

Joshua 1

Discussion Starter

Which of the following best describes how you think most Christians think of the Bible? Why?

- a) A Love Letter
- b) A Book of Promises
- c) A Book of History
- d) A Book of Commandments
- e) A Book of Information

Getting our Bearings

The book of Joshua is about the fulfilment of God's Promise to give the land to Israel. This is reflected in the structure of the book:

Ch 1-2	Prologue
Ch 3-5	Entering the Land
Ch 6-12	Conquering the Land
Ch 13-21	Receiving the Land
Ch 22-24	Epilogue

Read Genesis 15:1-21. What exactly does God promise about land for Abrahams descendents? When will it be fulfilled?

Read Deuteronomy 34 & Joshua 1:1-4. What is Israel's situation at the beginning of the book of Joshua? How might Joshua and the people have felt at this time?

Chapter 1

1. In verses 1-9 God speaks to Joshua. What promises are made? What commands are given?
2. On what basis should Joshua be strong and courageous?
3. How important is it for Joshua to obey God's law? Why?
4. Does verse 8 mean that if we obey God's law we will be prosperous and succesful? Why or why not?
5. Read Joshua 21:43-45. How do you think Joshua would have answered the discussion starter question?
6. What promises has God made to us as Christians? (eg. Acts 2:38-39, Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Peter 1:3-11). Having heard these promises, what should we do?
7. (Optional) In verses 10-15 Joshua speaks to the officers of people and to the two and a half tribes whose land had already been conquered. If you want to chase up the background here - see Numbers 32. (For those interested in the "half tribe of manasseh" - see Genesis 48).
8. In verses 16-18 the people (All the people? The 2 1/2 tribes?) respond to Joshua. How would you describe their response?
9. In whose shoes do you think we should place ourselves in this passage - Joshua's or the peoples? What therefore do you think is the main application of the passage for Christians today?

Joshua 2

Is it hard or easy to believe God's promise in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? Why?

In chapter 1 we saw that everything was looking good for Israel to receive the Promised Land. God restated the promise and further promised to be with Joshua (v 1-9), Joshua responded with obedience (v 10-15), and the people responded to Joshua with total allegiance (v 16-17). But there were still some serious obstacles. There were people in the land who would fight against Israel. As yet the Israelites had not even a foothold in the land. Could they be sure God would give them the land?

Read chapter 2.

1. What is ominous about verses 1 & 2? (Check out what happened last time spies went into the land, and what happened at Shittim (pronounced "Shi-teem") - Numbers 13-14 & 25.)
2. What tension is created by verses 2-4? How is it resolved?
3. What tension is created by the city gate being shut in verse 7? How is it resolved?
4. Why does Rahab help the spies? (Verses 8-13)
5. How does this story give confidence that God is giving the land to Israel (as reported in verse 24)?
6. What happens to Rahab and her family? See Joshua 6:20-25. See also Matthew 1:5.
7. Rahab (A Canaanite prostitute who lies and betrays her own people) seems like an unlikely person to play a crucial role in fulfilling God's promises. What does this teach us about God and how he works?
8. In the New Testament Rahab is held out as an example for us. In what way?

Hebrews 11:31

James 2:25
9. How does this story help us to believe God's promises, even when their fulfilment looks unlikely?

Joshua 3-4

1. God's intention to give the promised land to his people is confirmed in chapters 1 & 2. In chapters 3 & 4 the crossing of the flooded Jordan river and entry into the land is described. Read Joshua 3 & 4. Try and summarize the action (You might like to be creative and draw up a map and move objects around to represent the ark, the crowds of people, the stones etc.)
2. The "ark" was a wooden box overlaid with gold. It's construction is ordered in Exodus 25:10-22, recorded in Exodus 37:1-9, and recounted in Deuteronomy 10:1-5. When the tabernacle (travelling tent temple) was set up the ark was placed in the "holy of holies". There two important features of the ark. First, it is the place God said he would meet with Moses and give his commands (Exodus 25:22). Second, it contained the stone tablets engraved with the 10 commandments (the "testimony" to the covenant God made with Moses in Exodus 34). Therefore there is a close relationship between the ark and God himself. In Joshua the ark is a visual expression of God's covenant presence - God with his people fulfilling his promise.

In what different ways is the ark described in Joshua 3 & 4?

(See 3:3, 3:6, 3:8, 3:11, 3:13, 3:14, 3:15, 3:17, 4:5, 4:7, 4:9, 4:11, 4:16, 4:18)

3. Do you think it is significant that the ark is mentioned so many times? If so, why?
4. In what ways is Joshua portrayed in this account?
5. The setting up of the twelve stones seems to be emphasized. Why are they so important? (See 4:20-24)
6. According to 4:24 what was God's intention in all this? (See the immediate result in 5:1).
7. Living after Christ we can look back to even great displays of God's power than this. Read Ephesians 1:18-23 and see what example Paul gives of God's "incomparably great power for us who believe".
8. Why is it important for us to know God's great power? How should this knowledge help you to live a godly life this week? (Think and pray about the implications for your specific situations)

Joshua 5:1-12

1. In general terms what are the main stages of a person's life? What has been the most significant transition you have made from one stage to another (eg. study to work, single to married, nappies to undies, etc)? Why was it significant for you?
2. Chapter 5 of Joshua marks an important transition for Israel. In crossing the Jordan the exodus/wilderness period of history was completed. Life in the land had begun. Read verses 1-12 of the chapter. What significant changes does the passage indicate have been brought about?
3. According to Genesis 17:1-14 why were Israelite men circumcised? What did it signify?
4. What then is the significance of the timing of the (Joshua 5) mass circumcision?
5. According to Exodus 13:3-10 upon entering the land Israel was to celebrate the Passover. How do you think the people would have felt as they did this in Joshua 5:10?
6. With all the kings melting in fear (v 1 & 2) Israel stop to circumcize the men nd celebrate the Passover! Why delay the conquest for these things?
7. What does this tell us about where our hope lies in receiving God's promises? What implications might follow for our church and ministry activities?
8. What do these New Testament passages tell us about circumcision and the passover today?

Romans 2:25-29 & Galatians 5:6

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Joshua 5:13-6:27

1. Joshua 5: 13 seems to mark the beginning of the conquest of the land. Read 5:13-6:27. As was suggested for chapters 3 & 4, try and summarize the action using different objects to represent the city, the ark, the people, etc. (You might even like to work on sound effects).
2. List everything that is strange or unusual about this military campaign?
3. Read Exodus 3:1-10. What is similar between Moses encounter with God, and Joshua's with the Commander of Lord's army (5:13-15)? Could this similarity be significant? How?
4. Who or what does the passage say caused the city walls to collapse?
5. Do you think people today have trouble accepting this account as real history? Why or why not?
6. What would you say to someone skeptical about whether it really happened like this?
7. Many people find this passage difficult. It appears that God is engaging in some form of "ethnic cleansing" - killing the people living in Canaan to give their land to the Israelites? Is God unfair towards the Canaanites? How do these passages help us to understand what is happening?

Genesis 15:16 (the Amorites are one of the people's living in the promised land)

Deuteronomy 9:1-6

Joshua 5:13-14

Joshua 6:25

Joshua 6:27

8. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12. Many people have trouble accepting this as reality. How does Joshua 6 help us to understand God's coming day of destruction/salvation?
9. As a result of what you have learnt in this study, what should you pray for yourself, for each other and for those who don't know God?

Joshua 7

1. Do you think Christians today take sin in our own lives and in the lives of church members as seriously as we should?
2. Read chapter 7
 - a) Why did Israel fail to conquer Ai?
 - b) How did Israel deal with this problem?
3. Why is Achan's sin so serious? Isn't it just being greedy or stealing? See Joshua 7:11-12 (also Lev 27:28-29 & Deut 20:10-18).
4. How is the description of Achan's sin (Joshua 7:21) similar to that of Eve in Genesis 3:6?¹ Could this similarity be significant? If so - how?
5. Achan is the second individual featured in the book. How might he be compared and/or contrasted with the first person featured (Rahab)? What does this teach us about God?
6. In what way is the story of Achan a warning to us? How are things different for us who live after Christ?²
7. Read Colossians 3:1-10. What things are we to "put to death" and why?
8. In light of your privileged position as a Christian, what areas of sin do you need to take more seriously? As appropriate share your struggles and confess your sins to one another and to God. Give thanks for God's mercy in Christ. Ask God to change you.

¹ Note the same hebrew words are translated by different english words: "beautiful" = "good" & "Coveted"="desired"

² As time permits you may want to consult Hebrews 8:7-13 & 10:26-30, 1 John 1:8-2:6, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Joshua 9

1. Do you think its right to become a Christian because you're scared of God's judgment? Why or why not?
2. In Joshua 9 we see two responses to hearing of God's judgement. Read the chapter and try to summarize the two responses (verse 1-2 and verses 3-27).
3. Why did the Gibeonites need to persuade Israel they'd come from a very distant country? See Deuteronomy 7:1-2 and 20:10-18.
4. Did Israel do the right thing in making their oath to the Gibeonites?
5. What is commendable about what the Gibeonites did? Do you think they could have escaped God's judgement any other way?
6. What was the outcome (both positive and negative) for Israel and for the Gibeonites?
7. What does this account teach us about who can be saved and how? In what ways are we in a similar or better position than the Gibeonites? (See also Romans 10:9-13)
8. "At times Christians can be quicker to condemn people than God himself" Do you think this is generally true? When might it be true for you?
9. What should we do as a result of understanding God's word from Joshua 9?

Joshua 10-12

1. The Bible consistently portrays powerful people and forces opposing Christ and his people. Where do we see this most clearly today? When have you personally experienced this?
2. The book of Joshua is about God keeping his promise to give the land to Israel. Chapter 9:1-2 introduced the hostile reaction of the people in the land to what God was doing. The rest of chapter 9 recorded the different (smart) response of the people of Gibeon. Chapters 10-12 then show us the outcome for those who opposed God, and the great power of God in keeping his promise.

Read Joshua 10-12 out loud.

- a) What is repeated and/or emphasized in the passage?
 - b) What is the overall impression created?
 - c) What encouragements are here for God's people of later generations?
3. This talk of war and killing and extermination is difficult for us to take. Why do you think our generation is more squeamish about war than previous generations? Should we be?
 4. Could we justify a religious war (say in the middle east) from this passage? Why or why not?
 5. How does this passage challenge contemporary ideas of God?
 6. How does this passage help us to understand Jesus, and our own situation in God's plan? (Colossians 2:13-15 and Revelation 19:11-21 might help.)
 7. How should we be encouraged by this passage when we're facing opposition, or when we are intimidated by powerful forces?

Joshua 13-21

1. What are the good and bad things about being promised something good, but not yet having received it? (eg. a present, a special dinner, getting a job done around the house)
2. The book of Joshua is about God keeping his promise to give the land to Israel. After entering the land (chapters 1-5) and conquering the land (chapters 6-12), chapters 13-21 deal with the allocation of the land to all the people of Israel. As it is a long section try and get an overall feel for it by reading these selected sections and note down what is happening along with any observations, questions, etc.

13:1-7

13:8-14

14:1-8

15:1

16:1-4

18:1-10

20:1-3

21:1-3 & 41-42

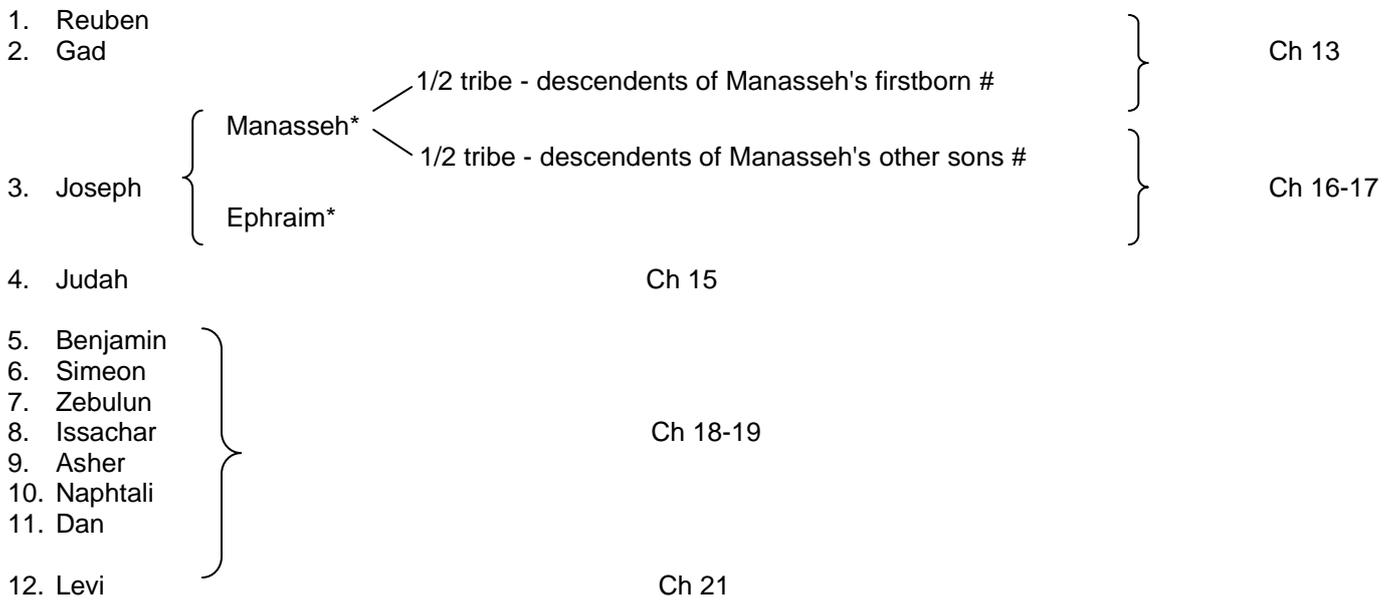
21:43-45

3. Why do you think all this is recorded in such detail?
4. Is the acknowledgement of 13:1-5 (also 13:13, 15:63, etc) compatible with the conclusion in 21:43-45? Why or why not?
5. As Christians what promises of God have we received? What is yet to be received? How are they connected?
6. Read Joshua 14:6-15. What can we learn from Caleb about trusting in God's promise?
7. Some people have described Joshua 13-21 as "pure praise". It is a detailed declaration of what God has done in keeping his promise to Israel. There are similar sections (much shorter) in the New Testament. Read Ephesians 1:3-10. Make a list and praise God in prayer for each blessing described.

Joshua 13-21 - Extra Information

In Joshua the land is allocated to the descendents of the sons of Jacob (the 12 sons, who became 12 tribes of Israel). However, it is not a clear cut division among twelve. the diagram below may help.

Jacob's Sons



* See Genesis 48

See Joshua 13:29-31 & 17:1-2

Joshua 22-24

1. Jesus said the most important commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength". In our context, what do you think are the most powerful or alluring challenges to/distractions from this kind of wholehearted service of God?

Through the book of Joshua we have seen the faithfulness of God in giving the land to his people. In this regard Joshua 21:43-45 is a summary of the book's message. The book closes with three chapters which highlight the implications of understanding/experiencing God's faithfulness.

- Chapter 22 - An incident demonstrating the seriousness of defection from right worship of God.
- Chapter 23 - A farewell speech where Joshua warns of the consequences of serving other gods.
- Chapter 24 - God's call for Israel to decide whom they will serve, and then three burials in the land.

2. Read chapter 23. On what basis are Israel urged to serve God in the land? What warning is given?

3. Read chapter 24:1-27.

- a) Try and work out the main sections of the passage, and give a title to each.

- b) In response to what God has done, what should Israel do? (See v 14)

- c) Joshua's response to the people's decision is surprising (v 19-20), but turns out to be true (see the rest of the Old Testament!). What does this tell us about how to regard the events of the book of Joshua in the context of God's wider plan of salvation? (See Hebrews 4:6-11)

4. (If time permits) Read Joshua 24:28-33. Do you think having 3 burials recorded at the close of the book is an anticlimax? Why or why not?

5. God calls on us to make a wholehearted response to what he has done in Jesus.

- a) Read Romans 12:1-2. How is this similar or different to what Israel were to do in Joshua 24?

- b) In what ways are you serving (or in danger of serving) other "gods"? How does this work out in your life? Confess your failings to each other and to God, and ask for God's help to change.

- c) What practical changes do you need to make to respond rightly to what God has done?