

# JOSHUA: CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND

Joshua 1 - 24

## STRUCTURE

**Key-person:** Joshua

**Key-location:** Canaan

**Key-repetitions:**

- Land. The following facts about the land are mentioned many times: promised by God; conquered; not conquered; divided.

- Fear (1:9; 2:9, 24; 5:1; 8:1; 9:24; 10:2; 10:8; 11:6; 14:8; 22:24).

- Obeyed: God or Moses' Law (1:7-8; 22:3, 5; 23:6; 24:24); Joshua obeyed the Lord's instructions (11:9, 12, 15; 14:5); Joshua was obeyed (1:17-18; 22:2).

- Promises kept: Spies to Rahab (2:12-21; 6:17, 22-23); God keeps his promises (23:14-16).

- The Israelites killed all of the residents: of Jericho (6:21-26); of Ai (8:24); the Amorites (10:9-26); of Makkedah (10:28-30); of Libnah (10:30); of Lachish (10:32-35); of Hebron (10:37); of Hazor (11:11); of Leshem (19:47).

- The person Joshua.

- Joshua was esteemed/famous (3:7; 4:14; 6:27).

- God gave the Israelites victory: He dried up the Jordan River (3:1-7). He gave victory over their enemies: the city of Jericho (6:16); The Lord was fighting for Israel (10:42); The Lord drove out super-powerful nations before them; no one was able to stand up to them (23:8-11).

**Key-attitudes:**

- The challenge Joshua faced in replacing Moses as leader.

- The conflict between the Israelites and the residents of the land.

- The people of the land were terrified of the Israelites.

- The respect the Israelites felt toward Joshua.

- The challenge the Israelites faced to conquer the land and to be faithful to God.

- The danger of disobeying God and of mixing with the people of the earth.

**Initial-situation:**

Forty years had passed since the incident when Moses sent 12 men to spy out the promised land. When the spies returned, ten gave a bad report about giants in the land. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, argued that since the Lord was with them, they could conquer the land. The Israelites listened to the ten, complained and wanted to return to Egypt. God declared a punishment for their unbelief: Those who were over 20 years old and lacked faith would wander in the wilderness for 40 years, until they were all dead. Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who believed God would give them the land.

However, Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the land. The 40 years of wandering had passed. Moses had died. The time had come for them to take possession of the land God had promised them.

**Initial-problem:**

The Lord told Joshua that Moses was dead and that the Israelites were to get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land he was about to give to them.

**Final-situation:**

Israel served the Lord during Joshua's lifetime and during the lifetime of their older leaders who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel (24:31).

## BIBLE STORY

### Entering Canaan

The Lord told Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead. Now, get ready to cross the Jordan River. I will give you every place where you set your foot, just as I promised Moses. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. Be strong; be courageous! You will lead these people to inherit the land I promised to give to their ancestors. Be strong; be courageous. Obey all the law my servant Moses gave you and you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of the Law day and night, obey everything written in it. Then you will succeed. I have commanded you: Be strong; be courageous; do not be afraid; do not get discouraged. The Lord your God is with you every step you take" (Jos 1:1-9).

Joshua sent out two spies to secretly get information on the city of Jericho. The spies went to Jericho and stayed in the house of a prostitute named Rahab. Rahab hid the two men from Jericho's king, but she told the king's men that the spies had already left Jericho.

Rahab told the spies, "I know the Lord has given your people this land. We are terrified of you. We heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you left Egypt. We heard how you destroyed the kings east of the Jordan. The Lord your God is God of the heaven above and of the earth below. Swear to me by the Lord that you will spare my family. I showed you mercy; now show my family mercy."

The spies promised, "Our lives for your lives! We will spare your lives."

Rahab's house was built on the city wall. She used a rope to lower the men through a window.

The spies told her, "When we enter the land, you must tie this red rope out the window through which you lowered us, and bring all your family into your house."

The two spies returned to Joshua and told him, "The Lord has given the whole land into our hands; all the people are terrified of us." (2:1-24).

Joshua told the people, "Make yourselves holy for the Lord; tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."

Joshua told the priests to take up the Ark of the Covenant and step out ahead of the people.

The Lord told Joshua, "Today Israel will know that I am with you just as I was with Moses."

Joshua addressed the Israelites, "Attention! You will see proof that the living God is with you. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go ahead of you into the Jordan River. When the priests who carry the ark of the Lord enter the water, the river will stop flowing. Water flowing downstream will be cut off and pile up in a heap as if a dam were there."

The Jordan was at flood stage during harvest. But when the feet of the priests who carried the ark touched the Jordan water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away. The priests stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel walked across on dry ground (3:1-17).

That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they respected him just as they had respected Moses (4:14).

The kings west of the Jordan were terrified of the Israelites (5:1).

Then the Israelites celebrated the Passover and they ate food grown in that country. The manna stopped coming the day they ate food from that land (5:2-12).

## **Conquering Canaan**

Jericho was shut up tight because of the Israelites. The Lord told Joshua, "I have delivered Jericho into your hands. For six days, march around the city with the army one time every day. Seven priests carrying trumpets of rams' horns will march in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. Then have them sound a long blast on the trumpets; when you hear that, all the people are to give a loud shout. Then the city wall will collapse, and the people will go up, straight into the city."

The Israelites obeyed the Lord's instructions. On the first day, an armed guard marched in front; next came the trumpet-blowing priests; they were followed by priests carrying the ark, and then came the rear guard. Those marching did not speak a word. They circled the city once. Then

they returned to camp and spent the night. For six days, the men marched around the city once and then returned to the camp.

On the seventh day, they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around, the priests sounded the long trumpet blast and Joshua commanded, "Shout! The Lord has given you this city! The city and all that is in it are to be destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only spare Rahab the prostitute and all those in her house, because she hid the spies we sent. If you take anything that should be destroyed as an offering to God, then you yourselves will be destroyed; you will endanger the camp of Israel, and you will make trouble for everyone. All silver and gold, all articles of bronze and of iron are holy to the Lord and must go into his treasury."

The trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and the wall collapsed; every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They offered the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it; people and animals.

Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her. But they burned the whole city and everything in it, except they put the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron into the Lord's treasury.

The Lord was with Joshua (6:1-27).

Joshua conquered the kings and their lands because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel (10:42). Joshua took all the cities and their kings and killed them with the sword as Moses had commanded. The Israelites kept for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but they killed all the people with the sword. Joshua obeyed everything that the Lord commanded Moses. Then the land had rest from war (11:13-23).

Joshua took the entire land and he parceled it out as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions (13:7 - 19:51). Each of the twelve tribes received its own parcel of land just as the Lord had commanded Moses (14:5).

## **Joshua's Farewell**

After Joshua was an old man, the Lord told him, "You are old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken" (13:1). God also promised, "I myself will drive out the people of the land before the Israelites (13:6).

Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you put off taking possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?" (18:3).

When Joshua became an old man, he called the Israelites together and gave them a farewell speech. He reminded them of all that the Lord God had done for them and challenged them to take possession of the land not yet conquered (23:1 - 24:28).

Joshua told them, "Be strong; obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses. There are still people living among us who are not Israelites; they worship their own gods. Do not worship their gods. Do not pray to their gods. If you ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you; if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then the Lord your God will not get rid of these enemies for you. They will cause you pain like a whip on your back and thorns in your eyes. Then you will become the ones who will be driven out of this good land, which the Lord your God has given you. Just as everything good that the Lord promised has come true, so the Lord will bring to pass all the evil he has threatened. If you violate the Lord's covenant and serve and worship other gods, the Lord's anger will blaze against you" (23:6-16).

"Serve the Lord. But if you decide that it's a bad thing to serve the Lord, then choose for yourselves a god you'd rather serve, and do it today. Choose one of the gods your ancestors

served in Egypt or the gods of the people in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

The people answered, "No! We will never forsake the Lord to serve other gods! We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God!" (24:14-18).

Joshua, the servant of the Lord, died when he was 110 years old (24:29).

Israel served the Lord during the time Joshua was living. They continued to serve the Lord during the lifetime of their older leaders who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel (24:31).

## GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

## SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Moses died, what instructions did the Lord give Joshua, the new leader of the Israelites?
2. What were some of God's actions that helped the Israelites have victory over the inhabitants of the Promised Land?
3. Why were the Israelites able to conquer the inhabitants of the Promised Land?
4. Before his death, how did Joshua prepare the people for the future?
5. What challenges do you face where you can only have victory if God acts on your behalf?

## LIFE-LESSONS

1. God is sovereign; he has the power to do whatever it takes to carry out his plans. He had the power to stop the Jordan River from flowing, and he enabled the Israelites to walk across the river-bed on dry ground (3:1-17).
2. God is faithful and keeps his promises. God gave the Israelites the land he had promised to Abraham and to his descendants (Gn 12:6-7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21). No promise of God failed (Jos 21:45).
3. The spiritual leader needs to give priority to God's written word. He needs to study it; obey it to the smallest detail and lead his followers to obey it. The Lord promised Joshua that if he held fast to the Law, studied it and obeyed everything written in it, then he would succeed (1:3-9). Joshua obeyed the Lord's instructions (11:9, 12, 15; 14:5), he taught the people to obey the Lord's Words (22:5; 23:6).
4. The sinner will be forgiven and become an instrument used by God when he meets the following pre-conditions: trust God, confess his confidence in God and take a stand to serve him. The prostitute Rahab had faith in God, confessed her faith to the Israelite spies and helped them. Her life was spared (2:9-11). Her faith resulted in God's considering her a righteous person, and it produced action that benefitted God's people. Her name is included in the list of the heroes of faith (Heb11:31). She became an ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5-16).
5. Often it is necessary for a person to struggle in order to obtain blessings promised by God. The Lord gave the Israelites the promised land of Canaan, and he gave them rest from war. However, it was necessary for Israel to fight battles in order to take possession of the land (21:43-44).

6. God keeps his promises, both to bless those who faithfully serve him and to punish those who disobey him. Joshua told the Israelites, "Just as everything good that the Lord promised has come

true, the Lord will bring to pass all the evil he threatened if you violate the covenant of the Lord your God and serve and worship other gods... " (23:6-16).