

# HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

A course in Biblical literacy

How to read...  
**JOSHUA**

Stephen Williams

## OVERVIEW

The three-fold structure of Joshua (designed for Presbyterians):

### **1. *Conquest of the land (chapters 1-12)***

A text to remember: 'When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (5: 13-15).

### **2. *Distribution of the land (chapters 13-22)***

A text to remember: 'When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the people of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. By command of the Lord they gave him the city that he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he rebuilt the city and settled in it.' (19: 49-50).

### **3. *Joshua's charge to leaders and people (chapters 23-24)***

A text to remember: 'But Joshua said to the people, 'You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.' (24: 19).

## TWO MAJOR QUESTIONS

### **A. Miracles**

Discussion question 1: 'Yes, yes, you've done your best, but it's still hard to believe that these things could have happened.'

### **B. Genocide**

Discussion question 2: 'Yes, yes, you've done your best, but it's still hard to believe that God could have commanded this.'

## CONCLUSION

Back to the beginning: 'I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous' (1: 5-6; see Deuteronomy 31: 6; Hebrews 13: 5; Matthew 28:20).

Notes...

## Suggested reading

To understand Joshua, we really need to have a Bible Atlas at hand so that we understand the significance of different geographical locations mentioned in the book. A. Curtis (editor), *The Oxford Bible Atlas*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) may be recommended.

The best way into commentary is to take a short and general one first, such as the commentary on Joshua in D. A. Carson (editor), *New Bible Commentary: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition* (Leicester: IVP, 1994). For more detailed and recent treatment, see David Firth, *The Message of Joshua* (Nottingham: IVP, 2015).

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