

JOSHUA

Eden to Exile Leader's Guide

John D. Morrison, PhD

OT LEADER'S GUIDE

JOSHUA

JOHN D. MORRISON, PHD



Dr. Tom Smiley, Senior Pastor
2235 Thompson Bridge Road, Gainesville, GA 30501
LakewoodLife.org • (770) 532-6307

OT Leader's Guide: Joshua

Copyright © 2019 John D. Morrison

Published by Lakewood Baptist Church

2235 Thompson Bridge Road

Gainesville, Georgia 30506

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV© Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version©), copyright © 2001 by Crossway.

OT19

Greetings! Welcome to our journey through the Old Testament from Eden to Exile! I am so excited about what we are going to learn together and how we are going to grow together as we read God's Word together in these next twelve months.

Our reading the New Testament in a year as a church was a much broader and deeper success than we ever imagined. We saw God work in individuals and in relationships as his Word was made a daily priority. God tells us that his Word is powerful to accomplish his purposes (Isaiah 55:10-11), and we saw that on full display last year.

We believe that all of God's Word is, as Paul tells us, "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It is our commitment as a church to the whole counsel of God that has led us to read the Old Testament this year.

I am even more excited about this year because of a new and added "twist." Each week you'll read from the Old Testament, but you'll also find a devotional for the end of the week written by a member of our Lakewood Team. These devotionals will draw the connection between what you read each day and the New Testament. We are about to discover more regarding the unity of the Scriptures. God's Word tells us the one story of salvation freely offered through Jesus Christ.

Please keep current and encourage others to read along with you. I would love to hear your thoughts and impressions as you reflect on each day's reading. Please email me at tsmiley@lakewoodlife.org

We are blessed as a ministry to have such a talented, gifted, and doctrinally sound staff who each have the competency to lead us into a deeper understanding of God's Word. As you read their devotional thoughts and commentary, consider letting them know how their words have impacted your daily walk of faith.

Enjoy our journey from Eden to Exile!

Dr. Tom

INTRODUCTION

Joshua recounts the people of Israel entering the promised land. The book connects the pre-history of Israel — the nation’s formation and wilderness wanderings — with the nation’s life in the promised land. In many ways, this book is the culmination of all that has come before in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Joshua completes the Exodus as the people who were redeemed out of Egypt now settle in the land. The fact that there exists both a people and a land points back further to Genesis. The Lord promised Abraham a people, a land, and to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14). At the start of Joshua, the nation that has come from Abraham is poised to enter the land promised centuries before. The book covers the conquest and distribution of the land of promise. At the end of Joshua, the people renew the covenant with the Lord, and then Joshua dies. They are a nation who lives in the land they were promised, but it remains to be seen who will lead them in this land.

The purpose of this book is to convey how God kept his covenant promise to bring the Israelites into the land he had shown to Abraham. . . . The message is that God keeps his promises no matter how impossible they seem.

- Andrew E. Hill & John H. Walton

Purpose and Outline

The book of Joshua’s main emphasis is that the Lord has kept his promise to Abraham. He has brought his people into the promised land. Joshua makes clear that it is the Lord who has brought his people into the promised land: from the parting of the Jordan to the battles fought, God himself is the main character of this book.

In emphasizing the faithfulness of God to keep his promises, the book of Joshua has four main sections:

1. Preparing to Enter the Land (1:1-5:15)
2. Fighting for the Land (6:1-12:24)
3. Distributing the Land (13:1-22:34)
4. Preparing for Life in the Land (23:1-24:33)

Preparing to Enter the Land. The first five chapters of Joshua deal with the Lord's preparing the people to enter the promised land. The generation of those redeemed from Egypt, including Moses, have died, and the wilderness wanderings have come to an end. Now, the people stand poised to enter the land promised to Abraham centuries before. The preparation begins with Joshua. The Lord challenges him to be strong and courageous in following all the law, and God encourages him with the promise of his presence. Then, Joshua turns to prepare the people for inheriting the land. Chapter two recounts

The Exodus was just one half of a great redemptive complex. God had not promised his people only that he would redeem them from bondage, but also that he would give them the land he promised to the fathers as their inheritance. The great work of redemption from bondage in Egypt cannot be separated from the inheritance of land that God had promised. The book of Joshua takes us into that inheritance: it describes the conquest and distribution of the land.

- Raymond B. Dillard
& Tremper Longman III

the spies' encounter with Rahab. These verses demonstrate that the Canaanites fear the Israelites, and with Rahab's turning to trust in the Lord, there is a glimmer of how Abraham's descendants will be a blessing to the nations. In chapter 3, there is the miraculous crossing of the Jordan at flood stage, which is clearly the work of the Lord and parallels the crossing of the Red Sea. Chapter 4 draws attention back to the

miraculous event of the previous chapter as the Israelites memorialize God's act. Then, in chapter 5, the people make their final preparations to enter the land. The men are circumcised, recalling the promise of the land to Abraham in Genesis 17. Then, the entire nation celebrates the Passover, which marks how the Lord delivered them from slavery in Egypt. As the Lord prepares them to inherit the land he promised, he has them remember all that he has done to bring them to this point. The preparation ends with the the commander of the Lord's army appearing to Joshua. This appearance seems to function as a guarantee of the Lord's presence with his people.

Fighting for the Land. The next section of Joshua covers the conquering of Canaan. These chapters highlight how it is the Lord

who brings his people into the land. They do not conquer the land because of their military might but because God himself fights for them. The miraculous and divine nature of the fighting for the land is apparent in the first battle. At Jericho, the Lord instructs the people in some less than typical tactics: they are to march around the city for seven days. And yet, as they follow the Lord's commands, he hands this city over to them. While Jericho demonstrates the Lord's faithfulness, the story of Achan shows the failure that will come if the people reject the Lord. The defeat at the first battle of Ai resulted from Achan's disobedience, but then victory follows at Ai when the people obey. These first two cities are paradigmatic for the rest of the battles. The Lord will deliver his people into the promised land: he will keep his promise. And, the people must obey all that the Lord commands.

Distributing the Land. A large portion of Joshua deals with the distribution of the promised land. With their detailed descriptions of the allotment of land, these chapters emphasize that the Lord has been faithful to his promise to Abraham. The land of Canaan has become the home of Abraham's descendants. 21:43-45 emphasizes the total commitment of the Lord to his promises. Particularly, 21:43 highlights the promise of the land: "Thus, the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their fathers."

Preparing for Life in the Land. The book concludes with Joshua calling the people to be faithful to the law of the Lord. Joshua reviews how God has shown himself faithful to his promises to Abraham and the patriarchs. Then, the people renew their covenant with the Lord. This promised land is to be a land where the Lord alone is worshipped. They are to worship and to serve the Lord and no one else. The book ends with the death of Joshua and the death of Eleazar, Aaron's son. In between the death of these two key leaders, the narrative points back to Genesis by mentioning the burial of Joseph's bones (24:32; cf. Gen. 50:22-26). Joseph's body has now come to rest in the land promised to Abraham, the land he had been forcefully taken from as a captive. The Lord has been faithful to his promise.

Frequently Asked Questions

Conquest. This question is asked in a variety of ways, but the essence is: why is there so much violence that seems to be sanctioned by the Lord in this book?

The Bible describes the destruction of these cities and people as both God's judgment against and protection from their evil ways. As far back as Genesis 15:16, the Lord mentions the sin of the people in Canaan as leading to judgment. In this passage, God tells Abraham that his descendants will have to wait to enter the land because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Note: Amorites and Canaanites refer to the same group of people). Leviticus 18:24-30 provides more detail on the nature of the Canaanites' sin, and Deuteronomy 9:4-5 cites the sin of the nations in Canaan as a reason for Israel's conquest.

The story of Rahab in Joshua 2 and the account of the people's hardness of heart in Joshua 11 demonstrate that the Canaanites did not go unwillingly to destruction. They had clearly heard of the God of Israel, the Lord, but they refused to bow to him. Rahab shows that there remains an opportunity for repentance and faith in the midst of coming judgment.

In addition to judgment for sin, the complete destruction of the people in the land is seen as protection from their evil practices. As the Lord through Moses prepares the people to enter the land in Deuteronomy, he calls on them to destroy utterly the nations in the land "that they may not teach you to do according to their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 20:17-18).

We should note that this is not an instance of God merely favoring one nation over another. When Israel sins, they too face God's judgment. Leviticus 18:28 and Deuteronomy 28:25-68 threaten these same punishments against Israel if they were to forsake the Lord. Such judgment is what happens through the rest of the Old Testament as God's people turn from him.

These judgments should remind us of the seriousness with which God takes sin. Sin is an affront to his holiness and destroys humanity, his image bearers. Moreover, it infects the entire created world. Old

Testament scholar Christopher J. H. Wright reminds us, “Those who are unrepentantly wicked face the wrath of God — including those within the covenant nation itself in Old Testament times.” Sin will be punished.

Our hope as believers is that Jesus bore our punishment for sin in order that we might experience true life in communion with God. Christ wages war against sin, Satan, and death, but his victory comes through his own death and resurrection. As believers, we join in that battle and fight not with swords but spiritual weapons and wear spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-20).

These accounts of conquest and judgment point us forward to a future day when evil will be destroyed completely and God will judge justly all who have ever lived. There will be a final reckoning for all, but for believers, we by faith will be found in Christ the righteous one who bore our punishment on our behalf.

Land. Throughout the Pentateuch and now in Joshua, the promised land has been a prominent theme. What does the land have to do with the church? Should we expect the modern nation of Israel to live within the boundaries described in Joshua 1:4?

Even at its peak under King David, Israel’s boundaries were never as expansive as those described in Joshua 1:4. The boundaries here are seen as an ideal, but as we read through the rest of Scripture, we begin to see that God’s plan was never limited to a small patch of Canaan.

The biblical trajectory of the land promise is that the entire earth will be part of God’s kingdom. “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). The author of Hebrews explains that Abraham understood the promise of land to be about something greater than just Canaan: “For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). In Revelation, John uses the language of a heavenly city to describe the entire new creation. All things will be made new when Christ returns. The new earth will be like a new and greater Garden of Eden where God will dwell in the midst of his people.

The land of Canaan was like a deposit. It was a downpayment on something much greater that is coming. Now, in Christ, God's kingdom is not limited geographically. One day, we will see Christ come again and all things will be made new, and his people will dwell with him forever.

New Testament Connection

“Joshua” is the English translation of the Hebrew name that means “Yahweh saves.” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this name is translated as *Iesous*, which is how Jesus Christ is named in the New Testament. The fact that Yahweh saves is the central truth of both the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, just as God delivered his people into the promised land through Joshua, so now God delivers his people into life with him through Jesus.

Hebrews 3-4 explicitly draws the link between the rest Joshua brought the people and the better rest now available through Jesus. Jesus is a better deliverer, and he offers a better rest.

Like the people of God in the Old Testament, believers today are a redeemed people who are called to act in faith and obedience to the Lord. While God was present above the ark of the covenant both in the camp and in battle, now, God indwells his people by his Spirit. As those redeemed by the work of Christ, we are divinely empowered to live in faith and obedience to God's commands because the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

JOSHUA 1-4

OT19 WEEK 26

Discussion Questions

- 1:1-9 | What command does the Lord give Joshua three times in these verses? Why is this command so important that it needs to be repeated three times? Verses 5 and 9 are the bookends to the repetition of this command: what promise do they provide that would encourage Joshua to obey?
- 2:8-13 | How are the nations in the promised land reacting to the Israelites? What is significant and surprising about Rahab's response? Look at the mention of Rahab in Matthew 1. Why does Matthew mention her at the start of his Gospel?
- 3:6, 10-11 | What does the ark of the covenant symbolize? Why was it significant for the ark to go with the people?
- 3:13-17 | What previous event from Israel's history is like this crossing? How do you think that encouraged the nation?
- 4:21-24 | What were the Israelites commanded to do in this chapter? Why? Who were they to tell about God's saving works (vv. 22, 24) How do you remember and tell others about the key ways God has acted in your life?

JOSHUA 5-9

OT19 WEEK 27

Discussion Questions

- 5:2-9 | What did circumcision signify for ancient Israel? Consider Genesis 17. Why was this a significant time to recall this promise to Abraham?
- 5:10-12 | What did the Passover celebration memorialize? Why was this an important event to remember before entering the promised land? How does remembering God's past actions fortify us to follow him in the present?
- 5:13-15 | Who was the commander of the Lord's army who appeared to Joshua? How is this account similar to Exodus 3? Why is this appearance significant right here on the eve of battle?
- 6:12-19 | Do you think this was a typical approach to fighting battles in this day? What does such a strange battle plan teach us about God? Who was responsible for the victory at Jericho?
- 7:1-26 | After such a stunning victory at Jericho, why did the Israelites suffer such a spectacular defeat at Ai? What do these accounts being paired together teach us? How do we square God's power and promise with human responsibility? Consider how Paul connects these two in Philippians 2:12-13.
- 7:21 | Why is coveting such a dangerous sin? Do you take it seriously in your own life? Consider Colossians 3:5-6.
- 9:24-27 | How do you make sense of the total destruction of Israel's enemies when Jesus teaches his followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Consider Genesis 15:16, Leviticus 18:24-25; Leviticus 20:22-24; Deuteronomy 9:5; Deuteronomy 12:29-31.
- 9:14 | How were the Israelites deceived? How are we today to seek the Lord's help in making decisions?

JOSHUA 10-12, 23-24

OT19 WEEK 28

Discussion Questions

- 10:8-11, 14 | Who won these battles? Why does the book of Joshua spend so much time emphasizing the Lord's role in these victories? What application can you make for your own life from the truth emphasized in these verses?
- 10:26-27 | Whose death and burial from the New Testament does this sound like? Why is it significant that Jesus suffered the same treatment as God's enemies? Why is that such good news for us, who were God's enemies? Consider how great our joy is that the stone does not remain over Christ's grave to this day!
- 11:20 | Compare this verse with Pharaoh in Exodus and with Romans 1:24-32. What do we learn from these accounts about the nature of sin?
- 11:23 & 13:1 | How do you make sense of these two verses together?
- 13:1-22:34 | We do not read these chapters as part of our reading plan, but in light of God's promise to Abraham, why is it significant that so much of this book is spent recounting the distribution of the land? How do the land promises point forward to something even greater? See Hebrews 11:10.
- 23:1 | Compare this verse with Hebrews 3:12-4:13. How does Jesus provide an even greater rest than Joshua?
- 24:14-15 | Why did Joshua need to call the Israelites to such obedience? Why would they be tempted to abandon the Lord? How do we face such temptations today? In light of these temptations, why is it such good news for us that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us as believers?



Dr. Tom Smiley, Senior Pastor • LakewoodLife.org
2235 Thompson Bridge Road, Gainesville, GA 30501 • (770) 532-6307