

Introducing the Historical Books and the Book of Joshua

Introducing the Historical Books.	As Protestants, we divide the OT as follows: (1) The Pentateuch; (2) The Historical Books; (3) The Wisdom Literature; (4) The Major Prophets and (5) The Minor Prophets. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther comprise this section. I like to call this section “the part of the OT we don’t have a good title for.”
The Framers of It, However, Had a Great Title for It.	The Hebrew Bible is composed as follows: (1) Law (Torah); (2) Prophets (Nev'im); (3) Writings (Kethuvim). Within the section of the prophets, they divide them into three: (a) The Former Prophets; (b) The Latter Prophets and (c) The Book of the Twelve. They put Joshua in the former prophets section. By “prophet,” they mean a spokesman for God under divine unction to a specific person and/or nation. Joshua certainly was that for Israel.
The Best Way to Divide the Historical Books	I divide the Historical Books chronologically because it helps me make sense of the whole: (1) <u>Before There Was a King in the Land</u> – Joshua, Judges; (2) <u>When There Was a Monarchy in the Land</u> – Ruth; 1-2 Samuel; (3) <u>When the Kingdom Was Divided</u> : 1-2 Kings; 1-2 Chronicles (even though it was written after the exile reflecting back) (4) <u>The Post-Exilic Books (after Babylonian Captivity)</u> : Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
The First Book in This Section is Extremely Important.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Name Is Important - Joshua’s name means “the Lord is my salvation.” In Hebrew, it’s <i>Yoshua</i>. Sound familiar? It should because it’s identical in script to <i>Yeshua</i>. The Hebrew language has only consonants, no vowels. In <i>Yoshua/Yeshua</i> the consonants are identical as is the meaning of the name. 2. The Subject Matter is Important: The subject matter in Joshua is taking the <u>promised</u> land. The key word there is “promised.” The material in Joshua, from the entry, to the conquering, to the dividing of the land, to the renewal of the covenant at Shechem, is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. 3. The Narrative is Important: the transition from Deuteronomy to Joshua is seamless. Joshua picks up where Moses left off. 4. The Foreshadowing Motifs are Important: We’ve already seen that with the name Joshua. But it’s also true in many more aspects in this book.
The Foreshadowing Motifs in Joshua	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land: We, like the 2nd Generation of Israelites, have a land that is the result of a promise. And we shall dwell there forever and ever. 2. Covenant: Israel will renew their covenant with God at Shechem at the end of Joshua. Unfortunately, they didn’t fulfill their end of the bargain and were kicked out of the land. We won’t be because our covenant is a better/greater covenant and our <i>Yeshua</i> is a better/greater <i>Yeshua</i>. 3. Salvation by Grace Through Faith Alone: The story of Rahab the harlot and her great faith in the God of the Israelites gives her a place with those honored for their faith in Hebrews 11. It’s a story of God’s grace to undeserving sinners. Just as important, by God grace, Rahab received an inheritance, not in the form of land. But in the form of being in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5). 4. Refuge: Cities of refuge are established in Joshua so that someone who accidentally killed someone could live there without fear of retribution. Christ is that refuge for us. 5. Rest: This is one of the main ideas in Joshua. After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, they finally entered the rest God had prepared for them in the land of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews uses this as a warning not to let unbelief prevent us from entering into God’s rest.
Key Verses	Joshua 1:6-9
Basic Outline	On a basic level, Joshua can be divided as follows: Preparing (1-5); Conquering (6-12); Dividing (13-24)

Preparing to Enter the Promised Land (Chs 1-5) – Key Passages

1. **God’s Instructions to Joshua:** ⁶ Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn

from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (1:6-9)

2. **The Rahab and the Scarlet Thread Together Gives Us A Clue as to How God Relates to Sinners:** Give me a sure sign¹³ that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.” ¹⁴“Our lives for your lives!” the men assured her. “If you don’t tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.” ¹⁵So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. ¹⁶She said to them, “Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.” ¹⁷Now the men had said to her, “This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us ¹⁸unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. (2:12-18).
3. **The Twelves Stones in the Jordan and The Sign of the Covenant at Gilgal Represents Israel as God’s Covenant People Taking Hold of the Promise:** ⁹Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day. (4:9)... ⁸And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed. ⁹Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day (5:8-9).

Conquering the Land (6-12)

1. **The Battle of Jericho Lets Us Know This is God’s Battle, Not Theirs.** ²Then the Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.” (6:2-5)
2. **The Fall at Ai Represents the Futility of Doing God’s Work Your Way Through Disobedience:** They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water... ¹¹Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. ¹²That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. (7:4; 11-12)
3. **The Sun Standing Still Representing God Answering Our Request When We Are in Line With His Plans:** The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. ¹⁴There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel! (10:13-14)

Dividing the Land (13-24)

1. **Represents Inheritance** - ⁶“As for all the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Misrephoth Maim, that is, all the Sidonians, I myself will drive them out before the Israelites. Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you, ⁷and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh.” (13:6-7)
****The reason it gets divided only to 9 ½ of the tribes is because Reuben and Gad and ½ the tribe of Manasseh had a whole section assigned to them east of the Jordan. The Levites had none.**
2. **Cities of Refuge Represent Grace** - Then the Lord said to Joshua: ²“Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, ³so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.
**** Here grace through refuge comes from accidently shedding innocent blood. In the NT, it comes from Jesus purposefully shedding it.**
3. **Represents Spiritual Blessings Associated with Covenant Relationship** - ¹⁹Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.” ²¹But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the Lord.” ²²Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.” “Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied. ²³“Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” (24:19-23)