

Joshua Bible Studies – Leader Notes

Introduction

After the Israelites wander for forty years in the wilderness, it looks as though a new era is on the horizon as the descendants of Abraham prepare to enter the land God has promised. Will they trust the promises of God? Will they take the land? Will God be faithful to His promises?

To give your group a quick introduction to the book of Joshua, it is worth watching the Bible Project's video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqOqJIFF_eU

Although the book of Joshua is a book of history of God's people, Israel, there is plenty in it for us to learn today. Take for example:

"For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day." (Hebrews 4:8).

What does this verse mean? Well you need to wait and see as we go through the studies.

Context

After creation and the fall, God makes promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. These promises include:

- God will make Abraham into a great nation
- God will give Abraham's descendants a land (see Appendix A for who Abraham's descendants are)
- God will make Abraham into a great nation
- God will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel
- God will make Abraham's name great
- All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through Abraham

In Genesis 15:

- Abraham was justified by faith because he believed God's promises (15:6)
- God made a covenant with Abraham and by that covenant He promised him a glorious inheritance (15:13-14, 18-21)

See *Appendix B* for an outline of the whole Bible and where Joshua fits in it.

Joshua

There are a number of incidents that involve Joshua in the lead up to the book of Joshua:

- Exodus 17:9 is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible. There is no background given but the text assumes you already know who he is.
 - Here, he is the military commander who defeats the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-13)
- He has been Moses' aid since his youth (Ex 33:11; Num 11:28)
- He accompanied Moses up to Mount Sinai (Ex 24:13)

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- Joshua witnessed the Golden Calf incident (Ex 32). Here he learnt about the terribleness of sin.
- Joshua would not leave the tent of meeting where God appeared (Ex 33:9-11). He learned about the reality of God in His glory.
- Moses would not tolerate Joshua glorifying him (Num 11:24-29)
- He is one of the 12 spies sent into the land, and one of only two who believe Israel can take the land (Num 13-14). He learnt that when the majority were against him, he was willing to stand with God.
 - Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until everyone over the age of 20 died, except for Joshua and Caleb (see Appendix C for a map of the ‘wanderings’)
- Moses gives Joshua his name which means “Yahweh saves”. It was Hoshea which means “salvation” (Num 13:16).
- Joshua was designated as Moses’ successor by the Lord (Num 27:15-23; Deut 31:1-8)
 - He was a man in whom God’s Spirit resided (Num 27:18)
- Joshua was the one to lead Israel into the Promised Land (Deut 1:38; 3:28; 31:23)
 - Joshua learns how war must be conducted (Deut 7; 20)
- Joshua was the one to divide the land among the tribes (Num 34:17)
 - Joshua learns how the land should be distributed (Num 32; 34; 35)
 - And he learns that Gad and Reuben will not inherit their assigned land east of the Jordan River unless they enter Canaan with the rest of the tribes and play their part in its armed conquest (Num 32:28)
- Joshua learns how God’s love (Deut 4:37-38), not Israel’s power (Deut 8:17) or righteousness (Deut 9:6), secures the inheritance
- Moses charged Joshua to be “strong and courageous” (Deut 31:7)
- God will be with him and told him to be “strong and courageous” (Deut 31:23)

The book of Joshua covers about a thirty year period of Israel’s history under the leadership of Joshua, as Moses successor. He would have been eighty years old when he led the conquest of Canaan after the forty year wilderness journey (Ex 16:35). He was eighty five years old at the end of the conquest (Josh 14:10), and he died at the age of one hundred and ten (Josh 24:29), thirty years after entering the Promised Land and seventy years after the Exodus.

Prophets

It should also be noted that Joshua is the first book of the ‘Prophets’. The Prophets begin with God calling Joshua to be careful to do all that “Moses my servant” commanded (Josh 1:7-8). And they end with Yahweh’s call in Malachi to “remember the law of my servant Moses” (Mal 4:4). The Prophets (Josh 1:8) and the Writings (Psalm 1:2) both open with commands to “meditate day and night” on God’s Law.

The Land

The foundation for the book of Joshua is really the book of Deuteronomy. Joshua is going to obey the Law given by God to Moses. And concerning the land, Deuteronomy makes a number of important claims:

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- The land will be a place of obedience where God’s people can serve God – Deut 4:1
- The land is God’s gift, an inheritance – Deut 6:10-11
- The land is a place of blessing and of rest – Deut 7:13-15
- The land is a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey – Deut 8:7-10
- The land is the promised land, God is faithful to His promises – Deut 9:4-5
- The land is God’s land – Deut 11:10-12

Structure

A simple structure for the book of Joshua can be seen looking at key words. Here’s one way of breaking up the book:

- Chapters 1-5: Cross over into the Promised Land ¹
- Chapters 6-8: Taking the Land ²
- Chapters 9-12: They took the land ³
- Chapters 13-21: The division of the land amongst the tribes ⁴
- Chapters 22-24: The purpose of the land is as a place where God’s people serve the Lord ⁵

A more complex structure can be found in Appendix D.

Recommended Commentaries

Three very good commentaries on Joshua are:

- *Joshua: No Falling Words* by Dale Ralph Davis
- *Joshua: People of God’s Purpose* by David Jackman
- *Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* by David Howard

Summary

At the beginning of Joshua, God’s people are finally going to enter the land promised to Abraham. But given Israel’s track record of disobedience, what will happen as they enter the land?

¹ This is highlighted by words related to ‘cross’ as in cross over the Jordan (which is used 15 times out of 20 in Joshua, in these chapters)

² This is highlighted by words related to ‘take’ as in take the land (which is used 10 times out of 19)

³ This is highlighted by words related to ‘took’ as in they took the land (which is used 14 times out of 30)

⁴ This is highlighted by words related to ‘divide’ (which is used 9 times out of 13)

⁵ This is highlighted by words related to ‘serve’ (which is used 19 times out of 45)

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Study 1 – Joshua 1 to 2

1. What thoughts, questions or comments do you have about the book of Joshua?
2. Have you ever lost someone that was a big inspiration for your life? How did that affect you?

Read Joshua 1

Moses has died (1:1)⁶. What do you do when the servant of the Lord dies and a raging river lies between you and the land that you are to inherit? Your greatest leader is dead, so now rise and cross over into the land. What???

The first chapter divides nicely into three sections. This chapter is like the contents page of the book of Joshua:

Table of Contents Item:	Corresponds to:
get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites (1:2-5)	Israel conquers Canaan (chs 1-12)
you will lead these people to inherit the land (1:6)	Israel's inheritance distributed (chs 13-21)
Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law (1:7-9)	Covenant renewals (chs 22-24)

3. What three things does God commit Himself to in verses 3 to 6?
 - *God will give them the land (vv3-4, 6) - LAND*
 - *God will overcome their enemies (v5a) - VICTORY*
 - *God will be with Joshua as He was with Moses (v5b) - PRESENCE*

When it comes to the land, v3 is actually in past tense. So it reads more like “I have given it to you”. This implies the absolute certainty that God will give the land to Israel. What an encouragement to Joshua as the new leader of God’s people. The title of the land is already Israel’s, they just need to accept it.

This book is about God giving the land to Israel. Remember: the previous generation would not enter the land; they were too afraid of the people in it.

Looking at the table below, we see that God’s promises to Joshua are the same as they were to Moses. God’s promises are consistent.

⁶ It is worth noting that Moses is called “the servant of the Lord” seven times by the Lord, whereas Joshua is called “Moses’ aide”. It is not until Joshua 24:29 that Joshua is also called “the servant of the Lord”.

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Deuteronomy	Joshua
Every place where you set your foot will be yours (11:24a)	I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses (1:3)
Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. (11:24b)	Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west (1:4)
No one will be able to stand against you (11:25a)	No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life (1:5a)

4. Are these three promises of Land, Victory, and Presence, also to Christians today?
 - *Yes!*
 - *LAND – read Revelation 21:1-4*
 - *VICTORY – read 1 Corinthians 15:57*
 - *PRESENCE – read Hebrews 13:5-6*

5. But what is stated in verse 4 is much more land than Israel ever is. Why the difference?
 - *Because the promise is dependent on the wholehearted obedience of God's people and the people don't wholeheartedly obey*

6. How does this relate to us now?
 - *On the one hand I think the principle is similar to salvation. Jesus has done everything He needs to do to save us from the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross in our place and rising again. However, we only receive the benefit of this if we receive His free gift in faith. And for Israel, the land is theirs if they have faith in God, just to take what is freely offered.*
 - *On the other hand, there are many things that God promises in the New Testament that haven't been received because of disobedience or lack of faith*

7. Three times God tells Joshua to be "strong and courageous" (1:6, 7, 9). What does this mean? Read Deuteronomy 31:1-13 for some context.
 - *For the battles ahead (v6)*
 - *It clearly relates to not being afraid of the people that already inhabit the land, even if they appear strong and powerful (the reason they didn't enter the land 40 years earlier)*
 - *In keeping the commandments of the Lord (vv7-8)*

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- *They all need to learn to fear the Lord (Deut 31:13). How? By reading the Law (Joshua 1:7-8).*
- *Joshua asks the people to be strong and courageous in Joshua 10:25 and near the end of the book in Joshua 23:6. In doing this he says they should obey the word of the Lord!*
- *God will give His people the land if they obey His word (1:8). If not, God will wait for another generation.*
- *Even God's people say this to Joshua in 1:18 and the Lord and Moses say it to God's people and Joshua (Deut 31:6, 7, 23) – be strong and courageous*
- *The motivation for Joshua to be strong and courageous is that the Lord will go ahead of him into the land. The Lord will be with him (1:9). God is faithful, so have faith in His promises.*

8. Why is being strong and courageous so important? For Israel? For us?

- *If you glance through the rest of Deuteronomy 31 you'll see that God predicts that the people will rebel against Him and that they will be destroyed (Deut 31:16-17)*
- *This is a life and death situation*
- *There are many temptations to sin in this life. This is why there is a focus in Joshua on remembering what the Lord has done for them. So easily we forget.*
- *God doesn't promise us an easy life. But He does clearly tell us the best way to live – by obeying His word.*

Moses encouraged Israel by reminding them that God would never leave them or forsake them (Deut 31:6). God promised Joshua that He would never leave him or forsake him (Joshua 1:5). And He promises the same thing for us as Christians (Hebrews 13:5).

9. How does Joshua respond?

- *With obedience – see Joshua 1:10-11*

10. What do we learn from verses 12 to 15?

- *To capture the land, unity is critical*
- *The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, already have their inheritance (outside of the Promised Land), but they promised that they would help the rest of Israel conquer the land. Joshua is asking them to come good on their promise. They agree!*
- *Also, the goal of taking the land is rest (1:13)*

Read Joshua 2

The promised salvation of God is on offer to all, sometimes even to the most unlikely of people, who fear the Lord and repent.

11. What has God already done?

- *God goes before the Israelites because Rahab says that the people's hearts have melted in fear (2:9-11 as promised in Deut 2:25) because they have heard what the Lord has done (the Red Sea crossing – Ex 14; and the defeat of Sihon and Og, two Amorite kings – Num 21:21-35)*
- *Their fear shows they don't have faith in the God of Israel*

At the end of verse 7, we are left with the tension of 'will the spies escape'? This is not resolved until verse 15, and this highlights the importance of what is in between – Rahab's confession of faith (vv8-14).

12. Why does Rahab have faith in God?

- *She knows about what He has done*
- *She understands who He is - the God of all the universe*
- *She believes God is who He says He is and decides to live accordingly*

Rahab is also mentioned in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. Read both passages.

13. What is she commended for?

- *Her faith (Hebrews 11:31)*
- *Her works (James 2:25)*
 - *Rahab's faith is shown by what she does for the spies*
 - *But it is also shown by what she says about God (Joshua 2:9-11)*
- *Also, Rahab is the only person that James chooses to parallel with Abraham (James 2:21, 25)! – a great honour*
- *And Rahab is mentioned as part of Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:5). Matthew deliberately highlights Rahab as part of Jesus' genealogy. He is proud that she is there.*

14. Why are faith and works so important for us?

- *Faith shows what we believe in*
- *Works confirm that our faith is genuine*

15. What does Rahab following the Lord anticipate?

- *The salvation of the Gentiles (non-Jews)*
- *See Galatians 3:6-9 and recall Genesis 12:1-3*

16. What does Rahab's example teach you about the similarity of hers and your experience?

- *Knowledge*
 - *We know about Christ's death and resurrection (God's ultimate act of redemption)*
 - *Rahab knew about the Exodus (an important act of redemption by God)*
- *God's Revelation*
 - *We know because of the Bible and the Holy Spirit*
 - *She knew because of God's words*
- *Faith and Obedience*
 - *Our faith is in Jesus, that He died in our place and rose again. The genuineness of our faith is shown by our actions.*
 - *Rahab's faith is in God, that He saved Israel. The genuineness of her faith is shown by her saving the spies.*
- *Peace with God as part of God's people*
 - *The result of our salvation is peace with God*
 - *Same as Rahab*

Chapter 2 is an important bridge linking chapter 1 and 6:

- chapter 1 speaks of the Israelites taking the land of Canaan as something still in the future,
- and chapter 6 shows the first stage of this taking place when the Israelites actually take Jericho.

Chapter 2, where most of the action takes place in Jericho, naturally anticipates chapter 6, where Jericho is actually conquered. It also forms a contrast with chapter 7:

- Where Israel's unfaithfulness is exemplified by Achan's sin;
- Conversely, here, Rahab, a Canaanite, is shown to be faithful.

She is behaving like Israelites are supposed to.

Summary

Chapter 1 gives us an introduction to what Joshua is about. God wants to give Israel a land, the Promised Land. Will they obey God?

But to obey God they will need to be strong and courageous because they will face many struggles. Israel starts off obeying God, but then surprisingly, a Canaanite shows great faith in wanting to follow God as well. Rahab teaches us why we should love God: because of who He is and what He does.

So what will happen as Israel enters the Promised Land?

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Study 2 – Joshua 3:1 to 5:12

Last week we saw that Israel is on the edge of the Promised Land. Joshua and his people will need to be strong and courageous to receive the land God gives them. Joshua sends spies to check out Jericho. Miraculously, Rahab the Canaanite declares her faith in God and hides the spies.

This study focuses on Joshua 3:1 to 5:12. Chapters 3 and 4 look at the crossing of the Jordan. And the first part of chapter 5 looks at the preparation required for God's people to be in the land. It should be noted that the verb 'to cross' is used twenty two times in chapters 3 and 4. This is a very important event. Finally, after centuries of waiting, the Israelites were now about to cross into the land promised to Abraham their ancestor.

1. Prior to the book of Joshua, what amazing things has God done for His people?
 - *The discussion can be about anything that God has done*
 - *But it is important to include God rescuing His people from the Egyptians, both in the Passover and the miracle of the Red Sea crossing*

Read Joshua 3

2. What is the focal point of 3:1-4 and why?
 - *The focal point is the ark of the covenant, because this is the symbol of the Lord's presence among His people*
 - *The ark is mentioned seventeen times in chapters 3-4*
 - *God will lead His people into the land*
 - *God will give His people the land, their inheritance*
 - *The ark contained three symbols of Israel's relationship with God (Heb 9:4):*
 - *The Ten Commandments – The Law*
 - *Aaron the High Priest's rod – The Priesthood*
 - *A jar of manna – God's Provision*
 - *And how do we get our inheritance? By the power of God, not through our own doing, by Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, and rising again*
3. Why did God choose this method to give His people the land?
 - *It wasn't merely a question of God taking the land*
 - *But so that He could give it to His people*
 - *God involves His people in His purposes. It's a relationship.*

4. How do the Israelites show their faith in God (3:4-6)?

- *They submit to God's instructions (3:4)*
 - *They look to the ark and not at the river*
- *They consecrate themselves (3:5)*
 - *Being dedicated to God*
- *They specifically obey His word (3:6)*
 - *They stepped into the Jordan!*
- *See also Romans 4:13-16 – the promise comes by faith*

5. What miracle does God do? And what does this remind you of?

- *He stops the waters of the Jordan flowing so they can cross the river on dry land (3:16-17)*
- *This recalls the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea (see also Ps 114:3 which links the two)*
- *Remember the Jordan is in flood, this is an obvious miracle (3:15)*
 - *God leads His people across the Jordan at the most difficult time of year to show who is in charge and who is all powerful*
- *It is likely scouts from Jericho would have seen this. What would they be thinking? The God of the Israelites is all powerful. What happened in Egypt is going to happen to us! Their hearts would melt.*
- *God gave this miracle, and God is teaching them to expect another miracle when He drives the people from the land (3:10-11)*

6. What is God teaching about Himself here?

- *God is all powerful*
- *God is faithful to His promises (they will receive the land)*
 - *In Genesis 12 God promises land for His people*
 - *He also promises that they will be a great nation*
 - *Joshua 3:17 is the first time Israel is referred to as a nation (aside from Exodus 19 'holy nation')*
- *It testifies to God's greatness and faithfulness to Israel (3:10) and to the nations (4:24)*
- *God doesn't need the Israelites to fulfil His promises – He leads the way*

Read Joshua 4:1-5:12

4:1-14 is narrated from outside the Promised Land.

But 4:15-5:12 is narrated from within the Promised Land.

7. Why in 4:4 do twelve men get the stones?
- *One person from each tribe (12)*
 - *The emphasis is on the unity of Israel*
 - *References to twelve in chapters 3-5 are 3:12; 4:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 20;*
 - *So unity is an important concept*
8. What is the significance of the pile of stones?
- *4:6-7 they serve as a sign – for the future so their children can ask what God did here*
 - *It is a memorial to remind the people of what God has done for them*
 - *A reminder of God's faithfulness in bringing Israel safely across the Jordan into the Promised Land*
 - *Future generations, who did not witness this event, need to know what God has done for His people*
 - *To the children of the current generation, the stones say "This is your Exodus!"*
 - *How do we remember what God has done for us?*
 - *Some ideas include:*
 - *The Lord's Supper is a clear way how we remember what God has done for us on the cross*
 - *By reading the Bible and recalling how God faithfully serves His people*
 - *It is critical that we remember what God has done for us*
 - *From His sustaining us every day*
 - *To Jesus' death on the cross to pay the price for our sins*
9. Why the repetition of 'your God' in 4:23-24? Why did God do what He has done in these chapters?
- *The repetition makes it clear that Israel have done nothing to earn their entry into the Promised Land. God has done everything.*
 - *He did this so that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is powerful and so you might always fear the Lord (fear = awe and respect)*
 - *We see this also in 5:1 (and see 2:10-11 for another parallel with the Red Sea crossing), that the Lord goes before Israel*

10. From chapter 5, what preparations need to be done before Israel attacks Jericho? Why?

- *All the men are circumcised. This is a sign of the covenant between God and His people (see Genesis 17:14). They are part of the Abrahamic covenant.*
 - *Circumcision was not done to the generation that was born in the wilderness (5:6-7)*
 - *The irony is that while God had promised the land to their children, the new generation is at risk of making the same mistake in rejecting God and His promises*
- *The people need to obey God to be able to serve Him*
- *Note: the circumcisions were done at a place called Gibeath Haaraloth or ‘Hill of Foreskins’ (fun place!)*

11. What does circumcision look like for Christian’s today?

- *See Romans 2:27-29 (also 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 6:15; Col 2:11). Circumcision today is not physical but spiritual.*
 - *It is circumcision of the heart*
 - *This means that someone follows God in their heart (not by outward rules)*
 - *Recall that Abraham was physically circumcised after he believed God, not as a condition to believing*
- *In the Old Testament, the physical sign of circumcision was always intended to lead to a circumcised heart marked by obedience to God’s Law*
- *With the renewed relationship, expressed by their circumcision, the people of Israel are now able to keep the Passover (5:10)*
- *So circumcision shows the privileged covenant position of the people*
 - *And the Passover recalls their redemption out of bondage as slaves in Egypt*
- *We are in the same position as the Israelites (privilege of covenant and redemption)*
 - *Baptism recalls our covenant relationship and the Lord’s Supper our redemption*
 - *These things show the importance of remembering that we are God’s people*
 - *Baptism and the Lord’s Supper should not be legalistic (things we have to do to be saved) but rather remind us of how we were saved by Jesus’ death on the cross*
 - *And Jesus’ resurrection shows that God has won the victory over sin and death*
- *There are many parallels between Exodus 12 & 15 and Joshua 2 & 5 about the Passover*

12. Interestingly, the day after the Passover the manna from heaven stopped (5:11-12). Why do you think this is the case?

- *God will now provide for His people from the produce of the Promised Land (5:11, 12, 12)*
- *So God's promise, giving His people the land, has been fulfilled.*
- *Even though the provision of food is now in an 'ordinary way', it is still God who provides it*
- *After the people cross the Red Sea, the manna starts. After they cross the Jordan, the manna stops.*
- *This marks the end of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness*

13. Do you have confidence that God's promises are for you? How is this seen in your life now?

Summary

It's happening. God's people miraculously cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. God is going to fulfil His promise in this generation. This is so important, God gets the united Israelites to create a memorial so that future generations will be able to learn about what God did by giving His people the land. Now that they are in the land, they need to be God's holy people. This starts with the men being circumcised to show they are God's people. They can now enjoy their first Passover over meal in the land, which again is a reminder of God's great act of redemption in saving Israel from slavery in Egypt.

As Christians, we too need to regularly remind ourselves of what God has done for us, in Jesus dying on the cross to pay the price that our sins deserve. And this means that we can live with God in His ultimate land, heaven.

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Study 3 – Joshua 5:13-6:27

The whole book of Joshua is focused on the possessing of the Promised Land. The opening chapters show Joshua as the leader through whom God will give the land to His people – he is the one God is with and to whom He will grant success (1:2-6). Entry into the land is then by God's hand and is explicitly linked with the Exodus as part of God's gracious redemption (salvation).

Once in the land the act of circumcision and celebration of the Passover function as clear identity markers: the Israelites are to live in the land as God's people, faithful to His covenant and remembering His redemption (5:2-12).

Jericho is then the first act of 'possessing' the land. Jericho is paradigmatic of possessing the land – what happens here is then repeated in later chapters to other cities. If Jericho falls then the land is theirs.

There is a broader context specifically related to the battle for Jericho and that is the commands for battles given in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 20 distinguishes between the instructions:

- For battles which are against cities 'that are at a distance from you' (verses 1-15) ie those outside the land;
- and the battles against the cities in the land that God had promised them (verses 16-20).

So what happens in the Promised Land is unique, not a model for future warfare outside the land. This introduces the theological important concept of the things 'dedicated' or 'devoted' to the Lord.

An article that I found helpful for this study is located here:

<http://beginningwithmoses.org/bt-briefings/162/may-your-kingdom-come>

1. What are some of your concerns or questions about passages like the one we are looking at today: on the fall of Jericho?
 - *There is no intention to answers all of these questions right away but hopefully as the study progresses a number of them will be answered*

Read Joshua 5:13-15

2. What do you learn from this passage?
 - *The man has a drawn sword in his hand – this implies impending judgement*
 - *Joshua submits to this man*

3. Who do you think “the commander of the Lord’s army” is?
 - *It doesn’t spell out exactly who ‘the commander of the Lord’s army’ is but they are clearly someone with divine authority*
 - *In fact, because Joshua worships them AND they don’t stop him, suggests to me that this person is Jesus, God Himself!*
 - *This parallels Moses’ experience at the burning bush (Ex 3:5)*
 - *This is essential preparation before taking Jericho – submission to God*
 - *This battle is important and God has come to fight it*
 - *Joshua realised he wasn’t the commander, but that God is the commander*
 - *Because of that, victory is certain (6:2)*

4. Why does he answer Joshua’s question with ‘neither’ (5:14)?
 - *The answer ‘neither’ implies authority. I’m not here to serve you, you’re here to serve me. I’m the one who should be asking this question!*
 - *The real question is not ‘is God for or against me?’, but rather ‘am I for or against God?’*

Read Joshua 6:1-27

Joshua 6:1 raises the question, how are the Israelites going to get into Jericho? No one can come in or go out!

5. So how does the Lord propose the Israelites will get into Jericho (6:2-5)?
 - *He will give it to them – it is a fact (v2)*
 - *God can guarantee what will happen because He is all powerful and is faithful to His promises*
 - *March around the city for six days led by the ark*
 - *The ark is central in this chapter (mentioned 9 times – 6:4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 13)*
 - *God will take the city (6:2, 16)*
 - *On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, seven priests will blow trumpets and then you shout and the walls will fall down*
 - *Notice all the sevens – symbolic in the Bible of completeness and/or creation*
 - *And that’s what happened (6:12-16)!*

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6. What is the purpose of the ark in marching around Jericho?

- *The purpose of the parade is to focus on the ark and therefore on the Lord, so that both Israel and Jericho will know who is responsible*
 - *God doesn't need Israel to fulfil His plans but chooses to involve them*
- *Hebrews 11:30 commends the Israelites faith for obeying God exactly*

How do we reconcile the conquest of Canaan with God's love for the world?

Patrick Schreiner defines God's Kingdom as "the King's power over the King's people in the King's place". Clearly, at this point in the Bible, the King's people are the people of Israel (which includes foreigners eg Rahab). The King's power is through His word, shown in the Law and His direct speech. So where is the King's place? Where does He dwell? Throughout the Bible, there are a number of places where He clearly dwells:

- Eden
- The Tabernacle (and the Temple)
- The Promised Land
- Jesus in the flesh on earth
- In the hearts of Christians through the Holy Spirit
- Heaven

In Eden, God dwelt with His people, Adam and Eve. All was good until Adam and Eve sinned. After this they had to leave Eden. The place where God lives must be pure and holy, without sin. The High Priest can only enter the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle/Temple once a year to make sacrifices for sins, only after they have been purified. A Holy God cannot tolerate sin. Holiness – that is the issue.

The Canaanites are sinners (Lev 18:1-30; Deut 9:4-5) and they are in God's Land. But God desires mercy and so gives them four generations to repent (Gen 15:16). God is patient. They have knowledge of God, through general revelation and specifically what they know about God's action during the Exodus and the Jordan miracles. The Canaanites chose to resist God. But neither does Israel receive the lands because they are godly (Deut 9:5).

The land is a picture of the resting place and inheritance of God's people where they will live in peace in relationship with God. This means that the entry into the land and the act of possessing the land are pictures for us of God's kingdom coming. The battles involved in possessing the land show us what has to happen within a rebellious world for that place to become the kingdom of God.

So we come to verse 21:

"They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys."

7. What does 'devoted to the Lord' mean?

- *'Devoted to the Lord' here means 'devoted to destruction' (Lev 27:28-29)*
 - *Anything 'devoted to destruction' cannot be redeemed (cannot be saved)*
 - *With regard to objects, this means they can't be sold*
 - *With regards to people not being redeemed means they must be put to death*
 - *Effectively, they pay the price for their own sins (rather than Jesus doing this)*
- *This indicates a strong element of God's sovereign claim over people and things*
 - *This sovereignty is used to describe what Israel did to the Amorites (Joshua 2:10)*
- *The rationale given in Deuteronomy 20:16-18 for this total destruction of the cities in the Promised Land is so that the people that previously lived there would not teach the Israelites to follow other gods*
 - *It is a purification of the land, making it clean and new*
- *There is also an element of judgement for their sins (see Genesis 15)*
- *Entering the land, it was vitally important that they do so uncontaminated by pagan worship*
 - *Failure to remove ungodly practices and worship of other gods from the land would pull down Israel, which, ironically, is what happened (Deut 7:4; 12:29-31)*
 - *It is key that Israel does not worship other gods (Ex 20:3-4)*

8. What do we learn about the coming of God's kingdom?

- *It will involve judgement*
 - *Why Judgement? Because God is a Holy and Just God and sin must be accounted for*
- *It will involve God's people but it is God who is in control*
- *It will create a place of rest where God can dwell with His people*
- *For us, being devoted to destruction means you cannot be redeemed, so the punishment for your sins stays on you. So judgement will be on those who are devoted to destruction.*

9. How does God establish His ultimate Kingdom?

- *This is done by Jesus dying on the cross*
 - *Jesus pays the price for all our sins by taking the punishment for them on Himself*
 - *This opens the way to God's Kingdom, heaven, for each one of us*
- *The Holy Spirit is given to us as a down payment of heaven*
- *So God's kingdom comes when we bow to Him and will ultimately come when Jesus returns to earth at His Second Coming*
- *God is King of all*

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10. Where in this passage do we see God’s mercy?

- *In Rahab*
- *God does not desire the death of sinners, rather for them to repent (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11)*
 - *This is what happens to Rahab – she turns from false gods and has faith in God*
- *The first Canaanite we meet is saved! (recall Gen 12:1-3 where Abraham’s descendants will be a blessing to all peoples of the earth)*
- *And God in His mercy, saves all of her family, not just Rahab*
- *For us, God will save all those who repent, regardless of what sins they have committed*

11. What are the alternatives to God’s plan here?

- ***Spare the people in the land – but where is justice?***
 - *And the Israelites ultimately will be seduced by their gods (which they are because they don’t destroy all the people in the land)*
 - *Throughout much of the land, that is exactly what happens*
 - *God did not use Israel to invade a peace-loving righteous people*
 - *God’s love demands justice, and therefore judgement on the wicked*
- *Does God play favourites with Israel? No. We see this with Achan in chapter 7 (next study) and with His people in the Promised Land. They are judged when they disobey God and follow other gods. The covenant is tied to faith not blood.*
- *Once the Israelites occupied the land they were to show hospitality and kindness to aliens and foreigners (regularly spelt out in the Law), remembering that God had showed undeserved mercy to them*
- *God wants all people to be saved (Gen 12:1-3; Gal 3:8)*
 - *See Matthew 15:21-28 and note that the woman is called a Canaanite even though Canaanites have not existed for many centuries (Mark calls her Cyro-Phoenician)*

The table below shows how Matthew relates Jesus’ ministry to what happened to Israel. Jesus is the true, faithful Israelite, who perfectly obeys God like Israel should have.

Incident	Exodus & Joshua	Matthew
Passover Meal	Exodus 12	14:13-21
Miraculous Sea Crossing	Exodus 14	14:22-33
The Law	Exodus 20	15:1-20
Canaanites come to faith	Joshua 2 & 6	15:21-28

God is showing here how the New Joshua (Jesus) would have His New Israel (God’s people) relate to Canaanites. The woman’s faith is shown by her persistence and submission to Jesus. The crumbs she asks for (Mt 15:27) are actually available in abundance (Mt 15:37). And the Canaanites in this passage are us, non-Jews. God wants to save people in abundance (and shows His abundant mercy).

12. There is a soberness to this passage. Only a few were saved from Jericho. Is God only going to save a few at the final judgement?

- *No, read Revelation 7:9-10*
 - *Many, many, many will be saved*
 - *God is rich in His mercy*
- *Read also Luke 4:14-28*
 - *When Jesus preaches in the synagogue He quotes Isaiah 61:1-2*
 - *Basically He is saying I'm here to save you*
 - *Notice that Jesus only quotes Isaiah 61:1-2a, not the second half of verse 2, which is about the day of vengeance (the judgement day at the end of history)*
 - *Like Canaanites in Genesis 15, we are being given time to repent before Jesus returns to judge*
 - *God is incredibly patient, so the time to repent has now lasted almost 2,000 years*
 - *The examples Jesus gives in Luke 4 are of Gentiles receiving God's blessing (vv26-27)*

When God's kingdom comes:

- He does it Himself
 - He is the one who conquers the Promised Land
 - He is the one who pays the price for sins on the cross
- He judges evil and brings His rule
- He saves those who trust Him

Summary

This conquest shows God to be both just and merciful:

- The people of Jericho are judged for their many sins
- But by faith Rahab the prostitute from Jericho did not perish – Heb 11:31
 - When all seemed doomed for Jericho, God shows His grace

Today God typically defers judgement, giving people time to repent. He withholds final judgement until the last day, but He has the right to judge at any time. And we must not mistake His patience for indifference.

13. What does this mean for us today?

- *When all seems to be chaos and sin, God still is gracious in allowing people time to repent*
- *Therefore, we should not give up on ourselves, our friends, our family*
 - *But continue to explain God's offer of salvation*
- *Like Israel in the Land, God wants to involve us in His plans to save those He has chosen*
- *God is full of mercy as well as being perfectly Holy*

Joshua Bible Studies – Leader Notes

Study 4 – Joshua 7 to 12

The Israelites have entered the Promised Land. God has miraculously taken Jericho for them. But have all the Israelites obeyed God?

Sin has a destructive effect on our relationship with God. But it is not enough to frustrate God's good promises.

1. Can you think of an occasion in your life when sin has not stopped God's plan?

Read Joshua 7

2. 'But' is an ominous note to start a chapter. After obedience in chapter 6 we see disobedience here. What did Achan do?

- *See 7:21 and compare to 6:17-19*
- *Achan is behaving like a Canaanite and deserves the death for disobeying God's word*

3. So why are the whole of Israel implicated (7:1)?

- *The consequences of the sin of one can affect others – However, this is more than that ...*
- *The whole of the camp of Israel had become unclean because of what Achan had done. Therefore the anger of the Lord burns against the whole of Israel. One sin made the whole of the camp unclean.*
- *God lives in the Promised Land with Israel, so He won't put up with sin*
 - *Sin = violating God's covenant (7:11)*
- *It's as if God says to Joshua, "Don't you understand? There is only one reason for this defeat, and you should know what it is. Sin has come among the people of God."*

4. What are the consequences (7:4-9)?

- *God is not with them so they lose in battle (because of Achan's sin)*
- *The Israelite hearts melted ironically just like those in Jericho before (see 2:11)*
 - *Remember in Chapter 1 the emphasis on being "strong and courageous"*
- *This has long term implications because now the Canaanites know that Israel can be defeated*
 - *But we know that they can only be defeated if they disobey God*
 - *Does this happens today when Christians are not godly?*
- *Even Joshua questions why this is happening (vv7-9)*
- *At worst, God will not be with them anymore (v12)*

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- *This is what happens to Israel with the Exile (Ezekiel 10)*
 - *It is critical that God remains with His people (1:5, 9; 3:7, 10; 4:14; 6:27) as this is what people were created for*
 - *Recall also the Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden after one sin – Eden became unclean*
5. From verses 11-12, how does God explain what is happening?
- *Because Israel has kept the devoted things and not offered them to the Lord, to whom they belong, they are now 'devoted to destruction' themselves (v12b)*
 - *They have violated God's covenant*
6. What words are used to describe what Achan did (7:21)?
- *I saw*
 - *I weighed it (priced it)*
 - *I coveted*
 - *I took*
 - *Note: These are the same verbs (saw, coveted, took) as Eve in Genesis 3*
7. So for us, what steps can we take to avoid this type of sin?
- *3 steps before you 'take it', so stopping is possible*
 - *I saw – be aware what you are gazing at (and stop)*
 - *What do you think about when left alone?*
 - *I weighed it – focus on something worth more – Jesus!*
 - *I coveted – repent*

Covetousness is the root of the problem.

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8. What was the punishment on Achan (7:25b-26)? Why so severe?

- *Achan and his whole family were stoned to death by the whole community*
 - *Then they were buried under a pile of stones*
- *'which remains to this day'*
 - *It is a reminder of the consequences of sin*
 - *We need to use this example to remind ourselves of how bad sin is to God*
- *The punishment is so severe because the sin is so serious*
 - *If this is allowed, God's people will continue to sin even more and disregard what God commands*
- *This is the first sin in the new Promised Land, so an example is made of Achan*
- *As soon as the sin is dealt with, God's anger is removed (see 8:1)!*

9. What are the parallels and contrasts between Achan and Rahab?

- *Rahab → Canaanite → faithful → delivered from destruction*
- *Achan → Israelite → unfaithful → destroyed*
- *In effect, Achan becomes a Canaanite and Rahab an Israelite*
 - *So salvation is not about your nationality*

10. What about parallels between Adam/Eve, Achan, and Ananias/Sapphira?

Steps	Genesis 1-3: Adam and Eve in the Garden	Joshua 7: Achan after Jericho's Fall	Acts 5:1-11: Ananias and Sapphira
New Beginning	Creation of the world	Entry into the Promised Land	Giving of the Holy Spirit
Forbidden Object	Taking fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil	Taking of plunder from Jericho	Holding back profits from a land sale
Sinful Act	Saw, desired, took (3:6)	Saw, coveted, took (7:21)	Lied to Spirit, kept money (5:3)
Hiding/Deception	Hid themselves from the Lord (3:8)	Hid the plunder (7:21)	Lied in their hearts (5:4, 9)
Revealed the secret	Yahweh questions them (3:9-13)	Joshua questions Achan (7:19)	Peter questions them separately (5:3, 8)
Pronouncement of Judgement	Curses announced (3:14-19)	Joshua proclaims God's 'trouble' (7:22-25)	Peter rebukes them (5:4, 9)
Judgement of Death	Removal of access to God (3:23) – so death will follow	Literal death (7:25)	Literal death (5:5, 10)
Corporate Impact	Brought death for all (Rom 5:12)	Entire people 'devoted to destruction' (7:12)	Great fear seized the church (5:11)

Read Joshua 8:1-2

11. What is the irony for Achan about Ai?

- *Soon after, actually at the next city, God gives Israel permission to keep the plunder!*
- *It is about obedience*
- *God is not a cruel God – He wants what is best for us (but that doesn't always match with what we think is best for us)*

Main Points of Chapters 8-11

We don't have time to go through the rest of chapters 8 to 11 in detail. However, the following is a summary of each chapter:

- **Chapter 8 – God is central**
 - Israel takes Ai
 - The king of Ai is buried under a pile of stones as a monument to Israel's second chance and restoration after what happened with Achan (8:28-29)
 - Joshua writes the Law on stone (8:32) – a reminder to obey the Law
 - The covenant is renewed at Mount Ebal (for all people)
 - Joshua builds an altar there and reads the whole Law to the people
 - There are only two ways to live: under God's blessing (represented by Mt Gerizim) or under God's curse (represented by Mt Ebal)
 - And they have profoundly different consequences
 - This is a witness to the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh to keep the promises He has made
 - Notice again that the ark (God's presence) and God's word is central (8:33)
 - **It is significant that the altar is built on Mt Ebal (the 'curse' mountain) – because sacrifices to God is the way to return to Him when you sin**
 - See Galatians 3:10-14 if you rely on Law you will remain under curse, but Christ becomes the curse for us, our sacrifice, so that Abraham's blessings might come to the Gentiles
- **Chapter 9 – The Lord needs to be consulted**
 - The failure of God's people at Ai unites the Canaanites (9:1-2)
 - The Gibeonites (a group of Canaanites) deceive Joshua into making a binding oath to not kill them
 - Joshua did not consult the Lord (9:14)
 - Joshua works out he has been deceived and makes them perpetual servants of the Temple

- **Chapter 10 – When God is with you, what you are doing for Him is guaranteed**
 - A group of Canaanite kings decide to destroy the Gibeonites because of their betrayal
 - The Gibeonites ask Israel to help them
 - Because of their oath, Israel fights for Gibeon and destroys the Canaanite kings
 - God supports this and will make Israel win the battle (10:8)
 - All the southern cities are conquered
 - Joshua creates another stone memorial (10:27) to anticipate the fall of Israel's remaining enemies
 - Joshua says to his people to 'be strong and courageous' (10:25)

- **Chapter 11 – Rest from war**
 - Israel then defeats the northern cities
 - Conquering the land takes a long time (11:18 estimated at seven years at this point – recall Exodus 23:29-30)
 - Joshua took the whole land and Israel has rest from war (11:23)
 - But Israel were not always obedient (11:13, 19, 22)

- **Chapter 12 – God is faithful to His promises**
 - 12:1 If the emphasis in the first half of the book of Joshua is on the Lord's faithfulness in giving Israel the land, it now falls to Israel to prove faithful in taking possession of the land
 - But in taking the land and gaining control they did not eliminate all the opposition
 - Ch 12 gives a long list of kings that God has defeated
 - God is faithful to His promises – here is the evidence

12. What does the Promised Land parallel for us?

- *Heaven – where we will have rest in God's presence*
 - *The Promised Land for Israel foreshadows heaven for all of God's people*
- *See Hebrews 4:8 – the rest into which Joshua led Israel is seen as temporary and inferior to the rest that still awaits God's people in Christ*
- *When we are tempted to go back to our old ways, remember the eternal realities of heaven. In the future we will be in God's presence with no sin, suffering, or death*

Summary

We learn from these passages the contrast between obedience to God and disobedience. When Israel obeys God He blesses them but when they disobey God He curses them. Joshua needs to consult God before making critical decisions. God is the one in charge.

Joshua Bible Studies – Leader Notes

Study 5 – Joshua 13 to 19

The first half of the book (Ch 1-12) is about the conquest of the land, and the second half of the book will be about its allocation to the twelve tribes. The central point of the second half of the book is Joshua 18:1-10. God has fulfilled His promises in giving the land to Israel. Now the land needs to be divided up for each tribe.

The land was divided in three steps: the first part took place under Moses on the eastern side of the Jordan, the second and third under Joshua on the western side, first at Gilgal, then at Shiloh.

Program of allocation:

Order	Tribe	Passage	Order	Tribe	Passage
1	Reuben	13:15-23	8	Simeon	19:1-9
2	Gad	13:24-28	9	Zebulun	19:10-16
3	Eastern Manasseh (1/4)	13:29-31	10	Issachar	19:17-23
4	Judah	14:6-15:63	11	Asher	19:24-31
5	Ephraim (1/2)	16:5-10	12	Naphtali	19:32-39
6	Western Manasseh (1/4)	17:1-13	13	Dan	19:40-48
7	Benjamin	18:11-28	14	Levi	21:1-42

NB: the first three tribes have land allocations 'outside' the Promised Land

See Appendix E for a map of the tribal division of the Promised Land.

1. Have you ever received an inheritance?
2. What do you do to earn it?

Read Joshua 13

Joshua's old age (v1) is presented as the trigger for the command to him to divide the land for an inheritance (v7). So although "there remains yet very much land to possess" (v1), the allocation and distribution of it among the tribes must be carried out by Joshua, under God, while he is still alive and active.

As the book had begun with God addressing Joshua, encouraging him and giving him instructions (1:2-9), so now too God speaks to Joshua with instructions for carrying out his next tasks, allocating the land (13:1-7).

3. What does God reaffirm in v6?
 - *That He will drive the Canaanites from the land*

4. Is this conditional?
 - *It is conditional upon Israel's willingness to act on the command*
 - *There are no conditions to God's ultimate will and purpose with the land, but there was nothing automatic about the fulfilment of the promise if this generation of Israelites failed to activate it by faith and action*

5. The land each tribe gets will be decided by casting lots (14:2). What does this mean and what does it say?
 - *Casting of lots is the equivalent of throwing a dice for us today*
 - *How it is done specifically is not mentioned in the passage*
 - *In effect it is saying God will decide*
 - *The primary reason for casting lots was to render an impartial, unbiased decision on important matters*

Levites the religious leaders

In 13:14 we see that the inheritance for the Levites will be 'the sacrifices of the Lord', that is, the tithes the rest of Israel gives for the Lord's work (Num 18:20-24; Deut 18:1-5). Originally, the tribe of Levi had been sentenced to a landless existence for its violent behaviour in the incident with the Shechemites (Gen 49:5-7; 34:25-31), but later, the Levites redeemed themselves during the golden calf incident where they supported Moses (Ex 32:25-28) and were promised a blessing for it (Deut 33:8-11).

The Levites key roles are to:

- Complete the sacrifices
- Maintain the Tabernacle
- Teach God's word

Caleb – faithfulness rewarded

Chapter 14 talks about Caleb receiving his inheritance (see Numbers 13-14) because he has wholeheartedly followed the Lord (vv8, 9, 14). At age 85, he attacks the Canaanites (v11). Caleb sets the example of how Israel's tribes ought to be extending the original conquest by cleaning out and nailing down their various tribal portions.

Rest in the land

And the land had rest from war (v15b). For a brief and shining moment, there was a glimpse of God's everlasting Sabbath: rest, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

It took seven years to get to this point since they crossed the Jordan.

6. In Chapter 15, Judah receives its inheritance. Why does Judah receive its land allotment first?
- *See Genesis 49:8-12. Judah is the royal tribe and receives the biggest blessing*
 - *Judah receives the most land west of the Jordan and the attention devoted to its lands is the most detailed and extensive of all the tribes*
 - *Judah is not the eldest son (they are the fourth eldest – see Appendix A). The older sons had set aside their place by sinning*
 - *Reuben through having sex with his father’s concubine (Gen 35:22)*
 - *Simeon and Levi through their violence (Gen 34) – they would both be scattered*
 - *But because of their repentance, Levi’s scattering would now be a blessing as they served the Lord throughout Israel*
7. What is ominous about verse 63 (and 13:13; 16:10; 17:12-13)?
- *Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites*
 - *So clearly Judah have not relied on God already*
 - *Leaving Canaanites in the land will come back to haunt them as the people corrupt the nation of Israel with their false gods and evil practices*
 - *What was the Israelites’ problem? The cares of this world and a lack of faith in God*
 - *There is also suspense because of Moses’ warnings in Deuteronomy about what will happen if they leave the Canaanites in the land*
 - *There are consequences for disobeying God*

In chapter 16, the next tribes given land are the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Again Genesis 49:22-26 highlights why they are favoured. But then they complain (Joshua 17:14-18).

Read Joshua 17:14-18

The root of their complaint is that they don’t trust God for His provision. They are not being “strong and courageous”.

8. What is Joshua’s answer to their request? Why is it so wise?
- *They complain that the land allocation they have been given is too small, because they are a big tribe*
 - *Joshua says, if you are so big, why don’t you go and take the rest of your allotment and the lands around you, which are full of Canaanites?*
 - *The implication is that they have been allocated enough space, they just need to show energy to get it*
 - *The land size was enough but their faith was not*

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- *Challenging the size of their allotment meant they were challenging God (who gave them the allotment)*
- *They distrusted God to fulfil His promises (their fear is a sign of unbelief)*
- *The Joseph tribe's arrogance contrasts with the humility of Caleb (14:6-12) and the daughters of Zelophehad (17:4)*
- *Joshua is also a descendant of Joseph, but there is no bias in his answer*
- *Joshua was living Deut 7:17-22 and 20:1, being 'strong and courageous'*

Ironically, the three tribes (Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh) that get their allocation first did not drive the Canaanites from the land (15:63; 16:10; 17:13).

Read Joshua 18:1-10

The establishment of the tabernacle at Shiloh is now the focus (this is at the centre of this section dedicated to the distribution of the land).

This is shown by:

- The tent of meeting being set up there (18:1)
- God's presence is dwelling there

Joshua moves his centre of operations from Gilgal to Shiloh, situated in the centre of the country. This signifies a shift from being on a war footing, with the main camp at Gilgal, to being at rest, at Shiloh. God's rest is finalised and then the tent of meeting is set up.

God is faithful to His promise of the land as an inheritance.

In Genesis 1:28 God commissions Adam and Eve to "fill the earth and subdue it". In Joshua 18:1, the sons of Israel assemble in Shiloh and "the land was subdued". They have obeyed God and the land is now under their control.

18:1 sums up the first half of the book and 18:3 sums up the remainder of the book.

God gives the people the land (18:10), but they must grasp the inheritance in a Caleb-like manner. Here is the land, now take it!

Benjamin's allocation is next (18:11-28). Then Simeon's (19:1-19). Simeon's allotment is within Judah's again in fulfilment of Genesis 49:7.

9. Why are these lists of lands and cities and boundaries so important?

- *These lists are the heart of the book*
 - *They prove that God is faithful to His promises*
- *God fulfils His promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)*
- *The land's importance was such that it was carefully parcelled out, clan by clan, with God guiding the allotments by the lots that were cast (18:6, 8, 10, 11; 19:1, 10, 17, 24, 32, 40)*

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- *God's presence in these verses is shown by the presence of the tent of meeting (18:1; 19:51), the presence of the Lord (18:6, 8, 10; 19:51), and the casting of lots (18:6, 10-11; 19:1, 10, 17, 24, 32, 40, 51)*
- *It also shows the unity of Israel, as all the tribes equally participated in the conquest*

Lastly, Joshua receives his inheritance in 19:49-50.

Joshua 19:51 is a fitting conclusion to this section of Joshua.

"These are the territories that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel assigned by lot at Shiloh in the presence of the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And so they finished dividing the land."

Now all the tribes except for Levi had received their inheritances.

10. Where is the 'rest' for Christians? How is this similar and different to the Promised Land?

- *Heaven*
 - *Heaven is better – no sin, no death, no suffering*
- *But the Promised Land foreshadows heaven*
 - *If Israel had lived in obedience to the Lord, the Promised Land would have been much more like heaven – a land of blessing*
 - *God's presence is in the land but access to Him is restricted – there is no restriction to the access to God in heaven*
 - *All the land was there if they wanted to take it by being faithful to God*
 - *Isn't the Christian life similar to that now?*
 - *Although we live in a world corrupted by sin, living God's way will give you the most abundant life now*
- *Remember that God made Eden and it was good*
 - *God wants to live with us*
 - *That is why we were created*

Summary

God is faithful to His promises. He determines which tribe will get which part of the land. All Israel needs to do to receive the inheritance is take it. Sometimes they do, but most of the time they fail.

Study 6 – Joshua 20 to 21

Finally, the task of apportioning the lands east and west of the Jordan to the twelve tribes was complete. What is the first thing God looks at? A system of justice and then the provision for the teaching of God's word. So, these two final items remained to be taken care of:

- The designation of the cities of refuge (ch 20)
 - A system of justice
- The designation of the Levitical cities (ch 21)
 - Provision for the teaching of God's word

The Lord's concern is that the land not only be duly allocated as an inheritance for the tribes (ch 13-19) but that it be a land where justice prevails and true worship is cultivated (designation of six cities of refuge - ch 20; and forty eight Levitical cities 21:1-42).

1. Do you think God is just? Why or why not?

Read Joshua 20

2. What is this passage talking about?

- *Cities of Refuge*
 - *If someone kills someone, they can run to these cities to escape anyone thinking of revenge*
 - *Here the fleeer is safe*
- *But the town leaders must decide if the death was accidental or deliberate. Either way, the killer faces God's Law, but it is more lenient if the killing was accidental.*
- *Note: Each City of Refuge is within a day's travel of anywhere in Israel, so accessible to all*

3. What does the legislation for 'Cities of Refuge' teach us about God?

- *God is merciful*
 - *Those who kill accidentally could find a place of refuge*
 - *The presumption of innocence is also there in that the fleeer then goes to trial at the City of Refuge*
- *God affirms the sanctity of human life*
 - *Even an accidental death caused blood guilt that deserved punishment*
 - *But God's Law takes into account intent*

4. What does the death of the High Priest mean in this situation (20:6)? Why?
 - *The death of the High Priest is a form of atonement, where his death pays the price for the sin of the 'accidental' killer*

5. How does Jesus do the same thing?
 - *Read Hebrews 2:14-18 & 7:11-28*
 - *Jesus' death pays the price for our sins so that we can have a restored relationship with God*

6. How does verse 9 add to the story?
 - *God's Law includes justice for aliens or foreigners*
 - *Equal justice; there is no favouritism*

So Cities of Refuge were:

- Easy to reach from anywhere in the country
 - Open to all
 - The gates were never locked (known from extra-biblical sources)
 - Stocked with provisions
 - But there was no help for the killer if they didn't flee to one of these
-
7. So how is a City of Refuge similar to Christ?
 - *Christ is easy to reach (actually Christ is even easier to reach than a city of refuge!)*
 - *Christ is open to all*
 - *Christ never locks His gates – He always welcomes people who come to Him*
 - *Christ is a totally sufficient refuge*
 - *If we don't turn to Christ there is no hope for us*

 8. What do you learn from this passage that impacts you?
 - *God's concern for mercy – means I can be forgiven no matter what I have done*

Read Joshua 21

Joshua 21:43-45 provides the theological key to all that we have witnessed. It brackets the book with Joshua 1:6. The emphasis here is on the exactness of the distributions and the fact that they were scattered throughout Israel.

9. Why did the Levites need to be in cities scattered throughout the land?

- *The primary reason is so that they could teach the Law to all people throughout the land (Deut 33:10)*
- *God had commanded it and the people obeyed (21:3)*
 - *See also Ex 21:12-14 & Num 35*
- *The cities were chosen by lot ie God chose the cities (21:4, 4, 5, 6, 8)*
- *The scattering also emphasises the unity of Israel and God's care for the individual*

The Kohathites' allotment within Judah (21:4) is significant since the tribe of Judah was the only one to survive in the centuries ahead, and Jerusalem (with its temple) was in Judah's territory. The Kohathites were descendants of Aaron. In the casting of lots, God is doing this knowing the future (knowing what places are going to be of most significance in the future eg Jerusalem). God is in control.

10. Who is the focus of verses 43 to 45? What did they do?

- *The Lord*
- *He gave them the land (v43) – summaries ch 13-21*
- *He gave them rest (44a) – summaries ch 1-12*
 - *Rest sums up God's good purposes for His people*
- *He gave all their enemies into their hands (v44b)*
- *Not one promise of His failed (v45) – summarises ch 1-21*
 - *Notice 'all' occurs six times in this verse for emphasis!*
 - *God is faithful to His promises*
- *Everything God had promised His people for centuries about the land had now been completed*

11. But how can this be said when there are still Canaanites in the land?

- *See 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-12; 19:47;*
- *God is completely faithful*
- *But Israel was not always obedient*
- *This is the tension in the book*
 - *'Now and not yet'*
 - *All God's promises are fulfilled but much of the land is to be fully possessed*

12. How does this relate to us and the Gospel?

- *We also live in a 'Now and not yet' time*
- *What Jesus has done on the cross, by dying in our place and paying the price for our sins, is all that is needed to save us*
 - *However, we still live in a sinful world, where there is suffering, sin, and death*
- *We can now live totally like He wants. But we don't because we still live in a sinful world.*
 - *One day, when we are in heaven, we will live exactly like God wants, in a place where there is no death, no sin, and no suffering, directly in God's presence, forever*

13. How will you respond to what you have learnt from this passage?

Summary

By allocating cities of refuge and cities for the Levites, God shows His mercy and His care that all people can be taught His word. The same principals apply now:

- God wants to be merciful to us (Eph 2:4-5)
- God wants us to understand His word (1 Th 2:13)

Study 7 – Joshua 22 to 24

This is the last study in Joshua. God has led the Israelites into the Promised Land. The land is at rest. It has been allocated amongst the tribes. So in light of all this, how will Israel respond to God's mercy and generosity?

1. What does it mean today to commit idolatry?

The final three chapters of the book of Joshua outline three farewells:

- Firstly, in chapter 22, to the two and a half tribes whose homes are east of the Jordan
- Secondly, in chapter 23, to the elders and heads and judges of Israel
- Thirdly, in chapter 24, to the whole nation

The book ends with a strong forward look with the people renewing their commitment to the covenant and to the Lord.

Chapter 22 sees the tribes to settle east of the Jordan leave but before they cross the Jordan, they build an altar to the Lord. This causes angst amongst the remaining Israelites as they see the altar as an alternate place to worship Yahweh, something forbidden (Deut 12:13-14). So they catch up and discuss the matter. It turns out the altar is not an alternate place to worship but rather a reminder that they are part of God's people too. It was a mark of loyalty and unity (note the mention of the location multiple times 22:10, 11 on the Israelite side of the Jordan). And of course, the altar will help the tribes remember all that God has done for them. So these tribes return to their land, carrying the wealth God has provided for them (v8).

So now onto chapter 23.

Read Joshua 23

God has given Israel rest in the land (v1). The big questions of these last two chapters then are 'how will that rest be used?' and 'what will be its fruit?'

2. Joshua draws special attention to 'the nations' (vv3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13). Who are they and why does he do this?
 - *The nations is a term for those outside God's covenant*
 - *In this specific instance it refers to the Canaanite nations that are still in the Promised Land*
 - *Why does he do this?*
 - *God has defeated these nations*
 - *He has given each tribe of Israel an inheritance in the land*
 - *But now the tribes are going to go to this allocation and some of the nations are still there*
 - *What are God's people going to do?*
 - *God knows that if the people disobey and don't drive out these nations, the Israelites will ultimately believe in their gods instead of Yahweh*

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- *The key way they will disobey is to worship idols like the nations do (Ex 20:3-4)*
 - *And if they reject God He will stop driving the nations from the land (v13)*
 - *God does not want compromise – idolatry will result in loss of the Promised Land*
3. What does Joshua emphasise in verse 14? Why does he do this?
- *He emphasises God's faithfulness*
 - *No promise to Israel has not been fulfilled*
 - *The implication is: therefore obey Him! Serve Him!*
 - *After all He is 100% dependable*
4. How does this relate to our situation as Christians?
- *God has promised that we are saved by Jesus dying in our place*
 - *He proves this by Jesus rising from the dead*
 - *Now we need to remember what Jesus has done for us and in light of our gratitude, live in obedience to Him*
5. But Joshua also warns the people (vv15-16). What is the warning and how does he do it?
- *There are also punishments for disobedience*
 - *You will lose the land if you worship other gods*
 - *Just as God is faithful in giving blessings to Israel, He will also be faithful in cursing Israel if they disobey*
 - *Specifically, the warning is don't mix with the nations (verse 7, 12)*
 - *There has been repeated warnings throughout the book of Joshua that the nations had not been fully driven out (13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-13)*
 - *Israel is not entitled to the land – God gives it to them freely but to live in the land they must live God's way*
 - *Having people from other nations living in the land and being sinful, compromises this because they will lead the Israelites astray with their idolatrous lifestyles*
 - *The ownership of the land (as a gift from God) is certain and eternal, but the occupation of it by any given generation is conditional on obedience*

Joshua tells the leaders of the people to be strong (verse 6) like God told him to be (1:6, 7, 9). Strength shown by obeying God's word. And be very careful to love the Lord (verse 11).

6. Looking at verse 11, what does be 'very careful' mean?

- *It requires energy and attention*
 - *It is an active expression*
- *And hold fast to the Lord your God (verse 8)*
 - *It is ongoing!*

7. Why should we be 'very careful' to love the Lord your God as well?

- *In this sense, there is no difference between an Israelite and a twenty first century person*
- *We should love God because He is faithful*
- *We also need to live obediently, following God's ways and not the ways of the world around us*

Read Joshua 24

Now Joshua assembles all the people at Shechem. Shechem is where the Lord appeared to Abram and promised to give the land to his offspring (Genesis 12:6-7). God's promises have been fulfilled.

8. How does God emphasise His faithfulness to His people?

- *With a series of 'I' statements*
- *I did this ...*
 - *See verse 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6, 7b, 8a, 8b, 8c, 10a, 10b, 11c, 12a, 13.*
- *Verse 2 to 4 covers what God has done for 'your ancestors'*
- *But in verse 5 to 13 it changes to 'you' – what God has done for 'you', the current generation*
 - *And verse 11 to 13 cover the book of Joshua*
- *He did all of this, not Israel (verse 12-13)*
- *Also compare 3:10 with 24:11-13 – they are the same nations (promises fulfilled)*

9. What does verse 14 say the people of God are to do?

- *Fear the Lord*
- *Serve Him with all faithfulness (serve is mentioned 16 times in this chapter)*
- *Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped (Exodus 20:3-4)*
- *Serve the Lord*

10. What does 'fear the Lord' mean?

- *This fear is not a paralysing horror*
 - *It is reverent awe, a deep respect for God as the King of the Universe*
- *The basic idea is that the Lord is with us and He is also over us. He is the great and Holy God and is to be feared. This is a good fear because whatever we fear controls us. When we fear the Lord, we are controlled by Him and His words. In short, we do what He says.*
 - *We should have gratitude to Him which leads to obedience*
 - *And an awareness of the consequences of not showing God due respect*
- *God is both strong and loving (Ps 62:11-12)*

11. The four imperatives in Question 9 also apply to us today. How do we live these out?

- *Treat God with reverent awe – go into specifics related to your group*
- *Serve Him by how we live, loving God and loving others – go into specifics related to your group*
- *Don't follow the ways of our culture (if they disagree with God's ways)*
 - *This is emphasised three times (v2 - Abraham; 14 – in Egypt; 15, 20 - in the land)*
 - *How can these other gods, false gods in fact, actually even be a choice?*
- *Serve the Lord, remembering what He has done for us, by giving us our inheritance, heaven*

12. In verses 14 to 24, what sort of commitment does the covenant require?

- *A logical commitment – God deserves your commitment because of who He is and what He has done for us*
 - *He created and sustains the whole universe*
 - *He is the King of the Universe*
 - *Verse 16-18 shows that the people know that God is faithful to His promises*
- *An exclusive commitment – He demands you only commit to Him and not other gods ie other things you worship before Him*
 - *Do not worship other gods*
 - *In fact they are false gods*

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13. But what does Joshua say in verse 19? Why?

- You are **not** able to serve the Lord!! Surprising?
 - Remember the golden calf incident, when the spies first went into the Promised Land, and Achan
 - At the golden calf, the people worshipped idols even while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments
 - Ten of the spies refused to go into the Promised Land even though the Lord was with them
 - Achan disobeys God's explicit word in keeping plunder from Jericho
 - Moses predicted they would break the covenant also and become utterly corrupt (Deut 31:16, 29)
- He is so concerned that they will follow other gods – He will not share them with any other god (see also Exodus 20:1-3)
- They need to be aware of their own weakness and inability
- And if you know anything about Judges, you see that the book is about a descent into more and more sinful practices – culminating in the terrible sins of Judges 17-21.
 - And what is intriguing is this descent happens in the next generation! (note Phinehas in Judges 20:28 and the last verse of Joshua, 24:33)
 - So it only takes one generation for the Israelites to be as depraved and sinful as the Canaanites were
 - Even 24:31 implies they may not serve God after this generation
- But Joshua accepts their reply and calls them to witness against themselves, and uses a large stone as the witness

Throughout the book, God provides the people with a series of 'stone' reminders:

Passage	Context	Reason
4:20	Gilgal	A reminder of God's faithfulness in bringing Israel safely across the Jordan into the Promised Land
7:26	Over Achan	A reminder of Israel's potential for unfaithfulness and of the dire consequences that result
8:28-29	Over the king of Ai	A monument to Israel's second chance and restoration
8:30-32	Joshua engraves a copy of the Law	A reminder of Israel's duty to live in obedience to God's Law
10:27	Over Amorite kings at Gibeon	A reminder of God's gracious action in defending Israel's covenant with a Canaanite city
22:34	Peace in the land of Gilead	A witness to the unity of the Transjordan tribes with Israel west of the Jordan
24:26-27	Covenant renewal at Shechem	A reminder of Israel's duty to serve the Lord, who fulfilled every promise in bringing them into the land

It is critical to remember God's faithfulness.

14. God has a long history of leading His people. Is this the same for us? In what ways? And what should we do in light of this? And why?

- *God has set things up for us*
 - *All of history has been heading towards the cross*
 - *And now we live in a situation where everything God, by His mercy, could do to make things right between Him and us, has been done by Jesus dying on the cross. And at the cost of the life of His Son!*
- *So we need to remember what God has done for us through Jesus*
- *Our gratitude for Jesus' death on the cross should drive how we live, not out of duty but out of love*

The story is complete. Joshua's work is done, they are in the land, and the narrative draws to its conclusion (vv29-33). Joshua is now accorded the ultimate accolade of the same title as Moses – he is “the servant of the Lord (v29 compare 1:1).

And Joshua (v30), Joseph (v32), and Eleazar (v33) are all buried in the land. There is however a hint that things may not be so rosy in the future (v31).

So we see in Joshua:

- God's faithfulness to His promises (Genesis 12:1-3 of Nation, Land, and Blessing)
- Joshua representing the first generation of Israelites who have to rely on the written Word
- The appropriate response to what God has generously done for His people, is obedience

So at the end of Joshua we have God's People (Israel), in God's Place (the Promised Land), under God's rule (the Law), enjoying God's blessing (the fruit of the Land).

Joshua also leaves us with the question of will the Israelites remember God's faithful mercy or will they not listen to the warnings He has given them and disobey?

But there is an expectation that there is more to the story ...

Read Hebrews 4:1-13

15. We have read a lot about Joshua and Israel as they entered, conquered, and allocated the Promised Land. What are the implications for us today?

- *God wants to give us rest - life in His presence (v1)*
 - *There is hope now*
- *What Joshua did by leading the people into the land was a foretaste of the permanent rest available for God's people in heaven (vv8-9)*
- *He is God and we have to give an account of our lives to Him (v13)*
 - *So 'let us be careful' (v1)*

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- *But God's message to us is valueless unless there is faith and obedience*
- *So do not harden your hearts like Israel did (v7; see also Ps 95:7-8)*
- *But He is also merciful and desires that all peoples are saved*
 - *So make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will perish (v11)*
- *God's word is alive and active now (v12)*

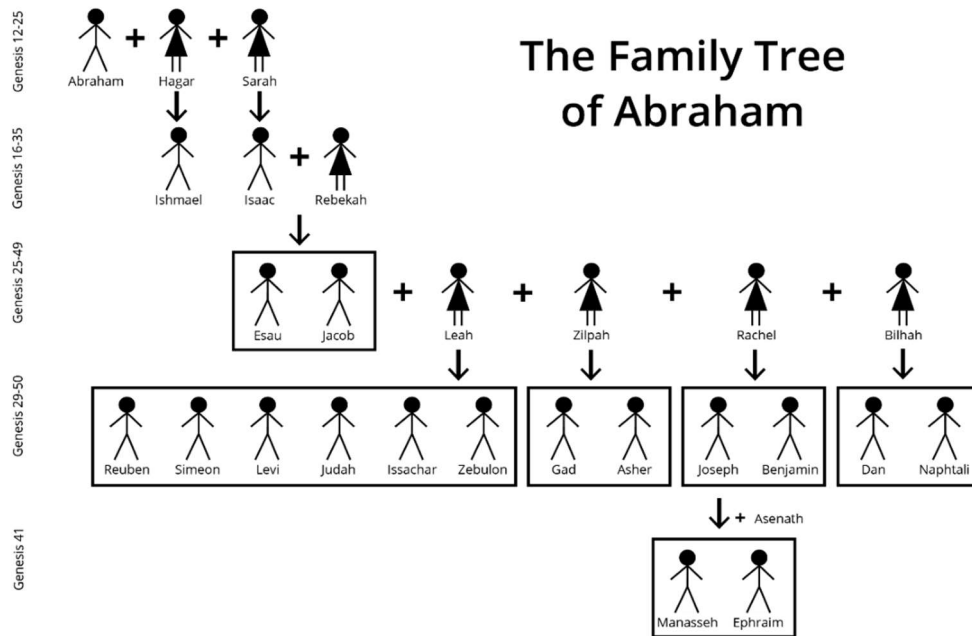
We face the same test now as Israel did: can the church be faithful after the eyewitnesses to Jesus have died? But there is also the same solution:

- God is faithful to His promises
- God has given us His word to learn how to live His way
- God is rich in mercy and desires that all people be saved
- Remember the Lord!

Appendix A – The Family Tree of Abraham

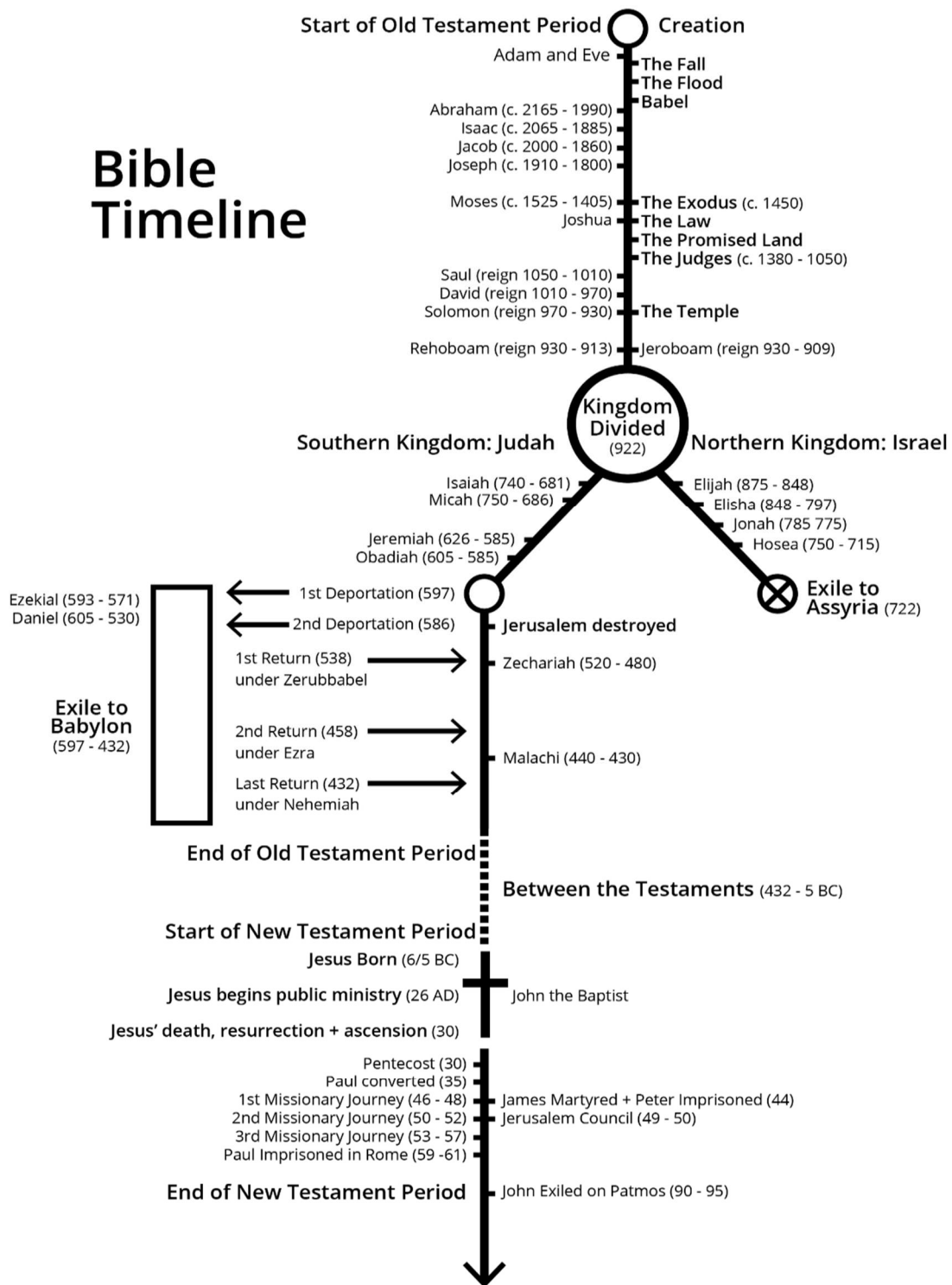
There are twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve are the twelve sons of Jacob (renamed Israel). However, Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are seen as half tribes rather than Joseph being a tribe.

When Jacob blessed Joseph's sons (Manasseh and Ephraim), while on his deathbed, he honoured them by treating them as his sons rather than as his grandsons (Genesis 48). Because of the symbolism of the number 12 to Judaism (the 12 tribes of Israel, totality, wholeness), the tribes were not considered whole tribes but were instead called half-tribes. Joshua gave them double the territory the other tribes received so that, even though they were technically half-tribes, they would each have the same amount of land as Jacob's other sons.



Visual sourced from *Creation to New Creation* (Moore College Distance Course)

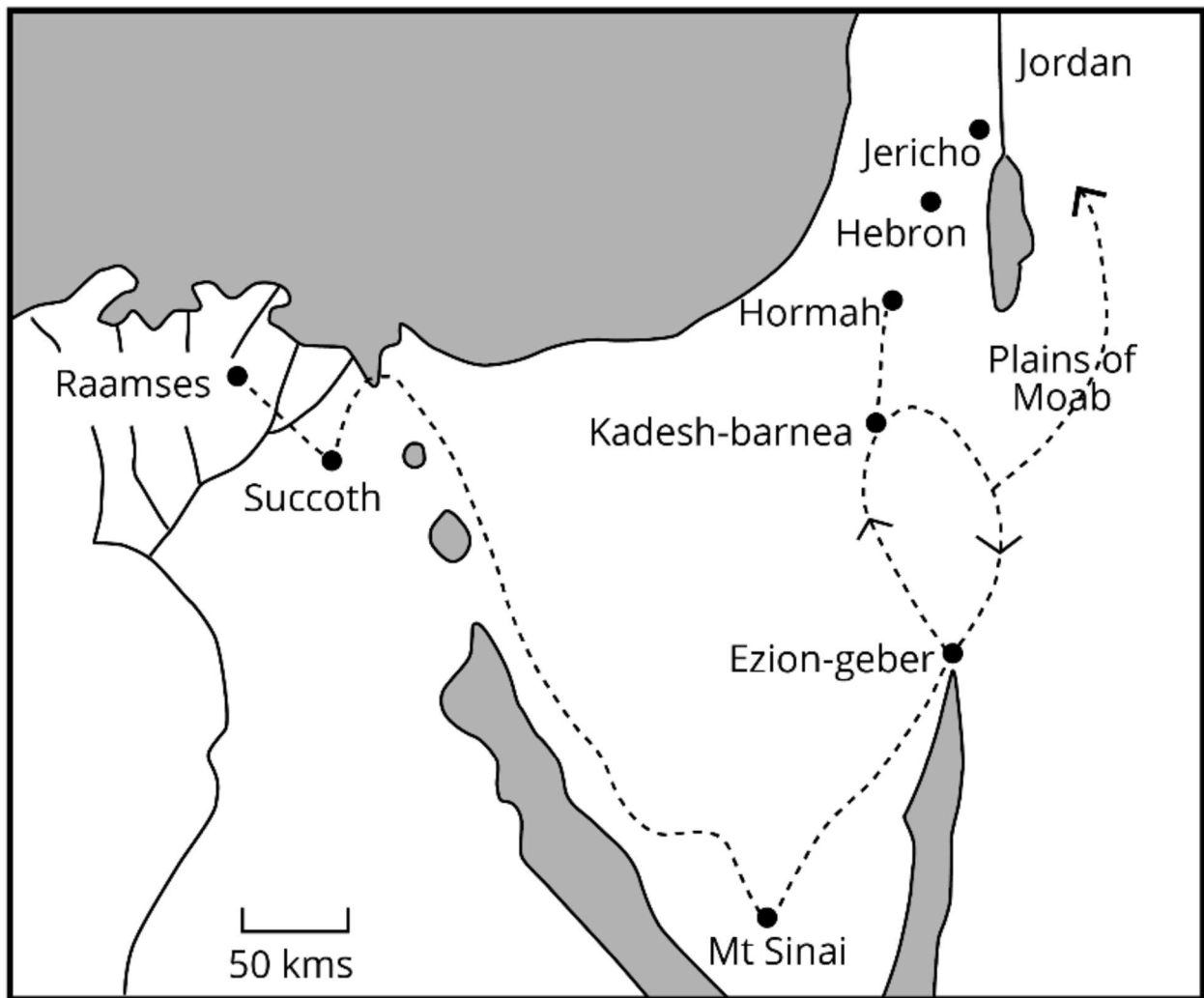
Appendix B – The Bible Timeline



Visual sourced from *Creation to New Creation* (Moore College Distance Course)

Appendix C – From Egypt to the Promised Land

This map shows the journey that God's people took from Egypt to the Promised Land.



Visual sourced from *Creation to New Creation* (Moore College Distance Course)

The journey of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land starts in Raamses. The Israelites, as slaves, helped build the city of Raamses (Exodus 1:11). When the Israelites leave Egypt they go via Succoth (Ex 12:37) and then cross the Red Sea. They then walk to Mount Sinai where they receive the Ten Commandments and build the Tabernacle (Exodus 20f). Ezion-geber is likely one of the first places Israel camped after the Exodus from Egypt before reaching Kadesh-barnea the first time (Num 33:35). The Israelites then reach Kadesh-barnea (Num 13-14; 33:36) and this is where the twelve spies go into the Promised Land and come back and report (ten spies say we can't take the land and two, Joshua and Caleb, say they can!).

At Hormah, the Israelites try to take the land without God's permission. This is a dismal failure (Num 14:45). After this, the Israelites wander in the desert for forty years until all adults over the age of 20 have died, except for Joshua and Caleb. They wander in the area between Ezion-geber and Kadesh-barnea.

After wandering in the desert for forty years, we get to the book of Joshua and this time God will let them into the land. But this time, they enter via the Jordan River and cross the Jordan near Jericho.

Appendix D – Structure of Joshua

The best structure I have seen is from David Dorsey (*Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, 91-94).

Structure of Chapters 1-8

- **A Opening focus on the “Book of the Law of Moses” (1:1-18)**
 - Joshua becomes the leader of Israel
 - Joshua commits himself to the law of Moses
 - God promises to be with Joshua
- **B Encouragement from a believing Canaanite: Rahab hides spies (2:1-24)**
 - Rahab scarlet thread; brought into God’s people
 - Good results from Rahab’s report 2:24; 2:6;
 - **C Jordan stands up (3:1-4:24)**
 - Israel is given marching orders
 - The priests lead the procession
 - The miracle enables Israel to enter the land
 - **D Israel worships Yahweh in the Promised Land (5:1-12)**
 - **C’ Jericho falls down (5:13-6:27)**
 - Israel is given marching orders
 - The priests lead the procession
 - The miracle enables Israel to enter the land
- **B’ Discouragement from a faithless Israelite: Achan hides plunder (7:1-8:29)**
 - Zerah scarlet thread (Gen 38:28); offspring cut off from God’s people
 - Bad results from Achan’s sin 7:7; 7:5; 7:9
- **A’ Closing focus on the “Book of the Law of Moses” (8:30-35)**
 - Joshua leads the people to renew the covenant
 - Joshua copies the stone tablets of Moses
 - God’s presence will dwell with the people in the land because of Joshua

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Chapters 9-12

- **A All the kings of Canaan oppose Joshua as one (9:1-2)**
 - Includes kings west of the Jordan, Lebanon, highlands, Shephelah, etc
 - ‘they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel’ v2
 - **B Mercy for a believing remnant Israel makes peace with Gibeon (9:3-27)**
 - Those who seek mercy are spared
 - **C Defeat of Southern Coalition (10:1-15)**
 - Begins: “when King Adoni-zedek heard ... he sent to ... “ list of kings
 - Kings “gather together ... to fight Israel”
 - Yahweh reassures Joshua: “do not be afraid of them; I will give them into your hands”
 - Joshua and the entire army surprise attack against enemy
 - Israel struck the enemy, pursued them as far as ... and as far as ...
 - **D Ritual ceremony at Makedah, conquest of kings of south (10:16-43)**
 - **C’ Defeat of Northern Coalition (11:1-15)**
 - Begins: “when King Jabin heard ... he sent to ... “ list of kings
 - Kings “gather together ... to fight Israel”
 - Yahweh reassures Joshua: “do not be afraid of them; I will give them into your hands”
 - Joshua and the entire army surprise attack against enemy
 - Israel struck the enemy, pursued them as far as ... and as far as ...
 - **B’ No Mercy for hardened Canaanites (11:16-23)**
 - Those who harden their hearts are judged
- **A’ All the kings whom Joshua conquered are listed one by one (12:1-24)**
 - Includes kings west of the Jordan, Lebanon, highlands, Shephelah, etc
 - Each king listed, one by one – 31 in total

Chapters 13-24

- **A Introduction (13:1-7)**
 - Joshua’s divides land as he grows old
 - Already / Not Yet: This is your land ... whose inhabitants you must drive out
 - **B Transjordan Tribes (13:8-33)**
 - **C Levites (14:1-5)**
 - **D Personal Allotment for Caleb (14:6-15)**
 - **E Two Large Tribes – Judah and Joseph (15:1-17:18)**
 - **F Land Apportioned from Shiloh (18:1-10)**
 - **E’ Smaller Tribes – associated with Judah and Joseph (18:11-19:48)**
 - **D’ Personal Allotment for Joshua (19:49-52)**
 - **C’ Levitical Cities (20:1-21:45)**
 - **B’ Transjordan Tribes (22:1-34)**
- **A’ Conclusion (23:1-24:33)**
 - Joshua’s closing challenge as he is about to die

- Already / Not Yet: This is your land ... whose inhabitants you must drive out

Appendix E – Map of Promised Land Allocation

