

# **Read the Bible in a Year**

Week 17 – September 26th, 2021

## **Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 49-51*

Luke 21-24

## **Readings in Class:**

Joshua 9-24

## **Overview of Joshua**

A promise over 600 years in the making comes to fruition in the book of Joshua. Back in Genesis 12, God had told Abram that he would give him the land of Canaan and in chapter 15<sup>th</sup> of Genesis, God swore an oath on Himself that he would do give the land to Abraham's offspring once the sin of the inhabitants of the land was complete.

Fast forward through Jacob coming to Egypt, the hundreds of years as slaves in Egypt, then the Exodus, and then finally the wanderings in the wilderness. Now the Israelites are at the banks of the Jordan River ready to go in and possess the land that God had sworn to give.

The book of Joshua is a book of fulfillment. Israel goes to inherit the land that God promised to give. They also end up being the instruments of God's judgment upon the nations who live in the land. After securing a major portion of the Promised Land, the rest of the book is then divided into giving the inheritance of the land to the tribes and them going to finish taking it. This part, while hard to read, is important because of the seriousness of God's promise being given out, even down to the minute detail.

The book then ends with Joshua giving a speech to the Israelites before his death, much like Moses did before his death. In it, Joshua extols many of the themes of Deuteronomy and encourages the Israelites to finish the taking of the Promised Land and being faithful to the Lord their God. The question then remains, now that they are in the Promised Land, will they be able to remain living in the land?

## **Brief Outline of Joshua**

1. Preparation to enter the Promised Land (1:1-5:15)
  - a. Joshua Commissioned by God 1:1-9
  - b. Preparing to cross the Jordan 1:10-18
  - c. Spies sent out again 2:1-24
  - d. Crossing the Jordan River 3:1-4:24
  - e. God's People Commissioned and Circumcised 5:1-25
2. Conquest of the Promised Land (6:1-12:24)
  - a. Stories of Faithfulness and Rebellion: Jericho and Ai 6:1-8:29
  - b. Announcing Blessing and Curses 8:30-35
  - c. Deceived by Gibeonites 9:1-27
  - d. Southern Campaign 10:1-43

- e. Northern Campaign 11:1-15
  - f. Summary of Conquest 11:16-12:24
- 3. Inheriting and dividing up the Promised Land (13:1-22:34)
  - a. Inheritance for Tribes in East and West of Jordan River 13:1-19:51
  - b. Cities of Refuge and for Levites 20:1-45
  - c. Eastern Tribes go Home
- 4. Joshua's last words to Israel (23:1-24:33)
  - a. Joshua Charges Israel's leaders 23:1-16
  - b. Joshua Gives God's challenge 24:1-28
  - c. Loose ends tied up: Joshua dies, Joseph is buried, High Priest dies. 24:29-33

**Genocide and Holy War:** The book of Joshua can be a bit shocking. The stories listed of the Israelites killing entire villages of Canaanites is disturbing and worse, God's support of their deaths is commanded is even more troubling to many modern readers. Does God support Genocide? Crusades? Holocaust? What gives?

All sorts of abuses have occurred because of a misunderstanding of these passages. God does uncomfortably order the complete destruction of the people living in the land. But he does not do it for ethnic nor racial reasons. He orders their destruction due to their sin having gone unrepentant for hundreds of years. And that sin which will corrupt His covenant people is something that God wants to fight against.

And keeping in mind the purpose of the Israelites, that through them is to come the Messiah for all people, for God to allow the mingling together of these groups of people puts the promise of Jesus at risk. So the command to destroy the Canaanites is only so that God can advance and secure the coming of Christ.

Now that Christ has come, the need for a physical people tethered to a promise from God is gone. We are now called and equipped to be a people who live in the midst of unbelievers to sow forth as a light to the world. In a sense, Christians fight the spiritual battle that the Israelites manifested in the book of Joshua. We should not allow false gods, sin, death, or the devil get a foothold in the church and texts like Ephesians 6, give us examples of that fight.

**Where is Jesus in Joshua:** Jesus actually appears a couple of times in the book of Joshua. Most prominently, in 5:13-15, the "Commander of the Lord's Army" appears. After noting that he is not for or against the people of Israel (they are just a tool in God's plan, another note on this not being God sanctioned genocide), we are told that Joshua falls down and worships him and that the angel never stops him from worshipping him, something that angels are quick to do (see John in Revelation 19:10).

This character even tells Joshua, like Moses, to remove his sandals because the place he stands is holy ground. This Commander is none other than the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, himself. The conquest of Canaan then, is the work of Christ.