

1 Studies in Joshua

“The Human Side of Covenant Living”

Joshua 23:1-16

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- ***“After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years, summoned all Israel - their elders, leaders, judges and officials ...”*** Joshua 23:1-2

3

“Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem...” Joshua 24:1

- Shechem is where Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim are located.
- The important significance of this place is that it points to the covenant of God with the people of Israel [i.e. this event was a renewal of the covenant which God had made with them through their father, Abraham and which was embellished by the covenant of the Law given through Moses on Mt. Sinai]!

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- **“The covenant is a pledge that God had made with humankind. The first covenant was God’s promise to Adam and Eve in their fall that One would come to crush the head of the serpent. It is re-articulated in the rainbow given to Noah after the flood. God also promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, and his progeny would become a great nation.”** - John Huffman

5

- **“Its ultimate expression is in the new covenant that Jesus articulated with His disciples when He took the bread and the cup instituting the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to be commemorated as the reminder of His life, death, and resurrection. The call is for us not only to receive His gift of grace but also to be participants in the covenant.”** - John Huffman

6

Joshua understood the covenant and the central role it plays in all of God’s dealings with His people.

- 1) He understood what God has offered in the covenant
- 2) He understood how the power and the benefits of the covenant come to God’s people when they keep their part of the covenant
- 3) He understood that in one sense, the covenant is “at risk” [Huffman]; not because of God’s part in the covenant, but because of you and me [our part]!

7

- ◆ Remember, Mt. Ebal & Mt. Gerizim teach the truth of Rom. 5:21, i.e. that grace reigns “through righteousness.”

8 ☐

- Also, that there is a transition going on in the soul of the redeemed (“progressive sanctification”); we are being delivered from the curse of the dominion of sin to the liberty of willing obedience and the blessing it brings - “Promised Land living in the soul!”

9 ☐

- **The foundational covenant which God made with Abraham is unconditional! New Testament passages, such as Gal. 3:13-14 & 29, make it clear that the covenant blessing of Abraham belongs to every true Christian. This involves our relationship to God in Christ and eternal life. This part of the covenant is unconditional and irrevocable.**
- **However, the immediate enjoyment of the power and the blessings of God in our daily lives is generally dependent upon our obedience to God’s Word.**

10 ☐

- **The basic principles of covenant relationship are the same for Christians today, who are under the New Covenant.**
- **The emphasis in Chapter 23 is on the human side of covenant living, while the primary emphasis in Chapter 24 is on the Divine side of our covenant relationship with God.**
- **The major theme of Chapter 23 is a call to be faithful participants in the covenant with God.**

11 ☐ **A Positive Challenge to Faithfulness**

- **The important lesson of Shechem [Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim] is that, even God’s children who are in a covenant relationship with God, can bring upon themselves blessings or curses, depending upon their obedience to God’s commands or the lack thereof!**
- **The important question is: “How do we live in faithfulness to our covenant relationship with God through Christ under the New Covenant?”**

12 ☐ **Four Steps of Faithful Covenant Living**

- **The foundational basis of these four steps:**
 - **“... for the Lord your God is He who has fought for you ... you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.” (vv. 3, 8)**
 - **“So be very careful to love the LORD your God.” (v. 11)**

13 ☐ **“holding fast to the Lord your God” ... is one of the many ways the Scripture refers to the concept of “abiding” in God [Christ]**

- Psa. 63:8 *“My soul follows hard after you ...”* KJV
- *“My soul follows close behind you ...”* NKJV
- Psa. 46:1 *“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”* NKJV
- John 15:5 *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*

14 ☐

- Prov. 3:5-6 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths.”*
- Psalm 1:1-2 *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doeth he meditate day and night.”*

15 ☐ **The Four Steps of Faithfulness**

• **Step #1**

- “Give the Lord credit for all you have and all you are.”
- Josh. 24:3 *“You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake ...”*
- Therefore, the first step in honoring our covenant relationship with God is humility! cf. Prov. 16:18; 29:23; 15:33; Jas. 4:6

16 ☐ **Step #2**

Bold obedience to the Word of God

- Verse 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 the left.”*
- Matt. 7:13-14 - Jesus indicates that there are fundamentally two pathways in life; one or the other characterizes the life of each person who ever lived

17 ☐

- *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*
- In the context, the implication seems to be that the general bent of one’s life-style [i.e. obedience to God’s Word, or defiance and rebellion] reflects the condition of one’s soul [saved or unsaved] and its eternal destiny.

18 ☐

• **I Cor. 6:9-11**

• **Proverbs 4:**

- vv. 18-19 *“The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.”*
- “But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

19 ☐ **Proverbs 4**

- vv. 14-15 *“Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.”*
- vv. 25-27 *“Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”*

20 ☐ **AN ASTONISHING TRUTH**

- The vital difference between the wicked and the righteous is not to be found in

themselves, but in God's upholding and sustaining grace toward the redeemed, which enables them to persevere in the path of righteousness, even though they may falter at times!

21 ☐

- **Psalm 37:23-24** *"If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand."*

- **Psalm 55:22** "... he will never let the righteous fall."

22 ☐

SUMMARY:

- **The second step of faithfulness to our covenant with the Lord is a serious effort to structure the entire direction and focus of our lives around the commands, the principles and the precepts of God's Word.**

23 ☐

Step #3 - Live a life of separation from the world

- *"Do not associate with these nations that remain among you ..."*
Joshua 23:7

- **As Christians, we are citizens of two worlds!**

24 ☐

- **This concept is expressed many places in Scripture:**

- *II Cor. 6:17* "Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord."

- *II Cor. 6:14-15* "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

25 ☐

- *Deut. 7:3* "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you."

- *iv. Ezra 9:13-14* "... you have punished us less than our sins have deserved ... Shall we again break your commandments and intermarry with the people's who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, ...?"

26 ☐

- **Romans 12:2** "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, ..."

- *vi. James 4:4* "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship

with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

27 ☐ **Step #4 - Have nothing to do with the idols of the pagans**

- *“... do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them.” Joshua 23:7*
- *“... dear children, keep yourselves from idols.” I John 5:21*
- **We would do well to carefully consider what it is in our lives that brings us the greatest pleasure and enjoyment. What is it that consumes most of our time and energy and most of our thought?**

28 ☐ **A Warning of the consequences of unfaithfulness**

- *“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, 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.”*
Josh. 23:12-13 NKJV

29 ☐

- *“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.” Joshua 23:16 NIV*

30 ☐ **John Huffman explains that there are various ways we can bring such consequences upon ourselves**

- **“Negative consequences occur ...” when we don’t give God the credit for all we have”**
- **“... and when we don’t obey the Lord with steadfastness”**
- **“They come when we don’t live lives of separation from the world ...”**
- **“... and when we involve ourselves in pagan worship ...” [i.e. forms of idolatry!]**
- **“Negative consequences also occur when we accommodate ourselves in ways that cause us to shift our priorities.”**