

Joshua

The Author

Although the book is anonymous,¹ internal evidence points to Joshua as the main composer if not sole (18:9; 24:6). However, there is evidence that suggest a secondary author. The book records the death of Joshua (24:29-30). The book makes statements such as “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel” (24:31). The book also records the “migration of a portion of the Danite tribe to the extreme north of Israel (19:47; cf. Judg. 18:27-29).”² Also the phrase “to this day” (4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28, 29; 9:27; 13:13; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10) suggests writing activity beyond Joshua’s time. While several authors have been promoted, including Eleazar, Phinehas and Samuel, Cambell claims that several facts must be remembered.³ Wilmington argues that “to this day” doesn’t necessarily mean an extended period of time as indicated by the book’s description of Rahab in 6:25.⁴ The book’s mention of Jebusites in Jerusalem (15:63) as well as Canaanites in Gezer (16:10) suggests a writing prior to 1000 and 970 B.C. respectively as both of these people groups were conquered at these times.⁵ Tradition claims Joshua as the book’s author. It seems best to conclude that Joshua wrote the main body of the book while an anonymous writer, though not too distant in time, completed the book.

The Recipients

Although immediately addressed to an early generation of Israelites, the book’s themes have an intentional impact for generations. The exhortation to faith as well as the record of land partition provides information intended for many generations. This become especially true when one considers the anticipation of continued rule (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-18; Deut. 28).

The Place and Date

The book was written around 1400 BC. Israel left Egypt in 1446 BC and wondered around in the desert for forty years. In 1406 BC Joshua led the 2nd generation believers into the Promised Land. Some five years later, 45 years after the children left Egypt, Caleb indicated that the land had been

¹ M. H. Woudstra, "The Book of Joshua," in *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1981). 5.

² Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 287.

³ “Any discussion of authorship should keep the following matters in mind: (1) An eyewitness wrote many parts of the book (cf. the “we“ and “us“ references in 5:1, 6; and the vivid descriptions of the sending of the spies, the crossing of the Jordan, the capture of Jericho, the battle of Ai, etc.). (2) An early authorship is required by internal evidence (Rahab was alive at the time of writing [6:25]; the Jebusites still inhabited Jerusalem [15:63]; Canaanite cities are mentioned by archaic names, such as Baalah for Kiriath Jearim and Kiriath Arba for Hebron [15:9, 13]; Tyre had not yet conquered Sidon which it did in the 12th century [13:4-6]; the Philistines were not a national menace to Israel as they became after their invasion about 1200 B.C.). (3) Joshua had written parts of the book (cf. 8:32; 24:26). (4) Other parts of the book were clearly written after Joshua’s death (cf. 24:29-30—the record of his death; 15:13-14—Caleb’s conquest of Hebron [also recorded in Jud. 1:1, 10, 20]; Josh. 15:15-19—Othniel’s conquest of Debir [also recorded in Jud. 1:11-15]; Josh. 19:47—the Danites’ conquest of Leshem [also recorded in Jud. 17-18]). In light of these factors many evangelical scholars ascribe the book to Joshua himself as the main author with minor additions made by Eleazar the high priest and his son Phinehas.” Donald K. Cambell, "Joshua," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. Roy B. Zuck John F. Walvoord(1983). 325.

⁴H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook*(Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997).

⁵ Bill T. & Bryan T. Beyer Arnold, *Encountering the Old Testament*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). 169.

conquered (14:10-12). Therefore it can be estimated that the book was written between 1401-1399 providing a couple of years for its inscription.

Other evidence helps to build the conclusion of a 1400 B.C. date. For example the naming of the Canaanite cities (15:9, 49, 15:13) and the characterization of Sidon as a Phoenecian city indicate a dating prior to the 12th century B.C.⁶ Archer indicates that discoveries at Armana indicate a Hebrew invasion while discoveries at Mari and Nuzi indicate possible Hebrew existence before the 2nd Millennium B.C.⁷

The Purpose

Joshua wrote the book as a historical account demonstrating God's faithfulness to his covenant.⁸ God's words of promise and challenge to Joshua in the beginning of the book (1:8) would have most likely been penned after the conquest of Canaan. His charge in 24:14-15 provided a similar challenge to Israel as Joshua's death drew near. Joshua wrote the book in order to record God's faithfulness to His covenant promises (Genesis 12:1-3; Deut 28) as well as provide a solemn charge to Israel's continued line. The book provides a fitting conclusion to the story line found in the Penteteuch.⁹

The Message

The message of Joshua centers on God's faithfulness to give Israel the land through covenant. God promised to give Canaan to the Hebrew nation (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 26:3,4; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4-22; 50:24). He renewed that promise when he delivered Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12; Num. 13:2). After the previous generation's failure to obtain the land God renewed his promised with Israel (Deut 28-30). God then encouraged Joshua to remember the Covenant (1:8) and possess the land. Once Israel crossed Jordan (1:1-5:12) Israel conquered the Central, southern and Northern areas of Canaan (5:13-12:24) and divided the land according to their inheritance (13:1-21:43). In the closing chapters Israel set memorial stones marking their victory under the Lord as Joshua gave his final charge to the victorious nation (22:1-24:33).

The Theme

Possession through Faith-filled Obedience

⁶ "In 1887 an accidental discovery led to the unearthing of an entire file of ancient diplomatic correspondence at the site of the ancient Akhetaton (Tell 3l-Amarna), the newly build capital of King Amenhotep IV (Akhnaton). These letters were written on clay tablets in Babylonian cuneiform In 1890... H. Zimmern categorically affirmed that in the Amarna correspondence we have nothing less than a contemporary record of the Hebrew invasion of Canaan... Later discoveries at Mari and Nuzi, as well as at Babylon, revealed the fact that Habiru figured in the history of Mesopotamian valley as early as the beginning of the second millennium B.C...Identification of the Habiru with the Hebrews is tempting. However, it is impossible to interpret most references to the habiru as indicating the Hebrews. Moreover, the Habiru are described as warriors, mercenaries, marauders, and caravaners all over the ancient Near East—which does not fit the biblical picture of the Hebrews." Archer. 286-90.

⁷ David Allan Hubbard William Sanford LaSor, Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Second ed.(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). 147.

⁸ Cambell. 358.

⁹ David M. Howard Jr, "Joshua," in *New American Commentary*(Nashville: Broadman, 1998). 30.

Outline of Joshua

I. The Crossing 1:1-5:12

- A. Israel Charged to Invade 1:1-18
 - 1. Yahweh's Charge to Joshua 1:1-9
 - 2. Joshua's Charge to Officers 1:10-11
 - 3. Joshua's Charge to Transjordan Tribes 1:12-18
- B. Israel Spies Canaan 2:1-24
 - 1. Rahab Protects Israel's Spies 2:1-7
 - 2. Rahab Asks for Spies Favor 2:8-14
 - 3. Spies Establish Compact with Rahab 2:15-21
 - 4. Spies Report to Joshua 2:22-24
- C. Israel Enters Canaan 3:1-5:12
 - 1. Israel Prepares to Cross Jordan 3:1-6
 - 2. Joshua's Announcement to Cross Jordan 3:7-13
 - 3. Israel Crosses Jordan 3:14-17
 - 4. Joshua's Charge Concerning Memorial Stones 4:1-7
 - 5. Israel Places Memorial Stones 4:8-14
 - 6. Priest Exit Jordan 4:15-18
 - 7. Joshua Sets Memorial Stones at Gilgal 4:19-24
 - 8. Male Israelites Circumcised in Land 5:1-9
 - 9. Israel's First Passover in Land 5:10-12

II. The Conquest 5:13-12:24

- A. Central Campaign 5:13-8:35
 - 1. Captain of Hosts Appears to Joshua 5:13-15
 - 2. Yahweh's Instructions for Conquering Jericho 6:1-5
 - 3. Israel's First Silent March Around Jericho 6:6-11
 - 4. Israel's Second Silent March Around Jericho 6:12-14
 - 5. Israel Destroys Jericho 6:15-21
 - 6. Israel Spares Rahab and Family 6:22-25
 - 7. Joshua's Curse on Jericho 6:26-27
 - 8. Achan takes Forbidden Spoil 7:1
 - 9. Israel's Defeat at Ai 7:1-5
 - 10. Joshua and Elder's Complaint 7:6-9
 - 11. Yahweh Reveals Israel's Sin 7:10-15
 - 12. Achan's Confession of Sin 7:16-21
 - 13. Israel Stones Achan 7:22-26
 - 14. Yahweh Reassures Joshua of Victory 8:1-2
 - 15. Joshua Prepares Warriors for Battle 8:3-9
 - 16. Joshua's Deception at Ai 8:10-17
 - 17. Joshua Captures and Burns Ai 8:18-23
 - 18. Israel's Plunder of Ai 8:24-29
 - 19. Israel Reads Law on Mountain 8:30-35
- B. Trickery of Gibeonites 9:1-27
 - 1. Canaanites Unites Against Israel 9:1-2
 - 2. Gibeonites Deceive Israel's Leaders 9:3-15

3. Israel Grumbles Against Leadership 9:16-21
4. Gibeonites Become Slaves 9:22-27
- C. Southern Campaign 10:1-43
 1. Five Kings Contract Against Gibeon 10:1-5
 2. Yahweh Fights for Israel 10:6-11
 3. Joshua's Prayer to Stop Sun 10:12-14
 4. Kings Cages in Cave 10:15-21
 5. Kings Hung and Buried 10:22-27
 6. Israel's victory at Makkedah 10:28
 7. Israel's Victory at Libnah 10:29-30
 8. Israel's Victory at Lachish 10:31-33
 9. Israel's Victory at Eglon 10:34-35
 10. Israel's Victory at Hebron 10:36-37
 11. Israel's Victory at Debir 10:38-39
 12. Israel's Victories in the Negev 10:40-43
- D. Northern Conquest 11:5-15
 1. Northern Kings Come Against Israel 11:5
 2. Israel Ambushes Army 11:6-9
 3. Israel Captures and Burn Hazor 11:10-15
- E. Summary of Conquest 11:16-12:24
 1. Israel Defeats all of Canaan 11:16-20
 2. Israel Destroys all Anakim 11:21-23
 3. Summary of Area Defeated 12:1-6
 4. Summary of Kings Defeated 12:7-24

III. The Division 13:1-21:43

- A. Division of Transjordan 13:1-33
 1. Unconquered Land of Israel 13:1-7
 2. Overview of Transjordan Inheritances 13:8-14
 3. Reuban's Inheritance 13:15-23
 4. Gad's Inheritance 13:24-28
 5. Half Tribe of Manasseh Inheritance 13:29-31
 6. Transjordan Land Apportioned by Moses 13:32-33
- B. Division of Canaan 14:1-19:48
 1. Tribes Eligible for Land 14:1-5
 2. Caleb's Request for Hebron 14:6-12
 3. Joshua gives Caleb Hebron 14:13-15
 4. Geographical Inheritance of Judah 15:1-12
 5. Caleb Awards Daughter for Mountain 15:13-20
 6. Judah's Conquered and Unconquered Land 15:21-62
 7. Judah's Unconquered City 15:63
 8. Territory of Joseph's Sons 16:1-4
 9. Ephraim's Inheritance 16:5-10
 10. Manasseh's Inheritance 17:1-13
 11. Son's of Joseph Complain to Joshua 17:14-18
 12. Joshua's Request for Survey 18:1-7
 13. Land Surveyed and Lots Cast 18:8-10

14. Benjamin's Geographical Inheritance 18:11-20
15. Benjamin's Cities 18:21-28
16. Simeon's Inheritance 19:1-9
17. Zebulun's Inheritance 19:10-16
18. Issachar's Inheritance 19:17-23
19. Asher's Inheritance 19:24-31
20. Naphtali's Inheritance 19:32-39
21. Dan's Inheritance 19:40-48
- C. Special Cities Established 19:49-21:45
 1. Joshua's City 19:49-51
 2. Six Cities of Refuge 20:1-9
 3. Levite's Cities 21:42
 4. Yahweh's Land Promises Fulfilled 21:43-45

IV. The Conclusion 22:1-24:33

- A. East and West Memorial Stones 22:1-34
 1. Charge and Blessing of Transjordan Tribes 22:1-9
 2. Transjordan Tribes Build Offensive Altar 22:10-12
 3. Levites Rebuke Transjordan Tribes 22:13-20
 4. Altar Explained as Memorial 22:21-29
 5. Leaders of Israel Accept Memorial 22:30-34
- B. Joshua Final Days 23:1-24:33
 1. Joshua's Farewell Address 23:1-16
 2. Joshua Rehearses Address 24:1-13
 3. Joshua's Charge to Israel 24:14-15
 4. Israel agrees to Serve Yahweh 24:16-18
 5. Joshua's Memorial and Israel's Covenant 24:19-28
 6. Joshua and Other Leaders Buried 24:29-33

Questions from Joshua

1. What specifically did God command Joshua to focus on as He went forth to conquer the land?
2. Since the command is recorded for more than a historical reason, how would have the intended audience applied this command in their lives?
3. How would you explain the lying of Rahab given she is noted in the Hebrews 11 as one is praised for her actions?
4. Describe the events that brought about Israel's defeat at Ai.
5. How would you describe the over all strategy of Joshua's invasion of Canaan?
6. Is there any significance to the fact that Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben have allotments on both sides of the Jordan?
7. What cities were burned?
8. Describe what you consider the top two battles of the book.
9. Who are the only two from the previous generation that entered the land of Canaan?
10. Where is the allocation of Dan in the book of Joshua?

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