

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL  
the PROMISED *land*  
GOD THE SAVIOR  
*In Light of God's Salvation...*

David said in *Psalms 27:1 (ESV)* <sup>1</sup> *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Long before the time of David, Joshua trusted in the light of God's salvation. He had experienced God's Light in the Pillar of Cloud that covered the Israelites by day and the Pillar of Fire that gave them light in the night for 40 years. He had personally seen the shining face of Moses after Moses had communed with God Himself.

Joshua's life's work was to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan and divide the land between the 12 tribes of Israel. The Book of Joshua covers about 25 years in one of the most important periods of Israel's history - their conquest and final settlement of the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants many centuries earlier. Joshua recognized God's salvation many times over his 110 years of living. First, when the death angel passed over the children of Israel when they were covered by the blood of the lamb. Next, when the Israelites were saved by the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. He experienced God's salvation when he drank from the water that literally flowed out of a rock. He experienced God's salvation in his battle against the Amalekites as Moses kept his hands raised up to God. We have looked into other examples of God's salvation of the Israelites in their 40 years of wandering and then their 25 years of conquering the land.

Although not included in our chronological study, there is a miracle of God's salvation that needs to be included in today's final study of the book of Joshua.

Joshua and his leaders had been impetuous and made an agreement with one of their enemies, the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites actually tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them. If you don't remember what happened, you can read it for yourself in *Joshua 9*. We will pick up the story where the miracle of God's Light occurred. Since Joshua was a man of integrity he kept his word to defend the Gibeonites. Because of the destruction at Ai and the Gibeonites making peace with Israel, five kings merged to war against the people of God. Let's read how the miracle came about in the midst of the battle when Joshua petitioned the LORD for extraordinary help.

**Read Joshua 10:12-14 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."* <sup>13</sup> *And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.* <sup>14</sup> *There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel.*

Immediately before Joshua prayed this prayer God had assisted the weary Jewish soldiers by killing the enemy army as they fled with large hailstones. The timely occurrence of the storm was a miracle, but an even greater miracle was the fact that the stones hit only the enemy soldiers.

Certainly, this helpful appearance of hailstones, encouraged Joshua in his prayer. As a military leader, he not only wanted to send the five kings running, he knew he needed to completely defeat the armies. That is why he prayed for a miracle. Joshua's prayer proved the Canaanite gods were powerless. The Israelites' God could even slow the earth's rotation. The sun and moon were compelled to obey the LORD. The Creator of the sun, moon, and stars was on the Israelites' side.

The Book of Jasher was probably a collection or compilation of ancient Hebrew songs and poems praising the heroes of Israel and their exploits in battle. When Joshua later wrote about the sun standing still, he was stating, in effect, "If you don't believe me, then go read it in the Book of Jasher."

If you look on Amazon.com, you will find a Booker of Jasher. It is an eighteenth-century forgery that alleges to be a translation of the "lost" Book of Jasher. There is also a more recent book titled "The Book of Jasher" by science fiction and fantasy writer Benjamin Rosenbaum. This book is a complete work of fiction. We don't need additional books to confirm our faith in God's Word. Today, we have the complete story from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation.

Although interesting, we will pass over the division of the land among the 12 tribes. Today's focal passage brings us to the covenant at Shechem. Shechem was designated as one of the cities of refuge—a safe place for a person to flee who had accidentally killed another. Shechem was a place of memories for the children of Israel. Sometimes we need to look back before we can move forward.

Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where the people had gathered to read the blessings and cursings bordered the valley of Shechem. Shechem was where Abram pitched his tent for the first time in the Promised Land and the LORD first promised him the land. Jacob later built an altar there and it was Shechem where Joseph made his fateful journey looking for his brothers and wound up a slave in Egypt.

Worship the Lord in sincerity and truth and put away your idols.

**Read Joshua 24:14-15 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua, this wise leader of the Israelites, had experienced what the writer of Proverbs would later say in **Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Joshua began in **Joshua 24:2** by speaking about how Abraham was just another pagan living beyond the Euphrates River when Yahweh called him west into the land of Canaan. The Amorites were the inhabitants

of the land west of the Euphrates. Joshua knew that there were a lot of other gods ‘out there’ to tempt the children of Israel just like there are a lot of other gods to tempt us in our world today. Whom we serve is a choice that each of us must make. You cannot remain ‘neutral’ in your decision. If you remain neutral, you are choosing to serve other gods. Jesus spoke about the same choice in **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other...”*

Then Joshua makes his message personal: *But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* This is one of those great verses of the Bible. You see it in a lot of places – on afghans, on needlepoint pictures. However, the place where God wants to see the verse written is on our hearts and displayed in lives totally committed to serving Him.

When Joshua gave his personal affirmation to serve the LORD, his words led the Israelites to desire to serve the LORD as well.

**Read Joshua 24:16-18 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, <sup>17</sup> for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”*

This generation knew the right words to say. They recognized the LORD’s history with them. Joshua knew that choosing to follow the LORD is not a ‘one time’ event in the life of the believer. In reality, serving the LORD is something God’s children must wake up every day and choose. Many times we find it is much easier to say we will serve the LORD in Sunday services than to wake up and serve Him on Monday and by Saturday night, our vow may be far from our minds.

**Read Joshua 24:19-23 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” <sup>21</sup> And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.” <sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” <sup>23</sup> He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.”*

When the former generation had met the LORD at Mount Sinai, they had said in **Exodus 19:8 (ESV)** ... *“All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”* ... But a few weeks later, they were worshipping a golden calf. Joshua knew that it was easy for the people to **promise** obedience to the LORD, but it was quite something else for them to actually **do** it. Joshua wanted the people to be careful not careless in their devotion.

Just as a husband and wife who are faithful to their marriage vows and jealously guard their mate's affection, Israel was "married" to Jehovah, and He would not tolerate any rivals in their hearts. **Exodus 20:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> ... *for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...*

We are to commit to obedience as a sign of our salvation.

**Read Joshua 24:24-28 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."* <sup>25</sup> *So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem.* <sup>26</sup> *And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.* <sup>27</sup> *And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."* <sup>28</sup> *So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.*

Three times the people had confirmed their desire to serve only the LORD and Joshua took them at their word. So that they wouldn't forget this solemn covenant with Jehovah, Joshua wrote it in the Book of the Law and then set up a large stone as a perpetual witness to their agreement. This is the ninth and last memorial stone mentioned in the Book of Joshua. A terebinth was a large spreading tree that grew to a height of about 20-26 feet with reddish-green leaves and red berries in clusters.

It is biblical to memorialize a wonderful event or a sacred decision, so long as the memorial doesn't become the focus of idolatrous worship. It's wise to remember what the Lord has done for us. At times we draw strength from looking back. However, we must never live in the past. **2 Peter 3:13-14 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* <sup>14</sup> *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.*

The book of Joshua ends with three funerals – the burials of Joshua and Eleazar, the priest, and the burial of the bones of Joseph. Joseph had been dead close to 400 years when his bones were taken out of Egypt as he had requested. His bones had wandered in the wilderness with the Israelites for 40 years and had been carried along for 25 years as they took the land. Finally, the bones of Joseph were buried in peace as God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled in the lifetime of Joshua. **Judges 2:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel.*

We would like to think that the 'rest of the story' is a happy one. But this is not the case because of the sin nature of man. **Judges 17:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* However, in our next study of the dark times of Israel, we will still see the Light of God's Great Salvation shining through!