

An Introduction to Joshua

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – an introduction and overview of the book of Joshua
2. aim – to cause us to understand the relevance and value of this book to our lives today
3. passage – Joshua 1:5-9

b. outline

1. An Overview of the Book of Joshua
2. An Outline of the Book of Joshua
3. An Objective of the Book of Joshua

c. overview

1. the **reasons** for choosing this book as our next sermon series
 - a. another book that starts with a “J” (**i.e.** James, Jude, Joshua)
 - b. a book I’ve never preached through (*even topically*, although I have taught through it in SS)
 - c. a “shorter” book (**i.e.** one that will take less total time to preach; in bigger pericopes)
 - d. an *Old Testament* book (**i.e.** my habit to use an OT work to “fill in” between NT series)
 - e. an *historical* book (contra the deep theological & doctrinal content of James & Jude)
 - f. an *obscure* book
 1. because Joshua is *overshadowed* by Moses (only mentioned about **10x** after this book)
 2. because the Conquest under Joshua was only *partial* and *incomplete* (**Judges 2:23**)
 3. because the book is about *events* that appear only “slightly” relevant to the NT gospel
2. the **purpose** of an introduction sermon
 - a. to establish *details* – to understand the simple details of the book
 1. **i.e.** who wrote it, when it was written, to whom it was written, why it was accepted, etc.
 - b. to establish *context* – because **“a text without a context is a pretext for a prooftext”**
 1. a **grammatical-historical** approach to Scripture insists that anything taken from the Bible (**i.e.** a word, verse, passage, or whole book) must be taken from the perspective *of the author*
 - a. **i.e.** to make sure we understand *why* the book was written, and what the author intended
 - c. to establish *interest* – to give us an initial desire to enter into it
 1. **i.e.** an opening designed to *transition* into the book – to establish *excitement* about it

I. An Overview of the Book of Joshua

Content

a. the title of the book

1. named for its primary character
 - a. unlike the books of the Pentateuch (which are named for their *primary topic*)
 - b. the *first* of a number of “personally named” books (**i.e.** Samuel, Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Neh., Job)

b. the author of the book

1. the **traditional** view: authorship by Joshua himself
 - a. fully assumed by the Jews in the First Century (**i.e.** in the Talmud) and by the early church
 - b. based on the “first person” nature of the text (**i.e.** historical and geographical details)
 - c. based on the “immediate” nature of various details in the text (**e.g.** **6:25**)
“But Rahab the prostitute and her father’s household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day ...”
2. the view of **John Calvin**: authorship by a priest just after the close of the events
 - a. based on the inclusion of Joshua’s death at the end (**see below**)
3. the **liberal** view: authorship by a later historian (during the Exile, c. 587BC)
 - a. often assumed about all of the early books (esp. the Pentateuch)
 - b. because of the inclusion of “impossible” details (**e.g.** the death of Joshua; **24:29ff**)
 1. but, explainable as an *addendum* by another author “finishing” the work
 2. **e.g.** Joshua appending the death of Moses to Deuteronomy; here, a priest adding the death of Joshua to this narrative to complete the work
 - c. because of the inclusion of “unknown” archeological locations (**e.g.** Jericho, Ai)
 1. but, explainable as *first person* contact (**i.e.** location names *often* change, **e.g.** Istanbul)

- d. because of the “problem” of writing by ancient Israelites (**i.e.** as unlikely)
 1. but, explainable from the word “Book” in **1:8** – God *himself* refers to the writings of Moses as a “book” (**i.e.** a unit of writing coming from a single author), thus validating the idea that Moses (and Joshua) were both literate *and* able to write, even in ancient Hebrew
 2. and, explainable from the concept of *inspiration* – the Holy Spirit was perfectly capable to use men **of the time** to record events known to them **as forms of Scripture**
 - a. our understanding of NT inspiration holds this position: Paul wrote about events and realities *in his own life*, and no one (except liberal scholars) assumes that someone *later* must have written his letters

c. the date and location of the book

1. the date of authorship would *naturally* be connected to its author
 - a. the liberal position: post-587BC, during the time of Exile (**i.e.** a part of the “history” of Israel)
 - b. the traditional position: c. 1350BC, near the end of Joshua’s life, from somewhere in Canaan
 1. given a *traditional* date of the Exodus c. 1440BC
 - a. **IMO:** the “scholarly” date of the Exodus of c. 1250BC does not leave enough time between the Conquest and David’s ascension (c. 970BC) for the period of the Judges and Saul
 2. so, 40 years of wilderness wandering, the Conquest beginning c. 1400BC plus the rest of the 110 years of Joshua’s life (**24:29**) = c. 1350BC

d. the reason(s) for the book

1. as a *reminder* to the immediate people (of Joshua’s day) of:
 - a. the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in which *they* have now participated
 1. **i.e.** they have seen the promise of **Genesis 13:14-17; 15:13-16** with their own eyes
 - b. their commitment to God in covenant in their new land (**chap. 24**)
2. as a *beginning* of the **Deuteronomic history** to future generations
 - a. the book begins with the word “and” (Hebrew *waw*) – linking it to the *previous* book
 1. Genesis does *not* begin with “and,” for it is the beginning link
 2. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers all start with “and” – they are linked to Genesis
 3. but, Deuteronomy does *not* begin with “and,” for it is the *start* of a new link (**i.e.** a new law)
 4. so, the “and” of Joshua links it to a *new* historical structure
 - b. Genesis → Numbers is the *patriarchal* period – the *promise* of a people and a land
 - c. Deuteronomy → Joshua is the *fulfillment* period – the promise fulfilled *literally* as given
 1. in Deuteronomy, the law is *repeated* as the beginning of a new phase of Israelite history

II. An Outline of the Book of Joshua

Content

a. a simple division

1. **chaps. 1-12** – the *conquest* of the land; **chaps. 13-24** – the *distribution* of the land
 - a. note the “summary” of the victories of both Moses and Joshua in **chap. 12**
 - b. note the word of the Lord that came to Joshua in **13:1-7**
 1. “Joshua, you are old and it is time to divide up the land that has been taken ...”
 2. the clean-up of the Conquest will continue under the Judges until complete in the days of David

b. a natural division

1. based on a key Hebrew word at the beginning of each section
 - a. *‘abar* – cross the Jordan into the land (**chaps. 1-5**)
 - b. *laqakh* – take the land (**chaps. 6-12**)
 - c. *khalaq* – divide the land (**chaps. 13-21**)
 - d. *‘abad* – serve the Lord in the land (**chaps. 22-24**)

c. a topical division

1. the relationship of the people to God *in the land*
 - a. God brings them *into* the land – he gives them what he promised to Abraham
 - b. God *settles* them in the land – he gives them peace as a nation in their own place
 - c. God *covenants* with them (again) in the land – he *reestablishes* a relationship to himself there

III. An Objective of the Book of Joshua

Content

a. a practical objective of this book

1. with **Joshua** as the primary character – with Joshua as a “type” of Christ in the OT
 - a. to see the concept of *faithfulness to God* through the faithfulness of Joshua
 1. thus, to see the faithfulness of Christ to the Father in his work of “conquest” over sin
 - b. to see the concept of *leadership* through the leadership abilities of Joshua
 1. thus, to see the leadership of Christ to “take” a people to their “promised” land
 - c. to see the concept of *humility* through the humble nature of Joshua in relationship to God
 1. thus, to see the humility of Christ as he puts himself “in danger” to fulfill the decree of God

b. a theological objective of this book

1. with **Yahweh** as the primary character – with *his power* standing over Joshua
 - a. a summation of **Joshua 1:1-4** = the command to go and take the land
 - b. a summation of **Joshua 1:5-9** to us as those set apart by God **to be his people**
 1. **i.e.** what does it mean to be the people of God (as the Israelites were)?
 2. **v. 6** – the need for *courage* in the face of tremendous evil, threatening to pull us from him
 3. **v. 7** – the need for *obedience* to the law of God as central to a relationship with the Lord
 4. **v. 8** – the need for *meditation* on the Word of God as the central authority of communal life
 5. **v. 9** – the need for *steadfastness* as a people for God to prosper (as his church) in the world
 - c. a summation of **Joshua 1:5-9** to us as those set apart by God **to be his servants**
 1. **i.e.** what does it mean to be the servants of God (as the Israelites were)?
 2. **v. 6** – the need for *courage* in the face of great personal obstacles to the gospel advance
 3. **v. 7** – the need for *obedience* to the law of God as the governing force of going out with it
 4. **v. 8** – the need for *meditation* on the Word of God as the substance of the gospel
 5. **v. 9** – the need for *steadfastness* against fear for God to be with us as we go into hostile territory
2. Joshua is a book that:
 - a. reminds *the people of the time* of the historical reality of the Conquest (**Joshua 24:14-15**)

“Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
 - b. demonstrates *for us* the nature of Christ through the “shadow” of Joshua serving as a *type* of him
 1. Joshua’s faithfulness, leadership, and humility all point to the One who would come as Messiah to lead a great Conquest against the “last enemy”: sin and death itself
 - c. **reminds us, the people of God (the new elect people of Yahweh), of what it will take as we go out and claim the promises of God made to us in Christ Jesus and in his kingdom**
 1. that the gospel shall conquer this world, and that evil shall not prevail against what God has promised to his Son (**Matthew 16:18**)

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [this profession of me as the Christ, the Son of the Living God] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
 2. **courage, obedience, meditation on the Word of God, and steadfastness in the face of fear as we go into hostile territory with the Promise of God to establish us in “Canaan”**