



The Historical Books Session - 1

Deacon Steve Swope
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Sections of the Old Testament

- The Pentateuch – Genesis to Deuteronomy
- Historical Books – Joshua to 2 Maccabees
- Wisdom Books – Job to Sirach
- Major Prophets – Isaiah to Daniel
- Minor Prophets – Hosea to Malachi

Sections of the New Testament

- Gospels – Matthew to John
- Acts of the Apostles
- Pauline Letters – Romans to Philemon
- Letter to the Hebrews
- Catholic Letters – James to Jude
- Revelation

The Historical Books

- At the end of the Pentateuch, Israel is in a covenant relationship with God and ready to enter the promised land
- The historical books pick up from there and continue the story up to about a century before the birth of Jesus
- This portion of the OT covers a huge amount of time – about 1,200 years in total
- These are history but not just for history's sake

The Historical Books

- This is the history of the Bible's most common theme – a bond between God and us
- In this extensive body of literature (about 25% of all the verses in the Bible), we encounter many people
- We should focus on those that look to God for strength and security – their lives are models for our faith journey

The Historical Books

- Broad outline...
 - Joshua picks up where Deuteronomy leaves off – as the successor to Moses he leads Israel into Canaan, fulfilling God’s promise to the patriarchs
 - God is loyal to the people but Joshua is worried about the people’s loyalty to God
 - In Judges those fears are confirmed, but God doesn’t give up on Israel he give them leaders, the Judges to guide them
 - Even with this help they are in disarray and fighting among themselves

The Historical Books

- Broad outline (con't)...
 - Ruth is a great story about strong faith
 - There is a promise of restoration in Samuel, a great spiritual leader – he serves God faithfully
 - This continues in 2 Samuel in the person of David whose career grows until he neglects God
 - David is the ancestor of a long line of kings; kings who cannot match David so a slow decline ensues
 - At the end of 2 Kings the kingdom has collapsed and the people are in exile

The Historical Books

- Broad outline (con't)...
 - Chronicles offers a more idealistic view of what happened by concentrating on David's spiritual gifts
 - It shows how David prepares the way for restoration after exile
 - Ezra and Nehemiah carry the theme forward as they tell about Israel's return from Babylon to the P.L.
 - We then encounter three small books – Tobit, Judith and Esther – close ups of spiritual giants that are protected by God against earthly kingdoms

The Historical Books

- Broad outline (con't)...
 - 1 and 2 Maccabees lead us to the final centuries before Jesus
 - They show how determined the people are to secure their faith and traditions against an enemy working to overpower them
 - This sets the stage for the rest of the OT and much of the tone of the NT

Joshua

- Could anyone replace Moses – we wonder and certainly a question on Joshua's mind
- God tells this new leader three times to “be strong and courageous”
- Joshua turns out to be a great leader – due to the fact that God was with him all the way
- After 40 years in the desert, Israel makes it to the Promised Land – but their spiritual journey is far from over

Joshua

- There are plenty of obstacles that they must overcome
- The real obstacles are not the obvious ones
 - The walls of Jericho come tumbling down
 - Surprise attacks against Israel fail
 - Multiple kings working together cannot defeat them
- God is on their side and as a result nothing can interfere with their claim on the Promised Land

Joshua

- The real obstacles are in the hearts of the people
- A lack of faith slowed their progress to the Promised Land and now lack of faith threatens their claim to the land that they have been given
- Joshua is such a loyal servant he strengthens the hearts of the people
- The middle chapters relate the allotment of the land to the tribes of Israel as promised by God

Joshua

- At the end of the book, Joshua is not sure that the people will be loyal to God after he is gone
- They already seem to be losing focus on God and serving earthly interests – exactly what Moses warned against
- Joshua tries to motivate the people by professing his loyalty to Yahweh; challenging to do the same
- They talk the talk, but Joshua isn't sure they will walk the walk

Joshua

- Joshua has 24 chapters
 - 1 – 12 Crossing the Jordan and winning the battles
 - 13 – 22 Claiming of the Promised Land
 - 23 – 24 Choosing to serve God
- When does it take place
 - The Pyramids c. 2500 BC
 - Joseph c. 1600 BC
 - Exodus c. 1290 BC
 - Crossing to P.L. c. 1250 BC

Joshua

- Interesting points
 - **Strong Ally** – Joshua saw the leader of the Lord’s army and asked whose side was he on. He was told “neither” (5:14). The meaning is that God doesn’t care about national boundaries but is concerned with faith and justice
 - **Longest Day** – The sun and moon remain fixed in the sky as Israel fights the Amorites (10:12-14). God gives them the time they need to win. The lesson is that all the resources of heaven are available to those that seek to remove obstacles to their journey of faith

Joshua

- Interesting points
 - **Woman of Faith** – Rahab was a Canaanite and citizen of Jericho. She knew even more than the two Israelite spies that nothing will stand in the way of God’s plan for his people. Her name appears in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew
 - **Final Resting Place** – the bones of Joseph are laid to rest in the Promised Land at Shechem on the ground purchased by his father Jacob – fulfilling the oath that Joseph made his brothers take. Joseph’s burial in the Promised Land closes the account of the Exodus from Egypt

Lessons from Joshua

1. The Promised Land is a gift from God
2. People who trust in God enjoy advantages in life
3. Illusions of self-sufficiency weaken our relationship with God

Joshua

- Points for consideration
 - God encourages Joshua repeatedly in the first chapter, why would he do that?
 - Read Rahab's statement to the spies (2:8-13). What do her words reveal about her deep convictions?
 - What lesson can be learned from the collapse of the walls of Jericho?
 - Considering what Achan took from Jericho, what do you think his intentions were?
 - Why are the Gibeonites successful in their bid for survival?

Joshua

- Points for consideration
 - How does God favor the people of Israel in Chapter 10?
 - What do you think of the Tribe of Joseph in Chapters 16 and 17?
 - How do the tribes of Gilead feel when they have to leave the Lord's land in Chapter 22?
 - Do you think Joshua is justified in fearing the people may not be able to serve the Lord after he is gone (in Chapter 24)?

For Next Week

- Read the Book of Judges
 - There are 21 Chapters
 - Think about the individuals – who they are and what motivates them
 - Think about the people of Israel, are they a nation or a collection of tribes