

Joshua Chapter 23

V: 1 “A long time after...” Approximately 13 years pass between the previous chapter, chapter 22 and chapter 23, it has been 20 years now since they crossed the Jordan River into the promised land.

- Joshua is older and even more “stricken in age” – this will be his last address, he will die at the end of the next chapter.

V: 2 Joshua calls for all the leaders of Israel.

- There will be two messages in these two chapters; first for the leaders, then in the next chapter a message for the people.
- Joshua knows that he is about to pass from the scene, he is seeking to prepare the nation for the next leg of their spiritual journey.
- There is something special about the last words of a man that knows he’s about to die. There is a wisdom that comes with age, a seasoned understanding of what is truly important and what is not.

V: 3 Joshua is reminding them of who won the victory, who has given them the victory and all the blessings – God is the One who fought for them.

Psalm 24:8 “Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.”

V: 4-5 Each tribe has been given their portion of land – it’s time to take it!

- God will go before them just as He has in all their battles, He is faithful.

Deuteronomy 7:9 “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.”

V: 6 Be courageous, and be obedient! Stay in the Word!

- Sometimes it takes courage to go against the flow of things, to be obedient to God’s Word.

Joshua 1:7 “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”

- Do not stray from the path of righteousness.

V: 7 Steer clear of the pagan people and their pagan gods, one will lead to the other. Don't even speak their names.

Paul tells us the same thing:

Romans 16:19 "... but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

2 Corinthians 6:17 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"

V: 8 "Cleave" unto the Lord your God..."

- This is the same word used in Genesis Ch. 2 describing a husband cleaving to his wife.
- Cleave: (H1692). dabaq, daw-bak'; to cling or adhere; abide, fast, be joined (together), stick.
- Wood working: construction adhesive / wood glue – cannot separate without destroying. The two pieces truly become one.
- Relationships are formed over time, spend time with God, stick with Him – allow that bond to grow stronger.

V: 9-10 Again, the Lord has been faithful to fight their battles, to give them victory – no man has been able to stand before them.

- One man shall chase a thousand: Quoting from Deuteronomy, song of Moses.

1 Samuel 14:6 "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

- Gideon's army of 300 put 135,000 to flight; that is 450 to one.

Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

V: 11 Take heed, be very careful – love the Lord your God.

- This is an obvious exhortation to obedience:

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 14:21 "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me..."

- In this chapter they are exhorted to love the Lord, in the next they are exhorted to serve the Lord. When we love the Lord the next natural progression is to serve Him.

V: 12-13 We are going to “cleave” to something – we need to cleave to the Lord.

- If we choose to cleave to the things of the world – then we shouldn’t expect God’s help.

1 John 2:15 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Hebrews 10:38-39 ³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. ³⁹But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

- Joshua illustrates that there is a progression that takes place:
 1. v: 7 Associating with them in a familiar way.
 2. V: 7 Discussing their religious practices.
 3. V: 7 Swearing by and serving, and worshipping their gods.
 4. V: 12 Making marriages with them.
 5. The lines of separation being completely erased, worshipping the gods of a defeated enemy!
- Look at the penalties: snares, traps – scourges in their side, thorns in their eyes:
- They did go whoring after others gods; and so have we. The One who took our punishment received our scourging, our thorns were upon His brow and in His eyes.

V: 14 I am about to die – Joshua’s last words are that God has kept His word – not one thing of all that God has said has failed to happen.

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

- Our days are numbered:

2 Timothy 4:6-7 ⁶For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

V: 15-16 Just as surely as the good things happened just as the Lord said when you would be obedient, be just as sure that all the bad things will happen if you are disobedient.

- God's past faithfulness is an assurance of his future faithfulness.
- That is why we hope in Him, why we wait upon Him, for His soon return, for the fulfillment of all of His promises – the prophecies written in God's word, they will come to pass.
- The saddest word in this chapter is "**when**", Joshua know that they are going to fail.
- Joshua's 3 main admonitions in this chapter:

V: 6 **Keep God's Word.** V: 8 **Cleave to the Lord.** V: 11 **Love the Lord.**

Joshua Chapter 24

V: 1 After addressing the leadership of the nation, Joshua now addressed the people directly.

- Joshua calls the people to Shechem as opposed to Shiloh, why?

Genesis 12:6-7 ⁶“And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. ⁷And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, unto thy see will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him.”

- It was at Shechem that God first promised to give the land to Abram's descendants.
- Later, again at Shechem, it was Jacob who spoke to his family and told them to put away their idols on their way to Beth-El, the house of God.
- Shechem is in the valley between Mt. Gerezim and Mt. Ebal, the place where the tribes were placed on the mountain tops and pronounced the blessings for obedience and the cursings for disobedience to God's word, affirming God's word.

V: 2-13 Joshua begins to recite their history starting with Abraham's father. Reminding them of God's faithfulness and demonstrating that God is worthy of their love and faithfulness in return. Joshua is just the spokesman; "...*thus saith the Lord God of Israel.*"

V: 2-3 Joshua points out that Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor worshipped and served pagan gods.

- The “other side of the flood” refers to the River Euphrates.
- He’s pointing out not only that they shouldn’t think too highly of themselves on one hand, and that they need to be careful not to fall back into that life style, a life of idolatry on the other hand.
- Joshua is pointing out that God graciously delivered Abraham out of a life or lifestyle of pagan idolatry that Abraham could not have otherwise extricated himself out of. It was God who came to Abram, not Abram who came to God.
Jesus told His disciples:
John 15:16 “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you...”
- Isn’t that very same thing true of each of us? Hasn’t God reached down and delivered us from that which we couldn’t deliver ourselves from?

V: 4 Isaac got Jacob and Esau. Esau was a man of the flesh, ruled by the flesh and he got a fleshly inheritance.

- Jacob became Israel; governed by God – and he got trials. He went to Egypt to as a matter of survival, yet even in his affliction he prospered, he went to Egypt 70 souls and came out a nation.

V: 5-7 God sent Moses and Aaron to lead them as God delivered the nation.

- God defeated the Egyptians, buried them in the Red Sea.

V: 8 The Amorites the same story, God delivered them, gave them the victory.

V: 9-10 Physical battles and spiritual battles: Balak sought to have the nation of Israel cursed, but they got blessed instead – delivered in the spiritual battle.

V: 11-13 Crossing the Jordan and all the battles that God fought, starting with Jericho – the Amorites, Perizites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites – victorious over them all.

- God sent hornets into their midst to fight for the children of Israel.
- God controls all of nature and uses it as He sees fit – no limitation on the miraculous!
- They’ve been given land, cities, vineyards, orchards – none of which they worked for or had to build – a ready made life of blessing: all by God’s grace and mercy.

God has blessed them more than they can ask or even think... **Ephesians 3:20**

V: 14 Because of all these things: fear God, serve Him – love Him!

- Serve Him in sincerity – from the heart, and in truth:

That admonition still stands; Jesus repeats it:

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”

- First step: put away the gods which your father’s served back in the days of Terah; that you also worshipped in Egypt.

The Apostle John’s at the end of his epistle:

1 John 5:21 “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

V: 15 Choose!

James 1:8 “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

- There is also the understanding in this statement that we / they are going to serve something.
- If we don’t serve the Lord, then we will serve something else.
- In reality, there is no such thing as an Atheist, that term is usually associated with not believing in the God of the Bible, or with some other form of organized religion – but everyone worships something.
- Hearing certain college professors claim to be Atheistic is fool hardy, they worship intellect and knowledge, more often than not they worship themselves.
- Still others may eschew the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – claiming to be Atheist; but their god might be money, power, career, family, sports, good times.
- That which we worship is what we give our time, effort, and resources to, that which we cling to and revere, the master passion of our lives, that is our God.

Joshua can’t speak for everyone, he can only speak for his household:

“... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

- That is called commitment!

V: 16-18 Response: God forbid that we should serve other gods!

- They acknowledge the things spoken by Joshua
- We will serve the Lord! He is our God.

V: 19-20 You can't serve the Lord if you are involved in idolatry!

- God is Holy! God is jealous – he won't share us!

Romans 8:8 "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

- God will judge sin.

Hebrews 10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

- 2 Chronicles 14 describes King Asa becoming King of Judah, and that he did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.
- Not long after an army of over 1 million Ethiopians came up against Judah. Asa cried out to the Lord – let not man prevail against thee – God subsequently gave Israel the victory smiting the Ethiopians.
- As King Asa was returning from that victory Azariah, a prophet of God, came to Asa:

2 Chronicles 15:2 "... hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."

V: 21 "Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

- "Nay" – we're not going to do that. We will repent, put aside our idols and serve the Lord.

V: 22-23 You will bring judgment down upon yourselves, if you swear to serve Him and don't.

- Get rid of the pagan idols! Stop worshipping other gods – turn your heart wholly back to the Lord God of Israel.
- Joshua knew that they had already compromised themselves and now he's confronting them on it.

V: 24-25 The people renew their commitment to obey the Lord that day in Shechem.

V: 26-28 Joshua recorded these things in the book of the law of God – we're reading it today.

- Joshua sets a large stone as a witness and reminder of their oath and dismisses the people.

V: 29-30 Joshua, “the servant of the Lord” dies and is buried in his inheritance.

- To be called the “servant of the Lord” – no greater calling for the Christian.

Psalm 27:4 “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple.”

Matthew 25:23 “His lord said unto him, well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

- We can only be called that if we serve Him, as opposed to ourselves.

V: 31 Israel served the Lord during all the days of that generation – those that had known the works of the Lord.

- The implication is that the next generation didn’t – those who didn’t know or remember the works of the Lord on their behalf.

V: 32 Joseph had said that when Israel returns to the land of Canaan, take my bones with you and bury me there.

- Joseph’s prophecy comes true, and his request is honored.

V: 33 Eleazar, the High Priest, Aaron’s son dies and is buried.

- Phinehas, Eleazar’s son becomes the High Priest in his stead.

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- When Moses passed from the scene, God ordained that Joshua would take his place as both the leader of Israel, and as a mediator between God and the people.

- With Joshua there is no heir apparent, no one to replace him.

Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

- This fits the typology: Joshua is a type of Jesus who alone is our mediator, there is none other.

1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

- There is an expectation that the children of Israel would no longer need a mediator to hear God’s voice, that they would hear it for themselves.
- In a sense moving from a religious relationship involving a mediator to a personal relationship and dependence upon the Lord.