

## Joshua: Possessing what God has promised

It is often said that the Christian life is a journey, marked out by events and circumstances that bring with them enjoyment, sadness, success, failure, laughter and sorrow. However, the Christian does not make his or her way through life alone, nor in a random fate determined progression that avoids some pitfalls but falls foul of others. Rather the Christian walks with God, he leads us to and then into His promise and His blessing. For our part we must learn to walk in obedience to His Word, and in confidence that whatever we face the Victory is ours in Christ. These truths are not just for individual Christian's but are also true of the church the body of Christ. As we the church at Bellevue Chapel look forward with anticipation at the prospects of additional accommodation and settling into the promises of God, what might His Word have to say to us.

The book of Joshua is a very helpful place to begin. Some may remember from Sunday School the central character and his victory culminating in the walls of Jericho crumbling to dust. Whilst the book certainly has many battles and wars recorded within it, it is also a book full of examples of how God will lead His people through challenges into the blessings of His promises. The book's main figure gives it its title. *Joshua* means "Yahweh saves,"<sup>1</sup> an appropriate name for the man who in succession to Moses led Israel, under God's command, to victorious conquest of the land promised to Abraham.

It is the first of the 12 historical books of the Old Testament. The events of the book cover about twenty-five years, starting soon after the death of Moses ([Joshua 1:1](#)) around 1406 BC, before the conquest commenced. The conquest of Canaan took about seven years, and Joshua's final address and subsequent death came almost twenty years later. The book begins with the nation of Israel poised at the banks of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. It records the details of numerous military campaigns that defeated the inhabitants of the land. The book ends with Joshua gathering the nation together for his final exhortation. This history was written to these victorious Israelites who had settled the land. Though they were newly established as conquerors, Joshua reminded them that the conquest was incomplete: "much of the land remains to be possessed" (13:1). Perhaps a timely reminder to us of the challenge of outreach that remains.

Joshua is in many senses a difficult story full of contradictions, full of what seem at first reading to lend support for genocide and also considerable detail given on how the land is parcelled out. This is a story of God promising, but the people failing to fully appreciate and accept the promise and to possess the land completely, allowing some inhabitants to remain. God fulfilled His side of the bargain, but the Israelites did not finish the job. The Canaanite peoples became a damaging influence on Israel as years went by.

Our short series picks up some of the key incidents, at its heart lies this great theme that God has given His people which includes His people today His very best. However to really benefit from God's gifts requires of us courage and a commitment to His Word of promise. We will meet Rahab a non Jew, a prostitute whose grasp of God must have been slim and yet she was given great faith that will surprise us. We will walk with the people as they cross the river, marking these initial steps into blessing, wonder again at God's power to demolish strongholds, perhaps we need to remember the note of victory still sounds.

But there is also failure, Achan's sin in chapter 7 strikes at the heart of our own selfishness; "I saw, I wanted I took and I hid them" However God's plan and His will cannot be thwarted and the people move on in faith and see Him at work until finally, we hear the big challenge to our modern hearts where there is real competition for our worship "Choose this day whom you will serve" Our answer may well require us to remove something from our hearts and lives that has usurped God's position so that our heart can be orientated only to God.



# Map 3 THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

- ▲ Philistine cities
- Cities of refuge
- (1,742) Elevation, in feet
- ? Exact location questionable

0 10 20  
Scale of Miles



4. In a northern thrust, Joshua moved from Gilgal all the way to Hazor (Josh. 11).

2. Joshua made peace with Gibeon, then moved through the Valley of Aijalon and defeated the five Amorite kings (Josh. 9-10).

1. Upon crossing the Jordan, Joshua camped awhile at Gilgal, then moved to take Jericho and Ai. Afterward he returned to Gilgal (Josh. 1-8).

3. From Makkedah, Joshua launched a southern campaign against Lachish, Hebron, Debir, and Gaza. Victorious, he returned to Gilgal (Josh. 10).