



Joshua 23

¹A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, ²Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, "I am now old and well advanced in years. ³And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you. ⁴Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. ⁵The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. ⁶Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, ⁷that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, ⁸but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day. ⁹For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. ¹⁰One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. ¹¹Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. ¹²For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, ¹³know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the LORD your God has given you. ¹⁴"And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. ¹⁵But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, ¹⁶if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you." *ESV*

Please read Joshua 23.

The beginning of the book of Joshua revealed that Moses had died. The book ends with Joshua sharing his last words with Israel, words of blessing and a plea to remain faithful to God.

God's work is not measured in greatness and smallness. Whatever God puts His hand to do, it is significant (v. 3).

They were not to forget what significant things God had done for them.

How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the LORD had surrendered them?

--Deut. 32:30

For their rock *is* not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.

--Lev. 26:7-8

When God fought for His people the odds increased in their favor by the hundreds and thousands! Much of Israel was under subjection to the 12 tribes. There remained some Canaanites yet to be dispossessed. But the significant part of the battle was over...at least on the "outside." In the dusk of these battles a battle just as fierce, and with higher stakes, was beginning to wage. Would their hearts be for God only? Would they reserve their affections for God alone? Would they give their hearts to heathens in marriage? Would they give their hearts to false gods? Their lives were beginning in a new way in this land. They would set up commerce, government, villages, and families. Each area of life was an opportunity to reflect loyalty to God. No small area of their lives was to go untouched by a callous or indifferent view of God's holiness, thus the Levitical code. If there is anything that the laws teach us is that there is not an area of our life that is meant to be outside of the transforming

power of God's holiness and under loving submission to His authority even to the end of costly sacrifices and as thorough as seemingly insignificant ones.

God's fierce love had won for them the prize of a relationship with Him (v. 3). This land was God's gift to them in His covenant love for them. It demonstrated to them that there were no lengths too far that God's love would not go to show them His covenant love. The land was an extravagant display of God's love. There wasn't a kingdom or confederation of kingdoms that could stand in the way of God's intention to extravagantly display the enacting of His power on behalf of His people. Instead of following the Canaanites' gods, the Israelites were to cling to their own God (v. 8). "Cling" in v. 8,12 and in 22:5 means to "hold fast" and the root refers to the soldering, a process in which things are joined together inseparably.

The problem with Israelites marrying Canaanites was not of race, blood, color or ethnicity. It was of loyalty of heart. The Canaanites were a people who were in rebellion against God. Their hearts were turned far away from God. In the most intimate of earthly relationships God knew there would be a "breeding ground" for unbelief and rebellion against Him if love was shared in the marriage of mixed loyalties.

God's supply of Rest in Him was won by the *dispossession* of sin at the cost of His own life-blood (v. 4). They were not forget the supply of Rest that He has given them. With each advancing occupation of the people of Israel was the picture that they were occupying more "Rest" or more complete "Rest." As their obedience to His command to fully possess the land so their satisfaction in Him would become evident. The blessing of joyful obedience is not merely that God's external work gets done but the communion with God is experienced fuller. Joyful obedience is the way in which we both experience and manifest the blessings of having someone like God to obey!

We truly rob ourselves of an infinite treasure when we deny ourselves the joy of submitting to God. Hidden in the commands to follow after Jesus Christ is the secret to abundant life. The self-serving ways of our heart fall short on their promise to satisfy our spirit with the depth of

pleasure that serving God greater brings. With the dispossession of our old man, the sin nature, it's claims to our heart...we gain the possession of peace and rest with God (see Eph. 4:20-24).

God's mission is to be the mission of His people—that He would receive glory unto Himself (v. 5). They were not to forget that their mission was not *their* mission. The mission of God's people was not merely possession of land. Their mission was to establish His glory amidst a world of those who know nothing of this greater glory of God, only the veiled glory of creation. Their mission was to reveal that God was God and no other gods were. From Israel would proceed direct and special revelation to the world of who God was, what a relationship with Him was like, what He demands of the fallen world, and the offer He gifts to those who will look only unto Him.

The mission of every Christian is also to declare the special and direct revelation of God, demonstrating through our lives that the dispossessing of ourselves and the possessing of God is an inheritance that all must pursue. Our mission is to proclaim the glory of God to nations full of people who only know of the fading and temporary glory of fallen man—whether it be celebrities, personalities, etc...

The Gospel is mirrored in verses 15-16. **Just as sure as His promises of good are to those who turn to Him, so devastating are His promises to judge those who resist turning to Him.** God's anger would "burn" against the people who would reject Him. (see also Judges 3:8, 10:7, 2 Kings 13:3, Joshua 7:1) The land belonged to God, it was His to give and His to take away. His promise to dispossess them from the land was fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity in 2 Kings 25. God's love for them and patience towards them was described in full.

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