

# JOSHUA

## CHAPTER 23

### *Joshua's Charge to Israel's Leaders*

**A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, 2 Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, “I am now old and well advanced in years. 3 And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you. 4 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. 5 The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. 6 Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, 7 that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, 8 but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day. 9 For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. 10 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. 11 Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. 12 For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the LORD your God has given you. 14 “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. 15 But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, 16 if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to 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)

*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. (TLSB)

**23:6** *be strong to keep.* 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. (CSB)

**23:12** *But if you turn back.* 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)

*make marriages with them.* 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)

*snare and a trap.* Joshua's warning echoes Ex 23:33; 34:12; Dt 7:16. (CSB)

*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)