

LESSON 7 JOSHUA, THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN, JUDGES

In continuing with this section of the scriptures, we are entering a new phase in the development of God's Plan. Moses has led the nation of Israel through the wilderness and now is standing ready to enter the land of promise. However, Moses, the great leader and law giver, is required to relinquish his command because of his disobedience at Meribah when he struck the rock rather than speaking to it as the LORD had commanded him. God chooses Joshua to lead his people into the land of promise.

This history of entering the land, the Conquest of Canaan and the following period overseen by various Judges is a story which highlights the constant ups and downs in the faith and fortunes of Israel in their repeated rebellion suffering and ultimate repentance. This lesson is a remarkable demonstration of God's long suffering (patience) and mercy. A Bible atlas will be very helpful in illustrating the division of the land among the tribes.

Deuteronomy 31:14-23 Here we are given the circumstances under which Joshua is commissioned to lead Israel into the Holy Land. Moses in his final words anticipate Israel's unfaithfulness in breaking God's covenant and warn them of the consequences. Moses is also told of his impending death and the reason he is not able to enter the land.

Deut. 34:9 In this verse we are given Joshua's qualifications for leadership. It seems quite fitting that in verses 10 through 12 there should be a testimonial to the qualities of leadership in Moses the great Prophet whom the Lord knew face to face. It will be profitable to consider in this connection the faithfulness of Moses in his service to his God by reading: Exodus 33:17-23 and Numbers 12:7-8.

Joshua 1:1-6 The Hebrew meaning of the name Joshua is "Yah Saves." Translated into Greek, the name is Jesus! Greek "Jesus" being equivalent to the Hebrew Joshua. This is significant because Jesus too will lead the faithful to the promised kingdom of God after leading his people in the ways of God. The Bible book "Joshua" in its beginning is given in the form of a commission to Joshua who was to lead this people from the wilderness, to their inheritance in the land. Here in verse 6 is a partial fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. (refer back to Genesis 13:15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.)The covenant to Abraham was not conditional, but the promise of a continuation of God's blessing to Israel in the land was conditional.

Acts 7:2-5 This New Testament reference to this promise shows that the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel did not invalidate the promises made to Abraham.

Hebrews 3:17-18 The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes that "the rest" which Israel was promised, due to their lack of faith perished in the wilderness. In Hebrews 4, "the rest" that was provided under Joshua's administration when they entered the land was not "the rest" God had in mind in the promise made to Abraham. Joshua did not give the people the rest of the Seventh Day. This is demonstrated by the words of King David, who many years later, spoke in anticipation of a rest that was yet future. This chapter emphasizes the true rest that will take place under a greater Joshua – Jesus when he returns to fulfill the promise of God presented to Abraham that they would inherit the land "forever".

Joshua 2 Have a brief review of this chapter. It should be mentioned that the time period of the conquest of Canaan took nearly ten years.

Joshua 3:14-17 Israel finally, is to enter the "Promised Land". This chapter describes the crossing of the Jordan River and the entrance into the land. A point of interest is that in spite of normal flood conditions which always took place at harvest time, the people passed over on dry ground. This was a repetition on a smaller scale of the crossing of the Red Sea forty years earlier. It is remarkable that Israel's journey started with a crossing through water on dry ground and terminated in the same manner.

Joshua 6 The first victory in the promised land came with the fall of the city Jericho. The organization and restraint of God's people during the siege of Jericho is a marvelous lesson in obedience and faith.

Joshua 7 through 13 Take the opportunity as you read these chapters to use a Bible atlas to illustrate Joshua's campaigns throughout the land of promise.

Joshua 14 One interesting observation in connection with this chapter is that the land that was divided by lot fits exactly in the pattern of the prophecy that Jacob gave to his sons in Genesis 49.

Joshua 24:29 This verse records the death of Joshua. His life was an outstanding example of faithful dedication to God's laws.

In verse 32 we find the record of the burial of the bones of Joseph. When we follow the narration we marvel at the circumstances under which each step of the journey brought Joseph's remains closer to his final resting place. His burial took place in the parcel of ground which Jacob had previously purchased from the people of the land. Surely it was not coincidence but design that this particular parcel of inheritance was allotted to the children of Joseph.

Judges 1 The Book of the Judges covers approximately 400 years. When Israel inherited the land it was divided among the tribes by lot. There was no capital city and no central government. Some of the tribes became isolated and there was little communication between them. During the time coinciding with the life of Joshua, Israel was faithful to God, but after, there was a falling away to idolatry. God punished them through raids and warfare with the surrounding nations. There were times when one portion of the land might be secure and at peace, while another area might be invaded and at war. The Judges were raised up by God to rescue them when they repented of their transgressions. Israel's history in this period swings like a pendulum between unfaithfulness and repentance.

It is interesting to note that the particular Judges were not selected from any particular tribe, but came from several tribes and different walks of life. God chose them to meet the requirements of particular circumstances. Outstanding examples are Gideon and Sampson. The administration of the Judges, in some cases, overlap. There were, in some areas, long periods of peace and prosperity as shown in the Book of Ruth. The historical record, however, points up the more dramatic parts when certain tribes were under great pressure.

A helpful way to remember what happens in this period is to remember the cycle that the nation went through at least 6 times: Sin, Suffer, Seek, Saved. They would **sin**, then **suffer** for it, in their persecution they would again **seek** their God who would then **save** them!

Their deliverance, after repeated provocation, is an amazing demonstration of God's patience. It is important to appreciate the instability of the tribes during this period, and God's love and concern for His people. He did not forget the covenant made with the fathers, but brought Israel through this most difficult period.

I Samuel 1-7 Samuel was the last “Judge” of Israel and certainly the most influential. These early chapters, give an account of his birth and introduction into the house of Eli. After Eli's death Samuel took over Eli's duties. One of the greatest works that he accomplished was the formation of the School of the Prophets. He taught selected men the ways and laws of God, and through them he established a bulwark of faithful men who stood against the spirit of idolatry which was so prevalent in Israel at that time.

The prophets lived together in the communal life of these great colleges and were held in great respect by the people. Samuel traveled from school to school residing for a time in the cities and towns in which they were established. Some notable centers of education were Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh, Ramah. Use your Atlas for a visual aid in locating these cities. The aim of these schools was to influence the political and religious life of the people.

We leave Samuel here as the strongest personality in Israel at this time, who as God's servant, would ultimately establish a King. We will see his strong influence when we take up our next subject, the Kingdom Period.