

Old Testament Core Seminar

Introduction

Good morning. We are continuing our study today in the books of Joshua and Judges. Now that we are done with the books of Moses we are entering into a different section of the Old Testament. Turn to the table of contents in your Bible. You'll see the first five books are the books of Moses, or the "Torah," the "Pentateuch." Now, as we turn to Joshua, we enter into the section of the Old Testament referred to as "the Historical Books." The Historical Books comprise everything from Joshua through Esther. They tell the story of Israel as they sometimes succeed, and sometimes fail at obeying the LORD while living in the land. Well, since we have two books to cover today, let's jump right in.

[PRAY]

JOSHUA

Context

The events of Joshua take place over about 15 years or so at the beginning of the 14th century BC. We think it was written by Joshua himself. At the start of the book the nation of Israel is outside the land of Canaan, eastward over the Jordan River. By the end of the book they will have taken and occupied the land.

I hope you're already aware of the redemptive-historical significance of this. By the end of the book all the promises made to Abraham will have been fulfilled. In fact, **Joshua 21:43-45** is the climax of redemptive-history so far. Turn to Joshua 21 for a moment. [READ VERSES 43-45] Not a single word has failed. The people are a great nation. They are in possession of the Promise Land, and they have rest all around. It's a great moment in redemptive-history, but as we'll see, there is much more that still needs to be accomplished in God's plan.

Theme

We could summarize Joshua like this:

Yahweh is planting His people in His land, so that they can have "rest" (as He had promised) in a relationship with Him.

The prominent themes in Joshua, we will see, are Yahweh's faithfulness in giving Israel the land, and what it means that they will enjoy "rest" in the land.

[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Yahweh has been faithful.
 - A. Joshua 1-4 – Entering the Land
 - B. Joshua 5-12 – Taking the Land
 - C. Joshua 13-21 – Possessing the Land*
- II. Will Israel be faithful?
 - Joshua 22-24 – Retaining the Land

OR,

The Promises of God and:¹

- I. Joshua 1-2 – the Encouragement of God
- II. Joshua 3-4 – the Power of God
- III. Joshua 5-8 – the People of God
- IV. Joshua 9-12 – the Enemies of God
- V. Joshua 13-21 – the Gift of God
- VI. Joshua 22-24 – the Covenant of God

*Joshua 21:43-45 is the climax to all of redemptive-history so far. (Joshua 11:23 also climactic.)

Theme texts

A couple of weeks ago, we talked about the redemptive-historical significance of the land, and what the land represents. Does anyone remember what we said about the land two weeks ago? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] The land of Canaan, and its theology, is bound up in what the Garden of Eden was, and what the New Heavens and the New Earth are going to be. Eden was a physical location where God's people had fellowship with God and with each other in a perfect environment. The New Heavens and the New Earth, that re-created universe that Jesus will bring with Him when He returns, will accomplish the same thing: once again God's people will have perfect loving fellowship with God and with each other in a perfect ecosystem. What will make the New Heavens and the New Earth better than Eden is that the temptation to sin will be completely eradicated, and there will be no fear of ever being exiled from relationship with God again.

And what do the Land have to do with this? The land promised to Israel was intended to be an imperfect re-creation of Eden, and a representation of the return to Eden, the New Heavens and the New Earth. It was a physical place where God's people could have relationship with Him and each other in the place where God placed them. The land wasn't perfect, nor was their relationship with God or each other. But it was a start, and a symbol of greater things to come.² [TAKE QUESTIONS]

1:13-15 & 21:43-45

¹ This outline from Dale Ralph Davis' *Joshua*.

² This is why the land is described with such metaphorical language as "a land flowing with milk and honey." Such language is meant to exemplify the abundance and prosperity that will be unparalleled in the New Heavens and the New Earth. (Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deuteronomy 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5; 32:22; Ezekiel 20:6, 15) Then there are a number of other such eschatological descriptions of the land as well. (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25; Hosea 2:21-23; Joel 3:18-Amos 9:13-15; Micah 4:4)

Now, there is one further thing I want to point out about the land. Turn to **Joshua 1:13-15**. In these verses, notice the concept of “rest,” and its connection to the land. [READ]

Now turn again to **Joshua 21:43-45**. Do you remember, just a moment ago I said that these verses are the climax of redemptive-history so far that we’ve seen? In these 21 chapters of Joshua the people of Israel enter and take the land of Canaan, and thus Yahweh’s promises to Abraham have all been fulfilled. This is the furthest we’ve seen God’s plan of redemption develop. So notice here in these climatic verses how much is made of this idea of “rest.” [READ] In verse 43 it says that Yahweh gave them the land. And in verse 44 it says He gave them rest. The two, the land and rest, are nearly synonymous.

But what does it mean for Israel to have “rest,” and what does it mean in the scope of Yahweh’s plan for the ages? To answer these questions, we should go back to the Garden of Eden, of course. Turn to **Genesis 2:2-3**. [READ] I mentioned in the second class, God did not rest because he was exhausted. Rather, this idea of “rest” needs to be understood redemptive-historically. What I mean is this: God is not the only one enjoying “rest” here in the garden, but so is all of creation. What this “rest” means is that the work Adam and Eve were to do in the garden was not strenuous or difficult. Rather, it was restful. The Garden of Eden was a place where everything was restful: work, the environment, relationships, people’s health, etc. All was peace. All was rest.

Maybe we’ll understand better what this rest was like when we see what happened to it once Adam and Eve sinned. Turn to **Genesis 3:17-19**. [READ] Thus, with sin, that “rest” enjoyed by all of creation was lost. In verse 17 we read that the ground is cursed and that it will no longer cooperate with Adam as he works it. Instead, it will cause “painful toil” for Adam, as it produces “thorns and thistles (v. 18).” Through arduous labor (v. 19) will Adam be able to cultivate it. Finally, in verse 19, we see that the part of the created order known to Adam as his body will also experience frustration as it grows old and dies eventually. So again, what we see is that the “rest” spoken of in chapter two, was indeed a “rest” and a peace between man and his environment, his surroundings.

So of course, as I hope you’re able to figure out by now, part of God’s plan of redemption is to return man to that life of work that is not toilsome, but to have him again enjoy “God’s rest” at the end of time. And, again as I hope you’re able to anticipate, there is an Old Testament foreshadowing of this return to rest. That rest is what we are reading about here in Joshua 21. Turn back to Joshua. Look at **chapter 11, verse 23**. [READ] Here the emphasis is that *the land* receives the rest from war. And look one more time at **chapter 21, verse 44**. [RAD] Here *the people* receive rest. And look at **23:1**. [READ] Again we see this rest is from war, and wandering, and enemies.

What we have here, then, is that the rest that God has in store for His people in the New Heavens and the New Earth, is prefigured in Israel having rest from their enemies and from wandering in the land of promise. This will be an **important theme throughout of the Old Testament**. This theology of “rest” will loom in the background of all the interactions between Israel and the surrounding hostile nations. Anytime they are obedient to the LORD in the land, they will continue to experience this “rest.” But, whenever they are disobedient, the LORD will remove this rest by sending their enemies against them. Just as Adam and Eve lost their rest by

sinning, so will Israel. In fact we'll see that before the end of today in Judges. More on that in a bit.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Of course we have to ask where Jesus is in all this. What do we learn about Christ here? Turn to **Matthew 11:28-30**. [READ] We can't spend too much time on this right now, but it should be pointed out that Jesus' choice of words here is not coincidental. The eschatological rest that all humans are longing for (whether they realize it or not) can only be found in Christ. Seven times in these three verses, Jesus refers to Himself. *He* is the One who leads His people back to the way of life that they were originally intended to enjoy: at rest with God, others, and nature. You can also read more on this "rest" in Hebrews 3 & 4.

Of course we do not completely enjoy that rest yet. Total rest will be experienced only when Christ returns. But for now, we do enjoy a *foretaste* of that rest, as we already have fellowship with God and one another. Not perfectly, but indeed in a very real way, as we wait for the full manifestation of it.

The application here, of course, is to turn to Christ in obedience and faith and taste of this invitation to "rest" that he offers. Everyone is longing for such a rest for their souls. C.S. Lewis said it this way: "A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other." "...human history [is the long terrible story of man] – [through] money,...ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery – ...trying to find something other than God which will make him happy."³ Augustine put it this way: "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in [God]."⁴ But your faith in Jesus, and "rest."

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Back to the Old Testament now. To achieve this rest Israel has to first take the land by dispossessing those who already inhabit it. That is really much of what the first 21 chapters of Joshua are all about. As you study these chapters on your own, or with your family or small group, keep this theme of **God's people, in God's land, enjoying God's rest** in mind as the driving motif behind what's going on. And also notice that Joshua leads the people of God into this land and achieves this rest for them. In that way, Joshua serves as a type of Christ, a foreshadowing of the greater leader, Christ, who will take His people into a greater land to enjoy a greater rest.⁵

6:21 & 11:20

Nonetheless, even with this perspective, some troubling things in Joshua need to be addressed. Many are shocked at the violent campaign that God commands the Israelites to

³ *Mere Christianity*, II, 3.

⁴ *The Confessions*, I. 1.

⁵ It is also worth pointing out that this conquest had as its ultimate end the same thing the exodus had: the glory of God (cf. 4:23-24). And it's also very interesting that this intended end of the exodus was accomplished (cf. 2:8-11).

undertake in Canaan. Look at **6:21**, [READ] and **11:20** [READ] Doesn't sound like the gracious and compassionate God we've come to know does it? What's going on here?

Now, we don't have enough time to camp too long here, but a brief apologetic is necessary. The first thing that should be noted is that God is *not* here condoning holy war or crusades for Christians to engage in at any time in history. Nor is there really any application that can be made from these verses to inform us about the current crises in the Middle East. Rather, Joshua's military campaign is to be understood as **a unique event** that was sanctioned by God (in fact commanded by God) at one, and only one time in history. The reason God commanded this at this one time in history is because it was a unique redemptive-historical event. What was unique about it was really everything we just said about the land and rest. This one land had to be taken and occupied as part of God's plan of redemption, *until* the Savior, Jesus Christ, should come.

Still, there was yet another redemptive-historically unique reason for this destruction of the people of Canaan. Think again in **eschatological** terms. Remember, how almost everything in the Old Testament is meant to prefigure something at the end of time. Well, when Jesus returns He will judge all the nations for their sins. This military campaign of complete destruction we see in Joshua is a foreshadowing of the judgment all will face when Jesus returns to judge the nations.

To understand this it is helpful to keep in mind that the Canaanites were not a group of innocent tribes who happened to get caught in the path of Joshua's armies. Rather, the Canaanites deserved judgment. And it's not because Israel is particularly righteous that they are the instruments of judgment, but because the Canaanites are wicked and that Yahweh has promises to keep. Listen to these words from Deuteronomy 9:4-6:

Deuteronomy 9:4-6 ⁴ After the LORD, your God, has thrust them out of your way, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because of my merits that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; for it is really because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. ⁵ No, it is not because of your merits or the integrity of your heart that you are going in to take possession of their land; but the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out before you on account of their wickedness and in order to keep the promise which he made on oath to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ⁶ Understand this, therefore: it is not because of your merits that the LORD, your God, is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

It is also helpful to point out that God was very patient with these people, and longsuffering with their sins for over 400 years as we read in **Genesis 15:13-16**. There we read about why Abraham's descendants won't take the land in his day. It's because God was waiting on the Canaanites, until their sins had filled up the full measure of God's wrath. So, they had a lot of time to repent and stop their wicked ways. But in 400 years they did not, and God's patience ran out.

Thus, we see that Israel was God's instrument of judgment upon these rebellious people. So again, Joshua had a unique role in redemptive-history that **no one today** is called to imitate. Instead, the application here is to fear our own sin and repent in the light of a coming far worse

destruction.⁶ We ought not to think that we are any better than the Canaanites were. We too are also great sinners. Therefore, learn this lesson from the conquest of Canaan: a great and awful day of reckoning is coming for everyone. Repent of your sins while there is still time, and put your trust in the only One who can save on that day: the Lord Jesus Christ.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

The book of Joshua ends with Joshua's challenge to the nation of Israel to be faithful to Yahweh now that they own the land, just as Yahweh has been faithful to them in giving them the land.

JUDGES

Context

We turn to Judges now. Judges picks up right where Joshua leaves off. Israel has taken the land, but now the question becomes whether or not they'll be able to keep it. The events told in Judges take place over roughly 350 years, from the time Joshua died until the time of Israel's first king. So we're talking somewhere around 1390 BC to 1050 BC or so. We don't know who wrote it, but we do believe it was written shortly after the last events were recorded,⁷ somewhere in the mid to late 11th century BC.

In the course of redemptive-history Judges takes up the place between the taking of the land, and the next great step forward in God's plan of redemption: the crowning of a king. The book shouts of the need for a faithful, covenant-keeping king to rule of the people of God and lead them in paths of righteousness. Judges also encapsulates a very important biblical theme: the theme of exile and return. When Israel is unfaithful they will lose control of the land, and serve their enemies, losing that rest. But Yahweh is compassionate and sends them "saviors," the judges, to deliver them from their oppressors and restore them to rest in the land. It's a theme that, of course, goes all the way back to the first exile from the Garden of Eden, and continues throughout the rest of the Bible.

Theme

A thematic might be this:

The people of God learn that they need a righteous, covenant-keeping king if they are to be a faithful people. Yet, regardless of their failings, Yahweh is still faithful, sending many saviors to deliver them from their enemies.

What we are going to see is a pattern of Israel forgetting Yahweh, serving other gods, enflaming Yahweh's anger and wrath, then finally crying out to Yahweh, where upon Yahweh has pity on them and delivers them through saviors, called judges. Then Israel will forget Yahweh again and

⁶ Joshua 10:24 is another interesting verse to point out. In the midst of this warfare Joshua called for his men to stand on the necks of the defeated Canaanite kings. This was a symbolic gesture of the seed of the woman triumphing over the seed of the serpent which we read about in Genesis 3:15. Israel represents the seed of the woman here gaining victory over the seed of the serpent, the Canaanites. Again, this looks back to Genesis, and forward to the eschaton.

⁷ This is because of the repetition of the phrase "to this day."

the whole cycle will run its course all over again. In it all we'll see that what Israel needs is a godly king to lead and direct them.

[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Judges 1:1-2:9 – Transition after death of Joshua
 - II. Judges 2:10-23 – Paradigmatic summary of Israel's sin and Yahweh's deliverance
 - III. Judges 3-16 – Seven stories of Israel's sin and Yahweh's deliverance
 - IV. Judges 17-21 – Two stories exemplifying Israel's need for a covenant-keeping king
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Theme texts

The easiest way to understand Judges is really by understanding the way it's laid out. Look at the outline on the back of your handout. You'll see there that after some words of transition, Judges 2:10-23 spells out a paradigm of sorts about what life is like in Israel during the time of the judges. Then, the bulk of the book tells 7 stories that fit that paradigm given in chapter 2 – those famous stories of Ehud, and Jephthah, and Samson, and so forth. Finally, the book ends with 2 stories that are meant to leave us, the readers, thinking, *Boy, Israel really needs a covenant-keeping king to lead and shepherd them.* And that's really the agenda of the entire book: Israel needs a king.

2:10-2:23

Well, let's look at this paradigmatic summary in chapters 2. By understanding this paradigm those famous stories of Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and so on, will make more sense. Turn to **chapter 2**, and let me show how this paradigm is explained in terms of a cycle that Israel falls into again and again in the book of Judges.

There are 7 parts to this cycle:

1. Israel forgets Yahweh.
Look at **2:10**. [READ]
2. Israel serves other gods.
Look at **2:11-12**. [READ]
3. Yahweh grows angry.
We see that there at the end of **verse 12**.
4. Yahweh responds with wrath through foreign invaders.
Look at **verses 14-15**. [READ] This is where we see the loss of that "rest" that we spoke of earlier. Instead of victory over enemies and the enjoyment of peace, they serve their enemies and fear them. These invading armies create mini exiles of sorts.
5. Israel cries out.
6. Yahweh has pity on His people.

- These two are both in **verse 16 and the last part of verse 18**. [READ]
7. YHWH delivers His people through a judge.
Look at the **first part of verse 18**. [READ] Notice here that Israel has done nothing to deserve this deliverance. Yahweh is simply gracious.
 - 1'. Israel forgets Yahweh again, and acts more corruptly than before.
And the cycle starts all over again. Look at **verse 19**. [READ]

Chapters 3-16

As I said, you can look for that pattern of events in the following seven stories about the judges. The point is always to emphasize Israel stubbornness and sin, and Yahweh's patience and great grace. One last interesting note: A lot of these judges are not the best ethical role models. They are quite immoral, a lot of them. This just goes to underscore all the more that the salvations these judges bring are not because of their great character any more than Israel's dessert. Rather, salvation is always rooted in the pure grace of God.

Chapters 17-21

Chapters 17-21, then, make the final commentary on all this. Look at **17:6**, [READ] and **21:25**. [READ] It's as though the author is saying that, "This sort of stuff that we've seen in Judges, all the sin of the people and the invasions of the foreign armies and the loss of rest, would not have happened with a covenantly-faithful king." Everyone doing as he sees fit in his own eyes is not good. They need a king who will act like a shepherd over the people of God.⁸

In this we see, again, that these leaders (the judges) serve as types of Christ. Only He finally delivers His people from all their woes. And as we saw earlier, in Matthew 11, only Christ brings a lasting "rest."

Further, only Christ solves problems that these judges could only temporarily address. For only Christ ever obeyed all the laws of God. And only Christ is the perfect King over His people. Only Christ shepherds His people in untainted righteousness. But, I get ahead of myself. We'll talk more about Christ as our great king and shepherd next week. For now, we leave off with the book of Judges calling and praying and hoping for this king.

Conclusion

The book of Joshua advances God's plan of redemption one step further, where the people of God are able to occupy the land promised to Abraham, and enjoy rest there. Then, Judges tells of the struggles with sin that the people of God had in the land, and serves as a prayer of sorts, asking God to advance His plan yet further still. For the people need a king. And all this should be understood as pointing forward to Christ.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

[PRAY]

⁸ Cf. 18:1 & 19:1 too.