

JOSHUA Chapters 1 to 24: God's First Leader in Israel

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| ◆ How God chose Joshua to follow Moses | ◆ The importance of waiting on God |
| ◆ The importance of fully obeying God | ◆ Miracles of God come in many ways |
| ◆ Trusting God to destroy the enemy | ◆ How one person's sin affected others |
| ◆ God's plans are better than our plans | ◆ How one person's faith saves us today |

THIS BOOK tells how Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan. He followed the example of Moses and learned many things from him and from God. He obeyed God and lived a holy life. As a result, he saw many miracles in the occupation of Canaan. The people of Israel trusted Joshua and learned how to obey God. They also learned how personal sin hinders the purpose of God for themselves and for others. They were given rest and peace in the Promised Land by following their leader and standing up against the enemies of God. They waited on God then saw how their enemies made wrong decisions which lead to their own defeat. Joshua was a former slave in Egypt and a spy in Canaan. God used him as the first of many leaders of Israel. This book also tells how God used a prostitute to prepare the way for Jesus, the Jewish Messiah or Christ, who came to save the world from sin.

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JOSHUA

God's first Leader in Israel

A Bible Teaching Commentary in easy-to-read Worldwide English for personal or group study

by Fred Morris



Joshua Chapters

1 to 24

To the reader or leader

These Bible teaching commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way that is easy to read and understand. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



Now read this: Where you see this sign, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible first before reading the words in this book.



Talk about this: Where you see this sign, there are questions that can be asked in a group study. These questions help the reader to understand the Bible.



Think about this: Where you see this sign, the question requires more time and personal meditation.



Pray about this: Where you see this sign, it is time to ask God to help you to understand what you have read. Talk with Him about how to apply these things in your own life. Ask Jesus to pray to His heavenly Father for you and for others. Praise God for the changes He brings.



Where you see this sign, the information inside the box is mainly for Bible students, teachers and preachers.

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So Israel became a great and holy nation during the time of Joshua. They served God but they did not rule the world. However, their example of holiness brought glory to God in the world at that time. The nations around Israel feared Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel.

Joshua fought and won many battles. He was encouraged and used by God into old age. Remember to share with children and with adults what God did through great people like Moses and Joshua. Remember, too, that the first convert in Canaan was Rahab. Her faith served Israel and changed the world. She became an ancestor of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Through the people of Israel, the world now has the choice to receive salvation in Yeshua, Jesus Christ. Jesus was not called to rule the people of Israel. God, His Father, sent Him to serve Israel and to serve the people of the world. He came to bring everyone back to Almighty God. Many people today are waiting for Jesus to return to rule as the promised Messiah.

The book of Joshua shows us the plan of God for His people to live in peace and security. It shows us the plan of God to bring salvation to the world through Jesus Christ. Israel saw many miracles at the time of Joshua. And the whole world saw many miracles of God through Jesus and His followers. Through the miracles of God and through faith in Jesus Christ we are saved today. This is because in Christ we can have victory over personal sin through His sacrifice on the cross.

Israel renewed their covenant with God at the time of Joshua. We believe the whole world can receive a new covenant with God through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

INTRODUCTION

When the people of Israel escaped from Egypt, they travelled through the desert to God's Promised Land of Canaan. Because of sin and disobedience, the journey lasted 40 years. During this time, Joshua helped Moses to lead the people. Everyone learned to trust in Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel. The people of Israel were the special people of God. There were many things to learn from Him.

Joshua was born as a slave in Egypt. On the journey to Canaan, Moses sent Joshua as a spy into Canaan.

Joshua believed that everything God said would come true if the people obeyed God (Numbers 14:6–8). He saw and believed that the land of Canaan was God's special plan for the people of Israel. So the theme of the Book of Joshua is about 'trusting and obeying God completely'.

Five hundred years before Joshua, God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's family (Genesis 17:8). He made the same promise to Abraham's son Isaac and to his grandson Jacob. Jacob was later called Israel by God.

God did not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land. This was because he became angry and did not give glory to God (Numbers 20:1–12). So the Book of Joshua tells how God used Joshua to lead the people of Israel after Moses died.

Moses brought the Law of God to the people of Israel. Joshua brought faith in God and victory. He led the people of Israel to win battles against the evil people who lived in Canaan. With Joshua as their leader, we see how:

- God kept His promises that He made to Abraham and his grandson Jacob whom God called Israel.
- God blessed the people of Israel who obeyed Him. They received the land that He had promised.
- God gave His people victory over sin in their lives and over sin in the land of Canaan.

First, Joshua had to lead the people of Israel across the River Jordan. Then they had to destroy the evil people who lived there. These people were the families of Canaan, one of Noah's grandsons. Noah cursed Canaan because of his evil ways (Genesis 9:20–25).

The people of Israel learned how to live as God's holy nation. They possessed the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. Then Joshua divided it among the twelve tribes of Israel. The people were later known as Jews.

God promised Abraham three things. God promised a special land, a special nation and a special Saviour. Through the promised Messiah of Israel, God would bring blessing to all nations in the world (Genesis 12:1–3).

God used Moses and Joshua in His plan for the land and nation of Israel. Then, 1500 years later, God sent the Messiah as Saviour. He came first to Israel. Jesus was born in Israel as Christ, the Messiah and Son of God. He came down from heaven to save the world from sin (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus in the Jewish language is Yeshua, which means 'Saviour God'.

WHO WAS JOSHUA?

Joshua was a slave and a spy who became a great leader. He learned to serve Moses and to obey God.

Joshua grew up in Egypt. His father and mother were slaves. They called their son 'Hoshea'. Hoshea's mother and father believed that Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, would save the people from their cruel masters in Egypt. The salvation of Israel happened through Moses at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.

Later, Moses gave to young Hoshea the Hebrew name 'Joshua' (Numbers 13:16). This name means 'God saves'. Joshua became Moses' helper. He wanted to obey God. He learned much from the life of Moses. God trained him to become a great leader.

After Moses died, Joshua led God's people and helped to save them from their enemies. He stood firm and fought against evil. He served God and his people until the end of his life.

If we obey God's word, we too can see Him change the lives of people around us.

Moses told Joshua, 'The Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you' (Deuteronomy 31:6). When we answer God's call, He goes before us. He leads us into the 'land of His promise'.

Joshua saw many miracles that God did. He had some amazing victories. At all times he had to obey God. God used him to build a holy nation that was peaceful but surrounded by evil nations.



Joshua was:

- a slave in Egypt with the people of Israel
- a soldier for the people of Israel
- a follower of Moses and a servant of God
- a spy in the Promised Land of Canaan.
- the first leader of God's people in Canaan since Abraham.
- a part of God's salvation plan for the world through Jesus.

So there was peace in Israel. Then Joshua, the servant of God and leader of Israel, died at the age of 110 years. They buried him in that part of the land which he inherited (24:29).

The words of Joshua encourage us all to be holy people before God, to worship Him and to obey His commands. Joshua also shows us the importance of seeking God's guidance in all that we do. He remained obedient throughout the time he fought against the enemies of God. As a result, 'Israel served the Lord God Almighty as long as Joshua lived. They saw for themselves everything that God promised to do for Israel' (24:31).



Talk about this:

1. What was the risk when the people of Israel found peace (24:19–20)?
2. Why did Joshua set up a stone of witness for the people of Israel (24:27)?
3. How did Joshua serve God in his old age?



Think about this: How can we continue to remember what God has done? How can we share His good news?



Pray about this: Ask God to show you how to encourage others to remember Him. Talk with Him about ways to teach each new generation of children and young people. Ask Jesus for ways to do His work into old age.

CONCLUSIONS

Joshua became the first leader of Israel in the promised land of Canaan. He was called by God to follow and replace Moses. He obeyed God and was blessed by God. God blessed the people of Israel through Joshua. He spent a lot of time meeting with God (Exodus 33:11).

The people of Israel proved that God is faithful. They also learned that personal sin hinders the purposes of God. They learned that the sin of one person can bring trouble for all the people. God keeps His promises to everyone who trusts in Him and obeys His word. God is always on the side of believers who oppose evil.

Joshua was God's chosen leader. He was not a prophet. He was not a priest. He was not a king. He did not work miracles. Joshua was not called to rule the people of Israel. He was called by God to lead and to serve them by teaching them the truth of God. God used him to possess the land and to establish the holy nation of Israel in Canaan. This was God's plan spoken to Abraham many years before.

If the people of God disobeyed Him, they would receive the punishment they deserved. Today, the people of God are saved from the punishment they deserve when they put their trust in God's Son, Jesus.

Let us therefore look at the empty cross of Jesus to remind us of God's promise to save everyone who believes in His Son. He was punished in our place. Jesus came to this world as the Son of God who was the promised Christ or Messiah. He died on the cross to take our punishment and to save us from our sins. After three days, God raised him from death and now He lives with Him in heaven.

Joshua then warned the people to destroy any remaining foreign idols and religious jewellery that they had kept. 'Give yourselves completely to the Lord, the God of Israel' (24:23). The people again replied: 'We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey Him' (24:24).

On that day, Joshua wrote down what the people promised to do (24:26). These things were added to the scroll containing the Law of God. This was God's renewed covenant with the people through His love and mercy.

THE PEACE OF GOD UNDER HIS COVENANT

Joshua set up a large stone to witness what had been agreed. Joshua remembered how God warned Moses that the people of Israel would disobey Him and worship foreign gods (Deuteronomy 31:14–21). God gave Moses a song to remind the people of the words of Almighty God (Deuteronomy 31:22). Joshua also remembered how God commanded him to be strong and brave when he entered the Promised Land (Deut. 31:23).

Joshua's large stone of witness reminded the people that they had promised to serve Almighty God and Him alone. But if they didn't stay true to Him then the stone would be a witness against them (Joshua 24:27).

As we go about our lives, occupying our 'land', we often forget what God has commanded us to do in this world. We must read His word daily. And we should remember our New Covenant given to us through God's love and mercy shown in Jesus.

So the people of Israel possessed the Promised Land of God. They received God's peace, purpose and provision. The Bible says that they entered into His rest (21:44; 22:4). God had not finished leading them. Nor must they finish obeying Him as holy people.

God has not finished with us! He will go on working in and through us until we reach heaven. Without Him, we cannot have fruitful lives (John 15:5).

The book of Joshua is about a slave from Egypt who became God's first leader of Israel in the land of Canaan which God promised to Abraham.



Now read this: Joshua 1:1–9

MOSES DIES AND GOD SPEAKS TO JOSHUA

Joshua was blessed and used by God on the way to the Promised Land. He led the men of Israel to win a battle against the Amalekite tribe while Moses prayed (Exodus 17:8–16).

After Moses died, Joshua listened to God's voice for himself (Joshua 1:1). The first command God gave to Joshua was, 'Get ready to go across the River Jordan' (1:2). So Joshua led the people forward for them to receive what God had promised.

We, too, must go forward in life. We must seek God and find what He has planned for us. If we do this, we will be a blessing to others.

God then said to Joshua and to the people, 'I have given you every place you walk on as I promised Moses' (1:3). He also gave Joshua the faith to receive victory over evil people and the bad things that they did.

God then promised Joshua that in the future the people of Israel would occupy the land of Canaan. God promised them all the land from the desert in the south to Lebanon in the north. Also the land from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the River Euphrates in the east (1:4).

God also promised Joshua (1:5):

- 'No-one will be able to stand against you so long as you live.'
- 'I will be with you just as I was with Moses.'
- 'I will never leave you.'

That was God's promise to Joshua and to Israel. In the strength of that promise they went forward into the Promised Land. Then God showed Joshua the right way to live (1:7–9):

- 'Be strong and very brave.'
- 'Obey all the Law. Do not turn to the right or to the left.'
- 'Think about it during the day and the night.' Read it again and again.

The secret of the success of the people of Israel is found in Joshua 1:5–9. God can use us, too, if we are holy people and obedient to Him. We can do even more through Jesus Christ our Saviour (Philippians 4:13).



Talk about this:

1. Describe the things God told Joshua to do (1:6–9).
2. How can we have rest and overcome troubles in our lives (1:7–8)?
3. What is the most important law of Moses (Mark 12:29–30)?

 **Think about this:** What message does the Book of Joshua have for slaves, spies or sinners like us? Joshua was a follower of Moses; who do we follow?

 **Pray about this:** Ask God to make you holy and obedient in your work for Him. Talk to Him about how to overcome the sin within you and around you. Thank Jesus for sacrificing His life to be our Leader and Saviour. Tell Jesus that you want to follow Him and to trust Father God more and more.

 Now read this: Joshua 1:10–18

OBEYING THE LAW GOD GAVE TO MOSES

Now Joshua was ready to walk in and occupy the Promised Land of Canaan. He believed God that would happen. He commanded the officers (1:10) to prepare themselves for whatever lay ahead. And he commanded the officers to tell the same message to the people (1:11).

They also told the people to remember God's instructions and their earlier promises to God (1:13). Only as they did these things, would they receive God's rest in the land (1:15). The instructions from God were for every part of the people's lives. They included laws for justice, for holiness, for health, for worship and for war.

Joshua then told the strong men of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh to get ready for battle. They lived east of the River Jordan. However, they must first cross over the River Jordan and help their brothers (1:14). Joshua said, 'You must help them until God gives them rest' (1:15).

There are some believers who must be at the front of the spiritual battle, including prayer battles. They must be ready for battles against spiritual enemies. They help others to find God's purpose and His rest.

The people promised to obey Joshua. They said to him, 'May Almighty God be with you, just as he was with Moses' (1:17). They would listen to him as long as he listened to God. They wanted Joshua to be strong and brave and successful (1:18). The people were faithful to God and to Joshua.

It is important to encourage the leaders in our churches in this way today.

Under the Old Testament Covenant, if people disobeyed God they would die or be punished (1:18). Christians know that Jesus took our punishment of death by dying on the cross for our sins.

If we disobey God and refuse to seek His forgiveness then we bring upon ourselves spiritual death. This means eternal separation from God. Sin separates us from the love of God now and destroys our future life with Him.

 **Pray about this:** Ask God to show you the wonderful things that He can do at any age of your life. Talk to God about your ministry in times of trouble and in times of peace. Ask Him to show you how to enjoy the good times together, and how to love and support each other when things go wrong.

JOSHUA CALLS ISRAEL TO RENEW GOD'S COVENANT

The elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel stood together in the sight of God (24:1). It is good to call meetings of church leaders. It is even better to stand and listen to what God has to say.

Joshua spoke the word of God to them (24:2–13). God reminded them of all the good things He had done for them.

Joshua called Israel to 'choose for yourselves right now whom you will serve. You can serve the gods in the land of Egypt. Or you can choose the gods of Canaan where you are now living. But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord our God' (24:14–15).

Joshua wanted the people to give their hearts fully to Yahweh, the one true God of Israel, not to false foreign gods.

In his final days, Joshua repeated to the people of Israel the words of Almighty God. 'This is what the Lord says...' (24:2). He trusted fully in God and he wanted the people of Israel to do the same. He knew also that God would bring big trouble if they served other gods.

The people answered Joshua, 'We will never leave Yahweh, Almighty God, to serve other gods!' (24:16). We too will serve the Lord because he is our God' (24:18).

Joshua did not fully trust the people. He was afraid they would do wrong. He was afraid that God would punish them.

He said, 'You are not able to serve a holy God! He is a jealous God. If you serve other gods... He will turn against you. He won't forgive you when you disobey Him. He won't forgive you when you sin against Him (24:19). He will bring trouble on you. He will destroy you, even though He has been good to you' (24:20).

The people answered Joshua. They said again, 'No, not so! We will serve the Lord!' (24:21).

Joshua knew what the people were like. They would end up being punished for their sins unless they stayed faithful to the one true God. They should obey His holy law. They should worship Him in the way that He commanded at that time.

'Be careful to obey everything that is written in the Law of Moses. Don't turn away from it to the right or to the left' (23:6).

'Don't copy any of the people of the nations that remain among you. Don't use the names of their gods for any reason at all. Don't take oaths and make promises in their names. You must not serve them. You must not bow down to them' (23:7).

'You must remain true to Yahweh, the Almighty Lord your God, just as you have done until now' (23:8).

Seven times in the Old Testament Joshua warned the people about the dangers of foreign religions in their land.

Then Joshua reminded them that 'no-one has been able to fight against you and win. One of you can chase a thousand away. That's because Almighty God fights for you, just as he promised he would' (23:10). If God's people are faithful in small things, God will do big things, even miracles.

Then Joshua taught them what to do so that they learned to trust God more. 'Be very careful to love the Lord your God' (23:11). When you know His command, you should obey at once. Then you will go on to do greater miracles for God. Our trust in God enables us to know Him and to do His work.

Again, Joshua instructed them not to mix with or marry any of the Canaanites who were left alive (23:12). 'If that happens, you will be destroyed or removed from this good land' (23:16). Therefore, any idols that remain in the land must be destroyed.

Joshua knew the sinful nature of all people. He knew how easy it is to forget the faithfulness of God and His love and His guidelines for holy living. He knew how easy it is to be attracted or seduced by spirits from other religions. These other religions do not come from the Holy Spirit of Almighty God.

God still used Joshua in his old age, as the leader of His people at that time. His age did not hinder him from trusting, obeying and serving God.

Talk about this:

1. What did Joshua and the people of God do during a time of peace?
2. Why is it important not to follow foreign religions (23:7,12-13)?
3. Why is it important to be faithful in doing small things for God (23:10)?

 **Think about this:** Describe in your own words what Joshua said to the people in 23:3-12. Include these seven words: 'praise'; 'warn'; 'encourage'; 'obey'; 'remind'; 'teach'; 'instruct'.

Then we lose our purpose in life and we lose God's provision and peace or 'rest'.

Talk about this:

1. How did Joshua instruct the people? What role do church leaders have today (1:10-15)?
2. What promise did the people make to Joshua? (1:17)
3. What prayer did the people have for Joshua? (1:17)
4. What support did the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh give to the other tribes of Israel?

 **Think about this:** How should we support our church leaders and other believers?

 **Pray about this:** Ask God for good leaders in your church. Tell Him that you want to know how to support them and others in the church. Ask Jesus to encourage everyone to support his or her church leaders. Ask Him for the power and guidance of His Holy Spirit.

Now read this: Joshua 2:1-24

TWO SPIES GO TO JERICHO

Joshua sent two spies to look at the strong walled city of Jericho (2:1). At that time Canaan had many small but strong walled cities. Each city had its own king who also ruled over the farms and villages.

The spies went out and obeyed their leader. They went out as servants of Israel. They believed in God's purpose and plan. They trusted only in God's power to keep them safe.

The two spies came to the city gates of Jericho and saw an inn. It was owned by Rahab, a prostitute (2:1). Other foreigners went there so the two spies went there. They would not be turned away. The inn was on the city wall. It was an easy place for a quick escape.

Somebody told the king of Jericho that two spies from Israel had gone to the inn. Rahab told the king that the two men had already left Jericho (2:5). 'Go after them quickly. You will catch them before they reach the river!'

Rahab had hidden the spies under stalks of flax which she had laid out to dry in the sun. She said to them, 'We've heard about... the Lord your God in heaven above and on earth below (2:10-11). Promise me... that you will show kindness to my family' (2:13).

'We will give up our lives to save your life', the spies promised. So she let them escape by a rope through the window.

'Go to the hills so they will not find you,' she told them. 'Hide yourselves

there for three days until they return' (2:16). So they escaped to the west instead of to the east. In this way Rahab, a sinner, saved the spies. She showed that she trusted in the Almighty God of Israel. Her faith and her request for help later saved her life (6:23).

The spies returned safely to Joshua and they told him what had happened. 'All the people are weak with fear because of us,' they told Joshua (2:24). God had prepared for the people of Israel to enter and take the Promised Land. He went before them.

 **Now read this: Joshua 3:1–17**

ISRAEL PREPARES TO GO INTO THE PROMISED LAND

The people got ready to cross over into the land of Canaan. They moved to the banks of the River Jordan, where they camped before crossing over (3:1).

After three days the officers gave orders to the people. They said, 'Watch for the Ark of the Covenant of Almighty God. The priests will be carrying it. When you see it, you must move out and follow it. But don't go near the Ark' (3:3–4). God shows us what to do and the way to go. But He does not always show us what lies ahead.

The Ark of the Covenant was a large box, over 1m long. It was made of wood and covered with gold. It had a lid made of pure gold. Inside the Ark were the Ten Commandments which God gave to Moses.

Long poles were placed through the rings that were fixed to the Ark. These were used to carry the Ark. There were four rings, two on each side.

Joshua spoke to the people. He said, 'Set yourselves apart and give yourselves fully to Almighty God' (3:5).



A prostitute has faith in Almighty God

Rahab believed in Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel. She said, 'Yahweh your God, He is the God in Heaven above and on Earth below' (2:11). So she helped the two spies from Israel (2:12-21). When God later destroyed Jericho, Rahab and all her family were saved (6:23). They were accepted into the family of God as people who believed Him.

Later, Rahab married and had a son, Boaz, who married Ruth. Ruth and Boaz had a son, Obed, who became the grandfather of Israel's King David (Matthew 1:5). So God blessed the new faith of Rahab. She repented and became a believer and an ancestor of King David. David was an ancestor of Joseph, whose wife Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God (Matthew 1:16). It is amazing the changes that God can make in people. It is also amazing the plans that God has for those who believe Him. God used the faith of a prostitute to change the world through Jesus.

The men from the eastern tribes of Israel replied that their altar was not a place of worship. The altar was to remind all future generations that the eastern tribes belonged to God and to Israel. It was not a place of sacrifice (22:27). Everyone went home happy and praising God (22:32–33). They named the altar 'A witness between us all that Yahweh is God' (22:34).



Talk about this:

1. Why were the six cities of safety?
2. What were the 48 cities of the Levites?
3. How were the Levites helped and supplied with food?
4. Why was it risky that many Canaanites lived as slaves in the land of Israel?
5. Why were the elders of Israel afraid when they heard about a new altar (22:16–20)?
6. What would the new altar remind the people of Israel about in the future (22:27–29)?



Think about this: How can altars and buildings help or hinder the worship of God?



Pray about this: Ask God to help you to understand where, when and how you can worship Him. Ask Jesus to show you simple ways to remind you to worship God our Father daily.



Now read this: Joshua 23 and 24

ISRAEL RESTS AND JOSHUA SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

The Lord gave Israel rest from all their enemies around them. There was peace (23:1). Joshua was now very old. So he called all the leaders, judges and officials of Israel to come to his town (23:2). He still had important things to do and to say.

He praised God before the people. 'You have seen everything Almighty God has done. You have seen what He has done to all of those nations because of you. He fought for you' (23:3). God did many miracles. And He promised to push out the remaining enemies of Israel. As Israel moved by faith into other parts of the Promised Land, God pushed their enemies out (23:5).

Then Joshua warned and encouraged them always to believe and obey God fully. They must be loyal to their God.

Abraham. The twelve tribes took it over and then settled down there. God gave them peace and rest on every side. That's what He had promised their fathers He would do. Not one of their enemies was able to fight against Israel and win. He kept all of the good promises that He had made to the people of Israel. Every one of them came true' (21:43–45).

This shows how faithful God is. However, many Canaanites remained in the land as slaves. They and their gods tested how faithful God's people were in their true worship and obedience.

THE MEN OF THE EASTERN TRIBES RETURN HOME

The soldiers from Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, had settled their families on the east of the Jordan (12:6). They had promised to fight with the other tribes of Israel to win the Promised Land of Canaan. Now the Lord kept that promise. These men were sent back to their homes east of the River Jordan.

There are times when God calls us to help other believers. There are also times when this calling will cease or change.

Joshua gave them this advice: 'Be very careful to keep the commandment and the Law that Moses gave you. He commanded you to love the Lord your God. He told you to live holy lives. He told you to obey His commands. He told you to remain true to Him, Yahweh, our Almighty God. He told you to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul' (22:5).

Joshua gave the eastern tribes his blessing before he sent them home (22:6). He said, 'Take your great wealth with you. Return home with your large numbers of animals. Take your silver, gold, bronze and iron with you. Return with all the clothes you have taken from your enemies. Share them with your people' (22:8).

THEY BUILD A LARGE ALTAR

On the way home these tired men built a large altar (22:10). It was at Geliloth near the River Jordan. When the other tribes heard this, they were afraid that God would punish them all.

When the elders of Israel heard about this, they too were afraid. A second place of worship would divide the nation and it might make God angry with them. The elders sent Phinehas, with ten others, to find out more about this new altar (22:13). They chose to talk and not to fight their brothers.

The elders asked them why they had built the altar. They warned, 'Don't disobey the Lord for He will be angry with the whole congregation' (22:18). 'Don't turn against us by building an altar for yourselves' (22:19).

Each person should live a holy life so that God could use all of them. God is holy and He calls all His people to be holy (1 Peter 1:14–16). Each person can then be a good example to others.

If the people of Israel had sin in their camp, then their hearts were not clean. They were not ready for God to use them. They should be holy. They must reject the sinful ways of the people who lived in Egypt and in Canaan. They should seek God's mercy to forgive their sin. Then they could serve the living God fully (Hebrews 9:14). Each person should be holy, not just the leaders.

Joshua said to the people 'Tomorrow, Yahweh God will do amazing things among you' (Joshua 3:5). It takes faith to believe what we cannot see. Only a heart full of faith believes for a miracle from God.

As they prepared to enter the land, God did a miracle. This proved His mighty power and made Israel believe Him more strongly.

The River Jordan was wide and deep. Crossing such a large river was not possible for everyone. Most of them were not born when Israel crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14). Would God do another miracle?

Joshua and the people waited for God to lead. When we follow God, we must go as far as we can, and then we wait for Him. He will make a way for us to go forward. Then we must obey. We will know the way to go or what to do (Joshua 3:3–4).



GOD PREPARES THE PEOPLE TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND

God gave instructions first to the leaders, then to the people, then to the priests. Finally He personally encouraged Joshua. Everyone heard clearly what God told them to believe and to do.

Joshua then told the priests to walk with the Ark of the Covenant in front of the people (3:6). God promised Joshua that He would be with him just as He was with Moses (3:7). God's personal promise to Joshua included these words: 'Today I will begin to honour you in the eyes of all of the people of Israel.'

The priests took the lead in doing God's will. It was their work. They served the Lord in the Tabernacle and ministered to the people. Joshua told the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the people. It contained the Ten Commandments from God. The people should not move forward without God going ahead of them.

Joshua said 'You shall stand still... hear the words of the Lord your God ... and know that the living God is among you' (3:8-10). Joshua spoke these words on the bank of the River Jordan when it was in full flood. The enemies of God were on the other side. It was God's advice to 'stand still and know God' before moving forward. He also prepared a plan for the people. The people should wait. They should listen to hear God and then obey Him. We should do this, too.

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE PEOPLE TO CROSS OVER

Joshua then told the people God's plan. First he told the priests what to do: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan River, go into the water and stand there' (3:8).

Then he spoke to the people: 'Come here. Listen to what Almighty God is saying. You will soon know that the living God is among you. You can be sure that He will drive out the people who are now living in the land. He will do it to make room for you' (3:9-10). That was an amazing promise!

The priests, who carried the Ark of the Lord, must step into the river. 'Its waters will pile up in one place. That's how you will know that the living God is among you' (3:13).

The people believed what God told Joshua. They obeyed and they got ready to go across the Jordan River. The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them (3:14).

The priests stepped into the water. Then the water they were standing in moved away and no more water came down the river. The waters were held back 20km away at a town called Adam near Zarethan (3:16).

All the people obeyed God and walked across the riverbed. The priests with the Ark stood in the riverbed until the whole nation of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan River (3:17).



Talk about this:

1. How did the people of Israel prepare to cross over the River Jordan (3:2-5)?
2. What was God's plan after the preparation was complete (3:8-17)?
3. Why was it important that each person should be holy before entering God's Promised Land?

town he asked for, Timnath-Serah, in the hill country of Ephraim (19:49-50). So the work of dividing up the land was finished (19:51).



Now read this: Joshua 20 to 22

CITIES OF SAFETY AND CITIES FOR PRIESTS

God told Moses to provide six cities of safety, three on each side of the Jordan River (20:2). Anyone who killed another person by accident could run to one of these cities. Then he could stay there until the people decided if he was guilty. He would be cared for by the Levite priests. He would be safe there from the relatives who wanted him killed (Numbers 35:6,13,15).

The Old Testament teaches that someone who murders another person must die. But Jesus taught that we must learn to love our enemies. We should no longer demand 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' (Matthew 5:38). We should not seek revenge in this way for a relative who has been killed (Romans 12:19).

At the time of Joshua, city-gate courts became normal (20:4). The elders of a city did all their public business at the city gate. There they decided if people were guilty. This included people who were accused of murder.

The Levite priests did not receive land of their own. 48 special towns were given to them as promised (21:41).

They were not in one place. These towns were in different places throughout the land given to the other tribes. They were given to the Levites to enable them to serve God and the people as priests. Each tribe gave offerings of food to the priests who served God in this way. God wanted the priests to live by faith in the provision of God's people.



A picture of an ancient judgement seat at the city gate of Dan in Israel. The gate is behind the wall.

'So God gave to Israel the land He had promised to the family of

The tribes of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh, Joseph's sons, were the next after Judah. They received land to the north of Judah (16:1). Their boundaries were set from near Jericho across to the Mediterranean Sea, near to Joppa (16:1–10). The other half of Manasseh was already occupied that land east of the Jordan River.

Some of the people of Canaan continued to live among the people of Ephraim. But they were forced to work hard as slaves for the people of Ephraim (16:10).

Five daughters of Zelophehad told Joshua of a promise that Moses made years earlier (17:3; Numbers 36:1–4). So Joshua gave land to these women in the way that the Lord told Moses (17:4).

Joshua continued to share the land of Canaan. 'But they did not drive out all the Canaanites... so the Canaanites became slaves' (16:10; 17:12–13). God told Israel very clearly to drive out or to destroy the evil Canaanites. But Israel did not obey God completely and this caused much trouble later for Israel. It still causes trouble today.

A SURVEY OF THE LAND

All Israel gathered at Shiloh, the place God had chosen for the Tabernacle (18:1). This became the central place of worship for all the tribes of Israel at that time.

Many battles had been fought and won, but there were still seven tribes without their inheritance (18:2). God had promised it, but they had not yet occupied the land.

'How long will you delay in occupying the land?' Joshua asked the leaders of the tribes. 'Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land, town by town' (18:4–9).

'You must divide the land up into seven shares. Write reports about those seven shares of land. Bring them here to me. Then I will cast lots for you in the sight of Almighty God' (18:6). This was part of the promised inheritance for the people of Israel, who later known as the Jews (Genesis 15:18–21).

Today, as Christians, we do not inherit land in the same way. All of God's people live wherever they are in His Kingdom, which is worldwide. The best inheritance is still to come: we will be with the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6).

JOSHUA RECEIVES HIS LAND

The tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan received land in the north. Simeon received part of the land of Judah in the south (19:9).

Joshua waited until the very last for his land. He did not ask for his share until all the others received their share. The people of Israel gave him the

 **Think about this:** What must happen before we can move forward in God's purpose? What hinders us from obeying God and moving forward with Him? How can you be ready to 'move forward with God' and to 'know the way to go' (3:3–4)?

 **Pray about this:** Ask God to share with you the next step in His plans for your life. Ask Him to go before you to prepare the way. Talk to Him about how to move forward in a sinful world and not to sin yourself. Praise God for the forgiveness and holiness that is freely given through Jesus. Ask Jesus for faith to believe He will guide you and protect you through His promised Holy Spirit.



Now read this: Joshua 4:1–24

GOD MAKES JOSHUA A GREAT LEADER

All the people crossed over safely. The first thing that God told Joshua to do was 'Choose one person from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Tell them to take twelve large stones from the riverbed where the priests stand' (4:1–3).

They were large stones washed smooth by the water. Each man could carry only one stone. All the people watched as the twelve stones were carried up out of the riverbed.



The tribes of Canaan that God destroyed (3:10)

Twenty-three times the Bible gives a list of tribes living in Canaan. At first the descendants of Canaan were too few to be listed, but by Joshua's time they had greatly increased.

Most Canaanites lived in the low lands. They were the original family tribe who moved there after the Great Flood. Canaan was their leader. He was the son of Ham and grandson of Noah. Noah cursed Canaan and his family (Genesis 9:25).

Other tribes that lived in the land of Canaan included:

- Hittites who were the children of Heth, son of Canaan.
- Hivites from the family Canaan.
- Jebusites who held the high land on which Jerusalem was built.
- Perizzites or Palestinians who no longer exist.
- Girgashites who were from the family of Ham the father of Canaan.
- Amorites who also lived on the high places of Canaan.

A longer list is given in Genesis 15:18–21. These are all the tribes who were punished and destroyed by God. God would drive out or destroy the Canaanites. The people of Israel must destroy the Canaanite gods and not copy their evil ways.

The stones were used as a memorial. Their children would see this heap of stones and they would remember God's miracle. They would look at the smooth flat stones. They would know that the stones were taken from the riverbed. They were not like any other stones. 'In days to come, your children will ask you what these stones mean' (4:6–7).

That day God encouraged all the people of Israel to put their trust in Joshua. They trusted him just as much as they trusted Moses (4:14).

Then God spoke to Joshua. He said, 'Command the priests to come up out of the Jordan riverbed, carrying the Ark with the Ten Commandments' (4:16).

Then the priests came up out of the river. As soon as they stepped out of the riverbed, the water of the Jordan began to flow again. It flowed over its banks, just as it did before.

God delivered His people to be a witness to all the world. 'He did it so that you will always have respect for Almighty God' (4:24). Years later, Jesus taught that all people who stand firm in their faith in God would be a witness to all nations (Matthew 24:13–14).

While Joshua lived, the people obeyed God. They did what Joshua said. God delivered them.

After Joshua died the people turned away from God. They began to worship the idols that the nations around them worshipped. The people forgot to tell their children what God did at the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River. They forgot to tell them how God fed them every day for 40 years. They forgot to teach them the commandments of Almighty God and to obey Him alone.

Joshua spoke to the people of Israel. He said, 'In days to come, your children after you will ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' Their parents must tell them, 'Israel went across the Jordan River on dry ground. Almighty God dried up the Jordan for you until you had gone across it. He did to the Jordan River the same thing He had done to the Red Sea. He dried up the Red Sea ahead of us until we had gone across it. He did it so that all of the nations on earth will know that He is Yahweh, our Almighty God.' (Joshua 4:21–24)



Follow Christ your leader

God wants us to go forward into our 'promised land' and possess what God has provided for us.

Joshua told the people, 'You must move out... and follow...' (3:3). 'Then you will know which way to go. You have not been this way before...' (3:4).

We must be ready to obey God. He wants the very best for us. He wants victory over all evil forces. He wants victory over sin within our lives and over the sin around us. The people of Israel chose to obey God and follow Joshua. When we choose to follow Christ, we should go the way God is leading and not where we want to go.



Think about this: How should we support church leaders and mission workers today?



Pray about this: Ask God to show you how you are called as a priest to serve Christ. Ask God to help you to serve other believers. Remember that they too are priests and followers of Jesus Christ. Ask Jesus to help you serve other believers in His church including the leaders.



Joshua chapters 14 to 19

CALEB TAKES HEBRON AND GIVES IT TO LEVI

Chapter 14 describes what happened next at Gilgal. This was the place where the people camped when they first crossed the River Jordan. Here Joshua, Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the tribes of Israel decided how to share the land that they had won (14:1).

Caleb and Joshua were the oldest men in Israel. Now Caleb stepped forward with a special request. He was ready to take the high ground and to make it his home. 'Here I am today, 85 years old! I'm still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out' (14:10–11). He was one of Israel's spies (Numbers 13:6).

'With the Lord helping me, I will drive the Anakites out of the land' he said (14:12). His spirit was strong in his old body. He knew there would be a fight, but He would have God's help.

Caleb really believed God and so he brought glory to God. However, He had to fight for his inheritance.

Caleb kept only as much land as he needed. Later he gave up Hebron to the priests from the tribe of Levi (21:13). It became a city of safety for murderers who were waiting trial. Caleb was content with keeping the lands around the city.

Caleb was one of the great men of the Old Testament. He was not a king. He was not a prophet. He was not a priest. He was not a leader. Caleb was a faithful servant of God.

'So the land had peace and rest' (14:15).

LAND FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

Judah was the largest tribe. The people of Judah were given the southern part of Canaan (15:1). The tribe of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem at that time (15:63). They were defeated later (Judges 1:8).

Almighty God Himself who hardened their hearts against Israel. He also made them go to war against Israel. In this way God totally destroyed the enemies of His people. He didn't show them any mercy (11:20).

Joshua took the whole land just as the Lord had told Moses. Joshua gave the land to the people of Israel as their own land. He divided it up and gave each tribe its share. At this time, the land had peace (11:23). Thirty-one kings and their tribes were defeated by Israel (12:24).

SHARING THE PROMISED LAND OF CANAAN FOR ISRAEL

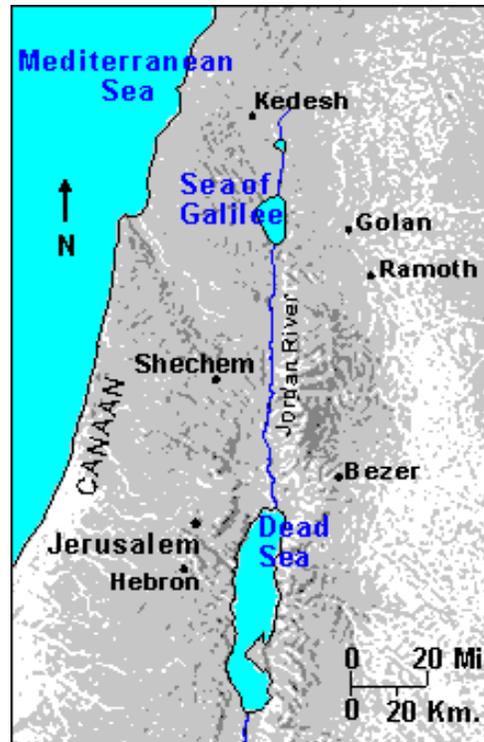
God told Joshua that there was still more land to possess. By this time, Joshua was an old man (13:1). So God told him, 'I myself will drive out the inhabitants while you share the land... for the people of Israel' (13:6).

Moses hadn't given any share of the land to the tribe of Levi. The Levites were priests (13:14). The other tribes gave the Levites 48 towns to live in, just as God told Moses (Numbers 35:7). God provided for them in this way through Joshua, their leader. He said that Almighty God was their inheritance (Joshua 13:33).

The rest of chapter 13 describes how the land was shared among the other tribes of Israel.

Talk about this:

1. Why did God warn Israel not to take enemy horses and chariots (11:6)?
2. What were they allowed to keep (11:14)?
3. When Joshua grew old, what did God tell him to do (13:6)? What did God do?
4. What land did the tribe of Levi receive (13:14)? How did the priests get everything they needed to live?



An old map of Israel showing Jerusalem and the six cities of safety for people accused of murder. Three were to the east of the River Jordan; three were to the west.



Now read this: Joshua 5:1–15

THE MARK OF GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE

The crossing of the River Jordan proved that God was able to deliver His people. It also proved that Joshua was now God's strong leader. He had the blessing of Almighty God. He was brave to cross in front of the enemy at Gilgal, near Jericho. He was brave because he believed God.

The Canaanites saw the people coming. The Israelites had a huge army. The Canaanites were afraid (5:1). The battle was ready to begin between Israel and Canaan. It was a battle between God's holy people and the unholy nations around them.

After crossing the River Jordan, they made a camp. Here God told Joshua to circumcise the male Israelites (5:2). Circumcision was part of the Covenant that God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:1–14). It was the mark or sign in boys and men of God's special people. However, they had not been circumcised while Israel wandered in the desert.

We are no longer required to circumcise males. It is the Holy Spirit today which is God's mark or sign on His special holy people (Ephesians 1:13). This is why there is no need for the sign of circumcision today. God seeks instead the circumcision of the heart.

Paul wrote about this in Romans 2:29. Those people who give their lives to Christ and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit within them show this sign. It is the sign of God's holy people. The Spirit first shows us the sin in our lives and then helps us to cut it out of our lives or remove it (Ephesians 4:22–32). Christ died to change us in this way.

Joshua obeyed God's command for the people. All Israel stayed in the camp until the men and boys were circumcised and healed (5:2–12).

This caused a delay in Israel's move forward. It was a miracle that



Circumcision under the Old Covenant

God told Abraham to circumcise himself and male members of his family (Genesis 17:10). This helped to reduce the number of days that men were unclean and unholy due to discharges at night. Uncleaness separates people from God and from other believers (Deuteronomy 23:10–14). Therefore it is wise for men to avoid or reduce discharges. It is wise to reduce sexual activities through greater self-control. Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit gives the power to overcome sexual temptations and to serve God in holiness. God will bless our desire to be holy. Then others will see God's blessing in our lives. His Holy Spirit will be a sign to others. Male circumcision is therefore NOT commanded in the New Testament part of the Bible. Female circumcision is NOT commanded in the Bible at all.

no-one attacked them whilst they were weak, waiting to heal. The tribes around were still afraid of them.

God tested the faith and obedience of this new generation of God's people. They should put their trust in God at all times – when they felt strong and when they felt weak.

THE FEASTS BEGIN AGAIN

Israel did not keep the Passover Feast while they were in the wilderness. Now Israel must remember the Passover. They did this while they camped at Gilgal on the flat land around Jericho. Celebrating Passover would remind all generations of how God saved the people of Israel from slavery and death in Egypt.

The day after the Passover, they ate some of the food that grew in the Promised Land. They ate the grains that grew in Canaan, wheat, oats, rye and barley. Israel could now keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast. They made this with flour from the grain they found in Canaan. It reminded them of the Passover night in Egypt when God set them free from slavery (Exodus chapter 12).

While they were in the wilderness, God fed them and cared for them. Even their shoes and their clothes did not wear out (Deuteronomy 29:5). But they could not make unleavened bread with the manna that fell in the desert (Numbers 11:7–9).

'The manna stopped coming down the day after they ate the food that was grown in the Promised Land. The people of Israel didn't have manna any more' (Joshua 5:12). They found everything they needed in Canaan, just as God promised.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S ARMY

A few days later, Joshua walked near Jericho. He waited for God to show him what to do. He looked up and he saw a man standing in front of him. The man was holding his sword. He was ready for battle (5:13). Joshua, the brave leader of Israel, went up to him to ask questions.

The stranger told Joshua, 'I have come as commander of the army of Almighty God' (5:14).

Then Joshua bowed down with his face to the ground. He asked the man, 'What message does my Lord have for me?'

'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground' (5:15).

 **Think about this:** How often do you rest to understand what God is doing? Do you wait to see what God will do next? How do you know when to wait and when to move forward quickly?

 **Pray about this:** Ask God to open your eyes to see His purposes, His plans and His miracles. Tell Him you need wisdom to understand His guidance and the strength to obey Him. Ask Him to help you to rest and wait in faith. Ask yourself 'What would Jesus do?'

 **Now read this: Joshua 10:29 to 13:33**

JOSHUA DESTROYS CANAANITES AS THE LORD COMMANDED

In the following days, Joshua and the men of Israel destroyed cities in the south of Canaan. They destroyed all the people who lived there. This included the central hill country, the Negev desert and Gaza (10:40–42). 'He did just as God commanded.'

They returned again to the camp at Gilgal (10:43) and they waited on the Lord.

Again, their enemies acted first. King Jabin called all the kings to the north, east and west to join him. They wanted to fight one big battle against Joshua and Israel. The kings had many men including horses and chariots. 'It was a huge army' (11:4).

God told Joshua once more, 'Do not be afraid of them.' Then God made an amazing promise: 'By this time tomorrow, all of the men will be killed. You must make their horses lame and burn their chariots' (11:6). Israel must not take and use their enemies' war horses nor their chariots. Israel's strength should be in God alone.

So Joshua attacked suddenly. He trusted God and he was brave. His army chased all the enemies until no-one was left alive (11:8). That was another miracle from God.

When he was chasing the kings, Joshua passed by King Jabin in Hazor. Jabin was the most powerful of all the kings. So Joshua went back to Hazor. The army of Israel killed everyone in Hazor and they also burned the city (11:10–11). God allowed Israel to keep the sheep and goats and the goods for themselves (11:14).

ISRAEL RECEIVES GOD'S VICTORY AND PEACE

God enabled Joshua to fight against many other kings 'over the whole land' and to win (11:17). This took a long time (11:18). Except for the people living in Gibeon, not one city made peace with Israel (11:19). It was

upon Almighty God, not on the great problems around us. Then the Lord will help us destroy the works of our enemy, Satan. He will do it in His way and in His time.

After Joshua and his men defeated the enemies of God, they returned to their camp in Gilgal (10:15). Later, Joshua's men found the five kings hiding in a cave. Joshua went and killed them using methods common at that time (10:26). On the same day the men of Israel killed all the Canaanites living in the nearby royal city of Makkedah (10:28).



Talk about this:

1. How did victory over the king of Jerusalem begin (10:1–4)?
2. What miracles did God use to help Israel destroy the Canaanites (10:10–13)?
3. What lessons did Joshua learn by NOT attacking the enemy first?
4. Why was it necessary for the army of Israel to move quickly (10:9)?



Why did our loving God destroy the Canaanites?

The Canaanites chose to worship false gods and to do all kinds of evil things. They had sex with people who were not their own wives or husbands. They looked for many wrong ways to have sex including men with men and men with animals and men with children. They killed their own children to sacrifice them to their gods.

The Canaanites chose to do these things instead of worshipping and obeying Yahweh, the one true God. He created them and saved them at the time of Noah. Their evil ways were never God's purpose for His creation. The Canaanites did not repent. Their punishment was death. They did evil things forbidden by God (Leviticus 18:3,22).

God promised to give their land to Abraham and his family (Genesis 15:18). He gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent whilst Abraham's family grew up in Egypt (Gen. 15:13–16). The family included Abraham's grandson Jacob, who was later called Israel. After 430 years, the people of Israel returned to Canaan. They crossed the River Jordan and God gave Jericho and Ai time to repent. He gave the kings of Canaan time to repent. Apart from Gibeon, they were all totally destroyed as God said, including women and children. This was to make certain that Israel would not copy the wicked ways of the Canaanites.

God punishes sin but loves the people he created. His plan was to show this to the world through the people of Israel. His final plan was the sacrifice of His only Son who came down to Israel to save them and the world from sin. Read John 3:16. God's love, mercy and power to overcome sin is given to all who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour. He was punished for our sins. Choose now to repent from sin and to follow Jesus as Saviour. Do not follow wicked people who use their own bodies or the bodies of other men, women and children in wrong ways.

God spoke to Joshua in this way to show that he was in the right place for what would happen next. God was there at Jericho with Joshua and with his men.

God showed Joshua that He, the Almighty God of Israel, was in charge. Joshua should trust and obey His voice and not trust himself.

Many people today say that they are Christians, but they do not listen when God tells them to obey His word. To win the battle over sin and over the evil around us, we must take orders from our Commander, Jesus Christ. Then the enemies of God will see that we have His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, with us and within us (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 4:1).



Talk about this:

1. What did the priests do (3:17; 4:10)?
2. What did the leaders take from the bottom of the river? Why? Who would see this in future? What would they think? (4:5–7, 21–24)?
3. Why did Joshua circumcise the men and boys?
4. Were the people still tempted by the idol worship of Egypt or were they now an obedient and holy people?
5. What would you say to a person who feels unholy because of their past sins?



Think about this: How is God preparing you to progress further from the old life to the new life under His direction? What does the advance of the Kingdom of God mean for you? Do you tell children about what God has done?



Pray about this: Ask God to be with you as you move forward in the path of life that He has called you to take. Talk to Him about the protection you need from the enemies of God. Ask God for opportunities to tell children and adults what He has done. Tell Jesus about the help you will need from Father God when you are strong and when you are weak.



Now read this: Joshua 6:1–27

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE WALLS OF JERICHO

The writer of the book of Joshua then describes the amazing miracles in the story of the battle of Jericho. He tells us God's plan to destroy the huge walls of Jericho.

The enemies were afraid as they waited. The gates of the city were shut tight. No-one went out or came in (6:1).

- God promised, 'I have delivered Jericho into your hands' (6:2).
- God told the armed men, 'March around the city once each day for six days' (6:3).

- God's Presence was with His army. Priests with trumpets went in front of the Ark of God (6:4).
- The armed men were in front and behind. They were quiet except for the noise of thousands of marching feet (6:10).
- On the seventh day, the priests and the army marched round the city seven times. Long trumpet blasts were followed by shouts of victory (6:5).
- 'The walls of the city will fall down and every man will go straight forward into the city', God said (6:5).

Joshua told the people God's plan. They marched silently round the walls of Jericho and came back to their camp. He reminded the people: 'Do not give a war cry, do not shout, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!' (6:8–11.) This silence helped to increase the fear in the enemy.

Joshua also told the two spies to save Rahab and her family (6:17, 22–23).

The watchmen on the walls of Jericho looked down. They saw the many thousands of Israelites marching round and round the city. It made them very afraid.



At the sound of the seven trumpets they all shouted and the walls fell down.

GOD'S MERCY AND HIS PUNISHMENT

Joshua told the people of Israel that they must not carry anything away from Jericho. God would punish them if they did take anything away. God's plan

The five kings came to fight first against Gibeon, not against Israel (10:5). This plan ended in disaster for the enemies of Israel.

The Gibeonites quickly sent word to Joshua, who was in Gilgal: 'Do not abandon us. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us because the Amorite kings have joined together against us' (10:6).

God told Joshua, 'Don't be afraid of them; I have given them to you' (10:8). With this promise, Joshua and his men set out. They marched all night and they took the enemies by surprise.

God made the enemies confused and the men of Israel chased them away (10:10). It was a miracle. Then God 'threw large hailstones down on them from the sky. This second miracle killed more of the enemy than the swords of Israel killed' (10:11; Job 38:22-23).

Joshua needed more daylight to complete his victory, so he asked God for another miracle (Joshua 10:12). The sun and the moon stood still in the sky for nearly one whole day (10:13)! 'There was no day like it before or since (10:14).

When we are doing God's work, we should remember that every victory is His victory and not ours. Sometimes God gives us a great victory in one day but other times the battle lasts for years. Our eyes must always be fixed



The role of Jerusalem in Israel and the world

Early in the occupation of Canaan, Jerusalem is mentioned (10:1). Joshua defeated the ruler of the city of Jerusalem without fighting against the city to destroy it. This happened nearly 3500 years ago. Later, it became the city of the Jews and was made into the capital of Israel as the city of King David. Its name means "place of peace". God prepared this place of peace for His people in the future.

Jerusalem was destroyed many times when Israel sinned. Then God in His mercy and love for His people allowed it to be rebuilt. Some people believe that it will never be destroyed again (Jeremiah 31:38–40).

Jerusalem is the place where God tested Abraham to be ready to sacrifice his only son Isaac on Mount Mariah (Genesis 22:1–13). It is the place where God sent His own Son to sacrifice His life so that others might believe and receive everlasting life.

This same Jesus, the promised Messiah, taught His followers in Jerusalem. He told them to preach the Good News of the salvation of God throughout the world. It is the city where Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11). It is the city where the worldwide Christian faith began 2000 years ago (Acts 2). Today it is a place of worship for Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is the city where the Messiah will return one day soon (Acts 1:11). This will happen during a time of great troubles (Matthew 24:6–8). Come Lord Jesus, come! (Revelation 3:11).

serving God (Romans 12:1). God will use everyone who truly believes in His Son to work for Him (Romans 8:28).



Talk about this:

1. How did God show mercy to the evil Gibeonites in Canaan through Joshua?
2. How has God shown mercy to sinners through Jesus?
3. What is the difference in the Bible between slaves and servants?



Think about this: How should we show mercy to sinners who are ready to surrender their lives to God?



Pray about this: Ask God to help you to see His love and mercy for the sinners around you. Tell Him you want to have His love and mercy for all people He has called to serve Him. Ask that sinful people will not deceive you but instead they will learn to serve Almighty God.



Now read this: Joshua 10:1–28

THE LORD PREPARES JOSHUA TO FIGHT FIVE KINGS

We must stand against our enemy, Satan. We must see him defeated in every struggle. But Canaan was not defeated in a day, nor in a month. Israel possessed the land 'little by little' as God promised (Exodus 23:30).

Joshua defeated Jericho and Ai. He made the Gibeonites the servants of Israel. Then Joshua waited on the Lord. He was ready for the Canaanites to come out and fight.

Sometimes, people talk about going out to battle against Satan. But is that what Christians are supposed to do? Paul tells us how to be ready for Satan. He says, 'After you have done everything ... stand firm' (Ephesians 6:13–14). Paul does not say that we should rush in and attack the enemy. He tells us to stand firm and to be ready.

The book of Joshua shows how God's enemies often made wrong decisions which led to their own defeat.

THREE MIRACLES IN ONE DAY

The king of Jerusalem was afraid of Joshua. He was afraid of what the people of God had done to Ai and Jericho (Joshua 10:1). He was also angry with the men of Gibeon for making peace with Israel (10:2).

So he encouraged four other kings to prepare for war (10:3). They were Amorites who were related to the Canaanites and lived in the hills.

to destroy all evil in the land began at Jericho. God planned to destroy the evil people and their false religion and their gods and their possessions (6:17–18).

Our merciful God waited seven days before He closed the door of Noah's Ark (Genesis 7:10). The same God of mercy told the people to march around Jericho for seven days before He destroyed the city. Like the city of Nineveh, God gave Jericho time to repent (Jonah 3:4–5).

God has no pleasure in war... or in people who make war. When people reject Him, they bring the punishment which they deserve upon themselves.

When we give ourselves up to God's plan, we watch to see His mighty power at work. There is no better plan than His plan, and there is no better way to win our 'battles'. Today, they are usually battles of the spirit and of the mind, not physical battles (Ephesians 6:12). They are won on our knees in prayer and by believing in the saving blood of Jesus.

Rahab and her family were saved (6:17,25). Other people in Jericho could be saved. God always warns people when He is going to punish them (Ezekiel 33:11). But the people of Jericho kept their city gates shut. They refused to talk to the people of God.

For one week God also tested whether His own people would believe Him and obey Him. Seven days of marching around the city was God's perfect timing. Then God's mercy and grace came to an end for the people of Jericho and He punished the city (6:20–21).

On the seventh day, the men of Israel marched around the city seven times. The trumpets blew and all the people gave a great shout. After their shout of victory, the walls fell down (6:5,20). When this happened, every man of Israel rushed straight in to destroy their enemies.

Rahab and her family were saved. They had to stay outside the camp of Israel until they were 'clean'. This was a rule of Moses (6:23). Then Rahab and her family came into the camp and they became citizens of Israel. God not only saved Rahab, He gave her a special honour. This foreign prostitute became an ancestor of Jesus Christ! (Luke 3:32). That was a special plan of God, which the people of Israel really could not understand at that time.

'Almighty God was with Joshua and he became famous everywhere in the land' (6:27). So Joshua became confident in God. Today, Christians are confident in God through Christ alone. We do not need to destroy our enemies. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to provide miracles as we pray and trust in God.



Talk about this:

1. How did God show mercy to the people of Noah's day (Gen 7:23; 1 Peter 3:20) and of Jonah's day (Jonah 3:4–5)?

2. How did God show mercy to the people of Jericho? How has God shown mercy to you?
3. Why were Rahab and her family saved?
4. Why did they have to stay outside the camp of Israel at first?
5. Do we need to understand fully what God is doing in our lives before we trust and obey Him?



Think about this: God usually shows us only part of His plan for what lies ahead. How do the problems you see around you change as you trust Him and walk forward?



Pray about this: Ask Jesus to send the peace of God into your life whilst surrounded by the enemies of His kingdom. Ask for faith to continue to believe that God has a special plan in your life. Talk to God about the guidance you need when you do not fully understand His purpose. Ask Him to remind you that your strength is in Christ alone.



Now read this: Joshua 7:1–26

THE MEN OF AI DEFEAT ISRAEL

After winning the battle of Jericho, Joshua did as he had done before. He sent men out to spy on the nearby city of Ai. His spies brought back a good report. They believed that Israel could defeat Ai. They saw only a few people in that city.

So Joshua was sure they would win the battle of Ai. But no-one asked God what they should do next. Joshua sent part of Israel's army to attack the city. However, when the soldiers marched on Ai, they were defeated. The men of Ai drove the men of Israel back and they killed 36 of them (7:5). This was the first and only time Joshua lost a battle.

What can hinder God's plans? Our sin hinders the purposes of God and holds back His plans. Israel should have entered Canaan 40 years earlier. But sin held them back. God does not work to our time. He remains in control and waits for us to follow and to obey Him.

Joshua was certain he would win the battle for God without asking Him what to do. This hindered the purpose of God.

At the report of this defeat, Joshua was no longer sure that God was in control. He tore his clothes and he put ashes on his head. This was a sign that he was very sad. Joshua cried, 'Almighty God and King, why did You...?' (7:7) Joshua began to blame God instead of asking what they had done wrong.

Joshua did not know about the sin that caused the defeat (7:1). He was sure that Israel would defeat Ai. So Joshua said to God. 'O Lord, what can I

received the punishment that we deserve. Thank God for His love and mercy in forgiving you. Ask Him to help you to forgive yourself and to leave behind your old life. Ask Jesus for a closer relationship with Him so that others will know Him through you.



Now read this: Joshua 9:1–27

MEN FROM GIBEON SURRENDER TO JOSHUA

Joshua was not afraid of the kings further west of the River Jordan (9:1). However, he was surprised by a small group of men from the tribe of Gibeon (9:3–6). The Gibeonites heard that Joshua had defeated Jericho and Ai. They had heard also about the miracles that God did during the time of Moses. They were afraid of the Almighty God of Israel. So the men of four Gibeon cities met and made a plan.

They came to Joshua and they said that they wanted to make peace. They lied and said that they came from far-away places. They wore old clothes and they carried dry, mouldy bread in their bags. They did not tell the names of the towns that they came from.

These Gibeonites praised the God of Israel (9:8–13). They hoped to escape God's judgement by making peace with God's people. It all sounded so good! They used the right words and they spoke kindly about God and His people. It was a plan to save their lives.

Joshua and the men of Israel did not pray about it (9:14). Joshua agreed to make peace with them (9:15). He hindered God's plan to destroy the Canaanites (Exodus 23:31–32). Perhaps he believed the Gibeonites were not from Canaan.

It was not long before Joshua discovered the truth. He sent a team of spies to find the Gibeonite's country. The spies found the Gibeonite cities were quite close to the people of Israel (Joshua 9:16–17). Joshua and the elders had been tricked. And it all happened because 'they did not ask the Lord what to do' (9:14). However, Joshua kept his promise to these men.

The Gibeonites did not want to become enemies of God (9:24). They were not true believers. Even today, many believers are deceived by people who use God's name and claim to believe in God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The people of Israel grumbled about the trick that the Gibeonites played on them. They wanted the Gibeonites to be slaves in Israel (9:18). Instead, Joshua gave them to the priests for the service of the Tabernacle (9:27).

So the Gibeonites became God's servants instead of slaves. Joshua set them free to work for God. Let us show mercy and aim to change lives in

THE COVENANT IS RENEWED AT MOUNT EBAL

The people put a large pile of stones over the body of the king of Ai. There were important things to remember every time they looked at this new pile of stones (Joshua 8:29).

'Then Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, Almighty God of Israel. He built it, not in the valley of the battle, but on Mount Ebal' (8:30). After great victories, it is very important to renew our love relationship with God. In the Old Testament part of the Bible this is called 'renewing the covenant'.

Joshua copied the Law of Moses onto the altar stones. 'He did it while all of the people of Israel were watching' (Joshua 8:32).

Then Joshua read the blessings and the curses from the Book of the Law (8:34; Deut 27:1–26). All Israel agreed to do what God said. No-one was left out. He read all the commandments of Moses to all the people including the women and children. The God-fearing foreigners who had joined Israel also agreed to obey Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel (8:33,35). God's grace and mercy was for everyone in the camp.

Everyone who truly believed God came under the covenant blessings and curses of the Old Testament Law. Jesus paid the price for sin that this Law required (Matthew 5:17). In Him, the blessings God promised to Abraham and Israel have now come to the rest of the world. This is possible through faith in Jesus and the promise of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14).

By sacrifice and worship, Israel gave God praise and thanks for the victories that He had won (Exodus 17:15). He gave Israel holy rules to obey. The people believed that all God's laws were good and necessary. This was 1500 years before the time of Jesus Christ. Today, God says, 'I have given you the victory through Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:57).



Talk about this:

1. Why was Joshua afraid (Joshua 8:1)? Was he afraid of sin in the camp or of the enemy?
2. How do we lose our peace through personal sin?
3. How was the King of Ai defeated by God's plan (8:14)?
4. Do all our sins deserve punishment? What is God's plan in Jesus for sinners?
5. Does God invite foreigners to worship Him (8:33)? Do we?



Think about this: What lessons did Joshua learn through the battles of Jericho and Ai? How are relationships with God and with others hindered by personal sin?



Pray about this: Ask God to forgive your sins and change the things that are wrong in your life. Ask God to help you to fully believe that Jesus

say...?' (7:8). Even great people who trust God moan at Him when things go wrong. Many people blame God. They moan at Him and expect Him to do something.

Joshua continued moaning at God: 'I wish we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan!' (7:7).

Joshua then began to think wisely. He told God that he needed an answer. They could not go forward. He said that God must explain to the people of Israel what went wrong (7:8). Otherwise the people of Canaan would hear about it and they would destroy Israel (7:9). These were good words spoken by Joshua but he still did not know the true cause of Israel's defeat.

Finally, Joshua told God that Israel's name would be destroyed. He also asked, 'What will You do for Your great name?' (7:9).

In times of difficulty we should stop feeling sorry for ourselves. We must stop blaming God and ask Him what is wrong. We should think about the needs of other people and about the name and glory of God.

God then told Joshua, 'Get up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned' (7:10–11.) God stopped Joshua moaning. Joshua listened instead of telling God what to do. Believers should listen to God at all times – in good times and in bad times.

THE SIN OF ACHAN

God told Joshua, 'Israel has sinned. I made a covenant with them. I commanded them to keep it. But they have broken it. They have taken some of the things from Jericho that should be destroyed. That is why the men of Israel can't win against their enemies. You must destroy the things you took. If you do not, I will not be with you anymore' (7:11–12).

Sin must be put out of our lives! If we disobey God, our sin destroys our relationship with Him and with other people. Our sin also makes it harder for other people to trust God. Sin hinders the purposes of God. It hindered the defeat of evil in Canaan. It hindered the possession of the Promised Land.

Achan died as a punishment for his sin. Achan had taken some of those things that God said should be destroyed. 'So God's anger burned against Israel' (7:1).

We all deserve to die for our sins. But because of God's mercy, Jesus took our place and He died for us. 'Christ suffered and died for sinners to bring us back to God' (1 Peter 3:18). When we have sin in our hearts, we cannot stand against the enemy. This is a principle of defeat and victory in the Christian life.

Satan had gained a foothold in the camp of Israel because Achan saw things he wanted at Jericho. He took those things and he hid them in his tent (7:20–21). Because one man sinned, all Israel suffered.

Achan had time to repent, 'for God is not willing that any should perish...' (2 Peter 3:9). But Achan did not repent. There is a lesson for us here. Don't wait for others to find out about your sin. Confess it and get rid of it.

The defeat of God's people at Ai reminds us how the church can fail today. The whole of the body of believers becomes weak when someone does not take God's word seriously. God wants His people to separate from sin. 'Light has no place with darkness' (2 Corinthians 6:14–18). The light of Christ in the church has much power in a neighbourhood or in a town. But it is easily lost because of sin.

Achan did not repent until it was too late. So, God judged Achan's sin (7:14–18).

Joshua brought each clan, each family and finally each person before the Lord. Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to the Lord.' Joshua spoke gently to this man and called him 'son'.

Achan did not repent until he was proved guilty. God's law at that time required him to repent or be punished for his sins. Today, God wants each of us to repent so that we can receive forgiveness through Christ (Luke 13:1–4). God is more interested in the sinner who repents than He is in punishing sin. He wants to save sinners like us.

It was God's plan that through Abraham, Israel and Rahab the Messiah should be born to Mary as the baby Jesus. And it was His plan for Jesus Christ to take the punishment for our sins, so that we can live. His Jewish name, Yeshua, means God's salvation,

The people stoned Achan and his family. They put a large pile of rocks over his body near Ai (7:26).

We no longer stone people to death. Jesus said we are to 'watch and pray at all times so that we do not enter into temptation' (Matthew 26:41). Note these warnings. Never think that some little sin won't get in the way of God's victory in your life.

Note, too, that Joshua did not judge Achan. It was the word of God that proved Achan wrong.



Talk about this:

1. Why was God's plan for Israel hindered at Ai?
2. Why was Joshua too confident to seek God's guidance in the battle of Ai?
3. Did God warn people before He punished them (6:18)?

4. Did Achan repent before or after his sin was found out?
5. Why did Achan deserve to die? Why did God's Son, Jesus Christ, have to die?
6. 'Our own personal sins hurt others.' Is this true or false? Why?
7. How did God show mercy for Israel? How does God show mercy today?



Think about this: Compare how confident Joshua was in 6:27 with how sad and hopeless he was in 7:6. What did he do and say when things went wrong (7:7–9)? What did God say (7:10–12)?



Pray about this: Ask God to help you to trust in Him at all times. Tell Him that when things go wrong you do not want to blame Him. Talk to Him about your troubles and allow Him time to talk to you. Remember to ask Him why things go wrong. Give thanks to Jesus that He took the punishment we deserve for our sins.



Now read this: Joshua 8:1–35

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL FINALLY DESTROY AI

Joshua was still afraid and he was not sure what to do. Then God said to him, 'Do not be afraid; do not lose hope. Go up and attack Ai' (8:1). God told Joshua to be wise and to take the whole army with him this time. 'I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.'

This time, God gave permission for the army of Israel to take the goods and animals from Ai for themselves (8:2). But not to take their gods.

Finally, God gave Joshua a plan to defeat Ai. 'Tell some of your fighting men to hide behind the city of Ai and take them by surprise.'

With these promises and wise instructions, God gave Joshua the victory over the Canaanites. Israel destroyed Ai and its people completely (8:25–26). Joshua had learned not to trust human wisdom (7:3). He waited on the Lord's instructions.

Joshua also learned that each person must confess their own sins so that we can gain victory over the enemy. He knew that it was God's command that sin deserved punishment, even death.

Today, throughout the world, Christians teach God's truth that sin deserves punishment. Christians also teach that Jesus Christ can forgive sin since He took the punishment that we deserve. This is true whatever our tribe, culture or family traditions. 'We believe we are saved by God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 15:11).

Joshua also learned that the methods to use in each battle against sin are different and require God's wisdom.