

**UNIT 1 - INTRODUCING THE OLD TESTAMENT****LESSON 8****THE ENTRY INTO CANAAN**

Israel's entry into the Promised Land is the subject of the book of Joshua. With this book, we commence studying the second section of the Hebrew canon - the Prophets, which are divided into Former and Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The authors of these books are unknown, but it was believed that the books were compilations by prophets. The books are also prophetic in the sense that their interest in history is a specialised one. This is not simply the history of Israel, but the history of God's dealings with Israel from the time of the entrance into the Promised Land until the time of Israel's and Judah's respective exiles. The historical background of the Former Prophets is necessary for an understanding of the messages of the Latter Prophets.

The book of Joshua, named after its principal character, divides neatly into two sections:

1. The Occupation of the Promised Land (chaps. 1-12)
2. Settlement in the Promised Land (chaps. 13-24)

**THE OCCUPATION OF THE PROMISED LAND****1. Israel's Entry into the Land (1:1-5:12)**

Joshua prepared Israel for this step on instructions from Yahweh. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh are reminded of their responsibility towards their brethren in assisting to occupy the land.

Careful preparation is undertaken for what will be a difficult undertaking. The account of the spies sent to Jericho is exciting, and their encouraging report contrasts with the report of the spies in Numbers. The crossing of the Jordan is accompanied by a miracle, as evidence of Yahweh's presence and power. This is similar to the incident in Exodus 14 (4:19-24). Such miracles not only encouraged Israel, but also terrified Israel's enemies (5:1).

**2. The Central Campaign (5:13-8:35)**

The capture of Jericho is described in 5:13-6:27. Again Yahweh's power is revealed in this miraculous event, for He is fulfilling promises made long ago to Abraham, and confirmed to the succeeding patriarchs. Much archaeological work has been carried out at Jericho, but no clear picture has emerged regarding the city and Israel's conquest.

Revelations about God continue in the book of Joshua.

- 1) There is still an emphasis on God's power and might, plus His ability to care for His people.



- 2) God's holiness is stressed and how sin offends His holy nature.

Both of these aspects are present in the story of the Battle of Ai (chaps. 7 & 8). Achan disobeyed and Israel suffered as a result. God's anger burned against all Israel. (Not until Ezekiel's time would a person be punished for his own sins only.)

The capture of Ai follows, after Israel had failed because of Achan's sin.

3. The Southern Campaign (9-10)

Before this campaign begins, the Gibeonites gain an alliance with Israel, through deceit. Chapter 10 tells of Israel's victorious southern campaign. Archaeological evidence confirms that Lachish and Debir were violently destroyed c. 1230 BC.

The famous incident of the sun standing still occurs in this section (10:12-14).

4. The Northern Campaign and Summary of the Conquest (11-12)

11:1-15 tells of Joshua's defeat of a confederation of northern kingdoms. The remainder of this chapter and chapter 12 review the events of the conquest.

The first 12 chapters of Joshua did not happen quickly in a few years. It took a long time. Jerusalem was not captured till the time of David, which was many generations later.

### **SETTLEMENT IN THE PROMISED LAND**

The conquest was still not complete, as the opening verses of chapter 13 indicate. Chapters 13-19 tell of the occupation of the land by the various Israelite tribes, but it is clear from what follows in Judges that occupation did not mean complete conquest of the Canaanite population. Even in the time of David, Jerusalem remained as a Jebusite city within Israel.

The concluding chapter provides for cities of refuge, Levitical cities, and sees the return of the Trans-Jordan tribes. The last days and death of Joshua are described, including a final address at Shechem, where he reviews the course of Israel's history and Yahweh's dealings with the nation, and appeals to them to serve Yahweh faithfully in the future.

#### **A Call to Faithfulness**

Chapters 22-24 of the Book of Joshua bring out most clearly the message of the whole book - A Call to Faithfulness. It is seen clearly in 22:5 where Joshua reminds the Trans-Jordan tribes to be faithful.

In Joshua 22:10-54 is the incident of the "Altar of Great Size". At Geliloth, some Israelite tribes built an altar and the other tribes prepared for war. Civil War almost resulted. The altar was seen as an act of apostasy (opposition to God). A deputation was sent to discuss it, and it was discovered that the altar was built merely as a monument to remind future generations that they are all part of Israel. The explanation was satisfactory and war was averted.



This incident of the altar has no direct statement of faithfulness, but the whole incident indicates the concern of the people that all should be faithful.

The farewell address 23:6-8 is a direct call to faithfulness.

The ceremony of covenant renewal in 24:14,15 and 24:23 are both calls to faithfulness and a careful keeping of the covenant. This is tied in with the Deuteronomic Principal ... ("If you are faithful to the covenant you will live and inherit God's blessing. If you are not faithful ... you will die"). This is seen in Joshua 22:16-18 and Joshua 23:11-13 and also in the farewell speech where there is the promise of punishment if the people are not faithful to God, 23:15,16 and 24:19,20. Blessings of obedience and punishment of faithlessness are seen throughout the book of Joshua.

The covenant of Renewal in chapter 24 is important for an understanding of Israel's beliefs. Why was such a covenant renewal necessary? Here are three reasons:

1. A new generation is continually arising. The covenant at Sinai did look forward to cover all generations, but each generation must accept the covenant for itself.
2. Other people were continually being absorbed into the Israelite community. For instance, not all enemies were killed or driven away. So the parents of these people had not been included in the previous covenants, so these people must accept the covenant for themselves.
3. Commitment requires perseverance. God's covenant with Israel was like a present-day marriage. There was an initial commitment, but as time goes on, there is the need for deliberate decisions to continue. People in Joshua's time were called to decide whether to go on with God or not.

The book thus concludes with Israel having proved Yahweh's faithfulness to His word, and the question one naturally asks is whether Israel will be faithful to Yahweh in the Promised Land.



## **QUESTIONS**

### **Question 1:**

Read Joshua chapter 2. Compare the spies reports (v24) with the spies reports in Numbers 13:27-29; 32, 33.

### **Question 2:**

Read Joshua chapters 3 and 4. What was the miracle at the Jordan (Joshua 3:13-17)?

### **Question 3:**

Read Joshua chapter 7. What was Achan's sin? What failure did Israel experience because of it? Why?

### **Question 4:**

What is the "Deuteronomic Principle"? What are some rules the Israelites must obey (eg 22:16-18; 23:11-13, 15, 16; 24:19, 20)?

### **Question 5:**

What are the main lessons which Joshua teaches Israel at Shechem (Joshua 24)?

### **Question for Group Study:**

Look at Israel's covenant of renewal in chapter 24. Read the notes as to why it was necessary. How can this apply to the Christian Life? Do Christians need to renew their commitment? Why?