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## COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

### **Joshua**

*by Matthew Henry*

*To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:*

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# AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

## THE BOOK OF

# JOSHUA

**I.** We have now before us the history of the Jewish nation in this book and those that follow it to the end of the book of Esther. These books, to the end of the books of the Kings, the Jewish writers call *the first book of the prophets*, to bring them within the distribution of the books of the *Old Testament*, into the Law, the Prophets, and the Chetubim, or Hagiographa, ~~<244>~~Luke 24:44. The rest they make part of the Hagiographa. For, though history is their subject, it is justly supposed that prophets were their penmen. To those books that are purely and properly *prophetical* the name of the prophet is prefixed, because the credibility of the prophecies depended much upon the character of the prophets; but these historical books, it is probable, were collections of the authentic records of the nation, which some of the prophets (and the Jewish church was for many ages more or less continually blessed with such) were divinely directed and helped to put together for the service of the church to the end of the world; as their other officers, so their historiographers, had their authority *from heaven*. — It should seem that though the substance of the several histories was written when the events were fresh in memory, and written under a divine direction, yet, under the same direction, they were put into the form in which we now have them by some other hand, long afterwards, probably all by the same hand, or about the same time. The grounds of the conjecture are,

**1.** Because former writings are so often referred to, as the Book of Jasher (~~<603>~~Joshua 10:13, and ~~<1018>~~2 Samuel 1:18), the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and the books of Gad, Nathan, and Iddo.

**2.** Because the days when the things were done are spoken of sometimes as days long since passed; as ~~<909>~~1 Samuel 9:9, *He that is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer*. And,

**3.** Because we so often read of things remaining *unto this day*; as stones (<sup>(-0049)</sup>Joshua 4:9; 7:26; 8:29; 10:27; <sup>(-0068)</sup>1 Samuel 6:18), names of places (<sup>(-0089)</sup>Joshua 5:9; 7:26; <sup>(-0023)</sup>Judges 1:26; 15:19; 18:12; <sup>(-1247)</sup>2 Kings 14:7), rights and possessions (<sup>(-0002)</sup>Judges 1:21; <sup>(-0276)</sup>1 Samuel 27:6), customs and usages (<sup>(-0085)</sup>1 Samuel 5:5; <sup>(-1274)</sup>2 Kings 17:41), which clauses have been since added to the history by the inspired collectors for the confirmation and illustration of it to those of their own age. And, if one may offer a mere conjecture, it is not unlikely that the historical books, to the end of the Kings, were put together by Jeremiah the prophet, a little before the captivity; for it is said of Ziklag (<sup>(-0276)</sup>1 Samuel 27:6) that it pertains to the *kings of Judah* (which style began after Solomon and ended in the captivity) *unto this day*. And it is still more probable that those which follow were put together by Ezra the scribe, some time after the captivity. However, though we are in the dark concerning their authors, we are in no doubt concerning their authority; they were a part of the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, and were so received and referred to by our Saviour and the apostles.

In the five books of Moses we had a very full account of the rise, advance, and constitution, of the Old-Testament church, the family out of which it was raised, the promise, that great charter by which it was incorporated, the miracles by which it was built up, and the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed, from which one would conceive and expectation of its character and state very different from what we find in this history. A nation that had statutes and judgments so righteous, one would think, should have been very holy; and a nation what had promises so rich should have been very happy. But, alas! a great part of the history is a melancholy representation of their sins and miseries; for *the law made nothing perfect*, but this was to be done by the *bringing in of the better hope*. And yet, if we compare the history of the Christian church with its constitution, we shall find the same cause for wonder, so many have been its errors and corruptions; for neither does the *gospel make any thing perfect* in this world, but leaves us still in expectation of a *better hope* in the future state.

**II.** We have next before us the *book of Joshua*, so called, perhaps, not because it was written *by him*, for that is uncertain. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Phinehas wrote it. Bishop Patrick is clear that Joshua wrote it himself. However that be, it is written *concerning him*, and, if any other wrote it, it was collected out of his journals or memoirs. It contains the history of

Israel under the command and government of Joshua, how he presided as general of their armies,

1. In their entrance into Canaan, Joshua 1-5.

2. In their conquest of Canaan, Joshua 6-12.

3. In the distribution of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, Joshua 22-24. In all which he was a great example of wisdom, courage, fidelity, and piety, to all that are in places of public trust. But this is not all the use that is to be made of this history. We may see in it,

1. *Much of God and his providence* — his power in the kingdom of nature, his justice in punishing the Canaanites when the *measure of their iniquity was full*, his faithfulness to his covenant with the patriarchs, and his kindness to his people Israel, notwithstanding their provocations. We may see him as the Lord of Hosts *determining the issues of war*, and as the director of the lot, *determining the bounds of men's habitations*.

2. *Much of Christ and his grace*. Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of Christ, yet all agree that he was a very eminent one. He bore our Saviour's name, as did also another type of him, Joshua the high priest, <sup><3061></sup>Zechariah 6:11, 12. The Septuagint, giving the name of Joshua a Greek termination, call him all along *Iesous*, *Jesus*, and so he is called <sup><4075></sup>Acts 7:45, and <sup><3048></sup>Hebrews 4:8. Justin Martyr, one of the first writers of the Christian church (*Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. mihi 300), makes that promise in <sup><0230></sup>Exodus 23:20, *My angel shall bring thee into the place I have prepared*, to point at Joshua; and these words, *My name is in him*, to refer to this, that his names should be the same with that of the Messiah. It signifies, *He shall save*. Joshua saves God's people from the Canaanites; our Lord Jesus saves them *from their sins*. Christ, as Joshua, is the *captain of our salvation*, a *leader and commander of the people*, to tread Satan under their feet, to put them in possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to *give them rest*, which (it is said, <sup><3048></sup>Hebrews 4:8) Joshua did not.