



Getting started with Joshua & Judges

The story of Joshua. . .

The book of Joshua tells the story of how God's saved people, the nation of Israel, invade and take possession of the land that God had promised to give to Abraham and his descendants. This great conquest happens under the leadership of a man named Joshua. Joshua however is not the real hero of the book, God is. Even Joshua's name, which means God Saves, leads us to this conclusion. The story is told in 4 major parts. Chapters 1:1 - 5:12 Tell how they crossed over into the land. Chapters 5:13 - 12:24 tells how they partially conquered the land. Chapters 13 - 21 tell how they divided up the land. Chapters 22 - 24 reflect on how God has kept His promise to give them the land, and remind Israel how they are to serve the LORD in the land that He has now given them.

Having "rescued" His people from slavery, He now leads His people into the "rest" of His promised land. Joshua is a story of God's grace and keeping His promises to His people.

Things to look out for as you read. . .

- God's faithfulness to His promises about becoming a great nation and giving them a land.
- God's presence with His people. He is the LORD who fights for them and whose presence with them is the key to strength and courage (e.g. 1:5, 9).
- God saving "outsiders" like Rahab and making them part of His people. He saves them from the judgement that a land that has rebelled against him deserves.
- The danger of being an "insider" and falling into sin that brings great judgement, (such as Achan in chapters 2 & 7). This backs up a major theme that God will certainly punish sinners, including those who claim to be among His own people but have turned to idolatry and refuse to worship Him.
- There are also themes of belief/unbelief; obedience/disobedience running through the book which have a contemporary application to us as we read the book.

Wiping out whole nations. . .

Some people might find it disturbing that whole nations are wiped out at the command of God using Joshua. How does this fit with the God of peace and love, especially whom we meet in Jesus? Sadly over the years a book like Joshua has been used by Christian empires and nations to justify violent holy war. However, this is a big misunderstanding. This side of the cross we need to get on board with God's salvation game plan.

God is now fulfilling His saving purposes not through a single nation living in a single land like in the Old Testament, but through a worldwide family who are trusting Jesus and are mixed into every nation under the sun. We advance this family not with violence but with faithfully telling people the gospel and enduring opposition. The picture of conquest in Joshua still stands true but the means of conquest now is quite different.

However, the violent conquest of Joshua does point beyond itself to the day when Jesus (the greater Joshua) will defeat all His enemies with greater might and power than ever we read about in the book of Joshua.

Jesus in the book of Joshua

There are several ways the book leads us to Jesus. The biggest one is that Joshua himself points us forward to Jesus. Or we could say that Jesus is a better Joshua who leads His people in spiritual battle as they head for a better rest. See Hebrews 4:8-11.

It also points us to Jesus the great conqueror who will one day crush His enemies with a war to end all wars (Revelation 17:1-20:15).

Jesus is also God with us. He is the one who gives us strength and courage to obey Him and remain faithful to him.

The story of Judges. . .

The book of Judges tells the sad story of what happened once the people started to live in the promised land of Canaan. The book records a cycle of sin that goes something like this: Israel did evil in the eyes of the LORD → Followed by a time of judgement from the LORD, normally in the form of attack from another nation → Followed by crying out to LORD for help → God would raise up a Saviour called a judge to rescue His people → The people would enjoy a time of peace → But the judge would die and sadly the cycle would start again...

The book isn't just recording a cycle but a downward spiral. The nation sinks deeper and deeper into unfaithfulness to God. The book of Judges leaves you in no doubt that the nation of Israel is in a bad place and in need of some serious help.

In the final few chapters a refrain starts to appear that captures the mess and the solution. *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."* Judges 21:25.

The book comes in three main sections:

Judges 1:1 – 3:6 Introduction to the main themes of the book

Judges 3:7 – 16:31 Main stories that follow the cycle described above.

Judges 17:1 – 21:25 Pulls together the primary themes of failure and leads to a conclusion.

Things to look out for as you read. . .

- The danger of drifting away from the LORD.
- The danger of doing what is right in our own eyes rather than God's eyes.
- The importance of telling the story of God's salvation to the next generation (2:10).
- The way God can use weak sinful people to do great things for Him.

Jesus in the book of Judges. . .

It won't surprise you to know that we can see Jesus all over the book of Judges. Here are some ways to get you going.

- Jesus is a better judge who leads His people into salvation and their full inheritance.
- Jesus is the needed king who can break the cycle of sin and oppression and lead His people in faithfulness to God.
- Jesus is the one who bore the punishment that our unfaithfulness deserves.
- Jesus is God's gracious answer to the cycle of sin our world is stuck in.

There is also a reference to the judges in the book of Hebrews that says:

They were people *"whose weakness was turned to strength;"* Hebrews 11:34.

Jesus is the Saviour whose weakness at the cross God turned into strength and win a great victory.



Here are some questions the Bible wants you to ask of itself. Use these to help you as you read your way through this month's book: (please don't feel like you have to fill in every question in loads of detail. These are a guide to help you learn from what you are reading.)

- What did you learn about Jesus and what it means to trust him? (Luke 24:45-47)
- What did you learn about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)
- How were you corrected or rebuked or equipped for every good work? (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- What did you learn from the book that will help you keep going as a follower of Jesus? (Romans 15:4)
- What did you learn that will help you serve and build up the church? (Eph 4:11-16)
- What have you learnt that helps you love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind? (Matt 22:37-40)
- What has helped you love your neighbour as yourself? (Matt 22:37-40)

Possible reading timetable:

01/05/2017	Joshua	1&2
02/05/2017	Joshua	3&4
03/05/2017	Joshua	5&6
04/05/2017	Joshua	7&8
05/05/2017	Joshua	9&10
06/05/2017	Joshua	11&12
07/05/2017	Joshua	13&14
08/05/2017	Joshua	15&16
09/05/2017	Joshua	17&18
10/05/2017	Joshua	19&20
11/05/2017	Joshua	20
12/05/2017	Joshua	21
13/05/2017	Joshua	22
14/05/2017	Joshua	23
15/05/2017	Joshua	24
16/05/2017	Judges	1&2
17/05/2017	Judges	3
18/05/2017	Judges	4&5
19/05/2017	Judges	6&7&8
20/05/2017	Judges	9
21/05/2017	Judges	10
22/05/2017	Judges	11&12
23/05/2017	Judges	13
24/05/2017	Judges	14
25/05/2017	Judges	15
26/05/2017	Judges	16
27/05/2017	Judges	17
28/05/2017	Judges	18
29/05/2017	Judges	19
30/05/2017	Judges	20
31/05/2017	Judges	21

My notes of Joshua:

My notes on Judges:



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g r o u p

RBT Grow Group is on Tuesday 23rd May

Bring along some things from your reading of Joshua & Judges to share with others.

Some RBT reading ideas:

Why not meet up once a week to read it with a friend?

Why not listen online at Biblegateway.com?