

JOSHUA



BE COURAGEOUS

Bible Studies for
Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au



INTRODUCTION:

These studies are designed to complement the Bible Talks at Church. Most Home Groups use them in the week **before** the Bible Talk, and find this helps prepare them to hear the talk. Hopefully, any unanswered questions will also be addressed.

The studies will work just as well for personal study. Perhaps you could find two or three short times during the week to work through each passage and questions.

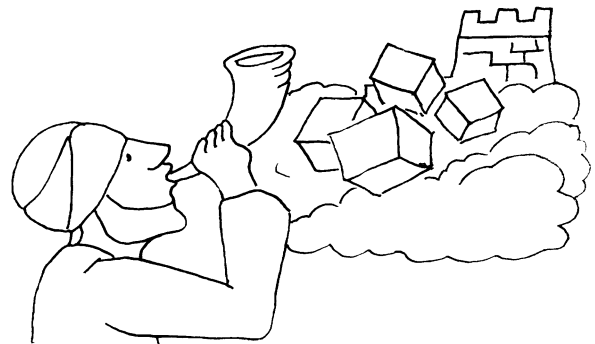
Joshua 1	God's antidotes to fear
Josh 2:1-5:12	The Lord paves the way
Josh 5:13-6:27	Joshua DIDN'T fight the battle of Jericho
Josh 7-8	When bad things happen
Josh 9	A sneaky scheme
Josh 10-12	Israel's two heroes
Josh 13-21	God delivered, and is delivering on his promises
Josh 22	Keeping God's people together
Josh 23-24	As for me and my house- we will serve the LORD

JOSHUA: FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Welcome to the Book of Joshua. In the Book of Joshua we see God's faithfulness to his promises to bring his people into the Promised Land. We see success in the conquest of the land, and we see Israel respond in faithfulness under the leadership of Joshua.

Who wrote Joshua? According to Jewish tradition, Joshua wrote most of the book of Joshua, with some additions and "editing" done by perhaps Eleazar the priest and others. We cannot really know for sure, and at the end of the day it's no big deal. What is important, is that we can be confident that in the final account of the book of Joshua, God has preserved His word for us concerning the events of the time.

Scholars also argue over the date that the events in Joshua, the conquest of "Canaan" ("Palestine"), took place. Some scholars, basing their estimates primarily on archeology, favour a date of around 1200 BC. However, the problem of archaeological evidence, is that it is often uncertain or ambiguous. The biblical data, based on 1 Kings 6 and Judges 11:26, seems to point to a time for the initial conquest of around 1400 BC (which would put the Exodus from Egypt at around 1440 BC).



JOSHUA 1: GOD'S ANTIDOTES TO FEAR

1. We have seen vast political changes in the world in recent decades. Old states and kingdoms have died off, new states have arisen. Although nowadays countries and states are moving away from monarchies to democracies, there was a time when most countries were under the rule of a king or Emperor. How would you define or describe a kingdom?

Read Joshua 1:1-18

The book of Joshua opens where the book of Deuteronomy closes, with the nation of Israel on the border to the "promised land". We are reminded of the death of Moses. We have previously met Moses' successor, Joshua the son of Nun, for he had led the Israelites in battle against the Amelakites, was Moses' aid or personal assistant, as well as being one of the spies sent to spy out the promised land (Exodus 17, Exodus 24, Numbers 13:-14). The book opens with the Lord addressing Joshua and charging him to lead his people. Like Moses before him, Joshua will receive his orders directly from God, reminding us that God is the real leader and military General of his people.

2. How is the story of Joshua tied to the previous books which involved Moses (v1-5)? What point is being made?
3. What is (a) the new responsibility, and (b) the assurance, that God gives to Joshua (verses 1-5)?
4. The Israelites are about to enter and capture the "promised land" (described in verse 4 as stretching from the desert, that is the Sinai Peninsula, to Lebanon and from the Euphrates to the Great Sea (the Mediterranean)). Why is Israel's attacking this land any different to some other "marauding nation" going on the rampage and stealing the land of another nation (see verse 3)?
5. God has held out the promise of a new land to his people for many generations - a land of abundance where God's blessing will be enjoyed. In fact a new land is part of the "package" of promises that God makes to Abraham, the forefather of Israel. What are the things that God promised Abraham in:

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 15:5 & vv 18-19

Genesis 17:1-8

The Lord is clear to Abraham that there will be a delay of four hundred years before Abraham's descendants will occupy the land promised to him, during which time they will be enslaved and mistreated in an alien land (Genesis 15: 13). Of course this happened exactly as God said it would.

Initially the fledgling tribe of "Israel" found refuge in Egypt from a famine that was decimating the whole region. In fact we can see how God preserved and multiplied his people in Egypt, reminding us of his promises to Abraham that he would become a "great nation".

Later, with a change of Pharaoh, the attitude of the Egyptians changed toward their Israelite visitors, and they were subjected to slavery (Exodus 1). The Lord had not forgotten his promises, of course. At the beginning of the book of Exodus, we are told God hears the cries of his people under the cruel treatment of their Egyptian task masters. God used Moses to rescue his people from Egypt - demonstrating his vast power and inflicting a rightly deserved judgement on the Egyptians through the "plagues". The climax of the Book of Exodus is Mt Sinai, where God's people come to worship their Lord - and to receive from him instructions on how to live as his people.

Israel often forgot God's love and mighty power - their trust in him is superficial and quickly failed when tested. Through the Book of Numbers we see time and again how Israel grumbles against God, is disobedient to God. Yet we also see God's faithfulness as he perseveres with them and continues to extend his mercy to them, until finally Israel is brought to the border of the promised land.

The new land (Canaan) is to be God's gift to his people. A land where they will live under his kingship, and enjoy the blessings that he will bring. But are we forgetting about the existing inhabitants of the land - the Canaanites, Amorites and others.? Are they simply being brushed aside?

6. Why was God not being unjust to the inhabitants of the land of Canaan in giving their land to Israel? (See Genesis 15:16, Deuteronomy 18: 9-12.)
7. Joshua is told: "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them" (1:6) and further on "do not be terrified, do not be discouraged" (1:9). Joshua and the Israelites need not be afraid because the Lord is fighting with them, it is his battle, it is a holy war in which God will punish those who have wronged him (the Amorites and Canaanites) and give a new land and bless his own people in accordance with his covenant promises. What is Joshua's part in this? (verses 7-8)
8. What is the application of these commands to us? Are they only for Old Testament leaders? What benefit is there in meditating on God's Word? How can we do that?
9. Graham Goldsworthy (in *Gospel and the Kingdom*) described the kingdom of God as: God's people, in God's place, under God's rule. The Israelites could look forward to living as part of the "kingdom of God" in their new land. For they, God's chosen people, would be living under God's rule (as they respond in obedience to the law) in this new land he has given them. When and where do we become part of the kingdom of God?

10. When and where will we fully enjoy the blessings of living under God's kingship or rule?

In Joshua 1:12-18, Joshua speaks to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh encouraging them to cross over with the rest of the Israelite tribes and fight with them. The background to this is that Moses had agreed to these three tribes settling in the land East of the Jordan, provided they support their brothers in conquering the land of Canaan on the other side of the Jordan (Numbers 32).

11. How do the people respond to Joshua's command (v16-18)? In what sense must we obey our leaders? Which leaders? (See Heb 13:17) What does that mean for us as a church?

12. Joshua's name (sometimes given as Hoshea) means "the Lord is salvation", the same meaning as Jesus. In what other ways does Joshua, in his life and in what he did, typify or point to Jesus?

13. Joshua and the Israelites are called to fight in a holy war, under God's leadership and banner and protection. This has been used as justification for so-called holy wars in South Africa and other places. Why, or why not, is this a correct application of the message of the Book of Joshua?

14. Christians are not usually called to engage in physical battles - but they are engaged in warfare of another sort.

a) What sort of struggles are Christians engaged in, and where does our "power" come from (Ephesians 6:10-20)?

b) One battle we are engaged in on the Lord's behalf is the battle to seek to "extend the kingdom of God" through living and sharing the gospel. Although this is the "Lord's battle" we can sometimes be nervous about sharing the gospel with non-Christians.

DISCUSS:

- Why are we often so nervous?

- What do we fear?

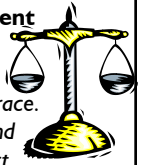
- What can we do about it?

- What assurance do we have from God (see Matthew 28:18-20)?

Law & Grace In The Old Testament

Sometimes the Old Testament is described as being about Law and the New Testament as being about Grace.

But this is a false distinction, Grace and Law (or obedience) play the same part



in both. Israel in the Old Testament were not saved by following the Law. In the book of Exodus Israel is saved from Egypt, and becomes the people of God, simply through God's grace - as he graciously saved them from slavery to Pharaoh and brought them to himself. It is only later, at Mt Sinai, they are given the Law which instructs them how to live as God's people. They are saved by grace, and their response to God is to be obedient to him as their Lord.

Likewise in the New Testament. God's people are saved through Jesus Christ, through grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). But we too are called to respond to God's grace by living in obedience to God as Lord of our lives (Ephesians 2:10).

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 2:1-5:12: GOD PREPARES THE WAY.

Rahab's Choice:

Read Joshua 2

Joshua's sends out two spies to look over the land, and especially the city of Jericho which will be the first city Israel will attack.

1. Why would the spies have based their activities at the house of Rahab?
2. The king finds out, and commands Rahab to hand them over. What is her response? Why?

What is her attitude to the Lord and his people?

Rahab recognises that her life is in the hands of the Lord - if she continues to go the way of her own people she will face destruction. And so by helping the spies she allies herself with Israel and commits herself to their God. It is a great practical demonstration of trust in the Lord. Rahab the prostitute becomes part of Israel, and faithfully follows the Lord as part of his people. She is listed in Hebrews 11 (verse 31) amongst those who persevered in faith.

What is perhaps surprising, is that Rahab, a foreigner and prostitute, is an ancestor of Jesus Christ. For Rahab married Salmon, whose family line then runs Boaz, Obed, Jesse and (King) David from whom Jesus was descended (Matthew 1:6)

3. Rahab stood apart from her own people, and sided with the people of God. In fact she went out on a limb in protecting the Israelite spies, and no doubt risked her own life. We all need to stand apart from our "own people" and become part of the people of God, as we become Christians. Sometimes there are consequences from what were our own people. Share how you felt when you have had to stand apart from your "own people" (family, friends, workmates) of the past. What reaction have you got from them.

Crossing The Jordan: Read Joshua 3 –4

4. The narrative seems a little disjointed in these chapters. Did you notice anything that doesn't seem to fit in the flow of the story? (eg 3:12 cf 4:1-2)

Part of the confusion comes from 4:5 where Joshua commands the 12 representatives to go over "BEFORE the ark". This doesn't mean "prior in time" as we assume, but rather to go to

the area near where the ark was. It's literally to go "to the face of the Ark". It's the same phrase used to describe Moses appearing BEFORE Pharaoh in his court.

This would mean that the events go like this;

- a) the priests carrying the Ark touch the water (3:13-14)
 - b) the waters pile up (3:15-16a)
 - c) the priests carrying the Ark move to the middle of the river (17; 4:10)
 - d) the people cross (3:16b)
 - e) the 12 representatives (perhaps kept back until last – 3:12) pick up the rocks from the vicinity of the Ark, and they cross (4:4-8)
 - f) the priests carrying the Ark come to the far side, and the waters return (4:18)
 - g) the rocks are set up at Gilgal as a memorial (4:8-9; 20)
5. The ark of the covenant is central to the crossing (3:3, 6, 11, 14, 17). It represents God, who will enable them to cross the Jordan and to take the land. What do we learn about the Ark, and God, in this account?

How is God's power emphasised in these chapters?

6. The priests will lead the procession, carrying the ark, and will remain in the middle of the Jordan until all the Israelites have crossed. This is a "liturgical procession" in the name of the Lord. As such the people are to be consecrated (3:5), for the Lord is among them. Yet, he is also separate from his people. How is this emphasised?
7. How does this act of God remind us of the Red Sea crossing (4:23)?

How were the people to remember?

What is significant about the date of this event? (4:19) See Exodus 12:3.

8. In what ways can we remember God's actions? How does this help us?

Circumcision At Gilgal: Read Joshua 5:1-12

9. How is the end of Ch 4 connected to the start of Ch 5?

10. At Gilgal, all the Israelites (males) are circumcised (verse 2). Why was it necessary for them all to be circumcised?

Why had the "rite" fallen into disuse?

11. Why should the Israelites (at the Lord's instruction) stop and take so much trouble for them all to be circumcised?

What is it a sign of (see Genesis 17:9-14; Deuteronomy 30:6)?

Who is the sign for?

What is the reproach of Egypt, and in what way has it now been rolled away?

12. Although God no longer requires us to be circumcised (Galatians esp. 6:15), it was intended to be a sign of belonging to God's family. Baptism replaces this sign in the New Testament. What is the purpose of your baptism?

How should it affect the way you look at yourself?

13. What was the significance of celebrating Passover at that time?

What else happened (5:12)? Why?

Prayer Points

Spend some time thanking God for his character as it's revealed in these chapters – Saviour, powerful, close to his people, but still holy and distant, faithful to his promises. He expects his people to be holy and separate too.

JOSHUA 5:13-6:27: JOSHUA DIDN'T FIGHT THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

1. Who is the most intimidating person you've ever met? A boss? A father-in-law? Why?

Read Joshua 5:13-6:27

2. At a number of points we are struck by the similarity between the experiences of Moses and that of Joshua - reaffirming that Joshua is truly Moses' chosen replacement. Now prior to the assault on Jericho, Joshua is confronted with the commander of the Lord's army, armed for battle, who instructs him in how to proceed with the conquest - for this is the Lord's battle. How does this confrontation remind us of Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3)?
3. What were the commander's instructions for Joshua?

How would you have felt if you'd received instructions like that?

4. Is the messenger in 5:13-15 the same "the LORD" in 6:2? (Compare also Gen 16:7-11 & 16:13)
5. Why this elaborate procedure that is more suitable for a church parade than an assault on a city? What does it demonstrate?
6. How is the plan a strategic one militarily?

Psychologically?

Religiously?

7. How is the procession similar to the crossing of the Jordan?

How is it different?

8. Why do you think Joshua commanded the people not to say anything as they marched?
(see 6:9)

Why the constant trumpets?

9. What is meant by “devoted things” (17-21)? Why are they prohibited?

10. Why is such total destruction warranted?

11. Why spare only Rahab’s family?

Why was she placed “outside the camp”?

How is this a dim copy of the salvation of the gospel offered to all nations (see Eph 3:6)?

12. Are there things God commands you to do which seem foolish?

What temptations do you experience in obeying these commands?

Prayer Points:

Pray that God would give you peace and faith to obey him, and that he would give you victory in those “foolish” things.

THE CONQUEST & THE ETHICAL QUESTION OF WAR

From the introduction to Joshua in the NIV Study Bible

Many readers of Joshua (and other OT books) are deeply troubled by the role that warfare plays in this account of God's dealings with his people. Not a few relieve their ethical scruples by ascribing the author's perspective to a pre-Christian (and sub-Christian) stage of moral development that the Christian, in the light of Christ's teaching, must repudiate and transcend. Hence the main thread of the narrative line of Joshua is an offense to them.

It must be remembered, however, that the book of Joshua does not address itself to the abstract ethical question of war as a means for gaining human ends. It can only be understood in the context of the history of redemption unfolding in the Pentateuch, with its interplay of divine grace and judgment. Of that story it is the direct continuation.

Joshua is not an epic account of Israel's heroic generation or the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan with the aid of her national deity. It is rather the story of how God, to whom the whole world belongs, at one stage in the history of redemption reconquered a portion of the earth from the powers of this world that had claimed it for themselves, defending their claims by force of arms and reliance on their false gods. It tells how God commissioned his people to serve as his army under the leadership of his servant Joshua, to take Canaan in his name out of the hands of the idolatrous and dissolute Canaanites (whose measure of sin was now full; see Ge 15:16 and note). It further tells how he aided them in the enterprise and gave them conditional tenancy in his land in fulfillment of the ancient pledge he had made to Israel's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joshua is the story of the kingdom of God breaking into the world of nations at a time when national and political entities were viewed as the creation of the gods and living proofs of their power. Thus the Lord's triumph over the Canaanites testified to the world that the God of Israel is the one true and living God, whose claim on the world is absolute. It was also a warning to the nations that the irresistible advance of the kingdom of God would ultimately disinherit all those who opposed it, giving place in the earth only to those who acknowledge and serve the Lord. At once an act of redemption and judgment, it gave notice of the outcome of history and anticipated the final destiny of humankind and the creation.

The battles for Canaan were therefore the Lord's war, undertaken at a particular time in the program of redemption. God gave his people under Joshua no commission or license to conquer the world with the sword but a particular, limited mission. The conquered land itself would not become Israel's national possession by right of conquest, but it belonged to the Lord. So the land had to be cleansed of all remnants of paganism. Its people and their wealth were not for Israel to seize as the booty of war from which to enrich themselves (as Achan tried to do, ch. 7) but were placed under God's ban (were to be devoted to God to dispense with as he pleased). On that land Israel was to establish a commonwealth faithful to the righteous rule of God and thus be a witness (and a blessing) to the nations. If Israel became unfaithful and conformed to Canaanite culture and practice, it would in turn lose its place in the Lord's land—as Israel almost did in the days of the judges, and as it eventually did in the exile.

War is a terrible curse that the human race brings on itself as it seeks to possess the earth by its own unrighteous ways. But it pales before the curse that awaits all those who do not heed God's testimony to himself or his warnings—those who oppose the rule of God and reject his offer of grace. The God of the second Joshua (Jesus) is the God of the first Joshua also. Although now for a time he reaches out to the whole world with the gospel (and commissions his people urgently to carry his offer of peace to all nations), the sword of his judgment waits in the wings—and his second Joshua will wield it (Rev 19:11–16; see notes there).

JOSHUA 7-8: WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN

1. In what ways do you think the church has changed unhelpfully in response to pressures from the "outside world"?

The Lord has miraculously led Israel across the Jordan, on dry ground, into the land he promised to their forefathers. He himself has delivered Jericho into their hands: Israel's contribution was little more than holding a "church parade" but they trusted in the Lord's power! Through all of this the Lord honours Joshua and demonstrates that he is clearly his chosen replacement for Moses (6:27). Despite all this we see the unfaithfulness of Israel come to the fore once more.

Problems In The Camp: Read Joshua 7

After Jericho the next target in Israel's conquest of the land was Ai, a relatively small city of 12,000 men and women (8:25). Israel expected an easy victory: the spies were confident Ai would easily be overcome with only a moderate force. Contrary to expectations Israel was routed by Ai, and forced to flee. We, the readers, are told of the reason for this problem in 7:1, but at this stage Israel itself is not yet aware of the reason for their abandonment by the Lord in doing battle with Ai.

2. How does this section connect to the one before it?

What is the change in mood from the end of Ch 6 to the start of Ch 7?

3. Why should Achan's action lead to such a passionate reaction by the Lord so that he burns with anger against Israel (why is it such a big deal)? In other words, what was the nature of Achan's sin and who was it against? (See 6:18; 6:24; 7:11)
4. Joshua and the elders throw themselves before the Lord. Finally Joshua cries out to the Lord in prayer (7:7-9). In what way does Joshua's prayer:
 - (a) show a right concern for God in these changed circumstances?
 - (b) show a misunderstanding of the Lord, even a lack of trust?

5. How does God get Joshua and Israel back on track?

What emotions does God express in his conversation with Joshua?

The passage is clear that Achan is the one who has sinned. Yet it is also Israel's sin (7:11). One man's sin taints a whole nation and brings disaster on it. We see how individual sin and corporate sin are intertwined: for one is part of the whole, and the whole is made up of individuals.

Now it is aware of the sin "within the camp" Israel is responsible for cleansing itself. It must first consecrate itself in response to the sin (7:13) locate the evil-doer under divine guidance (7:14 following) and punish him (7:25-26).

When Achan was found out and "charged" he didn't try to hid his sin but "gave glory to God" (verse 19) by admitting his sin, he came clean before God. Achan's punishment reflected the seriousness of his sin against the Lord - and we see how such serious sin has consequences beyond the individual for Achan's whole family are punished with him.

6. What kinds of things can happen in our lives when we sin and try to hide it?

In what sense does God "get tough" with us about it?

Has God worked like this in you? When?

Ai Destroyed

With the sin within Israel taken care of, the Lord relents and turns from his fierce anger (7:26) and commands Joshua to once more attack Ai, for the Lord will be with them and give them victory (8:1). This time Joshua takes a large army, divides his forces into two and sets an ambush for the men of Ai. The tactics are successful and Ai is routed and destroyed. Notice that whilst it is the Lord who gives assurance of victory, Joshua and Israel still plan the attack carefully and commit their full force to it. For often the Lord gives victory through his people acting whole-heartedly and in faith.

7. God promises that Israel shall do to Ai what they did to Jericho (8:2). How does the campaign differ to that against Jericho?

How is it the same?

8. How does this second attempt differ from the first against Ai?

9. At the end of chapter 7 and chapter 8 we see two piles of memorial stones raised up, which the writer tells us "remains to this day". When Israelite look on the pile of stones that cover Achan (7:25-26) and cover the king of Ai (8:28-29) what would they be reminded of?

Covenant Renewal

Back in Deuteronomy, when Israel were on the border of the promised land, Moses commanded the people that when they had crossed the Jordan to occupy the promised land, they were to copy the words of the law (presumably the ten commandments) on stones, build an altar and sacrifice to the Lord. The nation was to be divided into two halves, some were to stand on Mt. Gerizim and bless the people and the others were to stand on Mt. Ebal and pronounce curses in the event of Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord.

In **Joshua 8:30-35**, we see how Joshua carries out this instruction as commanded. In effect what is happening is a rededication to the Lord's purposes, a renewal of covenant with the Lord. This is especially appropriate after the sin of Achan, and as Israel faces a campaign to occupy the promised land.

10. In 8:30-35 there is another pile of stones. How does this one differ from the two piles covering Achan and the King of Ai?

11. In 8:30-35 the chapter finishes on a high note. What are the positives in these verses?

What expectation does the reader have heading into Ch 9?

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 9: A SNEAKY SCHEME

Read Joshua 9

1. How does this chapter connect to Ch 8?
2. What are the different reactions we see from the present occupiers of the land, to the threat from Israel (9:2-3f)?
3. What trick did the Gibeonites play? How close did they actually live? (See 9:16)
4. What was wrong with Joshua and the leaders making a treating with the Gibeonites (see Exodus 23:23-33 and Deuteronomy 7:1-3 and notice that in Joshua 9:7, the Gibeonites are identified as Hivites)?
5. How could Joshua have avoided being deceived by the ruse of the Gibeonites: in other words what did he fail to do? (9: 14)
6. Why did Joshua and the elders not destroy the Gibeonites when they realised they had been tricked? Do you think they were right or wrong in not subsequently destroying the Gibeonites?
7. Look at the location of Gibeon on the map. Was it a strategic location in the conquest of Canaan?
8. In what ways are we responsible for the "sin" of others within the Lord's family (see for instance Luke 17:1-4 and James 5:19)?
9. In what ways can we avoid being deceived by the world (that is non-believers), and avoid having the world set the agenda for our lives and relationships?

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 10-12. ISRAEL'S TWO HEROES

The conquest of the promised land by Israel started with a bang at Jericho, faltered temporarily at Ai, but continued full pace with the re-consecration of Israel to the Lord. That Israel should be so easily deceived by the Gibeonites does not bode well for the future. Nevertheless, conquest now proceeds strongly.

We then see the conquest proceed in two stages. Firstly the southern cities are conquered (10:29-43) and then the northern kings are defeated (chapter 11).

The cry we hear ringing through the campaign: "Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight" (10:25). For the battle belongs to the Lord, it is his holy war. The account of the conquest concludes with the destruction of the Anakites (11:21-22). This is a fitting note to end on, for the Anakites were giants of men, and it was fear of them that discouraged the Israelites from going into the promised land forty years before (Numbers 13-14).

In chapter 12 we are given in summary form the territory that Israel had taken and the kings they had defeated.

Read Ch 10:

1. How is the start of this chapter similar to previous chapters? How is the reaction of this king different from previous reactions?
2. Locate on the map each of the kingdoms involved in the alliance.
3. What does the alliance do? Why Gibeon rather than Israel? How would you react to Gibeon's plea if you were Joshua?
4. How is God involved in the battle?
5. What happens to the alliance of kings? How does Joshua use the opportunity of the capture and killing of the kings? What is his message?
6. Locate on the map each of the cities Joshua conquers in 10:29-43

Read Ch 11:

7. How is the start of Ch 11 similar to previous chapters? Different?

8. Locate on the map the places and people described in 11:1-5.

9. What does THIS alliance do?

What does Joshua do?

What is the result?

10. How is God present again?

11. Why is Moses mentioned again?

12. Despite all the triumphalism, are there any warning bells rung in this chapter?

13. According to this chapter, why was Joshua and Israel successful in their conquest?

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 13-21: GOD DELIVERED, & IS DELIVERING, ON HIS PROMISES

From chapters 13-21 we are given a summary of how the land was divided up and allocated to the tribes of Israel. So approximately half of the book of Joshua is given over to what is seemingly a routine listing of land and its division. Whilst this may seem monotonous to us in reading the book, it clearly reinforces that the Lord has fulfilled his promises in conquering and giving the land over to the Israelites: a land where they might live as his people and enjoy his blessings.

1. Despite all that Israel has done, there is still much to be conquered. What does God tell Joshua in 13:1-7?

Are these people ever fully conquered? (See 15:63; 16:10; 17:12; 19:47).

Yet, how is the settlement summarised in 21:43-45?

2. Why was it important for Joshua to allocate all the land to the tribes (13:6-7)?
3. Where (in general terms) was the inheritance of half-Manassah, Reuben and Gad?

How was their inheritance different from the other tribes?

4. Do you see any potential problems with this arrangement?
5. Why didn't the Levites receive any inheritance? (13:14, 33; see Nu 18:20-24).

Would they have felt blessed or slighted by this assignment?

6. What is significant about Caleb (14:6-15; 15:13-19)?

What area did he want?

What does his request show about his confidence in God?

What is the end result of his story?

7. Caleb was still going strong at 85. How can you do your part in finishing strongly like him?

8. What is significant about the cities of refuge (20)?

9. How were towns allocated to the Levites? (21:1-8)

10. How is the process summarised in 21:43-45?

What do these verses teach us about God's character.

Spend some time praising God for who he is.

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 22: REMEMBERING THE LORD

1. Tell about a time when something you said or did was misunderstood. What were the results?

The division of the land is over. The Eastern tribes have fulfilled their commitment to the rest of Israel. Now it is time for them to return home to the other side of the Jordan river. Will the physical separation hinder the unity of the twelve tribes?

Read Joshua 22

2. What does Joshua say to the Eastern tribes as they prepare to return to their families? What warning does he give them?
3. What blessings have these tribes received because of their faithful service?
4. How does God reward us for faithful service?
5. Why were the Western tribes prepared to do battle over the issue of the altar?
6. Phinehas reminds the Eastern tribes of the plagues brought on by the worship of Peor (Numbers 25) and the sin of Achan (Josh 7). How did he think those situations applied to the present one?
7. Why did the Eastern tribes build the altar (vv21-29)?
8. How did both sides show that they were honouring God?
9. What part does this story play in the whole book of Joshua?
10. What can we learn from this story about confronting those whose actions seem offensive? What should be our attitude towards those who have misunderstood our actions?

Prayer Points:

JOSHUA 23-24: AS FOR ME & MY HOUSE WE WILL SERVE THE LORD

The story of Joshua rushes to a close. Many years pass. Joshua is now old, and he prepares Israel for his death. Like Moses before him in similar circumstances (Deuteronomy 29-34), he reminds Israel of the Lord's faithfulness, challenges them to be steadfast in following the Lord, and leads them in a ceremony to renew and re-affirm their covenant relationship with the Lord.

In chapter 23 Joshua looks forward to the future and lays out the alternatives for Israel as God's people - basically blessing or curses. In chapter 24, Joshua looks back to how the Lord has worked in Israel's life as a preliminary to renewing the covenant between the Lord and Israel (24:25).

Read Joshua 23

1. What reminder does Joshua bring? What promise for the future? What warning? What commands?
2. How does Joshua exalt God in this address? Why is it important to recall God's faithfulness in past events?
3. What does it mean to "hold fast to the LORD" and to "love the LORD" (8, 11)?
4. Whilst the book of Joshua emphasises the faithfulness of the Lord especially in giving to Israel the promised land, alongside that is the recognition that the whole of the land has not been conquered, and that the enemy nations still remain in the land (13:1-5). Why wasn't Israel allowed to associate with the nations around them? (7-8; 12-13)
5. Today, what aspects of non-Christian culture can negatively influence the church?
6. Just as God is faithful to his promises to bless, he is also faithful to his promise to punish and curse. What threats had God made to Israel (15-16)?
7. How does Joshua's farewell address motivate you to be faithful to the LORD?

Read Joshua 24

Whilst the events of chapter 23 and 24 are linked, in a sense they are part of the aged Joshua's "last will and testament" to Israel as he farewells them, the events actually took place on different occasions. Some time later Joshua assembles all the tribes of Israel for a more "official" covenant renewal with the Lord.

8. Speaking prophetically for the Lord (in 24:2 he uses the term "Thus says the Lord" which we will later on find often on the lips of the prophets) Joshua re-counts God's dealing with Israel over the centuries. List the main events in Israel's history that Joshua draws attention to:

Verse Event

2-3

4

5-7

7

8

9-10

11-13

9. What does Joshua highlight in terms of;
- What God has done and why?

 - Where Israel has come from and gone to (spiritually as well as geographically)?
10. What should Israel's response be to the Lord's grace (verse 14)?
11. Joshua and the Israelites repeat the word "serve" thirteen times in verses 14-27. Why is this emphasised?
12. Why might serving God seem undesirable (v15)?

13. Why doesn't Joshua accept the peoples' first pledge to serve God?

How does he respond? What does he mean? (16-20)

Does this mean God won't forgive OUR sin?

14. What is the purpose of the witnesses in v22 and 27?

15. Share how God has worked in your journey through life. Is it easier to see God's hand as you look back than it was while the events were happening? Spend some time thanking God for his active concern in our lives.

The book of Joshua above all shows us the faithfulness of the Lord; for none of his promises fail (23:14). Whilst Israel's record in the book of Joshua is not unspotted, the book also shows us their faithfulness for "Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord has done for Israel" (24:31). Subsequent history in the promised land tells a different story, as we shall learn from the book of Judges.

Prayer Points: