

SESSION 6

"Farewell Address"

"Possessing the Land"—Part 2

I. PRAYER

II. BOOK OF JOSHUA

A. Charted

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA					
"Promise/Fulfillment of the Land"					
Enter		Conquer		Possess	
1	5	5	12	13	24
Jordan River		Canaan		East of Jordan	
				West of Jordan	

B. Partial Outline: "The Book of Joshua"

A. "Entering the Land" (1–5)

B. "Conquering the Land" (5–12)

C. "Possessing the Land" (13–24)

1. Division of the Land (13–19)

2. Cities of Refuge (20)

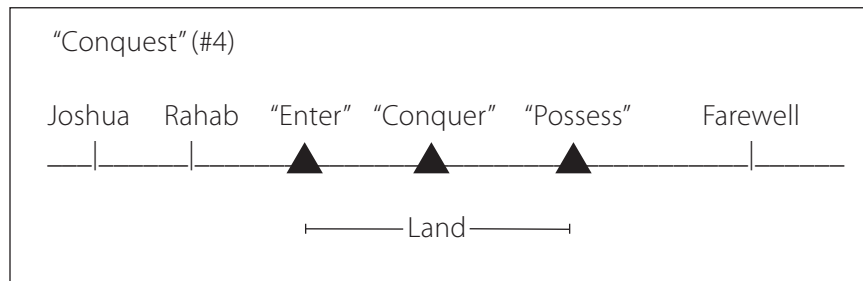
3. Levitical Cities (21)

4. Eastern Tribes: Release (22)

5. Farewell Address: Joshua (23–24)

*NB: Session 5 covers points 1-3; Session 6 will cover points 4-5.

C. Movement #4 Timeline: “Conquest”



III. “POSSESSING THE LAND”: BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (Part II)

A. Eastern Tribes: Release (chapter 22)

At this point in the Book of Joshua, the Promised Land (Abrahamic Covenant—Gen 15) has been “entered,” “conquered,” and “possessed.” Tribal allotments and special city bequests have been made (“cities of refuge” and “Levitical cities”). From this point the settlement of the land becomes the focus.

Insight

Constable (Notes, 75) quotes Hess concerning the final section of the Book of Joshua:

Each of the final three chapters describes a single event. At first glance, these events seem to be a random collection of leftovers: a dispute between the tribes about an altar, a farewell address, and another covenant ceremony. However, upon closer examination it becomes apparent that they all focus on a single matter, the proper worship of Israel’s God—how to offer it and what will happen if Israel does not do so.

1. Dismissal of the eastern tribes (22:1–8)

- a. Joshua’s releasing of the tribes (1–4)

Joshua 22:1–4

¹Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh ² and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. ³ For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you. ⁴ Now that the LORD your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

b. Joshua’s warning to the tribes (5)

Joshua 22:5 NIV

⁵ But be very careful to obey all the commands and the instructions that Moses gave to you. Love the Lord your God, walk in all his ways, obey his commands, hold firmly to him, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”

The eastern tribes have fulfilled their obligation and now will return to the Transjordan allotment of land. But a theological warning must be given: “keep the commandments and the law.” As Woudstra (317) notes, “the enjoyment of the rest in Transjordan will be assured only if there is covenant faithfulness on the part of the people.” (Recall again the opening words of Joshua 1:7–8.)

c. Joshua’s blessing of the eastern tribes (6–8)

2. Dispute between the tribes (22:9–20)

a. The eastern tribes depart (9)

b. The eastern tribes build an altar (10–12)

Joshua 22:10–12

¹⁰When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. ¹¹And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, ¹²the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

- (1) Before crossing the Jordan, the eastern tribes constructed an altar on the western border near the Jordan River. This “imposing altar” may have resembled the one in the tabernacle courtyard at Shiloh. If so, it appeared to be a direct disobedience of the command that only God-ordained altars were to be built in the land.

Deuteronomy 12:4–7

⁴ You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. ⁵ But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; ⁶ there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. ⁷ There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

- (2) The western tribes prepared “to go to war against them,” as was commanded and expected after such rash behavior (cf. Deut 13:12–18).

c. The western tribes confront the eastern tribes (13–20)

Joshua 22:15–19

¹⁵ When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them: ¹⁶ “The whole assembly of the LORD says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the LORD and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now? ¹⁷ Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the LORD! ¹⁸ And are you now turning away from the LORD?’” If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel. ¹⁹ If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the LORD’s land, where the LORD’s tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the LORD our God.

3. Defense of the eastern tribes (22:21–29)

a. Motive for the altar (21–25)

Joshua 22:24–25

²⁴ “No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?’

²⁵ The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the LORD.”

b. Meaning of the altar (26–29)

Joshua 22:26–28

²⁶ “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—**but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.**’” ²⁷ On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the LORD.’” ²⁸ “And we said, ‘If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the LORD’s altar, which our ancestors built, **not for burnt offerings and sacrifices**, but as a witness between us and you.’”

4. Reconciliation between the tribes (22:30–34)

a. Response (30–33)

Joshua 22:30

³⁰ When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.

b. Name (34)

Joshua 22:34

³⁴ And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the LORD is God.

B. Farewell Address: Joshua (chapters 23–24)

The time had come for the aged leader of the conquest (“old and advanced in years”) to deliver his final words. Although some scholars attempt to see the final two chapters as two records of the same event, there is unique purpose for chapter 23 (challenge to the leadership) and chapter 24 (covenant renewal and final charge).

1. Closing words (23:1–16)

a. Remember: first call to obedience (1–8)

Joshua summoned the leadership to meet with him. The conquest and settlement of the land was completed. But the Canaanites must be driven from the land (5); the Israelites must remember their charge.

Joshua 23:6–8

⁶ *“Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.*

b. Remember: second call to obedience (9–13)

Joshua 23:9–13

⁹ *“The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰ One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹ So be very careful to love the LORD your God. ¹² “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³ then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.*

(1) Recall the blessings of God's enablement (9–11).

(2) Recall the cursings of Israel's disobedience (12–13).

To disobey would be to ensure that the nations (Canaanites) left in the land would become "snares" and "traps" and "whips" and "thorns." This perfectly describes the coming "Movement 5: Apostasy" as recorded in the Book of Judges.

c. Remember: third call to obedience (14–16)

Joshua 23:16

¹⁶If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

Insight

"The terrible climax of this message to the nation's leaders emphasized the fact that Israel's greatest danger was not military – it was moral and spiritual" (Campbell in *BKC: OT*: 368). And what of today?

2. Covenant renewal (24:1–28)

More than a reminder was needed for the Israelites to faithfully obey God in the recently occupied Promised Land. Thus, Joshua called for a sacred assembly at Shechem for a "covenant renewal."

Ancient Near-Eastern history provides a historical precedent in the Hittite (1450–1220 BC) suzerainty (overlordship) treaties. The Hittites would require such treaties with their vassal states. The treaty would contain the following elements (note the parallel passages in Joshua 24).

- Preamble.....verse 1
- Historical prologue verse 2–13
- Covenant stipulationsverses 14–24
- Formal agreement.....verses 25–28

- a. Leaders gathered at Shechem (1)

Joshua 24:1

¹ Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

- (1) In this case the suzerain (king) was God; Israel is the vassal state.
- (2) The location was Shechem, a revered location where God had first promised the descendants of Abraham “the land” (Gen 17); where Jacob had built an altar of worship (Gen 35); and where Joshua had conducted a formal renewal of covenant obedience (Josh 8).

- b. History reviewed (2–13)

The Lord spoke through Joshua and recounted the history of the Israelite people. The summary recalls to mind the Panorama Movements and accompanying Timeline. Note the Panorama references which follow:

- (1) Movement 1: Prologue (Gen 1–11)

There is no mention of the earliest beginnings in Genesis 1–11.

- (2) Movement 2: Patriarchs (Gen 12–50)

Joshua 24:2–4

*² Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of **Abraham** and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father **Abraham** from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him **Isaac**, ⁴ and to **Isaac** I gave **Jacob** and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but **Jacob** and **his family** went down to Egypt.’”*

(3) Movement 3: Redemption (e.g., Ex-Lev)

Joshua 24:5–7a

⁵ “Then I sent **Moses** and Aaron, and I **afflicted the Egyptians** by what I did there, and I **brought you out**. ⁶When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea, ⁷But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what **I did to the Egyptians.**”

(3) Movement 3: Wanderings (Num, Deut)

Joshua 24:8–10

⁸ “I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. ⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. ¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.”

(4) Movement 4: Conquest (Josh)

Joshua 24:11

¹¹ “Then you **crossed the Jordan** and came to **Jericho**. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.”

c. Covenant ratified (14–28)

At this point the word of the Lord spoken through Joshua ends (i.e., Josh 24:2–13). In light of all that God had done for His people, Joshua strongly and formally charged the people. This is Joshua’s “Farewell Challenge.”

(1) The challenge (14–15): “make a decision”

Joshua 24:14–15

¹⁴“Now **fear** the LORD and **serve** him with all faithfulness. **Throw away** the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then **choose** for yourselves this day whom you will **serve**, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will **serve** the LORD.”

- (a) “Fear”: the attitude of awe and reverential respect
- (b) “Serve”: attend to or worship

Romans 12:1–2

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- (c) “Throw away”: choose to worship and serve the one and only true God

Exodus 20:3–6

³“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- (d) “Choose”: make a willful, conscious choice
- (2) The warning (16–19): “take a reality check”

Joshua demanded a response, “make a choice.” As the leader, he had stated his full intention, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). The people’s initial response followed.

Joshua 24:16–18

¹⁶Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. ¹⁸And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

Joshua, however, was skeptical of the people’s long-term resolve to follow the Lord. He starkly, bluntly challenged their momentary enthusiasm (24:19).

- (3) The promise (20–24): “reap what you sow”

Joshua 24:20

²⁰“If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

Galatians 6:7–8

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

- (4) The renewal (25–28): “reaffirm your commitment”

Joshua 24:25–26

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. ²⁶ And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

- (a) This covenant was a renewal of the Mosaic Covenant (first given at Mt. Sinai).
- (b) “Book of the Law” refers to this renewal document.
- (c) Finally, a stone was placed to be a memorial witness (24:27), and the people were sent away (24:28).

NINE MEMORIAL CAIRNS IN JOSHUA	
The stones in the middle of the Jordan River	4:9
The stones on the western bank of the Jordan	4:20–24
The stones in the Valley of Achor	7:26
The heap of stones at Ai	8:29
The altar on Mt. Ebal	8:30
The stones of the Law on Mt. Ebal	8:32
The stones at the cave at Makkedah	10:27
The altar built by the Transjordanian tribes	22:10
Joshua's stone of witness	24:26–28

(*Taken from Constable, *Notes*, 83.)

C. Epilogue (Chapter 24)

As a conclusion to the Book of Joshua, three burials are recorded (24:29–33).

1. The burial of Joshua (24:29–31)

Joshua 24:29–30

²⁹ After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ³⁰ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

2. The burial of Joseph (24:32)

Joshua 24:32

³² And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants.

Joseph, the man of character, was also a man of faith who believed the Abrahamic Covenant promises.

Genesis 50:24–25

²⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” ²⁵ And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

Exodus 13:17–19

¹⁷ When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” ¹⁸ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle. ¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.”

3. The burial of Eleazar (24:33)

Joshua 24:33

³³ And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

The death of Eleazar closed the book on those who had left Egypt. Eleazar had been to Joshua what Aaron had been to Moses (Num 27:18–21).

IV. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. Proper Worship: The concluding chapters of the Book of Joshua focus on the necessity of true and proper worship. The warning then can be the warning today. Note the following NT reminders.

John 4:24

²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

Romans 12:1–2

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

B. Integrity: The two and one half Transjordanian tribes were expected to join the other tribes to complete the task of conquering the land on the west side of the Jordan (Canaan proper). That they did so was an act of keeping their word and acting with integrity. This is a character quality greatly needed in our day.

Proverbs 10:9 NLT

³ *Honesty guides good people;
dishonesty destroys treacherous people.*

Proverbs 11:3

³ *The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

Proverbs 13:6

⁶ *Righteousness guards the person of integrity,
but wickedness overthrows the sinner.*

C. Unity: The near warfare over misunderstood intentions (the altar of remembrance—Joshua 22) highlights the need for clarity, communication, and especially unity. This also is a key NT principle for the church.

Ephesians 4:1–3 NLT

¹ *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.* ² *Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.* ³ *Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*

D. Charge to Obedience: At the close of his life, Joshua challenged (again) the Israelites to full trust and obedience to the Lord. Similarly, in His last meal with His disciples, Jesus issued a familiar charge.

John 14:15, 21

¹⁵ *"If you love me, keep my commands. . . ."* ²¹ *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."*

Trust and obey are underscored again.

E. **Charge to Choose:** Hear again Joshua's final words of challenge. These stirring words ring across the centuries and formulate our final words in the Book of Joshua.

Joshua 24:15

¹⁵ *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.***"

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