

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
5-17-23

Joshua 23

Joshua Declares What The Lord Has Done – Verses 1-3

¹ After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, ² summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am very old. ³ You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you.

23:1-2 Joshua called for all Israel: Joshua, in his old age, gathers the leadership of Israel together to give them a farewell address, to communicate to them the things that are, to his heart, the most important for them to hear. Joshua can't, as a practical matter, speak to the whole nation, so he speaks to the leaders: elders, heads, judges, and officers. He can reach the entire nation by communicating well to the leaders.

23:3 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 fought for you: Joshua begins his address by giving glory to God. It would have been easy for Joshua to focus on what he had done as a military leader, especially because it was impressive. But he is far more interested in glorifying God than talking about himself.

Joshua Describes The Challenges That Remain – Verses 4-5

⁴ Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ The LORD your God himself will push them out for your sake. He will drive them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

23:4 I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain: Under Joshua's leadership, the army of Israel broke the back of the Canaanite military occupation. Now it remains for each individual tribe to fully possess what God has given them.

23:5 So you shall possess their land, as the Lord your God promised you: In the same way, God gives every believer an inheritance. We have been blessed... with every spiritual blessing...in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and God has a definite part for us to play in coming to possess that inheritance.

How Israel Will Succeed: By Total Obedience To The Word Of God – Verse 6

⁶ “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left.

23:6 Therefore be very courageous: They need to be courageous, so they can be obedient. Following God and His word isn't something for the faint of heart. They must do all that is written in

the Book. We tend to focus on the aspects of obedience that we like and skip over the parts that attract us less.

23:6 Lest you turn aside from it: They must not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, because Satan doesn't care which extreme he pushes us towards. Either legalism or licentiousness among God's people pleases Satan.

Hold Fast To The Lord – Verses 7-8

⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.

23:7 You shall not make mention of the name of their gods: Joshua tells Israel to not even make mention of these false gods of the Canaanites. Instead of learning about them, they should hold fast to the Lord their God.

23:8 You shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day: An old saying concerning criminal enterprises says something to the effect of, "Keep your friends close, but your enemies even closer" but this is exactly what Christians are not to do. The normal Christian, by and large, is not called to become an expert in the cults or in heresy, but to become an expert in Jesus Christ — to hold fast to Him.

23:8 Joshua was dying, and so he called all the leaders of the nation together to give them his final words of encouragement and instruction. His whole message can be summarized in this verse: "Hold fast to the LORD your God." Joshua had been a living example of those words, and he wanted that to be his legacy. For what do you want to be remembered, and what do you want to pass on to your children and associates? You can leave them nothing better than the admonition to hold on to God and to the memory of a person who did.

Their Abiding Had Been Blessed, So If They Fail To Abide In The Lord, They Will Also Depart From God's Blessing – Verses 9-13

⁹ "The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰ One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹ So be very careful to love the LORD your God. ¹² "But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³ then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.

23:9-13 Joshua knew the nation's weak spots. Before dying, he called the people together and gave commands to help them where they were most likely to slip: (1) Follow all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses without turning aside; (2) don't associate with the pagan nations or worship their gods; (3) don't intermarry with the pagan nations. These temptations were right in their backyard. Our associations and relationships can be temptations to us as well. It's wise to identify our weak spots before we break down. Then we can develop strategies to overcome these temptations instead of being overcome by them.

Joshua Asks Each Man To Prove God's Faithfulness In His Own Heart – Verse 14

¹⁴ “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

23:14 You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed: Joshua requires that every man probe deep within, and see if there is ever a time in his life when he could rightly accuse God of unfaithfulness to him.. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed: If we think there could be such a legitimate accusation, it shows we are not well acquainted with the God we claim to know.

As Surely As God Has Been Faithful To Bless Their Obedience Under Joshua, He Will Be Faithful To Curse Their Later Disobedience – Verses 15-16

¹⁵ But just as all the good things the LORD your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the LORD your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. ¹⁶ If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.”

23:15 As all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things: Joshua merely repeats the principle of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience that was a specific part of Israel's covenant with God (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). He emphasizes that God will be just as faithful to judge as He had been to bless.

23:16 So the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things: We relate to God under a different covenant, a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-7), by which Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10-14).

23:16 God was supremely loving and patient with Israel, just as he is with us today. But we must not confuse his patience with us as approval of or indifference to our sin. Beware of demanding your own way because eventually you may get it—along with all its painful consequences.