

Joshua

Title and Purpose

The reason for the title is obvious from 1:1 - “*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant...*” The name Joshua (in the Hebrew *Yehoshua* is abbreviated to *Yeshua* - cf. Numbers 13:8,16), is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word *Jesus*. Both names mean, “*Jehovah is Salvation.*”

Following the five books recorded by Moses, the book of Joshua is the first of twelve historical books, which end with Esther. The name *Joshua* fits this book because it recounts the history of Israel following the death of Moses and the naming of Joshua as his successor. The purpose of the book is to show how the LORD delivers the Promised Land into the hands of the Israelites and how the land is divided among the tribes at God’s direction. Joshua is presented as the faithful leader of Israel, leading the people to victory and promoting faithfulness to the LORD God among the Israelites (see chapters 23 and 24, especially 24:15). As the LORD conquers Canaan for Israel in spite of the military and numerical superiority held by the enemy, we may recall the terror and lack of faith demonstrated by Israel in the book of Numbers when they were preparing to enter the Promised Land forty years earlier. Truly, Joshua demonstrates to the people of Israel that Jehovah is salvation.

Following the conquest of Canaan (1:1-13:7), the settlement of the land and the division of the land under the LORD’s direction are recorded (13:8-24:33). The book closes with the designation of the cities of refuge, the settlement of the Levites, and the death of Joshua (20:1-21:42).

One other important aspect of the book is the principle that true and false worship don’t mix. Like Moses, Joshua reminded the people of the LORD’s command to drive out the heathen nations who were dwelling in the land of Canaan. God wanted this because of His concern for the spiritual well being of His people. But the people disregarded this warning and the idolatrous nations continued to lead

the Israelites away from the LORD because of their disobedience (cf. Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:13).

The Holy Writer

There are as many opinions regarding the identity of the holy writer as there are Old Testament commentators. Jewish tradition holds Joshua to be the writer, which, at first glance, would seem to be well supported by the book itself. After all, in 24:26 we read, “*Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God.*” We also know that the writer was an eyewitness to the events he recorded: “*...until we had crossed over*” (5:1), and “*...that He would give us, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’*” (5:6). The reader will also note the repetition of the phrase, “*...to this day*” throughout the book (4:9, 5:9, 6:25, 7:26, 8:28-29, 9:27, 10:27, 13:13, 14:14, 15:63, 16:10).

However, there are three events that suggest that Joshua could not have written the book itself.

- The capture of Kirjath-Sephar by Othniel (cf. 15:13-19 with Judges 1:9-15);
- Dan’s migration to the north (cf. 19:47 with Judges 18:27-29);
- Joshua’s death and burial (24:29-33).

It could be that Joshua kept a record of Israel’s conquest while the inspired writer recorded the words that we find in the book of Joshua.

Eleazar the high priest could be the writer, as could his son Phinehas, or both (24:33). It has also been suggested that, while Joshua was the writer, one of these two inserted the portions recording the events that happened after Joshua’s death.

Though it is likely that Joshua recorded this book, the identity of the writer cannot be proven. Whoever the holy writer was, the fact remains that the book of Joshua was recorded under verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). Joshua and the events described in this book are referred to by the Holy Spirit in other Books of the Bible (cf. Joshua 2:1-21, 6:22-25 with Hebrews 11:30-31 and James 2:25; Joshua 6:26 with 1 Kings 16:34; and Joshua 7:18-26 with 1 Chronicles 2:7; Nehemiah 8:17; Acts 7:45).

Date

The time of the history recorded in the book is estimated to be about 1405-1398 B.C. Joshua died about 1390 B.C.

The time of writing depends upon the identity of the holy writer. If the writer is Joshua the time would, of course, need to be prior to his death. If Eleazar or his son was the holy writer, then the writing would have been during the time of the Judges, about 1380 B.C. However unlikely, some commentators have even suggested that Samuel is the holy writer, which would place the time of writing at around 1000 B.C. If one accepts this, however, there is a problem with those passages in the book which describe the holy writer as a witness of the events described.

Christ in Joshua

There are many comparisons in the book between Joshua and Christ. We see in Joshua a type of Christ, though he is not named as such in the Scriptures, unless one takes the common name of the two to be an indication of such. Joshua succeeds Moses, interceded for the people, brought them into the promised land and led them to victory over their enemies. In an even greater sense, Jesus intercedes for His people, brings us to the promised land of heaven and gives us victory over sin and death. (2 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:34-37; Hebrews 4:8-9; cf. also John 1:17). There are no direct Messianic prophecies, but the Second Person of the Trinity makes a pre-incarnate appearance as the “*Commander of the army of the LORD*” (5:13ff; cf. 6:2 and Exodus 3:2).

Content

Chapters 1-5 - These chapters deal with the preparation of the Children of Israel to conquer the promised land.

- 1:1-9 - The authority of the book.
- 2:8-11 - The faith of Rahab.
- 2:24 - The positive report of the spies.
- 3:7-17, 4:18 - The power of God.
- 4:1-9, 19-24 - Two remembrance monuments.
- 5:13-15, 6:2 - The presence of the supernatural leader.

Chapters 6-8 - We see the cycle of events within a faith-life relationship of men with God.

- 6:25 - God’s blessing to faithful man.
- 6:17-19, 7:1, 20-21 - Man’s sin against God.
- 7:2-5, 10-12 - God’s judgment upon unfaithful man.
- 7:13, 19, 24-26 - Man’s repentance before God.
- 8:1-2 - God’s blessing restored to man.

Chapters 8-19 - The conquest of Israel is described - with both its accomplishments and failures.

- 8:3-22, 11:7ff - Joshua a brilliant battle strategist.
- 9:14-15 - Israel’s failure / Gibeonites.
- 10:11-14 - The LORD’s presence and power (hailstones).
- 11:15 - Joshua’s obedience.
- 11:20 - The LORD’s judgment.
- 15:13-19 - Caleb’s inheritance for His faithfulness.

Chapters 20-24 - Joshua asks if the people will remain faithful to the LORD.

- 20:1-9 - The cities of refuge chosen.
- 21:43-45 - The theme of the book.
- 22:10-12, 22-25, 34 - The ‘witness’ altar.
- 23:5-16 - A warning of the dangers of the heathen nations.
- 24:14-24 - Joshua’s final exhortations.

Outline

I. The Conquest of Canaan! (1:1-13:7)

- A. Israel’s preparation for conquest.. (1:1-5:15)
- B. Israel’s participation in conquest. (6:1-13:7)

II. The Division of Canaan! (13:8-24:33)

- A. The division east of the Jordan. (13:8-13)
- B. The division west of the Jordan. (14:1-19:51)
- C. The division of the priests. (20:1-21:45)
- D. The division demanded by Joshua between faith and unbelief. (22:1-24:33)