

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Themes and Theology Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Themes and Theology, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. David Howard's course on Joshua and Ruth focuses on the book of Joshua's purpose and overarching themes. **Dr. Howard argues that the central theme is God's gift of the Promised Land (Canaan) as an inheritance to his people, Israel.** He supports this by analyzing the text to reveal God as the main actor, fulfilling promises made to Abraham. **Seven subsidiary themes are explored, including God's promises, the covenant, obedience, purity of worship, godly leadership, and rest.** The lecture encourages a deeper understanding of the book by viewing it through the lens of inheritance and God's actions. The overall goal is to move beyond simplistic interpretations and explore the rich theological tapestry woven within the narrative.

**2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 2 – Double click icon to play
in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org
[BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old
Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).**



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Themes and Theology

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session02_IntroPt2_Themes.pdf":

Briefing Document: Joshua - Themes and Theology

Overview:

This document summarizes Dr. David Howard's lecture on the themes and theology of the Book of Joshua. Howard emphasizes that the book is not just a historical account, but an "interpretive history" written to highlight God's role in the fulfillment of His promises to Israel. The central theme revolves around God's gift of the promised land of Canaan to his people as an inheritance. Several subsidiary themes further illuminate the book's message.

I. Purpose and Interpretation of the Book of Joshua:

- **Interpretive History:** The book is not a comprehensive historical record, but rather a selection of events viewed through a specific lens. As Howard notes, "It's not written just as history for history's sake. There are a lot of gaps in the life of Israel in the time of Joshua."
- **Focus on God's Action:** The narrative emphasizes God's direction, control, and oversight of events, rather than merely human actions. Howard states, "We should see it through the lens of God as the one that is directing, controlling, and overseeing what is happening here." God is seen as the "major actor, major character, and major protagonist" in the book.
- **Fulfillment of Promises:** A key purpose is to illustrate the fulfillment of God's promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants. The land is not simply a place to settle, but a gift from God, reinforcing the idea of a divine inheritance. Howard explains, "So, the book is about fulfilling promises. And whose promises? They're God's promises."

II. Overarching Theme:

- **God's Giving the Promised Land:** The central theme, derived organically from the text, is defined as: "God's giving the promised land of Canaan to his people Israel as an inheritance." Howard breaks down each part of this statement, highlighting God as the main actor, the land as a gift, the promise to Abraham, the specific land of Canaan, the recipient as God's chosen people, and the notion of inheritance.
- **Inheritance:** The concept of "inheritance" is crucial, with the book portraying the land as a gift from God received by Israel. Howard emphasizes that the author of the book wants us to understand the land as an inheritance, stating, "What is the author trying to do? And the author is trying to talk about this land as an inheritance from God." This perspective shapes how we interpret both the conquest and settlement of the land. He requires his students to use the word "inheritance" in their outlines of each chapter.
- **God's Character:** The book of Joshua challenges the false dichotomy of an Old Testament God of wrath versus a New Testament God of love. Howard emphasizes the "Old Testament God is a God of relationship," emphasizing His love for His people.

III. Subsidiary Themes (Seven Major Strands):

1. **The Land:** The importance of the promised land, given to Abraham and reiterated throughout generations, is a recurring theme.
2. **God's Promises:** The book highlights the fulfillment of God's promises, not only to Abraham but also to Moses, and the internal promises within the book. This reinforces God's faithfulness. Howard describes the "fulfillment of promises is an interesting little sub-theme as well".
3. **Covenant:** The covenants God made with Abraham and through Moses form a backdrop to the events in Joshua, emphasizing the importance of the law and how people were to follow it.
4. **Obedience:** In contrast to the rebelliousness seen during the wilderness wanderings, the book emphasizes the importance of obedience to God, where, "We see a sense of, we're trying to do things differently now." While not universal, it is a prominent theme.

5. **Purity of Worship:** The concept of holiness (separation from evil, uncleanness, and unholiness) is important to the narrative. Israel is instructed to keep separate from the Canaanites and to worship the Lord properly. This includes discussions about the destruction of the Canaanites. The idea of holiness in the Old Testament is "the idea of separation out and away."
6. **Godly Leadership:** The book presents Joshua as an exemplary leader, offering lessons on leadership through his actions. He is pictured as an "ideal leader with very few missteps."
7. **Rest:** The book emphasizes the idea of both the people and the land receiving "rest" as part of God's gift. This connects with the overall flow of the Pentateuch. Howard notes, "We have rest."

IV. Conclusion:

Dr. Howard presents the book of Joshua as more than a historical account, interpreting it as a narrative focused on God's faithfulness, the fulfillment of His promises, and the gift of the promised land as an inheritance for Israel. The subsidiary themes further highlight the importance of obedience, purity, leadership, and rest. Understanding these themes is key to grasping the theology of the book. The overall sweep of the book should point to that "inheritance" idea and see it as part of the overall sweep.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Themes and Theology

Joshua: Themes and Theology Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary purpose of the Book of Joshua?
2. According to Dr. Howard, who is the major actor in the Book of Joshua and why?
3. Why does Dr. Howard not capitalize "promised land"?
4. What does the book emphasize about God's nature in relation to the Israelites?
5. What exercise does Dr. Howard have his students do in relation to the theme of "inheritance" and why?
6. What is the overarching theme of the Book of Joshua, according to Dr. Howard?
7. What are the major sub-themes that fall under the overarching theme?
8. How does the Book of Joshua portray Israel compared to the Book of Numbers?
9. What is meant by the theme of "purity of worship" in Joshua?
10. How is the concept of "rest" presented in the context of the Book of Joshua?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Book of Joshua was written to provide an interpretive history of Israel's entry and settlement in the land of Canaan, focusing on God's fulfillment of his promises to Abraham. It is not just a historical account but one with a specific theological perspective.
2. Dr. Howard identifies God as the major actor because God is depicted as the one directing, controlling, and overseeing all events in the book, including the victories of the Israelites, highlighting God's active role.
3. Dr. Howard does not capitalize "promised land" because he wants to emphasize that it is not just a title or country, but the land that was specifically promised to Abraham and his descendants.

4. The book emphasizes God's loving relationship with his people, highlighting God as one who fulfills promises, and showing a covenant relationship, not just a God of wrath, as is sometimes stereotyped.
5. Dr. Howard requires his students to outline the book using "inheritance" at each level to show that the entire narrative is focused on God's gift of the land, not just the distribution chapters. This reinforces how the overarching theme permeates the entire book.
6. The overarching theme of the Book of Joshua is God's giving the promised land of Canaan to his people Israel as an inheritance; every part of the book plays into this theme.
7. The major sub-themes include the land, God's promises, the covenant, obedience, purity of worship, godly leadership, and rest. These themes provide a more nuanced view of the overall message.
8. Unlike the Book of Numbers, where Israel is often rebellious, Joshua portrays a more obedient people, trying not to repeat the errors of the past. However, it does include some exceptions of disobedience.
9. "Purity of worship" in Joshua refers to Israel's separation from evil and unholy things, including the Canaanites and their practices, to properly worship God in the right way in their new land.
10. "Rest" in the Book of Joshua is presented as part of God's gift and promise to His people, where both the land and people can find rest after their conquest. This theme looks back to the Pentateuch and shows a fulfillment of the promise.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the concept of "inheritance" in the Book of Joshua. How does this idea inform our understanding of God's actions and the Israelite's experience?
2. Analyze the theme of obedience in the Book of Joshua. How is it presented, and what are the implications for the Israelites and their relationship with God?
3. Explore the concept of God's promises in Joshua. How do these promises function as a major theme throughout the book, and how do they shape the narrative?

4. How does the Book of Joshua portray the role of leadership, particularly the leadership of Joshua himself? What does this tell us about the ideal leader?
5. How do the themes of the Book of Joshua relate to the Pentateuch?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Interpretive History:** History presented with a particular theological or ideological viewpoint, rather than just a recounting of facts.
- **Promised Land:** The land of Canaan, promised by God to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance.
- **Inheritance:** Something that is received as a gift, often passed down through generations; in Joshua, it refers to the land given by God to Israel.
- **Covenant:** A formal agreement between God and his people, often involving promises, obligations, and blessings.
- **Obedience:** The act of following the commands and directives of God, often emphasized as crucial for maintaining a relationship with God.
- **Purity of Worship:** The idea of worshipping God in a way that is set apart from anything unclean, evil, or unholy.
- **Godly Leadership:** Leadership that is characterized by faithfulness to God, obedience to His commands, and a desire to lead others toward righteousness.
- **Rest:** A state of peace, security, and tranquility; in the context of Joshua, it refers to both the land and the people finding rest after their conquest and obedience.
- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- **Overarching theme:** The main or most important theme of a text that all other themes relate to.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Themes and Theology, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Joshua

1. **What is the primary purpose of the Book of Joshua?** The book of Joshua serves as an interpretive history, focusing on a specific period of Israel's life when they entered and settled in the promised land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. It's not a comprehensive historical account; rather, it highlights how God fulfilled his ancient promises to Abraham by giving the land to the Israelites. This historical period is viewed through the lens of God's control and direction of events, rather than simply a record of battles.
2. **What is the overarching theme of the Book of Joshua?** The central theme is God giving the promised land of Canaan to his people, Israel, as an inheritance. This theme emphasizes that God is the main actor and protagonist throughout the book, and the land itself is a gift from Him. The book showcases the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham made centuries before. The idea of inheritance permeates the entire book.
3. **Why is the emphasis on God as the main actor in the book?** The book emphasizes that God is the primary actor because He is ultimately in control of all the events. The victories are attributed to God, and the entire narrative is meant to highlight His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises and His love for his people. It is not just about Israel's actions, but more about God's sovereign hand in delivering the land.
4. **Besides the main theme, what are some of the major subsidiary themes in Joshua?** There are seven main subsidiary themes: the importance of the promised land itself, the fulfillment of God's promises made to Abraham and Moses, the covenant God made with Abraham and at Sinai through Moses, the crucial role of obedience for the Israelites, the need for purity of worship and separation from evil, the concept of godly leadership embodied in Joshua, and the idea of rest for both the people and the land after settling in Canaan.

5. **How does the theme of obedience contrast with the previous books of the Pentateuch?** Unlike the books of the Pentateuch that highlight Israel's rebelliousness during their wilderness wanderings, the Book of Joshua depicts a people largely committed to obedience. While some lapses occur, the overall picture is one of a community that has learned from the past, striving to follow God's commands and instructions.
6. **How is the idea of holiness and purity of worship presented in the book?** The book emphasizes the concept of holiness as separation from evil and the unclean. This separation involves physical separation from the ark, and from the Canaanites. It also focuses on proper worship practices and creating a new society that is distinctly devoted to the Lord and his law.
7. **What does the Book of Joshua teach about leadership?** Joshua is depicted as an ideal leader who follows God's directions with few missteps. This underscores the book's theme of godly leadership. His example provides lessons in what it means to lead faithfully and obediently.
8. **How does the concept of "rest" fit into the broader narrative of Joshua?** The theme of "rest" signifies the fulfillment of God's promises, where both the people and the land can experience rest. It's not just about a physical rest, but also a spiritual rest in their relationship with God. The arrival in Canaan is portrayed as the point at which this rest was meant to be realized after a period of wandering and conflict.