

# The Book of Joshua

Lesson 1

An Introduction to Joshua

Lesson Guide



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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Notes

### I. Introduction (0:20)

### II. Authorship and Date (1:17)

#### A. Traditional Outlooks (2:10)

According to the Talmud, Joshua himself wrote the vast majority of the book of Joshua, with certain parts attributed to Eleazar and Phinehas.

Traditional perspectives held that the book of Joshua was written very early, soon after the events of the book took place.

There is little evidence to support to the claims of the Talmud, but it is quite possible that Joshua, Eleazar and Phinehas contributed to the book (cf., Exodus 17:14, Joshua 8:32; 24:26).

#### B. Critical Outlooks (7:17)

Most recent critical scholars have been deeply influenced by Martin Noth's work, *The Deuteronomistic History* (1943).

Martin Noth concluded that:

- The books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings were written during the Babylonian exile by “the Deuteronomist.”
- The Deuteronomistic history was composed from a variety of earlier written sources.
- The main purpose of these books was to demonstrate that Israel deserved the judgment of defeat and exile that it received.

While critical scholars affirm many of Noth’s perspectives, they also argue that Noth:

- failed to identify the unique theological outlooks of the individual books
- overlooked the books’ positive, hopeful aspects

### **C. Evangelical Outlooks (8:56)**

Evangelicals have held to different outlooks on the book of Joshua’s authorship and date.

## 1. Development (9:17)

The author of Joshua didn't write the book entirely from scratch but compiled a variety of written sources as he formed his book:

- He quoted directly from *the Book of Jashar* (Joshua 10:13).
- He incorporated portions of the Pentateuch and extra-biblical texts.
- The phrase "to this day," may refer to the days of an earlier source (e.g., 1 Kings 8:8).

## 2. Completion (11:48)

We can identify a range for the earliest and latest likely dates for completion:

- Latest possible date

The book of Joshua is part of Israel's "Primary History":

- Genesis – begins with creation and ends with Joseph and his brothers in Egypt
- Exodus – begins with the death of Joseph and ends with Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai
- Leviticus – reports events that took place at Mount Sinai
- Numbers – records the Israelites' travels from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab
- Deuteronomy (last book of the Pentateuch) – documents Moses' speeches on the plains of Moab and Moses' death

- Joshua (first book of the Deuteronomistic portion of the Primary History) – begins with Moses’ death and continues through Joshua’s death
- Judges – picks up the history of Israel where Joshua ends
- Samuel – begins with the rise of Samuel as the last judge of Israel and ends with David’s reign
- Kings – begins with the death of David and ends with the Babylonian exile

This chain demonstrates that Joshua must have been completed *before* the book of Kings was written:

- The last event reported in Kings is Jehoiachin’s release from prison in Babylon in 561 B.C. (2 Kings 25:27-30)
- Kings does not report Israel’s all-important release from exile in 538 B.C.
- The very latest the book of Joshua could have been completed was during the period of the Babylonian exile.

- Earliest possible date

The earliest Joshua could have reached its final form was during the period of the judges.

- The generation after Joshua’s death did not continue to serve God faithfully — a fact highlighted in the book of Judges (Joshua 24:31).



- Passages in Joshua reference events that took place during the period of the judges (Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:27-29).

Many argue that a date during the period of the monarchy is the earliest possible date of completion.

- The distinction between Judah and Israel in Joshua 11:21 suggests that the book could not have been written before the kingdom was divided in 930 B.C.
- The Septuagint (ancient Greek Old Testament) does not make this distinction in this same verse.

Recognizing the full range of possible dates helps us grasp the kinds of challenges the book of Joshua was designed to address.

### **III. Design and Purpose (20:16)**

#### **A. Content and Structure (21:03)**

The book of Joshua consists of 24 chapters that contain narratives, reports, speeches, and lists of people and places.

**1. Victorious Conquest, 1–12 (23:55)**

Reports events that took place during Joshua's conquest of the land of Canaan:

- crossing the Jordan and initial victories at Jericho and Ai
- covenant renewal ceremony near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal
- campaign against an alliance in the southern regions of the Promised Land
- campaign against an alliance in the northern regions

**2. Tribal Inheritances, 13–22 (25:07)**

Deals with Israel's national unity and the allotment of particular inheritances:

- the extent of territories God granted to Israel in Transjordan (east of Jordan) and Cisjordan (west of Jordan)
- how Israel maintained their national unity when conflict arose between the tribes of Cisjordan and Transjordan

**B. Original Meaning (28:13)**

The book of Joshua was written about Israel's victorious conquest, tribal inheritances and covenant loyalty in Joshua's day to address similar challenges facing later generations.

The author's central purpose was:

- to inform the original audience of what had happened in Joshua's time ("that world")
  
- to address the challenges of later generations ("their world")
  
- to provide meaningful points of contact between "that world" and "their world":
  - historical backgrounds explaining the origins of the audience's current privileges and responsibilities
  
  - models for the audience to emulate or reject
  
  - foreshadows of the audience's experiences

The original audience needed to apply the historical record in the book of Joshua in ways that were appropriate for their own day.

## **1. Victorious Conquest (35:49)**

Three outlooks on warfare from the Pentateuch helped the original audience apply Israel's victorious conquest to their lives.

### **a. Primeval conflict (35:14)**

They were engaged in a war rooted in the primeval conflict between God and Satan (Genesis 3:15).

The book of Joshua doesn't reduce Israel's conflict to just a physical war.

- Joshua and the army of Israel were participating in a battle involving God and his angelic army (Joshua 5:14).
- The Canaanite's satanic gods stood alongside the Canaanites in opposition to the people of Israel (Joshua 23:16).

**b. Israel's special conflict (36:50)**

Joshua's conquest was Israel's *special* conflict, and the generations to come were not to imitate it in every detail.

By the time of Joshua's conquest, Canaanite sin had grown so offensive that God called for their total destruction.

Joshua's author described Canaan's destruction using terms that meant to "to devote wholly to the Lord" or "to destroy in devotion to the Lord" (Joshua 6:17, 19, 21).

The command for utter destruction and devotion to the Lord in Joshua's day was extraordinary for a number of reasons:

- Moses directed total destruction for the Canaanites, but commanded Israel to offer peace treaties to peoples outside Canaan (Deuteronomy 20:10-20).
  
- The ongoing conflict between God and Satan took different forms both before and after Joshua's conflict. For example:
  - Genesis 11:1-9 – God and his heavenly army warred against rebellious humans at the Tower of Babel without a human army.
  - Genesis 14:1-24 – Abraham fought with God's help, but God didn't order the total destruction of Abraham's enemies.
  - Exodus 12:12 – God warred against the Egyptians and their gods, but Israel was passive, and God didn't kill every Egyptian.
  - Exodus 14 – Israel followed God obediently through the Red Sea, but it was God who destroyed Egypt's army.
  - Book of Samuel – David fought many of Israel's enemies with God's supernatural help, but God didn't devote all of his enemies to utter destruction.
  - Book of Kings – Many of David's descendants fought God's enemies, but didn't devote them to utter destruction.
  - Israel's prophets predicted that the end of Israel's exile would unfold through miraculous divine intervention.

Although the original audience could learn from Joshua, the conquest itself was a time of extraordinary judgment.

**c. Future victory of Israel's king (44:00)**

Joshua's conquest was one step toward the future victory of Israel's anticipated king.

- Genesis 49:10 – Jacob announced that the royal family of Judah would receive “the obedience of the peoples.”
- Psalm 72 – During the monarchy, the fulfillment of this expectation was identified with David's house.

The original audience had to apply the conquest of Canaan to their own day as God moved history toward the future worldwide victory of Israel's king.

**2. Tribal Inheritances (45:29)**

**a. Primeval human dominion (45:40)**

Israel's possession of Canaan was rooted in God's primeval call for human dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-30; 9:1-3).

**b. Israel's special inheritance (46:33)**

The distribution of lands to Israel in Joshua's day was the initial fulfillment of Israel's special inheritance from God (Genesis 15:18-21).

The book of Joshua frequently refers to Israel's possession of their land with the Hebrew words "inherit" (*nachal*) and "inheritance" (*nachalah*).

The original audience had much to learn from what Joshua had done in distributing the land:

- period of the judges – disharmony among the tribes and troubles from other peoples disrupted Joshua's successes
- monarchy – Israel's kings expanded Israel's lands, but also experienced setbacks and losses
- Babylonian exile – a small remnant of God's people remained in the land under the tyranny of other nations

**c. Future inheritance of Israel's king (48:19)**

Israel's inheritance of Canaan was but one step toward the future inheritance of Israel's king.

- Genesis 49:10 – a royal son of Judah will reign until he receives “the obedience of the peoples.”
- Genesis 17:4 – God promised Abraham, “You shall be the father of a multitude of nations.”
- Psalm 2:8 – God promised David, “I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”
- Israel's prophets announced that the land of David's great son would extend from one end of the earth to the other.
- Romans 4:13 – Paul wrote that “The promise to Abraham and his offspring [was] that he would be heir of the world.”

**3. Covenant Loyalty (51:03)****a. Primeval human loyalty (51:21)**

Covenant loyalty was rooted in the primeval requirement of human loyalty to God.

**b. Israel's special covenant loyalty (52:17)**

Joshua exhorted the people to remain faithful to God's covenant, and the people vowed to do so.

- Genesis 17 – God's covenant with Abraham required circumcision as a commitment to being blameless before him.
- Exodus 19–24 – God's covenant in Moses required Israel to obey the law of Moses.



Joshua set before Israel the possibilities of troubles, defeat and exile from the Promised Land if they were unfaithful.

The original audience had to consider Joshua's warnings in light of God's judgments in their own day.

**c. Future covenant with Israel's king (53:58)**

The events of Joshua's day anticipated that God would make a future covenant with Israel's king.

- Genesis 17:6, 49:10 – God had ordained for a king of Judah to reign.
- Judges 21:25; 1 Samuel 2:10 – Even without a legitimate king, the faithful still looked for deliverance through Israel's royal family.
- 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 89, 132 – God's covenant with David focused on the necessity of loyalty.
- Isaiah 53:11 – Eternal forgiveness would come through the substitutionary death of Israel's perfectly righteous king.
- Jeremiah 31 – Jesus, the Christ, brought the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah.

The original audience had to apply Joshua's call to covenant loyalty in the light of the developments of God's covenants with his people.

The author of Joshua wrote about Joshua's day so that his audience would apply it in ways that were appropriate for their own times and circumstances.

#### **IV. Christian Application (56:32)**

The more we grasp the connection between the book of Joshua and Jesus, the more we can understand the book's impact on us as followers of Christ.

- Jesus expands and fulfills all the good things Israel accomplished under Joshua.
- Jesus succeeds where Israel failed and reverses all their failures.
- Jesus wages victorious conquest over the entire earth, inherits all things, and establishes covenant loyalty everywhere in the world.

God determined that the messianic fulfillment of these goals would unfold *over time* in three interconnected phases.

#### **A. Inauguration (1:00:34)**

##### **1. Victorious Conquest (1:01:15)**

Jesus' inauguration of God's kingdom was the initial phase of his glorious worldwide victorious conquest.

Twofold strategy of Jesus' victorious conquest:

- He began the ultimate defeat of Satan and his demons.
- He proclaimed the gospel (“good news”) of the kingdom by warning people of judgment and offering God’s mercy.
  - John 12:31, 32 – “The ruler of this world [will] be cast out. And I ... will draw all people to myself.”
  - Colossians 2:15 – Jesus’ death “disarmed the rulers and authorities ... by triumphing over them.”
  - Ephesians 4:8 – “when [Christ] ascended on high he led a host of captives,” from among those who serve Satan, “and he gave [them as] gifts to men.”

## 2. **Tribal Inheritances (1:02:43)**

The inauguration of Christ’s kingdom fulfilled the hope of a worldwide inheritance for God’s people:

- God appointed Jesus “heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2) and gave him “all authority” (Matthew 28:18).
- Jesus distributed a foretaste of his worldwide inheritance when he poured out the Holy Spirit on his church:
  - Isaiah 44:3, 4 – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will one day renew the entire creation.
  - Ephesians 1:14 – the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church as “the guarantee of our inheritance.”
  - 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5, the Spirit is “a guarantee” of what is to come — our future inheritance in the new heaven and new earth.

### 3. **Covenant Loyalty (1:04)6**

Christ's inauguration of the kingdom emphasized covenant loyalty when he ushered in the new covenant age:

- Luke 22:20 – Jesus alluded to Jeremiah 31 when he said, “This cup ... is the new covenant in my blood.”
- Jesus bore the eternal judgment of God on the cross as the final atonement for true believers.

Jesus did not bring the fullness of the new covenant in his first advent:

- Jesus and his apostles and prophets still instructed even true believers to remain faithful because we are not yet fully sanctified.
- 2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4 – There are “false brothers” among us.
- The call to covenant loyalty still goes forth because we wait for the new covenant to be completely fulfilled.

## **B. Continuation (1:05:21)**

### 1. **Victorious Conquest (1:05:35)**

The continuation of Jesus' kingdom is when Jesus' victorious conquest expands globally through his Spirit at work in the church.

Twofold strategy of the church's victorious conquest:

- further the defeat of Satan and evil spirits (Ephesians 6:12)
- proclaim the good news that warns people of God's coming judgment and offers forgiveness and eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:20)

## 2. **Tribal Inheritances (1:07:04)**

Our anticipation of a worldwide inheritance for God's people is furthered throughout the continuation of his kingdom:

- People everywhere embrace Jesus as Lord.
- Christ continues to distribute the down payment of the Holy Spirit to more people throughout the world.
- We are heirs with Christ according to God's promise (Galatians 3:29; Romans 8:16, 17).

## 3. **Covenant Loyalty (1:07:53)**

Joshua's emphasis on covenant loyalty remains true during the continuation of Christ's kingdom:

- The blood of the new covenant covers the sins of all who have saving faith, but the church is still called to covenant loyalty.
- True believers still need to grow in their devotion to God (Hebrews 12:14).
- False brothers among us need to be warned so that they will repent and be saved (Hebrews 10:26, 27).

**C. Consummation (1:10:47)****1. Victorious Conquest (1:11:09)**

The consummation of Christ's kingdom will be the grand finale of his worldwide victorious conquest:

- Jesus will complete the defeat of Satan and evil spirits.
- God's mercy toward unbelievers will end (Revelation 19:14, 15).

**2. Tribal Inheritances (1:11:58)**

At the consummation of his kingdom:

- Jesus' worldwide inheritance will be fully realized (Revelation 11:15).
- Jesus' worldwide kingdom will be distributed to all who follow him (Matthew 25:34).

**3. Covenant Loyalty (1:12:39)**

In the consummation of Christ's kingdom, the warnings calling God's people to covenant loyalty will end:

- Those who haven't come to Christ in saving faith will come under God's eternal judgment.
- True believers will enter the new creation where the blessings of the new covenant will be received in their fullness (Revelation 22:3).

The New Testament calls us to remember how Christ fulfills the themes of Joshua in the inauguration, continuation and consummation of his kingdom.

**V. Conclusion (1:14:02)**











9. How will Jesus fulfill Joshua's hopes of victorious conquest, tribal inheritances, and covenant loyalty when he returns at the final consummation of his kingdom?

## Application Questions

1. Do uncertainties regarding the authorship of the book of Joshua cause you any concern? Why or why not?
2. It's impossible for us to determine a precise date for when the book of Joshua reached completion. How might this imprecision affect the way we apply the book today?
3. Do the various genres in the book of Joshua impact the way you read it? Explain your answer.
4. The book of Joshua indicates that Joshua and Israel's army were participating in the primeval conflict between God and Satan. How does this information change the way you view Joshua's conquest of Canaan? How does it impact your understanding of current struggles in your church?
5. How would you respond to someone who believes that Christians should physically attack God's enemies, just as Joshua and the Israelites did?
6. Israel's possession of Canaan was rooted in God's primeval call for human dominion over the earth. What are some practical ways that Christians today can participate in God's commission to fill and subdue the earth?
7. The book of Joshua makes it clear that God's people should remain loyal to God's covenant. How might you encourage those around you to remain loyal to the new covenant in Christ while teaching or preaching through this book?
8. Jesus is the greater Joshua. He is our commander who leads us to a victory that he has already secured on the cross. How do the various ministries of the church today contribute to the final victory secured by Christ?
9. As the church today, Jesus calls us to further the defeat of Satan and evil spirits and to proclaim the good news to those around us. How can your personal life as a Christian contribute to the final defeat of Satan and evil spirits?
10. Although Jesus' sacrificial atonement saves us from judgment, we are still required to be faithful to God. How would you use the book of Joshua to encourage faithful obedience to God?
11. At the consummation of Christ's kingdom, God's mercy toward unbelievers will end and their devastation will be final. How should the future destiny of unbelievers cause us to live our lives today?
12. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

## Glossary

**Abraham** – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

**Ai** – Canaanite city near Beth Aven; conquered by Joshua and the Israelites only after Israel repented of their disloyalty to God

**Amorites** – People descended from one of the sons of Canaan; sometimes used as another name for Canaanites

**Babylonian exile** – Deportation and exile of ancient Israelites to Babylon from approx. 586 B.C. to 538/9 B.C.

**Book of Jashar** – An unknown work that may have celebrated heroic Israelites; quoted in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18

**Canaan, land of** – Region given to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance in his covenant with God; encompasses present-day Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan, the adjoining coastal lands and parts of Egypt and Syria

**Canaanites** – People descended from Canaan, the son of Ham, who lived in the land of Canaan before Joshua's conquest

**charam** – Hebrew verb (transliteration) meaning “to devote wholly to the Lord” or “to destroy in devotion to the Lord”

**cherem** – Hebrew noun (transliteration) meaning “devoted or dedicated thing” or “utter destruction”

**Cisjordan** – The lands to the west of the Jordan River that God promised to Israel as an inheritance (lit. “beside the Jordan”)

**consummation** – Third and final stage of inaugurated eschatology when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

**continuation** – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

**covenant** – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

**David** – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

**Deuteronomist (“D”)** – According to source criticism, the third literary source responsible for the Pentateuch; called “D” because these materials appear primarily in the book of Deuteronomy

***The Deuteronomistic History*** – (1943) Book by Martin Noth concerning the authorship and date of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings

**Eleazar** – Third son of Aaron and high priest at the time of Moses and Joshua; father of Phinehas

**Gibeonites** – Inhabitants of the Canaanite city of Gibeon who tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them

**inauguration** – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

**Jericho** – Canaanite city that was conquered by Joshua and the Israelites through God's miraculous intervention

**Joshua** – Leader of Israel after the death of Moses who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land and faithfully distributed Israel's tribal inheritances

**judges** – Special deliverers commissioned by God to release Israel from their oppressors after Joshua's death and before the monarchy began

**Moses** – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national “covenant of law” and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

**Mount Ebal** – Mountain in the heart of the Promised Land near Mount Gerizim and Shechem where Israel renewed their covenant with God in the days of Joshua

**Mount Gerizim** – Mountain in the heart of the Promised Land near Mount Ebal and Shechem where Israel renewed their covenant with God in the days of Joshua

**nachal** – Hebrew verb (transliteration) meaning “to inherit”

**nachalah** – Hebrew noun (transliteration) meaning “inheritance”

**new covenant** – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

**Noth, Martin** – (1902-1968) Influential German scholar who wrote *The Deuteronomistic History* and other books detailing his hypotheses on the history of Israel

**Pentateuch** – First five books of the Old Testament

**Phinehas** – Son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron; high priest after his father; known for his zealous faith

**Primary History** – The history of Israel that stretches from Genesis through Kings, excluding Ruth

**Promised Land** – The land that God promised to give as an inheritance to Abraham and his descendants

**Rahab** – Gentile woman who helped the spies when they entered the Promised Land; included as a part of the people of Israel after the conquest of Jericho

**Septuagint** – Greek translation of the Old Testament

**Shechem** – City located near Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Abraham built his first altar in the land of Canaan and where Israel renewed their covenant with God in the days of Joshua

**Talmud** – Collection of rabbinic teachings on Jewish civil and ceremonial law spanning approximately 600 years, beginning in the first century A.D.

**Transjordan** – The lands to the east of the Jordan River where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh received permission to settle (lit. “across the Jordan”)