

Overview of the Book of Joshua

The Book of Joshua is the sixth book of the Old Testament and the first book after the Pentateuch. It describes Israel's transition from wilderness wandering to life in the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The book emphasizes God's faithfulness, the importance of covenant obedience, and the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses.

Historical Setting and Purpose

Joshua takes place after the death of Moses, as the Israelites stand on the edge of Canaan. God commissions Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan River, conquer the land, and divide it among the twelve tribes. The book's purpose is not only to record military victories and territorial settlement, but also to show that God keeps His promises when His people trust and obey Him.

Major Themes

- **God's faithfulness:** The land promised to Israel's ancestors begins to become their inheritance.
- **Courage and obedience:** Joshua is repeatedly called to be strong and courageous, grounding his leadership in obedience to God's law.
- **Covenant responsibility:** Israel's success depends on faithfulness to God, while disobedience brings consequences.
- **Holy living:** The book stresses that Israel must remain distinct from the idolatrous practices of surrounding nations.
- **Leadership transition:** Joshua models faithful leadership after Moses while guiding Israel into a new stage of national life.

Basic Outline

1. **Entering the land:** Joshua is commissioned, spies are sent to Jericho, and Israel crosses the Jordan River.
2. **Conquering the land:** Israel defeats Jericho, faces failure at Ai because of sin, renews obedience, and continues the conquest of Canaan.
3. **Dividing the land:** The conquered territory is assigned to the tribes, showing the beginning of Israel's settled life in Canaan.
4. **Renewing the covenant:** Joshua gives final instructions and calls the people to serve the Lord faithfully.

Key Events

Some of the most memorable events in Joshua include the crossing of the Jordan River, the fall of Jericho, the sin of Achan and defeat at Ai, the covenant ceremony at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, the long day during the southern campaign, the distribution of tribal inheritances, and Joshua's farewell address at Shechem.

Theological Message

The central message of Joshua is that God is faithful to His covenant promises, but His people are called to respond with trust, obedience, and worship. The book presents victory as the result of God's power rather than human strength. It also warns that compromise, hidden sin, and idolatry threaten the community's relationship with God.

Conclusion

The Book of Joshua stands as a powerful account of promise, leadership, conquest, inheritance, and covenant renewal. It reminds readers that God's purposes move forward through faithful obedience and that each generation must choose whom it will serve.

Bible Verses for Preparation to Study

The Call of Moses – Exodus 3:1-4:17, Numbers 12: 1-15

God's commands to Israel come through Moses – Dt. 18: 15-20

God sets out laws of warfare fought against cities outside the Promised Land – Dt. 20: 10-15 and those inside the Promised Land – Dt. 20: 16-18

God's promise to Abraham – Genesis 15: 17-20

God is Creator and Owner of all land on earth. He is also the universal Judge. Fall, Flood, Tower of Babel, Plagues on Egypt, Prophetic judgements against Ammon, Arabia, Assyria, Babylon, Damascus, Edom, Egypt, Elam, Ethiopia, Gaza, Kedar and Hazor, Lebanon, Moab, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon

Acts 17: 22-31 Mars Hill in Athens speech by Paul

Gods' judgement is for Israel as well – Dt. 7: 1-11