

“On Your Own”

Joshua chapter 23-24

Scripture Ref: James 1:6-8; Heb 8:6, 12:7; Luke 14:25-27; John 6:66-69; Prov 30:8-9

1. **The nation of Israel is about to enter into her most dangerous period –**
 - a. **Not a battle – not a formidable enemy...**
 - b. **No - the time when they are at REST and living in the blessings of the Lord**
 - c. **WHY?? When they are enslaved, or they are about to be wiped out, or face insurmountable odds – the tribes “call upon the Lord”**
 - d. **But when things are good, plenty of food, no enemies on the horizon... that is when the people begin to drift away from the Lord!**

23:1 Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. 2 And **Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them:**

"I am old, advanced in age. 3 **You have seen** all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has fought for you. 4 See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. 5 **And the LORD your God will expel them** from before you and drive them out of your sight. **So you shall possess** their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

2. **IOW – “the time of my leadership is over, you guys are now on your own!.. (OK, not really!)**
 - a. **“the time of my leadership is over, there is still work to be done.**
 - b. **God has brought you this far, He is not gonna drop you now! God will be with you!”**
 - c. **And Josh speaks words of faith “so shall you possess their land!”**
3. **Just – just you be sure – and he speaks some exhortation...**

Exhortation #1 - Don't Play with Sin

6 Therefore **be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book** of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You **shall not make mention of the name of their gods**, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall **not serve them nor bow down to them**,

Exhortation #2 - Hold Fast to God

8 but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

4. This is good advice!

- a. **It does take courage to obey God – because many others do not!**
- b. **“don’t mention it” – staying away from sin – not even talking about it.**
 - i. **I have found that our mouths often lead the way of our actions**
 - ii. **We start talking about sin, joking about it, sort of floating a trial balloon to see how it goes over!**
- c. **“hold fast” – I get the picture of holding on for life – when I was a teen we used to climb this old abandoned water tower near RDU**
 - i. **Man talk about holding on – at the top of that ladder you could not have pried my hands off with a crowbar!**
 - ii. **Until one day they found Mark Ikler at the bottom of the tower.**
- d. **We need to realize how critical it is to stay close to the Lord – how things can get really bad – really fast – when we don’t!**

9 For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. 10 One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you. 11 Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. 12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations -- these that remain among you -- and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. **But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes**, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

5. Josh describes sin in an interesting way... “snares, scourges, thorns” – but that is exactly what sin becomes to us

- a. **It starts our alluring and pleasurable**
- b. **But in the end, it is prickly and painful!**

6. Joshua cares for the people – and he does not want to see them fall

14 "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And **you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you**. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. 15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He

has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. 16 When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you."

7. IOW – “check it out – look in your hearts – has God not been faithful to us??”

- a. **If they – or we – are honest, we have to say with all conviction God has never let us down**
- b. **And as a reminder, Josh recounts their history...**

The Covenant at Shechem

24:1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including **Terah**, the father of **Abraham** and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him **Isaac**. 4 To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but **Jacob** and his children went down to Egypt. 5 Also I sent **Moses and Aaron**, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. 6 Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the **Red Sea**. 7 So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the **wilderness** a long time. 8 And I brought you into the land of the **Amorites**, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. 9 Then **Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab**, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. 11 Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you -- also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. 12 I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. **13 I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.**'

14 **"Now therefore (IOW – I have made my case!), fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth,** and put away the gods which your fathers served on

the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**

8. Few things I like about this statement:

- 9. #1 - Joshua had made a choice – and his choice was to serve the Lord.**
- a. He did not make that choice based on where they were NOW, he had made that choice LONG AGO**
 - b. It was one of the things that I believe qualified him to lead the people.**
 - c. Some will follow God depending on the conditions – it things are really good, or really bad...**
 - d. But if the conditions change – their obedience will change**
 - e. I believe that it is hard for God to use a person like that – the inconsistency**

James 1:6-8

he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- f. But on the other hand, I believe if we will just make a choice – decide “am I going to follow God – NO MATTER WHAT – God can use that person!**
- 10.# 2 - The rest of them needed to make a choice – not “if” they would serve, but “whom” they would serve**
- a. Everyone serves something – and any choice other than God boils down to serving Satan – whether intentionally or not.**
- 11.#3 - Joshua recognized his place as the priest and leader of his home – it was his responsibility to ensure that they whole house served the Lord**
- 12.#4 - Joshua didn’t care what anybody else did or thought – if the whole nation went astray, he was going to remain faithful to the Lord.**
- a. Like the Super delegates – once it becomes apparent that Obama might have the nomination, they start defecting – no one wants to be left behind, or be on the losing side.**
- 13.And in all of this – Joshua was able to set an example to the people.**

16 So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did

those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. 18 And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. **We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."**

19 But Joshua said to the people, "**You cannot serve the LORD**, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."

14. Josh is not trying to discourage the people - this is an exaggeration to emphasize the gravity of their obligation to serve the Lord

- a. **For if they take this task lightly, if they only half-heartedly serve God, and they take a cavalier attitude towards sin...**
- b. **They will surely bring destruction on themselves...**

15. We are under a "better covenant"

Heb 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

16. Now we are under a "better covenant", in that Jesus has *redeemed us from the curse of the law*

- a. **Therefore, in Jesus we no longer can experience God's "faithfulness to curse us" as Israel knew it.**
- b. **Yet we do experience God's faithfulness to correct us as a loving Father**

Heb 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

17. Joshua us trying to discourage them from making lightly made and easily broken commitments.

- a. **Jesus did the same...**

Luke 14:25-27

Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple

- b. **Jesus was not trying to discourage people from following Him – but Jesus was well aware that people are fickle**

- i. **They will make a commitment one day, and break it the next.**
- ii. **How many have you known who commit their lives to Christ, but six months later they are living the same life they lived before??**
- iii. **How many of US have done that??**

21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!"

22 So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him."

And they said, "We are witnesses!"

23 "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel."

24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!"

18. There is a sense here – how could they NOT follow the Lord, after all they He had done?

a. Similar to Peter...

John 6:66-69

66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- b. If we wonder sometimes about how hard it seems to serve the Lord, think of the alternative...**
- c. For the Israelite – it was curses for sure**
- d. For the Christian today, it is the repercussions of sin, and the correction of the Lord**
- e. But – doesn't it seem that some get away with not serving the Lord??!**

19. NOTE – there are times that we might look at others, who perhaps are not 'fully serving the Lord', carnal Christians

- a. And maybe they seem to be doing fine – even prospering!**
- b. And we wonder – "what's up Lord? I am serving you and being faithful and obedient, and I don't seem to get ahead... and this guy never goes to church, never gives to the Lord, lives about half in the world, and yet seems to get richer every year!"**

20. I can only answer that with two points...

Matt 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- a. **The treasures that we acquire on this earth will NOT transfer to heaven – there is no ‘rollover’.**
 - i. **If your focus is the treasures of this world, then your harvest will be the treasures of this world**
 - ii. **Gal 6:7 “as a man sows, that will he reap”**
 - iii. **If your focus is the Lord – your harvest will be on earth – in the people lives that you change, and also in heaven**
 - iv. **Because there IS a rollover for that treasure.**
- b. **I believe that God, in His wisdom, has a way of keeping each of us where we need to be in respect to the riches of this world.**

Prov 30:8-9

*Give me neither poverty nor riches --
Feed me with the food allotted to me;
9 Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, "Who is the LORD?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God.*

- i. **I believe God knows that some can be good stewards, and He can bless them and it wont draw them away from the Lord**
- ii. **Others might be ruined by riches –**
- c. **This prayer is a prayer of balance – “Lord, keep me in the place that is best for ME!”**

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27 And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." 28 So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

Death of Joshua and Eleazar

29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. 30 And they

buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

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