

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 16
Joshua 1-12

Key Concepts: The key concept in this section is that God will fulfill God's covenantal promise to give the land to the people of Israel. These 12 chapters tell the entire story of the conquest.

Stories: The stories include God commanding Joshua to conquer the land that God had promised to the people (1:1-17), Joshua's speech to the tribes (1:10-18), the story of the spies and Rahab (2), the amazing crossing of the flooded Jordan (3), the creation of the eternal monument remembering the crossing (4), the renewal of the covenant through circumcision at Gilgal (5), the conquest of Jericho (6), the results of disobedience in terms of devoted items (7), the defeat of Ai (8), the cleverness of the Gibeonites (9), the victory over five kings and the southern conquest (10), the northern conquest (11), and a summary of all of the victories (12).

Brief Summary: we will look at several themes that run through these first twelve chapters.

The first critical theme is the role of Joshua. Carefully look for those moments when Joshua becomes the new Moses. These moments include God speaking directly to Joshua, Joshua standing on Holy Ground and Joshua's holding his javelin above his head until victory is achieved. While all of these events demonstrate that Joshua is a "second Moses" in terms of leading his people we will also discover that he is not a lawgiver. Instead his power comes from being obedient to the Law (or Book) of Moses. The law is now set and everyone, including Joshua must follow it.

The second critical theme is that God is power behind (or in front of) the people during the conquest. Throughout this section we will witness God telling Joshua that it is God who will give the nations into the hands of Israel. We see this most clearly in the Jericho story. All the people have to do is obey God by marching and blowing trumpets in order to gain victory. In some ways this is a cautionary tale for Israel. It is a reminder that none of the blessings they have received (freedom, offspring or the land) has been, or ever will be, brought about by their own power or perfection. The response of Israel is to be absolute faithfulness to God.

The third critical theme is that of the utter destruction of all foreigners in the land. For many of us in the 21st century this is the most difficult part of the story. It is so difficult in fact that many people do not want to read or think about these first twelve chapters. There are several things to keep in mind as we read these accounts. First, we have to remember that these stories are more theological than historical in nature. The theology is that that land was to be given to the people of Israel and could not be shared and that if Israel were to be a people living by Torah (loving God and neighbor) then those who would not live this way must be destroyed. However both archeological evidence, and scripture itself, make it clear that at the time of the conquest there was no wholesale destruction of cities and peoples. Thus the violence about which we read is not necessarily historical fact but reflection on the importance of Israel being a people set apart.

The fourth critical theme is that of remembering. Once again (Exodus 12:26; Deuteronomy 6:2) the people are to remember an event (the crossing of the Jordan) in order to be able to recount it to their children.

1. How are we as people of God supposed to be different from the world around us? How do we do that?
2. Where do you see God working to help you in your life in the same way God helped Israel.
3. How do you communicate the stories of God's faithfulness to the next generation?