

## Notes on Joshua 23

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### II. Joshua's final discourses (Josh. 23,24)

#### A. Joshua's Warning to the People – Chap. 23

Verses 1-5

1. When did the events in chap. 23 occur? To whom did Joshua speak?
2. What had God done for them? What had Joshua done?

#### *Joshua begins his farewell address*

These events happened a long time later after God had given Israel rest from wars with the surrounding nations, after Joshua was old. He later died at age 110 (24:29); however, Joshua had been said to be old as far back as 13:1. We are not told how long had passed since the land was conquered nor how long it was from the time of this message till Joshua died. However, at least some considerable time must have passed since Israel had divided the land till Joshua gave this parting message.

He called all Israel, along with their leaders, and rehearsed how he had led them into the land. He said that God had fought for them, so they had captured the land and had divided it among them from the Jordan to the Great Sea (Mediterranean). He promised that God would continue to expel the other nations from the land so that Israel could completely possess it for themselves alone (Ex. 23:30). Later in the message he attached conditions to this.

However, this is not to deny that the land had all been given to them. He clearly stated that it had been all given to them and he would repeat this again (21:43-45; 23:14). So the land was theirs. There was no doubt that they possessed it, but there were still people of other nations living in it in certain areas where Israel had not driven them out. And several tribes had yet to move in and take physical possession of their lands (see notes on Judges 1.)

Verses 6-10

3. Tell what Joshua reminded them to do (v6). Where have we earlier read similar statements?
4. Describe what they were told to **not** do (vv 7,12).

#### *Warning to keep God's law and be faithful to Him.*

Joshua's final admonition to Israel contains some of the same instructions that the book began with in reciting God's instructions to him when he began to lead the nation (1:5-9). He warned the people to have the courage to do all that God taught in Moses' law, not turning from it to the right or the left.

They were not to in any way compromise with the gods of the people remaining among them. They not only were not to bow in worship to those gods nor swear by them, they were not even to mention them. Instead they were to hold fast and be faithful to the true God.

He reminded them that by God's power they had driven out all the nations from the land; no one had been able to withstand them successfully. God had promised that one of them could chase a thousand, because God was fighting for them as He had promised to do. This promise was being repeated from Deut. 28:7; Lev. 26:8. The point is that by God's power they would be victorious, and their enemies could not defeat them.

Verses 11-13

5. Since God had blessed them, what should they do for Him (v11)?
6. Tell what would happen if they became influenced by people of the land (vv 13-16).
7. List other *passages* that make similar predictions.
8. Had God kept His promise to give them the land? Proof? Did this guarantee they would keep the land? Proof?
9. Special Assignment: What actually happened in future generations? Did they keep the land or not? Why? If later we find they do not possess the land, would this prove, as some teach, that God is still required to give them the land in the future?

***Warning of consequences for being influenced by the nations***

Whereas Joshua promised God would continue to drive out the inhabitants if Israel was faithful, he here warned that this promise was conditional. If they did not remain true in loving God but allowed themselves to grow attached to the people in sin, God would not continue to drive out the people of the land.

If they clung to the people of the nations, associating with them and making permanent bonds with them such as intermarriage, these people would cause Israel to sin. They would be like a trap or scourge and thorns in their eyes. God would not continue to remove the people of other nations from the land. On the contrary, the Israelites themselves would be removed from the land.

Note the clearly conditional nature of the land promise. God had given them the land in fulfillment of His promise to the fathers. He was willing even to remove the remnant of the people of the nations from the land. But whether or not He did that and whether or not Israel would remain in the land would depend on their faithfulness in obedience to Him. Receiving the land was unconditional. Keeping it was conditional. See Lev. 26:14-33; Deut. 28:15-68.

The record of Israel's history after this point, of course, shows they were not faithful and were therefore eventually removed from the land as God promised here and elsewhere.

Joshua then again affirmed that God had kept His promises to Israel. He had done everything He promised to do. Nothing had failed. Cf. 21:44,45. As mentioned before, this absolutely disproves the claims of modern premillennialists. They claim the land promise was not completely fulfilled, so it must be fulfilled when Jesus returns. Joshua absolutely denies their claim. Israel received all God had promised.

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But then Joshua repeated the conditional nature of keeping the land. They had received it. But whether or not they kept it depended on their future obedience. As surely as God had blessed them in giving them the land, He would just as surely punish them in the future if they did not keep His covenant. His anger would burn against them and they would be destroyed from off the land if they worshipped and served idols.

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