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Joshua 23

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Joshua 23.

Topics.

- Joshua is old and well advanced in years.
- Joshua warns Israel to obey all written in the book of the Law of Moses.
- One man puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD fights for you.
- Marriages with foreign women will be thorns in your sides.
- Not one word failed of all the good things the LORD promised Israel.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9). At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

JOSHUA 23:1-4

Joshua is Old and Well Advanced in Years.

- **Joshua 23:1-4:** A 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.

This and the next chapter contain the last addresses of Joshua. These addresses were among the closing acts of Joshua's life, but given on different occasions, and are of different character and scope. In this chapter Joshua briefly reminds the heads of the tribes, the elders, the judges and officers of the recent benefits of God toward them and their people. He declares that God had fulfilled all His promises, and exhorts the nation to faithfulness toward God so His mercies and blessings would not be withdrawn. In the following chapter Joshua takes a wider range, he recounts the gracious dealings of God with the nation from its very origin, and uses these dealings of God as grounds for the LORD to claim their sincere and entire service. But he does not force it upon them, but gives them the choice of withdrawing from the covenant or choosing to agree to abide by it. The entire nation from their free will chose to renew the covenant. Joshua's reproofs and warnings are in substance identical with those with which Moses closed his career in (Deut. 31). A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel and the greatest part

of the land of Canaan was subdued and divided amongst the tribes of Israel, and they quietly settled into the portions assigned to them with their mighty warriors becoming shepherds and farmers. Joshua had grown old and was well advanced in years so he calls all Israel (not every individual, but their representatives, by their elders, heads, judges, and officers), either to his own city, or to Shiloh the usual place of such assemblies where his words, being uttered before the LORD, were likely to have the more effect upon them. He tells them that they will not have him long to preach to them so take notice of what he says and lay it up for the time to come (i.e., after his death).

JOSHUA 23:5-7

Joshua warns Israel to Obey all Written in Moses Book of the Law.

- **Joshua 23:5-7:** The 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,

Joshua tells the people that God will drive their enemies out of their land and give it to them to possess as He has promised them providing, they do all that is written in the Book of the Law. Had Israel remained faithful to God they would have been the head of all nations and their land, cattle and crops would flourish and the offspring of their women would have multiplied and all they put their hand to would have prospered. This is why Joshua so strongly exhorted Israel to be courageous and very strong and not mix with the nations remaining among them or serve their gods, because if they did God would remove His blessing and favour from them.

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JOSHUA 23:8-10

One Man Puts to Flight a Thousand, for the LORD Fights for You.

- **Joshua 23:8-10:** but 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.

The words, "the LORD fights for you, just as he promised you," refers to the following promises of God:

- The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes (Deut. 1:30).
- The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. (Deut. 28:7).

The LORD fights for Israel, this is why a thousand are put to flight by one man. It is not the power of Israel's armies that put their enemies to flight, but the power and fear of their God. When Rahab spoke to the two spies she told them:

- I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. (Joshua 2:8-11).

This is what the expression one man of you shall chase a thousand means it is a pledge that God will give Israel the complete fulfilment of His promise in giving them the parts of the country still unconquered. But the accomplishment of the divine promise depended on Israel remaining faithful to God and to His law and keeping themselves from the people of Canaan's idolatrous sins. Provided they remained faithful God's blessing would secure them a path of brilliant and triumphant victories.

JOSHUA 23:11-13

Marriages with Foreign Women will be Thorns in Your Sides.

- **Joshua 23:11-13:** Be 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.

Throughout this chapter Joshua warns Israel to be very careful to always love the LORD their God and of the destruction that will come upon them if they rebel against Him. Now he warns them against making marriages with the people of Canaan, because they will be a trap for them meaning they will turn them away from the God of Israel to serve and sacrifice to their gods and should they commit such a horrendous sin God will turn against them until they perish from the land He has given them.

JOSHUA 23:14-16

Not one Word Failed of all Good things the LORD Promised Israel.

- **Joshua 23:14-16:** "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."

I am going the way of all the earth means Joshua is soon to go the way of all flesh, the way of all people; the way which all eventually go. The captain of the LORD'S army cannot be spared from the common death all must follow, but for Joshua to die was not a matter of sorrow, but of a journey to his long-awaited heavenly home. Here is manifested the deep love Joshua has for the people of God, even in his final days his focus is set upon warning Israel to remain faithful or they will come to ruin.

The three fatal steps to their ruin are:

1. Friendship with idolaters.
2. Marrying idol worshippers and believers of other gods.
3. Serving their gods.

The way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with those who deliberately do wrong, cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. The statement, "Not one word has failed of all the good things that God promised Israel all has come to pass not one of them has failed" (v14) as well as the following words that Joshua spoke in the previous chapter:

- The LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. ⁴⁴And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. (Joshua 21:43-45).

Show that though the conquest of Canaan by Joshua was in one way a limited conquest, yet it fully satisfied the hopes of Israel showing that they understood God's promises to have actually been fulfilled. Some might ask, "How is this true when parts of the Promised Land remain to be possessed and people remain unconquered?" The answer is that God promised to destroy all their enemies, and to give them the whole land, not at once, but by degrees, little by little, as is expressed in the following verse:

- The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. (Deuteronomy. 7:22).

Added to this Israel's victory is guaranteed (providing they remain faithful), because it is based upon God's promise and He cannot lie, (Titus 1:2). The following three warnings of Joshua are not limited to Israel only, but apply to God's people of all generations.

1. Always stand guard against any temptation that would lead away from the Lord.
2. Be careful not to enter into behaviour that is offensive to God and brings dishonour to his name.
3. Love the Lord and cleave to him in faithfulness.
4. Treat those in the Kingdom of God and others with respect and decency.

Whoever sets these four standards up as the pillars of their mind and the foundation of their heart and make them a guide to all that they say and do will not only establish a good name before man and God, but will also secure their salvation and be storing up treasure in heaven.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.