

# A Study of the Book of Joshua

## Course Handout

Primary Resource for this study: *Concordia Commentary: Joshua* by Adolph L. Harstad.  
Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. 2004

### Introduction

When you think of Joshua, what stories, images, or thoughts come to mind? Do you recall anything bad about Joshua?

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In terms of understanding the Old Testament, what would we lose if the **Book of Joshua** was not part of the Canon of Scripture?

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What New Testament book serves this same transitional purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

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Looking at your Bible's introductory or commentary notes for **Joshua** do you see any indications of the approximate date for the historical events of **Joshua**?

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One of the Biblical references to help determine that date is **1 Kings 6:1**.

**1 Kings 6:1** In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord. ESV

With that, let's take a look at a timeline of the Old Testament to see where the events in Joshua fit into Biblical history.

### The Book of Joshua and the partial fulfillment of Abrahamic Covenant

COVENANT *A pact, treaty, alliance, or agreement between two parties of equal or of unequal authority. The covenant or testament is a central, unifying theme in Scripture, God's covenants with individuals and the nation Israel finding final fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ Jesus. God's covenants can be understood by humans because*

*they are modelled on human covenants or treaties.* (from Holman Bible Dictionary. Copyright © 1991 by Holman Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.)

COVENANT "*Covenant*" in the strict sense, as requiring two independent contracting parties, cannot apply to a covenant between God and man. His covenant must be essentially one of gratuitous promise, an act of pure grace on His part... So in **Psalm 89:28** "*covenant*" is explained by the parallel word "*mercy*." (from Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

As you read **Genesis 12:1 – 7** what promises/covenant did God make to Abram and how many are yet to be fulfilled at the beginning of the **Book of Joshua**?

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In **Genesis 15:7 – 21** God takes a very formal oath affirming His Covenant with Abram. To what does God take an oath?

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The methodology of affirming the oath was apparently a common way at that time to establish a covenant between two parties. Each party would walk between the two halves of the carcasses testifying that should they break the covenant they could be cut in two by the offended party and have their carcasses laid out for the birds. Let's look at what happens here a little deeper.

Note that the smoking fire pot and flaming torch remind us of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that led the Israelites at the time of the exodus and their wandering in the desert. How does this add to the significance of those pillars at the time of Israelites?

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Before we are too quick to judge the Israelites, what daily reminders do we have of God's presence in our lives and yet we stray from God's Law?

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Note that only the smoking fire pot and flaming torch pass between the carcasses but Abram does not pass between them. What is the significance of that?

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If Abram breaks the Covenant, who pays the price and to whom does this point?

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Why did God choose Abraham and establish His Covenant with him?

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How does **Deuteronomy 7:6 – 10** help answer this question?

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How does this apply to us and what type of attitude should that foster toward God and toward each other?

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The Abrahamic Covenant is reaffirmed to Abram later when God changes his name to Abraham. God also reaffirms the Covenant with Isaac (**Genesis 26:23 – 24**) and then to Jacob (**Genesis 28:10 – 15**). God again reaffirms His Covenant with Jacob (now called Israel) when Jacob and his family are about to leave Canaan for Egypt at the invitation of Pharaoh and Jacob's son, Joseph, due to the severe famine. See **Genesis 46:1 – 4**.

What do these verses say about Israel's (Jacob's) state of mind and why do you think he is that way?

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What does this say about how God deals with us?

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At the beginning of **Joshua**, the Israelites are finally now ready to go and take possession of the Land of Canaan. Based on the previous verses and reviewing our OT timeline, what are some lessons God is teaching them/us?

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## This importance of understanding typology as it pertains to the Book of Joshua

To understand Joshua (and the Old Testament in general) the principle of “Typology” is critical. The following quotes and concepts are from the LCMS booklet published by The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR): *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism*:

*“A type is a person, institution, or event which prefigures and foreshadows a new and greater reality (the antitype). The antitype historically and theologically corresponds to, elucidates, fulfills, and eschatologically completes the type. The antitype is no mere repetition of the type but is always greater than its prefiguration. And since the Scriptures are Christological, the Old Testament types (which are so indicated in Scripture) are related to, centered in, and fulfilled in Christ and his People, the church.”*

Type = (In Biblical terms) A person, representation, event, or symbol of something to come in the Old Testament that foreshadows another in the New Testament.

Antitype = That which is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type, such as a figure in the New Testament who has a counterpart in the Old Testament.

*“The Old Testament dare not be treated as a self-contained entity to be read apart from Christ and the New Testament. This would amount to treating the Old Testament as a non-Christian Jewish book.”*

In the ESV (an many other translations) note **Romans 5:14: Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ESV**

The typology in **Joshua** starts with the man himself. Joshua is considered a type of Jesus. This starts with his name. What do we learn about Joshua and Joshua’s name in the following verses?

**Numbers 13:1 – 3, 8** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Numbers 13:16** \_\_\_\_\_

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As we study **Joshua**, look for other examples of how Joshua is a type of Jesus as well as other typology in the book.

What else do we learn about the man, Joshua, from the following verses?

**Exodus 17:8 – 16** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Exodus 24:12 – 18 and Exodus 32:15 – 20** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Exodus 33:7 – 11** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Numbers Chapters 13 – 14** is the account of Moses sending the 12 spies out to investigate the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb two of the 12. Instead of reading this long selection, would someone please summarize what happens in this story and how it pertains?

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**Numbers 27: 18 – 23** \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Setting the Stage for the Book of Joshua

To better understand the events in **Joshua** we need to briefly review some additional events prior to the Israelites crossing the Jordan River.

Using **Genesis 35:23 – 26** let's list the 12 sons of Israel that will make up the 12 tribes of Israel.

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How does **Genesis 48:3 – 6** impact the make-up of the twelve tribes? Why do you think Jacob (Israel) did this?

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What do we learn about the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh in **Numbers 32:1 – 5, 16 – 22, 33**?

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**Numbers 20:1 – 13** is the account of what Moses did that resulted in God declaring that Moses would not get to cross over into the Promised Land. What did Moses do that was so bad?

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After all of the faithfulness of Moses, don't you think this sounds a little unfair of God? What can we learn from this?

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Read **Deuteronomy 31:1 – 8**.

What basic facts do we learn from these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is there for us to learn about our service to the Lord from Moses' blessing upon Joshua? Our service to each other?

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Read **Deuteronomy 34**. What message(s) of God's grace do we find in these verses?

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### **Joshua leads Israel into the Promised Land**

Read **Joshua 1:1 – 9**. What is the significance in these verses of the repetitive points we previously read in **Deuteronomy 31:1 – 8**?

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What is the significance of verse 2 and 3 relative to the Israelites and us?

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How certain can the Israelites be that they will be given the Land and why?

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Of what is the Land a type and what certainty do we have?

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Why does God choose this geographical location for his people? See **Ezekiel 5:5** for a hint.

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Read **Joshua 1:10 – 18**.

What is meant by “rest” in verse 13?

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Do you have “rest” in your life? What does that mean and how do we get there? See **Hebrews 4**.

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**Joshua 1:16 – 18** could be considered a contract. What are the terms of that contract?

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How does that apply to leaders today in the church and the state?

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Read **Joshua 2:1**. Since God has promised Joshua and the people of Israel that He will be with them and that the land will be delivered up to them, why does Joshua need to send out two spies?

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How does this apply to future planning as an individual and a congregation?

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How does Joshua's method of sending out the spies differ from Moses'? Why? (Refer to **Numbers 13:1 – 3** again for the account of Moses sending out the spies.)

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Why would the two spies, members of God's chosen people, enter the house of a prostitute?

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Read **Joshua 2:2 – 15**.

What do we learn about Rahab's faith in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

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Rahab lied to the King of Jericho's messenger in order to save the spies. How do we know when this is appropriate? See also **Hebrews 11:1 – 2, 29 – 31** and **James 2:25 – 26**.

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What does Rahab's confession say about her fellow Canaanites and why did she believe in the one true God and not them?

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What is the significance of **Matthew 1:5** and how does that relate to us?

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Read **Joshua 2:16 – 24**.

What is the significance of the method by which Rahab's household will be identified and spared?

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Note the detail of the oath given by the men. Why was it so detailed?

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How does that relate to us taking oaths?

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How does the report of the two spies given to Joshua in verse 24 differ from the report of the 10 spies that reported to Moses and the people? What has changed between the time of the two reports?

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How do we apply this to our lives?

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Read **Joshua 3**.

What does the Ark of the Covenant represent?

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What is the significance of the Jordan river in the Bible? What other great events in the Bible occurred at the Jordan?

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Compare **Genesis 10:1, 6, 15 – 20** to **Joshua 3:10**. What similarity do you see?

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What is the significance of Ham and his son, Canaan? See **Genesis 9:20 – 27**.

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The Israelites drove out other peoples from the Land. Why do you think only these are mentioned?

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Prior to dams and modern diversion of the waters of the Jordan, the flooding of the Jordan in this area was significant. See photo of flooding of the Jordan in 1935. Even when not flooding, the Jordan river was estimated to be 90 – 100 feet across and up to 12 feet deep with very strong currents.

What is the significance of how the Jordan ceased to flow as soon as the priests stepped into the water and how the water did not flow until they stepped out?

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What is the significance of the Israelites passing through the Jordan?

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Note that **Joshua 3:9** is the first time that it is recorded that Joshua explicitly states to the Israelites that he is speaking the words of the Lord. What is the impact of the crossing of the Jordan on this proclamation?

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“Liberal scholars” will often point out that it is not unusual for mud slides to occur and temporarily stop the Jordan from flowing. There are at least 3 documented times of this happening (1267 AD, 1906, and 1921). How would you respond to them when they say that the Israelite crossing was not a miracle?

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