

**JOSHUA'S FINAL WORDS**  
*To The Leadership Of The Nation Of Israel*  
**Joshua 23**

The **Book of Joshua** ends with **Joshua** saying farewell...first to the *leadership* of the nation of **Israel** (**Joshua 23**)...and then to the *people* of **Israel** (**Joshua 24**). His parting words were marked with deep *concern* and *sadness*. They expressed the *anxiety* that he had, having observed a growing complacency on the part of **Israel** towards the remnants of the **Canaanites**. They had to easily accepted the joint occupancy of a land which was to have been exclusively theirs.

With all the victories **Israel** had, **Joshua** knew well the danger of the people letting their guard down. So before his departure he felt compelled to warn them that if they were going to continue to enjoy His blessings...continued obedience to God's commands was essential.

**I. JOSHUA REVIEWES THE PAST: (vs. 1-4, 9, 14)**

This is a chapter that reminds us that **God is faithful**:

- **Faithful in His promise (vs. 4, 14).**
- **Faithful in His presence (vs. 3).**
- **Faithful in His protection (vs. 3, 9, 14).**

Some *10 to 20 years* after the end of the conquest and distribution of the land, **Joshua** summoned **Israel's** leaders...probably to **Shiloh** where the tabernacle was located. He **called for the elders and their heads and their judges and their officers** (**vs. 2**) to warn them earnestly of the dangers of departing from **Yahweh**. It was a solemn meeting. No doubt **Caleb** was there, along with **Eleazar the priest**.

They had come in response to **Joshua's** call to hear the last words of their great leader. And **Joshua** spoke on *one theme* only...*God's unfailing faithfulness to Israel and their corresponding responsibility to be faithful to Him.* (**Old Testament Theology**)

*Three times* he repeated his central message...**vs. 3-8; 9-13; 14-16**. *Three times*, fearful they would not *hear* and *obey*. *Three times* he emphasized the *faithfulness of God* and the *responsibility of Israel*.

**And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has been fighting for you (vs. 3)...**

**Joshua** reminded the leaders of **Israel** that their enemies had been defeated solely because the Lord had fought *for* them. *The battles were the Lord's...not his...and not theirs* (**Psalm 20:7; Psalm 44:1-8**).

**II. JOSHUA REASSURES THE PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE: (vs. 5, 10)**

**The Lord your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you (vs. 5)...**

As for the **Canaanites** who still lingered about the country, the Lord promised to **drive** them out so they could take possession of the land that they only now partially occupied.

**One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you (vs. 10)...**

**III. JOSHUA GIVES THEM THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT: (6-8, 11-16)**

**Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. But you are to **cling** to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day (vs. 6-8)...**

Turning to impress upon the **Israelites** their responsibility, **Joshua** passed on the very words **Yahweh** had armed him with when He instructed him to cross the **Jordan** (**Joshua 1:6-9**).

*Courage* and *obedience* were the **graces** that led to the successful conquest of **Canaan**...and they were no less essential now (**Joshua 22:5**). (The *multiple* and *various forms* of **grace**).

Specifically, **Joshua** was concerned that **Israel** would *conform* to the pagan nations around them. So he specifically *prohibited* all *contact* and *fraternization* with them...knowing that it would be easy for his people to *compromise* and ultimately *embrace* their *pagan deities* (**vs. 16**). Instead, he exhorted them to **cling to the Lord** (**vs. 8, 12**).

**Cling**...Heb. *dabaq*, means to *cleave* or *keep close*. Literally it means to *join with glue and be stuck together*.

For if you ever go back and **cling** to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and **intermarry with them**, so that you associate with them and they with you... (vs. 12)...

*“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”*

~II Corinthians 6:14

To continue to obey God and not be influenced by the *idolatry* of the **Canaanites**, would require *diligence* and *watchfulness*. The temptation would be strong to *forsake Yahweh* and **cling** to the people of **Canaan**. There would be no room for *neutrality* or *compromise*. This would require them to focus on the **Word**...the **world**...and their **worship**.

- They must focus on the **WORD**: (vs. 6-8)...They must continue in the Word.

*“Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”*

~Joshua 1:6-8

**Joshua** is calling for a **continuation in the Word**. In order to be the leader that God wanted them to be, they must *continue* to be in the **Word**. To continue in the **Word**...

- It takes **courage**...
- It takes **consistency**...
- It takes **commitment**...
- They must focus on the **WORLD**: (vs. 7, 12-16)...They must be separate from the **world** and their relationship to it.

*“...Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*

~James 4:4

Keep in mind...separation from the world is not isolation.

*“Do not love the world nor 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 and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”*

~I John 2:15-16

*“Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.”*

~I John 3:13

*“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error ...By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.”*

~I John 4:4-6, 17

- Separation is a willingness to **sacrifice**...a sacrifice to follow Jesus.

They would either go with **Yahweh**, the **God of Israel**...or the **idols** of the people of **Canaan**. There was *no middle ground*.

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

~Matthew 6:24

*“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”*

~Matthew 12:30

- Separation is a willingness to **see**...not just seeing close at hand, but the ability to see far off into eternity. **Discernment**.

- Separation is a willingness to serve...righteous acts.

*“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world...our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*

~I John 5:4-5

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”*

~II Corinthians 5:17-19

- They must focus on their WORSHIP: (vs. 11)...They must have *adoration* (love...esteem...respect) for the Lord in order to be a godly and faithful leader.

### Deuteronomy 6

*“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might...then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.”*

~Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 5, 12-13

*“Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul”*

~Joshua 22:5

The climax of this message to the nation’s leaders emphasized the fact that **Israel’s** greatest danger was *not military*...it was *moral* and *spiritual*. If **Joshua** were alive today, there is a strong likelihood that he would be saying the same thing to this nation.

### LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **God still speaks!** He speaks through...the **Bible (His Word)**... **Prayer...Biblical Authority (Parents, Church leaders, Employers, Government)**...**Teaching/Preaching...Providential Circumstances**. When God speaks...He will never contradict what His Word says.
- **God’s faithfulness is the foundation for our faith**. Because He is faithful, we can trust Him. His faithfulness in the past is what gives us hope...our trust in Him for the future...as long as He carries.
- **God has given us His final Words...the Book of Revelation**. Will we heed His final Words?