

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

By

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### **LESSON TEN**

#### **JOSHUA**

Joshua might be called "*The book of conquest and division*," with reference to the events in Canaan it records. According to the marginal chronology it covers a period of how many years? Its character is that of a military campaign, and I have read a criticism of it from that point of view, which places Joshua in the very first rank of military commanders, classing him with the Caesars, and Hannibals, and Napoleons, and Wellingtons, and Grants of all ages. We know, of course, whence he secured his wonderful equipment, and are not surprised at this estimate of him, but it is interesting to have it come to us from another source. The first great fact in the book might be described as

#### **I. The Command to Joshua, Chapter 1**

Observe the renewal of the gift of the land, (v. 4), and compare the marginal references to the same matter; for this is not a dead issue, but a very live one, and one that is coming up again in the settlement of "the Eastern question."

Observe the promise (vv. 5, 6) and the conditions of blessing (vv. 7, 8). Also the promptness and leadership of Joshua (vv. 9-15). Suppose we call the second great fact

#### **II. The Spying of the Land, Chapter 2**

As this was not disapproved of GOD, we may assume it has His sanction, and shows that, notwithstanding His promise to Joshua, the latter was to use the ordinary methods of warfare except where specially instructed otherwise. The use of means is not dishonoring to GOD, nor does it discount faith in any way, sometimes indeed the very opposite is true. It may exhibit weaker faith to be straining after the marvelous always, than to be willing to carry on the work of GOD with the common agencies at hand.

It need not be supposed that GOD commended Rahab's falsehood by what we read in Hebrews 11:31, or James 2:25, any more than that He commended her other sins. Those allusions are to call attention to her faith, a living faith which took hold of GOD and saved her, sinner as she was.

Indeed this story of Rahab is in several points a suggestive type of redemption, and can be employed as a sermon or Bible reading.

Observe:

- her abode,
- a condemned city;
- her character;
- her faith;
- the promise she received;
- the token she displayed;
- her deliverance (chap. 6);
- her interest in saving others.

All these particulars can easily be wrought out into a most helpful and soul-stirring discourse.

### **III. The Crossing of Jordan, Chapters 3, 4**

Let the title at the head of this paragraph identify the third great fact.

- see the preparation for it, (3:1-5),
- observe the particulars, (3:14-17), and
- memorials of the event, (4:8-9).

Dwell especially on 3:15, which shows it to have been all the more extraordinary because of the time it took place. The locality named in verse 16 was about 30 miles from their encampment.

This event has always seemed to me an impressive type of the mediatorial or intercessory work of CHRIST on behalf of His people. The priests standing in the river-bed until every member of the host had passed over in safety, strangely yet blessedly, brings to mind Hebrews 7:25.

F. B. Meyer, in *Joshua, and the Land of Promise*, suggests many spiritual analogies of this kind, helpful not only to the quiet reader, but also to one who is teaching the contents of the book to others.

#### **IV. The Conquest of Jericho, Chapters 5-7**

As usual, locate the facts, beginning with those immediately preceding the event itself, the circumcision, the passover, the appearance of the captain of the Lord's host.

Observe that the act of circumcision indicated a gracious renewal on the part of GOD of His covenant with the children whose fathers had sinned against Him, and perished in the wilderness. In this sense verse 9 may be explained.

- what indicates the captain of the Lord's host to be a divine person?
- how do His name and equipment indicate His interest in and approval of the invasion taking place?
- with what other Christophanies have we met previously?

There must have been a strategic reason for first attacking Jericho, and the plan seems to have been by its destruction to effectually separate the northern foes in Canaan from those in the south, and thus prevent a military coalition.

Observe the particular directions to Israel. No battlements, but a promenade! How foolish it must have seemed not only to their enemies, but even to some of themselves! Compare such a passage as I Corinthians 1:17-31. To what is this victory ascribed (Hebrews 11:30)?

Dwell on the marked illustration it affords of saving faith.

The Israelites did nothing, and yet they did everything. They did the most they could do in the fact that they absolutely surrendered themselves to GOD, obeying Him to the last degree. Does not the man who truly accepts JESUS CHRIST do this?

Dwell on the illustration it affords of conquering faith.

Hearts are shut up like Jericho (6:1), but GOD gives them to His servants who obey Him.

The utter destruction referred to in verse 21, seems horrible in our eyes, but two or three things are to be kept in mind in judging of it.

- in the first place, it is the teaching of the Bible itself that has made such an act horrible to us.
- in the second place, it was in perfect accord with the usual methods of warfare in those times.
- in the third place, and this is the all important thought, it was GOD's judgment on sin.

Sin is unspeakably awful, and we must not minimize it. All through the Old Testament these object lessons are given us, which in the goodness of GOD, are intended to be deterrent both for nations and individuals, and which in the opposite event, only become types of the universal judgments or judgment to come. The death of the Son of GOD to put away the consequences of sin must have been vitally necessary to men. Let these Old Testament facts be used to impress this truth on those we teach. and lead them to the Saviour.

#### **V. The Defeat at Ai, Chapters 7, 8**

This next great fact, will be found to emphasize what has just been said about sin, and to bring out one or two new thoughts about it.

The former illustration applied to sin in the world, but this to sin in the church, or in the individual believer.

Here "**the children of Israel committed a trespass**" (v. 1).

See the consequences which befell all for the folly of one (vv. 2-5). Compare James 2:10, for an individual application. Joshua's ignorance of the cause of defeat (7:6-15) has a deep lesson likewise which may bring to mind II Corinthians 6:14; 7:1, and kindred passages. Mr. Beecher once said that half of our troubles were just GOD dragging us; they would depart if we stood on our feet and went whither He desired. This story of Joshua's discouragement is in that line. Let verses 16-21 be used as an illustration of the deep principle in Numbers 32:23, last clause.

Let it be remembered in Achan's case as in that of Nadab and Abihu, that it is not a question of the eternal damnation of his soul, but of GOD's earthly judgments among His people. Let the victory recorded in chapter 8 illustrate the power over spiritual enemies which becomes theirs who are living in obedience to GOD's commands.

## **VI. The Rescue of Gibeon, Chapters 9, 10**

This fact brings us to the most interesting part of the book, as it is also the most critical moment in the present history of Israel.

Observe the wiles of the Gibeonites (9:3-13), and the failure of Israel to ask counsel of GOD before entering into a covenant with them (vv. 14, 15).

Observe, too, the relation which the Gibeonites ever after sustained towards Israel (vv. 22, 27).

Observe the confederation of the five kings against Gibeon, and the reason for it (10:1-5).

Study the location of the kingdom or cities represented by these kings, and observe that they were all in the southern part of Canaan. Their destruction, therefore, in a bunch, meant the conquest practically of the whole of that region.

Observe the supernatural phenomena associated with the battle, e. g., the Lord's special encouragement to Joshua (v. 8), the visitation of hail-stones (v. 11), the remarkable prayer (v. 12), and more remarkable answer (vv. 13, 14), and finally, the issue of the contest (42).

### **Did the Sun and Moon Stand Still?**

This miracle shares with that in the book of Jonah, the distinction of being more "spoken against" than any other in the Old Testament.

Joshua speaks in verse 12, and the historian in verse 13 in the popular language of men referring

to the heavenly bodies. It seems to a spectator on the earth's surface as though they moved, while in reality the earth moves with reference to them. This miracle, therefore, literally construed, was the cessation of the earth's revolution on its axis by the space of a day. Men say this could not be, but they forget who GOD is, and what He has done. Given a GOD who can create the earth and set it rolling on its axis, and it can not be too hard for Him to stop it twenty-four hours without allowing it, or the universe of which it is an important part, to get out of order.

All the supernatural phenomena attendant on this battle, and its prime importance to Israel at that particular juncture, and hence to the plans and purposes of GOD in the earth, prepare us to accept this view of the case.

In addition to this there is other corroborative evidence which may, or may not, be regarded as having value. For example, Professor C. A. Totten, a mathematician, and at one time professor of military science in Yale College, has made and published calculations to show that one day in the earth's history was 48 hours long. A tradition to the same effect is held by the Egyptians and Chinese.

These things are not stated for the purpose of maintaining a theory, or defending a principle of exegesis, or opposing Christians who take another view of the matter, but simply to express a personal opinion. Men whom we all love and respect hold differently. For example, F. B. Meyer, in the book previously referred to, speaks of this incident thus: "GOD could make the clock of the universe stop if it were necessary. But it is not necessary to believe that He did this. By some process, the laws of which are at present unknown to us, but of which we get glimpses, in refraction, in the afterglow of sunset, GOD was able to prolong the daylight until Israel had made an end of slaying their foes."

## **VII. The Close of the War, Chapter 11**

The seventh great fact in the book may be stated in the words at the head of this paragraph, and requires the briefest treatment. Examine the map, and observe that the names of the places mentioned in the text bear out the general statement as to locality, in verse 2. Locate the particular field of battle (v. 5). Observe the vastness of the combination against Israel (vv. 1-4), and the thoroughness of the victory (vv. 8, 10, 12). Observe that this did for the northern part of Canaan what the previous victory secured for the south.

Observe the reference to the conclusion of the campaign (v. 23), to which allusion will be made again in the study of the next book.

Verse 20 may trouble some, but it must be remembered that when such "hardening" is spoken of, it always presupposes conduct on the part of the people obstinately opposed to GOD's will. This was dwelt on in the case of Pharaoh. Such hardening is a divine judgment on men for wicked actions freely indulged in on their part. Compare II Thessalonians 2, especially verses 10-12. Is there any evil of the present day, of a religious character, which these verses bring to mind? - what of Christian Science, for example? Let us beware of it.

## **VIII. The Division of the Land, Chapters 12-21**

In the consideration of this event there are certain especially interesting features to be observed.

In the first place, the conclusion of the campaign noticed in the last chapter must be qualified to our understanding (13:1). The land was conquered in a general sense, but not in detail. The first settlers in this country conquered the land when New England was settled, but there was a great deal of conquering done afterwards before the Pacific coast was reached. The land was ours in one sense, and it had to become ours in another sense.

Observe that the separate tribes were not as eager for this conquest as might have been expected, and that personal ease and advantage soon began to supersede zeal for GOD (16:10; 18:3, etc).

Observe the fulfilment of earlier instructions concerning Caleb and Joshua (14:6-14; 19:49, 50), the setting up of the Tabernacle (18:1), and the assignment of the cities of refuge (chap. 20).

### **IX. The Altar of Witness, Chapter 22**

Observe the commendable fidelity of the two and a half tribes (vv. 1-6), and the commendable action of patient inquiry and investigation (vv. 11-33) on the part of the other tribes.

Individuals have sustained "strained" relations with one another for years, and nations have gone to war for the lack of observance of such an example (Matthew 18:15).

Observe the value of public memorials of great men and great events. How often have such memorials been referred to thus far in our studies!

- what statutes, or monuments or tablets of this kind are in your town?
- what are you yourself doing personally, to instruct and benefit later generations in this way?
- especially, how is the memory of GOD's great goodness being perpetuated in a public way?
- is the Sabbath observed, Thanksgiving Day, or fast day?
- is GOD publicly recognized and honored among us as He ought to be?
- do our children thus hear us rehearse His wondrous acts of old time?
- should not Washington's birthday, and the Fourth of July be holy days before the Lord, for His sake and our children's sake?
- what great memorial or "altar of witness" has GOD Himself set up for us in His church to keep perpetually before us and our children the wonderful sacrifice of His Son?

All this is aside somewhat, but may be suggestive in the use of this chapter in preaching and teaching.

### **X. The Renewal of the Covenant, Chapters 23, 24**

- in what solemn and important act does Joshua now engage before his death?
- what commandment does he lay upon the people (23:6-8)?
- with what promise does he assure them (v. 10)?
- what warning does he give them (vv. 12, 13)?
- what seems to be his feeling as to their future conduct, as expressed in the general tenor of his words?

- what does he set before them (24:15)?
- what obligation do the people lay upon themselves in the verses that follow?
- what testimony to the authenticity of this book is contained in verse 26?

At what age did Joshua die? Point out in these two chapters the ways in which he kept his own merit in the background and exalted GOD.

~ end of Lesson 10 ~

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