

History: JOSHUA

INTRODUCTION

The book of Joshua picks up where Deuteronomy left off, chronicling Israel's conquest of the Promised Land and the allotment of this land to the 12 tribes under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' successor. Likely, the book was written between 1400 and 1370 B.C., around the time that the events being recorded took place.¹

Joshua is more than a record of military victories; it's a testament to God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises. Through miraculous interventions, such as the crossing of the Jordan River and the fall of Jericho, God demonstrates His power and sovereignty in ensuring the success of His chosen people. The book emphasizes the crucial roles of faith and obedience in obtaining victory and God's promised blessings. It also marks a major transition in Israel's history: after centuries of slavery in Egypt and decades of wandering through the wilderness, the Israelites finally had a land to call their own.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

Picture a map with markers representing battles and conquests, each symbolizing a step closer to the fulfillment of God's promise. The book of Joshua serves as this map, showing Israel's conquest of the Promised Land.

Additionally, imagine the map depicts not only physical but spiritual victories as the Israelites learn to trust and obey God amidst the challenges they face. Each battle represents both a military triumph and a marker of God's trustworthiness. Thus, the book of Joshua serves as a spiritual roadmap illustrating the importance of wholehearted commitment to God's commands and the necessity of reliance on His strength in the face of adversity.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

Chapters 1-5: Joshua Leads Israel

Chapters 6-12: Conquest and Division of the Canaanite Land

Chapters 13-22: Distribution of the Land to the Tribes

Chapters 23-24: Joshua's Farewell and Covenant Renewal

JESUS IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

As the leader of Israel, Joshua serves as a type, or foreshadowing model, of Jesus.² Just as Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, so too does Jesus lead believers into the fullness of God's promises, including salvation and eternal life. In fact, Hebrews 4 specifically describes Joshua's conquest as foreshadowing Christ's victory, blessing, and gift of rest.³ Therefore, the book of Joshua not only serves as a precursor to Jesus as a triumphant leader but also points ahead to the spiritual inheritance He secures for His followers through His redemptive work on the cross.

¹ Got Questions Ministries. "When Was the Book of Joshua Written?" *GotQuestions.org*, <https://www.gotquestions.org/when-was-Joshua-written.html>.

² Ligonier Ministries. "New Joshua." *Ligonier.org*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/new-joshua>.

³ Piper, John. "The Conquest of Canaan." *Desiring God*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-conquest-of-canaan>.

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

OBSERVATION

- Typology is a literary and theological concept where elements in the Old Testament are seen as foreshadowing elements in the New Testament. The word *type* comes from the Greek word τύπος (*typos*), meaning model or example. Types reveal a shadow pointing to a deeper substance: the *antitype*. Though this word is unfamiliar, it simply means “not a model”. Whereas types are examples or pictures of something, an antitype is the very thing itself. The antitype is always greater than the type, expanding its qualities. Joshua should be seen as a type of Christ as his name means “The Lord is salvation” and he leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. Jesus, on the other hand, is the antitype: he is the saving Lord and delivers his people into a better, eternal rest.

INTERPRETATION

- Literary Context: The book of Joshua is a historical account of the Israelites’ conquest of the Promised Land.
- Narrative Context: Traditionally, Joshua is thought to be its author, though it is likely later editors contributed after his death. The themes of the book are its consistent calls to trust in God's promises, obey His commands, and be thankful for His guidance.
- Historical Context: The events recorded in Joshua began about 1406 BC,⁴ immediately following Israel’s forty years of wandering through the wilderness and Moses’ subsequent death in Deuteronomy 34.
- Cultural Context: Joshua’s contemporaries were the pagans of Canaan. Surrounded by the Canaanite polytheists, the Israelites stood out for their belief in one God, Yahweh, and their special relationship with Him. Chiefly, the Ancient Near Eastern polytheistic religions offered gods who could be appeased, coerced, and won over through sacrifices, sexual activity, and cultic practices. In stark opposition, Israel’s worship, ethics, and public life was shaped by a God who could not be bought and who demanded his people be holy and distinct from their pagan neighbors.

APPLICATION

- The command to “be strong and courageous” occurs repeatedly in this book. What foundation does Israel’s strength and courage rest upon? The answer is simple: God’s faithfulness, presence, and promise to give Israel victory. This same promise is secured for the Christian by Jesus’ work of redemption. He is faithful to his promise, welcomes us into God’s presence, and conquers his and our enemies as our perfect King. Considering what Christ has accomplished, ask yourself the following questions: In what areas of your life do you need to “be strong and courageous”? How does Christ’s work provide you with strength? How can you cultivate courage and strength in your daily life?
- Consider the importance of following God’s laws as described in Joshua 1:7-8. How can you demonstrate obedience in your actions and decisions? Where are you choosing to go your own way instead of following God’s instructions? What changes do you need to make?

PRAYER

- Pray for courage and strength (Joshua 1:9), and for the Holy Spirit to grant you the desire and ability to face challenges with faith and trust in Him.

⁴ *ESV Global Study Bible*. "Introduction to Joshua." *ESV.org*, <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-joshua/>.

- Pray for obedience (Joshua 1:7-8). Ask the Lord to help you adhere to His commands, serve Him faithfully, and meditate on His Word to guide your steps.
- Pray for God's guidance. Pray for a deeper understanding of God's plans and purposes, asking Him to lead you on the right path and sanctify you for His work (Joshua 3:5).

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF JOSHUA?

“He will see Jesus leading the people into the land of promise; for this name was given to the leader of Israel, not at first, or by chance, but on account of the work to which he was called.” – Augustine,⁵ 400

“(Moses) knew so well that in Christ was something divine. And the same one foreseeing, under the influence of the divine Spirit, the name Jesus, dignified it also with a certain distinguished privilege. For the name of Jesus, which had never been uttered among men before the time of Moses, he applied first and only to the one who he knew would receive after his death, again as a type and symbol, the supreme command. His successor, therefore, who had not hitherto borne the name Jesus, but had been called by another name, Auses, which had been given him by his parents, he now called Jesus, bestowing the name upon him as a gift of honor, far greater than any kingly diadem.” – Eusebius,⁶ 324



⁵ Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, Book 14, Chapter 6. *New Advent*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140612.htm>.

⁶ Chrysostom, John. *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, Homily 25. *New Advent*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250101.htm>.