**Joshua Session 1**

**Introduction and Part 1 - Entering the Land (ch1-4)**

**a short INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK**

**A book given to us…**

…for our encouragement that we might have hope

**Romans 15:4** For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

…to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

**2 Timothy 3:15** …from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

…to warn us

**1 Corinthians 10:11** These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.

**A book that gives us a couple of ‘problems’**

1. The problem of the slaughter of the Canaanites

Book: *Mass Destruction: Is God guilty of genocide?* by Melvin Tinker [Evangelical Press: 2017]

 Lecture: sussexgospelpartnership.org.uk/resource/melvin-tinker-is-god-guilty-of-genocide/

2. The problem of application

**The main themes**

*Be strong and courageous, because you [Joshua] will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. (Joshua 1:6)*

Five key themes: **battle**, **leader, inheritance, land and promise**

1. Land

 chs 1-4 Entering the land (by faith)

 chs 5-12 Taking the land (by covenant obedience)

 ch 13-21 Receiving the land (in fulfilment of covenant promise)

 ch 22-24 Keeping the land (by covenant faithfulness)

1. Promise/fulfilment

The land the Lord *promised* to give

* promised to Abraham, 1:6
* promised to Moses, 1:3

The land the Lord *promises* to give

* Joshua/people, 1:3

The Lord *kept* his promise, 23:14

Moses is dead – yet the figure of Moses hangs over the whole book (The name ‘Moses’ 58 times)

* commands given through Moses being obeyed
* promises given through Moses being fulfilled

The book of Joshua is all about the fulfilment of the Pentateuch

1. The Leader
2. Inheritance
3. Battle

*Who is our Joshua?*

**Part 1 – Entering the Land**

ch 1 – The commissioning of Joshua and the acceptance of his leadership

ch 2 – Spying out the land – encouragement for Israel and covenanted grace to a gentile

ch 3-4 – Crossing the Jordan – a miraculous entry into the land

**Crossing the Jordan - Chapters 3 to 4**

* extraordinary manner of the crossing confirms
	+ God will truly give the people the land
	+ Joshua as the leader the people should follow
* The LORD thus confirms his word by his actions to strengthen the faith of his people

Initial observations of the narrative

1. Length and complexity – the slowness of the telling
2. The primary themes

*cross over* – ‘*abar* [Heb.] – 23 times

the leading role of *Joshua* – Joshua’s leadership confirmed – 4:14

the leading role of the *priests* – a religious event not military

*ark of the covenant* – 17 of the 25 occurrences in the books

*amazing things/wonders* (3:5) – a miraculous event

*knowing* – what various people know as a result of these wonders is important

The twelve stones to serve as a *sign* (4:6)

1. The structure of the narrative

3:1-13 Words of preparation – instruction and significance

 3:14-17 The crossing commenced - the miraculous stopping of the waters

 4:1-9 Memorializing the crossing – twelve stones taken and set up

 4:10-18 The crossing completed - the miraculous return of the waters

4:19-24 Words of remembrance – instruction and significance

3:17 and 4:10 – the story has not advanced

4:10b and 4:11a – pick up the narrative strand left hanging in 3:17 and 4:1

The final emphasis lies with Joshua’s speech at the end of the narrative

**Section 1 – Words of preparation (3:13)**

3:1 – no delay

The officers to the people (3-4)

* ‘Follow the ark’
* ‘Keep your distance’

*However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it,* ***that you may know the way by which you shall go****, for you have not passed this way before* (Jos 3:4 NASB)

Joshua to the people (5)

Joshua to the priests (6)

The Lord to Joshua (7-8)

Joshua to the people (9-13)

* Emphasis on what the people will know as a result of seeing this wonder

**Section 2 – The crossing account commenced (3:14-17)**

Finally, the movement begins – v14a

v14-16 starts with a main clause followed by a whole string of subordinate clauses:

*And it happened,*

*in the journeying of the people from their tents to pass over the Jordan,*

*and of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,*

*and at those bearing the ark coming as far as the Jordan,*

*and the feet of the priests bearing the ark have been dipped in the extremity of the waters*

*now the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest (3:14-15)*



The actual Jordan valley varies in breadth from 3 to 14 miles - wide enough for the nation to set up camp

The river’s floodplain is up to 1 mile wide

The river channel itself about 100 feet broad; in places as deep as 10 to 12 feet; the fall averages 9 feet per mile

Melted snow waters from the Lebanon swell the river in the Spring, with the maximum inundations in April.

The Israelites crossed the river at the time of the Spring harvest, just before Passover – late March to mid-April – the river was no stream, but a broad fast-flowing river, probably a mile wide. The Lord chose a date for the crossing which would demand a miracle and emphasize the wonder

Finally, we get to the end of the sentence begun in verse 14:

*–* ***stood****, the waters coming down from above; they* ***rose up*** *in one heap, a very far distance away at
Adam the city, which is opposite Zarethan; and those going down to the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea,
were completely cut off [lit. they* ***finished****, they were* ***cut off****]. And the people crossed opposite Jericho.* (3:16)

verse 17

* Not standing in mud! They stood on dry ground!
	+ c.f. ‘*And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.’* (Exo 14:22)

a great deal of finishing: v16; v17; 4v1; v10; v11

**Section 3 – Building a lasting memorial (4:1-9)**

The Lord’s direction, not just Joshua’s bright idea

v9 - the education and faith of future generations requires a lasting memorial.

v6-7 - The significance of the memorial is spelt out in verses 6 and 7

The answer to the child’s question:

A – the flow of the Jordan was cut off

B – before the ark of the covenant of the Lord

B’ – when it [the ark] crossed the Jordan

A’ – the waters of the Jordan were cut off

The focus on the ark of the covenant

**Section 4 – The crossing account completed (4:10-18)**

v10 the narrative of the crossing resumes with a near repetition of 3:17

* the priests and the ark they are carrying
* the military divisions of the trans-Jordan tribes
	+ crossed over, **ready for battle**
	+ about 40,000 **armed for battle**
	+ they cross to the plains of Jericho **for war**
* Joshua’s day of divine accreditation before a watching nation - verse 14
* the priests coming out of the Jordan

**Section 5 – Words of remembrance – teaching what it all means**

v21-22a – *tell them* would be better translated – *make it known to them*

v22 – Israel crossed over on dry ground

This was the Lord’s work

* the Lord did this – v23
* why did he do this? – v24
* an object lesson for the nations
* a lasting impact on God’s people

**Understanding the passage through Christ**

The great and miraculous event that opened up the way for the children of Abraham to enter into their inheritance

Five uses of the verb to know:

1. It was for Israel to know the Lord’s way for them into their inheritance – 3:4
2. It was for Joshua to know that the Lord was with him – 3:7
3. It was for the people to know that the living God was among them and would defeat their enemies – 3:10
4. It was for their children to know what the Lord the power of the Lord revealed in his mighty acts – 4:23
5. It was the world to know about that same power – 4:24

Remembering all this was crucially important and the ongoing fruit of remembering was to be faith in the Lord and lasting reverence for and loyalty to him

The great NT event that fits this foreshadowing:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope* ***through the resurrection*** *of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you* (1 Peter 1:3-4)

We cannot be heirs without joining the family

It is his resurrection that opens up the way for us into our inheritance

1. We know the way into the promised inheritance
2. Because he rose, he is exalted in our sight and we know that God was and is with him

(3) Because he has risen, we know that the living God is among us

(4) Because Jesus is risen, we know the mighty power of the Lord

(5) The witness to his resurrection is as a testimony to all nations of the reality and power of the God of Israel

Remembering it and teaching what it means