

The Book of Joshua

Study Guide

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

The second major division of Joshua called the people of Israel to live together as heirs of the Promised Land.

The book of Joshua was written about Israel's victorious conquest, tribal inheritances and covenant loyalty in Joshua's day to address similar challenges facing later generations.

II. Initial Boundaries, 13:1-14 (3:07)

A. Structure and Content (4:11)

God promised Abraham's descendants a land extending from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates river from which they would spread God's blessings to the ends of the earth (Genesis 15:18-21).

In Joshua's time, God granted Israel only a portion of these territories.

1. Boundaries in Cisjordan, 13:1-7 (6:48)

- Joshua was "old and advanced in years," and "there remain[ed] yet very much land to possess" (13:1).
- God promised, "I myself will drive [the inhabitants] out" (13:6).
- God commanded Joshua to treat all of Canaan as Israel's inheritance (13:7).

2. **Boundaries in Transjordan, 13:8-14 (7:33)**

- Moses had granted these territories as Israel's inheritance before he died (13:8).
- The Israelites had not yet driven out some groups (13:13).
- The Levites received an inheritance of "the offerings by fire to the Lord," rather than land (13:14).

B. **Original Meaning (9:44)**

The original audience struggled to gain and maintain control over their territories, so it was crucial that they never forget the initial boundaries of their inheritance.

1. **Divine Authority (11:02)**

Divine authority had established Israel's inheritance:

- "The Lord said to [Joshua]..." (13:1).
- God told Joshua to "allot the land to Israel ... as I have commanded you" (13:6).
- These were the lands that "Moses the servant of the Lord gave them" (13:8).

2. God's Covenant (12:21)

The initial boundaries of Israel's lands were secured by God's covenant with Israel:

- God promised the lands of Cisjordan as Israel's inheritance (*nachalah*) in his covenant with Abraham.
- God confirmed his promise in his covenant in Moses.
- Transjordan is also called Israel's inheritance (13:8).

3. Standard of Moses' Law (14:19)

Israel's initial boundaries accorded with the standard of Moses' law:

- Moses directed Israel to possess the lands of Cisjordan (Deuteronomy 20:16, 17).
- The law of Moses granted possession of Transjordan (Numbers 32:33-42; Deuteronomy 3:8-17).

4. God's Supernatural Power (15:35)

The author of Joshua drew attention to God's supernatural power:

- Regarding Cisjordan, God declared that he himself would drive the remaining Canaanites out (13:6).
- Regarding Transjordan, Israel's possession of these lands resulted from God's supernatural victories over Sihon king of the Amorites and Og in Bashan (13:10, 12).

5. All Israel (16:43)

The record of Israel's initial boundaries documented the participation of all of Israel's tribes:

- Cisjordan was divided among “the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh” (13:7).
- Transjordan was the inheritance of “the other half of the tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites” (13:8).
- The tribe of Levi had a special inheritance (13:14).

III. Specific Allotments, 13:15–21:45 (17:42)

A. Structure and Content (18:41)

1. Allotments in Transjordan, 13:15-33 (19:54)

- Reuben, 13:15-23
- Gad, 13:24-28
- Half-tribe of Manasseh, 13:29-31
- Levi, 13:32-33

Overlapping territories and disagreements over borders made it necessary to explain in detail to whom specific regions belonged.

2. Allotments in Cisjordan, 14:1-21:45 (22:43)

a. Opening Summary, 14:1-5

- records Joshua's actions and how they reflected what Moses had already done in Transjordan
- notes that Joshua's land assignments were in accordance with the will of God

b. Closing Summary, 21:43-45

- All the tribes "took possession of [their lands], and they settled there" (21:43).
- "Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass" (21:45).

c. Judah, 14:6–15:63

- received a very large inheritance
- was destined to be the royal tribe of Israel (Genesis 49:8-12)

The narrative of Judah:

- includes the lands given to Caleb
- lists more towns and villages than are listed for any other tribe

d. Ephraim & Manasseh, 16:1-17:18

- received a great deal of land in the northern regions of Canaan
- received a rich inheritance because their father Joseph had replaced Reuben and received the double inheritance (Genesis 48, 49)

The narrative of Ephraim and Manasseh:

- gives an overview of Joseph's lands in Cisjordan and specific details about the tribe of Ephraim
- records Manasseh's territory, including the land inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters (Numbers 27)
- concludes with Joshua's explanation that Ephraim and Manasseh received more land due to their large numbers

e. Minor Tribes, 18:1-19:51

The narrative of the minor tribes:

- begins with Joshua's call for representatives of each tribe to survey the lands

- closes with a story indicating that the tribes approved of these arrangements because they gave Joshua his own special inheritance

- records allotments for Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. These tribes:
 - didn't receive nearly as much land as Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh

 - later, had difficulties maintaining their lands

f. Levi, 20:1-21:42

The narrative of Levi:

- names the cities of refuge

- lists the Levitical cities in general, following Moses' instructions in Numbers 35:6-34

Levitical cities were scattered throughout the other tribes' territories so the Levites could lead all tribes in God's service.

B. Original Meaning (32:30)

To further the spread of God's kingdom, the original audience needed to recognize the status and differences God had established for each tribe.

1. Divine Authority (33:07)

Divine authority directed the distribution of lands among the tribes:

- The Transjordan allotments were the divisions that Moses had given them (13:8, 15, 24, 29).
- Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes had established the divisions of the land in Cisjordan (14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:1).
- The tribe of Levi's inheritance was introduced with the words, "Then the Lord said to Joshua..." (20:1).

Dissatisfaction with these specific tribal allotments amounted to dissatisfaction with what God had directed.

2. God's Covenant (34:47)

The author of Joshua emphasized that Israel's tribal allotments were based on God's covenant by calling them their "inheritance."

The author:

- called the Transjordan lands Israel's inheritances (13:32)
- identified the Levites' special portion as their inheritance (13:33)
- used the term "inheritance" in the opening summary of allotments in Cisjordan (14:1-3)
- spoke of Judah's land as an inheritance (14:9, 13; 15:20)
- referred to Ephraim and Manasseh's land eight times as their inheritance (16:4; etc.)
- called the minor tribes' allotments their inheritance 17 times
- mentioned that each tribe gave towns and pasturelands to the Levites from their inheritance (21:3)
- wrote in his closing summary that God had given Israel "all the land that he swore to give to their fathers" (21:43).

If anyone neglected these allotments, they neglected the sacred promise of God to his people as their covenant Lord.

3. Standard of Moses' Law (36:46)

In his report of Israel's specific tribal allotments, the author of Joshua stressed obedience to the standard of Moses' law:

- Joshua acted "as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses" (14:2).

- The Israelites divided the land “as the Lord commanded Moses” (14:5).
- Zelophehad’s daughters appealed to what “the Lord commanded Moses” (17:4).
- Israel was to follow what God had spoken to them “through Moses” (20:2).
- Cities were assigned to the tribe of Levi as “commanded through Moses” (21:2, 8).

The appeal to the standard of Moses’ law in these chapters called all generations of Israel to observe these divisions of the land.

4. God’s Supernatural Power (38:05)

Israel’s specific tribal allotments were confirmed by God’s supernatural power.

The record of allotments in Transjordan mentions:

- the miraculous defeat of King Sihon (13:10, 27)
- Balaam’s killing (13:22)
- victory over Og in Bashan (13:31)

The record of allotments in Cisjordan repeatedly refers to casting lots – one of the ways God supernaturally revealed his will to Israel (Numbers 36:2; Proverbs 16:33):

- opening summary (14:2)
- allotments to the minor tribes
- tribe of Levi (21:4, 10)

These allotments were not to be violated because God himself had established them.

5. All Israel (41:20)

The chapters on Israel's specific tribal allotments stress the inclusion of all Israel.

- The record of allotments in Transjordan specifies lands for each tribe to the east of the Jordan.
- The record of allotments in Cisjordan reports what was given to the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, Manasseh, the minor tribes, and the tribe of Levi.

Despite the circumstances the original audience faced, all of Israel was to have its rightful portion of the Promised Land.

IV. National Unity, 22:1-34 (42:46)

The natural divide between the tribes in Transjordan and Cisjordan nearly led to a war but Joshua led the tribes on both sides to remain united.

A. Structure and Content (44:18)**1. Construction of Altar, 22:1-10 (44:37)**

- After Israel's victories in Cisjordan, Joshua sent the Transjordan tribes home.
- While returning home, they built an altar near the Jordan River.
- The Cisjordan tribes assumed the altar had been erected as a substitute for the Lord's altar at the Tabernacle of Moses.

2. Threat of War, 22:11-14 (45:28)

- The Cisjordan tribes feared God's anger on all of Israel and made plans to attack.
- Phinehas and ten other men confronted the Transjordan tribes.

3. Confrontation, 22:15-31 (45:59)

- The delegation warned that the altar violated God's command.

- The Transjordan leaders explained that the altar was a symbol of their unity with the Cisjordan tribes.
- The delegation rejoiced because the Transjordan tribes had not been unfaithful to the Lord.

4. Cessation of Threat, 22:32, 33 (46:45)

- The delegation reported what they had learned.
- The Cisjordan tribes praised God and stopped speaking of war.

5. Naming of Altar, 22:34 (47:03)

- The Transjordan tribes named their altar “Witness” (“a witness between us that the Lord is God”).
- They confirmed their intentions to sacrifice only at the Tabernacle and their commitment to national unity.

B. Original Meaning (47:39)

The events of these chapters showed the original audience how to maintain their unity, even in the face of tremendous potential for conflict.

1. **Divine Authority (48:29)**

The theme of divine authority appears in the chapters about national unity:

- Joshua, God's ordained leader, called for the tribes of Transjordan to return to their allotted lands (22:1).
- Phinehas, the son of the priest, led the delegation from Cisjordan (22:13).

The participation of divinely-ordained authorities called the original audience to uphold national unity in their own day.

2. **God's Covenant (49:43)**

The story of national unity touches on God's covenant:

- The Transjordan tribes didn't want the other tribes to say, "You have no portion in the Lord" (22:25, 27)

The author closely connected the word "portion" (*cheleq*) with "inheritance" (*nachalah*) (Joshua 18:7; 19:9).

- The Transjordan tribes wanted to be treated as full heirs of the covenant promises given to their ancestors.

The original audience must never forget that all the tribes had a portion in the Promised Land that was rooted in God's covenant.

3. **Standard of Moses' Law (51:17)**

The account of Israel's national unity highlights the standard of Moses' law:

- Joshua warned, "be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses ... commanded you" (22:5).
- The Cisjordan delegation warned the Transjordan tribes not to violate Moses' law by building an unauthorized altar (22:19).
- The Transjordan tribes affirmed Moses' law saying, "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord" (22:29).

The original audience was to seek the unity of the nation, but only in accordance with the regulations of Moses' law.

4. **God's Supernatural Power (52:24)**

The narrative of national unity also draws attention to God's supernatural power:

- The delegation warned that God supernaturally brought a plague on Israel when they sinned at Peor (22:17).
- Phinehas acknowledged, "Today we know that the Lord is in our midst" (22:31).

References to God's supernatural power reminded the original audience that the call to national unity was no mere human affair.

5. All Israel (53:32)

It's not surprising that the narrative on national unity highlights the theme of all Israel:

- Joshua referred to the Israelites on both sides of the Jordan as “brothers” (22:3, 7, 8).
- The sin of some in Israel could bring God's wrath against the whole congregation (22:17, 20).
- The altar's name, “a witness between us that the Lord is God,” affirmed the unity of Israel's faith (22:34).

The author made it clear that tensions between Israel's tribes in Joshua's day were resolved because of deep commitments to the unity of Israel's tribes.

V. Christian Application (54:41)

What happened in Joshua's time was only one step toward the much greater fulfillment of God's inheritance for his people in Christ.

A. Inauguration (55:56)

Jesus' first advent was a major step toward fulfilling Israel's hopes of regaining their inheritance and expanding it to include the whole world:

- God appointed Jesus “heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2) and “heir of the world” (Romans 4:13).
- Those who are in Christ are heirs with him (Galatians 3:29; Romans 8:17).

- Jesus ministered throughout the boundaries of Israel's tribal inheritances.
- Jesus gathered to himself a faithful remnant from the tribes of Israel who would inherit the earth with him.
- Representatives of the tribes of Israel began to follow Christ "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5).

The most important connection between Israel's inheritance and the inauguration of Christ's kingdom is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit is "the guarantee of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14).
- The Spirit is "a guarantee" or the first installment of our future inheritance in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5).

The major themes in this portion of Joshua help us reflect on the foretaste of our inheritance in the Holy Spirit:

- Divine authority – Jesus, his apostles and prophets distributed believers' inheritance in the Spirit with divine authority.
- God's covenant – Jesus' distribution of the Holy Spirit to God's people was in fulfillment of the new covenant in Christ.
- Standard of Moses' law – The distribution of the Spirit was the result of Christ's perfect obedience to Moses' law.
- God's supernatural power – Even greater supernatural power than in Joshua's day was at work in the distribution of the Holy Spirit.
- All Israel – Both the faithful remnant of Israel and Gentile believers received the Holy Spirit.

B. Continuation (1:03:00)

In the continuation of his kingdom, Christ blesses his people with foretastes of the world to come through his Spirit.

The New Testament calls the church to:

- move forward in the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18)
- acknowledge the specific variety of gifts given to believers (1 Corinthians 12:4)
- be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3)

The major themes of this division of Joshua provide opportunities for us to discern how we are to live for Christ day by day:

- Divine authority – We are to acknowledge Christ’s authority by seeking our inheritance in the Spirit and not in worldly things.
- God’s covenant – The Spirit seals us for the day of redemption because of the new covenant in Christ.
- Standard of Moses’ law – We live in the inheritance of the Spirit as Moses’ law is applied in the light of New Testament revelation.
- God’s supernatural power – Our inheritance is poured out by the power of God’s Spirit.
- All Israel – Christ’s followers from every tribe and nation on earth share the same inheritance in the Spirit.

C. Consummation (1:05:46)

The record of Israel's tribal inheritances strengthens our hopes for the inheritance we'll receive at the consummation of Christ's kingdom.

- When Jesus returns he will rule over “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1).
- As the people of God, the new creation will be our eternal inheritance (Revelation 21:7).

The main themes in this division of Joshua turn our eyes toward the hope we have in the consummation of Christ's kingdom:

- Divine authority – Jesus will do God's bidding perfectly and fully when he returns in glory.
- God's covenant – Our final inheritance is secured by the new covenant in Christ.
- Standard of Moses' law – Every follower of Christ will be fully conformed to Christ's image and will fulfill the standard of all divine revelation in the world to come.
- God's supernatural power – God will display his power as never before when Christ returns.
- All Israel – Everyone that is in Christ will receive their eternal inheritance in the world to come.

VI. Conclusion (1:09:40)

3. Which tribes received allotments in Transjordan? Which tribes received allotments in Cisjordan? What was the special inheritance of the tribe of Levi? Explain why the specific allotments were different for Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh.

4. How did the author of Joshua weave his five recurring themes into the record of Israel's *specific tribal allotments*? Include at least one example for each theme.

9. As the people of God, what inheritance do we hope to receive at the consummation of Christ's kingdom? How do the five main themes in the record of Israel's tribal inheritances apply to this hope?

Application Questions

1. Once the Israelites were settled in the Promised Land, they were to spread God's blessings to all the nations of the world. Today, how do we spread God's blessings to the whole world? How are you personally spreading God's blessings from where you live?
2. In Joshua 24:13, God told Israel, "I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant." Does this seem unfair to you? Explain your answer.
3. Why was it so important that Israel rid the Promised Land of idolatrous people groups? What can we do to protect our families from idolatrous worldviews in the new covenant age?
4. Israel used the practice of casting lots to determine God's will. How do we determine God's will for our lives? Should we cast lots? Why or why not?
5. The Cisjordan tribes were ready to go to war against their fellow Israelites to defend God's honor and commands. How might this be applied today? Should Christians today ever administer spiritual discipline? What would that look like?
6. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is the "down-payment" or "guarantee" of our future inheritance? How might this guarantee strengthen your faith and confidence in your salvation?
7. How can Christ's people pursue unity in this present age when believers are divided among many denominations and conflicting theologies? How do we maintain this unity without becoming tolerant of false teaching?
8. Do you think Old Testament Israel's inheritance of physical land has any relevance for believers in the new covenant, or is it merely a symbolic lesson for us? What will we inherit? Will any of it be physical?
9. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

cheleq – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “portion” or “territory”; sometimes associated with inheritance

Cisjordan – The lands to the west of the Jordan River that God promised to Israel as an inheritance (lit. “beside the Jordan”)

consummation – Third and final stage of redemption when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

continuation – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

Eleazar – Third son of Aaron and high priest at the time of Moses and Joshua; father of Phinehas

inauguration – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

Jacob – Son of Isaac who became the familial head of the twelve tribes of Israel

Joseph – Eleventh son of Jacob; favored by his father; sold into slavery by his jealous brothers; rose to power in Egypt by interpreting Pharaoh's dreams; father of Ephraim and Manasseh

Joshua – Leader of Israel after the death of Moses who brought the Israelites into the

Promised Land and faithfully distributed Israel's tribal inheritances

Levites – Those from the tribe of Levi; served as priests for the nation of Israel

Moses – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

nachalah – Hebrew noun (transliteration) meaning “inheritance”

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

new heavens and new earth – The last stage of redemptive history when creation will be completed and perfected; God's eternal kingdom where his people will dwell with him forever in perfect peace and fellowship

Phinehas – Son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron; high priest after his father; known for his zealous faith

Promised Land – The land that God promised to give as an inheritance to Abraham and his descendants

Transjordan – The lands to the east of the Jordan River where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh received permission to settle (lit. “across the Jordan”)

Wadi of Egypt – Either an eastern branch of the Nile that no longer exists, or Wadi El-Arish that still exists east of the Nile; one of the borders of the Promised Land identified in Genesis 15