

JOSHUA BIBLE STUDIES

CONQUERING: JOURNEYING WITH JOSHUA

LESSON #13

JOSHUA CHAPTERS 23, 24**"FAMOUS LAST WORDS"**

Conquering: Journeying With Joshua, has been an edifying experience. But now, as we come to the end of the book we also come to the end of Joshua's life and ministry. He ends with a stirring farewell address.

Last words can reveal much about the person if they are lucid. However, some final words are irrational, depending upon the dying person's physical and mental condition. Some farewell words are vile, some violent and some are victorious and inspirational, such as Joshua's, in which case they are treasured by those nearest and dearest to them.

I well remember General Douglas McArthur's famous and final speech to Congress. He said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." That was somewhat like General Joshua's concluding speech to the nation.

Visualize if you will, General Joshua standing before the people. What an imposing figure he must have been, this 110 year old warrior! He had been trained by the revered Moses, now long dead. Under Joshua's leadership the mighty armies of the enemies had been defeated; it was he who had commanded the sun to stop and the moon to remain motionless. What will he say on this occasion? Let us examine briefly these famous last words of Joshua. His speech can be divided into three sections:

I. JOSHUA GAVE THE PEOPLE A WARNING. 23:1-16

Chapter 23 records Joshua's address to the leaders; in chapter 24, he addresses the people in general.

A. He Warned Them Of The Danger Of Leaving The Written Word Of God. v.6-7

"Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. 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...."

God's Word is essential for our spiritual preservation and progress. It the basis for our sanctification. John 17:17 "Sanctify them through the truth, your word is truth." (John 17:17) And "You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3) How much are we in the Word? How much of the Word is in us?

B. He Warned Them Of The Danger Of Loosening Their Grip On God. v.8-10

"but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. 9 For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one

has been able to stand against you to this day. 10 One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He has promised you.”

We conquer as we hold fast to God, for in so doing we are infused and enthused with His strength. The Psalmist said:

- “The Lord is my strength and my salvation.” (Exodus 15:2)
- “The Lord is my strength and shield.” (Psalm 28:7)
- “The Lord is my strength and song.” (Psalm 118:14)

C. He Warned Them Of The Danger Of Lessening Their Love For God. v.11-13

“Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. 12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations--these that remain among you--and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.”

The progress of the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua was the result of their:

- obedience to the Precepts of God - “keep and do” the Word;
- allegiance to the Person of God - “hold fast to the Lord”;
- maintenance of their Passion for God - “love the Lord.”

II. JOSHUA GAVE THE PEOPLE A WITNESS. 24:1-13

Joshua, quoting God Himself, gave witness to the fact that:

A. God Associated Himself With Israel’s Successes.

Seventeen times in the first thirteen verses the personal pronoun “I”, representing God, appears. Some of the representative statements are: v.3 “I took Abraham”; v.5a “I sent Moses and Aaron”; v.5b “I plagued Egypt”; v.5c “I brought you out”; v.8a “I brought you into the land”; v.8b “I gave them into your hand.”; v.8c “I destroyed them.”

B. God Aligned Himself Against Israel’s Foes.

He drowned the Egyptians. v.6-7; He destroyed the Amorites.v.8; He delivered Canaan’s inhabitants into Israel’s hands. v.11 also 23:3.

C. God Activated The Forces Of Nature On Behalf Of Israel.

Plagues - v.5; Darkness - v.7; Sea - v.7; Hornets - v.12; (also stopped sun.10:11 and sent hail - 10:12-13).

D. God Allocated A Homeland For Israel.

Josh. 24:13 - “I have given you a land for which you did not labor....” The history of God’s dealings with Israel and us, give witness that He is a good and faithful Father.

Here in his last words, Joshua witnesses to God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises and of God’s goodness to Israel, His chosen people. He reviews

God's history with Israel to refresh their memories and to rekindle the fire of their devotion to God. We need to review God's gracious dealings with us on a regular basis. "Count your many blessings; see what God has done!"

III. **JOSHUA GAVE THE PEOPLE A WATCHWORD** 24:14-28

The watchword appears 10 times in these verses. What was it? Let us examine it as follows:

A. **The Watchword Articulated.** 24:14

The word was "serve" – "Serve the Lord!" said Joshua. (24:14) The word "serve", in relation to God, appears 10 times in this passage and the words "serve" or "served" occur a total of 15 times.

B. **The Watchword Modeled.** 24:15

Joshua had been serving the Lord but here he recommits himself and his family to serve Jehovah. That is Leadership! He has modeled servanthood from the days that he was Moses assistant to his last days.

C. **The Watchword Embraced.** 24:16-24

Three times the people responded saying, "we will serve the Lord" v.18,21,and 24. Joshua chides them in Josh. 24:19 saying, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

Some Hebrew scholars render Josh. 24:19 as follows: "you shall not cease to serve the LORD..." While others interpret the words as: "You cannot serve the Lord, for he is holy and jealous, *unless* you put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the flood. For he is a jealous God..."

Some suggest that Joshua was chiding them to see how strong their resolve to serve the Lord was. In either case, the people forcefully responded in v.21 saying, "No, but we will serve the Lord!"

D. **The Watchword Memorialized.** Josh. 24:25-28.

Joshua then erected a visible reminder of their promise. "And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance." (24:27-28)

The meeting is over. This was Joshua's "Swan Song." His death is recorded as follows: "Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel." (24:29-31)

LEARN FROM JOSHUA

There are many lessons that we can learn from the man Joshua. Among them are:

1. Make Your Life Count.

Joshua did. Do you think Joshua was missed? Yes! Sometime read just a few pages ahead in the book of Judges 2:9-15. We can only serve the Lord in the time allotted us, so let's make the most of that time.

2. Make Your Labor Count.

Joshua did. We were created to serve the Lord. It is the most fulfilling, lasting, and rewarding thing to do. Remember, God calls us not to be celebrities, but to servants! "Serve the Lord with gladness." Ps.100:2

3. Make Your Legacy Count.

Joshua did. What kind of legacy will you leave? Unlike Joshua, King Og left a pathetic legacy. Deut. 3:11 says, "Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites." Og left a big bed, How pathetic! What spiritual legacy will we leave?

Illust. The Greeks had a race in the Olympics, the winner of which was not the one who finished first, but the one who finished having the best time *and* with his torch still lit! I too, want to finish with my torch for Jesus burning brightly!

Hebrews 11 is called the "Hall Of Faith" chapter. Hebrews 12:1 challenges us all and Eugene Peterson's expanded translation reads as follows: "Do you see what this means – all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it!" (*The Message*)

In 1770 John Wesley wrote the following words upon the death of the early Evangelist George Whitefield, that could well have been quoted at Joshua's funeral service:

*"Servant of God, well done!
Thy glorious warfare's past;
The battle's fought, the race is won,
And thou art crowned at last."*

"Joshua the son of Nun, *the servant of the LORD*, died" (Josh. 24:29) Let us work on our spiritual legacy by making the purpose of our lives to be servants of the Lord!

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