

Wednesday

Joshua 5:1-15

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of circumcision and the Passover in God's relationship with Israel? (See Gen 17:1-14 and Exod 12:1-16.)
2. Why might God want all the people circumcised before they enter the Promised Land?
3. Whose side would you expect the Commander of the Lord's army to be on? Can you make sense of the answer "No" (ESV)/"Neither" (NIV) (v. 14)?

PRAYER IDEAS

Pray that your loyalty to the God who will give you life in the Age to Come will be expressed in your life today.

Thursday

Joshua 6:1-27

QUESTIONS

1. How do you react to the violent genocide described in this chapter? Does it fit with your idea of God?
2. Read Genesis 15:12-16. What insight does this give you about why Jericho is destroyed at the time of Joshua 6 (and not before)?
3. Do you now feel more comfortable with these events? Why (not)?

PONDER

Is God just racist (hating Canaanites/ favouring Israelites)? What does the sparing of Rahab show us about God?

PRAYER IDEAS

Ask God to help you see the rightness of his judgement. Pray that many people will take it seriously enough to want to avoid it.

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6

QUESTIONS

1. What part did God play in the extermination of the peoples of the land?
2. What was his purpose in doing this?
3. Skim read Joshua 13:1-7. What does Israel do with the land they had conquered? What is the significance of calling it an "inheritance"?

PONDER

What is our "inheritance" from God (see 1 Pet 1:4)?

PRAYER IDEAS

Give thanks for the inheritance stored up in heaven for you.



15 Steps through the Bible

Land

God brought Israel through the sea in order to bring them to the land he had promised to Abraham and his descendants. They were to live as God's special people in this land he had given them. The promises to Abraham were beginning to be fulfilled: there was a nation of descendants who were to receive the Promised Land. On the way there, they found out more about their special relationship with their God.

Deuteronomy 26:8-9

"So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. 9 He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

More detail

God's gift of the Promised Land to his people Israel shows us:

Who God is

God is a gracious God, who gives a spiritual home to his chosen people. God wants his people to be distinctive within the world, and separate from it in some sense.

EXODUS 34:10-14

And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation.

And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. 11 "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 12 Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. 13 You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim 14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God).

What God does

God provides an abundant land where his people can live as his distinctive nation.

EXODUS 6:8

"And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord."

How God works

He calls people out of the world to himself.

EXODUS 15:17-18

"You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, O Lord, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established. 18 The Lord will reign for ever and ever."

As God predicted (see Deut 31:15-21), Israel broke its covenant with him and did not live as God had commanded them in the Promised Land. God's people would still yearn for a future land of milk and honey and a place of rest. This points forward to Jesus, because those who have responded to him in faith find their spiritual home in Christ and long for the 'rest' of the new creation (Heb 4:9-11).

HEBREWS 4:9-11

⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

QUESTIONS

1. How is God's gift of the promised land connected to the previous stages?
2. Read through the 'More detail' section. What's something that strikes you about what God reveals here?
3. What did the distinctiveness of Israel show?

PONDER

What kind of 'rest' are you looking forward to? What sort of 'promised land' are Christians waiting for?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God for the way he keeps his promises—the promises made to Abraham, and those he has made in Christ. Pray for his kingdom to come, on earth as it is in heaven.

Further Readings

In Genesis 12:1-7, God made some far reaching promises to Abra(ha)m, including:

- blessing Abraham and making his name great
- making a great nation from his descendants
- giving his descendants the land of Palestine
- blessing all nations through Abraham.

Eventually Abraham's descendants became numerous enough to be a nation (Israel), and God rescued them from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

But that generation didn't trust God's promises, and were condemned to being wanderers until they died out (including Moses).

It is now about 40 years after they left Egypt, and Israel has finally gained control over some land East of the Jordan River. But the bulk of the Promised Land lies on the West side of the Jordan.

We read the story of how they finally entered the land and began to conquer it in Joshua. It's an epic tale, full of victories and defeats, deception and intrigue, bravery and sin.

The hero, of course, is not Joshua—as heroic as he is—but the God whose promises propel Israel forward, and whose promises to us are just as sure.

WHERE DOES THIS FIT?

In terms of our 15-step Bible Overview Joshua comes at the very end of Israel's *Exodus from Egypt* and details the conquest of the *Land* promised by God in his *Pledge* to Abraham.

Here's an opening prayer you might like to use before each of these readings in Joshua:

*Almighty Father,
Your word is always sure. What you promise, you fulfil. Let me learn now from your promises and faithfulness to your ancient people. Let what is written in Joshua urge me to trust you as Israel did, and warn me not to disobey you as they also did. And thank you for the one in whom all your promises are yes and amen: Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name I pray.
Amen.*

Monday

Read Joshua 1:1-9

QUESTIONS

1. Which of God's promises to Abraham is God particularly concerned with at this point in time?
2. Has the faithlessness of Israel caused God to abandon his promises?
3. What does this tell us about the nature of God's promises?
4. What promises does God make to Joshua as he takes up his new role? What effect on Joshua does God expect the promises to make?
5. What do you think God means when he says, "I will be with you"?

PONDER

How certain do you feel about God delivering the promises he has made to you in Jesus? Are all of them conditional on your faithfulness?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God that he will keep his promises to renew creation whether we are faithful or not. Ask God to strengthen your resolve to keep trusting in Jesus because the future is sure.

Tuesday

Read Joshua 2:1-24

QUESTIONS

1. Why might Joshua send spies to look over Jericho? Do you think it shows trust in God's promise to give Israel the land?
2. Why does Rahab risk her life to save these foreign spies? Is she any different from the rest of the citizens of Jericho?
3. Does she really believe God will give Israel the land? How do you know?

PONDER

A non-Christian commented: "I'd be more interested in Christianity if the Christians I knew lived as if they really believed that God would give them eternal life. They say they believe it, but they live just like the rest of us who don't believe." Do you think that's a fair comment? Does it describe you?

PRAYER IDEAS

Pray that more people who hear the gospel (like vv. 10-11) will respond like Rahab.