

# Joshua

## *The LORD is Salvation*

### Chapter 23 *Joshua's Last Messages: First to the Israelite Leadership*

**23:1-2** In c.1356 B.C. (43 years after the conquest: c.1406-1399 B.C.), Joshua called together the Israelite leaders to admit he was “well advanced in years”, and to instruct them for the final time.

The phrase “long time” in the NIV1984 is literally “many days” in the Hebrew, and the Hebrew word for days (*yôwm*) is the same word that is translated “day” in *Genesis* 1.

**23:3-5** Joshua began his farewell address by saying to the leaders that as God’s appointed servant, he led the people in the conquering wars and then allotted the inherited land, but he also reminded them that the victories over the Canaanites were from God <sup>Exodus 14:14, Deuteronomy 20:4</sup>.

God promised they would conquer the land quickly <sup>Deuteronomy 9:3</sup>, but assured them the process of completely driving out the “nations” would be “little by little” <sup>Deuteronomy 7:22</sup>.

**23:6** Joshua revealed the secret of success in following God: understand and live by (“obey”) the complete Word of God (“all that is written”), without compromise (“turning aside”) <sup>Joshua 1:7</sup>.

Christians obtain spiritual strength in the same manner: *Philippians 4:6-9 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

**23:7-8** Joshua instructed the Israelites to reject compromise and to faithfully follow (“hold fast to”) the LORD <sup>Deuteronomy 10:20</sup>. The people were told not to “associate” with the remaining “nations”, nor to embrace (invoke name, serve or worship) their pagan gods <sup>Exodus 20:5, 23:13</sup>.

**23:9-11** To build confidence, Joshua reminded the people what God had done <sup>Deuteronomy 7:24, 11:23</sup>, and reiterated that future success depended on their love of (obedience to) God <sup>1 John 5:3-4</sup>.

## Joshua R: 23-24+Review

Joshua emphasized God's sovereignty by pointing out that His obedient followers could defeat an enemy, even when they were outnumbered a thousand to one (or more <sup>Leviticus 26:8</sup>).

Remember earlier discussions <sup>see notes in Chapters 13 & 21</sup> that indicated the Israelites inherited the land, but God is the true owner, the people of Israel are His tenants <sup>Leviticus 25:23</sup>, and what God required from Israel (the 'rent') was their obedience. Maintaining possession and enjoyment of the land depended on their obedience <sup>Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30</sup> to the LORD. The Christian's inheritance is salvation <sup>Hebrews 1:14</sup> and the benefits of the Kingdom <sup>James 2:5</sup>, but obedience <sup>Luke 11:28, John 15:5,10-11</sup> is the proof of a believer's redemption <sup>James 1:2-4,12</sup>.

**A general definition of salvation is: *A faith that leads to obedience.***

**23:12-13** Continuing to emphasize these points, Joshua strongly warned them against involvement with the remaining Canaanites, either through marriage or even a casual association, because as a result, God would not help the Israelites drive them out of the PL and these compromises would be a "snare" <sup>Exodus 23:33, 34:16, Numbers 33:55</sup> and lead to their destruction <sup>Deuteronomy 7:1-4</sup>.

America has rejected God, but when crises come, people flock to churches and cry "God Bless America!". These verses make it clear: neither Israel nor America can have it both ways.

**23:14** In another attempt to get the Israelite leaders to think clearly as they would lead their people in the future, Joshua, declaring his nearness to death <sup>1 Kings 2:2</sup> for emphasis, stated that God always lives up to His promises. <sup>Joshua 21:45, Psalm 119:140, 145:13</sup> (God "does not lie". <sup>Titus 1:2</sup>)

**23:15-16** Joshua warned the leaders that God's promises associated with this covenant had a contingency of obedience <sup>Jeremiah 11:8</sup>. The consequence of not driving out the pagans in the "good land" and compromising their singular worship toward the true God would be that Israel would "quickly perish" from the PL <sup>Deuteronomy 4:25-26</sup> (reiterating verse 13 and a future prophecy).

The result of the Israelite people not heeding Joshua's (God's) advice by failing to complete the purging of the land, associating with the remaining Canaanites and compromising their faith by embracing pagan worship rituals (like idolatry) would be judgement. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was judged by God through the Assyrians in 722 B.C. <sup>2 Kings 17</sup> and the Southern Kingdom of Judah was judged through the Babylonians in 605-586 B.C. <sup>2 Kings 24-25</sup>.

## Chapter 24:1-27 *Joshua's Last Messages: A Final Inspirational Reminder*

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## Joshua R: 23-24+Review

Joshua's last speech emphasized to the people it was time for worship and thanksgiving for everything God had done for the Hebrew people before and during the conquest of Canaan.

**24:1** Joshua gathered all the leaders and people at Shechem to present "themselves before God".

Joshua's plan was to remind the people of their responsibilities to their God and His faithfulness.

Shechem was between Mt. Gerizim/Mt. Ebal (Blessings <sup>Deuteronomy 27:12</sup> /Curses <sup>Deuteronomy 27:13</sup>).

There were several reasons for Shechem being the appropriate place for Joshua's final message: (1) Shechem was where God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land <sup>Genesis 12:6-7</sup>, (2) Jacob had built an altar at Shechem <sup>Genesis 33:18-20</sup> and (3) Shechem is where Joshua had gathered the people years before <sup>Joshua 8:30-35</sup> to fulfill the instructions of Moses on how to honor God once they entered the Promised Land <sup>Deuteronomy 27:1-8</sup>.

**24:2-4** God, through Joshua, gave the people a brief history lesson about their people. God began with the forefathers of Abraham, who lived "beyond the River" (Euphrates River), and spoke of Abraham's obedience in leaving his homeland in Mesopotamia to go to Canaan, where he was given Isaac, Jacob and Esau. God reminded them that Jacob and sons (the tribes of Israel) went "down to Egypt" (so Joseph could save them from starvation). <sup>Genesis 11–Exodus 1</sup>

By telling Abraham to leave his "country" on the other side of the Euphrates River <sup>Genesis 12:1</sup>, God was essentially calling him out of idolatry into a life of service to Him. <sup>1 Thessalonians 1:9b</sup>

**24:5-13** God's historical review continued with His bringing the Israelites out of Egypt by sending Moses, Aaron and His plagues on the Egyptians. God then provided the victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea, followed by their long journey in the wilderness, the victories God gave them on east side of the Jordan, the account of the pagan prophet Balaam <sup>Numbers 21-25</sup>, their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, the victories (through God) over the people in the land of Canaan and His gift to the Israelites of the PL (a fruitful land). <sup>Exodus 2–Joshua 22</sup>

In His explanation of the victories He gave to the Israelites in the PL, God used a picturesque illustration: "I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you...". The Hebrew term for hornet means 'fierceness' and 'discouragement'. In God's assurance to Moses about His plans for Israel, He told Moses His strategy was to send the "hornet" out ahead of them to guarantee victory in the PL <sup>Exodus 23:28, Deuteronomy 7:20</sup>. In context, the

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hornet is the Angel of Jehovah <sup>Exodus 23:20, 14:9</sup> (Jesus <sup>Joshua 5:13-15</sup>), who is described as a "terror" to not only the people of the PL, but to "every nation [they] encounter" <sup>Exodus 23:27-28</sup>.

**24:14** Joshua then encouraged the Israelite leaders and people to fear and to serve the LORD God (by yielding, trusting, worshiping, obeying) <sup>1 Samuel 12:24</sup>, and to "throw away" and never return to the pagan gods <sup>Exodus 20:3</sup> who many of their forefathers turned to in Mesopotamia and in Egypt.

Abraham's ancestors in Mesopotamia most likely worshipped the moon-god Sin (Nannar). One of the Egyptian gods referred to was probably the fertility god, Apis the Bull, who the Israelites were worshipping (golden calf) when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai <sup>Exodus 32:4</sup>.

**24:15** This verse is an indication of man's choice (reflecting limited sovereignty), because Joshua told the Israelites they had a choice who they will serve <sup>1 Kings 18:1</sup>. Joshua, however, made a public profession that he and his family had made their choice: they chose to serve the one true LORD. In making this statement, Joshua hoped to gain a similar commitment from all of Israel.

Jesus taught that people can only serve one thing/person <sup>Matthew 6:24</sup> and that serving the LORD is more important than possessing all of the earth's riches <sup>Matthew 16:26, Luke 4:5-8</sup>.

**24:16-18** In the spirit and emotion of the time, the Israelites responded in the only way possible: by saying (in essence) 'Yes, of course we will only serve the LORD.' In bookend statements around a quick summary of God's history lesson reminding them of His faithfulness to them.

This commitment is suggestive of the one Israel made when they were at Mt. Sinai. <sup>Exodus 19:8</sup>

**24:19-21** Joshua rebuked their emotional response, and sternly warned them of the consequences of half-hearted commitments, but Israel reacted with another decisive statement of devotion.

**24:22-24** The Israelite proclamations served as witnesses against themselves <sup>Deuteronomy 30:19-20</sup>. Joshua repeated the charge to only serve the LORD and the people agreed to obey <sup>Exodus 19:8</sup>.

**24:25-27** In one final effort to drive home the point, Joshua put the covenant in writing and then set up a large stone at a holy place at Shechem (not "the" holy place, where the tabernacle was in Shiloh), so there would be no doubt as to what the people agreed to on that day. <sup>Exodus 24:7-8</sup>

God's teachings, Joshua's warnings and Israel's emphatic responses are suggestive of a later exchange between Jesus and Peter. After the Last Supper, Jesus warned His disciples of their scattering after His death <sup>Mark 14:27-28</sup>, but in the emotion of the time, Peter pledged

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his complete allegiance to Jesus <sup>Mark 14:29</sup>. Jesus told Peter he would soon fall <sup>Mark 14:30</sup>, but being overconfident, Peter again emphatically avowed he would not fail <sup>Mark 14:31</sup>; however, he quickly faltered in the garden <sup>Mark 14:32-37</sup> and in the courtyard of the high priest <sup>Mark 14:66-72</sup>. However, in His mercy/compassion for Peter, later Jesus extended grace to Peter <sup>John 21:15-19</sup>.

## Chapter 24:28-33 *The Death and Burial of Joshua*

**24:28** Following his last messages of responsibility, challenge and encouragement to the Israelite leaders and the people, Joshua sent them all back to their respective inherited homelands.

**24:29-31** The statement: “Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua” was another way to say Joshua had faithfully served the LORD <sup>Matthew 25:23</sup>, as he had promised <sup>Joshua 24:15</sup>. Once the land was divided and Joshua finished the work God had called him to <sup>2 Timothy 4:6-7</sup>, he chose his inheritance to be the city named Timnath Serah <sup>Joshua 19:49-50</sup> (also called Timnath Heres <sup>Judges 2:9</sup>) on the west edge of Ephraim’s <sup>Numbers 13:8,16</sup> hill country, overlooking the sea. The elders chose to bury him there, when he died at the age of a hundred and ten (c.1356 B.C.).

In addition to Joshua, Joseph also died at the age of one hundred and ten <sup>Genesis 50:26</sup>. Interestingly, the records of the ancient Egyptians stated that 110 years was the ideal life span, and they considered anyone living this length of time to have been divinely blessed.

Unfortunately however, Israel’s faithfulness to God lasted only one generation. <sup>Judges 2:6-13</sup>

**24:32** At this time, the Israelites completed the promise that the “sons of Israel” had made to Joseph about 450 years earlier <sup>Genesis 50:24-25</sup> by burying his bones (that had been brought from Egypt during the Exodus by Moses <sup>Exodus 13:19</sup>) at Shechem in the plot of land purchased by Jacob after camping and building an altar there approximately 550 years prior <sup>Genesis 33:18-20</sup>.

**24:33** Eleazar (son of Aaron) had served Joshua in the same way that Aaron had served Moses. When he died, he was buried on a hill belonging to his son (Phinehas) near Shiloh in Ephraim.

The NIV1984 states Eleazar was buried in Gibeah in Ephraim. However, Gibeah was a city in Benjamin’s inheritance <sup>Joshua 18:28</sup>, and since “Gibeah” actually means “hill”, then that seems to be the better translation. This is reflected in the King James version and the note above.

The burials of the three Godly men (Joseph, Joshua and Eleazar) in the Promise Land marked the end of the generation of conquering leaders, and the beginning of Israel’s decline <sup>Judges 2</sup>.

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## A Review of **Joshua**: a Book of Commitment, Conquest & Compromise

**Joshua** (c. 1466-1356 B.C.) – A MAN OF PRAYER, GOD’S WORD, COURAGE, OBEDIENCE, PERSEVERENCE

Joshua: English rendering of the Hebrew word *Yehoshua*: the LORD is salvation

Jesus: English transliteration of the Greek transliteration of *Yehoshua*

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Chapter 2 *Rahab and the Spies (Messengers?)*

Chapter 3 *The Nation of Israel Crosses the Jordan*

Chapter 4 *The Two Sets of Twelve Stones*

Chapter 5:1-12 *The Circumcision at Gilgal*

Chapter 5:13-15 *The Commander of the Army of the LORD (Central Campaign)*

Chapter 6 *The Battle and Fall of Jericho*

Chapter 7 *Achan’s Sin*

Chapter 8:1-29 *A New Beginning: Ai is Destroyed*

Chapter 8:30-35 *The Covenant with the LORD is Renewed*

Chapter 9 *The Gibeonite Deception, but an Honored Oath*

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