

Joshua

Background

The book of Joshua belongs to a group of writings known as the “historical books” which record the span of about a thousand years of Israel’s history from Joshua to Esther. The author of Joshua is anonymous but Jewish traditions (Talmud) claim that Joshua wrote his own book except for the account of his death and the death of Eleazar.

The exodus from Egypt and liberation from the oppression of the Egyptians was only part of the salvation story. God had promised more than redemption from bondage; possession of the land of inheritance was an integral element of that salvation, which was also tied to God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:18-21).

Joshua is a book of the inheritance: its conquest and distribution. It continues the story from Deuteronomy with Joshua as God’s chosen servant tasked with completing the work of Moses to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land. It portrays Israel as God’s instrument of wrath that He uses to execute just punishment on the nations to purge the land of evil in order to bring the Israelites into their promised rest.

“Trusting a faithful savior to lead God’s people to land and rest”

Outline

Joshua can be broadly divided into two sections. Chapters 1-12 record the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land and their military campaigns to remove the inhabitants of the land and take what God had given to them. It ends with a list of Israel’s military victories and the territories they acquired. Chapters 13-24 are a record of the division of the land among the tribes of Israel and conclude with the death of Joshua and Eleazar the priest.

The Entrance into the Land (1:1-5:12)

Joshua’s Commission (1:1-18)

After the death of Moses, God spoke to Joshua and commissioned him to take the people of Israel into Canaan, assuring him that the promises He made to Moses would be carried out for him (1:3, 5). God would give victory to Joshua all the days of his life and would never leave or forsake him (1:5, 9). Joshua was exhorted to “be strong and courageous” (1:6-7, 9, see also v.18) because he would always have God’s presence.

The Reconnaissance of Jericho (2:1-24)

-Joshua sent two spies to survey Jericho where they stayed in the home of Rahab the prostitute. During that time, the spies were discovered and reported to king of Jericho who sent men to Rahab’s home in search of them. Meanwhile, Rahab had hidden the spies on her roof. Rahab lied to the king’s men to send them away and helped the spies to escape from the city through her window in the city wall.

-Rahab recognized who the God of Israel was and that Jericho’s defeat was imminent so she had the spies swear an oath to spare her life and the lives of her family before she sent them on their way (2:14).

-**Note:** The attitude behind Rahab’s actions was a result of faith (Hebrews 11:31) and she is commended for hiding the spies and sending them off to safety (James 2:25). However, this recognition only extends to what she did and not to the fact that she acted through deception.

Crossing the Jordan (3:1-4:24)

Joshua instructed the priests who carried the ark of the Lord to take the ark into water and the rest of the people to follow them. As the men who carried the ark stepped into the Jordan the river was completely cut off. The Israelites were able to cross over while the ark remained in the middle of the river until everyone had reached the other side (compare with Exodus 14:21-22).

Consecration of the People at Gilgal (5:1-12)

-God commanded Joshua to circumcise the men of Israel because from the time the Israelites came out of Egypt they had not practiced circumcision (5:5-7, see also Genesis 17:9-14).

-The Israelites also celebrated the Passover and had their first taste of the produce of the land at which time God stopped providing them with manna.

The Conquest of the Land (5:13-12:24)

The Initial Battles (5:13-8:35)

Victory at Jericho (5:13-6:27)

-As Joshua approached Jericho he saw a man in front of him holding a drawn sword who identified himself as the commander of the army of the Lord and told Joshua to remove his sandals because the place where he stood was holy ground (compare with Exodus 3:1-5).

-The Lord met with Joshua and instructed him on how to invade Jericho. The Israelites were to march around the city with the ark and with seven priests blowing trumpets leading the way for six days. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times and give a war cry in unison at the signal from the trumpets. When the Israelites did this, the walls of the city collapsed allowing everyone to go directly into the city. They put the entire city to the sword and burned it sparing only Rahab and those in her house.

-The salvation of Rahab's family amidst of the destruction of Jericho parallels the first Passover during the plague on the firstborn of Egypt in several ways:

- 1) In Egypt the destroyer of the Lord swept through the city to punish the Egyptians (Exodus 12:23); in Jericho the army of the Lord swept through the city to punish the Canaanites (6:20).
- 2) In Egypt the red blood of the Passover lamb on the doorframe meant salvation for the inhabitants (Exodus 12:13); in Jericho the scarlet cord in the window meant salvation for the inhabitants (2:17-18).
- 3) In Egypt the people were told to stay in their homes until morning (Exodus 12:22b); in Jericho if anyone left Rahab's house his blood would be on his own head (2:19).

The main difference is that in Egypt the Israelites were the ones who were spared whereas in Jericho it was a Canaanite family that was saved. This is another fulfillment of blessing coming to the nations from Abraham's offspring (2:14, see Genesis 22:18).

Achan's sin (7:1-26)

Achan took some treasure from among the devoted things found in Jericho. On account of Achan's actions God was angry with the whole community so He allowed them to be defeated at Ai. God then revealed to Joshua that it was because of sin in the camp that they were not able to stand against their enemies. The words of Joshua in 6:18 had been fulfilled, the camp of Israel had been made liable to destruction (7:12). God instructed Joshua to have the Israelites present themselves before the Lord so that He could reveal who the sinner was. When Achan was discovered, the whole community took him, his family, and all that he owned to the Valley of Achor. There they stoned them and then burned them with all of their possessions.

Victory at Ai (8:1-29)

The Israelites marched out again against Ai. They set an ambush and used their army to lure the city's defenses out, enabling the ambush party to take the city from behind. The Lord delivered the city into Israel's hands and they struck down all of the people of Ai until there was no one left and set the city on fire. The destruction of Ai was complete (8:24-26)

The renewal of the covenant (8:30-35)

Joshua built an altar to the Lord on mount Ebal and offered sacrifices on it. He then renewed the covenant with the people of Israel reading the law along with its blessings and curses as Moses had commanded (Deuteronomy 11:29).

The Campaign in the South (9:1-10:43)

The treaty with the Gibeonites (9:1-27)

The kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites banded together to make war against Israel. The Gibeonites, however, resorted to a ruse to make a treaty with Israel. They hid the fact that they were natives of the land and presented themselves as distant travelers. The men of Israel didn't inquire of God and so were fooled into making a treaty with the Gibeonites. Because the Israelites were bound by their oath they pressed the Gibeonites into service as woodcutters and water carriers.

The long day of Joshua (10:1-15)

When Adoni-Zedek the king of Jerusalem heard that Gibeon had made a treaty with Israel he joined with four other Amorite kings to attack Gibeon. The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua for help so Joshua marched with the entire Israelite army to attack the Amorites. The Lord threw the Amorite armies into confusion (the Hebrew word implies terror or panic) and they were defeated. As the Amorites fled God sent large hailstones on them and killed many of them. On that day Joshua called to the Lord for the sun to stand still and God answered, prolonging the daylight for a full day until Israel had defeated its enemies.

The southern cities conquered (10:16-43)

- The five Amorite kings fled and hid in a cave but when Joshua learned where they were he sealed them in. Meanwhile, almost every one of the Amorite soldiers was killed. Joshua then brought out the five Amorite kings and had his army commanders put their feet on their necks in a sign of defeat and humiliation and then he put the kings to death.
- From there Joshua took the city of Makkedah and put the entire city to the sword. The Lord also gave Joshua victory over Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. The destruction of each city was complete, no survivors were left.

The Campaign in the North (11:1-23)

- The king of Hazor joined forces with the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Acshaph, the northern kings, and the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites against Israel. The Lord met with Joshua and assured him of victory. Israel attacked the other armies and pursued them until there were no survivors left. Then they captured Hazor, putting its king and its people to the sword, and burned the city like they had done to Jericho and Ai (11:11). Joshua also put the other opposing kings to the sword.
- A summary of Joshua's victories (11:16-22).
- After Joshua captured all of the land he had been commanded to take he gave it as an inheritance to Israel. Then the land had rest from war (11:23).

The Defeated Kings of Canaan (12:1-24)

- A summary of the military conquests east of the Jordan under Moses and the allotment of that land (12:1-6).
- A summary of the 31 kings defeated under Joshua's leadership (12:7-24).

The Distribution of the Land (13:1-21:45)

The assignment of the inheritance was a joyful event and cause for celebration for Israel. They had previously sampled the goodness of the land but now the land was now theirs to keep. The Lord had finally given them rest in a place where they could flourish.

Areas yet to be Conquered (13:1-7)

When Joshua was an old man there were still large areas that needed to be taken over. God said that He Himself would drive out the Sidonians before the Israelites. He then instructed Joshua to allot these areas to Israel as an inheritance as well.

The Land Assigned to the Transjordan Tribes by Moses (13:8-33)

- A record of the distribution of the lands east of the Jordan (captured from Sihon and Og). Moses assigned the land to the Gadites, Reubenites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
- The tribe of Levi received no land inheritance because the offerings made to the Lord by fire would be theirs (13:14, 33; 18:7).

The Division of the Land of Canaan (14:1-19:51)

- A record of the distribution of the lands west of the Jordan.
- In faith Caleb asked for Hebron, the hill country that he surveyed when Israel first arrived at the edge of the Promised Land, to claim what was promised to him 40 years ago. Joshua blesses Caleb and gives him Hebron.
- Allotment for Judah
 - Caleb had victory over the Anakites in Hebron. He then marched against Debir offering his daughter Acsah in marriage to who whoever was able to capture it. Othniel his nephew was able to do it and he married Acsah.
- Allotment for Ephraim and Manasseh
 - Zelophehad's daughters claimed their father's inheritance (17:3-4).
 - The seven remaining tribes had yet to receive their inheritance because they didn't go to occupy the conquered land (18:3). Joshua had the people appoint men to survey the land and report back on it. He then cast lots to determine which parcel of land each tribe would get.
- Allotments for Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan
- Allotment for Joshua. The Israelites gave Joshua the town he asked for, Timnath Serah in Ephraim, and he built it up and settled there.

The Cities Assigned to the Levites (20:1-21:45)

- The cities of refuge and procedures for admitting someone who was waiting to stand trial for the unintentional death of another person. There were three cities of refuge on each side of the Jordan.
- The Levite family heads claim the towns and pasturelands promised to them. These came from the inheritance of the other tribes (Numbers 35:6-8).

The promises of God were fulfilled completely: Israel had victory over all of its enemies and rest was achieved on every side (21:43-45).

Epilogue: Tribal Unity and Loyalty to the Lord (22:1-24:33)

The Altar of Witness (22:1-34)

- Joshua called together the Transjordan tribes and blessed them. He then released them to go home. On their way back, the Transjordan tribes built an imposing altar in Geliloth. When the other tribes found out about it they misinterpreted the intentions of the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites and gathered to wage war against them. They sent Phinehas and ten of the chief men to confront the Transjordan tribes about what they had done. The Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites explained that the altar was to be a witness to mark their partnership with the other tribes as worshippers of the God of Israel (22:34).
- As the tribes of Israel united against the inhabitants of Canaan, they were ready to do so again against their own people if they turned away from the Lord (22:11-12, 33). They understood the consequences of sin and were ready to purge it from among them.

Joshua's Farewell Exhortation (23:1-16)

Joshua summoned the leaders of Israel and encouraged them to follow God faithfully, warning them to not turn away from the Lord or to open the door to that possibility by associating with the peoples around them.

A Second Renewal of the Covenant (24:1-28)

Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel and set before them a choice to follow the Lord or to follow the gods of their forefathers or of the people of the land in which they lived. On that day the people renewed their covenant to serve the Lord.

The Death and Burial of Joshua and Eleazar (24:29-33)

Joshua dismissed the people to enjoy their inheritance. Joshua died at the age of 110 and was buried in the land of his inheritance but there was no provision made for a succession of leadership. Eleazar also died and was buried in the land allotted to his son.

Themes

God's Righteous Judgment

-God's judgment on sin is vividly displayed in the punishments that He executed on the inhabitants of Canaan (11:19-20). God had been patient with the Canaanites but they refused to turn from their evil ways (Genesis 15:16, Deuteronomy 9:4-5). The judgment on them was swift and devastating, entire peoples were annihilated. If there had been anyone righteous God could have saved them (E.g. Lot and Naomi). As it was, complete destruction was the result of almost every battle the Israelite's fought.

-The Israelites themselves were also sinners and were deserving of God's wrath like the Canaanites but because of God's goodness and mercy He chose to preserve them. However, there were some sins that did call for God's immediate punishment. When Achan took what was to be devoted to the Lord the entire nation suffered and others died on account of one man's sin (7:12). In the end, Achan's household and all that belonged to him faced destruction at the hands of Israel.

-The military campaigns in the book of Joshua as well as Israel's response to sin from their own people are graphic reminders that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Sin and idolatry are acts of war against the rightful reign of a holy God that merit His wrath. Through the Israelite army, God brought the fight to those who had been living in defiance to Him. The severity and extent of the judgments are indicators of how seriously God views sin and how much of an affront rebellion is to His holiness.

The Promises of God Fulfilled

God was faithful to fulfill all of the promise that He had made (21:45; 23:14). Throughout the book of Joshua there is also an ongoing fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham.

People – By this time God had already made the people of Israel numerous. Beyond sheer numbers there was a unity under God and collective submission to Him amongst all of the tribes of Israel. The Israelites walked in the faith of their forefather, showing themselves to be true children of Abraham (Romans 9:6-8), and were unified against sin and threats that were both from without (the people of Canaan) and within (7:23-25; 22:11-12). Even after the land had been won, the Transjordan tribes set up a monument as a reminder of their place with Israel (22:26-27, 34).

Place – Much of the book of Joshua is devoted to describing how the Promised Land was conquered and divided. Possession of the land was the goal and conclusion of the deliverance that God began when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt. It was a unilateral grant of God, which He fulfilled by fighting for Israel to bring His promises to pass (11:23, 21:43); God gave the Israelites victory over their enemies and established them in a land of abundance. The land was an extension of God's provision for His people (the manna stopped when the Israelites began eating the produce of the land, see 5:11-12) as well as a precursor to Israel as a kingdom under a earthly monarchy.

God's Presence – God was present with Israel in His going to war for them against their enemies (10:11, 14, 42; 11:6; 13:6; 23:3, 9-10; 24:12). Joshua makes it clear that it was because of God's personal intervention that Israel was able to achieve victory. His presence was also with Israel through His relationship with and guidance of their leader Joshua, just as He had done with Moses (1:5, 9).

Blessing to the Nations – Rahab and her family were saved out of the judgment on Jericho and brought into the community of the Israelites where they were treated kindly (2:14; 6:25). Aside from Rahab, there were other aliens who lived within the community who were included with Israel at the renewal of the covenant (8:33, 35). Aliens were also permitted to take shelter in the cities of refuge for the unintentional deaths of others, receiving its protection and the pardon that came with the death of the high priest (20:9, see also Numbers 35:9-15, 22-28).

Covenant Rest

Rest was the goal for God's people (1:13-15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1, see also 11:23; 14:15). It was made possible in light of the repeated episodes of Israel's failure in the wilderness only by the covenant faithfulness of God. The land and the rest are inseparable. Rest implied secure borders: the removal of Israel's enemies, peace with neighbouring countries, and an absence of threat to life and well-being. The Israelites had no rest during their time of wandering in the wilderness, even during extended stops, because it remained that they were not yet where they were meant to be. Their final destination had yet to be reached and they would eventually be required to leave the place where they were staying. The theme of rest in Joshua points forward to a coming time of complete rest and security for God's people (Hebrews 4:1-11).

Conclusion

From the time of Israel's exodus to their victory over the inhabitants of Canaan, God was leading His people on a journey to their promised home. The land of inheritance and the accompanying rest would be theirs. God's promises couldn't be thwarted even by the Israelites themselves as they stood on the character of the God who made them. He was faithful to accomplish all of His purposes and complete the deliverance that was begun in Egypt.

The people of Canaan were subject to God's righteous judgment at the hands of Israel for the evil they refused to turn from and though the punishment of the Canaanites was swift and complete, it pales in comparison to what Christ had to suffer to redeem His people from sin: the full, unmitigated wrath of God that all have earned, the true penalty of sin. In both cases, in the act of condemnation God was also accomplishing deliverance for His people.

The journey of the Israelites is a picture of the lives of all followers of Christ. We have been brought out of the slavery to sin that was Egypt, dying to the old self and rising anew from the Red Sea (2 Corinthians 5:17), and have been placed on the path to the land of God's inheritance. Despite having been enemies of God due to our sin (Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21) God will not fail in keeping His promise to bring salvation to us through Christ. One day we too will be given rest in Immanuel's land.

After Joshua's death the people were left in the land without a leader to guide them to serve the Lord.

Judges

Introduction

Judges continues the story from Joshua in post-conquest Canaan. The author of Judges is unknown but tradition ascribes the book to Samuel with possible contributions from the prophets Nathan and Gad. It is believed to have been written shortly after the events that are recorded in it took place. As with Joshua, the book of Judges begins with the death of Israel's leader but after Joshua there was no one chosen to take his place to lead the Israelites (Joshua 24:31).

Israel's failure to wipe out some of the tribes from the land began to take its toll on them. When the Israelites lived among the Canaanites they began living like the Canaanites. They lost sight of their unique identity as God's people and attached themselves to the people of Canaan, rejecting the kingship of the Lord.

If the concern in the book of Joshua was whether the Israelites would be able to take the land from the people who occupied it, the concern in Judges is whether or not the Israelites would be able to keep the land that they had won. Throughout the time of the judges, Israel is shown to be in constant need of a saviour in order to retain what they had gained from God.

“Requiring a perfect savior to maintain God's people's land and rest”

Outline

During the time of the judges Israel faced constant pressure from the surrounding nations. The people of Israel went through repeated cycles of apostasy and rebellion, suffering at the hands of foreign oppressors, crying out to God, and deliverance by a judge who was raised up by God to rescue Israel. There are nine of these cycles in 14 chapters and each time a judge of Israel died the people turned back to practices that were more wicked than what they had done before leading to a downward spiral of immoral behaviour.

-Note: The events recorded in the prologue and epilogue are not listed in strict chronological order with each other or with the events in the rest of the book of Judges. No chronological scheme of time as a whole is intended in the order of these accounts.

Prologue: Incomplete Conquest and Apostasy (1:1-3:6)

Israel's Failure to Purge the Land (1:1-2:5)

- The Israelites continued to occupy the Promised Land after Joshua's death to varying degrees of success.
- Judah and Simeon banded together and took Bezek, Jerusalem, Debir, Zephath, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. Caleb successfully took Hebron (1:20) and the house of Joseph took Bethel (1:23-25).
- A list of all of the people that Israel failed to drive out from the land (1:19, 21, 27-34). The successfulness of Israel's advance on the land decreased to the point where the Danites were confined by the Amorites to the hill country (1:34).
- The angel of the Lord confronted Israel at Bokim for their disobedience in partnering with the people of the land and not destroying their altars. As a result God would no longer drive out them out, allowing them to be a stumbling block to the Israelites.

God's Dealings with Israel's Rebellion (2:6-3:6)

- A summary of the events from the period after Joshua to the monarchy. The sequence of events for the accounts of the judges takes a standard form: disobedience, chastisement, crying out to God, and deliverance followed by a time of peace.
- Israel didn't know the Lord or what He had done for Israel (2:10). The previous generation had failed to raise their children in the knowledge and ways of the Lord. Israel intermarried with the people around them and served their gods, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord. Because of this God handed them over to raiders who plundered and oppressed them. When the Israelites cried out in their distress, God had compassion on them (2:18). He raised up judges to save them and delivered Israel throughout the lifetimes of the judges.

Oppression and Deliverance (3:7-16:31)

Judge	Oppression	Deliverance
Othniel (3:7-11)*	8 years under Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim	The land had peace for 40 years
Ehud (3:12-30)*	18 years under Eglon king of Moab	The land had peace for 80 years
Shamgar (3:31)	---	Struck down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad and saved Israel
Deborah (4:1-5:31)*	20 years under Jabin, a Canaanite king, and Sisera his army commander	The land had peace for 40 years
Gideon (6:1-8:35)*	7 years under the Midianites	The land had peace for 40 years
Tola (10:1-2)	---	Led Israel for 23 years
Jair (10:3-5)	---	Led Israel for 22 years
Jephthah (10:6-12:7)*	18 years under the Philistines and the Ammonites	Led Israel for 6 years
Ibzan (12:8-10)	---	Led Israel for 7 years
Elon (12:11-12)	---	Led Israel for 10 years
Abdon (12:13-15)	---	Led Israel for 8 years
Samson (13:1-16:31)*	40 years under the Philistines	Led Israel for 20 years

* Major judge

Othniel Defeats Aram Naharaim (3:7-11)

When Israel cried out because of Cushan-Rishathaim the Lord raised up Othniel, Caleb's nephew, to save them (Joshua 15:17; Judges 1:13). The Spirit of the Lord came upon him to make him Israel's judge and He overpowered king of Aram Naharaim.

Ehud Defeats Moab (3:12-30)

Eglon king of Moab enlisted the Ammonites and Amalekites and attacked Israel, capturing Jericho from them. When Israel cried out God gave them Ehud. On an errand to deliver tribute to Eglon, Ehud deceived the king and assassinated him. He then rallied Israel to capture the fords of Jordan and struck down ten thousand Moabites making them subject to Israel.

Deborah Defeats Canaan (4:1-5:31)

-Israel cried out to the Lord under the cruel oppression of Jabin and his commander Sisera. At that time, the prophetess Deborah was leading Israel and judging their disputes (4:5). Deborah sent for Barak with a plan to ambush Sisera but because Barak was reluctant to go (4:8) Sisera's defeat would be given to a woman. When Sisera advanced on Israel the Lord routed his army and all of his soldiers were killed. Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, the wife of a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab. Jael hid him in her tent and killed him with a tent peg and hammer after he had fallen asleep. On that day God subdued Jabin until the Israelites destroyed him.

-In Deborah's song Reuben, Gilead (Gad), Dan, and Asher were rebuked for not responding to the call to fight with Israel (5:16-17) and the town of Meroz in Naphtali was cursed for refusing to help (5:23). The unity that once marked the tribes of Israel had broken down.

Gideon Defeats Midian (6:1-8:35)

-The Midianites oppressed Israel and impoverished them by ruining their crops and killing their livestock. When Israel cried out God sent a prophet to rebuke them. The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and commissioned him to save Israel (6:14). That night God told Gideon to destroy his father's altar to Baal and

Asherah pole and to use their remains to offer one of his father's bulls. Gideon obeyed God but he did so at night because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town.

-When the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed the Jordan, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he summoned an army from Israel. Gideon asked for two signs involving his fleece and the threshing floor to confirm that God would save Israel through him, which God provided (6:36-40). Gideon and his men took trumpets and surrounded the Midianite camp. When the soldiers gave a battle cry and blew their trumpets God caused the men in the camp to turn on each other. Israel defeated their enemies and Gideon and his men chased after Zeba and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. When they arrived at Succoth, Gideon asked for bread for his troops but the officials refused him, the same happened at Peniel. Because of this, Gideon held a grudge against these two towns. He eventually overtook the Midianites and routed their entire army, capturing the two kings. He then went back to Succoth and Peniel and exacted revenge against them before executing the kings.

-After the defeat of Midian the Israelites wanted Gideon's family to rule over them. Gideon pointed the people back to God as their ruler (8:23). He asked for gold from the plunder and used it to make an ephod (a pagan object associated with idols, different from the priest's garb in Exodus 28:6-14) which he set up in his town (compare with Exodus 32:2-6). In this all of Israel was led astray. Israel immediately turned back to idolatry upon Gideon's death and failed to show kindness to his family.

Abimelech, the Anti-Judge (9:1-57)

-Abimelech, Gideon's son, tried to seize power in Israel and talked his way into the favour of his people. He hired mercenaries and went to his father's home and murdered all 70 of his brothers except for Jotham the youngest son who escaped. All the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo crowned Abimelech their king. Jotham called out the unfaithfulness and ingratitude of the people to Gideon's family and cursed Abimelech and the people of Shechem and Beth Millo to destroy each other.

-After reigning for three years, God caused dissension between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem. Gaal, a new resident of Shechem, stirred the people up against Abimelech. When Abimelech learned about it he set out to attack Shechem. Abimelech destroyed Shechem and struck down its people. When the citizens tried to take refuge in the tower of Shechem Abimelech set the tower on fire and killed the thousand people inside. He then lay siege to Thebez and captured it but when he approached its tower to set it on fire a woman dropped a millstone on his head. Abimelech had to have his armour-bearer to kill him to avoid the shame of being killed by a woman. Jotham's curse was fulfilled (9:16-20).

Jephthah Defeats Ammon (10:6-12:7)

-When the Israelites cried out from under the Philistines and Ammonites God initially rejected their plea because they had forsaken Him (10:12-14) but in the end He had compassion on them (10:16). Jephthah was a mighty warrior whose mother was a prostitute. He was driven from home by his half-brothers but when the Ammonites made war on Israel the elders of Gilead approached him for his help promising him headship over Gilead. Jephthah first attempted diplomacy with the king of Ammon but failed. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah and he advanced against the Ammonites. He rashly vowed to God to sacrifice the first thing that came out of his house to meet him in exchange for victory. God gave the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands and he subdued them but when he returned home his only child came out to meet him and he did to her as he had vowed.

-The Ephraimites went out to confront Jephthah for not including them in the battle against the Ammonites and threatened him. Jephthah didn't answer them gently as Gideon had done (Judges 8:1-3) but called the men of Gilead and struck down 42,000 of them in a civil war.

Samson Checks Philistia (13:1-16:31)

-There is no account of Israel crying out while they were under the rule of the Philistines for 40 years but God still responded to their distress. God enabled the miraculous conception of Samson to his mother who was

sterile and set him apart as a nazirite from birth (Numbers 6:1-21). The Lord blessed Samson and the Spirit of the Lord stirred in him.

-When Samson grew up, he insisted on marrying a Philistine woman. At his wedding feast he made a wager with his 30 Philistine companions. The Philistines couldn't solve Samson's riddle so they used his wife to get the answer from him. She pressed him for the answer until he gave in (14:16-17), allowing the Philistines to win the challenge. Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson in power and he struck down 30 Philistines and robbed them of their belongings to pay for the prize that he owed and left in anger without his wife.

-Later when Samson returned for his wife he found out that she had been given to another man so he burned the grain fields of the Philistines. In response, the Philistines killed his wife so he slaughtered many of them and escaped to Etam. When the Philistines searching for him arrived in Judah the men of Judah went to Samson to capture him and turn him over to the Philistines but the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to break free of his bindings and he struck down a thousand Philistines with a donkey's jawbone.

-Sometime later Samson fell in love with Delilah. The Philistine rulers bribed Delilah to lure him into revealing the secret of his strength. She asked three times about it and three times he lied to her. Delilah continued to nag him until he eventually broke and told her everything (16:16-17). She called in the Philistines and had his hair shaved off while he slept causing him to lose his great strength (the Lord had left him) and enabling the Philistines to capture him. The Philistines blinded him and took him to prison in Gaza. All the Philistine rulers then held a feast in Dagon's temple to celebrate Samson's capture and called Samson out of prison to entertain them. Samson prayed for his strength to return and God answered him. He toppled the supporting pillars in the temple causing the temple to collapse and killed more of his enemies in death than he did in life. His relatives retrieved his body and buried him in his father's tomb.

-Samson was a violent man who he died a violent death and although he dealt a heavy blow to the Philistines he didn't achieve victory over his enemies as the other judges did.

Epilogue: Religious and Moral Disorder (17:1-21:25)

The events of the epilogue took place early during the period of the judges (see 18:30; 20:27-28) but not enough is known to date the accounts to when a specific judge led Israel.

First Episode (17:1-18:31)

Micah's corruption (17:1-13)

Micah the Ephraimite had a shrine set up in his house along with an ephod (see 8:27) and other idols and installed his son served as his priest. His mother also took some of her silver and had it made into a carved image and a cast idol and put them in Micah's house. One day Micah met a journeying Levite (Jonathan, a grandson of Moses – 18:30) and hired him to serve as priest in his paganized place of worship.

The Danites' departure from their tribal territory (18:1-31)

The Danites didn't claim their tribal inheritance. Instead, they abandoned their allotted territory and sent men to spy out Laish. On their way, the spies arrived at Micah's house and spent the night there. They then went to Laish and reported back to the Danites who sent 600 soldiers to take the land. When the soldiers reached Micah's house they plundered it of the objects of worship and convinced Jonathan to leave with them. The Danites then put the people of Laish to the sword and settled in the land, carrying on Micah's distorted religion with Jonathan and his sons as priests.

Second Episode (19:1-21:25)

Gibeah's corruption of morals (19:1-30)

There was a Levite who had taken a concubine who became unfaithful to him and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem. Sometime later he went to her to bring her home. On his way back he refused to stop for the night until they reached Gibeah. No one took them into their home except for an old man from who

was one of the Levite's countrymen. That night the wicked men of the city surrounded the house where they were staying and demanded that the man be sent out to them (compare with Genesis 19:5-8). The Levite sent his concubine out to the mob who sexually assaulted her, abused her, and left her for dead. The next day the Levite found the body of his concubine and took it home where he dismembered it and sent the pieces throughout Israel, inciting the Israelites.

The Benjamites' near removal from their tribal territory (20:1-21:25)

-All the Israelites assembled before the Lord against Gibeah. When they heard the Levite's story of what happened they united to purge the evil from Israel (20:8, 11). The Israelites demanded that only the offenders be surrendered to them but the Benjamites sided with their own people and mobilized to fight against the rest of Israel. The Israelites suffered heavy losses in their first two encounters but on the third day they set an ambush around Gibeah and drew the Benjamites out from the city. After they went out to chase the Israelites, the ambush party took the city and put all of the people in it to the sword. When the Benjamites saw what had happened they fled but Israel cut them down as they tried to escape. The Israelites then returned and put all of the Benjamite towns to the sword and burned them.

-The men of Israel took an oath to not give their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites. Even in victory the Israelites mourned for Benjamin and sought to prevent them from being wiped out. The Israelites fought the people of Jabesh Gilead because they had failed to assemble with the rest of Israel against the Benjamites, sparing the 400 virgins from among them. The Israelites gave the virgins to the Benjamites to be their wives but there weren't enough women for all of them. They needed a way to circumvent the oath that they had made. The elders suggested that the Benjamites wait in hiding and seize wives for themselves from among the girls at the annual festival of the Lord. The Benjamites did this and were able to return to their inheritance and rebuild their towns.

Themes

"Israel Had No King; Everyone Did as He Saw Fit" (17:6, 21:25)

The statement is an apt summary of the attitude and climate of the time. After the deaths of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him, Israel had no leader to guide them in the ways of the Lord. The monarchy had not yet begun so there was no human king but the people had also rejected God as their heavenly king (8:23). Without God's laws as their moral standard, each person was left to do whatever his sinful nature desired. There was both religious and moral degeneracy as well as national disunity. The accounts of Micah's homemade religion and the Danites' desertion of their inheritance as well as those of the Levite's concubine and Israel's war with the Benjamites are representative of the spirit of that period.

Israel's Constant Stubbornness and Sin

Israel's first failure was their inability to clear the land of its pagan inhabitants to the degree to which God would enable them; this opened the door for the Israelites to fall under the influence of the surrounding people because they didn't keep themselves set apart (2:1-2). Through the repeated cycles of disobedience and apostasy Israel showed that it had a strong affinity for idolatry. The Israelites wouldn't listen even to their judges even though it was through them that they were saved out of the hands of their enemies (2:17). Each time a judge died the people were more than ready to turn back to their old ways, becoming worse than they had been before, which resulted in a downward spiral for the people and further chastisement from God. The truth that Israel never fully embraced was that the Lord was their Judge despite the presence or lack thereof of an earthly leader among them (11:27).

The Need for a Perfect Saviour to Obtain True Rest

Throughout the book of Judges God used flawed individuals to deliver a deeply flawed nation. Many of the judges are shown to have defects of character, lapses in their faith, and/or times when they acted through

dubious means to accomplish their purposes. The self-interest and self-indulgence that provoked God to anger with Israel was also characteristic of the judges. Even the best of them were sinners by nature. For nine out of the twelve accounts of the judges, the author deliberately included the death of the judge, punctuating the end of the judges' career. Additionally, each period of peace that was brought about by the judges came to an end. Despite the great effect to which God used the judges, the inherent shortcomings and limitations, and ultimately the mortality, of all of the judges point us to our need for one who is perfect in character and deed and who will live on in headship to maintain the peace and security that he establishes.

The Patience and Grace of God

Despite the constant provocation from the people of Israel, God didn't forsake them. He didn't do to Israel as He had done to the nations before them. In handing them over to their enemies He was both punishing them for their unfaithfulness as well as awakening them to their need for repentance. God showed compassion for Israel even when they had become so hardened in their ways that He refused to come to their aid at first (10:10-16) and He continued to provide deliverers for His people knowing in His omniscience how quickly they would return to their idolatry once the leader died. Throughout the period of the judges and in the midst of the worst of the Israel's wickedness He chose to preserve His people and kept them from being overwhelmed and absorbed by the pagan nations around them.

Conclusion

Israel had forgotten its identity as God's chosen people; the new generation didn't know or acknowledge the God of Israel (2:10). The Israelites desperately needed separation from the surrounding people because of their attraction to the Baals of Canaan and their tendency to spurn the kingship of the Lord. Though they occurred early during the period of the judges, the accounts given at the end of the book (17:1-21:25) represent the "state of the union" in terms of Israel's spiritual and moral health. The frequent foreign oppression that the Israelites experienced on account of their covenant violations did lead to repentance but that repentance was always short-lived. No earthly judge was able to remedy the sinful hearts of Israel.

The book of Judges concludes with a lament over Israel's plight and the need for a saviour. In His perfect timing, God would bring Israel out of the tumultuous period of the judges and establish an earthly kingship to unite and lead His people in obedience to the Lord. From that dynasty, Christ would later emerge as the everlasting judge and king who takes away peoples' hearts of stone and replaces them with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26) and who delivers His people with justice, faithfulness, and compassion.

"We too need a champion to fight our battles for us, one raised up by God and invested with his Spirit in full measure; we too need a leader to secure for us the inheritance that God has promised, one who will perfect our faith."

Ruth

Background

The events of Ruth took place during the early days of the judges (see Matthew 1:5 and Joshua 2:1) and are precursors to those in 1 Samuel. The author is unknown but Jewish tradition points to Samuel as the author of the book. In contrast to the book of Judges which takes a high-level look at Israel as a nation and at the tribes that it was comprised of, the book of Ruth focuses on the life of a single Israelite family.

Naomi and her family left their home in Bethlehem for Moab because of a famine in the land. While there Naomi lost her husband and both of her sons. In these situations, people often consider their difficulties and conclude that God is against them as Naomi did (1:13, 20-12). Although God is mentioned throughout the book of Ruth, there are few places where He is shown acting directly on the events of the story (E.g., 1:6; 4:13). It is only upon closer reading that the providence of God can be seen directing the circumstances of the lives of Naomi and Ruth through difficult times in order to bring salvation to them as well as to Israel.

“God’s providence in times of trial for the good of His people”

Outline

Introduction: Naomi Emptied (1:1-5)

There was a famine in the land and a man from Bethlehem (Elimelech) along with his wife (Naomi) and two sons (Mahlon and Kilion) left their home and went to live in Moab. During that time Elimelech died and his sons married Moabite women (Orpah and Ruth). After 10 years in the land, the sons died as well and Naomi was left with only her two daughters-in-law as widows (no male providers in the family).

Ruth Clings to Naomi (1:6-22)

Naomi heard that the famine had ended so she and her daughters-in-law prepared to set out for Judah. Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to return to their mothers’ homes as there was nothing she could do to provide for them. Both of them offered to accompany Naomi but after further urging from Naomi Orpah left. Ruth clung to Naomi (1:15 – Ruth no longer identified with the gods and people of Moab) and made a bold declaration of solidarity with her (1:16-17 – Ruth invokes the name of Israel’s God). The two women went to Bethlehem together and arrived there at the time of the barley harvest.

Ruth and Boaz Meet in the Harvest Fields (2:1-23)

Ruth Begins Work (2:1-7)

Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, Boaz, a man of standing who lived in Bethlehem. Ruth offered to glean in the harvest fields to support her and Naomi and ended up working in Boaz’s field where Boaz took notice of her.

Boaz Shows Kindness to Ruth (2:8-16)

Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field with his servant girls and ordered his men not to harass or berate her. He provided her with water and invited her to eat with him and his men. He also instructed his workers to leave extra gleanings for her from the harvested wheat (see Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19). In his dealings with Ruth, Boaz treated her with an extra measure of kindness and provided for her abundantly.

Ruth Returns to Naomi (2:17-23)

When Ruth returned home that evening, Naomi inquired about whose field she had worked in because of the large amount of barley she had gleaned. When Ruth told her that the field belonged to Boaz, Naomi revealed that Boaz was a close relative and a kinsman-redeemer. Verse 20 marks a change in Naomi’s attitude, an awakening sense of hope.

Naomi Sends Ruth to Boaz's Threshing Floor (3:1-18)

Naomi Instructs Ruth (3:1-5)

Naomi told Ruth to ready herself like a bride and to secretly go to Boaz on the threshing floor. When she found the place where he was sleeping she was to uncover his feet and lie down there.

Boaz Pledges to Secure Redemption (3:6-18)

-Ruth followed Naomi's instructions and after the celebration of the harvest when Boaz awoke and found Ruth at his feet she asked him to cover her with the corner of his garment. This was a request for marriage, appealing to Boaz's kinsman status. Boaz commended Ruth for this and called her a, "woman of noble character" (3:11b, see Proverbs 31:10-31 – in the Hebrew Bible Ruth occurs between the books of Proverbs and Song of Songs).

-There was another kinsman-redeemer who had priority to redeem but Boaz pledged that he would do it if the other man was not willing.

Boaz Arranges to Fulfill His Pledge (4:1-12)

Boaz Confronts the Unnamed Kinsman (4:1-8)

Boaz waited for the other kinsman-redeemer at the town gate and offered him the opportunity to redeem Naomi's land but when he learned that he would also be responsible for providing an heir through Ruth to maintain the family's ownership of their property. The rights of the kinsman-redeemer were then transferred to Boaz.

Boaz Redeems Naomi's Property (4:9-12)

Boaz bought Naomi's property and announced his marriage to Ruth, receiving the blessing of the elders and witnesses at the gate.

Conclusion: Naomi Filled (4:13-17)

Boaz married Ruth. The Lord enabled her to conceive and she gave birth to a son, Obed, the grandfather of King David. Naomi was filled once again, she had both provisions for her life as well as an heir in her family, and the other women rejoiced with her.

Epilogue: Genealogy of David (4:18-22)

The genealogy of David from Perez son of Judah.

Themes

Redemption

-The theme of redemption occurs in various forms throughout the book of Ruth. Redemption refers to the recovery of something, often from an unpayable debt as was the case when the kinsman-redeemer was involved.

-The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family. If a poor relative was forced to sell his land outside of the family or sell himself into slavery, the kinsman-redeemer was to pay the price purchase these properties and people back (Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-49; Jeremiah 32:6-9).

-Boaz as the kind and faithful kinsman-redeemer is a type of Christ and is contrasted by the unnamed kinsman-redeemer who was more concerned with his own estate than with the care of those who were in need (3:6). God would later work through Ruth and Boaz's great-grandson David to redeem Israel from the disorder and waywardness that was prevalent in their day (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

God's Providence

The providential hand of God can be seen at work in the lives of Ruth and Naomi to bring about His purposes even though credit is not explicitly given to Him in many instances. God used a famine to bring Naomi and her family into the land of Moab (1:1) where her story intertwined with that of Ruth when she married Naomi's son Mahlon (1:3-4). In coming to the aid of His people by providing food for them, God gave Naomi the impetus to return home (1:6) causing them to arrive in Bethlehem at the time when the harvest was beginning (1:22). Through God's guidance, "as it turned out" (implying that no human intent was involved) Ruth found herself working in Boaz's field (2:3) where he took notice of her and where she found favour in his eyes. After they were married the Lord enabled Ruth to give birth to Obed (4:13).

God's Provision

-God provided for Naomi through the kindness, loyalty, and generosity of Ruth, a Moabite woman. As an aged widow in a foreign land with no husband or son to provide for her, Naomi was in a dire situation. Ruth on the other hand was still young, living in her own homeland, and able to take shelter in her mother's home. Ruth chose to leave this security and familiarity to accompany Naomi and worked a dangerous job (2:22) to support the two of them.

-God provided for Israel by acting through nature to end the famine and supply food for His people (1:6).

-God ultimately provided for Ruth and Naomi through the kindness and compassion of Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer and protecting provider who also became Ruth's husband.

-God provided an heir for Mahlon and a grandson to Naomi in Obed, enabling the family to retain their land inheritance.

-God would further provide for Israel through King David, a descendant resulting from Ruth and Boaz's marriage.

Conclusion

The book of Ruth shows the transformation of Naomi from despair to happiness through the selfless acts of Ruth and Boaz, Ruth in her self-giving and steadfast devotion to Naomi (1:16-17; 2:11-12; 3:10; 4:15) and Boaz in his kindness to the two widows (2:1-4:17). The theme of emptiness versus being filled runs through the whole of the book. Naomi was emptied when she lost her family and her only means of support (1:21) but in the events that followed God worked through Ruth and Boaz to bless and provide for her. In the end, Ruth is seen as having been a greater blessing than seven sons (4:15).

In the background, God was providentially directing every circumstance in ways that were not apparent to those who were in the midst of them in order to fulfill His purposes. God worked through the tragic circumstances of Naomi's life (much like with Joseph), guiding her to meet Ruth and to bring her back to Bethlehem (and her people) where Ruth saved the family from desolation and was eventually involved in bringing about one of the most important figures in Old Testament history, King David, a divine gift to Israel, and his descendant Jesus Christ, God's final redemption for His people.

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