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# Lesson 1

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## Background and Survey

**T**he book of Joshua picks up the history of Israel from the point where Deuteronomy ended. Moses had led the nation up to the border of their promised inheritance and had given them his final counsel, exhortation, and blessing. Then, after being allowed to gaze upon the land of promise, he passed from earth to be with God.

Moses' lifework was done, but Israel's was not. They had to cross the Jordan, drive out the enemy, and possess the land. Under the leadership of Joshua they successfully carried out the mandate.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

At the outset it will be helpful to acquaint yourself with the background of Joshua. This kind of familiarity always enhances personal Bible study.

#### **A. Author and Date**

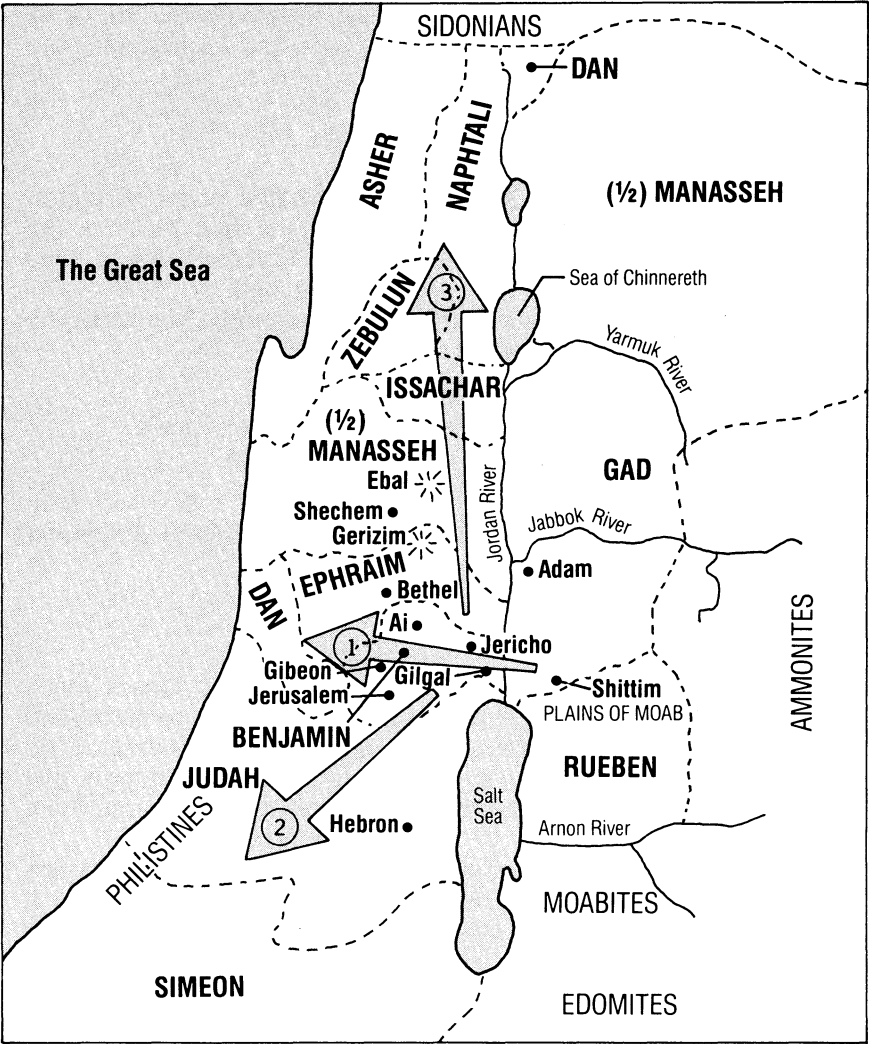
The author of the book of Joshua is not explicitly identified. But the general tenor of the book indicates that he was an eyewitness of most of the events, which are described with great vividness and minuteness of detail, and occasionally in first person ("we" and "us"; e.g., 5:6). The unity of style in the organization of the book indicates that one author wrote the bulk of the work.

In all probability the book was written by Joshua himself, with a few additions (e.g., reference to Joshua's death, 24:29-28) made by other writers, possibly Eleazar or his son Phinehas. Jewish tradition uniformly attributes the book to Joshua.

The book was written not long after the events themselves had transpired. If the conquest of Canaan was completed around

**GEOGRAPHY OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

Showing the three major campaigns and land allotments



1400 B.C., the book was written soon after this. (Note: Concerning dates of this period of Old Testament history, see John C. Whitcomb's excellent chronological chart *Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges*.)

Some twenty-four years are covered by the narrative of Joshua. After the Canaanites were conquered, Joshua divided the land, settled the tribes in their respective places, and looked after the affairs of the nation until his death.

## **B. Place in the Bible**

In our Bible, Joshua, the sixth book, is the first of the historical books. In the Jewish Old Testament it is the first book of the prophets, probably so classified because its historical record illustrates the basic truths that the prophets preached.

The relation of Joshua to the two books preceding it (in the order of our Old Testament) is simple:

Numbers:	Journey to Canaan
Deuteronomy:	Preparation to enter Canaan
Joshua:	Conquest of Canaan

Study the contents of the books that immediately follow Joshua in the Old Testament canon to further confirm its logical placement in the list.

## **C. Style and Message**

This book is the history of a military campaign. If Moses was a shepherd-leader, surely Joshua was a general-leader, to be classed in the front rank of military commanders along with Caesar, Hannibal, and Napoleon. He was one of the greatest strategists that ever lived, but we must remember that his wisdom came from God.

Joshua is the account of one long triumph. It took seven years to conquer the land of Canaan, but in those seven years Joshua lost only one major battle. His secret of success was implicit faith and absolute obedience to God.

Joshua might be called the Book of Conquest. For those Christians who would be "overcomers" in the "good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), the book will be most profitable, because it illustrates how a Christian may overcome his spiritual foes and possess what God has for him in Christ. The book is full of encouragement for the spiritual soldier. Those who are satisfied to be "wilderness" Christians, simply saved from the *penalty* of sin, will

miss the richest blessings of Joshua. But those determined to be saved also from the *power* of sin, to reign with Christ and be soldiers of the cross, will receive much strength and encouragement from this book.

### **D. Symbols and Types**

Throughout your study of Joshua you will want to identify the major symbolical teachings in the narrative. Only a few of the outstanding ones are mentioned here.

First, review the major typical lessons of the books immediately preceding Joshua. (As stated earlier, the book of Joshua will be more meaningful to one who has already studied the books of the Pentateuch.) There is a remarkable correspondence between the experiences of Israel, from the bondage of Egypt to the conquest of Canaan, and the spiritual experiences of the individual soul. In Exodus we read of (1) Israel's condition in Egypt (bondage, poverty, imminent death), corresponding to the spiritual condition of a soul before regeneration; and (2) Israel's exodus from Egypt, typifying God's deliverance of a soul, bringing salvation. In Numbers we read of Israel's condition in the wilderness (unbelief, disobedience, discontent, weakness), picturing a soul regenerated but not fully yielded to God.

The close of Joshua shows the commencement of Israel's life in Canaan to be one of peace, joy, wealth, power, and victory, typifying a saved soul wholly surrendered to God.

Three prominent types in Joshua are:

1. Joshua, leader of the host of Israel, is a type of Christ, the "captain of our salvation." (Read Heb. 2:10-11; Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 1:10; 2:14.)
2. The crossing of the Jordan is a type of the Christian's dying with Christ. (Read Rom. 6:6-11; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 3:1-3.)
3. Israel's conquest of Canaan typifies the Christian's victories over the enemies of his soul.

As you proceed in your study of Joshua, be sure to keep these major types in mind.

### **E. The Man Joshua**

After you have finished studying the book of Joshua, you will feel that you have come to know this man of God intimately. At this point a few general identifications are sufficient:

1. *His name.* Joshua's original name was Hoshea (Num. 13:8; Deut. 32:44), which means literally "salvation." During the wilder-

ness journey Moses changed the name to Jehoshua, meaning “Jehovah is salvation” (Num. 13:16). Joshua is a contracted form of Jehoshua. What is the significance of this change of name?

2. *His association with Moses.* Joshua was a young man when Moses appointed him as one of his ministers, or attendants, during the wilderness journey. Read the following passages that tell of some of his services during those years: Exodus 17:8-16; 24:12-13; Numbers 13:1-16; 14:26-35. At the close of Moses’ career God chose Joshua to be his successor (Num. 27:18), and Moses transferred the mantle of leadership to his faithful attendant and friend (Deut. 34:9).

3. *His character.* Read what God said of Joshua in Numbers 27:18 (cf. Deut. 34:9). Joshua feared God, believed God, obeyed God, and glorified God. These and other godly traits appear throughout the book bearing his name.

## II. SURVEY

If you have used the study manuals of other books in this series, you are aware of the procedure to be followed in the survey stage. Your main activities should be:

1. First read the book through in one sitting if possible.  
2. Jot down on paper your impressions from this first reading (e.g., What is the atmosphere of the book?).

3. Return to the beginning of the book and assign a title to each of the twenty-four chapters. Record them on the horizontal chart. (Note: A segment should begin at 11:16 instead of 12:1.)

4. Before studying the outline on the accompanying chart, try to group the chapters on your own. Look for turning points in the book, and make your own survey chart, if possible.

5. Now study the accompanying survey chart. Observe the following:

(a) Since the task given Joshua was to take the land (cf. 1:6), the theme of the book is conquest.

(b) The first five chapters describe Israel’s preparation for the battles to come, and chapters 6 through 12 record the actual battles. At the end of this section a key summary statement reads, “So Joshua took the whole land” (11:23).

(c) Whereas chapters 1-12 mainly record action, the last half of the book is almost devoid of action. The allocations of the inheritances are recorded in chapters 13-21, and the book closes on a warm note of appeal and consecration (chaps. 22-24).

(d) As shown on the chart, the atmosphere of the last section (chaps. 22-24) is the anticipation of dwelling in the land of Canaan, which is the subject of the books following Joshua.

A KEY VERSE 11:23	CONQUEST OF THE LAND		DIVISION OF THE LAND		CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE
	CONQUEST OF THE LAND		DIVISION OF THE LAND		
1	ACTION	INHERITANCES	CONSECRATION	24	
2				23	
3				22	
4				21	
5				20	
6				19	
7				18	
8				17	
9				16	
10				15	
11:1				14	
11:16				13	
11:16				12	
11:16				11	
11:16				10	
11:16				9	
11:16	8				
11:16	7				
11:16	6				
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11:16	-119				
11:16	-120				
11:16	-121				
11:16	-122				
11:16	-123				
11:16	-124				
11:16	-125				
11:16	-126				
11:16	-127				
11:16	-1				

One of the practical purposes of a survey is to discover the outstanding truths of the book. These truths may then be used as guides to observing and interpreting the hosts of individual items that are studied in a more detailed analysis. Beware of failing to see the forest for the trees. From time to time in your study of the individual chapters of Joshua you should review the overall picture.

As a conclusion to this lesson it would be profitable to consider the prominent truths of Joshua and their intended applications. List these truths after you have done the following exercises:

1. In your own words, state the theme of Joshua.

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2. God said to Joshua, "Thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land" (1:6, ASV\*). What is the relationship between *conquest* and *inheritance* in Joshua?

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3. The Israelites were *promised* all the land of Canaan. What determined how much they would *possess*?

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4. If faith and obedience were requirements for conquering the land, what were the requirements for holding the land?

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5. What important aspect of Christian living is typified by Israel's conquest of Canaan? Read Hebrews 4 and interpret the phrase "entering into God's rest." (Refer to this topic in *Numbers and Deuteronomy* of this series.)

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\*American Standard Version.