



Joshua Bible Studies

**Trinity Church Adelaide
2024**

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Joshua

The promises God made to Abraham back in Genesis have been gradually fulfilled - Israel became a mighty nation. In Exodus, they were brought out of Egypt with their God, Yahweh, dwelling in their midst. He established the priesthood and tabernacle so that Israel could live with the Holy God in their midst (Leviticus). But right on the edge of the promised land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14) disaster struck: Israel refused to trust God. They refused to trust him by entering Canaan. In judgement, they wandered the wilderness until nearly all that generation died, and a new generation rose up. Would this generation trust God and be faithful to him? Moses' final speeches (Deuteronomy) called for them to trust God. The book of Joshua picks up the action right after Moses' death. Joshua is about Israel's entry into the land of Canaan. But more than that, it's about Yahweh's faithfulness to his promises. The summary in Joshua 21:43-45 says it all:

⁴³ So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. ⁴⁴ The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵ Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

The same question remains for us today: will we trust this Holy God to keep his promises? He has an excellent track record - the book of Joshua is filled with painstaking details that testify to it. He is worthy of our trust, our adoration, our worship, our lives.

Study 1: Be Strong and Courageous

Joshua 1 - 2

When you're planning for a holiday/trip, what kind of research do you like to do about the place you're going before you go?

Read Joshua 1-2

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

Joshua 1:1 opens with a monumental announcement: "*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord...*" Why is this a big announcement? (turn back a page in your Bible and read Deuteronomy 34:10-12 for reference)

We then read that Joshua is the new leader of Israel. But who is Joshua? As a group, complete the table below

Passage	What it tells us about Joshua
Exodus 17:9-16	
Exodus 24:13, 32:17, 33:11	
Numbers 11:28	
Numbers 13:16; 14:5-9, 30-35	
Numbers 27:12-23	
Deuteronomy 31: 1-8	
Deuteronomy 34:9	

Based on all these passages, what kind of man is Joshua? What do we know about him?

At God’s instruction, Moses commissioned Joshua to be the new leader of the people of Israel. How do we see God and Israel affirming and encouraging Joshua as the “new Moses” in chapter 1?

The phrase “be strong and courageous” is a repeated theme in Joshua 1. Why do you think Joshua needed to be encouraged to be strong and courageous? How does this compare with how the Canaanites feel (Joshua 2)?

How does Rahab respond to all that Yahweh has done for Israel? How does this response compare with the rest of the people of Jericho? (Rahab is most likely not just a prostitute, but the operator of the lodgings for people passing through, and something of an information gatherer for the king of Jericho)

Across Joshua 1-2, the idea of God giving the people of Israel the land comes up 9 times (1:2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 15; 2:9, 14, 24). This is compared with only two mentions of Israel taking the land (1:11, 15) - both in the context of land that God has given them. Why does it matter that God is the one giving them the land, rather than Israel seizing the land for themselves?

A newcomer to church, Jeannie o'Lowgy, asks, "*Why would God be willing to save someone like Rahab - and more than that - include her in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1?*" How would you respond to Jeannie? Why would God save Rahab and her family?

As good as Joshua was, he wasn't the ultimate leader for God's people - as we'll see, he was a fallible human like anyone else. But God had promised Israel that there would be another prophet like Moses to come (Deuteronomy 18:18). And when we fast forward to Acts 3:18-26, we see that ultimately, Moses was looking forward to Jesus, the better Joshua, who came not to save God's people from the Canaanites, but rather to save them from their sin. It was Jesus who was forsaken by God (Mark 15:34) so that God never has to forsake us (Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5). God is always with us to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20). How much more reason we have to be strong and courageous than Joshua and the Israelites did!

As a group, consider how we might be strong and courageous in the following situations:

- When facing pressure in our work environment to be unethical
- When we've been silent about our faith with our long term friends or family
- When we realise that someone in our small group is caught in a habitual sin
- When we've been praying for someone for years to become a Christian and they don't seem any closer than the day you started
- When our classmates/colleagues are all wearing rainbow lanyards in solidarity with LGBTQIA+
- When you're struggling with health, but aren't sure whether to share it with someone else at church

Pray

Praise God for his presence with us; that he won't leave us nor will he forsake us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pray that he will help you to be strong and courageous as his followers.

Study 2: A New Exodus

Joshua 3 - 5

What are some of the monuments/memorials/landmarks you've seen that stick in your mind? What makes them memorable?

Does your family (or did your family growing up) have traditions that get repeated? How did they come about?

Read Joshua 3 - 5

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

Why is it important for the people to keep a healthy distance of 2,000 cubits (or nearly 1km) from the Ark of the Covenant? (check out Exodus 25:22, Numbers 10:33-36)

As they cross the Jordan River, Joshua has Israel choose 12 men to go and collect a river stone to create a memorial (3:12; 4:1-9, 20-24). This is the heartbeat of the story of the river crossing: a physical monument left in Israel to the day of writing (4:9). What is this monument meant to testify to? How were Israel to repeat it and impress it upon future generations?

Much like the crossing of the Red Sea, Israel crossing the Jordan makes the Canaanites fearful (Exodus 15:14-18 compared with Joshua 5:1). Why were they afraid of Israel?

In Joshua 5:2-9, the Israelite men are all circumcised (having been left uncircumcised in the wilderness wanderings). Why was it important for Israelite men to be circumcised? (check out Genesis 17:9-14 for background)

With Israel encamped at Gilgal, how has God rolled away the reproach of Egypt? What is the reproach of Egypt? (check out Deuteronomy 9:26-29)

Israel celebrates the Passover together (5:10) - another important marker of faithfulness to God - before beginning to live off the food of the land (vv11-12). Why does God stop the supply of manna when they arrive in Canaan?

The crossing of the Jordan River, the monument, the circumcision and the Passover - these all show a new beginning for Israel. It's not a coincidence that John the Baptist chose the Jordan River when he was baptising. He brought people through waters that would bring death and called them to repentance in a new life (Matthew 3:5-11). In a similar way, our baptism as Christians represents us being brought through death into new life (Romans 6:3-4). Share with the group: have you been baptised? When? Why did you decide to be baptised? And if you haven't, why not? What's stopping you from being baptised on the next Commitment Sunday at church?

A member of your small group, Kat E. Chisholm, says, “*Back in the good old days, Christians followed along the pattern from Israel - we helped our kids to learn the faith with set questions and answers - just like here in Joshua 4:21-24. Why don't we bother with catechesis anymore?*” How would you respond to Kat?

In the book, *Family Discipleship*, Adam Griffin and Matt Chandler write about milestones:

...milestones are those points in time that stick with you...they offer you the chance to take special note of what God is doing in and through (you)...Milestones make lasting memories together as a family of God and create things that help us remember so we won't forget.¹

Milestones and monuments are incredibly important for our own lives of faith. But there's a great risk that we're so busy and so caught up in just living that we don't take the time to reflect and remember. So use this time together as group to recalibrate: what are the milestones or monuments in your own spiritual walk you can think of? Or in the lives of others in your group? Some examples to get you started:

- Baptism
- Confirmation/declaration of faith
- Communion (a repeat-visit milestone!)
- Seeing someone come to Christ
- First person in your family to become a Christian (if you know)

¹ Chandler, Matt & Griffin, Adam. *Family Discipleship*. (Crossway; Wheaton, IL: 2020), 136.

Take a few minutes, fill out your list, then share your lists with each other. How might you use these in the coming weeks to give thanks to God for his faithfulness to you?

Pray

Praise God for how he has shown his faithfulness to each of your small group members. (You may like to listen to and/or sing “Great is Thy Faithfulness” as a group as a sung prayer). Pray that he will help you to continue to remember his goodness and faithfulness to you.

Study 3: The Battle Belongs to the LORD

Joshua 6 - 8

On a scale from “*completely uncomfortable and would prefer it wasn’t in the Bible*” to “*completely confident and ready to answer anyone,*” how do you feel when reading Bible passages like Joshua 6 and 8 in which God commands Israel to completely wipe out Canaanites?

Are the battles in Joshua the same as holy wars today? Why, or why not?

Read Joshua 6-8

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

Back in Joshua 2, we read the account of the spies visiting Rahab. How do we see the ramifications of that encounter in Joshua 6?

Complete the table below based on the three battles in Joshua 6-8 (there may be some blanks, and that's okay!):

	Jericho (Joshua 6)	Ai (Joshua 7:1-5)	Ai (Joshua 8:1-29)
Who initiates the battle?			
Who gets the plunder from the city?			
What military tactics are employed?			
Who wins?			
Who is cursed?			

Drawing all this information together, what conclusions can we draw about what makes Israel succeed or fail in their battles? (check out Deuteronomy 28:7 and 28:25)

With these battles, we see the beginning of God’s judgement on Canaan being executed by Israel. It’s a fairly confronting topic to address (and we won’t cover all of it in this study!). But briefly, turn back to Genesis 15:13-16. Why does God say that Abraham’s descendants won’t take possession of the land of Canaan until the fourth generation? (see also Deuteronomy 9:4-6)

Read Deuteronomy 20:16-18. Why is Israel to be so extreme in destroying the Canaanites? (see also Leviticus 18 - especially vv24-28 - and Deuteronomy 7:1-11)

We see in Joshua 7 that Israel isn’t exempt from God’s judgement either; in fact, it’s the only place in Joshua where we read that Yahweh’s anger burned against Israel. Paul Copan writes:

God was concerned with *sin*, not *ethnicity*. In fact, as we read the Old Testament prophets, they (with God) were angered about Israel’s disobedience and they threatened divine judgement on Israel/Judah more often than they did on the pagan nations. If we read carefully, it’s obvious God was opposed to *Israel’s* sin just as much as he was to that of their oppressors.²

² Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker Books; Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 165.

Based on this, how might we address concerns that Yahweh is a genocidal, bloodthirsty God who had it in for the Canaanite nations?

Find out more and get your questions on Holy War in Joshua answered - come along to our Deep Dive on Thursday 5th September from 7:30-9:00pm with Reuben Salagaras (AFES SA/NT Regional Director)!

A regular member at your church gathering, Kain Ahn, says, “*It doesn’t seem fair - Achan’s children are caught up in his rebellion. And Rahab’s family didn’t help the spies either. Shouldn’t the individuals involved be the only ones who suffer or benefit from faithfulness or disobedience?*” How would you respond to Kain?

God’s heart has always been for the nations. He doesn’t delight in any perishing, but instead desires for all to be saved (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 1 Timothy 2:4). As we see in these chapters of Joshua, the only way to be saved is to come over to Yahweh; to become faithful to him and his people as Rahab was. The alternative is to live in opposition to him, with a hard heart that opposes him and his purposes in the world. This is what the rest of the people of Jericho and the people Ai did. From the time of the Exodus, there has been room for people to defect to God’s family (Exodus 12:38) - that’s why we read of the foreigners living among Israel as being a part of the blessing-curse declaration ceremony in Joshua 8:33.

Ultimately, we see how this amnesty works in Christ. In Romans 5:8, we are told “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” As members of God’s family today in Christ, we’re not called to bring God’s judgement in a temporal sense against the nations. We are called to invite the nations to defect to him; to enter into the blessing of living with Yahweh as our God. To be on the side of the true king. But these days don’t last forever. They will come to an end. As a small group, choose one (or more!) of the following areas of inviting the nations to defect, and put it into practice this week:

- Each member choose two people to pray for, two minutes a day, to come to know Christ. Plan how you might develop these relationships to share the gospel more effectively.
- As a group choose a missionary overseas/rurally in Australia to support; subscribe to their prayer points, partner with them financially, write to them, etc.
- Choose a country/countries around the world to pray for, using a resource like Operation World, Open Doors, or the CMS Prayer Diary. Commit to praying for them as a group over the remainder of this series.

Pray

Praise God for his just judgement against sin. Praise him that in Christ, our sins are judged fully. Pray that we might be a part of his mission taskforce, helping save the nations in Christ.

Study 4: A Shrewd Treaty

Joshua 9:1 - 10:15

Have you ever been ripped off? What happened? How did you feel?

Read Joshua 9:1-10:15

Reading suggestion: when reading 9:3-15, assign reading roles to group members: narrator, Gibeonites (try to sound ragged and desperate), Israelites, Joshua.

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

According to Deuteronomy 20:10-18, what kinds of relationships was Israel to have with the foreign cities? With Canaanite cities? Based on this, what should Israel's response have been to the Gibeonites?

Why did Israel get this decision wrong?

Why did the Gibeonites want to make a treaty with Israel?

Once the deception is found out, Joshua announces a curse on the people of Gibeon (9:23, 27) - that they are to perpetually serve the needs for the altar of God. Is this actually a curse? Why, or why not?

In Joshua 10, we read the account of the Gibeonites being attacked by a coalition of Amorite kings. How do we see that the battle belongs to the Lord?

A member of your small group, Lou Pohl, says, “*Technically, Israel didn’t have to keep the oath they made with the Gibeonites; it was made in bad faith and their allegiance was to God’s commands. Surely they didn’t have to keep this treaty!*” How would you respond to Lou?

In Luke 14:31-33, Jesus gives this bit of teaching in the context of calling people to be his disciples:

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

As with the Gibeonites, the wise response to the King who has complete authority is to defect; to surrender to his sovereignty on his terms. And Jesus makes these terms quite clear: we need to give up *everything* to be his disciples. This isn’t a one-and-done kind of decision either. It’s a daily decision to be a living sacrifice. To live for King Jesus’ priorities rather than my own. Sometimes it feels like dying. But over time, may what Paul wrote in Philippians 3:7-8 be true: whatever felt like it was important to me before I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Thinking of your own discipleship, then. These are just some areas where we may be tempted to live for ourselves rather than King Jesus. Are they challenges for you? Have you seen God at work in your life in them over the past 12 months? Several years?

- Money, material things and a desire for more
- Sex, relationships
- What others think of you/your reputation
- Your kids/family
- Your professional success
- Your health, body image, fitness

A few questions to help you assess yourself:

- If this was suddenly taken away, would I be able to still say God is good?
- Do I find myself becoming irrationally angry or sad if this is threatened?
- Do I think that my own personal success/happiness is dependent on any one of these being more fulfilled?

Share with your fellow small group members, and pray for one another, that you might give up everything you have for the sake of Christ.

Pray

Praise God for making a way possible for us to be part of his people; for making a way for us to be included as Christ's disciples.

Study 5: The Battle Belongs to the LORD (Part 2)

Joshua 10:16-12:24

Muhammad Ali, arguably the greatest boxer in history, in 1974 said “*I done wrestled with an alligator, I done tussled with a whale; handcuffed lightning, thrown thunder in jail; only last week, I murdered a rock, injured a stone, hospitalized a brick; I'm so mean I make medicine sick.*” Should we take him literally? Why, or why not?

Read Joshua 10:16-11:23

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

We’ve already heard about the King of Ai being hung on a pole until sunset, before being brought down (Joshua 8:28-29), and now the five kings of the coalition against Gibeon suffer the same fate. Why was this done? (Check out Deuteronomy 21:22-23 for reference)

Using verse numbers where relevant, complete the table below based on the conquest of Southern Canaan in Joshua 10 (there may be some blanks, and that's okay!):

	Makkedah	Libnah	Lachish	Eglon	Hebron	Debir
Then Joshua and all Israel went from city A to city B...						
The LORD gave city into the hand of Israel						
Joshua put them to the sword / no survivors						

In Joshua 11 we similarly get an outline of the conquest of Northern Canaan (albeit not as structured as Joshua 10). How do we see God's hand in the conquest of Canaan through these chapters?

Joshua 12 provides a comprehensive list of all the kings (and territories) defeated by Israel following the Exodus. Compare Genesis 15:18-21 with Joshua 12:7-8 - how do we see God's promises to Abraham fulfilled in Joshua's day?

With these battles, we see the continuation of God's judgement on Canaan being executed by Israel (which we started looking at back in study 3 with Jericho and Ai). What are we to make of these city conquests? Based on archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern scholarship in the Late Bronze Age, it seems likely that these cities functioned somewhat differently to our modern ones. Joshua Ryan Butler comments,

...when Israel "utterly destroys" a city like Jericho or Ai, we should picture a military fort being taken over - not a civilian massacre. God is pulling down the Great Wall of China, not demolishing Beijing. Israel is taking out the Pentagon, not New York City...kings were often local leaders who functioned a lot more as generals. They were military leaders who frequently led their soldiers into battle...the picture is one of Joshua's armies attacking military strongholds, knocking out generals, and putting their soldiers to flight; not invading cities, assassinating presidents, and slaughtering civilians.³

Or, in other words, putting all who lived in these cities to death doesn't necessarily mean a genocide-level event. In the same way that Muhammad Ali's trash talk is an exaggeration, so too was Ancient Near Eastern battle reporting. For example, in Joshua 11:21, we read that Joshua destroyed the Anakites from the hill country. However, in Joshua 14:12-15 and 15:13-19 we see that there were still Anakites in this hill country. And the book of Judges is filled with plenty of remaining Canaanites in the land too.

³ Butler, Joshua R. *The Skeletons in God's Closet*. (Thomas Nelson; Nashville, TN: 2014), 227.

With all that in mind, what should we do with Joshua 10:40 - *"So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded."*?

Don't forget to come along to our Deep Dive on Thursday 5th September from 7:30-9:00pm with Reuben Salagaras (AFES SA/NT Regional Director) to unpack more of the questions around Holy War in Joshua.

A visitor to church, Armin Iain, says, *"I heard that your church believes that God controls people's wills - that there's no such thing as free will? But that must mean God is a monster - if in Joshua 11:20 he really makes the Canaanites want to be evil and they didn't want to, then why does he hold them responsible for their sin? Isn't that just evil?"* How would you respond to Armin?

In Joshua 12, the list of kings defeated and places captured on both sides of the Jordan river can seem a bit tedious, especially after having already read the accounts earlier! But to reframe it - each place where a king has been conquered is a tangible expression of God keeping his promises to Abraham's family. How about for us? How good are we at keeping track of tangible evidences of God's faithfulness to us?

One practice has that Christians have used commonly through history is to keep a prayer diary, and to make a note of when God has answered their prayers. Take a moment to reflect on one (or more) of the following, then share with the rest of the group:

- If God had answered every one of your prayers this week, how would the world be different?
- Have there been any prayers you've seen God answer this year?
- If everyone you prayed for God to save this year became Christian immediately, how many new Christians would there be in the world?

Putting it into practice:

- How do you go about keeping track of your prayers? Are there any systems you could implement this week to help?
- What's stopping you from praying for God to do something that seems impossible - whether it's saving a non-Christian friend, or healing a broken relationship, or recovering from a disease? Why not start praying regularly for this?
- Why not start keeping a "thank you" list/jar/diary? Set aside a minute at the end of each day to add something to it, and then once a month come back to the list and give thanks to God for all the ways he has shown his faithfulness to you.

Pray

As a group, take a moment to share a point of thanks to God for his faithfulness to each one of you.

Study 6: Meditating on the Lord's Words

Joshua 1:7-8

This week we take a break in the main action of Joshua, returning to an idea raised back in Joshua 1. Thanks to Courtney Freer for providing this material.

After the death of Moses, the Lord calls Joshua to lead the Israelites. We see that the Lord promises to be with Joshua, just like He was with Moses (Joshua 1:5). And as Israel's new leader under God, Joshua is given a command from the Lord. In Joshua 1:7-8 the Lord says to him:

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

In this week's study we are going to step away from following the story in Joshua and focus more deeply on these commands, focusing on the idea of meditation.

What commands are given to Joshua in these verses? What will the outcome be when Joshua follows these commands?

Read Psalm 1

Who does the Psalmist compare in this Psalm?

a) How are they described?

b) What are the outcomes/consequences for these people?

Do you notice any similarities between the commands given to Joshua and Psalm 1?

Both passages highlight the command to meditate on the law of the Lord, day and night. You might also have noticed that both passages highlight the prosperity of those who do so, with the psalmist painting a picture of a steadfast and fruitful tree. It's a beautiful image, and something most of us would desire to feel in our own lives as we trust in God. But have you ever stopped to consider what it means to meditate on the law of the Lord?

What do you think it means to meditate on the law of the Lord? Do you get any hints from Joshua 1:7-8 or Psalm 1?

The Hebrew word for 'meditate' used in both of these passages is similar to 'ponder', 'murmur' and 'mutter'. How do you think these descriptions add to our understanding?

Often as Christians we understand the importance of reading God's word, but do we meditate on it? Is our reading of scripture a slow pondering process, or more of a task on the to-do list?

David Mathis suggests that *"God designed us with the capacity to pause and ponder. He means for us to not just hear him, not only to read quickly over what he says, but to reflect on what he says and knead it into our hearts"*.

What do you think could be some benefits of meditating on God's word? (Some ideas can be found in Psalm 139:23-24, Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

As a group, brainstorm at least 10 ways you might be able to pause and ponder as you read God's word. (If you need some ideas, follow the link on the next page to the examples handout)

On a scale, where do you currently sit between reading quickly or pausing and pondering? Reflect and discuss what it currently looks like for you when you read God's word.

Quickly read

Pause and ponder

What could it look like for you to meditate on the law, day and night?

For more examples of meditating on God's word, follow this link –

<https://www.trinitycity.church/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Joshua-Bible-Study-extra-resources.pdf>

Individually, or (even better) as a small group, you might like to commit to trying one or two of these methods this week. Meditate on Joshua 1:7-8 together, or another passage of your choosing.

Pray

Spend some time in prayer now thanking God that we can know him through his word, that we can be trained for righteousness and equipped for good works through it. Thank God that he has created us with the capacity to pause and ponder and pray that we might use this to know him and his word more deeply.

Further resources on biblical meditation:

- Keller, Timothy. *Prayer*. (Hodder & Stoughton; London, UK: 2014) - especially chapter 10.
- Mathis, David. *Habits of Grace*. (Crossway; Wheaton, IL: 2016)
- Thompson, Katherine. *Christ-Centred Mindfulness*. (Acorn Press; Sydney, Australia: 2018) - practical approaches to meditation.

Study 7: A share in the land
Joshua 13-21

If you were tasked with redrawing state lines across Australia, would you do anything different? Or would it stay the same?

Share with the group: what's your dream house? Or, if you're already living in it, what makes it your dream house?

Read Joshua 13:1-7 and 14:1-5

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

Why were there still large amounts of land to be taken up after the military campaigns from Joshua 6-11? (check out Exodus 23:27-30)

Thinking back to Joshua 10-12 especially, and the sweeping language of complete victory across Canaan: how does Joshua 13 help shape our understanding of what's been said earlier?

Why are only nine tribes plus half the tribe of Manasseh receiving land in the land of Canaan (i.e. West of the Jordan River)?

The process for dividing up the land across Joshua 14-19 is given by Moses in Numbers 33:50-56. Why was it so crucial for Israel to drive out the inhabitants of the land in their allotment?

As a group, fill out which region is assigned to which tribe on the map provided. You may like to divide up one chapter each (13-19) or divide into smaller groups to work with some chapters, skim reading them, and then filling out the map before reporting back to each other.

Map 1: Israelite Tribal Inheritance (exported from Logos Bible Software)



A note on Jerusalem - Jerusalem falls between Judah and Benjamin's territory in the allotment (some of the allotments gave one Tribe a city in another's territory). It seems understood that it was to be a shared endeavour to take this city (Joshua 15:63; 18:15-16, 28). In the time of Judges, Jerusalem is viewed as thoroughly Canaanite (Judges 19:10-13). It is only taken under King David's leadership (2 Samuel 5:6-9) but even then, the Jebusites aren't driven from it (cf 2 Samuel 24:18-25).

As you skimmed through those chapters, what comments about driving out the Canaanites from the land did you notice?

Joshua 20-21 then proceeds to cover the designation of some cities to be cities of refuge for those who commit manslaughter (cf Numbers 35:6-34) and the giving of pastureland and cities for the Levites among the rest of the tribes since they don't themselves receive any physical inheritance (cf Numbers 35:1-5).

A family friend, Heidi Ng, shares with you *"It seems too risky for Christians to mix with non-Christians in the world. Look at how things turned out for Israel when they mixed with Canaanites! Surely it makes more sense for us to avoid being influenced; our kids should only go to private Christian schools or, better yet, homeschool. We should only have Christian friends, and as much as possible only do business with Christians."* How would you respond to Heidi?

In Hebrews 11:13-16, we read:

¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Talking about those who didn't get to see what they had been promised and hoped for, the author to the Hebrews is speaking equally to all Christians everywhere. Chances are you've probably not been promised a physical land inheritance in the Middle East from God. But each and every Christian is promised an inheritance from God - the better heavenly country, the place where Jesus has gone to prepare for us (John 14:1-3). A place where the hope we have in God will one day no longer be faith, but will be by sight, as the promised land of Canaan was for the people of Israel. As a group, reflect together: how enmeshed in this world are we? How much are we longing for the better heavenly country?

A few questions to help you assess yourself:

- Do you feel comfortable praying for Jesus to come back right now? If not, why not?
- How much time, effort and dreaming do you put into your earthly home? How does that compare to your thinking about your eternal home?
- How would you describe the Christian hope to a non-Christian friend?

- If it would help you feel more attached to your eternal home, is there anything that's claiming your heart here and now that you could give up? It doesn't have to be a bad thing! E.g. books or hobbies or sports or video games or TV shows that capture our hearts and imaginations, investments that take up our time and hopes, careers that are good and contribute to society, but limit your time here and now to serve God's people.
- Is there a reason why you *shouldn't* explore vocational ministry, and potentially leave your career here and now? (CV Conference - September 27-28 2024 - is a great space to explore this in more depth)

Pray

Praise God for the inheritance he has given to us, his people. Pray that you might live each day longing for that inheritance more and more.

Study 8: Goodbyes and Funerals

Joshua 22 - 24

Are there any last words, or goodbyes, that have stuck with you?

Read Joshua 22

Anything weird/interesting/unusual that you noticed in the passage?

In Numbers 32:28-32, the Transjordan Tribes (Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh) are instructed to cross the Jordan with the rest of Israel to assist in the conquest of Canaan. How do we see this moment come full circle in Joshua 22?

After the Transjordan tribes build an imposing altar (Joshua 22:10), we read that the whole of Israel gathered to go to war against them (v12). Why did they have this response - why is the whole nation potentially on the brink of a civil war?

What reason do the Transjordan tribes give for building this altar?

Across Joshua 23-24, we read Joshua's last recorded words. How does Joshua see the conquest that has happened so far, and the remaining work to go?

How does Joshua describe God's faithfulness to all his promises?

Joshua 24:14-15 contains one of the best known quotes from Joshua - *“But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”* What threatens the Israelites from continuing to be faithful to the LORD? How does Joshua urge them to be faithful to the LORD?

A member of your small group, Faith Phule, says, *“It doesn’t really matter how we behave - God is always faithful to his promises. He won’t really judge us; he wants to save everyone! He is faithful even when we’re faithless - 2 Timothy 2:13 says so!”* How would you respond to Faith?

In Joshua 23:14-16, Joshua strongly urged Israel to be faithful to Yahweh. God is faithful to his promises - both to bless, but also to judge. The same is true for us today: God is faithful to his promises to save and to judge. In Hebrews 4:8-11, the author reflects on Joshua’s conquest for Christians in their day and writes:

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

Unfortunately, while the generation in Joshua's day had positive attitude, they failed to pass it onto their children (Judges 2:6-12). That next generation perished in their disobedience. And fast forwarding through the generations, the same questions are posed to us. God is faithful. He is faithful to do what he has promised for us (1 Corinthians 1:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Hebrews 10:23). The question is put on us: will we be faithful to God? And will we help pass the faith on to future generations?

- Are there idols that have a grip on your life (cf Joshua 24:14-15, 23)? Consider the list we had on pg. 21 - do any of these things have a sway on your heart and need to be put away? How might you make every effort to enter the rest gifted us in Christ?
- Are there other Christians in your life who have permission to hold you accountable for your behaviour? For your faithfulness, obedience, and spiritual disciplines? Who would address it with you if they were concerned about your disobedience to God? Do you need to invite someone to be that person for you?
- How are you involved in passing the faith on accurately to the next generation? Whether people in their 70's or kids, how are you involved in passing the message on to them, and helping them to embrace it in a way that speaks to their challenges and culture?

Pray

Praise God for our time in Joshua! More especially, praise him for his faithfulness to his promises.

Appendix 1 - A visual representation of the conquest of Canaan



