

INTRODUCTION

“Joshua is an important book for many reasons — for the history it records and for its internal teaching. But what make the book of Joshua overwhelmingly important is that it stands as a bridge, a link between the Pentateuch (the writings of Moses) and the rest of Scripture. It is crucial for understanding the unity the Pentateuch has with all that follows it, including the New Testament.”

Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History,
by Francis Schaeffer,
Inter-Varsity Press, 1975

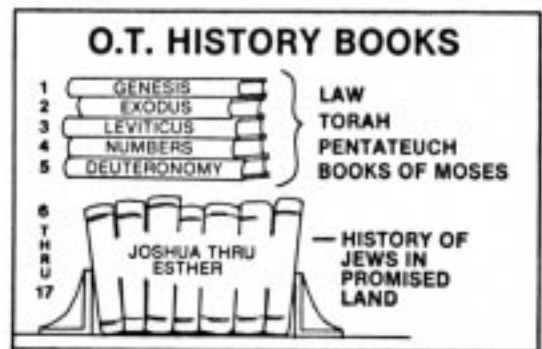
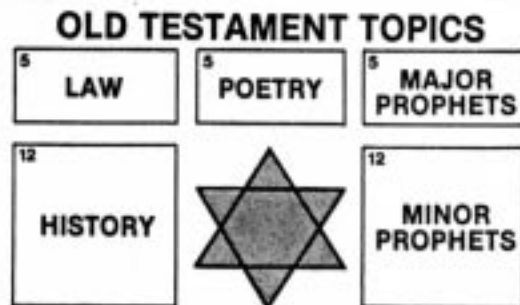
◆ Understanding the Old Testament

Most people feel hopelessly lost when it comes to seeing the Old Testament as a whole. They remember a few major stories and characters, they can find the book of Psalms, but the rest remains a giant fog. Yet this confusion is largely unnecessary, for the structure of the Old Testament is really very simple.

Open your Bible to the table of contents. There are 39 Old Testament books. They are divided into 3 main categories: History (17 books), Poetry (5 books) and Prophecy (17 books). Think of 17 - 5 - 17.

History = *Genesis through Esther*
Poetry = *Job through Song of Solomon*
Prophecy = *Isaiah through Malachi*

Now, there is one more important division to remember. The History and Prophecy sections are each subdivided into 2 groups of 5 books and 12 books. In the History section, the 5 are the books of Moses (known as the Pentateuch or the Law), and the 12 contain the remainder of Israel’s history after the death of Moses. Likewise, in the Prophecy section, the first 5 are called the Major Prophets, while the next 12 are the Minor Prophets.



◆ Understanding the Book of Joshua

Joshua, the first of the twelve historical books (Joshua - Esther) forges a link between the Pentateuch and the remainder of Israel’s history. Through three military campaigns involving more than 30 enemy armies, the people of Israel learn crucial lesson under Joshua’s capable leadership: victory comes through faith in God and obedience to His Word, rather than military might or numerical superiority.

The first half of Joshua (chap. 1-12) describes the seven-year conquest of the land; the second half (chap. 13-24) relates the partitioning and settlement of the land among the twelve tribes.”

Bruce Wilkinson,
Talk Thru the Bible

◆ **The Central Figure**

The book is entitled Joshua not only because Joshua is the main character, but also for the meaning of his name. He was born “Hoshea” (salvation) but Moses changed his name to “Yehoshua” (Yahweh is salvation). This is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name “Iesous” (Jesus). His name is symbolic of the fact that although he is the leader of the Israelite nation during the conquest, the Lord is the Conqueror.

While scholars are confused over the authorship of the book, Joshua himself wrote at least a part of it (24:26)

He led an amazing life. Born a slave in Egypt, he became Moses’ personal attendant in the wilderness, was one of the original 12 spies (Numbers 13) and succeeded Moses in taking his nation into the Promised Land.

◆ **The Land of the Book**

Geography is one of the main characters of the book of Joshua, but don’t let that scare you! It is really very simple. As the maps show, all the action takes place on a small strip of land (only about 150 miles from north to south, and 60 east to west) bordered on the west by the “Great Sea” (the Mediterranean) and on the east by a line formed by three bodies of water: The Seas of Chinnereth (known as Galilee in the New Testament), the Jordan River - and the Dead Sea (or Salt Sea).

In between those two borders, a line of mountains runs through the land from the north to the south, sloping down to a plain next to the Great Sea. Much of Joshua’s warfare took place in these hills.

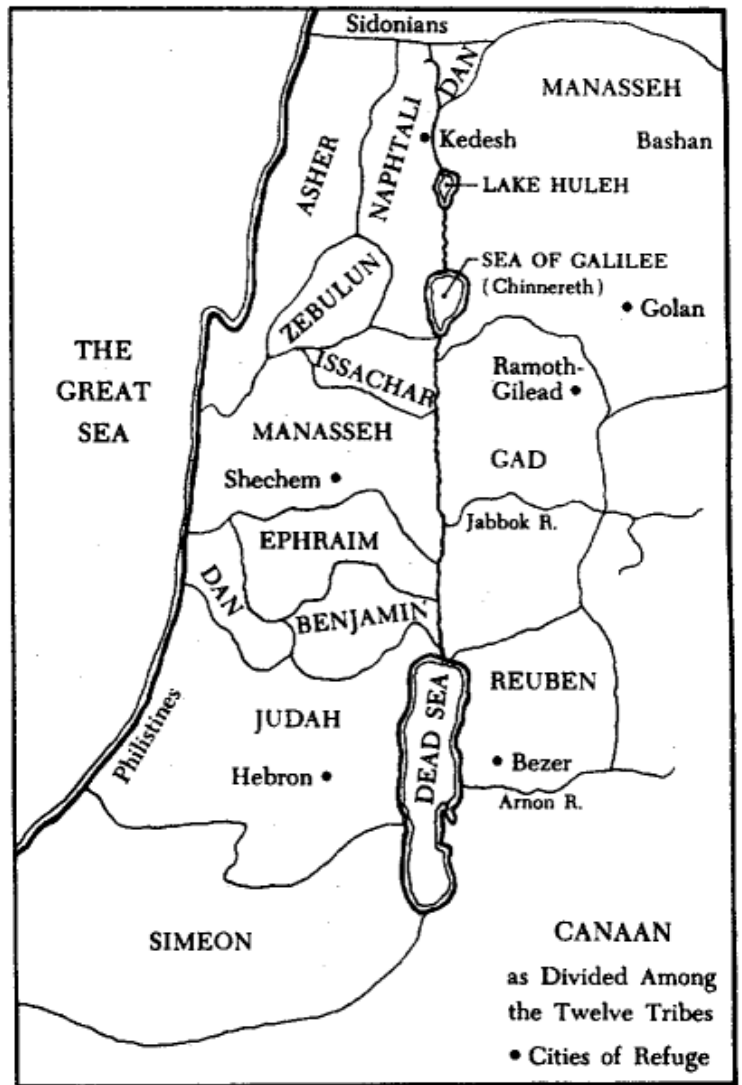
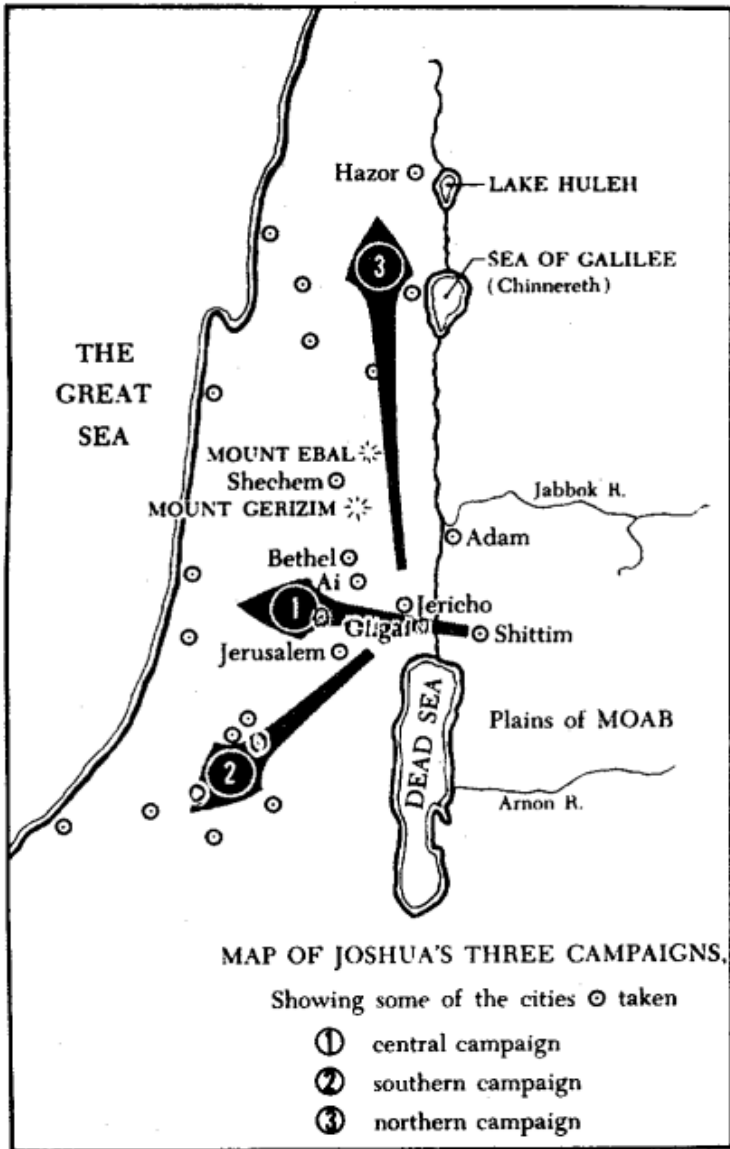
“And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendents I will give this land.”

Genesis 12:7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Study #	Title	Passage
1	A Hard Act to Follow	<i>Joshua 1</i>
2	The Unlikely Ancestor	<i>Joshua 2</i>
3	Crossing the Jordan	<i>Joshua 3:1 - 5:12</i>
4	A New Way of War	<i>Joshua 5:13 - 6:27</i>
5	A Severe Mercy	<i>Joshua 7:1 - 8:29</i>
6	A Day of Renewal	<i>Joshua 8:30 - 35</i>
7	A Costly Lesson	<i>Joshua 9</i>
8	The Divine Strategy	<i>Joshua 10 - 12</i>
9	A Man and His Mountain	<i>Joshua 13 - 21</i>
10	Jumping to Conclusions	<i>Joshua 22</i>
11	Choose Life!	<i>Joshua 23 - 24</i>

Focus	Conquest of Canaan		Settlement in Canaan			
	1:1	13:7	13:8	24:33		
Divisions	Preparation of Israel for Conquest	Conquest of Canaan by Israel	Settlement East of the Jordan	Settlement West of the Jordan	Settlement of Religious Community	Conditions for Continued Settlement
	1:1	5:15 6:1	13:7	13:8 13:33 14:1	19:51 20:1 21:45	22:1 24:33
Topics	Entering Canaan	Conquering Canaan	Dividing Canaan			
	Preparation	Subjection	Possession			
Place	Jordan River	Canaan	2½ Tribes – East Jordan 9½ Tribes – West Jordan			
Time	c. One Month	c. 7 Years	c. 18 Years			



Overview of the book of Joshua

- **Preparation of Joshua and the People (1-5)**

In any project, planning and preparation are half the battle. Through forty years of disciplined living in the wilderness, God's people have been prepared for the rigors of warfare yet to come in conquering the land of Canaan. Now the process is nearly complete. God next prepares Joshua, Israel's new commander-in-chief, for his demanding assignment by assuring him of God's abiding presence. The Israelites are encouraged by the news of a terrified enemy before them, and inspired by God's miraculous parting of the flood-swollen Jordan River. Once the new generation has been set apart to God in the ceremony of circumcision, the stage is set for conquest.

- **Beginning The Conquest (6-8)**

The jubilation that the people must have felt upon setting foot in the Promised Land is quickly tempered by the realization that there are still battles to be fought and won. Jericho, the first great military objective, proves no match for God's unorthodox tactics and obedient people. But one man's greed leads to a shattering setback at Ai and the needless slaughter of thirty-six Israelite soldiers. When at last the sin is discovered and dealt with decisively, God fights for his people in the rematch with Ai. Once the territory surrounding Mount Ebal is secured, Joshua pauses to offer sacrifices to God and to read again for the people all the words of God's law.

- **Completing the Conquest (9-12)**

By attacking the land of Canaan in the center, Joshua has now isolated the two halves of the country, making it possible for the remaining armies to link up and form a united front against the advancing Israelite troops. The Gibeonites, hearing the sad fate of Jericho and wishing to escape a similar end, send emissaries to trick Joshua into signing a peace treaty. The strategy works when Joshua fails to inquire of the Lord, with the result that Israel ends up defending rather than destroying her enemy.

- **Beginning the Partitioning (13-17)**

The first stage of conquest is complete. The backbone of Canaanite control has been broken. It is time to divide up the land among the tribes and give them the task of clearing the remaining traces of Canaanite influence from their respective parcels. Two and a half tribes who had earlier asked to settle east of Jordan are assigned the territories they requested. The other tribes, with the exception of the Levites, receive their new inheritances west of Jordan as determined by lot. Caleb, as vigorous at age eighty-five as he was at forty, requests the mountain of Hebron, knowing it represents a Canaanite stronghold and will require further fighting to subdue!

- **Completing the Partitioning (18-20)**

Seven additional tribes now receive their hard-earned inheritances. With the tabernacle in place in Shiloh, cities of refuge designated on both sides of the Jordan, and forty-eight cities set aside for the Levites, the task of dividing up the land is complete. It is time once again to pause and reflect. God has indeed kept his word, giving the Israel "all the land he had promised to their ancestors, and they went in and conquered and lived there," not failing to perform "every good thing the Lord had promised them" (21:43-45).

- **Challenge to Unity and Obedience (22-24)**

After dividing up the land and designating the cities for Levites and accused manslayers, Joshua commands the two and-a-half tribes desiring to settle east of Jordan to "go home now to the land given you by the Lord's servant Moses" (22:4). This simple directive is complicated when a stone monument erected on the banks of the Jordan causes a dispute. The western tribes mistakenly interpret it as a pagan idol, and only quick work by Joshua prevents civil war. As Joshua's life draws to a close, he addresses the leaders of the nation, exhorting them to "follow the Lord your God" (23:8). Then he calls together the nation and delivers a ringing call to commitment: "Decide today whom you will obey....but as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord" (24:15).

KEYS TO THE BOOK

1. The Character of God

"Joshua has much to say about who God is, and what man is like, with emphasis on the former. God is shown to be holy, almighty, sovereign, just, full of mercy, a designer of order, worthy of worship, and a rewarder of those who fear and obey Him."

Irving Jensen

2. The Promises of God

[The reason Joshua was written was that...]
...since God was in covenant with Israel He wanted them to know how the promise made to the forefathers was fulfilled during the Conquest so His chosen people would trust and obey Him in future generations."

M. H. Woudstra

3. The "Three Changeless Factors"

"As he passed from the Pentateuchal period into the post-Pentateuchal period, Joshua knew the book, the supernatural power and the supernatural leader who was the living God. We are not living in the time of Joshua, but the New Testament says that these three great changeless factors are true for us as the children of God today ... We in our battles in the 20th century have the same book, the same power, and the same leader."

Francis Schaeffer

4. A Foreshadowing of Christ

"Although there are no direct messianic prophecies in the book, Joshua is clearly a type of Christ. His name is the Hebrew equivalent of the name Jesus. In his role of triumphantly leading his people into their possessions, he foreshadows the One who will bring "many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10). Joshua succeeds Moses and wins the victory unreached by Moses. Christ will succeed the Mosaic Law and win the victory unreachable by the Law."

Kenneth Boa

5. The Seriousness of Sin

"While it is wonderful to have an infinite God, this means we must take His omniscience into account in our daily lives. There is nothing we do that God does not know. There is no night so dark, no coal mine so deep, no astronaut so far out in space that God does not know it. God knows every single thought, every single action. He knew when Achan first coveted, and He knew when he carried out his covetousness."

Francis Schaeffer