

Lesson Four

EXODUS,



Exodus 21-40

JOSHUA,



Numbers

AND JUDGES



Judges

MEMORY VERSE

*“As for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD.”*

—Joshua 24:15

Joshua utters this famous verse in the final chapter of the book of Joshua, just before his death. The Israelites have lived in the Promised Land for a while now and have endured several attacks from several different foreign powers. Joshua begins his final speech by reminding the people of God’s faithfulness back in Egypt, through the Red Sea, at Mount Sinai, during the desert wanderings, and finally in the conquest of Canaan. Now, as Joshua’s life is all but over, he wants it to be clear that his descendants will continue to follow God and serve him in fidelity. He is calling everyone to recommit to the Lord and to the covenant.

OPENING PRAYER



Heavenly Father, open our minds and hearts today. Open our eyes and ears so that we may see and hear what you want to say to us at this time. Teach us what it means to love you, what it means to worship you, and what it means to follow you. Reveal to us the areas of our lives we still do not entrust to your care, and help us to be more committed to you. Thank you for the gift of your Word. May it enlighten and console us now and forever. Amen.



TIME PERIOD OVERVIEW

EGYPT AND EXODUS » DESERT WANDERINGS » CONQUEST AND JUDGES



Our last lesson ended with Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites miraculously escaping the Egyptians through the Red Sea and making their way to Mount Sinai. As we pick up the action in this time period of **Egypt and Exodus**, we will hear God giving them some familiar commandments—ten of them, in fact. As the book of Exodus unfolds, God will teach his people *how to worship him*, and in Leviticus and **DEUTERONOMY**, he will give them the Law, teaching them how they are to act as a people. Eventually, however, they will forget all that God has done for them and show a lack of trust in his Providence. As a result, God will give them an invaluable lesson about covenantal love. As Exodus draws to a close, we will enter into the book of Numbers and a new time period, the **Desert Wanderings**.

Numbers will outline numerous stories over a forty-year span as the Israelites wander in the desert in their journey to the Promised Land. God will be refining the next generation of Israelites and instructing them in his Law, his desire, and his expectations for them to live within the covenant. Moses will continue to lead with **JOSHUA** at his side until Joshua's time to lead the Chosen People comes. Moses' story will stop just short of their entry into the Promised Land.

The book of Joshua opens with Moses' death and Joshua assuming leadership over the nation of Israel, which is on the brink of entering the Promised Land. We begin a new time period here, titled **Conquest and Judges**, when we see God's firstborn "child," Israel, finally take possession of and inhabit the land that God had set aside specifically for them. Over the next several years, and throughout the book of Joshua, we will see a nation constantly battling enemy armies and fighting off invaders as the people learn what it means to truly live in relationship with the one true God.



Video Notes >>



Check Your Understanding

1. On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses _____.
 - a) the Ten Commandments
 - b) the entire book of Leviticus
 - c) wine and bread for the first Eucharist
 - d) the golden calf

2. The Israelites did not trust in God, and so they wandered in the desert for _____.
 - a) forty days and nights
 - b) forty years
 - c) forty generations
 - d) four and a half years

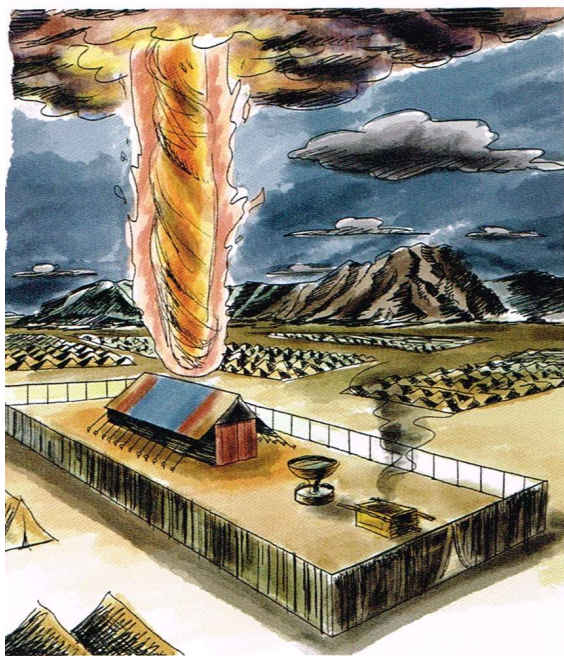
3. _____ was Moses' successor to lead the Israelites.
 - a) Gideon
 - b) Samson
 - c) Aaron
 - d) Joshua

4. The Israelites marched around _____ seven times, and the walls came tumbling down.
 - a) Jerusalem
 - b) Jericho
 - c) Mount Sinai
 - d) Babylon

5. God promised _____ great strength as long as he did not cut his hair.
 - a) Moses
 - b) Aaron
 - c) Joshua
 - d) Samson

DIVE IN

At Mount Sinai, God gives the Israelites (and us) not ten suggestions but ten commandments. The commandments were not designed to take away our freedom but rather to help us live in freedom. Sadly, the Israelites had reverted back to their Egyptian ways, fashioning a false idol—a golden calf—and worshipping it instead of God. As God’s fury rages, Moses intercedes for the people, and God is merciful.



In the closing chapters of Exodus, we see God giving the Israelites detailed instructions on how they are to worship him, complete with descriptions of candles and altars, priestly robes and bowls of bread. He also tells them how to construct the **TABERNACLE**, which will hold the Ark of the Covenant, where God’s presence will dwell. This is the origin of what we have in our churches today and what we do at Mass.

As the Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land, they will send spies to do some reconnaissance on the people who already inhabit the land. However, instead of returning with the insights needed to conquer the Promised Land, the twelve spies spend forty days arguing, lamenting how formidable their opponents are and how outnumbered they will be. Their lack of trust in God (who has already saved them from slavery) is obvious, and the Lord is forced to teach them a valuable lesson. Now they will wander the desert for forty years—one year for every day they doubted their deliverer.

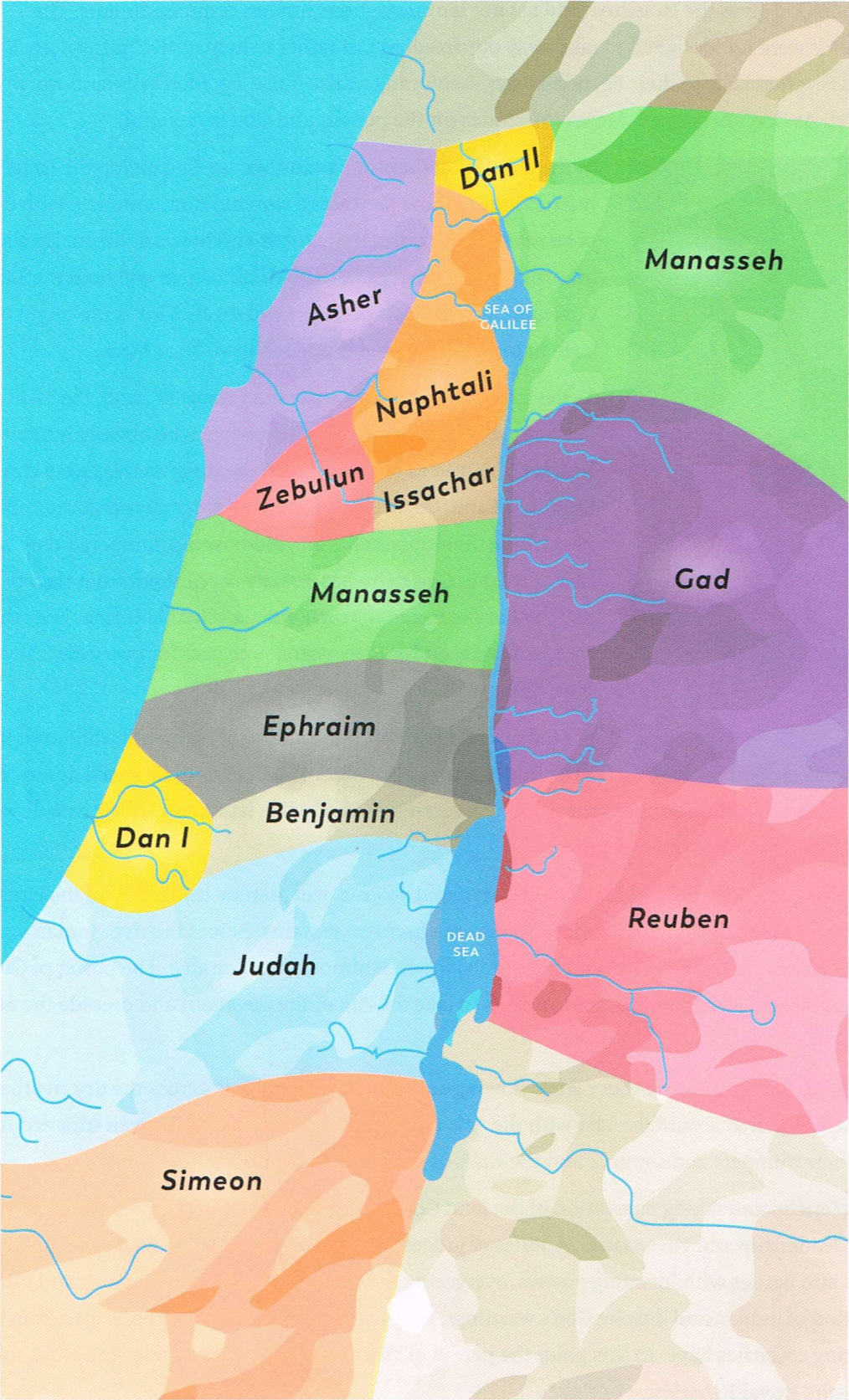
For the next four decades, the nation of Israel will wander in the desert, forced to depend on God for food and water at every turn. The older Israelites will die in the desert, never to see the Promised Land, and the younger generation will receive an invaluable lesson regarding true dependence on God and what living in a covenant requires.

Eventually, Moses, too, will die, and his next-in-command, Joshua, will assume leadership of the Israelites as they come to the border of the Promised Land. However, one problem remains. Across the river Jordan stands the mighty city of Jericho, a fortified city with high walls, which is almost impenetrable. The power of God, however, cannot be vanquished. Joshua instructs the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and precede the army across the river.

As they enter the river Jordan, the water stops flowing and parts, and they walk across the dry riverbed. For seven days, the Israelites march around Jericho with the Ark, and on the seventh day, after seven trips around the city, they sound their trumpets and shout ... and the walls of Jericho come tumbling down.

After sacking Jericho and taking possession of the land God promised them, the Israelites attempt to put in place some type of leadership and governance. A series of judges will guide them over the next several years, leading the Israelites into battles with invading powers, overseeing the tribes, and ruling on disputes and other matters. After this period of judges, and despite God’s warnings, the people cry out that they, too, want a king like the one the neighboring countries have. At this point the period of **Conquest and Judges** comes to a close, and a new time period—the **Royal Kingdom**—begins.

The Tribal Allotment of Israel (Twelve Tribes)



THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

In the book of Genesis, we read how God gave Moses detailed instructions on how to build the Ark of the Covenant. This small chest (approximately 52" x 31" x 31") was made of acacia wood and overlaid in gold. Its golden lid had statues of two cherubim with outstretched wings, and each of its four corners had golden rings so that it could be carried on poles without anyone touching it. The Ark was covered with a veil and kept in the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle, the movable tent-temple that the Israelites used until the permanent Temple was built in Jerusalem.

The Ark of the Covenant was the presence of God in their midst, and it contained sacred items, for example, the tablets of the Ten Commandments (the Law), Aaron's rod (representing the Levitical priesthood), and manna (bread from heaven). In the New Covenant, Christ will be the new law, the one high priest, and the true bread from heaven.

In the Litany of Loreto, one of the titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary is "Ark of the Covenant." While this may seem like a strange title for a person, it makes perfect sense when we compare Our Lady to the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant. Just as the Ark was the presence of God in the midst of the Israelites, Mary bore Christ himself within her womb—that is, the presence of God the Son in the midst of the people. There are also several striking parallels in how Scripture speaks of the Ark and how it speaks of Mary.

THE ARK OF THE OLD COVENANT	MARY, ARK OF THE NEW COVENANT
<p>"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).</p> <p>The Greek word <i>episkiasei</i> is translated here as "covered."</p>	<p>"The power of the Most High will overshadow you [Mary]" (Luke 1:35).</p> <p>The same Greek word <i>episkiasei</i> is translated here as "overshadowed."</p>
<p>"And [David] said, 'How can the ark of the LORD come to me?'" (2 Samuel 6:9).</p>	<p>"And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).</p>
<p>"As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal ... saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD" (2 Samuel 6:16).</p>	<p>"And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41).</p>
<p>"The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months" (2 Samuel 6:11).</p>	<p>"And Mary remained with her about three months" (Luke 1:56).</p>

Before Babylon conquered Jerusalem and sacked the Temple in the sixth century BC, the Ark of the Covenant was miraculously hidden by Jeremiah (see 2 Maccabees 2) to preserve it from being defiled. However, the Ark appears once again in the Book of Revelation, immediately followed by the appearance of Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant.

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. ... And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth. (Revelation 11:19–12:2)

TOUGH QUESTIONS

VIDEO 4.2

- Why is Leviticus in the Bible, and why are there so many seemingly random restrictions and rules?

- Why would God order the Israelites to wander in the desert for forty years and allow so many of them to die before entering the Promised Land?

- If God is a God of love, why does he allow for and order war against Jericho?

- Was Samson's power really in his hair?

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



1. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ... you shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

Moses by
Michelangelo
Buonarroti

TO THE HEART



Do you put more faith in your plans or God's plan? Will you follow him even if it does not logically "make sense"?



God may call you to do things in your life which on the surface make little or no sense. In this lesson, we see how he called ...

- a shepherd with a speech impediment and no army to battle the pharaoh with a mighty army ... but God was with Moses;
- a smaller, outnumbered "army" led by priests into a heavily fortified city with a larger, stronger enemy ... but God was with Joshua; and
- a farmer with no military training and only three hundred men to attack the enemy camp ... but God was with Gideon.

These are only a few examples, but they are important ones. God's will and God's way may not always seem "logical," and that is OK. It is important to remember that God's plan is perfect and beyond our comprehension.



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Ask yourself these questions:

- What are some relationships or situations in your life that confuse you—or confused you at one point? List a few.
- When do you feel the most out of control, and what are some areas of your life that you feel the need to control (e.g., your image, your relationships, your future)?
- What are one or two examples of times you had anxiety or stress about something going badly but it actually turned out fine? What did you learn from those experiences?
- What question would you ask God right now if you could?



God's ways may not always make sense to you, but it is important to continue to try to grow in your trust in him and in his perfect plan. Commit this prayer to memory: Lord, I may not understand you, but I trust you, and I will follow you.

Your Thoughts

Reflect on the questions on the previous page,
and write your thoughts in the journaling space below.

Journaling space consisting of 25 horizontal dotted lines for writing.



BIBLICAL CHARACTER PROFILE

Joshua

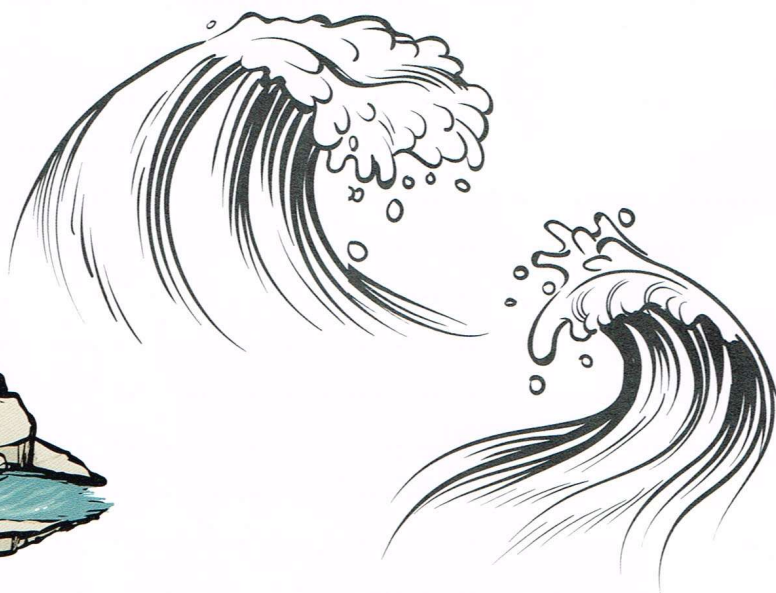
Do you remember the first time you were left home alone by your parents? Maybe you had older siblings there to watch you, and it felt like a party—one where you had little or no supervision.

What about the first time you were left home without supervision? Was it still a party, or did it make you a little nervous at first? All of a sudden, you probably became more aware of your surroundings. Is the garage door down? Is the front door locked? What is that sound? And if you had younger siblings you were watching—even if it made you feel powerful—you were still aware that you were now responsible for the safety of others.

Joshua had been a close friend and follower of Moses for decades. Now imagine being in Joshua's sandals when the great prophet Moses died and the entire nation of Israel was looking to you.

Is the front door locked (when the enemies invade our borders)? Is it still a party when you realize that there are thousands and thousands of souls depending on you to lead them (and keep them) closer to God?

Joshua had to step up in a big way, and in doing so he had to make several tough decisions ... decisions that would challenge his trust in the Lord and his confidence in himself.





Exercise 1: Read **Joshua 1:7-9**. In Joshua 1:7, what exactly does it take strength and courage to do? Why is that the case? When does Joshua 1:8 say we need to meditate on the Law of God? If we do it, what will the result be? And according to Joshua 1:9, why should we not be worried or dismayed? Do you believe this to be true and trustworthy?

Exercise 2: Read **Joshua 6:12-16, 20**. What number is significant in this story, and why? Does this remind you of the story of creation in Genesis and which day God set aside to rest and worship? Why would God command them to do such a specific thing with such numeric precision? What do you think God is trying to convey to the Israelites at this moment, and why?



Video Notes »



Check Your Understanding

1. If they followed him, God promised the Israelites that they would _____.
a) have an easy life b) never suffer c) be victorious over their enemies d) have great wealth
2. When they _____, the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.
a) used their catapults b) stormed the city c) set off explosives d) blew their trumpets
3. Our true home is _____.
a) Rome b) Jerusalem c) heaven d) where the heart is

TALK IT OUT

1. After all that God had done for them, why did the Israelites not trust in God? How does this apply to our own lives?
2. When Moses delayed coming down from Mount Sinai, the Israelites made a golden calf for worship. The *Catechism* tells us that anything that takes precedence over God in our lives is a false idol. What are some false idols that we have in modern society—or even in our own lives?
3. God gave the Israelites laws of worship, laws for purity, and laws to set them apart from other nations. Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Which of the Old Testament laws are still applicable today? What about the Ten Commandments?
4. The Israelites marched around Jericho seven times with the Ark of the Covenant, and the walls came tumbling down. What does this teach us about the importance of placing God first in our lives?
5. The strength of Samson was in his hair. Unfortunately, he trusted Delilah with his secret, and she betrayed him. What does this tell us about putting our trust in the wrong things or the wrong people?

Notes »



Joshua Passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant by Benjamin West