

BWCC-UNIVERSITY READING OUTLINE-FEBRUARY-2023

BOOK: Joshua

WRITER: Joshua (Joshua 24:26)

HISTORY: Joshua the son of Nun had been born Hoshea (Num. 13:8) but was renamed by Moses (Num. 13:16). His long years of service served him well as Moses field commander (Exo. 17:9-16) and personal aide (Exo. 24:13) had prepared him well for his succession to Moses his master. Joshua had served well (Exo.24:13, Num. 14:6-10, 27:15-23), and as one who was full of the Holy Spirit (Num. 27:18; Deut34:9), was God's choice to:

- Succeed Moses, (Num. 34:17, Deut. 1:38, 3:28, 31:7, 34:9),
- To conquer the land (Deut. 3:21, 31:7),
- And to see to its proper apportionment (Num. 34:17).

He who would lead well must learn how to serve well (1 Kings 19:21).

KEY WORD: Possession

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: Completes Redemption out of Egypt. Salvation is not only a redemption from hell, but it is a redemption to heaven.

TRANSITION: Up to this point Jehovah had spoken by dreams, visions, or by angelic ministry. Now a new method was introduced. The Law of Moses is the written voice of Jehovah (Joshua 1:8).

KEY VERSE: ³ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses (Joshua 1:3).

OUTLINE:

I. The land entered Chapters 1 -- 12

- A. Commission and command of Joshua, chap. 1
- B. Contact of spies with Rahab, chap. 2
- C. Crossing the Jordan river, chap. 3
- D. Construction of two memorials, chap. 4
- E. Conditioned for conquest, chap. 5
- F. Center of land attacked, chap. 6 -- 8
 1. Conquest of Jericho, chap. 6
 2. Conquest of Ai, chap. 7 & 8
- G. Campaign in the south, chap. 9 -- 10
 1. Compact with the Gibeonites, chap. 9
 2. Conquer 5 kings of Amorites (miracle of sun), chap. 10
- H. Campaign in the north, (conclusion of Joshua's leadership in war), chap. 11
- I. Conquered kings listed, chap. 12

II. The land divided, chapters 13 – 22

- A. Command of Joshua is terminated, confirmation of land to the 2 ½ tribes, chap. 12
- B. Caleb given Hebron, chap. 14
- C. Consignment of land to the children of Israel, 15 – 19
- D. Cities of refuge, chap. 20
- E. Cities of Levities, chap. 21
- F. Command to the 2 ½ tribes to return home; construction of altar as a witness, chap. 22

III. The Last message of Joshua, chap. 23-24

- A. Call to leaders of Israel for courage and certainty, chap. 23
- B. Call to all tribes of Israel for consecration and consideration of covenant with God; death of Joshua, chap. 24.

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BOOK: **Judges**

WRITER: Unknown (probably written by Samuel) and comes from the period of the monarchy, judging by the phrase, “In those days there was no king in Israel” which occurs 4 times (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25).

KEY WORD/S: “Defeat and Deliverance”

HISTORY: A Philosophy of History, righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14:34). Defeat and deliverance are unusually appropriate however, there’s another aspect which this book emphasizes and that is disappointment. The children of Israel entered the Land of Promise with high hopes and exuberant expectation. You would expect these people who were delivered out of Egypt, led through the wilderness, and brought into the land with such demonstration of God’s power and direction to attain a high level and victory in the land. Such was not the case. They failed dishonorably and suffered miserable defeat after defeat. God raised up judges to deliver His people when they apostatized and cried to Him in their misery. The book takes its name from the men that God had raised up.

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: It serves a two-fold purpose:

1. **Historically** it records the history of the nation from the death of Joshua to Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. It bridges the gap between Joshua and the rise of the monarchy. There was no leader to take Joshua’s place in the way he had taken Moses’ place. This was the trial period of theocracy after they entered the land.
2. **Morally** it is the time of the deep declension of the people as they turned from the Unseen Leader and descended to the low level of “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; also compare Judges 1:1 with 20:18). This should have been an era of glowing progress, but it was a dark day of repeated failure.

KEY VERSE: ²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25).

OUTLINE:

- I. **Introduction to era of judges**, Chapters 1, 2
 - A. Condition of nation after death of Joshua (revealed in limited victories of the tribes of ¹Judah, ²Simeon, ³Benjamin, ⁴Manasseh, ⁵Ephraim, ⁶Zebulun, ⁷Asher, ⁸Naphtali, ⁹Dan) chap. 1
 - B. God feeds into the computer of Israel’s history cycle in this period of the judges, chap. 2
- II. **Era of the judges**, Chapters 3 – 16
 1. 1st Apostacy; conquered by Mesopotamia, delivered through Othniel, the judge, chap. 3:1-11
 2. 2nd Apostacy; conquered by Moabites and Philistines; delivered through Ehud and Shamgar the judges, chap. 3:12-31
 3. 3rd Apostacy; conquered by Jabin, king of Canaan; delivered through Deborah and Barak, the judges; chap. 4:1 – 5:31.
 4. 4th Apostacy; conquered by Midian; delivered through Gideon, the judge, chap. 6:1 – 8:32
 5. 5th Apostacy; civil war; delivered through Abimelech, Tola, Jair; the judges, chap. 8:33 – 10:5
 6. 6th Apostacy; conquered by Philistines and Ammonites; delivered through Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, the judges chap. 10:6 – 12:15
 7. 7th Apostacy; conquered by the Philistines; delivered partially through Samson, the judge, chap. 13 – 16
- III. **Results of the era of the judges (confusion)**, chap. 17 -- 21
 - I. Religious apostacy (the temple), chap. 17, 18
 - II. Moral awfulness (the home), chap. 19
 - III. Political anarchy (the state), chap. 20, 21.

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BOOK: Ruth

WRITER: Samuel could have been the writer.

HISTORY: This book derives its name from its principal character. The biographical sketch of this godly young Moabitess contains much information concerning the customs of the ancient Near East and provides valuable data regarding the ancestry of King David. It also demonstrates God's gracious concern for all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike. The book was read at the Feast of Pentecost. Historical setting at the time of the judges, at a time of great famine, occurring in the days of the Midianites oppression (Judges 6:3-6).

KEY WORD/S: Love of both Jew and Gentile

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: (1) Historically, the author provides information as to certain activities and customs in the period of the judges. (2) Theologically, the book emphasizes the sovereign activity of God's providential working in the affairs of men. (3) Devotionally, the book provides several analogies between the work of the kinsman-redeemer of ancient Israel and that of Jesus Christ, who serves as the saving Mediator for all men. It also assures the believer of God's continuing love for a helpless mankind and His willingness to meet man's needs. The book also gives instruction in practical living in such things as;

- Personal morality
- A genuine concern for the needs of others,
- and the necessity for personal godliness in the face of testing and adversity.

For today's Christian woman Ruth's example of godliness, purity, humility, honesty, fidelity, and thoughtfulness remain an exemplary standard for all.

Similarly, Boaz becomes for the Christian man a model of God-given strength, honor, graciousness, courtesy, and compassion that can give encouragement for becoming a believing gentleman in the finest sense of the word.

KEY VERSE: ¹⁸ Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day (Ruth 3:18).

OUTLINE:

- I. In the land of Moab, Chapter 1**
- II. In the field of Boaz, Chapter, 2**
- III. On the threshing floor of Boaz, Chapter, 3**
- IV. In the heart and home of Boaz, Chapter, 4**

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BOOK: **Ezra**

WRITER: Ezra

HISTORY: The setting of Ezra is the postexilic era, when the faithful Israelites were returning from Babylon to Judah, so they could reestablish their temple worship. The temple and temple worship are vital subjects in all of the books written during the postexilic period. (1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi)). The people who returned to the Land of Promise were publicly acknowledging that they believed God would reestablish the nation and usher in a time of kingdom blessing. Through the work of Ezra and Nehemiah Israel's new identity centered on the law and the temple. At this crucial time in the nation's history, God's redemptive acts forced Israel to focus on the form and content of religious life and practice. Thus, in exile, Israel became more faithful to God's law than ever before.

KEY WORDS: "Trembled at the words of the God of Israel" (Ezra 9:4; 10:3).

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: Ezra has not received proper recognition. He was a descendent of Hilkiyah, the high priest (Ezra 7:1), who found a copy of the law during the reign of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:14). Ezra as a priest, was unable to serve during the captivity, but he gave his time to a study of the Word of God --- he was 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses' (Ezra 7:6). Ezra was a great revivalist and reformer. The revival began with the reading of the word of God by Ezra (Nehemiah 8). He probably was the writer of 1 and 2 Chronicles, and of Psalms 119 which exalts the Word of God. He organized the synagogue, founded the order of the scribes, helped settled the canon of Scripture and arranged the Psalms.

KEY VERSE: The Books of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1) should be read and studied with the book of Ezra, for all 3 were written in the shadow of the rebuilt temple and were given to encourage the people in building.

OUTLINE:

1. **RETURN from BABYLON by ZERRUBBABEL**, Chapters 1 -- 6 (*about 50,000 returned*).
 - A. **Restoration of the temple by decree of Cyrus**, chap. 1
 - B. **Return under Zerubbabel**, chap. 2
 - C. **Rebuilding of temple**, chap. 3
 - D. **Retardation of rebuilding of the temple by opposition**, chap. 4
 - E. **Renewal of rebuilding of the temple** (decree of Darius), chap. 5, 6,

2. **RETURN from BABYLON LED by EZRA**, chap. 7 – 10 (*about 200 returned*)
 - A. **Return** under Ezra, chap. 7, 8
 - B. **Reformation** under Ezra, 9, 10
 1. **Prayer of Ezra**, chap. 9
 2. **Separation from heathen is demanded and maintained**, chap. 10

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BOOK: **Nehemiah**

WRITER: Most Bible expositors agree that Nehemiah wrote the book that bears his name. Much of the book is a first-person account of the circumstances surrounding his return to Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7; 12:31-13:31).

HISTORY: The Elephantine Papyri, discovered in A.D. 1903, confirm the historicity of the Book of Nehemiah, mentioning Sanballat (2:19) and Johanan (6:18; 12:23). While Ezra accomplished the spiritual establishment of the new community, Nehemiah succeeded in giving it physical stability. When Nehemiah was in high position of cupbearer to the king, he learned that the community in Judah was in “great affliction and reproach” (1:3). Thus, he succeeded in having himself appointed governor in Judah with authority and resources to rebuild the city walls.

He was a man of skill and daring. He first surveyed the walls at night, to avoid detection by those who might oppose the work. Then he assembled a labor force and, dividing the walls into sections, he supervised the building process. The project was completed in remarkably short time of 52 days. During this endeavor he faced determined opposition:

- Mockery (2:19; 4:1-3)
- Armed raids 4:7-12)
- A ruse to draw to draw him outside the city, without doubt to murder him (6:1-4).
- Blackmail (6:5-9);
- And finally, a prophet hired to foretell his death.

In every case he met the challenge with courage, wisdom, and an invincible determination to complete the task for which God had called him.

KEY WORD: “So” occurs 32 times. It denotes a man of action and few words.

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: This book reveals what God can do through a layman who has a heart for the things of God.

KEY VERSES: And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven (Nehemiah 1:4). And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? (Nehemiah 6:3).

OUTLINE:

I. **REBUILDING THE WALLS**, chapters, 1 – 7

- A. **Nehemiah’s Prayer** for remnant at Jerusalem, chap. 1
- B. **Nehemiah’s Request** of the king, **Return** to Jerusalem, and **Review** of ruins of Jerusalem, chap. 2:1-16
- C. **Nehemiah’s Encouragement** to rebuild the walls, chap. 2:17-20
- D. **Rebuilding** the walls and gates, chap. 3
- E. **Nehemiah’s Response** to opposition, chaps. 4 – 6; Wall completed, chap. 6:15
- F. **Nehemiah’s Register** of people, chap. 7 (Only 42,360 people, 7,337 servants and 245 singers returned. Compare this with the fact that Judah alone had 470,000 warriors).

II. **REVIVAL and REFORM**, chaps. 8 – 13

- A. **Great Bible Reading** is essential to revival, led by Ezra, 8 (The method of reading the word of God & then explaining so that the people can understand it is still used today). Ezra instructs the teachers in the law and the Feast of Tabernacles is observed).
- B. **Revival** --- the result, 9, 10
- C. **Reform** --- another result, 11 – 13

TRANSITION: The Babylonian Captivity

God’s chosen people were called to witness against idolatry, but too often they themselves succumbed and became idolaters. God sent them to Babylon, the fountainhead of idolatry, to take the gold cure. They returned repudiating idolatry. Their restoration was incomplete. They were not free from this on to the time of the Roman Empire. The New Testament opens with them under the rule of Rome.

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BOOK: Esther

This is one of the two books of the Old Testament named for a woman. While Ruth is the story of a Gentile who married a Jew, Esther is the story of a Jewess who married a Gentile.

WRITER: Unknown. Could it had been Mordecai (see Esther 9:20, 29, 32, 10:2).

HISTORY: The events of the book cover a 10-year portion (483-473 B.C.) of the reign of Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.), Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of his name. The events occurred between those recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra. God's name is not mentioned in this book; no divine title or pronoun refers to Him. The heathen king's name is mentioned 192 times. (It is also true that God's name does not occur in the Song of Solomon, but every masculine pronoun – with the exception of 8:6 – refers to Him). Esther is the record of Israel in a self-chosen pathway. Opportunity had been given for the Jews to return under Cyrus, but only a very small remnant returned. Ezra and Nehemiah give the story of those who did return; Esther gives the story of those who did not return but who chose instead the prosperity and luxury of Persia. They are out of the will of God, but they are not beyond His care. Deuteronomy 31:18; *and I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods*, explains the reason God's name does not appear. In the book of Esther his face is hidden. There's no mention of prayer nor dependence upon God in this book. Esther is never quoted in the New Testament, nor is there even a casual reference to it. However, the Jews give it a peculiar emphasis. It is one of the five books called *Megilloth* (rolls) and is placed beside the Pentateuch in importance.

KEY WORD: Providence

PURPOSE/MESSAGE: The Book of Esther is a remarkably different biblical book because;

- (1) neither the word for God nor the name *Yahweh* (Lord) occurs in the Hebrew text;
- (2) the scene is Shushan (Susa), the winter capital of Persia not Israel (*Persia today is known as Iran*).
- (3) the book concerns the marriage of the Jewish heroine with a Gentile king;
- (4) and it solves the problem of an incipient anti-Semitism by a bloody self-defense, which is even repeated on the following day by Esther's request!

KEY VERSE: For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14)

TRANSITION: Esther teaches the providence of God. "Providence" comes from the stem as "provide," and it means simply that God will provide. *Theologically*, providence is the direction God gives to everything: animate and inanimate, good and evil. *Practically*, providence is the hand of God in the glove of history – and that glove will never move until He moves it. God is at the steering of the universe and that God is behind the scenes, shifting and directing them. It is the way God leads those who will not be lead. As recorded in the book of Esther, the entire Jewish nation would have been slain had it not been for the providence of God. God stands in the shadows keeping watch over His own.

OUTLINE:

- **The wife who refused to obey** her husband, chapter, 1
- The **beauty contest** to choose a real queen, chap. 2
- **Haman and anti-Semitism**, chap. 3
- **For such a time as this**, chap. 4
- The **scepter of grace** and the nobility of Esther, chap. 5
- When a **king could not sleep** at night, chap. 6
- The **man who came to dinner** but died on the gallows, chap. 7
- The **message of hope** that went out from the king, chap. 8
- The institution of the **Feast of Purim**, chap. 9, 10.