

STUDY GUIDE

# JOSHUA

Brett Baggett



## CONTENT

This study guide was edited, and the study questions were written, by Brett Baggett. The excerpts contained are from The ESV Study Bible, The New City Catechism Devotional, as well as excerpts from sermons, books, confessions, and articles by many pastors, authors, and theologians, both current and from church history.



## HOW TO USE IT

The *Joshua study guide* is designed to help you work through the book of Joshua in 13 weeks (one week of introduction and 12 weeks of Bible study). I hope this will be a great tool for personal study, small groups, and leadership training of various kinds.

## PURPOSE

My hope for this study guide is to equip the people of Jesus Christ to understand, love, and obey the written Word of God. I believe when that happens they will more joyfully understand, love, and obey the Incarnate Word of God—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

For God's glory and the joy of all people,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brett Baggett'.

# RECOMMENDED HELP FOR STUDYING JOSHUA

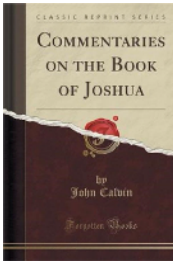
from technical to accessible



## Technical

*Joshua* by David M. Howard Jr.

*The New American Commentary:  
An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*



## Technical but Accessible

*Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*

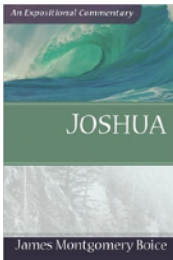
by John Calvin



## Accessible

*Joshua: No Falling Words*

by Dale Ralph Davis



## Accessible

*Joshua* by James Montgomery Boice

*An Expositional Commentary*

# JOSHUA

*the LORD executes his justice, keeps his promises,  
and gives his people rest*

## **Study 0**

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW - 7

## **Study 1**

THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES: Joshua 1:1-18 - **14**

## **Study 2**

THE LORD SAVES THE UNLIKELY: Joshua 2:1-24 - **21**

## **Study 3**

THE LORD PARTS THE WATERS AGAIN - **27**

Joshua 3:1-17

## **Study 4**

THE LORD IS WORTHY OF REMEMBRANCE - **34**

Joshua 4:1-5:12

## **Study 5**

THE LORD BREAKS STRONGHOLDS: Joshua 5:13-6:27 - **42**

## **Study 6**

THE LORD IS WORTHY OF PURITY: Joshua 7:1-26 - **54**

## **Study 7**

THE LORD RENEWS HIS PEOPLE: Joshua 8:1-35 - **61**

## **Study 8**

THE LORD IS A COUNSELOR: Joshua 9:1-27 - **68**

## **Study 9**

THE LORD MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE - **74**

Joshua 10:1-43

## **Study 10**

THE LORD DEFEATS HIS ENEMIES: Joshua 11:1-12:24 - **82**

## **Study 11**

THE LORD GIVES THE LAND FOR A PURPOSE - **88**

Joshua 13:1-22:34

## **Study 12**

THE LORD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP: Joshua 23:1-24:33 - **95**



## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS THE BOOK OF JOSHUA ABOUT?

“The greatest act of salvation in the Old Testament was not the Exodus alone.”<sup>1</sup> The Exodus was but the first half of the LORD’s great act of redemption in the Old Testament that foreshadows the gospel of Jesus Christ. The second half of this grand foreshadowing is laid out for us in the book of Joshua.

*Joshua tells the story of how the LORD executes his justice toward sin, and yet, at the same time, makes good on his promise to graciously give his people rest.*

In simplest terms, the book of Joshua reveals how the LORD gave his people the inheritance—the *land*—that was promised long ago to Abraham. Exodus cannot be separated from Joshua any more than the cross of Jesus Christ can be separated from his resurrection and future inheritance Christians will receive. And this brings us to an important point:

*Make no mistake. The story of Joshua is ultimately about Jesus.*

It’s about how he *not only* set his people free from bondage to sin on the cross, but how he also, in his resurrection and constant intercession, is fighting for them and leading them to the place that was promised—their final inheritance and rest in his presence forever. In light of the Greater Joshua, *Jesus*, we must make a decision. The same decision Joshua himself presses upon the people of Israel: “Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served...or the gods...in whose land you dwell.” And with Joshua, may we all by grace through faith say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

## WHO WROTE IT?

“The book of Joshua is named for its leading character. (For more on Joshua, see ESV Study Bible note on [Josh. 1:1](#).) The book’s author, however, is not explicitly mentioned. The Talmud—a collection of ancient writings by rabbis on Jewish law and tradition—ascribes the book, with the exception of the account of Joshua’s death, to Joshua himself (Baba Bathra 15a). While the book depicts Joshua writing ([Josh. 8:32](#); [24:26](#)), it does not claim he wrote the book. Indeed, the repeated references to something existing ‘to this day’ (see [Josh. 4:9](#); [5:9](#); [6:25](#); etc.) seem to suggest a significant lapse of time between the events and the book’s final form. Also, the narrator in [Joshua 10:13](#) cites what may be an earlier record of Joshua’s deeds.”<sup>2</sup>

## WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

“Determining the date of the book of Joshua is difficult because, as with many other OT books, it may have been edited as it became part of the growing corpus of OT texts. Its final editing may well have taken place in the exilic period (post-587 B.C.), but its original composition was likely much earlier. A number of features point to a date of origin in the late second millennium B.C.”<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT KIND OF BOOK IS THIS?

“In the Hebrew canon, the book of Joshua is included (along with Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings) in the ‘Former Prophets.’ In English Bibles, these same books are often called the ‘Historical Books.’ Both designations are apt. The book of Joshua qualifies as historiography (history writing), but it is not like the ostensibly disinterested, largely political histories that modern secular historians write. It is, rather, a didactic history written from a prophetic (that is, theological) point of view.

Multiple genres converge in the book of Joshua. The overall format is narrative or story. The specific type of story is epic—the story of a nation engaged in matters of state, including warfare. A feature of epics is the



inclusion of epic catalogs (lists), and in the book of Joshua they are so extensive that the book becomes a historical chronicle in addition to an epic story.

To read the book of Joshua in keeping with its literary purpose, one needs to place oneself in the narrative world of the text. Readers need to imagine themselves present at the events, and take the literal, physical details seriously. They need to relish the suspense, the danger, and the plot conflicts that the storyteller puts forward. An epic presents heightened images of good and evil, and all the more so with the implied holy war motif encountered in the OT. Along with the images of good and evil, there are images of heroism to admire and emulate. Finally, the reader should look not only at the world of the story and its characters but through that world to life as it is now. Having relived the events in the story, one must ponder the recognizable human experiences and the underlying principles, especially in leadership, community, and spiritual warfare."<sup>4</sup>

(1) Joshua, by Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III. (2) Taken from the ESV® Study Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. (3) IBID. (4) IBID.

1. Read **Exodus 17:9-14**. What do we learn about Joshua from these verses?

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2. Read **Numbers 14:5-10**. Who were the only two spies originally sent to spy out Canaan that trusted the LORD and therefore plead with the people to take the land? What does this tell us about Joshua's faith?

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7. Read **Hebrews 11:30-31**. Do you think it's significant that the writer of Hebrews included these scenes from the book of Joshua in his writing? Why or why not?

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## Study 1

### **JOSHUA 1:1-18**

## **THE LORD KEEPS HIS PROMISES**

### **THE BIBLE IS INDISPENSABLE**

God has made the *written* word as indispensable as the *incarnate* Word. For the achievement of God's ultimate purpose, he has made *Christ* essential and the *Bible* essential. The Bible is not as glorious, not as ultimate, not as foundational, as Christ. But both are indispensable.

Without the written word — explaining and preserving for us who God is and what he has done — there would be no saving knowledge of God, no new birth, no faith, no seeing and savoring of God's glory, no experience of forgiveness, no transformation, and, in the end, no completed and beautified Bride for the Son, and no white-hot worshipping family for the Father.

The ultimate aim of creation, the ultimate aim of inspiring the Scriptures, and our ultimate aim in reading them is that God's infinite worth and beauty will be exalted in the everlasting, white-hot worship of the blood-bought Bride of Christ from every people, language, tribe, and nation.

Oh, how thankful we should be that God has given us, and preserved for us, his Word!

**- John Piper, *There Ultimate Goal of Reading the Bible***



1. Read **verses 1-2** in **Joshua chapter 1** and **Deuteronomy 34:7-12** and note how these two books connect.

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2. Read **verses 1-5**. What is the LORD promising to give his people? How does **Genesis 12:1-3** help clarify? What are the three specific things the LORD promises Abraham and his descendants? How do you see those eluded to in **Joshua 1:1-5**?

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## INHERITANCE BY THE PROMISE

*“For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise” (Gal. 3:18).*

The Galatian Judaizers thought their argument for Abraham as one justified by faith and works was convincing, but Paul has proved to be their superior in interpreting Scripture. There is no way that sinners can be declared righteous in God’s sight by doing the works of the Law because Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, and he did not live under the Mosaic law (Gen. 15:1–6). Augustine says, “If the law justifies, Abraham was not justified, since he lived long before the law” (*Ancient Christian Commentary*, NT vol. 8, p. 43).

Being declared righteous is the way people, Jew and Gentile alike, are counted as sons and daughters of Abraham and thus, heirs of the inheritance promised to the patriarch (Gal. 3:6–7). But what exactly is this inheritance? To answer this question we must turn to Genesis, wherein we read that God promised Abraham a good land, many offspring, a blessed life that would be a blessing to the world, and victory over His enemies (12:1–3; 22:15–18). Our Creator Himself pledged to do all that is required to bring this inheritance about. When He appeared to Abraham as a smoking pot and flaming torch that passed between the corpses of animals, God swore that His plan for the patriarch’s descendants would be accomplished or He would die just like those animals (Gen. 15:7–21). Since God cannot die, it is impossible for His promise to fail.

In Jesus, our Creator did all the work necessary to bring these things to pass. He defeated Satan, initiated the renewal of all things, and commissioned His church to declare His gospel that the world might be blessed through the addition of all nations to the family of Abraham (Matt. 4:1–11, 23–25; 28:18–20). The Father promised His Son that all this would be accomplished if He would trust and submit to God’s plan. Our Savior never doubted Him, living and dying to fulfill all that the Scriptures foretold (26:36–56).

Galatians 3 does not describe the promised inheritance in full, only the Spirit of promise (v. 14). But justification gives us the inheritance, and the indwelling of the Spirit provides proof of justification (v. 2); thus, the Spirit is shorthand for the fact that by faith we receive everything pledged to Abraham.

**- R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries**

## **JOSHUA 2:1-24**

### **THE LORD SAVES THE UNLIKELY**

#### **A BLESSED EXAMPLE OF SOVEREIGN GRACE**

Rahab is a remarkable character for several reasons. First, she is the only other woman besides Sarah mentioned specifically in the catalog of faith found in Hebrews 11. Thus we can see that she occupies a place of prominence among the other great heroes of the faith such as Abraham and Moses. Her inclusion demonstrates that both women and men are required to exercise persevering faith and are both honored citizens in the kingdom of God. Rahab's prominence is also markedly displayed in Matthew 1 where she is only one of two women mentioned in the genealogy of Christ.

Rahab was also a Gentile. She was not one of Abraham's physical descendants and yet was accepted into Israel, God's people. She foreshadows the great ingrafting of Gentiles into the church now happening under Christ. Like her, those who are outside the people of God today can join His kingdom if they place their faith in Christ alone.

Finally, knowing that Rahab was a prostitute is a reminder of God's mercy. John Owen says that Rahab is "a blessed example both of the sovereignty of God's grace and of its power; of its freedom and sovereignty, in the calling and conversion of a person given up through her choice to the vilest of sins. Nobody, no sin, should lead to despair when the cure of God's sovereign, almighty grace is engaged." There is no sinner, no matter their sin, that cannot be forgiven if they would but turn to Jesus for salvation.

**- Ligonier Ministries, Rahab and the Spies devotional**



1. According to **verse 1**, who's house did the spies end up in? Why do you think they entered the house of a prostitute? How does **verse 15** help clarify?

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2. Read **verses 2-7**. What did Rahab do? What would the consequences have been if the king of Jericho found out? What can we learn about the right kind of "risk"? Is it ever permissible to defy a king or government? If so, *when* and when is it *not* permissible?

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7. Read **verses 22-24**. How did the LORD confirm to Joshua that He had given the land to Israel?

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## **SAVING FAITH MADE VISIBLE**

“In and of herself, Rahab was no more righteous than the rest of the Canaanites. As a prostitute, she could have been more wicked than some of the others who would be put to the sword. Her only difference from the other inhabitants of the land was that she recognized Yahweh fighting on Israel’s side and that He was the one, true God. By faith she forsook the blood ties she had to the Canaanites, choosing instead to submit to the Lord. Consequently, she was adopted into God’s family (Joshua 6:22–25).

Rahab revealed her faith in risking her life to hide the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:1–14). Being a true child of God means being just as willing to lay down our lives for His people as we are for our own kin. Matthew Henry writes, ‘Those who by faith take the Lord as their God take his people as their people, and cast in their lot among them.’”

- **R.C. Sproul, Rahab’s Adoption (article at [ligonier.org](http://ligonier.org))**

## JOSHUA 3:1-17

# THE LORD PARTS THE WATERS AGAIN

### THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The ark was a rectangular box, made of acacia wood, measuring forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. It was overlaid with pure gold inside and out. The lid, called “the atonement place” (kapporet), traditionally known as the “mercy seat,” also was pure gold. Two golden cherubim were at the two ends of the lid, facing each other and looking down at the cover, with their wings raised above (Ex. 25:10–22). The cherubim were guardians of the divine presence. The ark housed the tablets of the testimony revealed to Moses, and for this reason the ark was also identified as “the ark of the covenant law” (Josh. 4:16). The significance of the ark was shown by its place and function in the tent of meeting. It sat in the most sacred room of the sanctuary, “the Most Holy Place” (Ex. 26:34; Heb. 9:3). It is from above the ark that the Lord spoke to Moses (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89). The Lord was identified with the ark, though not coterminous with it, and it is referred to as the place above which God is enthroned (e.g., 1 Sam. 4:4) and is called his “footstool” (e.g., 1 Chron. 28:2). The high priest on the annual Day of Atonement entered the most holy place, presenting the blood of the slaughtered goat to make atonement on behalf of the nation (Lev. 16:15–16). The Greek Old Testament renders the lid *hilastērion* (“place of atonement”). In the New Testament, *hilastērion* is the place where Jesus’s blood functions as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 3:25; cf. Heb. 9:5). The writer to the Hebrews in chapters 9 and 10 draws an analogy between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The heavenly most holy place is entered by Jesus, who offers his blood on the ark (Heb. 9:12). “By the blood of Jesus,” Christians may enter into the most holy place, confident in the perfect, permanent redemption achieved by Christ and where we by faith receive forgiveness and are sustained spiritually (Heb. 10:19). – Mathews, Kenneth A.. *Joshua (Teach the Text Commentary Series) 921-937*





3. Read **verse 4**. Why do you think they were not permitted to be within 2,000 cubits of the Ark?

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4. Read **verses 5-6**. What does it mean to *consecrate yourself*?

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5. According to **verse 7**, why will the LORD exalt Joshua? Why is it important to let the LORD do the exalting, instead of seeking to exalt yourself? How does **Philippians 2:9-11** help us see Jesus in **Joshua chapter 3**?

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6. Read **verses 8-13**. Why is it important for the people of the LORD to “come here and listen to the words of the LORD God”? How will the people “know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out” their enemies?

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7. Read **verses 14-17**. How did the LORD make good on His promise to lead His people into the Promised Land; was this a natural or a supernatural event?

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8. What can we learn from this about obstacles that stand in the way of the LORD making us holy and taking us, as Christians, all the way to glory? How do **Philippians 1:6** and **Romans 8:28** give us further hope as we follow Jesus, even when life is difficult and great obstacles stand in the way?

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## TRUST GOD IN THE FACE OF GREAT ODDS

Andrew van der Bijl (“Brother Andrew”) is a Christian missionary who smuggled Bibles into communist countries during the height of the Cold War. In his autobiography, *God’s Smuggler*, Brother Andrew tells the story of his first entry smuggling Bibles into communist Romania. The six cars in front of him had been inspected so thoroughly that one even had its engine taken apart. Watching these intense inspections, he prayed, “Lord . . . , I know that no amount of cleverness on my part can get through this border search. Dare I ask for a miracle? Let me take some of the Bibles out and leave them in the open where they will be seen. Then, Lord, I cannot possibly be depending on my own stratagems, can I? I will be depending utterly upon You.” When it was his turn at the crossing, he got over the border in less than thirty seconds; the guard only looked at his papers and waved him through. There are times when God calls us to take risks in order to accomplish his purposes. We obey knowing that we are not alone and that he is a God of miracles. – Mathews, Kenneth A. *Joshua (Teach the Text Commentary Series) 822-832*

## Study 4

# **JOSHUA 4:1–5:12**

## **THE LORD IS WORTHY OF REMEMBRANCE**

### **REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN NEED TEACHING**

Remember that your children need teaching. . . . That makes your work all the more solemn. If children did not need teaching, I would not be so extremely anxious that you should teach them right; for works that are not necessary, men may do as they please. But here the work is necessary. Your child needs teaching! He was born in sin; in sin did his mother conceive him. He has an evil heart; he does not know God, and he never will unless he is taught. He is not like some ground of which we have heard, that has good seed lying hidden in its very heart; but, instead he has evil seed within his heart. God can place good seed there. You profess to be God's instrument to scatter seed upon that child's heart; remember, if that seed is not sown, he will be lost forever, his life will be a life of alienation from God, and, at his death, he will be thrown into the everlasting fire.

Be careful, then, how you teach, remembering the urgent necessity of the situation. This is not a house on fire needing your assistance with a fire hose, nor is it an accident at sea, demanding your oar in the lifeboat, but it is a eternal spirit calling out loud to you, "Come over and help us."

- **Charles Spurgeon, *Teaching Children***



1. Read **verses 1-7** in **chapter 4**. What did the LORD command the people to do, according to **verses 1-3**? How did Joshua respond to the LORD's command according to **verses 4-5**? Why did the LORD command this, according to Joshua's explanation in **verses 6-7** — what did He want them to remember?

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2. Can you think of any other time in Biblical history that a “memorial” or “sign” was performed in this similar fashion? What signs or memorials do we do to this day as Jesus’ church and why?

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9. Do you remember the LORD's salvation frequently? Do you know and meditate on the fact that the LORD is mighty, which should lead you to fear Him forever? What does it mean to fear Him?

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10. Read **chapter 5 verses 1-9**. What was *circumcision* about under the Old Covenant? How does **Genesis 17:10-14** help clarify? What is the New Testament equivalent to circumcision? How does **Colossians 2:11-12** help clarify?

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11. Read **verses 10-12**. What was *the Passover* about? How does **Exodus 12:23-28** help clarify? What is the New Testament equivalent to *the Passover meal*? How does **Luke 22:14-23** help clarify?

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## MEMORIALS COMBAT SPIRITUAL AMNESIA

“In Joshua 3, we read of an amazing miracle God performed for his people. He caused the Jordan River to stop flowing so they could cross on dry ground into the Promised Land. God then instructed them, through Joshua, to gather twelve stones from the Jordan to set up as a memorial. One man from each tribe was selected to take a stone from the riverbed. Joshua set them up as a sign, as a remembrance, of what God accomplished for his people on that day.

God is so gracious to us. He knows we have *spiritual amnesia*. He knows that we are forgetful. So he gives us memorials. He commands us to do certain things that will serve as reminders.

. . . In the Lord’s Supper, we take in our hands the bread and the cup. The senses of touch, smell, and taste are all involved as we partake of a meal representing Christ’s death in our place. For the one being baptized, it is a most memorable experience as he or she is immersed in water. And as the rest of us participate in baptism through our presence, we see with our eyes a dramatic parable of death, burial, and resurrection.

Let us not forget. May we be people who fight spiritual amnesia with God-given means of remembrance.”

- Ben Reaoch, in an article titled *Remember God’s Goodness*

## JOSHUA 5:13–6:27

### THE LORD BREAKS STRONGHOLDS

#### HOW WAS THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN JUST?

Now let's look back over this great event of redemptive history, the conquest of Canaan, and try to answer some troubling questions that I hope will lead us deeper into God's purposes and lessons for us. The first question is this: How can this unprovoked aggression of a foreign power against the Canaanites be justified, even to the point where it is a cause for worshipping God? If a nation did today what Israel did in the conquest of Canaan, we would oppose it with all our might. The answer, I think, has three parts.

First, the period of redemptive history from the Exodus to the incarnation, from Moses to Jesus, is unique. In this period God's will was that his people have a national form with a land. He willed that it be a political body, and not just a religious one. In this way, God typified that the land is his and foreshadowed that one day his people will inherit the whole earth. And by giving his people the form of a nation for a span of history, God secured for them a prominence which guaranteed that the lessons he wanted to teach through them would be known to all the world. Before Moses and after Jesus this was not so. Abraham and his descendants were sojourners and exiles and had no political national identity. And since Christ the *Church* is the people of God, the true Israel, and it has no national form, but it too, like Abraham, is described as a people of sojourners, exiles, and aliens (1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11; Hebrews 11:13–16; 13:14). Therefore, no nation today may claim to be the people of God as Israel was and presume to execute God's historical judgments.

The second part of the answer is that, as the unique people of God, the exploits of Israel were not her own doing but God's. God was her commander-in-chief. He gave all the orders, and he himself fought for them (Joshua 6:16; 11:20; 23:10). When they acted against his orders, they were defeated (Numbers 14:39–45; Joshua 7:1–5). Therefore, we must conceive of Israel

as the weapon of the Lord, the instrument by which he accomplished his historical judgments on the nations.

That leads to the third part of the answer, namely, that the destruction of the nations of Canaan was not just to make a place for Israel; it was a judgment on the wickedness of those nations. Moses warned Israel in Deuteronomy 9:4, 5:

*Do not say in your heart after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, "It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land," whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*

Therefore, I think if we keep these three things in mind, we can view the conquest of Canaan as a great demonstration of God's holiness and faithfulness: first, in the period from Moses to Jesus the people of God are a national, political body as well as a religious one; second, God is the one fighting through Israel; the conquest is not merely a human act of aggression; third, the conquest is a divine judgment on the idolatry and wickedness of the nations of Canaan.

**- John Piper, *The Conquest of Canaan***



1. Read **verses 13-15** in **chapter 15**. Note all the things we learn about this “commander of the army of the LORD.”

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2. How does the commander respond to Joshua’s question and what do you think he means? How does Joshua respond to him and what do you think that teaches us about the commanders true *identity*? How does **verse 15** help further clarify?

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5. Why do you think passages like this—*passages where the LORD destroys people*—are troublesome for people, especially those in 21st century Western societies? How does **Ezekiel 18:4** help us understand this passage? How does **Romans 6:23** help us see what we all deserve and how greatly we need the Gospel?

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6. Read **verses 22-25**. Was Rahab any less of a sinner than the others that were devoted to destruction? If not, why was she saved?

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## THE COMMANDER OF THE LORD'S ARMY

This is not an angel. He says, "Thank you for worshiping me, and as a matter of fact, I would like you to go one step further. I want you to worship me even more intensely. Get your shoes off. Realize who I am. You're in the presence of the holy, the uncreated. You're in the presence of the beginningless."

So who is this? This is not a hologram. This is a person. This is God incarnate. This is a preliminary manifestation of the eternal Word of God, who in the fullness of time was born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law from the curse of sin. This is a preliminary. This is not a person really, who was born into this world and lived a life. This person doesn't stick around.

Yet what you have here...is called *the* Angel of the Lord, who shows up all the time. *The* Angel is not an angel. *The* Angel does get worship. *The* Angel speaks as if he is God. *The* Angel of the Lord is a preliminary manifestation of the multi-personal God, a preliminary manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, a preliminary manifestation of the fact that within the Godhead there is One whose specialty is to come and relate us to God.

There's one Person in the Godhead whose specialty is to come to us and to be a channel between us and the Lord. Do you see that? He is the Lord, and yet he's also the way to the Lord... He's from God, but he is God. How could that be? Only if God has more than one person inside the Godhead.

- Dr. Timothy Keller, from a sermon titled *Joshua and the General*

## JOSHUA'S JIHAD?

The Muslim terrorist movement has raised in the West an acute awareness of the growing global influence of Islam. The Arabic term "jihad" has become a popular synonym in the West for war by Muslims against non-Muslims, coercing them to submit to Islam's Allah ("God"). Islamic militants, it is thought by many, take this ideology to the extreme by murdering innocent (noncombatant) non-Muslims, even practicing suicide bombing. Government officials and media outlets in the West forcefully affirm that terrorism is not a legitimate view among Muslims

themselves and that only a small minority interpret “jihad” to mean armed conflict. When it is pointed out that the early centuries of Islamic expansion were achieved often through aggression, not persuasion, a popular response—especially by academics and media—is the charge that Christianity too had its medieval crusades and the Bible has wars carried out in the name of God. In the introduction (“Christian Interpretation”), I have addressed the issue of Israel’s wars in general. Now, I focus on the specific issue of Joshua’s wars and the Islamic idea of jihad. There are two aspects of the discussion that are often misunderstood and must be pursued. First, jihad has different meanings among those of the Islamic faith. What does “jihad” mean? Second, confusion reigns today because people wrongly make a moral equation between Israel’s conquest and the Islamic doctrine of jihad. What is the difference? First, the Arabic term “jihad” means “struggling,” which in the Qur’an (Islam’s scriptures) can refer to inner spiritual resistance to evil (“greater jihad”) or to armed conflict (“lesser jihad”). Peaceful ways of striving for the faith are explicit in the Qur’an, such as conversion by the “pen” and the “tongue.” Among Muslim scholars there is dispute as to what “jihad” means for Muslims today since the Qur’an has conflicting ideas, some verses calling for armed aggression and territorial expansion and others rejecting any form of coercion (e.g., Qur’an 2:256). In the case of armed conflict, some passages set rules of warfare, such as fighting only defensive battles (e.g., Qur’an 22:39–40). Still other verses that address warfare have no boundaries limiting the engagement (e.g., Qur’an 2:216; 9:5, 29). Scholars argue about which ideology better represents the ethics of the Qur’an. Classical Islam contends that the militaristic verses are later and have cancelled out the tolerant verses. Regardless of a final resolution to the meaning of jihad in the inner-Muslim debate, it is clear that unrestricted territorial expansion is called for in the Qur’an, and classical Islam (seventh–thirteenth centuries) had its greatest expansion as a consequence of warfare against non-Muslims, from Spain to India, including North Africa. Second, what differences occur between the battles in the Bible and in Islamic history?<sup>1</sup> Before we begin this discussion, there are two important principles of interpretation that must be remembered. (1) Biblical narratives are largely descriptive, simply telling what occurred, not prescriptive, calling readers to the same action.

That the Bible reports that the Israelites engaged in wars does not always mean that battles had divine sanction. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is prescriptive. Nevertheless, there are specific passages in Joshua where God explicitly directs his people to do battle. Here, similarities between Yahweh's wars and jihad may mislead. (2) Counting up similarities versus differences does not necessarily determine whether an analogy between entities is legitimate. The matter of parallels is more complex than simply counting. More likenesses or more differences do not reveal the inherent nature of the items under comparison. The point of comparison must be at the most fundamental level—the substance of the two systems.

The most fundamental difference between the two understandings of war is the extent of the action that God calls for. Classical Islam requires Muslims to subject all nations to Muslim rule. It is a global program of establishing Islamic law. In Islamic thought there is envisioned a global religious and political community. Islamic identity supersedes national boundaries. Since the mission is to achieve a worldwide institution of Islamic religion, there is no restriction on the time required to achieve the goal. There is no end in sight until all peoples live under Islamic rule and faith. Until this time, Islamic jihad has no space or time boundaries; there is a perpetual "struggle." Israel's conquest of Canaan, however, had limitations of both geography and time. Its purpose was to establish a safe haven, a community of related tribes that would eventually establish a geopolitical state. Israel's mission was to pacify the land of promise, Canaan. During the Late Bronze Age, Canaan was in constant turmoil, as the Amarna documents reflect. Israel's mission was not a global mission. The boundaries of other peoples were respected. For example, the Israelites were specifically prohibited from displacing neighboring Edomites and Moabites (Deut. 2:4–5, 9–12). Only those people groups living in the land of Canaan were potential opponents in war. Also, there was necessarily a time factor involved, because the purpose of controlling the land did not require unlimited domination by the Israelites. Israel's victories were limited and were temporary. Israel did not engage in perpetual warfare against towns once their threat had been downgraded and their influence in the region diminished. Moreover, the conquest was

deemed an act of God's judgment against a specific people—the Canaanites—because of their heinous (Lev. 18:6–23) and long-standing (Gen. 15:16) moral failings, not because they were non-Israelites or because they did not worship Yahweh. Thus, as judgment, utter destruction was called for (compare Josh. 6:17–21 with Deut. 20:10–18). Whereas jihad is one of the central means of extending the Islamic faith, the means of extending the kingdom of Yahweh was not militaristic but primarily through proclamation (e.g., Jon. 3:4–10).

- Mathews, Kenneth A. *Joshua (Teach the Text Commentary Series)* (Kindle Locations 1643-1658). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

## Study 6

### **JOSHUA 7:1-26**

## **THE LORD IS WORTHY OF PURITY**

### **TRUE HOLINESS**

“True holiness, we surely ought to remember, does not consist merely of inward sensations and impressions. It is much more than tears, and sighs, and bodily excitement, and a quickened pulse, and a passionate feeling of attachment to our own favourite preachers and our own religious party, and a readiness to quarrel with everyone who does not agree with us. It is something of ‘the image of Christ,’ which can be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings.” — **J.C. Ryle, Holiness**

### **WOULD YOU BE HOLY? GO TO CHRIST**

“Christ is not wisdom and righteousness only to His people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and sad work they make of it. They toil and labour, and turn over new leaves, and make many changes; and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood, before she came to Christ, they feel ‘nothing bettered, but rather worse.’ (Mark v. 26.) They run in vain, and labour in vain; and little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand; their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a leaky vessel: the leak gains on them, not they on the leak. Other foundation of ‘holiness’ can no man lay than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. “Without Christ we can do nothing.” (John xv. 5.) It is a strong but true saying of Traill’s, ‘Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly—righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation—sanctification out of Christ is filth and sin—redemption out of Christ is bondage and slavery.’ Do you want to attain holiness? Do you feel this day a real hearty desire to be holy? Would you be a partaker of the Divine nature? Then go to Christ.” — **J.C. Ryle, Holiness**



1. How did the people of Israel “break faith” with the LORD according to **verse 1**? Is there a connection between *faith* and *works*; *believing* and *doing*? If so, what is it?

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2. Why are “the people of Israel” said to have “[broken] faith” when the only one that took the “devoted things” was Achan? How can **Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7; 19:19** and **1 Corinthians 5:12-13** help clarify?

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3. What happens in **verses 2-5** when Joshua sends men to attack Ai while there is unrepentant sin tolerated within the community? How does Joshua seem to be carrying himself?

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4. Read **verses 6-9**. How does Joshua respond to Israel's defeat? Who does Joshua seem to blame? What is really at stake, if Israel is ultimately defeated, according to the end of **verse 9**?

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7. Read **verses 16-26**. What stands out to you and why?

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8. What can we learn about the Gospel from **verses 25-26**—*when does “the LORD [turn] from his burning anger”*? How does **Romans 3:21-26** help clarify how the LORD’s anger against sin is turned away from us, though we are sinners as bad as Achan?

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## CORRECTING IN LOVE

The Bible is clear that we are to be willing to challenge one another by speaking the truth in love (Gal. 6:1–2; Eph. 4:15). The purpose of this challenge is to encourage other people to make better choices in their lives. But this is difficult to do if they are unwilling to receive the truth, or if they do not want to be challenged, or even change. To keep others at bay, they may remind us that we are not to be “judgmental.” As Maranda M. states on her blog, *Revealing Truth Today*,

*“Many people won’t take a stand against evil for fear of coming across as judgmental. In the name of “love” and “acceptance” and “tolerance,” they remain spineless. This is not love, acceptance, nor tolerance; but it is cowardice and disregard for another’s well-being. Such people will not take a stand against sexual immorality, moral decay, false religions, or deception found in much of today’s “entertainment,” all because it is politically correct, popular and accepted—and they wish to be popular and accepted.”*

Do you love other Christians enough to be willing to speak the truth in love? - **Kenneth A. Matthews, Joshua (Teaching the Text Today)**

## Study 7

### **JOSHUA 8:1-35**

### **THE LORD RENEWS HIS PEOPLE**

#### **200 PROOF GRACE**

“The Reformation was a time when men went blind, staggering drunk because they had discovered, in the dusty basement of late medievalism, a whole cellarful of fifteen-hundred-year-old, two-hundred proof Grace – of bottle after bottle of pure distillate of Scripture, one sip of which would convince anyone that God saves us single-handedly. The word of the Gospel – after all those centuries of trying to lift yourself into heaven by worrying about the perfection of your bootstraps – suddenly turned out to be a flat announcement that the saved were home before they started... Grace has to be drunk straight: no water, no ice, and certainly no ginger ale; neither goodness, nor badness, not the flowers that bloom in the spring of super spirituality could be allowed to enter into the case.”

- Robert Farrar Capon, *between noon and three*, pages 114–115



1. According to **verses 1-2**, what is the first word the LORD gives His people after they repented? What does this show us about the LORD's faithfulness to His people? How is His command different than what it was when the people were to sack Jericho?

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2. Read **verses 3-17**. What stands out to you and why? According to **verse 7**, who is the source of the people's victory? What does **verse 8** tell us about how we obey the LORD?

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3. Read **verses 18-28**. What stands out to you and why? What did Joshua have to do in order for the city to be sacked, according to **verse 18**? What does this teach us about faith?

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4. Why do you think Joshua “hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening” in **verse 29**? How can **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** help clarify both the king of Ai’s guilt before the LORD and the reason he was hanged?

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7. How much of “the Book of the Law” did Joshua read according to **verses 34-35**? What do we learn about the significance of the written Word of God when it comes to renewal? When it comes to faithfulness to the LORD?

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## GRACE UPON GRACE

“Now, you would think that Israel's bad record of greed at Jericho would make the Lord more reserved in what he gives them the next time. In our natural minds, we think the best way to prevent disobedience is to take away opportunities for it (which, coincidentally, are also opportunities for obedience). But God knows a better way.

After their repentance, God leads Israel back up to Ai with a promise just like the one he gave at Jericho, ‘See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land’ (8:1). But there's a major difference this time: *no caveat*. And not only no caveat. There is a positive command to do precisely what had been restricted at Jericho: ‘Only its spoil and its livestock *you shall take* as plunder for yourselves’ (8:2).

So what is God's response to Israel's abuse of grace and their subsequent repentance? More grace.

Like the father of the prodigal son, God the Father of Israel does not withhold his gifts when his son repents. He doesn't treat him like one of his hired servants. He slaughters the fatted calf.

In Joshua 8, God increases his generosity to a repentant Israel, giving them the thing they were really seeking when they resorted to disobedience in the first place. He gives them the spoil.

Take heart, then, fellow sinner. Where you have sought fulfillment outside of the will of God, repent. knowing that he who poured out such abundant grace on Israel will also pour it out on you who have become his child through Jesus Christ.”

- Tyler Kenney, article on [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org) titled *Spoiled by the Grace of God*

## Study 8

### JOSHUA 9:1-27

## THE LORD IS A COUNSELOR

### TAKING VOWS

God...does not treat our oaths and vows as matters of indifference. Instead, He views them with utmost seriousness, for they are made in His name, and His name is to be hallowed (Ex. 20:7). The fact that we invoke Him as a witness to our oaths means that we must make only lawful oaths and vows that we intend to keep, and then we must keep them once they are made. Furthermore, oaths are so important to the Lord that He would rather that we not make any vows at all than make vows that we do not fulfill (Eccl. 5:4–5). Since He prizes truth in the inmost being of every man and woman (Ps. 51:6), we must prize it as well. Consequently, we must safe-guard the truth—not only the truth of God’s Word but the truth of our words.

In breaking our vows, we implicitly deny that truth is sacred. Those who treat truth with the utmost sacredness that it deserves endeavor to keep their word. They do not look for an “out” even when it proves far more difficult than anticipated to be true to their promises. We see what prizing the sanctity of truth looks like especially when we look at the life of Christ. Our Lord made the most difficult promise of all—to offer Himself as an atoning sacrifice to bear the full wrath of God against our sin. This was the hardest promise to keep that has ever been made or could ever be made. It was so arduous that Christ asked that the task pass from Him—if such were possible for the Father to allow. But since He was fully committed to His Father’s will—keeping His promise to the Father to do what was necessary to save us from sin—Jesus went willingly to the cross to fulfill the plan of redemption made by the triune God.

Knowing that Jesus went willingly to the cross gives us great comfort, for His work on the cross is inseparable from His perfect intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). All of us will break vows that we have made, but there is hope. Because Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us, we have an advocate with our Father in heaven (1 John 2:1). Until we are in glory, oaths will be necessary, and despite the best of intentions, we will sin and break them at least on occasion. Not until that final day will the presence of sin be fully removed from us. As we await that day, we seek to live in truth, for that is how we will live in glory. But we rejoice that the One who is truth Himself ever lives to make intercession for us. - **R.C. Sproul, *Keeping Our Vows***



1. Read **verses 1-13**. What are some of the words used to describe the Gibeonites and their actions? Why did they do what they did?

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2. How did “the men” respond to the Gibeonite deception according to **verse 14**? What did they not do and why do you think the writer points it out? How does **Proverbs 1:20-33** help clarify how much of a failure this was?

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3. What did Joshua himself do, according to **verse 15**? Read **Deuteronomy 7:1-5**. Why did the LORD forbid the people of Israel from making *covenants* (etc.) with people such as the Gibeonites?

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4. Read **verses 16-27**. Why did the people of Israel not break their covenant with the Gibeonites according to **verse 18-20**, even though they deserved to be destroyed? What is the fate of the Gibeonites, according to **verses 26-27**?

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5. How does **Numbers 30:2** help clarify the importance of covenants and oaths to the LORD? How does this help us in some way understand the gospel of Jesus? Read **John 6:37-40**.

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## CONSULTING THE LORD, AND GOOD NEWS

Joshua 9:15 clues us in on why Joshua and the other leaders fell for the Gibeonites' trick: they "did not ask counsel from the Lord."

Yikes. That was a big slip. Joshua and the people of Israel were on track to drive out all the Canaanites, just as the Lord had commanded them (Numbers 33:51-52). But then they unwittingly enter into covenant with a whole nation of them.

It was an epic failure. Joshua and the leaders of Israel presumed to be wise enough to handle the situation on their own, and they ended up compromising on what the Lord had commanded them.

There's a lesson in that for us: do not go about life trusting in your own strength. But there's something else I want to point out in this passage. There's more to this story than just a warning about not submitting your plans to the Lord.

Three days after they make the covenant, the Israelites learn that they've been had and that the Gibeonites are actually Canaanite neighbors. The news is obviously regretful. The people of Israel murmur



against their leaders about it, but they all agree that they can't go back on what they've promised—the covenant has to stand.

Still, Joshua summons the Gibeonites to learn why they sought to deceive them. The Gibeonites reply,

Because it was told to your servants *for a certainty* that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you—so *we feared greatly* for our lives because of you and did this thing.

Do you hear faith in the Gibeonites' response? "It was told to your servants *for a certainty* . . . so *we feared greatly*."

I suppose you could argue that this is nothing different than the "faith" of demons that James talks about ("Even the demons believe—and shudder!"). But is that the kind of belief going on with the Gibeonites here? I don't think so.

Notice all the parallels between the Gibeonites and Rahab, the hero of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11:31.

- *Like the Gibeonites, Rahab was a native of Canaan (Joshua 2:1).*
- *Like the Gibeonites, she had confidence God was giving the land to Israel (2:9).*
- *Like the Gibeonites, she responded with fear before God's people, Israel (2:9-11).*
- *Like the Gibeonites, Rahab acted with cunning in order that she and her family might find refuge among the people of Israel (2:12-13).*

The parallels between the story of Rahab and the story of the Gibeonites seem more than just coincidental. The author of Joshua appears to be demonstrating on more than one occasion—and thereby reaffirming—that God indeed intends to bless all the families of the earth through Israel, as unwitting as Israel may be, according to his promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3).

That is glorious. Even in the Old Testament, God had a heart for and was saving Gentiles, even if, in the mystery of his providence, it was through the disobedience and failures of his people Israel (cf. Romans 11:30-32).

**- Tyler Kenney, Good News in the Gibeonite Deception**

## Study 9

### **JOSHUA 10:1-43**

## **THE LORD MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE**

### **PRAYER, AND THE SOVEREIGN LORD**

There are wonderful "examples" in Scripture of the power of prayer. Nothing seems to be too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth, and water.

*Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah's sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib.*

Well said Mary Queen of Scots, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men." Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer has procured the conversion of souls. "The child of many prayers," said an old Christian to Augustine's mother, "will never perish." Prayer, pains, and faith can do anything. Nothing seems impossible when a man has the Spirit of adoption. "Leave me alone," is the remarkable saying of God to Moses, when Moses was about to intercede for the children of Israel. (Exodus 32:10). The Chaldee version has it "Stop praying." So long as Abraham asked mercy for Sodom, the Lord went on giving. He never ceased to give till Abraham ceased to pray. Think of this. Is this not encouragement? - **J.C. Ryle, Prayer**



1. Read **verses 1-5**. What is happening here? How is **Psalms 2** reminiscent of this scene?

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2. Read **verses 6-7**. Why did Joshua and the people of Israel go to Gibeon to save the Gibeonites? What can we learn about the gospel from this scene?

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9. How is **verse 42** a summary of the whole of **chapter 10**?

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### **“SUN STAND STILL”**

*Then spoke Joshua to the Lord, etc.* Such is the literal reading, but some expound it as meaning *before* Jehovah: for to speak to God, who, as piety dictates, is to be suppliantly petitioned, seems to be little in accordance with the modesty of faith, and it is immediately subjoined that Joshua addressed his words to the sun. I have no doubt that by the former clause prayer or vow is denoted, and that the latter is an expression of confidence after he was heard: for to command the sun to stand if he had not previously obtained permission, would have been presumptuous and arrogant. He first, then, consults God and asks: having forthwith obtained an answer, he boldly commands the sun to do what he knows is pleasing to God.

And such is the power and privilege of the faith which Christ inspires, (Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6) that mountains and seas are removed at its command. The more the godly feel their own emptiness, the more liberally does God transfer his power to them, and when faith is annexed to the word, he in it demonstrates his own power. In short, faith borrows the confidence of command from the word on which it is founded. Thus Elias, by the command of God, shut and opened the



heaven, and brought down fire from it; thus Christ furnished his disciples with heavenly power to make the elements subject to them.

Caution, however, must be used, lest any one may at his own hand presume to give forth rash commands. Joshua did not attempt to delay and check the course of the sun before he was well instructed as to the purpose of God. And although, when he is said to have spoken with God, the words do not sufficiently express the modesty and submission which become the servant of God in giving utterance to his prayers, let it suffice us briefly to understand as implied, that Joshua besought God to grant what he desired, and on obtaining his request, became the free and magnanimous herald of an incredible miracle unlike any that had previously taken place. He never would have ventured in the presence of all to command the sun so confidently, if he had not been thoroughly conscious of his vocation. Had it been otherwise, he would have exposed himself to a base and shameful affront. When, without hesitation, he opens his mouth and tells the sun and the moon to deviate from the perpetual law of nature, it is just as if he had adjured them by the boundless power of God with which he was invested. Here, too, the Lord gives a bright display of his singular favor toward his Church. As in kindness to the human race he divides the day from the night by the daily course of the sun, and constantly whirls the immense orb with indefatigable swiftness, so he was pleased that it should halt for a short time till the enemies of Israel were destroyed.

**- John Calvin, Commentary on Joshua**

## **JOSHUA 11:1–12:24**

### **THE LORD DEFEATS HIS ENEMIES**

#### **A SABBATH REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

“So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9). We know from the argument of the whole letter that this “rest” equates with the eternal kingdom, the heavenly country, the city that is to come, which is the inheritance of all who believe the gospel. At one level it is already ours, entered into by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as rescuer and ruler. But at another level it is not yet ours in all its fullness of experience and enjoyment. What we have already is real and a wonderful down payment, guaranteeing the rest that will one day be ours in its totality. “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). The “rest” referred to at the end of Joshua 11 is therefore a prototype or foreshadowing of the rest that remains for the New Testament people of God. Joshua could only replicate in the physical, temporal sphere what Jesus has won for his people in his spiritual and eternal kingly rule. That is God’s gracious intention for his people. “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:11), namely the fruit of unbelief. Real faith shows itself in obedience, and while that faith is never a work by which we earn our salvation, it is the means by which we receive and appropriate the promises of the gospel, made real for us in the person and work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. So Joshua points us to his infinitely greater namesake and to the liberation from our works into the rest that is the new birthright of everyone who turns and trusts in him. “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

- Jackman, David. **Joshua: People of God's Purpose (Preaching the Word)** (Kindle Locations 2312-2324). Crossway. Kindle Edition.



1. Read **verses 1-9** in **chapter 11**. What is happening here? How does **Psalms 20:6-7** shed light on the big picture of what's going on?

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2. Read **verses 10-19**. What does it seem the LORD is trying to communicate to us through what is written and repeated?

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3. What do you think is meant in **verse 20**?

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4. According to **verse 23**, what was the point or resolution of the conquest of Canaan?

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## THE LORD HARDENED THEIR HEARTS

*“It was the LORD’s doing to harden their hearts”* (v. 20), just as in the generation before he had hardened Pharaoh’s heart to resist the exodus in spite of and perhaps because of the plagues. Woudstra comments, *“The stubborn heart is due to God’s hardening process . . . but this in no way exonerates the Canaanites. The other way was open, as is shown by what the Gibeonites did.”* In a footnote he adds, *“God gives up to their own wickedness those who have shown that they prefer the lie to the truth. Nevertheless, the sovereignty and majesty of the divine counsel is not limited by the will of man.”* This helps us understand why the Canaanite resistance was so determined in spite of all the evidence that Israel was assisted by supernatural power. Of Pharaoh in Exodus 9:34—10:1 we read that first he hardened his heart, so that it became hardened, a decision confirmed by the Lord, so that there could be no going back. This seems to be how the wickedness of the Canaanites in the end brought about their own destruction. As Christopher Marlowe has his central tragic hero Dr. Faustus declare in his Elizabethan drama, after selling his soul to the devil, *“My heart’s so hardened I cannot repent.”* That possibility seems to have become an immovable reality for the Canaanites, whose wickedness must come under the judgment of their righteous Creator. - Jackman, David. *Joshua: People of God's Purpose (Preaching the Word)* (Kindle Locations 2279-2289). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

## THE LORD WILL DESTROY HIS ENEMIES

Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?

No, every sin is against the sovereignty, holiness, and goodness of God, and against his righteous law, and God is righteously angry with our sins and will punish them in his just judgment both in this life, and in the life to come.

- Question 18, *The New City Catechism*

## Study 11

### **JOSHUA 13:1–22:34**

## **THE LORD GIVES THE LAND FOR A PURPOSE**

### **CITIES, A PLACE OF REFUGE AND OUR FINAL HOME**

All of the Hebrew words for city used in the Old Testament mean an enclosed place. The cities were originally places that were safe. You see it in Genesis 11 when the people say, “Let’s build a city that we might not be scattered.” If you’re scattered, you’re vulnerable. So if you want to be strong, you have to gather. Cities were always places where scattered people and weak people could come together and be safe. The first cities God told the Israelites to build were called cities of refuge. Why? Because God had a purpose for the city. God knew that when a person was accused of a crime, someone could hunt them down and kill them. A city of refuge was a place to which you could flee and get a fair trial because the cities were the places of civilization. The law of the jungle didn’t hold. They were the places where justice would first develop. . .

We’re told in the book of Hebrews that all throughout the Old Testament, the great patriarchs like Moses, David and Abraham himself had a goal during the time of their wandering through the desert. According to Hebrews 11:10, “For [Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

We’re also told in Revelation 21 and 22, when God finally gets the world to its ultimate goal—when he finally develops the new heavens and the new earth, when he puts the world in the shape it ought to be in—that it’s going to be a city. It talks about the streets of the city, the center square of the city, the dimensions of the city. All the inhabitants of the kingdom of God will be urbanites.

One writer put it this way: “The world to come, Scripture teaches, will be an urban world. The redemption drama that began in a garden will end in a city, the new Jerusalem. Heaven’s citizens will be urbanites. Drawn by bonds of grace from all races, nations, and language groups, new-city citizens will live together in perfect harmony as God’s redeemed people, his new covenant community.”<sup>1</sup>

**- Tim Keller, *Why God Made Cities***

<sup>1</sup> Roger Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Missions’ New Frontier* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2000), 27.)





1. Read **verses 1-7** in **chapter 13**. What does the LORD command Joshua to do? What does this mean?

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2. Read **verses 8-32** in **chapter 13**. Who is repeatedly said to have “given” the inheritance to these tribes and the one half tribe? What does this teach us about the LORD speaking and working through a mediator?

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5. Carefully read **chapters 15-19**, noting that, at the end of almost every section, the writer highlights the fact that the LORD gave the inheritance in spite of the fact the people failed to drive out all the former inhabitants. What does this teach us about the LORD's perfect faithfulness to fulfill His promises, despite His people's imperfect faithfulness to obey all that He's commanded?

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6. Read **chapter 20**. What is the point of the cities of refuge? What do the cities of refuge teach us about the LORD's concern for justice and righteousness? Are you concerned with justice and righteousness?

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## **SAVED TO GOOD WORKS, NOT BY THEM**

Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?

Yes, because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, also renews us by his Spirit; so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ. - **Question 34, The New City Catechism**

## **NOT THE ROOT, BUT THE FRUIT**

So, then, dear friends, these good works must be in the Christian. They are not the root, but the fruit of his salvation. They are not the way of the believer's salvation; they are his walk in the way of salvation. Where there is healthy life in a tree, the tree will bear fruit according to its kind; so, if God has made our nature good, the fruit will be good. But if the fruit be evil, it is because the tree is what it always was— an evil tree. The desire of men created anew in Christ is to be rid of every sin. We do sin, but we do not love sin. Sin gets power over us sometimes to our sorrow, but it is a kind of death to us to feel that we have gone into sin; yet it shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace; and therefore we shall conquer it, and get the victory.

- **Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Agreement of Salvation by Grace with Walking in Good Works," sermon 2210 in The Complete Works of C. H. Spurgeon, vol. 37 (Morrisville, PA: Delmarva Publications, 2015).**

## **JOSHUA 23:1–24:33**

# **THE LORD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP**

## **A LIVING SACRIFICE, OUR RATIONAL WORSHIP**

Paul sums up the entirety of the Christian life in [Romans] 12:1 in his admonition that we present our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” This is our “spiritual worship,” and understanding Paul’s point requires us to consider briefly one of the purposes of the old covenant sacrificial system. Our Creator, of course, did not need the animals and grains offered up to Him before the coming of Christ. What He was most concerned with was the attitude of the worshiper and the heart of the person offering the sacrifice. Cain and Abel both gave offerings to God, but only Abel’s was received because only he desired to honor the Lord and devote everything that he had to Him (Gen. 4:1–5; Heb. 11:4).

Full devotion of ourselves to God is the logical response to all that He has done for us, for nothing less than our time, talents, desires, and possessions could even begin to show our appreciation for His willingness to purchase us from the wrath we deserve for sinning against Him (1 Thess. 1:9–10). Such devotion means that we think God’s thoughts after Him, refusing to be conformed to the patterns of this fallen world, for if we love what the world loves, we cannot love what our Father loves. And the chief way we learn to deny the world’s ways and embrace the Lord’s will is through the renewal of our minds, which occurs as we study and meditate upon God’s Word (Rom. 12:2; Heb. 4:12).

Most of us are accustomed to the reading of sacred Scripture, but how many of us take the time to meditate on it, to take a passage and spend some time mulling it over, considering what it teaches and how it applies to our life? Take some time today to meditate on one of the passages suggested today for further study. Ask the Lord to show you how you may live in line with what it teaches and to use it to transform your mind that you may conform to His will.

**- R.C. Sproul, A Living Sacrifice**











7. What is Joshua resolved to do, according to **verses 14-15**, and how is he in line with what Peter would later command in **1 Peter 5:3**?

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8. How do the people respond to Joshua's call for them to choose whom they will serve, according to **verses 16-18**? How does Joshua, in turn, respond to them in **verses 19-28**?

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## THE FUTURE IS DEPENDENT ON GOD'S GRACE

The response of verse 19 is a staggering comfort, staggering because it is so unexpected. "You are not able to serve the LORD." Joshua is in essence telling them, "What you have promised is impossible." But Joshua is not just turning the tables or playing games with them. The rest of the verse explains what he means. God is "holy" and "jealous." He is set apart from all the petty, false, pagan deities and also from his own people by his righteousness and moral purity. There is no flicker of deviation in his character, which is why he will not share Israel's devotion with any rivals. He is jealous, like a faithful partner in a marriage whose love for his or her spouse is so constant and so uncompromising that reciprocal undivided love is the only appropriate response in return. Yahweh's response underlines the absolute demands and awesome nature of God's grace, seen in his holiness and jealousy. It is not a light choice to refuse to genuinely surrender to his Lordship (v. 20).

- Jackman, David. *Joshua: People of God's Purpose (Preaching the Word)* (Kindle Locations 3404-3410). Crossway. Kindle Edition.













# JOSHUA

## STUDY GUIDE



### WHAT IS THE BOOK OF JOSHUA ABOUT?

"The greatest act of salvation in the Old Testament was not the Exodus alone."<sup>1</sup> The Exodus was but the first half of the LORD's great act of redemption in the Old Testament that foreshadows the gospel of Jesus Christ. The second half of this grand foreshadowing is laid out for us in the book of Joshua.

Joshua tells the story of how the LORD executes his justice toward sin, and yet, at the same time, makes good on his promise to graciously give his people rest.

In simplest terms, the book of Joshua reveals how the LORD gave his people the inheritance—the land—that was promised long ago to Abraham. Exodus cannot be separated from Joshua any more than the cross of Jesus Christ can be separated from his resurrection and future inheritance Christians will receive. And this brings us to an important point:

Make no mistake. The story of Joshua is ultimately about Jesus.

It's about how he not only set his people free from bondage to sin on the cross, but how he also, in his resurrection and constant intercession, is fighting for them and leading them to the place that was promised—their final inheritance and rest in his presence forever. In light of the Greater Joshua, Jesus, we must make a decision. The same decision Joshua himself presses upon the people of Israel: "Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served...or the gods...in whose land you dwell." And with Joshua, may we all by grace through faith say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).