

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning we finish up our study through the book of Joshua.

We've seen the Promised Land conquered and we've seen the Promised Land being divided up among the tribes of Israel.

These last two chapters in the book of Joshua consist of Joshua's farewell speech to the nation of Israel.

Joshua is going to remind them of God's faithfulness – as well as his own faithfulness toward the statutes of God as well as his faithfulness to the Children of Israel.

Remember that upon the death of Moses, it was Joshua who led them into the Promised Land and 15-20 years later, he is still guiding them.

Not only is he going to remind them of God's faithfulness, he is going to remind them about the dangers of apostasy – the abandonment of their faith, the worship of other gods.

Not only is it going to be a powerful message to the young nation, it is a powerful reminder to us as well.

To be reminded what God has done, what He is doing and what He will continue to do in our lives.

Let's pray...

[Jos 23:1-16 NKJV] 1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their

enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. 2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age.

Our text this morning will reveal that Joshua dies at the age of 110 years old.

So yes, Joshua was indeed old – however, we still see him being passionate, exhorting, encouraging and inspiring others.

Many times, we feel that our age or maybe our circumstances prevent us from serving God.

But the scriptures point out the opposite.

A few chapters ago, we saw Caleb at 85 asking Joshua to give him the land where the giants were. At 85.

Moses – is another example.

Moses' ministry began at the age of 80.

We come up with excuses –

I have too many things to do before I die.

I'm retired.

Yet, God calls us to finish the race strong. He doesn't call us to finish the race until we decide to retire...

God desires to use us until the day He calls us home.

God seeks availability over ability.

He provides us with the resources to do His will.

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.

Notice that Joshua is not calling attention to himself.

He is giving all the glory to God.

It wasn't my military strategy or my great ability or my ingenuity that brought you victory. It was the Lord.

And in the same way, the greater Joshua – Jesus did the same thing. Every miracle He performed resulted in glory coming to His Father.

[Jhn 8:49-51 NKJV] 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50

"And I do not seek My [own] glory; there is One who

seeks and judges. 51 "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

What does Jesus mean in John 8:50 when he says, "I do not seek my own glory"? I think he means two things.

First, he means: I do not seek the glory and wealth and power and prestige of this world.

Remember – Jesus' mission - I am here to suffer and be shamed, not honored by the world.

And, second, he means: The glory that I do seek is my Father's glory, which, for those who have eyes to see, is also my glory.

He does not seek his glory apart from the Father's glory. He does not seek to be glorious with a private glory, but only with the Father's glory embodied in his own person.

4 "See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. 5 "And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

Joshua reminds the Children of Israel of what God had already done – as they have received the inheritance.

He reminds them of what God is going to continue to do – which is to expel the inhabitants and drive them out.

But, Joshua also reminds them that in return **they** still have to take possession of the land.

It works the same way in our spiritual lives, God will do... but we must possess, we must cooperate, we must do our part.

God want to do a great work in us, through us, and with us – however, we have to do our part – we simply can't sit there passively and do nothing.

6 "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,

This is the same commandment that God gave Joshua in chapter one – he is now passing it to the next generation of leaders.

7 "[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,

Here we have a warning from Joshua to the Children of Israel –

Notice that it goes beyond worshipping the gods of the ites that remained among them.

Joshua includes even mentioning their names.

He wants to make sure that they don't even dabble / that they have nothing to do with the gods of the inhabitants.

Because it doesn't take much – we dabble and sooner we find ourselves overwhelmed by sin.

Pornography, drug use, addictions.

8 "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 promised you. 11 "Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God.

To hold fast means to cling – to maintain that relationship with God.

And as they maintain that relationship with God, He will continue to fulfill the promises of ongoing blessings. (Deut 28 – God tells that nation of Israel, you have two choices,

obedience produces blessings and disobedience will result in curses) and we will see that throughout the history of the Children of Israel.

So after Joshua encourages them to cling to the Lord, he provides them with a warning.

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,

So he warns them against the opposite, disobedience - instead of clinging to the Lord, he warns them against clinging to the world.

Remember, they were to be set apart – they were not supposed to marry the nations because the nations would cause

them to stumble because they would lead them to worship their false gods.

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. 14 "Behold, this day I [am] going the way of all the earth (meaning that Joshua knows that he will die soon). And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

Joshua brings them to personal accountability. You have seen God's faithfulness with your own eyes, and blessings or curses that occur will be as a result of your own decisions. Your disobedience will result in consequences.

15 "Therefore it shall come to pass, that 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, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. 16 "When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you

shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you."

The consequence for serving other gods – you will lose the land that God has given you.

And the Children of Israel refused to heed God's warning and decided to worship Baal and Ashtoreth and Moloch and many of the other gods of the inhabitants and just like God said He would, the Children of Israel perished from the land as He used the Assyrians and the Babylonians to come in and take the Israelites captive.

Always remember that just as God is faithful to help, God is faithful to judge.

And as Christians, even though we may no longer face the prospect of eternal judgment, we may still face the

chastisement on earth due to the fact that we are God's children.

[Heb 12:5-6 NKJV] 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

God will allow discipline in our lives for one reason – because He loves us.

He loves us too much to allow us to go on without some sort of warning to get our attention.

And hopefully as a result of our chastening or discipline, we will turn back to Him.

So after addressing the leaders in chapter 23, he addresses the entire nation and he brings them back to Shechem which was the place of commitment.

Shechem is the place where God promised the land to Abraham

And here Joshua is going to bring the nation together to remind them of God's faithfulness once again.

He provides a brief history lesson.

[Jos 24:1-33 NKJV] 1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, [including] Terah, the father

of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. 3 'Then **I took** your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4 'To Isaac **I gave** Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5 'Also **I sent** Moses and Aaron, and **I plagued** Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward **I brought** you out. 6 'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 'So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and

the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. 8 'And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. 9 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 'But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So **I delivered** you out of his hand. 11 'Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you--[also] the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites,

the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. 12 'I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, [also] the two kings of the Amorites, [but] not with your sword or with your bow. 13 'I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

As Joshua is giving the people a history lesson, he is pointing out God's active involvement in the lives of His people.

He has cared for them every step of the way.

I took, I gave, I sent, I brought, I destroyed/plagued, I delivered.

Over and over again.

Why is Joshua reminding them of God's faithfulness???

Because the Children of Israel had already started to worship other gods.

14 "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

Turn with me to Proverbs 1

[Pro 1:7 NKJV] 7 The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of knowledge, [But] fools despise wisdom and instruction.

To fear the Lord means to hold Him in reverence for who He truly is.

If we do not fear the Lord, if we do not hold Him in reverence, then we have no reason to repent.

You see, **the fear of the Lord** is what brings us to our knees in asking for forgiveness.

Because we acknowledge who He is and what He has done – the tremendous sacrifice that He paid for us on the cross.

So Joshua is trying to remind them of God's faithfulness and hoping that they turn from their idolatry.

**15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD,
choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,
whether the gods which your fathers served that [were]**

on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

This is the choice that each of us individually have to ask ourselves.

Who/what are we going to serve???

For the Israelites, it was the choice between the God that delivered them or the pagan gods that promised them prosperity.

It is the same message the Jesus taught on the sermon on the Mount.

Turn with me to Matthew 6

[Mat 6:24 NKJV] 24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Mammon – money, riches, prosperity.

Notice also that Joshua makes it clear who he is going to serve along with his house, he is going to serve the Lord. His decision has already been made.

Not only had Joshua made that decision but also his house.

Joshua is over 100 years old –

He is not forcing the decision upon the others in his

household – it is more likely because they had seen his life of faith and agreed with him.

16 So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;

17 "for the LORD our God [is] He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. 18 "And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He [is] our God." 19 But Joshua said to the people, "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.

The people respond to Joshua's charge with – Are you kidding Joshua, we will never do that. We will never worship other gods.

You see, the people said that because they were among each other. The whole entire nation was before Joshua listening to his charge.

And Joshua responds with – “you can't”

You see, Joshua knew that back in the confines of their tents – hidden beneath the blankets and the mattresses were all the idols that they worshipped.

And his message to the Children of Israel is – you will not be able to serve God if you are worshipping those idols.

20 "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!" 22 So Joshua said to the people, "You [are] witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "[We are] witnesses!" 23 "Now therefore," [he said], "put away the foreign gods which [are] among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel." 24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Once again, Joshua warns them of the consequences if they fail to repent from serving other gods but the people are adamant that they will only be loyal to the Lord and His word.

So Joshua has them make a vow or a recommitment and that is the covenant that is made here in Shechem.

26 Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that [was] by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27 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."

28 So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

Joshua writes down the covenant as a reminder to the people of their recommitment.

It's going to be another memorial stone for them so that they wouldn't forget what occurred here in Shechem.

29 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. 30 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. 31 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. 32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out

of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph. 33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill [belonging to] Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

In this last section we have the death of Joshua and I asked you to underline the portion that stated that Israel served all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders that outlived him –

The problem that faced the Children of Israel is that they didn't pass along the warning to their children and their grandchildren.

Because it is not too far down the road where we start reading in the book of Judges that forsook the Lord and started serving Baal and the gods of the “ites”

Church, there is a reason why we have this warning in scripture – God gives us warning because we need to be warned.

And just like the children of Israel responded to the word of Joshua and put away their idols, we need to respond to our Joshua, our Jesus and put away every idol in our homes as well as in our hearts.

May we have the fear of the Lord in our hearts to respond to His warnings? Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I

believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please

forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give

me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

