**Survey of Old Testament**

**Joshua 1 The Commission to Joshua**

1. The first book of the Prophets, the second division of the Old Testament canon, is named after Joshua, the chief character of the book.
2. God had chosen Joshua to be Moses’ successor as far back as the battle with Amalek (Ex. 17:8–16).
3. Notice that God gives every encouragement to Joshua: (1) the promise of the land; (2) the promise of His presence; and (3) the assurance that God would keep His word.
4. We have here a “spiritual chain of command.” God commanded Joshua (v. 9); Joshua commanded the leaders (v. 10); the leaders were to command the people (v. 11). This is spiritual leadership under the command of God, and this same pattern ought to prevail in the NT church.
5. How wonderful it is when God’s people honor God by respecting and following their spiritual leaders. See Deut. 34:9. Unlike the carnal Christians at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11–17), they did not divide up into groups, with the followers of dead Moses opposing the followers of Joshua. They all followed the Lord!

**Joshua 2 The Covenant with Rahab**

1. Archaeologists have done a great deal of research at Jericho. They tell us the city covered about eight acres, with inner and outer walls surrounding the city. The inner wall was twelve feet thick, the outer wall six feet thick, and there were houses upon the walls (v. 15). The walls stood about thirty feet high, and excavations show that these walls were “violently destroyed.” Of the many people who lived in Jericho, we know the name of only one—Rahab, the harlot (see Heb. 11:31; James 2:25).
2. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17, nkjv). It is faith that saves the sinner (Rom. 4:5). We are told in Heb. 11:31 that Rahab was saved by faith. Note that her assurance came from the Word: “I know that the Lord has given you the land” (v. 9, nkjv).
3. In Matt. 1:5, we find Rahab included by marriage in the Jewish nation and named as an ancestress of the Messiah! While the people of Jericho suffered death, Rahab and her family were to enjoy a marriage feast! See Rev. 19:7–9 and 17–19. Rahab was saved by faith, not by character or by religious works. This is the only way God saves people (Eph. 2:8–9).

**Joshua 3-5 The Miracle of the Crossing**

1. Joshua arose early in the morning to meditate on the Word (1:8; 3:1) and to prepare himself for the day’s duties. It was not left for Joshua to invent a method of crossing the flooded Jordan, for God gave him all the instructions necessary. The key word in this chapter is ark, used ten times. Of course, the ark symbolized the presence of God. The ark went before the people to lead them, and it was kept in the midst of the river until all the nation had passed over. Christ always goes before His people and opens the way, but the people must sanctify themselves (see 2 Cor. 7:1) and be ready for God’s leading.
2. The priests went before, bearing the ark, and when they dipped their feet into the water, God opened the river before them! (Sometimes God’s people have to “get their feet wet” by faith before God goes to work!)
3. There were two piles of stones built: one by the twelve chosen men on the bank of the river (3:12; 4:1–8), and one by Joshua in the midst of the river (4:9–10). They were to be memorials of the crossing, and to us they convey wonderful spiritual truths. The twelve stones on the bank of the Jordan came out of the midst of the river (v. 8) as evidence that God did part the waters and take His people safely across. The twelve stones hidden in the midst of the river could be seen only by God, but they too spoke of Israel’s marvelous crossing. These two piles of stones picture Christ’s death and burial (the hidden stones), and resurrection (the stones on the bank).
4. The Jews were no sooner safe on the other side than God commanded them to receive the mark of the covenant, circumcision (Gen. 17). Collectively as a nation they had gone through the experience of “death” in crossing the river. Now they were to apply that “death to self” individually. Throughout the Bible, physical circumcision is always a picture of a spiritual truth. Circumcision pictures putting off that which is sinful, and in the NT it illustrates putting off the “old man” of the flesh (Col. 3:1; Rom. 8:13).
5. Jericho was a closed city. Joshua stood by the city and saw a man there with a drawn sword. Fearlessly, Joshua asked the man to declare himself, and he discovered that the Man was the Lord of Hosts!

**Joshua 6 The Fall of Jericho**

1. Israel’s conquest of this mighty city is an illustration of several practical spiritual truths: (1) It is faith that overcomes obstacles, Heb. 11:30 and 1 John 5:4; (2) The weapons we use are spiritual, 2 Cor. 10:4; (3) Christ is the victor and we can trust Him fully, John 16:33. Christians face many “Jerichos” in daily life, and often they are tempted to give up, as the spies did at Kadesh (Num. 13:28). But no wall is too high or too strong for the Lord. By faith we win the victory and claim the inheritance!

**Joshua 7–9 Israel Begins to Conquer Canaan**

1. Joshua’s military strategy was to cut across Canaan and divide the land, beginning at Jericho and continuing with Ai, Bethel, and Gibeon. He then would conquer the southern cities and complete his conquest by defeating the northern cities. However, he experienced a setback at Ai and was deceived by the leaders of Gibeon.
2. God had made it clear that the spoils of Jericho were to be “devoted” or dedicated to Him and placed in His treasury (6:18–19), but Achan had disobeyed this law.
3. After being defeated at Ai, the hearts of the Jews melted (v. 5) instead of the hearts of the enemy melting (Josh. 2:11). Joshua and his leaders spent the whole day in prayer before the ark.
4. God spoke sternly to His servant: “Get up! Israel has sinned!” Of course, only one man had sinned, but this involved the entire nation (v. 1; 1 Cor. 12:12). It is a solemn truth that one person’s disobedience can cause the sorrow and failure of a whole nation, family, or church. Achan thought he could hide his sin, but God saw what he did.
5. “I have sinned!” confessed Achan, explaining how he “saw … coveted … and took” the spoils from Jericho. Undoubtedly the members of his household knew about the loot and were sharing in his sin. All of them had to be judged for their disobedience, so the people took them to the valley and stoned them. That place was called the “Valley of Achor” (trouble) in memory of the trouble Achan had brought to the people. Sin will always put us in the valley of trouble.
6. Now that the nation had been sanctified (7:13) and their sin judged, God could again lead His people to victory.
7. The heathen tribes of Canaan were divided into many little “nations” (city-states) with key cities as their centers. They usually fought each other, but when God’s people arrived, they united to oppose Israel. It is amazing how enemies unite against God! However, the people at Gibeon, the next city to be taken, decided to use deceit instead of force. (Satan is both a lion and a serpent.) They dressed themselves to appear like men who had been on a long journey, with old sacks, patched shoes, and moldy food, and their plan worked. God had commanded Israel to make no covenant with the nations in Canaan (Deut. 7), but the Gibeonites knew that if they did get a covenant, Israel would keep it.
8. Joshua and his leaders failed to seek God’s mind in the matter; instead, they judged by appearances. What Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, the Gibeonites accomplished with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God’s people, and we must constantly be on guard. Note that it is usually after a great victory that Satan begins his subtle attacks.

**Joshua 10-13 The defense of the Gibeonites and the battles of Israel**

1. Attention shifted suddenly from Gibeon to Jerusalem, five miles south. Near panic had seized its king and for good reason.So the king of Jerusalem sent an urgent message to four other kings of southern Canaan stressing the fact that Gibeon had made peace with Israel, a punishable act.
2. Faced with certain slaughter, the Gibeonites sent a runner to Joshua for help against the overwhelming force that pressed on them.
3. The Amorites however were not able to escape. Using the forces of nature to fight for Israel, the Lord caused large hailstones to fall on the enemy with deadly precision so that more were killed in this way than by swords.
4. But the day of the battle was wearing on and Joshua knew that the pursuit of the enemy would be long. At the most, the military leader had 12 hours of daylight ahead of him. He clearly needed more time if he were to realize the fulfillment of God’s promise (v. 8) and see the total annihilation of his foes. Joshua therefore took to the Lord an unusual request: O sun, stand still over Gibeon. It was noon and the hot sun was directly overhead when Joshua uttered this prayer. The petition was quickly answered by the Lord. Joshua prayed in faith, and a great miracle resulted.

**Joshua 14–15 Caleb the Man of God**

1. Caleb stands out in the Bible as a great hero of faith. Six times we are told that he “wholly followed the Lord” (Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Joshua 14:8–9, 14). Caleb was “an overcomer” (1 John 2:13–14 and 5:4), a man who surrendered wholly to the Lord and fully obeyed His Word. We may trace his spiritual history in four stages.
2. **Caleb the Sufferer**. Since Caleb was forty years old at Kadesh-barnea (Josh. 14:7), he had to have been born in Egypt while the Jews were enduring great suffering (Ex. 1–2). He was born a slave, yet he died free!
3. **Caleb the Defender.** The nation had been out of Egypt about two years when they arrived at the entrance to Canaan. Instead of believing God’s Word and immediately claiming their inheritance, they asked for a report from twelve spies (Deut. 1:21). When the report was given, only Caleb and Joshua defended Moses and encouraged the nation to enter Canaan. But Caleb and Joshua lived to enter and enjoy the Promised Land. “To be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6).
4. **Caleb the Wanderer.** Caleb did not die in the wilderness, but he still had to suffer with the unbelieving nation during their nearly forty years of wandering. Think of what this godly, believing man had to endure! Every single day he saw people die and miss out on their inheritance. He had to listen to the murmuring and complaining. This man of faith had to put up with the unbelief of his fellow Israelites. How was Caleb able to maintain his spiritual life when surrounded by so much carnality and unbelief? His heart was in Canaan! God had given him a wonderful inheritance (read Josh. 14:9–12), and though his body was in the wilderness, his heart and mind were in Canaan!
5. **Caleb the Conqueror.** Joshua is giving each tribe its special inheritance, and Caleb comes to claim his share. He reminds Joshua of God’s promise (14:6–9), for it is only on the basis of God’s Word that we can claim our blessings. Forty-five years after the nation’s failure at Kadesh-barnea, Caleb is eighty-five years old, yet he is anxious to claim his inheritance to the glory of God. It is sad when believers allow “old age” to make complainers out of them when they ought (like Caleb) to be conquerors.

We overcome the enemy and claim the inheritance the same way as Caleb: (1) we must be wholly yielded to the Lord; (2) we must know His promises and believe them; (3) we must keep heart and mind fixed on the inheritance; (4) we must depend on God to give the victory.