



Lesson 1

Introduction to Joshua

I. Scripture Reading:

Exodus 17:8-16, 24:13, 33:11; Numbers 13:1-18, 14:6-9,
27:15-23

II. Synopsis:

Introduction

The first five books of the Bible, beginning with the book of Genesis, are collectively known as the Five Books of Moses, or the Pentateuch. The book of Joshua is the sixth book and is also the first of the history books in the Old Testament. The book was named after God's chosen

servant who is also the central figure of the whole book, Joshua. Joshua in Hebrew means “Jehovah Saves”. The Hebrew name Joshua is the exact same name “Jesus” in the New Testament Greek. While the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, Joshua was Moses’ capable and trusted assistant. He was the only person who accompanied Moses to go up Mt. Sinai and was also designated to attend the Tabernacle after its construction. Joshua was one of the 12 spies Moses sent to survey the land of Canaan. Upon their return, only Joshua of the tribe of Benjamin and Caleb of the tribe of Judah with a firm faith in God’s promise, strongly advocated an attack on Canaan. Before his death, Moses chose Joshua to succeed him to be the leader of the Israelites.

The Bible recorded when God chose Joshua, He said, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him” (Num 27:18). Joshua was loyal, upright, and courageous all his life, and strictly followed the word of God. Just as God instructed Joshua in the Book of Joshua 1:7-8 “Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with

all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.”

During Joshua’s life time, God gave him the courage and strength to take over the leadership from Moses and to lead the Israelites to cross Jordan River, enter into Canaan, the land God promised to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their off springs. Joshua also led them into numerous battles with the Canaanites and conquered all the natives west of the river. He then divided the land west of the Jordan River to the nine and half tribes of Israel. The other two and half tribes already had their portion of inheritance on east side of the river. All the twelve tribes of Israel received the portion which was the “promised land” God wanted to give to them. Just as the Scripture says, “Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that He swore to their ancestors that He would give them; and having taken possession of it, they settled there.” (Jos 21:43) The twelve tribes of Israel settled down in this land and prospered, establishing a firm foundation for the newborn nation as it evolved into the eras of the judges and the kings. As for Joshua, he devoted his entire life wholeheartedly and faithfully to completing the work God entrusted him with.

The book of Joshua reveals to us the treasures of the kingdom of heaven. It truthfully recorded the conduct of each character; and page by page gave their vivid testimonies. Study the book of Joshua can help us to realize that

God is our only source of strength to overcome challenges in our lives and that He is our ever-present help in all circumstances, especially in times of crisis. Also, based on the various accounts of important events and battles recorded in the book of Joshua, we realize that while God is full of grace and mercy; He absolutely detests all sins! Finally, as the 12 tribes received their allotment of the Promised Land, Joshua and Caleb also received their rewards. We have to admire how great is God's faithfulness! Every one of His promises never falls through. No matter how impossible or helpless is the environment, God always accomplishes his blessing on his children beyond what we can think or see. For Christians today, the book of Joshua helps us to understand why Jesus is the Messiah. Just as said in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'".

1. Author and Time of Writing

The Bible does not tell us explicitly who wrote the book of Joshua. With the passing of time, scholars have held different schools of thoughts regarding by whom and when the book was written. Some scholars postulate this book was completed about 800 years after Joshua's death, thus ruling out the possibility that Joshua wrote this book

himself. Others believe the prophet Samuel wrote the book around 1000 B.C. In a contrary belief, according to Jewish tradition (the Talmud), Joshua wrote all of the book, except 24:29-33, which was supplemented later by others. Although there is no conclusive evidence to prove its authorship and the time when this book was written, the book did clearly record the verbal commands Joshua gave on various occasions. For example, it says, “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD.” (Jos 24:25-26) This seems to point to the theory that Joshua wrote most of the book and the events after the death of Joshua were most likely amended by son of Aaron the high priest Eleazar, and his son Phinehas.

In addition, many places in the book were named with the arcane names. For example, the name “Jebusite city” is used, whereas this city was later renamed to be “Jerusalem” by King David. Also, the familiarity regarding the geographical environment, locations of towns, and the distribution of the Canaanite tribes definitely evidenced that the author personally experienced the events described in the book.

2. Special Features

The theological theme of the book of Joshua is very clear. In the Hebrew Scripture, Joshua is classified as one of the Former Prophet books, along with Judges, Samuel, and Kings. All these books were composed from a prophetic viewpoint to reveal the intention of God's covenant with the Israelites. The readers can see how the Israelites often deviated from God's guidance and how God's unwavering love ultimately rescued them. We also should realize we are sinners saved by grace and need His salvation. From the moment the Israelites entered Canaan (the Promised Land) to the eventual collapse of the kingdom and their subsequent captivity and exile, in this land given by God, the Israelites repeated from recovery to failure and from the hardship of failure to turn to God. Documenting these cyclical events of history is not just only for reporting purposes. Its much more precious meaning is that through the history and stories of the Israelite race to manifest to all the nations and peoples including you and me, the faithfulness, righteousness and lovingkindness and the principles of God's work and His salvation to redeem the entire human race.

The book of Joshua keeps the records of many battles between the Israelites and the Canaanites. The significance of these battles often was misunderstood. This book

is not a record of the annihilation of the seven tribes of Canaan. Rather it demonstrated the side of God's righteousness and holiness. God wanted to eradicate the idol worshiping, fornication, the offering of children by fire and many other abominations. He wanted to prepare for the next generations of Israelites a start of a new life of godliness and holiness in this land. In addition, these episodes of war should cause us to take heed of the prophecy of judgment and destruction written in the book of Revelation, that indeed this kind of destruction will eventually fall on those who hinder God and reject the Gospel. Although the promise of the land of Canaan was unilaterally given by God, to maintain a lasting peace and stability would require the Israelites to learn to obey the holy and righteous commandments of God. A good example is, Rahab, a Canaanite woman from Jericho who chose to believe in the God who brought the Israelites out from Egypt and decided to act according to God's will. As a result, God saved her and her whole family from death when the city of Jericho was destroyed. Rahab was honored by having her name be included in the genealogy of Jesus and was recognized as one of the ancestors of the Messiah, our Savior.

The book of Joshua started with a new era of the Israelite race; it also predicted that "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm,

and consume you, after having done you good.” (24:20)
The consequence of their disobedience gave them the same ending as the Canaanite, losing this promised land of milk and honey. However, God’s salvation far exceeds the weakness of men. When Jesus Christ came into the world, He died on the cross to pay the debt of our sins. By the power of His resurrection, we can be delivered from the bondage of sin, enter into God’s eternal kingdom and become the heirs of His glorious inheritance. This is what God prepared for His children a promised land of eternity.

3. Outline

There are 24 chapters in the book of Joshua, and these can be divided into four sections.

- Section 1 Entering the Promised Land (chapters 1-5)
 - The Israelites cross the Jordan River in a miracle.
- Section 2 Conquering the Promised Land (chapters 6-12)
 - Joshua leads the Israelite army to conquer the south and the north.
- Section 3 Allotting the Promised Land (chapters 13-22)
 - Joshua divides the land to the tribes of Israel and set the boundaries.
- Section 4 Renewing the Covenant with the One True

God (chapters 23-24)

- It is the conclusion with the instructions and encouragements of Joshua, and to renew their covenant to only serve Jehovah.

III. Video Viewing:

DVD session “1. Introduction”

DVD session “2. God Appointed Joshua”

DVD session “3. Outline”

IV. Study Questions:

1. Fill in the Blanks:

- (1) The book of Joshua is listed as the _____ book in the Bible, and it is the _____ historical book in the Old Testament. It records events in which _____ led the Israelites in the conquest of the Promised Land of Canaan.
- (2) “Joshua” is the Hebrew name meaning _____.
- (3) According to Deuteronomy 31 and 34, God commanded _____ to pass his responsibility to _____, son of Nun.
- (4) The book of Joshua has _____ chapters.

2. Scripture Study:

- (1) List one or two events about Joshua before the Israelites entered Canaan.

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- (2) Read Deuteronomy 31:1-9 and describe how Moses passed the leadership of leading the Israelites to Joshua.

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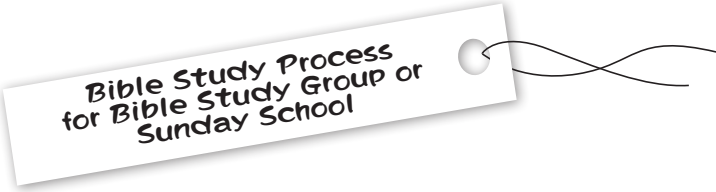
3. Discussion and Sharing:

- (1) Did you have any experience of handing your work to someone as your successor? Share how you felt and what you did.

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- (2) Why reading the Bible can help us understand ourselves and guide our conducts?

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**Bible Study Process
for Bible Study Group or
Sunday School**

This part supplies a reference for Bible study group leaders and Sunday school teachers. If needed, please refer to Appendix: “Instruction for Bible Study Group Leaders and Instructors”. Please feel free to adjust the process according to time limits.

A. Preparation (5-15 minutes)

1. Icebreaker / Introduction:

- a. Each member of the class briefly introduces him or herself.
- b. The group leader asks this question: “If you could be any cartoon or movie character, what would you like to be? Why?”
- c. The group leader picks a few group members to answer the above question.
- d. The group leader introduces Joshua, whom this book is named after: Joshua was born into slavery in Egypt. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he was Moses’ faith-

ful assistant. After Moses' death, God appointed him to lead the Israelites into Canaan, and he became a national hero. Joshua's loyalty, courage, faith, and obedience is a good model for every Christian today.

2. Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, as we get together and study your words, please be with us and bless us. May the Holy Spirit prepare our hearts and help us to understand your words. May you open our ears so that we can know your will, follow your lead and be blessed by you. Please give us wisdom and strength through your words, so that we can live a life that is pleasing to you. We also want to seek after your heart and be a blessing to the people around us. We pray all these in Jesus' name. Amen.

B. Development (40-90 minutes)

I. Scripture Reading:

Exodus 17:8-16, 24:13, 33:11; Numbers 13:1-33, 14:6-9, 27:15-23

II. Synopsis:

Introduction

1. Author and Time of Writing
2. Special Features
3. Outline

III. Video Viewing:

DVD session “1. Introduction”

DVD session “2. God Appointed Joshua”

DVD session “3. Outline”

IV. Study Questions:

1. Fill in the Blanks: Questions (1) – (4)
2. Scripture Study: Questions (1) – (2)
3. Discussion and Sharing: Questions (1) – (2)

C. Conclusion (5-15 minutes)

1. Summary:

Although the content of the book of Joshua contains mainly the historical events. It conveys from a prophetic viewpoint to reveal the intention of God’s covenant with the Israelites. It allows us to see how the Israelites often deviated from God’s guidance and how God’s un-

wavering love ultimately rescued them. We should also realize we are sinners saved by grace and in need of His salvation.

2. Homework Assignment:

a. This Week's Scripture Memorization:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.” (Jos 1:8)

b. Scripture Reading: Joshua 1-2.

* Closing Prayer: *

The group leader can lead the prayer or invite one member to do so.

Oh God, do not let us to despise ourselves, but willing to give our life to you, pray that you will guide us according to your will and mold us into the children of your delight. Pray in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.