

Old Testament Foundation 3

History Part 1 - Conquering the Promised Land

Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land--from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it." And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. – Deuteronomy 34:1-7

Forty years after Israel had been taken out of Egypt, they were ready to follow Yahweh into the land of promise. Moses had been a faithful leader to the Israelites during their wilderness days, but he disobeyed the Lord when he struck the rock twice (Nu. 20) to bring forth water. Because of that disobedience, the Lord did not allow Moses to enter the land.

Moses had been a shepherd-leader to Israel, leading them in the wilderness. Now, they would need a military-leader to conquer the land. Moses' assistant Joshua was the one chosen by God to take them into the Promised Land.

Joshua – Conquest of the Land

With the book of Joshua, we come to a new section of the Old Testament called “The Books of History.” These books include Joshua through Esther. The book of Joshua is one of the most action- and adventure-filled books in the Old Testament. The phrase “be strong and very courageous” is repeated several times as the people of Israel (Israelites) prepared to take possession of the land.

“In Exodus, the Lord actively moved to fulfill the promises He had made to Abraham. He delivered Israel from Egypt. He made her into a great nation. He brought her through the desert, providing for and protecting her. He gave her military victories over Sihon and Og (Nu. 21) on the east side of the Jordan River giving concrete assurance of His ability.”¹

1. Moses, that great leader of Israel, stood before the Pharaoh of Egypt fearlessly bringing the Lord's message, “Let My people go,” until the Pharaoh finally relented. Then Moses led two million (plus) people out of slavery in Egypt and into the desert. But Moses didn't do this alone. Moses was called a “prophet” because he spoke to the Lord face to face. It was under the direction and power of Yahweh, the God of Israel, that Moses was able to accomplish God's plan. Imagine taking over after a leader like Moses! How did God reassure Joshua that he would be able to “handle the job”? Joshua 1:1-9

You may want to write the words of Joshua 1:8 & 9 in the cover of your Bible and commit them to memory. They are the Lord's words for a successful life.

"Joshua's responsibility to lead the people of Israel into Canaan, their Promised Land, was grounded in his careful obedience to God's commands and in God's faithfulness to the covenant promises."²

Entering the Land of Promise

In obedience to the Lord's instructions, Joshua led Israel into the land of Promise through a miracle of the Lord. Just as in the days of Moses, when they crossed through the Red Sea on dry ground, once again the Lord showed His power as Israel crossed the Jordan River at flood stage but on dry ground (Josh. Chapter 2). Israel entered the Promised Land on the 10th day of the 1st month and camped at a place called "Gilgal" (meaning circle).

2. From Joshua 4:20-24 what was the first thing Joshua did after entering the Promised Land?

These memorial stones are called *Massebot* or standing stones and would be placed at many different locations as time went on. The purpose of the massebot was to cause someone passing by to stop and ask, "What happened here?" In that way the story of the Lord's faithfulness to His people would be passed on from generation to generation. Israel had finally arrived in the Promised Land just as God had promised Abraham, but there was a slight problem. The Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites already occupied the land! Did Israel have enough faith in Yahweh their God to be obedient to the covenant? Or would they believe Yahweh's power was limited to the desert?

3. From Joshua 5:1-9:
 - What had Israel not done during the wilderness years that the Lord commanded they now do?
 - How did the Lord protect them during the recovery time?
 - Why do you think this was an important first step?
4. Then, on the evening of the 14th day, what did Israel do? (Joshua 5:10)

Land of Inheritance

Prior to crossing the Jordan, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and ½ of Manasseh (Nu. 32:33) had received their land inheritance on the east (or trans-Jordan) side. In Numbers 34:13; Moses gave instructions that the rest of the land was to be divided between the 9½ remaining tribes by “lot.” The High Priest (Aaron) carried two stones in a pocket on the back of the breastplate. It is believed these stones would be cast or thrown in the presence of the Lord. The Lord would direct the lay of the stones to reveal a “yes” or “no” answer. In this way, all the tribes received a land inheritance prior to entering the land.

5. The bulk of the conquest took place in three military campaigns. Joshua first took the center of the land with the city of Jericho their first military victory. What did the Lord say Israel was to do with Jericho? (Josh. 6:17-25)

By giving back to the Lord the first city they conquered, they were expressing their faith in His promise that He would also give them the rest of the land.

6. After their second victory at Ai, what did Joshua do? (Josh. 8:30-35)
7. Following the covenant renewal, Joshua continued with a southern and finally a northern campaign. Once the major cities of each section were taken, each tribe was on its own to conquer the rest of its allotted territory. Every tribe was given an inheritance except the tribe of Levi. Why were they not given a land inheritance? (Joshua 13:32, 33)
8. Without the tribe of Levi, there would be only 11 tribes. In order to keep the count at 12, the tribe name of Joseph was also removed, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh replaced Levi and Joseph. Who were Ephraim and Manasseh and why were they chosen to be included in the tribes of Israel? (Gen. 48:1-5)

9. “After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years, summoned all Israel.” Joshua 23:1. As the last act of an obedient life, Joshua called upon the people of Israel to renew the covenant one more time with the LORD God of Israel. After reminding them of all the Lord had done for them (Josh. 24:1-13), he challenged them to “fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness.” What did he say they must do? (Josh. 24:14)
10. What challenge does Joshua give to the people in Verse 15?
11. What was their answer? (Josh. 24:16-18)
12. Then “Joshua said to the people, ‘You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after He has been good to you.’” Josh 24:19, 20. Joshua was reminding them they must serve the LORD God of Israel alone; there could be no compromise. How did they answer his second challenge? (Josh. 24:21)
13. “Then Joshua said, ‘You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.’ ‘Yes, we are witnesses,’ they replied.” What other instructions did Joshua give the people? Please comment. (Josh. 24:23)
14. What did the people say this time? (Josh. 24:24)
15. How many times had they vowed to follow the Lord? (Josh. 24:16, 21 & 24)

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God." Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance. After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a

hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel. – Josh. 24:25-31

The Importance of the Promised Land

“Israel was a land that was dependant upon God. Unlike Mesopotamia and Egypt, where annual flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Mesopotamia) and the Nile (Egypt) all but guaranteed fertile soil and adequate irrigation, Israel depended on storms and rainfall for the fertility of its soil and the crops that would provide food from year to year. Therefore, God’s people had to learn to trust Him for their survival (Deut. 11:8-21). God promised His blessing or judgment upon the land based on the people’s obedience. If they obeyed Him, He would bless them by sending rain and abundance to the land; but if they disobeyed Him, He would discipline them by withholding the rain, allowing them to experience hardship, or even allowing their enemies to harm them.

“Israel is important not only for *what* it is – a land dependent upon God, which teaches faith – but also for *where* it is – on the crossroads of the world where the civilizations of that time passed through because there was no other route. God put His people in a public place so that the world would come to know them, and through them, it would come to know God as well. God intended that world to know who He was based on how His people lived. Isaiah 43:12 says, ‘*You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, that I am God.*’ This tells us that God’s people must conduct themselves in such a way that through them ‘*the world may know that I am God.*’

1 Kings 8:60”³

Judges

With the death of Joshua and the separation of the 12 tribes throughout the land, there was no longer any centralized leadership. Each tribe and each family was now responsible to take possession of their inheritance.

16. When the people promised to follow Yahweh alone, He promised if they obeyed, He would go before them and give them the land. What else had He commanded Israel to do? (Nu. 33:51-56)

17. What was the first sign of a problem in Judges 1:28?

18. Economics soon took higher priority over obedience to the Lord. But to the Lord, partial obedience is disobedience. The Book of Judges is arranged according to the cyclical nature of Israel's obedience to God in the process of their gradual expansion in the land. What was the first part of that cycle? (Judges 2:10-13)

Describe cycle 1 in one word _____

19. What was the second part of the cycle? (Judges 2:14, 15)

Describe cycle 2 in one word _____

20. What was the third part of the cycle? (Judges 3:9 & 15)

Describe cycle 3 in one word _____

21. And finally how was the 4th part of the cycle recorded? (Judges 3:11a)

Describe cycle 4 in one word _____

Joshua 2:19-23 explains what was happening. *“But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They followed other gods, worshipping and bowing down to them. And they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. So the LORD burned with anger against Israel. He said, “Because these people have violated the covenant I made with their ancestors and have ignored my commands, I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died.”*

22. Why did the Lord say He didn't give them all the land upon first entering? (Judges 2:21 & 22)
23. In the period between Joshua and David, the word “judge” is best defined as a military deliverer. These judges, for the most part, were local, dealing only with a small area or a few tribes at most. They were not a “leader” of Israel as Moses and Joshua had been. How does Judges 21:25 sum up this period of Israel's history?

Ruth

After reading of Israel's unfaithfulness, we get to a refreshing story that took place during this time of the judges. The book of Ruth is about life with the common people of Israel. It is a story of a young Moabite woman named Ruth who became widowed early but through the teaching of her mother-in-law, Naomi, put her faith in the God of Israel. The book tells how Yahweh blessed this foreigner because of her faith in Him. The Lord provided Ruth with a kinsman redeemer in a man named Boaz. The role of a kinsman redeemer was to redeem (buy back) the paternal estate that his near relative sold because of poverty. In the case of Ruth, since there was no son to carry on the paternal name, the role also was to raise up an heir that would carry on the name of the deceased father. The book ends with these words: *"Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David."* Ruth 4:21 & 22.

24. In the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 1 gives the genealogy from Abraham to Jesus Christ. What historical marker is mentioned in Matthew 1:17? Please comment.

25. In that genealogy, what "mothers" are listed? (Matthew 1:1-16)

26. Why do you think they were included among the "fathers"? (Refer also to: Genesis 38:1 – 26; Joshua 2:1-15 & 6:25; Ruth 1:15-18 and Luke 1:26-38)

Bibliography

- ¹ Albert H. Baylis, *From Creation To The Cross* (Zondervan, 1996), Pg. 166
- ² *Shepherd's Notes, Joshua, Judges* (Broadman & Holman, 1998), Pg. 10
- ³ Ray Vander Laan, *That the World May Know Leader's Guide 1* (Focus on the Family, 1995), Pg. 10, 11