**Joshua**

Chapter 23

*Joshua’s Farewell to the Leaders*

**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, 2 summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am old and well advanced in years. 3 You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you. 4 Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west. 5 The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you. 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 to the left. 7 Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. 8 But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now. 9 “The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. 10 One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. 11 So be very careful to love the Lord your God. 12 “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, 13 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. 14 “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. 15 But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. 16 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.”**

**23:1–16** Joshua, the Lord’s servant, delivers a farewell address recalling the victories the Lord has given, but also reminding the people of areas yet to be possessed and of the need to be loyal to God’s covenant laws. Their mission remains—to be the people of God’s kingdom in the world. (CSB)

**23:1** *A long time afterward*. Probably c 1375 BC, based on the age of Caleb and other chronological information from Scripture, archaeology, and astronomy. (TLSB)

*rest.* See note on 1:13. (CSB)

*well advanced in years.* Joshua was approaching the age of 110 (24:29). (CSB)

**23:2** *elders* … *heads* … *judges* … *officers*. Leaders of Israelite society. As representatives, they could properly be called “all Israel.” Cf 8:33. (TLSB)

*I am now old*. Joshua died at age 110 (24:29). (TLSB)

**23:3** *the Lord* *your God who has fought for you*. Theme of Jsh is that Israel’s success was the result of the Lord’s victories for His people (cf 24:2–13). (TLSB)

**23:4** *those nations that remain*. Cf 13:1–7 for the land still to be conquered. Nations of Canaan have been hamstrung, but much work remains if Israel is to take full possession and hold on to the land that has been allotted. (TLB)

**23:6** *be careful to obey.* Echoing the Lord’s instructions at the beginning (1:7–8; see 22:5). (CSB)

Joshua borrows the Lord’s language (1:7–8). Strength to carry out God’s will comes from God through the power He gives in His Word (cf Php 2:13). (TLSB)

*Book of the Law.* A reference to canonical written materials from the time of Moses (cf. Dt 30:10, 19; 31:9, 24, 26). (CSB)

First five books of the Bible; portion of the inspired Scriptures completed by the time of Joshua. (TLSB)

**23:7** *may not mix*. Intermarriage with heathen nations was prohibited (Ex 34:13–16). The real threat to Israel in mixing with heathen nations is spiritual, not political.(TLSB)

*make mention* … *swear* … *serve* … *bow down*. Each term can refer to worship. (TLSB)

**23:9** *the Lord* *has driven out*. Chs 1–12 attest to the Lord’s victories for Israel, fulfilling His promises of Dt 4:38; 7:1; 9:1; 11:23. (TLSB)

*driven out*. Verb does not mean simply “remove to another location,” but rather “destroy.” (TLSB)

**23:10–11** By accenting what the Lord has done for His people, Joshua motivates Israel to love the Lord, who first loved Israel (1Jn 4:19). (TLSB)

**23:10** *puts to flight a thousand*. What God promises, He fulfills, no matter the seeming odds against it. Gr Nys: “Victory in battle being due not to numbers, but to righteousness” (*NPNF* 2 5:250). (TLSB)

**23:11** *love the Lord your God.* A concluding summation (see note on 22:5). (CSB)

**23:12** *But if you turn away.* Remaining in the promised land was conditioned on faithfulness to the Lord and separation from the idolaters still around them. Failure to meet these conditions would bring Israel’s banishment from the land (cf. vv. 13, 15–16; 2Ki 17:7–8; 2Ch 7:14–20). (CSB)

*ally yourselves … intermarry.* The Lord prohibited alliances, either national or domestic, with the peoples of Canaan because such alliances would tend to compromise Israel’s loyalty to the Lord (see Ex 34:15–16; Dt 7:2–4). (CSB)

Intermarriage with unbelievers is perilous because the unbelieving spouse may seduce the believer into abandoning the faith and cause destruction (Dt 7:4). Cf 1Co 7:12–16; 2Co 6:14. (TLSB)

**23:13** *these nations*. Canaanites will afflict Israel with spiritual and physical disaster if she turns away from the Lord and His covenant. (TLSB)

*snares and traps.* Joshua’s warning echoes Ex 23:33; 34:12; Dt 7:16. (CSB)

Cf Ex 34:12. (TLSB)

*good ground*. The ground is good as God’s gift, the place where Christ would carry out His ministry to give all believers an eternally good inheritance. (TLSB)

**23:14** *go the way of all the earth*. Because the whole world fell into sin, this is an apt phrase for “to die. (TLSB)

**23:15–16** Blessings and curses as found in Dt 28. For her own good, Israel must see the tragic picture of life without the Lord and His covenant. Cf Lv 26:14–39; Dt 28:15–68; 29:18–28 for earlier warnings of disaster for covenant rejection. In breaking the covenant, Israel’s name would be added to the list of nations driven from the land (cf Lv 18:28). This came to pass in 722 BC, when idolatrous northern Israel was destroyed, and in 587 BC, when Judah was defeated and exiled to Babylon. (TLSB)

**Ch 23** In the second of Joshua’s three farewell sermons, he addresses the leaders of Israel with warnings against serving other gods and reminds them of the Lord’s faithfulness and victories for Israel. What God threatens to those who reject Him and His salvation will certainly come to pass. God has not failed to fulfill even one word of all the good things He has promised. We can trust all the promises of His Word. • Lord, cause us to know that You are always faithful to Your Word, so that we heed Your warnings and trust Your gracious promises. Amen. (TLSB)