

# Old Testament History

Lesson #9

Joshua 1:1-12:24

## Outline

### I. **Entering The Land (1:1-5:12)**

- A. The command to enter the land (1:1-18).
- B. Rahab and the spies (2:1-24).
- C. Crossing the Jordan (3:1-4:24).
- D. Circumcision of the new generation (5:1-12).

### II. **Conquering The Land (5:13-12:24)**

- A. The commander of the Lord's army (5:13-15).
- B. The conquest of Jericho (6:1-27).
- C. The struggle at Ai (7:1-8:35).
  1. The defeat at Ai (7:1-5).
  2. Achan's sin punished (7:6-26).
  3. The victory at Ai (8:1-29).
  4. Renewal of the covenant (7:1-27).
- D. The treaty with Gibeon (9:1-27).
- E. Joshua's conquest of the south (10:1-43).
- F. Joshua's conquest of the north (11:1-23).
- G. The list of conquests (12:1-24).

## Notes

### **Joshua 1:1-2:24**

- The book of Joshua recounts the conquest of the land of Canaan. Archaeologically, the era of Joshua and Judges occupy the Late Bronze II (1400-1200 B.C.) and Iron I (1200-1000 B.C.) ages.
- Joshua was the son of Nun and of the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8). He was born in Egyptian captivity. He went with Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:13). He also led the army in battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:9). He was one of the 12 spies who wanted to go in and conquer the land (Numbers 13:8, 16). Josephus says that Joshua was 85 when he succeeded Moses.
- It took about six or seven years to subdue the Canaanites; Joshua spent the remainder of his dividing up the inheritance and ruling the nation. He died at 110 (Joshua 24:29). The New Testament makes it clear that Joshua is a type of Christ (Hebrews 4:8, where "Jesus" [KJV] should be translated "Joshua"). The name "Jesus" in Greek is equivalent to "Joshua."
- Skeptics of the Bible may ask how a God of love could command war and bloodshed. Keep in mind that God had given these nations

hundreds of years to repent (Genesis 15:16-21), yet they refused to turn from their wicked ways (Leviticus 18:24-28). Israel was not given the land because of their righteousness (Deuteronomy 9:5-6).

- Moses had been writing "the Book of the Law" (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-7; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9-13), and this book was now given to Joshua. He was to read it, meditate upon it, and follow its commandments. If Joshua was able to conquer Canaan having only the first five books of the Bible, how much more ought we be able to accomplish now that we have a completed Bible!
- Where the people were prepared to cross the Jordan River, Elijah struck the waters (2 Kings 2:8), and John baptized Jesus (John 3:23).
- The secrecy relating to the two spies probably lay in the nature of the errand, and in the sad remembrance of the discouragement which the evil report by the spies had produced among the people.
- This paradise of Canaan was guarded by the fortress of Jericho -- one of the strongest in the whole land. When the spies approached the city, they would have come to the traditional site of the forty days of Christ's temptation.
- The very language in which Rahab described the terror that had fallen upon her countrymen was the same as that uttered prophetically forty years before, when Moses and the children of Israel sang the new song on the other side of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:14-16).
- Rahab's actions truly show that she had genuine faith (Hebrews 11:31). It was not a dead faith without works. Because of her faithfulness she became the wife of Salmon (maybe Caleb's son, 1 Chronicles 2:51), a prince of the tribe of Judah, and from her came forth in direct line both David (Ruth 4:21) and Jesus (Matthew 1:4).

### ***Joshua 3:1-5:12***

- It was not left for Joshua to invent a method of crossing the flooded Jordan, for God gave him all the instructions necessary. The ark went before the people to lead them, and it was kept in the midst of the river until all the Israelites had passed over. The first crossing illustrated separation from the past, while the second crossing illustrated entrance by faith into their physical inheritance.
- When three days of sanctification passed, it was "the tenth day of the first month" (Joshua 4:19), the anniversary of the day on which forty years before Israel had set apart their Passover lambs (Exodus 12:3), that the miraculous passage of the Jordan was accomplished, and Israel stood on the soil of the promised land. Everything between those two anniversaries seemed like a grand historical parenthesis.
- It was very fitting that a miracle similar to the one of the exodus from Egypt would mark the entrance into the land of promise. It is also fitting

that the beginning of Joshua's leadership would be divinely attested like Moses (Joshua 3:7). To Israel's enemies, the crossing of the Jordan was a token of future judgment (Exodus 5:4).

- Probably the Passover at the foot of Sinai (Numbers 9:1) had been the last, as the feast would not have been observed by the people in their uncircumcision. Their unbelief had temporarily suspended their covenant relationship with God (Numbers 14:32-34). When they refused to enter Canaan because of their unbelief, God "gave them up" to years of wandering until the old generation died. Now the new generation was to receive the mark of the covenant. This Passover also marked the cessation of the manna in the wilderness.

### ***Joshua 5:13-6:27***

- The conquest of Jericho was the key to the whole country. It was Joshua's strategy to divide the land and then conquer the southern region and the northern region. Joshua must have known that Jericho was important, but he had been given no divine direction, and he knew the people were untrained for battle.
- Excavations at Jericho indicate that it was one of the earliest fortified cities. It had walls and a tower in pre-pottery neolithic times -- as early as 7000 B.C. It comprised an area of about eight acres, with inner and outer walls surrounding the city. The inner wall was twelve feet thick, the outer wall six feet thick, and there were houses upon the walls. The walls stood about 30 feet high. By the time of Joshua, Jericho was a major Canaanite city devoted, as its name implies, to the Moon god.
- Joshua saw a man with a drawn sword who was the "captain of the host of the Lord." This is the "battle" title of the Lord; it speaks of His supreme command of the hosts (armies) of Israel and of heaven.
- Jericho was "devoted" to the Lord (Joshua 6:17; cf. Leviticus 27:28-29; Deuteronomy 13:16). This was not the ordinary sentence against all the cities of Canaan. In all other cases the inhabitants alone were "smitten with the edge of the sword" (Joshua 8:26; 10:28; cf. Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 8:2; 20:16), while the cattle and the spoil were preserved. It was very appropriate that Jericho was devoted to God, a "firstfruits" of the conquest of the land.
- It would have been impossible to show it more clearly that God had given the city to Israel. He bestowed it upon His people as a free gift. The requirement of six days of marching (during which the people were not allowed to talk) was a great means of discipline for the nation. Faith and patience go together (Hebrews 6:11-15; 11:30).
- Evidently, the walls of Jericho fell, not before Israel, but before the ark of God, or rather, as it is specifically said in Joshua 6:8, before God Himself, whose presence among His people was connected with the ark

of the covenant. The suddenness of the destruction is reminiscent of 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. Archaeological discoveries have corroborated the biblical accounts of the siege; the walls were destroyed very violently. God put a special curse on the city and on any man who would rebuild it (cf. Deuteronomy 13:15-18; 1 Kings 16:34).

### ***Joshua 7:1-8:29***

- Canaan seems to have been broken up into small territories, each under an independent chieftain or “king,” who reigned in his fortified city and ruled over the district around, a series of sieges rather than of outright battles was to be expected.
- Ai was the site of Abraham’s altar, when he first entered the Promised Land (Genesis 12:8), and where he stood with Lot to divide the land (Genesis 13:4, 10). There is a hint of overconfidence here: Jericho had fallen to Israel, and they were confident that the smaller city of Ai would be a “pushover.”
- At the scene of their defeat, Joshua and the elders spent the whole day in prayer before the ark, and even Joshua wanted to back up and settle for an inheritance on the other side of Jordan. It was noteworthy, though, that Joshua was more concerned about the glory of the Lord and the testimony of Israel before the heathen nations, than he was about the discouragement of the defeat.
- Achan’s sin was not only a violation of God’s exact command, but it was also sacrilege and profanity. Achan allowed himself to be tempted and yielded to the lowest passion. Had he only waited a few days, he would have had all the wealth he could have carried (Matthew 6:33). Sometimes we obey God before the battle, but disobey Him after the victory.

### ***Joshua 8:30-9:27***

- Moses had commanded that the Israelites were to commemorate their passing into the land (Deuteronomy 27:2). The act itself was to consist of three parts: the law was written on stones, sacrifices were offered, and the law was recited. At this point, it was more important to hear the word than to fight any more battles.
- This spot was where Abraham had first built an altar (Genesis 12:7), and where Jacob’s first settlement was located (Genesis 33:19). This scene was unlike any ever before witnessed on the earth, and one which would never fade from memory.
- Gilgal seems to have been a permanent camp. Again, it was near where Abraham had first built an altar (Genesis 12:7). Gilgal was one of the three cities where Samuel judged the people (1 Samuel 7:16). He also offered sacrifices there when the ark was no longer in the tabernacle at

Shiloh (1 Samuel 10:8; 13:7-9; 15:21). Israel also gathered there to renew their allegiance to Saul (1 Samuel 11:14). Later on, Gilgal was the great scene of Elisha's ministry (2 Kings 2:1), and still later it became a center of idolatrous worship (Hosea 4:15; 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5). Israel had been specifically warned against any confederation with the inhabitants of Canaan (Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:2).

- The people at Gibeon decided to use deceit instead of force. They knew that if they could make a covenant with Israel, they would keep it. Joshua and the leaders failed to seek God's mind in the matter; instead, they judged by appearances. God's people could not go back on their word, so they made slaves out of the Gibeonites. What Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, the Gibeonites accomplished with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God's people, and we must constantly be on guard. Moses warned Israel that friendship with these heathen nations would only lead Israel into sin, and that is what happened.

### ***Joshua 10:1-12:24***

- The surrender of the kings of Gibeon gave Israel a strong position in the heart of the country and within easy reach of Jerusalem. The march of the combined kings was probably rapid, and the danger was great, because it apparently caught the Gibeonites by surprise.
- It was probably very early in the morning when Joshua and his warriors surprised the allied camp. The Canaanites made a short stand before their unexpected enemies; then fled in wild confusion towards the pass of Upper Beth-horon, "the house of caves." God overcame them by casting down large stones upon them.
- Joshua's plan of conquest included going west toward the Mediterranean, then south, and the finally finishing in the north. When Joshua went to attack the northern country, the Lord again gave him explicit assurance of victory. He commanded the weapons and horses be destroyed lest Israel should be tempted to put their trust in those kinds of weapons in the future.
- The Israelites conquered the land as far north as Baal-gad, the town dedicated to Baal as the god of fortune. This city was the Caesarea Philippi of the gospels (11:16-18). He also drove out the Anakim, who had filled the spies with fear, from their place in the mountains.
- Although Israel had broken the power of Canaan's inhabitants, all of the inhabitants of the land were not exterminated, nor were all of their cities taken by Israel (Joshua 13:1-6; 17:14; 18:3; 23:5, 12). We know from the beginning that this was God's purpose (Exodus 23:28-30; Deuteronomy 7:22).