

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell *Joshua*

—by Peter Hammond



“And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.”

Joshua 23:14

Some Christians have imagined that the Promised Land symbolises Heaven. One famous hymn contains the line: “When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside” depicting the river Jordan as passing through death, from this world to Heaven. However, that is a misunderstanding.

tering into the Promised Land was rest from slavery, but it was hardly passivity, or inactivity. Occupying the Promised Land required real, serious warfare. So too a balanced Christian life of discipleship involves much spiritual warfare, fighting the good fight of Faith.

“...Only be strong and very courageous,

Joshua is a Book of Faith and obedience, where God’s people are united in following His anointed leader. This is a book of conquest and victory!

While many Christians do indeed seem to wander in the wilderness, after their conversion, but not quite entering into a balanced discipleship, that is not the way it is meant to be!

that you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand, or to the left...do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Josh 1:6-9.

Spiritual warfare

Across the river lay many enemies, much warfare, sacrifice, injuries and death. En-

Delay of disobedience

Moses led the children of Israel out of



Saved to Serve

Joshua is a Book of Faith and obedience, where God’s people are united in following His anointed leader. The Word of God is central. Joshua is a book of conquest and victory.



Step Out in Faith

As Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, so Joshua now led them across the swollen Jordan River. However, the ministers were commanded to carry the Ark of the Covenant and step into the River Jordan first, before the Lord made a path for them through the Jordan. They had to step out in Faith.

As Moses led the children of Israel **out of Egypt**, so now **Joshua led** the children of Israel **into the Promised Land**.



Moses and Joshua

- In the Law of Moses there is promise, but in Joshua: **Fulfillment**
- In the Law is legislation, but in Joshua: **Application**
- In the Law the Covenant is established, in Joshua the Covenant is **expressed**
- The Pentateuch has the cause, Joshua shows the **effect**
- **God blesses obedience** and He punishes disobedience.

The Joshua generation

A new generation had been trained and disciplined in the wilderness. They responded wholeheartedly: *"All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us, we will go."* Josh 1:16

bondage in Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness. If the people of Israel had been faithful and obedient, they could have entered into the Promised Land 39 years earlier. However, it was their disbelief and disobedience that led them to being condemned to die in the wilderness. Of all the men over 20 years old that crossed »

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the Red Sea, only two, Joshua and Caleb, entered into the Promised Land.

Confrontation and Christophany

As Joshua was walking outside the camp near Jericho, he was confronted by a man standing with a drawn sword. "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" The answer came back: "Neither, but as Commander of the Army of the Lord, I have now come." Joshua fell on his face and worshipped and said to Him: "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

Joshua was commanded to take off his sandals because the place where he was

standing was holy. This was not an angel of the Lord, but The Angel of the Lord. A Christophany, a pre-incarnational appearance of Jesus Christ Himself.

Commander

Joshua was reminded that although he was the General of the Armies of Israel, he was

under the Commander of the Army of the Lord. If you are not under authority, you have no authority. The Lord does not come to bless our plans, but to give His orders. The question is not: Is God on our side? But, Are we on God's side? "Whoever is for the Lord, come to Me." Exo 32:26.

The Book of Joshua makes it clear that we are saved to serve, to fight the good fight of Faith. Joshua is God's servant, but also a soldier.



Sin in the camp

God exposed Achan, who had stolen and hidden gold, silver and a garment, in violation of God's express command that there was to be absolutely no looting of this city. "Be sure your sin will find you out!"

No one lives to himself alone. Sin can affect the whole community. Sometimes an entire nation suffers from the sin of one individual. Everything has consequences.

In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit. Just as Achan died for the sin he brought into the camp, so the early Church was to learn that sin is serious and everything has consequences.

Jericho

The first target was the fortified city of Jericho. With a double wall, both thirty foot high (9 metres), and the inner wall 12 feet thick (3.6 metres), it was a formidable stronghold.

Successful strategy

The strategy given by the Lord to Joshua required marching around the city with all the armed men, for six days. On the seventh day, with the priests leading, they were to march seven times around the city and on the seventh time, all the trumpets were to be blown and all the men were to give a mighty shout.

As the fortifications fell, the armies of

“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua...” Judges 24:31



Israel were perfectly poised, as they surrounded the city, to charge in and take the stronghold. The harlot, Rahab, and her family were spared, to honour the promise of the spies, whom she had helped.

Defeat at Ai

After such an amazingly easy victory, the

children of Israel did not understand the difference between faith and presumption.

Divide and conquer

Joshua’s military strategy was to cut the Promised Land in two. By seizing Jericho and Ai in the centre, and driving to the sea, they were then able to conquer the South-

Caleb and Joshua were not lukewarm, passive and inactive believers. They were not faint-hearted. Instead they were brave warriors of God.

children of Israel became overconfident, and underestimated their next target, Ai. Only a small contingent was sent to seize this fortified city. There they were put to flight and fled in disgrace. As the news of this shocking defeat came, Joshua fell face down on the ground before the Ark of the Lord and prayed.

Prayer and action

The Lord rebuked Joshua: *“Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned...”* Josh 7:10-11. There is a time to pray, and there is a time to act. Prayer must never be an excuse for disobedience and inaction. Prayer is a foundation for obedient action, not an alternative to it. We also need to un-

derstand the difference between faith and presumption. After years of strenuous fighting, the land was divided amongst the tribes of Israel.

Memorial stones

After crossing the Jordan River, God instructed the children of Israel to take stones from the riverbed, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel and set up a monument that future generations would be reminded of what God had done there.

At the end of his long and productive life, Joshua set up another memorial stone as a witness of the Covenant that the children of Israel had chosen to obey the Lord (Joshua 24:27).



Give me this mountain!

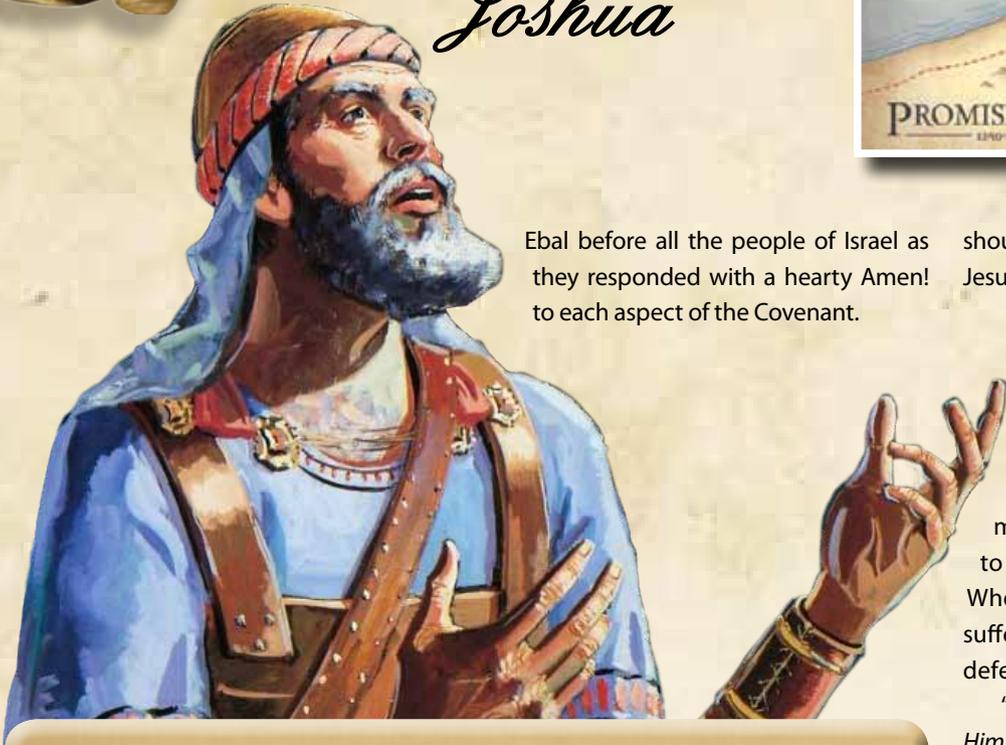
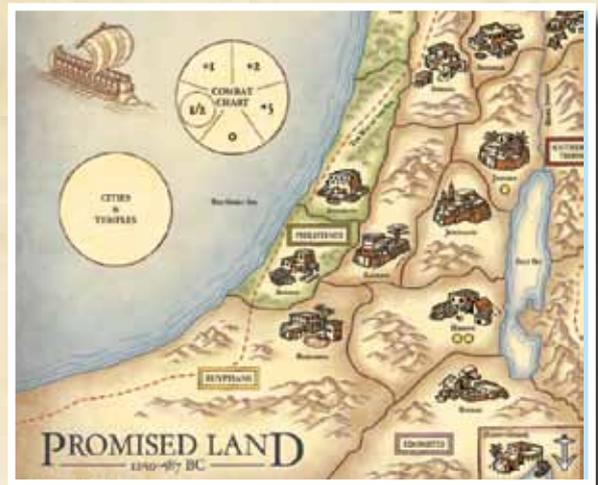
We do not know the names of the other ten scouts, but the names of Joshua and Caleb are honoured forever. They may have given the minority report, but God was with them. Caleb and Joshua were not lukewarm, passive and inactive. They were not half-hearted, nor faint-hearted. They were whole-hearted. Even after 45 years of faithful service, Caleb did not hide behind any excuse, he still wanted to be involved. He did not want to retire from life, or from warfare. He did not ask for an easy assignment, but chose the honour of a hard and difficult assignment: Give me that mountain! (Joshua 14:7-12)



THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Joshua



Ebal before all the people of Israel as they responded with a hearty Amen! to each aspect of the Covenant.

should inspire us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and run with perseverance the race.

The blessings of obedience

In his farewell speech, Joshua reminds the children of Israel of God's faithfulness, His provision, His protection and guidance. He reminds us that when we are obedient to the Lord, He blesses us with victory. When we are disobedient to the Lord, we suffer the consequences and experience defeat.

"Now, therefore, hear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth...Serve the Lord! Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" Josh 24:14-15.

The name Joshua means Yahweh Saves. Joshua is the Hebrew form of what the Greek New Testament translates as Jesus.

Jesus in Joshua

The Book of Joshua makes it clear that we are saved to serve, to fight the good fight of faith. God's servant is mostly a soldier. The name Joshua means Yahweh Saves. Joshua is the Hebrew form of what the Greek New Testament translates as Jesus. ■

Mount Ebal and Gerizim

The Covenant was renewed by the children of Israel in the centre of the Promised Land. The blessings of the Covenant were proclaimed from Mount Gerizim. The curses of disobedience were proclaimed on Mount

Hall of faith

Matthew's Gospel includes Rahab in the royal lineage of David and of our Lord Jesus Himself. Both Joshua and Rahab are honoured in the hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, as part of the great cloud of witnesses that

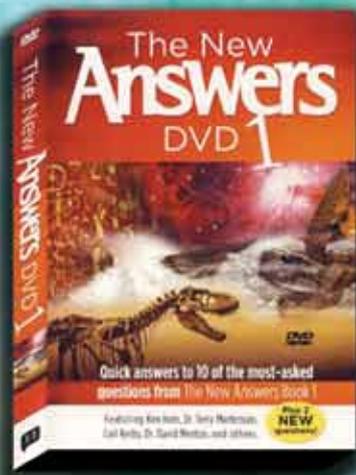
Ending Well

The Bible tells us of many who began well but ended badly. Lot, King Saul, Solomon and Demas, were some of those who ended shamefully. It is not so important how we begin the race. What is of the greatest importance is how we end the race. May we be able to say with the Apostle Paul: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith."* 2 Tim 4:7.

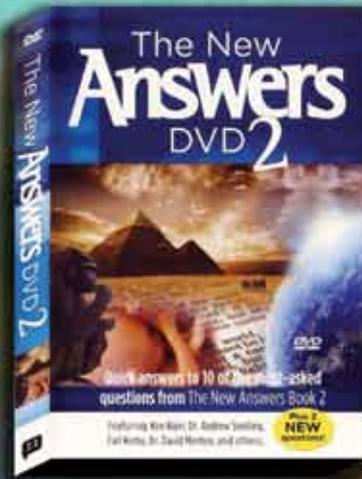


Answers in Genesis

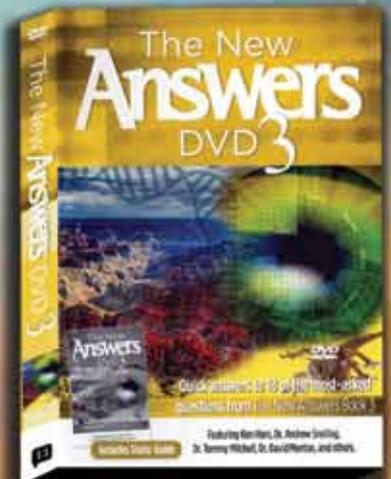
"Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..." 1 Peter 3:15



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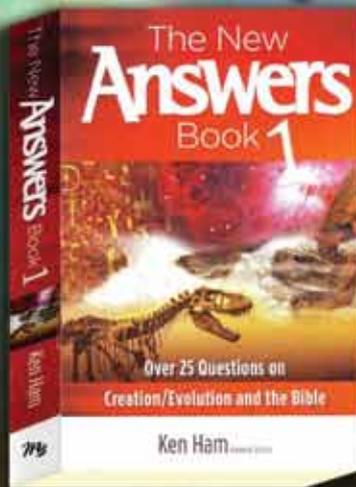


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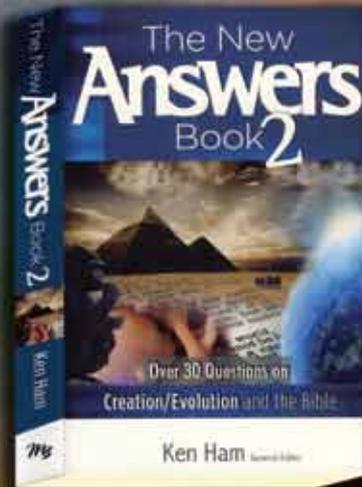


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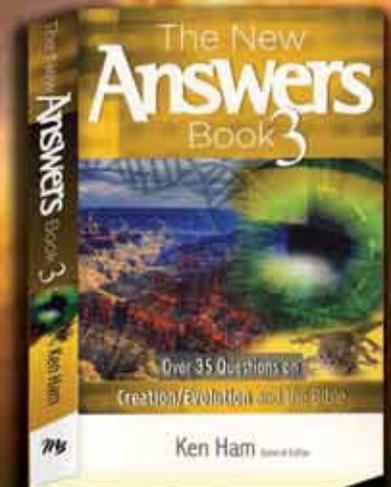
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