

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 11: Joshua, *Conquering the Land*

Welcome to Week 11 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters, and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

This week, we'll be reading the Bible's sixth book, the book of Joshua. This week, you'll notice a very different change of pace as we begin to read about conquering the land, especially in the first half of this book. It also includes one of the most well known Bible stories, the fall of the walls of Jericho, but there's plenty in here to surprise you as well. So let's take a look at it.

First of all, Joshua consists of 24 chapters, the first 11 of them are fast paced, they're very brisk. It's about taking the land, all kinds of amazing stories. The second half is important. But it's more of interest to archaeologists and historians typically than to the reader that will be you know, the kind of reading that we'll be doing this week. So the first half kind of takes care of itself, I'll give you an outline of that. But in the second half, I'm going to give you some nuggets to look for to keep it alive. And to keep you understanding what's happening. As we go through some things that again, while important, can be a little challenging to read for the average reader.

So let's take a look at it piece by piece. Here's what we'll be looking at this week. First of all, in chapter one, Joshua is going to take the leadership of the people will see God give Joshua his assignment to take the land. Four times in the first chapter, the phrase, "Be strong and courageous is used", because that's what they're going to need to be as they go in to take the land. The people then pledge to obey Joshua, just as they obeyed Moses, which of course, has mixed results. But we're going to have two important tasks, they've got to send in a spy to spy out the land. And then they've got to cross over the river. And that's what the next few chapters will be about.

In chapter two, the spies go into the land, they check out what's happening, they have to hide, and a woman named Rahab, who was a prostitute in the city hides them, I want you to remember the name Rahab. Because she'll show up again, when we get to the New Testament, she shows up in Matthew in the lineage of Jesus. And she shows up in Hebrews and James as an example of faith. So remember the story of Rahab, from Joshua to in Joshua three through five, we get what I'm gonna call crossing and commemoration. The Jordan River is in their way, they have to cross this water to take the land, just like they had to cross a huge body of water 40 years before that, in the Red Sea, to cross into freedom from slavery to Jordan is a much smaller body of water to cross, it's just a small river, compared to the massive Red Sea.

So I want you to note two differences between this crossing and the crossing 40 years before of the Red Sea. First of all, in the previous crossing for the Red Sea, Moses led them and he held his staff out, as the water parted. In this one, they have to wade into the water first, their feet have to get wet. Specifically, the feet of the priests have to get wet as they carry the

ark into the river. This is a step of faith that God is requiring the people to make. Because now after 40 years in the wilderness, they should have enough faith to be able to do this, so they have to wade in first. Secondly, note how the difference in the miracles actually matches the geography of parting a sea as opposed to parting a river. When the Red Sea is parted, it just parts straight down the middle. There's even the phrase of like, God uses the breath of his nostrils to part the Red Sea. Here, it talks about the river backing up from miles up river until it slows to a trickle as they as they start to walk in. So it even matches the geography of the two different types of water that they're crossing.

We then go to Joshua, chapter six, and the famous story of the taking of Jericho. How does a band of untested wanderers destroy one of the greatest cities of its day in their first battle? Well, the way they do it is they obey God. Take note who actually leads the march around this city for days at a time, it is led by the worshipers, and by the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant. It's not led by the soldiers. It's led by worship. We then go to Joshua chapter seven, where we see two sins that immediately happen after the taking of Jericho.

This is a pattern we've seen already, right? God does something great. And then the people mess it up and sin. This happens again in Joshua 7 in two ways. First of all, in the city of Ai. They thought, well, we've taken Jericho and it's a big city. There's a little city over there, we'll send a few people, and we'll take him but they did it without asking God how to take the city and so they are defeated. And after this amazing triumph over Jericho, they have this horrible defeat at the hands of a very small town. Why Jericho they did in obedience to God Ai they did without even consulting God and so it fails. And then you've got this trial of amending akin who disobeyed God and the horrible things that happen because of that. So you see in Joshua seven, the importance of following what God says very, very closely, or bad consequences happen. And then in chapter eight, we see the taking of Ai itself because they do it the way God commanded them to do it. Then in Joshua, chapter nine, we have an interesting chapter.

I think it's one of the most fascinating and most under told stories, and maybe underappreciated stories. In the Old Testament. There's a group of people in the land called the Gibeonites. There's all kinds of tribes in the land that they need to take over. One of them is called the Gibeonites, and they deceive God's people in a very interesting and actually very clever way. But the lesson isn't how clever they Gibeonites are. It's about how once again, they don't consult God about what to do about the Gibeonites, and so the Gibeonites are able to deceive them. So take note of that in Joshua chapter 9.

We then get to Joshua chapters, 10, and 11. There are several battles that they undergo as they're overtaking the land. But the one thing in this that you'll probably take note of the most, is just three verses. But it's chapter 10, verses 12 through 14, in which it talks about the sun standing still for an entire extra day so that the battle could continue and God's people could win. Now, the question that comes there is, how does this happen?

First of all, we know that this, although the sun appears to move in the sky to us, we are actually moving in the sky around the sun. So we understand that this is figurative language,

God knows how the solar system is designed. But the question becomes, how does this happen? Can this even even happen? How do we have an extra 24 hours of sunlight? And the answer to that is, I have no idea. That's the nature of miracles. Here's the thing. So far, we've had a talking snake, we've had a talking, talking donkey, upcoming, we've got a guy swallowed by a big fish, we've got all kinds of crazy miracles happen in the Bible. And I actually believe that it's a mistake to try to explain them away through naturalistic means.

I know a lot of good godly Christians who are trying to do the right thing, who tried to come up with naturalistic explanations about what this actually means. But I don't think you can come up with a naturalistic explanation for an extra 24 hours of sunlight. I think it's a, it's a miracle that God performs, and I'm not going to even try to explain how he does it, we're just going to accept that God did it. Remember, the Bible began with "In the beginning God". If you can accept that, then you can accept an extra 24 hours of sunlight. And we just have to accept it on faith that God is able to do it, even if we can't understand it.

Then the last half of the book, a little more than half of the book, Joshua 12, through 20, we're going to see a list of defeated kings and then a whole bunch of chapters of how the land is going to be divided among the tribes, the border will go here, and that border will extend to there. And it can be a challenge for us to read, because we're not there. We don't know those places. And we're not. We're not out there trying to divide up the land. We're not an archaeologist digging it up. We're not a historian trying to understand where it is. We're not a real estate agent trying to figure out where the property borders are.

So here are a couple things to look for in the last half of the book, as you read through it this week. First of all, note Joshua 13 verse 1 says this, "When Joshua had grown old, the Lord said to him, you are now very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over." Almost every time that I used to read this, and my younger years, I would get to Joshua 13. And go, Wait a minute. This is the book of Joshua. We've just had 12 chapters, we still got another 12 to go. And already, he's an old man. Like, what happened? How did that happen so fast? At the start of the book, he was young, and he was in charge. I mean, take a look at any illustration online or in the back of your Bible, or maybe in the book of Joshua, about Joshua taking the city of Jericho, for instance. He's young, he's vibrant. He's a general, he's in the prime of life. Well, that's not actually accurate. Take a look what the Bible says, He and Caleb, were the two spies 40 years before this, who said yes, we could take the land and he was an adult, then. This is 40 years later, he is at least in his 60s, maybe in his early 70s, when the conquering of the land begins.

So his ministry, if you will, His calling from God only comes into its fullness when he's in his 60s or in his 70s. So it doesn't take too many years, especially of leaving in battle before, okay, I'm kind of old and I'm done right now. The good news is God can use us in any area of our life, even if it's short term, and we need to realize that that's what's happening here. God is using a very old and seasoned man to do his business here, even while using the young the youth and aggression of an army.

Second thing to notice as we go through this last half is this Chapter 14 verses one through 15. Caleb gets his land. Remember Joshua and Caleb, were the two of the 12 spies who say yes, we can take the land. And so God said, Okay, you two won't die, you two get to go into the land. So they're going into it in their in their 60s, probably. And God takes note, even in the Bible, to let us know, millennia later that Caleb gets the land that he was promised because he was obedient to God.

And then the third thing to look for in this last half of Joshua is the Cities of Refuge in chapter 20. It's important that God sets aside the cities in a culture that was all about revenge, if somebody was killed, even if it was an accident. If you were, you know, a swinging an axe and the axe, hit somebody by mistake and killed them completely by mistake everybody around and went. that was a horrible mistake, nobody meant that to happen. In their culture, that man's brothers and family members would still find you and kill you. That's just what they did in their culture. That's not what God said to do. That's just what they did. Then, God sets up the cities of refuge for accidental killings, if you go to the city of refuge, no one is allowed to touch you. And it keeps people safe.

So God sets those up, it's an important thing to look at when we get to chapter 20. And then the book will conclude in chapters 22, to 24, with three important chapters. Chapter 22, is about Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. Those three tribes going back home, we didn't mention this back when it happened, because there was a lot going on then. So let's catch up to a part of the story that we've already read about when they got to the edge of the promised land. They were supposed to go in across the Jordan and settle there. But three of the tribes look at the land on the side of the Jordan, they were at on the east side, I went, we kind of like this, can we stay here, and this happens in Numbers chapter 32. And in that place, Gad, Manasseh. And Ruben asked, Can we stay on this side of the Jordan? And can we settle here? And they agree, yes, we'll let you settle here. But when we go in and take the land on the far side of the Jordan, you have to fight with us. Because it's really tempting, once I've got my land, I ain't fighting for your land. And they agree to do so. And they in fact, have done so they have honored their commitment, and now they get to go back home. This is really honorable of these three tribes. And it's really important to see that they honored their promise, and they got to go back home again.

Chapter 23. We see Joshua was saying farewell to the people. And then in Joshua 24, Joshua reminds them of God's covenant, and it's renewed again to the people. This is a theme that we're repeating the Bible over and over again, look for it, reminder, and renewal is a huge Bible theme. In fact, it's a big part of why we gather is the church as a reminder of God's goodness, and a pledge to renew our commitment to him. Remindful reminder, and renewal is a huge principle in Scripture.

So as we go through this week, here are some principles to look for, in the first half of the book, take a look at the part that we play in God's plan, that it starts and ends with obedience, when they obey God, even for a crazy plan, like just marched around the city for several days, it works out when they don't consult God or directly disobey Him, like not

consulting him about a tribe that they was, was trying to deceive them, or a tiny little city that we can take on our own, we don't need God's help, or disobeying God, like akin did horrible things happen. So take a look at the role of our obedience in God's plan in the first half.

And then in the second half of the week, for the second half of the book, take a look at a handful of things in addition to the little treasures that I helped you to look for. Take a look at what God says about the ownership and protection of property. There's a big debate between left and right wing between all kinds of different people about property ownership, and whether it's right or not. Well, God talks a lot about property ownership. These boundaries matter to him protecting your property, protecting the property of others, and honoring the property of others, is a really important part of Scripture that repeats over and over and over again, it the importance of contracts, the importance of property lines, but along with that, also the importance of welcoming the stranger into your land.

So there's a wonderful balance in Scripture. Some people want to go all the way into knock down all the property, but borders and others want to just build up big walls. And the Bible says No, neither one of those is correct. property lines matter. Property itself matters. But sharing and being generous with what God has given you, is the point of it being given to you. And the Bible carries a wonderful and healthy balance of those two things that sometimes we forget. So take note of that, as you're reading through what can be some challenging passages in the last half of the week. You'll see those principles laid out there beautifully, even as it's talking about this border extends from here to there. That's the principle that's underneath it. Well, again, if you're getting something out This I encourage you to continue to subscribe, pass it along. let others know about this.

Next week, we'll come back and we'll talk about the next couple books. Judges and Ruth are going to get very entertaining. But this week, you're really going to enjoy Joshua. See you next week.

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