



Reading the book of Joshua

DID YOU KNOW?

1. The book of Joshua recounts some of the stages of the military conquest of the Promised Land and then the instructions for the division of the country among the tribes. It is the first book in the Bible that bears the name of the hero of the story.
2. As a young man, Joshua served in the tent of meeting (Ex. 33:11). He was one of the twelve spies (Nu. 13); only he and Caleb gave a positive account of their exploration (Nu. 14:6-9, 30). Towards the end of the forty years in the desert, Moses was commanded to appoint Joshua, the man in whom the Spirit resides, as his successor (Nu 27:18-23; De. 1:38).
3. The expression “Book of the Law” in Joshua 1:8 most often refers, in the biblical context, to the five (5) Books of the Law written by Moses.
4. The Bible references to Rahab show that it occupied an important place in the Jewish history (Jos. 2:12). Only she and her family survived the Battle of Jericho. She became a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:5). The authors of James (2:25) and Hebrews (11:31) cite Rahab as an example of faith.
5. The Ark of the Covenant symbolized the presence of God in the midst of the people of Israel (Jos. 3:3).
6. The miracle of the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:16) recalls the crossing of the Red Sea forty years earlier (Ex.14), thus presenting Joshua as a worthy successor to Moses. Joshua and the Israelites crossed a place very close to where Jesus was later baptized (Mt. 3).
7. The twelve stones represented God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to the twelve tribes of Israel (Jos. 4:2-7).
8. The expression “land of milk and honey” expresses the idea of a fertile and prosperous territory (Jos. 5:6b).
9. Everything about Joshua seemed to suggest that God was truly in control. Covering a period of about seven years, the 24 chapters of Joshua devote only a few sentences to some vast military campaigns. But key events, such as the fall of Jericho, are explained in detail, emphasizing that the Israelites succeeded when they trusted in God, not in their military might.

10. When something is “utterly devoted” it means that it belongs only to God and is destined for destruction (Jos. 6:8, 21).
11. Ai was located next to the precise place where God had promised the land to Abraham hundreds of years before (Ge. 12:8). A military defeat there, so soon after Jericho’s resounding victory, shook even Joshua (Jos. 7:6-9). The Israelites were militarily vulnerable without God’s protection.
12. The privileges of Israel entering Palestine under Joshua's leadership were as follows: divine promise about the Promised Land, presence of the Lord, law of the Lord. With such privileges, the Israelites should have won everywhere, but they suffered defeats as a result of their disobedience.
13. Joshua employed expert war tactics against Israel’s many enemies living in Canaan. His mission as a spy gave him a good knowledge of the topography of this country. His group “raids”, night marches and ambushes, preferred to long sieges and the destruction of important cities, indicate that they were familiar with advanced warfare techniques.
14. The word “west” comes from the Hebrew *akōr* which means what lies behind as opposed to what lies in front or “east”. The peoples of the West are from the West (Jos. 8:9). The current use of the word “west” also implies a distancing from either the rest of the world or one or more other areas of world influence such as the Arab world, the Chinese world or the Russian sphere of influence.
15. When Joshua asked the sun to stand still, it was the whole planetary system that was miraculously stopped by God, the creator of the universe (Jos. 10:12-15).
16. The expression “rising sun” is synonymous with the East. It refers to the East, that is, the direction in which the sun appears every morning.
17. The word “Noon” in the biblical text can mean many things. It can identify the middle of the day (morning, noon and evening). However, in the context of Joshua 13, it refers to a position on the 4 cardinal points, designating the South (to the right of the Sun).
18. The word “Septentrion” comes from the Hebrew *tsaphon*, which refers to the North (Jos. 15:5).
19. Chapter 13 of Joshua introduces an abrupt transition. The rest of the book recounts what happened five to seven years after the crossing of the Jordan River. Chapters 13-22 constitute a kind of land title for the new generation. Genesis 48-49 and Deuteronomy 33 provide background information.

20. The word “Tribute” is a contribution one victorious State required one another State to pay (Jos. 16:10).
21. In several key passages (Jos. 13:2-7; 16:10; 23:4) and in Judges 1, the Bible indicates that there were still groups of Canaanites in the land. The Israelites could not dislodge them or did not drive them out. The unconquered tribes became a stumbling block for the Israelites.
22. The word “tribe” is derived from the Hebrew word *chèbèt* or *mattèh*. It is a union of several clans. A clan can be a family or a community of relatives (Jos. 14).
23. The cities of refuge were reserved for people who had committed a crime by accident or involuntary manslaughter. These cities were sanctuaries that protected them from popular vindictiveness. However, these cities could not be used as safe havens for the perpetrator of a premeditated crime or intentional murder. (See Numbers 35 :6 and Deuteronomy 4 :41-43; 19).
24. Because of their call to serve God, the Levites did not own land in Canaan. Rather, they had received 48 cities scattered throughout the territories of the other tribes – four cities in each tribe (Jos. 21). This forced them to put their trust not in their inheritance, but in God.