

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL****Joshua 1; 3:1–5:12****Joshua 5:13–6:27; 8:30-35; 11:16-23; 21:43-45; 23–24**

**Memory Verses:** *Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass* (Josh. 21:45 ESV).

*“Choose this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Josh. 24:15 ESV).

**Background Helps:**

This forecast combines two lessons that are scheduled for Christmas and New Year's Sundays, anticipating that your teaching time will be abbreviated. A single aim for both lessons is suggested below.

In our readings we have at last reached the Promised Land! One of the promises of the covenant God made with Abraham was the promise of the land (Gen. 12:1, 7; 13:14-15; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8; et al). In the book of Joshua this covenant promise is fulfilled by conquest and settlement of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.

These two weeks' readings include:

- The commissioning of Joshua (Josh 1:1-11)
- The crossing of the Jordan River into Canaan (3:1–5:1)
- The circumcision the new generation of Israelites (5:2-9)
- The first Passover in Canaan (5:10-12)
  
- The conquest of Jericho (5:13–6:27)
- A covenant renewal ceremony at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (8:30-35)
- A summary of the conquest and settlement of the land (11:16-20, 23; 21:43-45)
- Joshua's two farewell addresses, leading to a renewal of the covenant (23–24)

Notice the following:

- In commissioning Joshua, the LORD makes frequent mention of the gift of the Promised Land (Josh. 1:2-4, 6, 11).
- The “ark of the covenant” plays a crucial role in crossing the Jordan River (3:3, 6, 8, 10-11, 13-17; 4:5-7, 9-11, 15-18). This “ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth” (3:13) represents the presence of the covenant-keeping God, who paves the way before the people of Israel and guarantees the conquest of the Promised Land (3:10-13).
- Upon entering the Promised Land, the new generation of Israelites is circumcised (5:2-9), which was the sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14).
- Also, upon entering the land the nation observes the Passover (5:10-12), one of the major feasts included in the covenant God made with Moses at Sinai.

- The battle of Jericho (5:13–6:27) is included as one example of how the LORD enabled Israel to conquer the land. Notice once again the significant use of the ark of the covenant in this victory (6:4, 6-9, 11-13).
- The reading of the Law of Moses in 8:30-35 is a reading of the old covenant.
- Joshua 21:43-45 summarizes God’s fulfillment of the covenant promise he made to the patriarchs to give Israel the land of Canaan. This passage includes the first week’s memory verse.
- In Joshua 23–24 Joshua calls on the nation to renew its commitment to the covenant God made with them through Moses. Joshua takes the lead on behalf of his family and pledges to keep the covenant (24:15, the second memory verse). The people also pledge their commitment to the covenant in 24:16-27.

### **Lesson Helps:**

A possible combined aim for the two weeks: My students will learn about God’s covenant faithfulness in the conquest and settlement of the land of Canaan, so that they will choose to commit themselves to serve the Lord. What a great theme for the end of one year and the beginning of the new! This aim will give us a chance to look back at God’s faithfulness over the past year and then commit ourselves to be faithful to him in the new year.

In the first half of your lesson, emphasize the first memory verse, Joshua 21:45 (or even 21:43-45), which summarizes God’s faithfulness to his covenant promise to the patriarchs. Then use examples from the readings showing how God kept this promise, specifically in the crossing of the Jordan River and the conquest of Jericho. It will be especially important to include one or both of these stories in children’s classes. In adult classes you may also want to draw attention to the circumcision of the new generation of Israelites (5:2-9), the keeping of the Passover (5:10-12), and the reading of the Law of Moses (8:30-35)—all of which were significant covenant acts by the people of Israel.

In the second half of your lesson, emphasize the second memory verse, Joshua 24:15, in which Joshua and his family pledge their commitment to God’s covenant. Notice that his pledge is a response to God’s faithfulness to Israel (which he recites in 24:1-13), including the conquest and settlement of the land (24:11-13). The people follow Joshua’s lead and also pledge their commitment to the covenant (24:16-27).

Ask your class, “What has the Lord done for you?”—a great question for the Christmas season! What is your response to God’s covenant love and faithfulness? Like Joshua, will you renew your commitment to serve the Lord?” These are two great questions as we look forward to a new year.

### **Home Assignment:**

 Read Psalm 105.

 Memorize Psalm 105:1 ESV.