

Survey of Joshua

Overview

The book of Joshua transitions from the wilderness to the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. The book describes how YHWH fulfills His ancient promise to Abraham: “To your seed I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7; cf. 15:18–21). After forty years of wandering due to unbelief, the new generation, under Joshua’s leadership, crosses the Jordan, conquers key Canaan, and divides the land as an inheritance among the tribes.

Theologically, Joshua describes YHWH’s faithfulness to His word. The repeated phrase is that “YHWH gave” the land to Israel (Joshua 11:23; 21:43–45; 24:13). Victory comes not by Israel’s military prowess but by YHWH’s mighty acts — miraculous crossings, walls falling, sun standing still, hailstones, and the enemy’s fear. But it records the many failures of the people: conquest is partial, incomplete obedience leads to future trouble, and faithfulness to the covenant remains the condition for continued possession and blessing. Joshua ends with covenant renewal, reminding Israel that serving YHWH demands loyalty:

Joshua 24:15 “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Fun Fact

Caleb was not a born Jew. He converted. He is described as “the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite” (Numbers 32:12, Joshua 14:6, 14). This links him to the Kenizzites, a people group mentioned among the inhabitants of Canaan in Genesis 15:19. The Kenizzites are associated with Edomite lineage (Kenaz in Genesis 36), which would connect them to Esau rather than Jacob.

Themes

- The faithfulness of God
- Obedience as the key to blessing
- Conquest and YHWH’s sovereignty
- Covenant loyalty
- Unfinished work

Outline

I. **Conquest (1-12)**

- a. **Preparation and Entry into the Land (1:1–5:15)** YHWH commissions Joshua: “Be strong and courageous” (repeated four times, 1:6–9, 18); spies sent to Jericho and Rahab’s faith and confession (“YHWH your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath,” 2:11); miraculous crossing of the Jordan on dry ground (parallel to the Red Sea); circumcision of the new generation at Gilgal; cessation of manna; appearance of the commander of YHWH’s army before Joshua (5:13–15).
- b. **Conquest of the Land (6:1–12:24)** Fall of Jericho: seven-day march, trumpets, shout, walls collapse by YHWH’s power (6); Achan’s sin and judgment at Ai (pronounced like ‘eye’), followed by victory after obedience (7–8); deception by the Gibeonites and covenant with them (9); southern campaign: five Amorite kings defeated, hailstones, sun and moon stand still at Gibeon (10); northern campaign: defeat of Hazor and coalition kings (11); summary list of conquered kings (12).

II. **Division of the Land (13-21)**

- a. **Division and Allocation of the Land (13:1–21:45)** YHWH’s command to Joshua (old and advanced in years) to apportion the remaining land (13); inheritance east of the Jordan for Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh (13); Caleb’s claim to Hebron as reward for his faithfulness (14); detailed tribal allotments (Judah, Ephraim, Manasseh, etc., 15–19); cities of refuge appointed (20); Levitical cities and pasture lands distributed (21); summary

III. **Conclusion (22-24)**

- a. **Covenant Renewal and Farewell (22:1–24:33)** Dismissal and blessing of the Transjordan tribes; their altar by the Jordan misunderstood as rebellion, resolved by clarification (22); Joshua’s farewell charge to the leaders: obey the law, cling to YHWH, avoid intermarriage and idolatry (23); national covenant renewal at Shechem: historical review of YHWH’s acts, call to put away foreign gods, people’s pledge (24:24); Joshua’s death and burial, bones of Joseph brought up from Egypt (24:32), and Eleazar’s death.