



# The Bible's Big Story

## Joshua

After the rituals of Leviticus, the lists of Numbers, and the repeating of the law in Deuteronomy, the beginning of Joshua is a refreshing change as the narrative picks up again. However the book of Joshua presents its own challenges.

### Introductory Information

**Title:** The English title comes from the name of Moses' successor, who led Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation" — it is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek \*Ἰησοῦς\* (Jesus).

**Authorship: Joshua** Both conservative Christian scholars and Jewish tradition attribute this book to Joshua the successor of Moses. This is corroborated internally by Joshua 24:26 which states that, "Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God."

**Date: 1406–1386 BC** The events of Joshua cover approximately twenty years, from the initial conquest and the settlement in the land to the death of Joshua. These dates are based on a mid-fifteenth century date for the Exodus.

**Theme & Purpose:** The purpose of the book of Joshua is to show the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to the patriarchs to give the land of Canaan to their descendants (Gen 12:2; 15:16; Deut 30:20). As the book affirms, not one of God's promises to the house of Israel failed (Josh 21:45). Three major themes run through the book:

- **The Promised Land**
- **God's Presence**
- **The Call to Obedience**

**Summary Theme:** *God fulfills His covenant promise to Abraham by giving Israel the land of Canaan, demonstrating that faithful obedience to His word results in rest and inheritance, while unfaithfulness brings judgment.*

### Redemption Revealed in Joshua

#### *Joshua Points to a Greater Leader*

Joshua as a \*type\* of Christ — a shadow that points to a greater leader to come. Besides the immediate connection is his name, Joshua also echoes Christ as the successor of Moses. Before his death, Moses prophesied that God would raise up another like him (Deut 18:15). Joshua fulfilled that in a partial way — succeeding Moses in leading God's people, interceding for them, teaching them God's law, and leading them across the Jordan into the

rest of the Promised Land. Yet Joshua only foreshadows the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, the greater Moses, who leads his people to victory not over the Canaanites, but over sin and death — bringing them through the dark waters of death and into their eternal rest.

#### *The Promised Land Points to a Greater Inheritance and Rest*

The land of Canaan offered Israel rest from wandering and from their enemies, a place of blessing where they could dwell in security. But this rest was outward and temporary. The rest Christ gives is secured not by continued obedience, but by the obedience of Christ himself, once for all.

Psalm 95, written by David while Israel was already living in the land, warns the people not to harden their hearts and be barred from "my rest" — revealing that even the earthly Canaan points to a greater rest. The writer of Hebrews makes the connection explicit: "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:7–10).

#### *The Conquest of Canaan Displays the Struggle of Kingdom Advance*

The conquest illustrates the nature of kingdom advance. God promised Israel victory and accomplished his purpose, fighting for them — yet Israel did not simply coast into the land. Inheritance required immense and prolonged effort on their part. This interplay mirrors the Christian life: our eternal rest is certain and secured in Christ, and yet the path from here to there is full of battles. We are to fight the good fight and press toward the goal with all our strength, while trusting not in our own power but in the promise of God. Just as Canaan was taken incrementally, so our sanctification requires a lifelong struggle against sin.

#### *Judgement of Canaan Displays Both the Cost of Sin and the Power of Grace*

The judgment visited upon the Canaanites is a sobering reminder of the seriousness of sin. The severity of God's judgment, including the total destruction of certain cities, stands as a warning to any who believe sin is without consequence or that God can be mocked.

Yet Joshua also reveals the remarkable power of God's grace to redeem. Rahab deserved the just judgment her city received. But she placed her faith in the one true God. Through grace she was made a child of God by covenant, and from her own offspring would one day come the one who would pay the penalty for that she was spared.

