

As regards the place of the book of Joshua in the history of redemption, we note that it is a book of fulfilment and anticipation. It describes the fulfillment of the promise to Abram that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7) and anticipates the future history of Israel in that land (Joshua 23-24; compare Judges-Nehemiah). Despite the sin of Achan (Joshua 7) Israel is seen as a nation united under the Lord and successful in everything to which she turns her attention. Other positive periods are recorded in the Bible but none so consistent nor so extended.

Several themes intertwine throughout the book. At Gilgal Joshua consecrated the people to the Lord by circumcising the generation born in the wilderness during the wanderings. This restoration of the nation's covenant relationship with the Lord (broken at Kiriath-jearim in Numbers 13-14) is alluded to in the covenant renewal ceremony recorded in Joshua 24 near the end of Joshua's life. God grace was shown to Rahab by granting her faith to believe (2:8-11; compare Heb. 11:31) and to the Gibeonites by keeping the oath for the sake of his name. The major point of Joshua is that Israel finally had possessed the land promised to her fathers solely by the grace and power of God.

Some key questions arise in the Joshua study. How do spiritual and physical forces interrelate in Joshua (for example, if 3000 Israelites went up against Ai and only thirty-six were killed, why did Israel flee)? What happened at the Battle of Bethhoron (10)? Why were the Canaanites to be exterminated? Does this have any relationship with the question of a "just war" versus pacificism? How do statements of complete conquest (for example, 11:23) correlate with verses such as 13:2-7?

In archaeological light the material in Joshua lends itself by its very nature to archaeological investigation. Burned, ruined cities and evidence of cultural change should be found. Lachish, Bethel, Debir, and Hazor all were burned late in the 13th century BC (the ash in Debir is five feet thick in some places!) This usually is interpreted as Israel's destruction of these cities after conquering them. None of the cities which was conquered but not burned has been found with a similar layer of ash. The culture which replaced that which had been destroyed was of a poorer, less intentional quality, which is to be expected after Israel's forty years in the wilderness. Considerable question exists over the ruins of Jericho. Earlier claims by Garstang argued for a structure ruined in the 14th century... (ca) but later interpretation under Kenyon suggested a later date. This will help you understand that the exact dating of this whole sequence is by no means sure. The account of the geography and settlement of Palestine is accurate enough to ensure the accuracy of the rest of the story. The Amarna texts (ca. 1400-1300) give evidence that the "Hapiru" were overrunning the land and Pharaoh is urged to help overthrow them. The famous Merneptah stele tells of conquests by Egyptian forces over Israel about 1220 BC (or slightly earlier). Both of these latter have been known for some time and seem to relate to the fact of Israel's conquest and her subsequent movement into the land.

Key study areas include several passages useful in understanding the book of Joshua: the Lord's charge and promise to Joshua (1:1-9); the consecration of Israel at Gilgal (5:1-12); the presence of the commander of the Lord's army (5:13-15); Joshua's warning (23); the renewal of the covenant (24). Some memory passages are 1:6-9, 22:34; 23:6-8, 14-16