

Joshua 23:1 ¶ And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old *and* stricken in age.

Joshua 23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, *and* for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old *and* stricken in age:

Joshua 23:3 And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God *is* he that hath fought for you.

Joshua 23:4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

Joshua 23:5 And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

This chapter begins with a statement telling us that Joshua lived a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel. Time is relative to perspective; commentators note that it was anywhere from 14-25 years later. Joshua had become an “old man.” He called a meeting of all the chief leaders among the people. He reminded them how God had blessed them and fought for them and that the land had been divided among the tribes. Though there were still enemies in the land that needed driven out, they should remember that the LORD would go before them if they acted in faith and obedience toward Him. Eventually, they would possess the whole land if they followed the LORD’s commands.

Joshua 23:6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to* the right hand or *to* the left;

Joshua 23:7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear *by* them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

Joshua 23:8 But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

Joshua 23:9 For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; but *as for* you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

Joshua 23:10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

Joshua encouraged the people to be courageous, strong and constant (all from the Hebrew) to “keep and do” all that was written in the book of the law of Moses. When I looked at the Hebrew for “keep,” it included the idea of making a hedge of protection. In effect, that is the result of faith and obedience to the LORD; it establishes a hedge of protection around us. Within that hedge, you have the freedom to do as you choose without fear because you are within the realm of God’s protection; step outside that hedge and you put yourself in danger.

The little word “all” is a reminder that God doesn’t want us to pick and choose the commandments we want to keep; we are to obey the whole.

Joshua warns the people against assimilation with the enemy nations among and around them. They should actively guard against even mentioning the name of their gods, let alone swearing by them, serving them or worshipping them. That is quite a statement by Joshua. It's basically a statement that warns against fellowship with the world. We are to be in the world but not of the world. Jesus phrased it this way when praying for His disciples:

John 17:14–16 “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Joshua urged the people to “cleave” to the LORD “your God.” To cleave is to hang on tight, to catch by pursuit; it requires passion and determination. One who cleaves to the LORD has recognized Him as his/her own, the One that they look to as the supreme authority over their lives.

Joshua reminded the people that they possess the land only because the LORD had fought for them and given them the victory as He had promised to do. With the LORD on their side, the strength and courage of one man was equal to a thousand that were fighting in their own strength and courage.

*Luke 1:37 “For **with** God nothing shall be impossible.”*

Joshua 23:11 ¶ Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

Joshua 23:12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

Joshua 23:13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any* of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

Joshua urges his people to be very careful to continue to “love” the LORD your God—to be passionate in their desire to honor and worship Him. Jesus identified this as the most important commandment.

Matthew 22:36–38 “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

He warns them strongly against intermarrying with the people of other nations. Such action will only serve as a snare and trap that will result in trouble and eventually their destruction and loss of the land.

Joshua 23:14 And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of

all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

Joshua 23:15 Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

Joshua 23:16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

The chapter closes with Joshua telling the people that he is about to die. The chief thing he wants them to remember is that God had not failed to do one thing that He had promised to do. He then warns them that just as surely as the LORD had kept His promises to bless, He would also keep His promises to destroy them if they turned away from Him as their LORD. One summary statement of this truth is found in Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28:63–66 “And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life....”

From our perspective today, these words are quite powerful. History reveals that the Jews’ rejection of Jesus resulted in the fulfillment of every word of this prophecy.

Thankfully, we know it doesn’t end there, and that the people of Israel will one day become the people that the LORD always intended they be.

Ezekiel 36:22–28 “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD....And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

Romans 11:26–27 “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”