

11/30/03

A Stern And Solemn Warning To Leaders
Josh. 23:1-16

What we have in these last two chapters in the book of Joshua is the farewell speech of Joshua to the nation of Israel.

Chapter twenty-three is Joshua's personal testimony to the leaders regarding God's faithfulness and his own, with instruction and warnings against apostasy.

Chapter twenty-four is God's witness of His faithfulness throughout their history and the renewed covenant by Joshua and the people.
* It is a reminder of what they already knew.

Moses did the same in the book of Deuteronomy.
Deut. 12-26

We want to look at the last words of Joshua to the leaders, reminding them about the faithfulness of God, as well as warning them against apostasy.
Josh. 23:1-16

- I.** The personal proclamation about God's victories. Vs. 1-5
- II.** The prompt exhortation to abide in God's blessings. Vs. 6-11

III. The admonishment about future disobedience. Vs. 12-16

I. The personal proclamation about God's victories. Vs. 1-5

- A.** The occasion for the witness. Vs. 1-2
 - 1.** The occasion took place a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies. Vs. 1a-b
* The location is not disclosed, so probably it's at Shiloh.
 - 2.** The condition of Joshua was that he was old and advanced in age. Vs. 1c
 - a.** Some think at this time it was about twenty-five years after entering the land. Josh. 24:29
 - b.** If so, we know Joshua died at 110 years of age and if he was eighty-five years of age like Caleb, when he asked for his inheritance, seven years after the conquest of the land, Joshua at this would then be about 103 years of age. Josh. 14:10, 24:29
 - 3.** The one who called them assembly together was Joshua. Vs. 2
 - a.** All of Israel, included their elders, their heads, their judges and their officers. Vs. 2a-e
 - b.** Joshua said to them: "I am old, advanced in age." Vs. 2f-h

- 1) He knew his life was nearly over.
- 2) He knew his ministry charge was also close at hand.

B. The partnership in the witness. Vs. 3-5

1. God had been the One who had brought victory against the nations by their own witness. Vs. 3
 - a. They had seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for their sakes. Vs. 3a
 - b. They had seen how the LORD their God had fought for them. Vs. 3b
 - * Rest is the theme of the book, though small battle remained.
2. Joshua had divided the land. Vs. 4
 - a. They has seen the division of the nations that remained by lot. Vs. 4a-b
 - b. They had received these division as an inheritance for their tribes, along with all the nations Joshua had cut off. Vs. 4c-f
 - * From the Jordan, as far as the Great Sea westward.
3. God would fulfill His promise completely. Vs. 5
 - a. And the LORD their God would expel them from before them and drive them out of their sight. Vs. 5a

- b. And they were to possess the land themselves, according to the promise. Vs. 5b-c
 - * Moses had told them beforehand Ex. 23:23-33, Deut. 6:5, 10, 12

Illustration

The wisest thing President Woodrow Wilson said, was one of the simplest when he remarked that, as President, he liked to put a man on an important job to see whether he grew or “just swelled”.

#3023

Application

1. Paul the leader and apostle spoke to the Ephesians elders in like manner. Acts 20:19-38
 - a. He gave his witness of his service to God, sinners and the church.
 - b. His dependence on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the things of God.
 - c. He gave to them the entire council of God’s word.
 - d. He warned the elders about taking heed to the care of the people, pride and lording over the church.
 - e. He commended them to the word of God.
 - f. He declared his integrity and passion by example.
2. Leaders must always give a true witness of their dependency on God and their human commitment,

a partnership in their lives to encourage others, instead of have others praising them. 2Cor. 1:7-10

- a. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. Vs. 7
- b. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Vs. 8
- c. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. Vs. 9
- d. Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us. Vs. 10

The personal proclamation about God's victories to the leaders!

II. The prompt exhortation to abide in God's blessings. Vs. 6-11

- A. The exhortation for ongoing blessing by way of warning. Vs. 6-8
 1. The reasonable request. Vs. 6a
 - a. Involves the right attitude.
 - * "Therefore be very courageous". Josh. 1:7

b. Involves the right actions.

* "To keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses", the first five books.

2. The reasons for the request are several. Vs. 6b-7
 - a. To maintain stability. Vs. 6b
 - * "Lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left."
 - b. To not mingling with the unbeliever and tempting themselves. Vs. 7a-b
 - * "Lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. Vs. 7a-b
 - c. To not meddle to their own hurt. Vs. 7c-d
 - * "You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them." Ex. 20:3-5, 23:13, Deut. 5:7-9, 8:19-20, 10: 20, 13:1-15
3. The right thing to do. Vs. 8
 - * "But you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day."
 - a. This is what God told Joshua at his commission. Josh. 1:7-9, 18
 - b. This is what God expected for life!
 - c. The phrase "hold fast" in Hebrew "dabaq" is used for the intimate

binding of husband and wife in
Genesis. Gen. 2:24

- B.** The exhortation for ongoing blessings is by way of promise. Vs. 9-11
1. The past promises have been fulfilled by God. Vs. 9
 - a. God was the One who defeated the enemy. Vs. 9a
 - * “For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations.”
 - 1) This is a second reminder. Vs. 3
 - 2) This is repeated over and over, throughout the book.
 - b. Israel was seen as the victor. Vs. 9b
 - * “But as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day.” Vs. 9
 - 1) The pride of man is ever present.
 - 2) He so quickly forgets what God has done and is tempted to take the glory.
 2. The future promises will equally be fulfilled by God. Vs. 10
 - a. Israel would be invincible. Vs. 10a
 - * “One man of you shall chase a thousand.”
 - 1) This was fulfilled literally by Gideon.

- 2) In the 1973 war of Israel, one tank held off incredible number of enemy tanks and troops.
- b. God would be the One fighting for them. Vs. 10b-c
 - * “For the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you.” Lev. 26:7-8, Deut. 28:7, 32:30
3. The present promises were conditional on their relationship to God. Vs. 11
 - a. Their relationship with God was personal and individual, with great accountability as leaders. Vs. 11a
 - * “Therefore take careful heed to yourselves.”
 - b. Their relationship to God, could only be maintained by their love for God. Vs. 11b
 - * “That you love the LORD your God.”
 - c. That is why the future king was to make a copy of the law for himself and meditate on it day and night. Deut. 17:18-20

Illustration

“I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity on them”. G. Campbell Morgan #2017

Application

1. The way to please God is to know His will and His will is revealed in the word of God.

* Leaders have the greater responsibility and accountability to God.

a. Paul tells Timothy, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

1Tim. 3:14-15

b. “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. **Continue** in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

1Tim.4:16

2. The way the believer stays in the flow of God’s blessing is to avoid the pitfalls of the flesh.

* “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1Jn. 2:15-17

a. The lust of the flesh, from within!

b. The lust of the eye, from without!

c. The pride of life, from the spirit of vain boasting!

3. The way the believer receives all the benefits of God is by His promises and some are conditional.

a. If we abide in Christ, as the branch to the vine, we will bear good and much fruit. Jn. 15:1-5

b. If we look to our past, we will see all God has done for us and through us.

c. If we will obey Him and depend on Him, we will be able to say, “I can do all things, through Christ Jesus who strengthens me.”

Phil. 4:13

4. Peter makes all this clear to the elders as he admonishes them in their responsibility. 1Pet. 5:1-4

a. The focus of leaders is to be the glory that is to be revealed, not the glory they can get on earth. Vs. 1

* “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.”

b. The faithfulness of leaders is to be marked by feeding, caring, protecting the sheep, financial contentment and personal example. Vs. 2-3

* Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being

lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

- c. The faith of leaders is that reward righteously. Vs. 3
 - * “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”
 - 1) The leaders relationship to God, as well as all believers must be maintained at all cost.
 - 2) The consequences of disobedience to God’s word can not be escaped, be it by a believer but especially by a leader and it will come at a high price.
- d. Jesus warned the Scribes and the Pharisees, “Woe to you”. Matt. 23

This was the prompt exhortation to abide in the blessings to the leaders!

III. The admonishment about future disobedience. Vs. 12-16

- A. The promise regarding their disobedience. Vs. 12-13
 - 1. The warning to not make marriages with the people of the land. Vs. 12
 - a. It is denounced as “going back”. Vs. 12a-b
 - b. It is declared as “clinging to the remnant of the nations”. Vs. 12c

- c. It is described as “to go in to them and they to you”. Vs. 12f
 - * This is in reference to intermarriages, which is the first time it is mentioned in the book, which were strictly prohibited. Ex. 34:12-16, Deut. 7:1-6
- 2. The consequences are not to be taken lightly. Vs. 13
 - a. They were to know for certain that the LORD their God would no longer drive out these nations from before them. Vs. 13a
 - 1) Moses had stated the same thing. Ex. 23:30-33, 34:11-12, Num. 33:55
 - 2) “Then I saw that for all the causes for which **backsliding** Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.” Jer. 3:8
 - b. Rather, they would be snares and traps to them, scourges on their sides and thorns in their eyes. Vs. 13b-c, Num. 33:55
 - * “Why has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual **backsliding**? They hold fast to

deceit, They refuse to return.” Jer. 8:5

- c. They would bring their own downfall, “Until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.” Vs. 13d

- 1) “Your own wickedness will **correct** you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing That you have forsaken the LORD your God, And the fear of Me is not in you," Says the Lord GOD of hosts.” Jer. 2:19
- 2) “You have forsaken Me," says the LORD, "You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am weary of relenting!” Jer. 15:6

B. The prophecy regarding their disobedience. Vs. 14-16

1. The urgency is marked by the nearness of the death of Joshua. Vs. 14
* Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. Vs. 14a
2. The accountability is by personal knowledge. Vs. 14b-d
* And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has

failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

3. The ultimate destruction will be their own doing. Vs. 15
 - a. Just as God kept His word to bless them. Vs. 15a-b
 - b. So the LORD would bring upon them all harmful things, until He destroyed them from the good land the LORD your God has given to them. Vs. 15c-d
4. The sin of idolatry would take them into captivity. Vs. 16
 - a. By transgressing the covenant of the LORD your God, in going and serving other gods, and bowed down to them.” Vs. 16a-d
 - b. By bringing upon themselves the anger of the LORD to burn against them, to perish quickly from the good land which He had given them. Vs. 16e-f
5. The entire land was filled with debased idolatry, confirmed by the Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) tablets and the extant relics of fertility cult practices unearthed at Bethshen, Megiddo, etc..

- a. El was the supreme deity, described as a bloody and cruel tyrant, of uncontrolled lust.
- b. Baal was the son of El and his successor, he dominated the Canaanites groups and considered “Lord of heaven.”, the god of rain and vegetation.
- c. Anath was sister of Baal and one of three goddesses who were patronesses of sex and war, with sacred prostitutes and child slaughter.
- d. Ashtoreth Astarte or Asherah were also consorts of Baal and goddesses of sex and war.
- e. Molech and Milcom were Ammonite gods of orgy as Chemosh was the national deity of the Moabites.

Illustration

When Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius there were many persons buried in the ruins who were afterward found in very different positions.

There were some found in deep vaults, as if they had gone there for security. There were some found in lofty chambers. But where did they find the Roman sentinel?

They found him standing at the city gate where he had been placed by the captain, with his hands still grasping the weapon. There, while the

earth shook beneath him; there, while the floods of ashes and cinders overwhelmed him, he had stood at his post and there, after a thousand years, he was found.

So Christians should stand by their at their post at which their Captain placed them, unmoved!
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Application

1. The most dangerous and lasting disobedience is that of unequally yoked marriages.
 - a. Samson was constantly involved with unbelieving women. Judges 14-16
 - b. Solomon’s heart was deceived by women. 1Kings 11:1-8
 - c. Being unequally yoked is disobeying God and tempting oneself. 2Cor. 6:14-16
2. The prophecies of Israel can be confirmed by history.
 - a. The two and a half tribes first went into captivity to Assyria.
 - b. Then the Northern Kingdom to Babylon.
 - c. Finally the Southern Kingdom to Babylon.
3. The involvement of idolatry is always associated with sexual sin.
 - a. The idea being that you will sacrifice or give yourself sexually to someone because you think they are worth it.
 - b. The bondage of worshipping sex which is based on the mere satisfaction of the person,

without any concern for the other person, they are a mere object or instrument.

- c. The worship of sex outside of marriage degrades both God's design and the person, who was designed for God.
- d. How many leaders have fallen prey to sexual sin, due to not obeying the warning signs.
- e. There are leaders in the church who do not counsel young people as to their commitment in Christ and simply marry them, or even marrying unequally yoked people.

This was the admonishment about the future disobedience of the leaders!

Conclusion

These are the last words of Joshua to the leaders, reminding them about the faithfulness of God, as well as warning them against apostasy, marked by:

- I. The personal proclamation about God's victories to the leaders!
- II. The prompt exhortation to abide in God's blessings to the leaders!
- III. The admonishment about future disobedience to the leaders!