

PREACHING THROUGH JOSHUA

Join with the rest of the church in reading this book in this month. Be in the worship services to hear the sermons based upon it.

HISTORY

The book of Joshua is the first of the "Books of History" in the Old Testament, but it follows closely and logically the "Books of Law" preceding it. It tells how the Children of Israel entered and conquered the land of Canaan after their release from bondage in Egypt and their wanderings in the wilderness. Joshua, its hero, wrote a "book of the law of God" (see 24:26), but there is nothing in it to tell who wrote the book of Joshua. The book covers a period of about thirty years just prior to 1400 B.C.

Chapters 1-12 tell of the conquest of Canaan.

Chapters 13-21 tell of the division of the land among the Israelites.

Chapters 22-24 tell of closing scenes in the life of Joshua.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology, the study of remains from ancient human occupation, helps us much to understand the book of Joshua. Many have wondered why God commanded Joshua to destroy the Canaanites. Archaeology suggests an answer. Many of the idols and other objects that have been found are very obscene. One writer says, "Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of the Canaanite cities wonder why God did not destroy them sooner than He did!"

Excavations at Jericho and at Hazor have shown that these places were violently destroyed and burned at the end of the late Canaanite period (the Middle Bronze). For a long time no discoveries from Joshua's time were found in the area of Ai. Recent discoveries of Canaanite objects in the Ai area give evidence of the truthfulness of the Bible.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE
IMPORTANCE TO THE CHRISTIAN

The Book of Joshua:

- Shows the hand of God in the history of men.
- Warns of the punishment in store for men and nations which reject the right ways of God.
- Demonstrates the need for a clear-cut, courageous choice to be made by each person individually.
- Shows how God acted in preparing for the coming of His Son through the Israelites.
- Points out our own need of a Savior, that forgiveness, and not punishment, may be our portion.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- “Go Forward!” (Josh. 1:1-9)
- “After the Battle” (Josh. 8:30-35)
- “A Dangerous Altar” (Josh. 22:10-34)
- “Witness Against Ourselves” (Josh. 24:14-28)

Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

- “The Conquest of the Crossing” (Josh. 3:14—4:14)
- “One Sins; All Suffer” (Josh. 7:1-26)
- “What Remains to be Possessed” (Josh. 13:1)
- “A Man Alive at Eighty-five” (Josh. 14:6-15)

QUESTIONS OVER JOSHUA

1. Before the children of Israel crossed into Canaan Joshua sent two spies into what city? (2:1)
2. What memorial was placed at Gilgal? (4:20-24)
3. Whose sin caused Israel to suffer defeat at Ai? (7:1)
4. For whom did the sun stand still? (10:12, 13)
5. Name the two sons of Joseph who share in the land of Canaan. (16:1, 4)
6. What did the sons of Reuben and Manasseh call the altar they built? (22:34)
7. How old was Joshua when he died? (24:29)

PREACHING THROUGH JOSHUA
GO FORWARD! (A New Year Sermon)
(Joshua 1:1-9)

INTRODUCTION —

Entry to the Promised Land was fulfillment of long preparation.

- A. Moses' death left responsibility with Joshua.
 - 1. He must continue what Moses had begun.
 - 2. Thus the theme of the text: "Be strong and of good courage." It was Moses' attitude.
 - B. God declared a promise.
 - 1. He would support Joshua as He had Moses.
 - 2. He would fulfill the promise of a homeland.
 - 3. He would require active faith and obedience.
- I. "ARISE, GO OVER JORDAN" (v. 2).
- A. God required a definite commitment.
 - 1. Israel must cross the Jordan in the sight of all.
 - 2. Similarly, definite commitments are required in business; through purchases, rents, contracts, etc.
 - 3. A strong faith will make commitments in morals and religion.
Resolutions made are not so soon broken as those not made at all.
 - B. God required a definite action.
 - 1. The riverbed became dry only after the priests' feet became wet.
 - 2. Breaking and making of habits requires doing, according to determination.
 - a. Formally it applies to Bible reading, prayer, church attendance.
 - b. Informally it applies to words and deeds in personal relationship.
- II. "OBSERVE TO ALL THAT MOSES COMMANDED" (v. 7).
- A. God required continuing course of obedience.
 - 1. The law must be spoken and taught.

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2. The law must be kept continually in mind, by thoughtful meditation.
3. The law must direct the doings of the people.
- B. A breakdown in obedience would nullify the promise: "Then you shall succeed."
 1. Israel was defeated at Ai because of disobedience.
 2. So we must beware the tendency to set aside the revealed will of God in favor of a general enthusiasm for "doing good."
 3. Observe the condemnation of some who have even "done many wonderful works in the name" of Christ (Matthew 7:22).

III. "I WILL NOT FAIL THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE" (v. 5).

"The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (v. 9).

- A. The promise was interwoven with the command; neither is complete without the other.
- B. "I will give the land." God set the boundaries.
- C. "None shall stand before you" (v. 6). The conquering power was God's.
- D. "The Lord thy God is with thee" (v. 9).
 1. His presence with us cannot be maintained apart from our presence with Him.
 2. Some doubt the presence of God because they expect the wrong things in evidence that He is there.

CONCLUSION —

God's commission to Joshua was echoed in Christ's commission to His apostles (Matthew 28:18-20).

- A. Commitment and action are required in teaching and baptism.
- B. Obedience is required in "observing all . . . I have commanded."
- C. Presence is promised: "Lo, I am with you always."

PREACHING THROUGH JOSHUA
AFTER THE BATTLE (Veterans Day Sermon)
(Joshua 8:30-35)

INTRODUCTION — Historical

- A. The first great part of the campaign for the conquest of Canaan ended in a religious service.
- B. Are we troubled at the ethics involved in the conquest?
 - 1. There was moral necessity for drastic action. Survival of worship of the true God was at stake, not for the sake of God, nor for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of all. Indescribable abominations of Canaanites crept in when Israel "went easy."
 - 2. Joshua's practice gentle according to practice of his day. No willful torture; pillage kept at a minimum.
- C. Jericho, taken by a miracle. Ai, attempted, but Israel defeated because of the sin of Achan. Ai taken by strategy, one group drawing army out; other putting town to torch. Then came obedience to the command of Moses to establish covenant.
- D. The occasion —
Half the tribes on the slope of Mt. Gerizim, half on Mt. Ebal (60 rods apart). Altar of whole stones erected on Mt. Ebal; altar plastered and the Law imprinted in the plaster. Valley of Moreh echoed to the sound of the blessing and the curse. (Travelers still note how sound travels in still clear air there.) Read from Deuteronomy 27:16-26.

Application to our own situation after crises.

I. OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE COMMAND GIVEN THROUGH MOSES.

- A. Command given at a time of trial kept in an hour of success.
- B. We have not special commands given at any one hour, but His commands remain.
 - 1. A service man writes, "I'll be in church." — Not yet.

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2. What of the promises we made then—?

“When war is over and I am less busy—”

Work for the church—attend evening service.

Read Bible—have family prayer.

II. THE SHARED CONFESSION (SIN OFFERINGS) AND WORSHIP.

A. The victor is tempted to think that his goodness has won the battle.

B. We have humbling reminders in the form of strikes and crime.

III. LEARNING THE WILL OF GOD.

A. Israel served notice that ongoing national program was concerned with the will and law of God. That will must be learned before it can be done.

B. Shall we say, “Run along, God, until we need you again to help us win another war?”

C. Until we learn from Him the art of getting on with people in spiritual relationships, every other art is self-destructive. “If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of the other” (Gal. 5:13).

IV. COMMITMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD.

A. The people were there and said, “Amen.”

B. No great program can succeed if it is adopted *for* a nation by only a few men in conference—the people must be solidly behind it.

C. The *people* of the church must be committed to the program of the church.

Do we desire a flourishing church?

A program that will serve the needs of all?

Do we wish to escape the horrors of a crime wave?

Do we wish to see a real spiritual revival?

Let all the people say Amen, not only with words, but with deeds of devotion.

In Christ there is that which will meet our needs, but until we commit ourselves to Him we receive no blessing.

PREACHING THROUGH JOSHUA
A DANGEROUS ALTAR
(Joshua 22:10-34)

INTRODUCTION —

Things are not always what they seem.

- A. Jesus admonished, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).
 - 1. Righteous judgment demands investigation.
 - 2. Righteous judgment demands an honest report.
- B. What shall we say, then, of these:
 - 1. "What do you suppose he was doing in *that* place?"
 - 2. "But he reached into his pocket as though he was drawing a gun!"
- C. The answer is in an altar that almost started a war. The story has a happy ending because it includes patient inquiry before action.

I. THE EASTERN TRIBES BUILD AN ALTAR AT THE FORDS OF JORDAN (vv. 10, 11).

- A. The background.
 - 1. Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh had chosen the land of Gilead, east of Jordan, for their dwelling.
 - 2. They had continued with the other tribes to conquer the land of Canaan.
 - 3. Now they were dismissed to take up their homes.
- B. The altar they built.
 - 1. It was at the riverside, a natural boundary.
 - 2. It followed the pattern of the altar in the tabernacle.
 - 3. The offering of sacrifices was forbidden in any other place than tabernacle.
- C. The incident reported.
 - 1. It looked like forbidden worship, or idolatry.
 - 2. Israel remembered how the whole nation had suffered for the idolatry or rebellion of a few at Ai, or at Baal-Peor (Num. 25:1-9).

II. THE WESTERN TRIBES PREPARE FOR WAR (v. 12).

- A. They took the matter with utmost seriousness.

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1. As an affront to God, it must be punished.
 2. Moses had commanded the destruction of any city that practiced idolatry (Deut. 13:12-18).
- B. They gathered at Shiloh, the place where they had received Joshua's commission.

III. PHINEHAS LEADS AN INQUIRY (vv. 13-20).

- A. The inquirers were capable men; leaders of the tribes.
- B. They emphasized the seriousness of the situation.
1. Idolatry had brought God's wrath, and would bring it again.
 2. Application: Leaders who wink at evil share its responsibility.
- C. They offered a way of reconciliation.
1. If they could not remain free of idolatry in Gilead, the other tribes would make room for them in Canaan.
 2. Foreshadows New Testament: "Ye that are spiritual, restore . . . (Gal. 6:1).

IV. THE EASTERN TRIBES RESPOND (vv. 21-29).

- A. They acknowledged that idolatry was a deadly sin.
- B. They explained the purpose and nature of the altar they had built.
1. It was not to another god, nor for offering sacrifices.
 2. It was for testimony and a link with the other tribes.
- All must know that God was worshiped on both sides of the Jordan.

V. THE RESPONSE BROUGHT REJOICING.

- A. First Phinehas, then all Israel, welcomed the explanation as made known.
- B. The nation was unified and saved from war.
- C. The incident strengthened Israel against idolatry.
- D. So understanding and reconciliation can strengthen any community.

CONCLUSION —

We rejoice with Phinehas the priest, but more with Christ our High Priest, who brings, not an explanation of innocence, but cleansing from guilt.

PREACHING THROUGH JOSHUA
WITNESS AGAINST OURSELVES
(Joshua 24:14-28)

INTRODUCTION —

Nothing is so terrible as self-condemnation. (Illustration—A politician discredited in the eyes of his people by re-broadcasts of his old speeches.)

American courts, in policy of protecting innocent, will not force one to testify against himself.

I. CHOOSE YE THIS DAY!

- A. The situation of Israel, surrounded by idolatrous people; if they allowed themselves to be indecisive, it would end in drifting wrong. Let your choice be of your own making, and stand by that choice!
- B. Many make final choice without knowing it—they think they are not choosing. —A refusal to choose the right is to choose the wrong.
- C. To drift brings the evil of a wrong choice without the courage of it.

II. "WE WILL SERVE JEHOVAH"—Naturally.

- A. Any other reply would be unthinkable under the circumstances.
- B. Nearly every one approves the good, and "would like" to be on the right side.
 - 1. He approves an upright family, community, and national life.
 - 2. If he does wrong, he rationalizes it to make it look right, or harmless.
- C. Many, faced with the challenge to make a decision, have come into the church, and then have done nothing more about it. "Many profess Christianity with far more irreverence than others keep aloof from it."

III. "YE CANNOT SERVE JEHOVAH"—Not that easy; not the line of least resistance.

- A. Read Luke 14:25-33.

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- B. See marriage service—"It is not by any to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God."
- C. "He will not forgive your transgression nor your sin." (If you declare yourself for Him, you leave yourself without excuse if you then turn away from Him.) See Hebrews 10:26-29.

IV. "NAY, BUT WE WILL SERVE JEHOVAH."

- A. Ready now to accept the greater obligation with open eyes.
- B. We ourselves have declared in favor of:
 - 1. The Christian life: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2).
 - 2. The Lordship of Christ: There is no easy way to escape His commands.
 - 3. A personal faith: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15).
 - 4. Non-sectarian Christianity.
 - a. Root out the sectarian spirit within and among us.
 - b. Learn the doctrines of Christ, not the doctrines of the church.

V. "YE ARE WITNESSES AGAINST YOURSELVES." — You will be judged by your own statements.

- A. "Thou art inexcusable, O man . . ." (Rom. 2:1).
- B. See Romans 2:21-23 for application of self-judgment.
- C. (A fitting sort of judgment would take place if a moving picture should show the things we did and said.)

CONCLUSION —

We are led to say with the apostles, "Who then can be saved?" "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:25,26).