

Joshua


*Moses' successor
& leader of the
Conquest*



Date and Authorship

- Ascribed variously to Samuel, David, or "the Deuteronomistic writers."
- Book is anonymous and ambiguous as to date:
 - Some "until this day" references indicate a date no later than David's time:
 - Jebusites (Josh 15:63, cf. 2 Sam 5:6ff).
 - Canaanites among the Ephraimites at Gezer (Josh 16:10, cf. 1 Kgs 3:1; 9:16).
 - Reference to Rahab being alive seems much earlier (Josh 6:25)
 - This would indicate that at least portions of the book were produced shortly after the events recorded in it.
 - Like other biblical books, it's possible that the final canonical form resulted from some editorial work that included materials important to a later audience at the time when the Old Testament canon was completed (e.g., Num 12:3; Deut 34).
- Whatever the date, the book even mentions one source, "the Book of Jashur," which mentioned the sun standing still (Josh 10:13).

Joshua



Historical and Cultural Setting



Joshua the man

- Joshua (יהושוע)
 - "Yah saves," or "may Yah save"; changed from "Hoshea" (הושע) - "Salvation."
 - LXX has Ἰησοῦς, from which we get the New Testament name "Jesus."
- One of the two faithful spies, along with Caleb ([Num 13-14](#)).
- Joshua has inherited Moses-like authority (Josh 22-24), a "servant of the Lord" (24:29, cf. David [Moses, Deut 34:5], Mary [Luke 1:38]).

Chronical data sets up 1470 BC for the Exodus and 1406 for the beginning of the conquest:

- Solomon began construction of the temple 966, which was 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kgs 6:1).
- Jephthah (ca. 1100 BC) boasts that Israel has been in the land for 300 years (Judg 11:26).
- At least 18 generations between Korah at the time of the Exodus and Heman, the musician in David's court (1 Chr 6:33-37, 18 generations x 25 years/generation = 450 years).

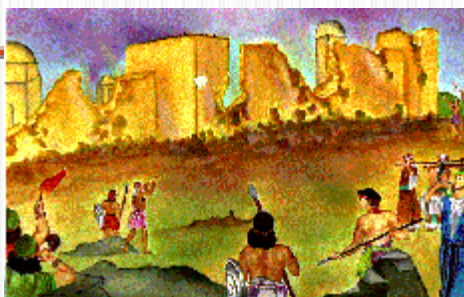
No burn layers for mid-15th century BC.

- Not a problem for most Canaanite cities, because general regulations for conquest forbade that kind of destruction (Deut 6:10f; 19:1f; Exod 23:23-30; Num 33:50-56).
- Raises a question for Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, which were razed (Josh 6:24; 8:28; 10:1; 11:13).
 - Jericho
 - Kenyon said Jericho had destroyed a century before Joshua (ca. 1550 BC) and remained unoccupied through the Late Bronze period (1550-1200 BC).
 - B.W.Wood says he's found ruins of toppled walls from about 1400 BC, which would fit the biblical data.
 - Hazor shows destruction layer for about 1230 BC, but nothing earlier.
 - Ai has no discovered evidence of occupation between from 2300-1200 BC, if they have correctly identified the site of ancient Ai.
- Archaeological data won't settle the question, but remember Dever's dictum: "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

More complex than that

- Tensions within the biblical account itself:
 - Some texts speak of unified assault yielding total victory (Josh 11:23; 18:1; 21:43f)
 - Some texts indicate gradual conquest by individual tribes, which never eradicated the indigenous population (Josh 15:13-19, 63; 16:10; 17:11-13; 19:47; Judg 1).
- Suggestions for explaining this:
 - Alt: Israel entered peacefully and the sparse indigenous population couldn't resist the developing Israelite state.
 - Goppelt and Mendenhall: Hebrews who had escaped Egyptian slavery sparked a native peasant revolt among the Canaanites, who overthrew their feudal overlords.
 - Some suggest these tensions indicate inconsistent redaction of contradictory accounts of the "conquest."

Nature of the Conquest



Explaining the tension:

- Common ANE practice of reporting military conquest with understandable hyperbole.
- This tension is already present in Deuteronomy itself:
 - God will give the land but Israel will not keep the covenant (Deut 31:15-18, 27-29).
 - Israel's failure to eradicate the indigenous population will eventually sow the seeds of growing idolatry, which will consume the land (Deut 31:20f).

Joshua's simple account

- Three-stages of conquest:
 - Central campaign at Jericho and Ai (Josh 2-8)
 - Southern campaign (Josh 9-10)
 - Northern campaign (Josh 11)
- Summary of conquered cities (Josh 12)
- Distribution of the tribal land holdings (Josh 13-22)
- Joshua's death (Josh 23-24)

Special Issues in Joshua



Special Issues in Joshua

- “Genocidal terrorist attacks” on the Canaanites (e.g., at [Jericho](#), [Ai](#), and [the seven kingdoms](#) and [the twenty-two kingdoms](#))
- Rahab’s lie
- Joshua’s long day [when the sun stood still](#)

The Land

- Deuteronomy set on the edge of the Promised Land as the last will and testament of Moses, Israel’s wilderness leader who had prepared them for conquest (Deut 1:8, 6:10, 18; 7:8).
- Joshua records the conquest (chs. 1–12) and distribution of the land (chs. 13–22).
- These chapters wouldn’t have looked like boring geography lessons to the first readers of Joshua; they would have rung the changes of God’s covenantal faithfulness in giving them the land he had promised to the patriarchs.

Theology of the Book of Joshua



The Unity of Israel

- Deuteronomy addresses “all Israel” (e.g., Deut 5:1, 3; 11:6; 29:9).
- Joshua has an “all Israel” point of view (e.g., Josh 3:7, 17; 4:14; 7:23f; 24:1).
- Each of the twelve tribes is commemorated by a stone near Gilgal (Josh 4). All tribes participate in punishing the transgressor and in conquest (Deut 13:10; Josh 7:25)
- The nation comprised a union of twelve tribes acting in concert (Josh 18:2).
- All twelve tribes receive a part of the inheritance (Josh 13–22).
- Even the Trans-Jordan tribes symbolize their unity with the other tribes by erecting an altar to symbolize that unity (Josh 22).

Holy War

- Deuteronomy spelled out principles of holy war (Deut 7:1–26; 20:1–20; 21:10–14; 25:17–19).
- Joshua illustrates these principles
 - Positively: Jericho and Ai accounts (chs. 2, 6, 8, 10, 11).
 - Negatively: Ai and treaty with the Gibeonites (chs. 7, 9)
- Yahweh fights for Israel and strikes terror in the enemies’ hearts (Josh 2:9, 24; 5:1; 9:24; 10:21).
- The “ban”
 - Falls on disobedient Achan and his family (Deut 7:25f; Josh 7)
 - Most Canaanite peoples placed under the ban and eradicated (Deut 7:1–5; Josh 6:2; 8:24f; 10:1, 28–40; 11:11, 14, 21; cf. 9:16–18).

The Role of Joshua

- Deuteronomy presents Joshua as Moses’ chosen successor to lead the conquest (e.g., Deut 1:38; 3:21, 28; 31:3; 34:9).
- The book of Joshua shows him playing that role until his death at book end.
 - He assumes the military leadership that had belonged to Moses (Josh 1:8); indeed Josh 12:1–6 lists Moses’ victories and 12:7–24 lists Joshua’s
 - Completes the work of Moses by giving Israel its inheritance.
 - Jordan crossing echoes Red Sea crossing (Josh 3–4).
 - Like Moses, Joshua removes his feet in God’s presence (Exod 3:5; Josh 5:15).
 - Like Moses, Joshua led the nation in celebrating Passover (Josh 5:10f).
 - Joshua allots the land, according Moses’ plan (Josh 13:8–32; 14:1).

The Covenant

- Joshua led the nation in a covenant renewal at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal (Josh 8), which Moses had commanded (Deut 27:1-8).
- Mosaic law = standard of conduct for Israel (Josh 1:13; 4:10; 8:30-35; 9:24).
 - The relation of Israel and the Gibeonites (Josh 9:23-27, cf. Deut 20:10f).
 - Removing the bodies of the five slain kings before sunset (Josh 10:27, cf. Deut 21:23).
 - Achan's punishment (Josh 7:25, cf. Deut 13).



The Promised Rest



- Joshua was leading Israel into their promised rest (Deut 3:20; 12:10; 25:19; Josh 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1)
 - At best this was only temporary, for Israel would fight its enemies throughout its entire existence as a landed nation.
 - Joshua is "open-ended" (Woodstra 1981, 33): The people have an inheritance but the land is not yet possessed (Josh 13:1-7; 15:63; 17:12).
 - This "rest" for "all Israel" dissolved at the schism between North and South and finally removed by exile.
- These partial manifestations of "rest" point beyond themselves to Joshua's greater namesake, Jesus:
 - Jesus will bring all of new Israel into an inheritance that cannot be taken away (1 Pet 1:3-5).
 - Jesus provides the rest that Joshua never attained (Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1-11).

Covenant (cont.)

- Both curses and blessings are set before Israel at the time of Joshua's death, just as they had been at Moses' death (Josh 23:14-16; Deut 28).
- At the time of his death, Joshua, like Moses before him, was certain that Israel would not keep the covenant (Josh 24:19f, cf. Deut 31:15-29).
- The Anakim are wiped out (Josh 11:21, cf. Deut 9:2)
- No one can withstand Israel (Josh 1:5, cf. Deut 11:25)
- The "hornet" expels the enemy (Josh 24:12, cf. Deut 7:20).



Models of Faith

- At Jericho, both the people of Israel and the prostitute Rahab are presented as models of faith:
 - They were "examples of those who were looking for a country" (Heb 11:30-f; 11:14-16).
 - But they did not attain what was promised (11:39-40), because God had planned something better.



Joshua in the light of the New Testament

God's Warrior

- Jesus is not only Joshua's greater namesake, but he is the Divine Warrior, the Captain of the Lord's army who fights for his people and gives them victory (Josh 5:13-15; Rev 19:11-16).
- "The inheritance he gives is not a stretch of rocky land in the eastern Mediterranean, but rather renewed heavens and earth and a heavenly city (Rev 21:1-2)" (Longman & Dillard, 117).



The Conquest

- **Old Testament Conquest and Inheritance**
 - After liberation from Egypt, Israel began the conquest of her inheritance (Joshua).
 - Israel enjoyed an earthly inheritance and an earthly kingdom that could not last.
- **New Testament Conquest and Inheritance**
 - After liberation through the cross, Jesus' people move out to conquer the world in his name (Acts).
 - God's new Israel enjoy a heavenly inheritance and an eternal kingdom that can never be removed.