
Joshua 23

Joshua 23:1–16

Joshua's Farewell Address Part I

Outline of Chapter 23:

- vv. 1–13 **Joshua warns the elders of Israel**
- vv. 14–16 **Joshua's final remarks**

Charts

- v. 6 **The New Concept that the Law of Moses is the Word of God**
- v. 8 **Contrasting the Conjunctions in v. 8 and v. 12**

Introduction: Joshua gives two farewell messages—one in Joshua 23 and the other in Joshua 24. My thinking is that both of these messages were given on the same day to slightly different groups of people. In the previous chapter, at least the latter portion of it, I theorized that the authorship properly belonged to Phinehas for two reasons: (1) the vocabulary and sentence structure was more complex; (2) the events recorded were given in great detail, although Joshua was not a participant; and, (3) the only person mentioned by name was Phinehas. In this chapter we return to a simpler vocabulary, and certainly a much simpler sentence structure. My thinking is that Joshua left the Word of God in the tent of worship, but that he penned a few more words during that last portion of his life and decided to present these as his last message to Israel; and hence, we have this chapter.

Keil and Delitzsch have a good introduction to this chapter: *After the division of the land among the tribes, Joshua had withdrawn to Timnath-serab, on the mountains of Ephraim...to spend the last days of his life there in the quiet enjoyment of his own inheritance. But when the time of his departure from the earth was drawing near, remembering the call which he had received from the Lord..., he felt constrained to gather the people together once more in the persons of their representatives, to warn them most earnestly of the dangers of apostasy from the Lord, and point out the evils that would follow.*¹

At first, I had just assumed that Joshua 23 and 24 were simply his two farewell messages to Israel, made perhaps on the same day. Barnes: *These addresses were no doubt amongst the closing acts of Joshua's life, but were evidently given on different occasions, and are of different character and scope. In the former Joshua briefly reminds the princes of the recent benefits of God towards them and their people, declares that God had fulfilled all His promises, and exhorts to faithfulness on their side to God that so His mercies may not be withdrawn; in the latter he takes a wider range, rehearses the gracious dealings of God with the nation from its very origin, and upon these as his grounds, he claims for God their sincere and entire service. But he grants them the option of withdrawing from the covenant if they so choose; and when they elect still to abide by it, it is solemnly renewed by the free consent of the whole people. Joshua's reproofs and warnings are in sum and substance identical with those with which Moses closed his career (Deut. xxxi., &c.).*²

We don't know where this took place. My first guess was that this took place in Shechem, which is between Manasseh and Ephraim. I made that guess because that is where Joshua 24 is said to occur. Since Joshua's home was in Manasseh, he may have gotten up to travel to Shiloh, and then realized that he was not going to make it, and stopped in Shechem. However, what is said in Joshua 24 precede the message here by 10–15 years, so from whence Joshua spoke then has no affect on what he had to say here. My guess is that he is speaking from Timnath-serah, the city given to him in the hill country of Ephraim, which Israel had given him (Joshua 19:50).³ He is ill, he knows this is his last day, and if Joshua is going to summon his people, it would be

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 163.

² *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 407.

³ Keil and Delitzsch guess either Timnath-serah or Shiloh. Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 163.

most logical for him to summon them to his hometown if he is at the end of his life. Furthermore, in context, it would make more sense for him to not mentioned the town to which he has summoned these men if it were his home town, where he has lived for the past 10–25 years. In the intervening years between Joshua 22 and here, it is even likely that some of the incidents early on in the book of Judges took place. You will recall that the Israelite mind thinks not in terms of time but subject matter. The book of Joshua was begun by Joshua and should end with Joshua. Therefore, we will deal only with material having to do with Joshua. The system of judges, which likely began during the time of Joshua, is not mentioned, as that is not directly relevant to his life.

In a more careful examination of this and the last chapter, it appears as though Joshua 24:1–28 occurred between Joshua 22 and 23. What he said was a final address prior to dismissing the people to their lands, but it was such a fitting end to his life, that Phinehas placed that chapter at the end of this book. If I taught this verbally, then I would go from Joshua 21 to these verses in 24, and then go back to 22. I may, in fact, still rearrange the chapters in this way. What has surprised me is that I have not yet found any commentator who thinks this way. To a man, other than what Barnes wrote, they all seem to think that Joshua 23 and 24 occurred close together in time in the order in which they are found, the only reason being that that is how they are found in Scripture.

What we have in this chapter is the final, deathbed message the Joshua, something which we have seen two times before. Deut. 31 gives the last few personal things which Moses said to Israel, to Joshua and to the Levites; also, it was one of the last times that God spoke to Moses while he was on this earth. In Deut. 32, we have the song of Moses, and in chapter 33 we have his final blessing of Israel prior to his death. Jacob also gave his final blessing, as well as his predictions, concerning his sons in Gen. 49. Joshua is not quite as corny as Jacob, so he is not going to make a statement about each tribe; nor is he as talented as Moses, so this final message will not be a song.

The NIV Study Bible summarizes this chapter as follows: *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.*⁴

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Joshua Warns the Elders of Israel

Literally:

And so it was from days many afterward when had caused to rest Y^ehowah to Israel from all their enemies round about. And Joshua old and he went into the days. Joshua 23:1

Smoother English rendering:

And it came to pass many days later, after God had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them; and Joshua himself was old and advanced in years.

In this verse we have the Hiphil perfect of the verb *nûwach* (נִוַּח) [pronounced *NOO-ahk*], which means *rest, cause to rest, set down, lay down, deposit, leave*. In the Hiphil, this means *to deposit, to set down, to cause to rest*. This is a more permanent *rest*, and can be even taken to me *to be at peace*. Strong's #5117 (and 3240) BDB #628. There is another word used for *rest*; *shâqat* (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*], which means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. It is a little less than permanent (although the context of Joshua 11:23) allows for it to be longer. Strong's #8252 BDB #1052.

Joshua has endured a long life to this point. He is 110 years old (Joshua 24:29 Judges 2:8). He spent 40 of those years in the desert, one of the few who wholly supported Moses, and therefore one of the two men of his generation who survived their stay in the wilderness-desert. He then led Israel through seven years of war. At the end of this war, he would have been Caleb's age (85, Joshua 14:10) or perhaps a decade or more older. Prior to distributing the property, we even read that Joshua was old and advanced in years (this is assuming that

⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 318.

Joshua 13:1–6 is correctly placed, chronologically speaking). Considering that Caleb saw himself as strong and vigorous at age 85, that means (1) the war aged Joshua considerably and that he had reached old age at 85 (we all age differently); (2) Joshua was older than Caleb to begin with, by one to two decades; or, (3) Joshua 13:1–6 should be placed right prior to this chapter, chronologically speaking.⁵

What will follow is a message which could have been given after the land had been distributed and prior to the incident in the previous chapter—except for the fact of this verse. This verse seems to place a greater interval of time between the previous portion of Joshua and this chapter and the next. Throughout the battles of the previous chapters and the subsequent distribution of land, nothing is said concerning Joshua’s age. A mention of his age here seems to indicate that time has passed; perhaps 10–25 years. Apparently, Joshua died the day that he gave this message, as v. 14a reads: **“Now, observe, today I am going the way of all the earth...”**

There was apparently a period of time after the distribution of the land until now when Israel engaged in very few battles. They moved into their land, no longer opposed by the people of the land, although there were certainly Canaanites still strewn throughout Israel. **And Jehovah gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies took a stand before them; Jehovah gave all their enemies into their hand** (Joshua 21:44; see also Joshua 22:4).

And so summoned Joshua to all of Israel: to their elders and to their heads and to their judges and to their officers; and so he said to them, “I have become old; I have entered into the days.

Joshua
23:2

The Joshua summoned all of Israel, their elders: the heads of the tribes, the judges and the military brass—and said to them, “I have become old and I am advanced in years..

A tiny bit of syntax which we should note here is that after the noun *Israel*, we do not have a wâw conjunction. What that means is that following *Israel*, we should have a colon. When Joshua summoned all of Israel, he summoned those who represented all of Israel—their elders, their heads, their judges and their officers. In fact more precisely, as Keil and Delitzsch put it, the *elders* described the leaders of the people in general. They were broken down into three classes: heads of families, judges and the top military officers.⁶

Because there had been peace on all sides, Joshua had no need to do anything in particular to lead his people. He had a well-oiled machine and the tribes of Israel were settling into their land, mentally removing themselves from the wars that they were in and raising their families. It was a period of time probably not unlike the late 40’s and early 50’s in the United States.

Scofield notes: *the last counsels of Joshua should be compared with those of Moses in Deuteronomy, especially chs. 31–33. Like Moses, Joshua reminded Israel of God’s past blessings upon them, the necessity of continued obedience, and urged them to further conquest. He warned of the dangers of worshiping heathen gods and of worldly alliance with heathen nations. departure from God would lead inevitably to Israel’s judgment. Joshua’s last counsels concluded with a stirring challenge to choose the Lord, to serve Him, and were highlighted by the exhortation to put away foreign gods (24:23), shocking evidence of incipient apostasy which was already invading Israel. to Joshua’s plea Israel readily responded, but this pledge was tragically forsaken after the death of Joshua and the elders associated with him.*⁷

As we will see, Joshua will not give them any new doctrines or revelation; he will reemphasize that which is most important to the continuation of and prosperity of Israel. He will warn them about falling away from their covenant

⁵ Allow me a tangent here; chronologically speaking, Joshua 13:1–6 would fall quite neatly into place preceding Joshua 23. The only problem with this is that the quote of God speaking to Joshua would have been separated in time by perhaps two decades, the first portion (vv. 2–6 occurring at the end of Joshua’s life; and the second portion, v. 7, occurring a decade or so earlier, prior to the distribution of the land). Given the fact that much of the Bible is organized more by subject than by chronology, this would not be out of the question.

⁶ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 163.

⁷ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 285.

with God. They are not to deviate from the Law of Moses, which was the canon of Scripture to them. There are nations which remained within the Land of Canaan, nations which Israel was to drive out. They were to be careful not to intermarry and then follow the gods of these other nations. He will finally remind them that all that God promised, He has done and that God will remove them from this land if necessary.

There is something else that I want you to notice here. There are a lot of people who claim that they don't believe in dispensations who really do. The term *dispensation* is perhaps not the best of terms to be adopted by theologians, particularly because what Protestants means and what Catholics mean by this term are so entirely different. It refers, in the Greek, to the administration of a household, not to a period of time; although we often take it as a block of time. When the word occurs in the New Testament, it refers strictly to the administration of a household. There are also words used in the Greek to refer to the succession of events in time as well as to epochs of time (or time periods). As long as you understand that in the Old Testament, there was a system of sacrifices, that God worked primarily in the nation Israel, and that there was no baptism of the Spirit; then you are a dispensationist, even though you call yourself a covenant theologian. Because what we have is a different way in which God's household was administered. There were different rules, a different form of spirituality, and a different sort of responsibility. Israel, a nation of believers, was treated as a whole. When one member, during crucial time periods, was out of line, the entire congregation was affected. We have studied the nationally devastating sins of Achan and Korah in this regard (Num. 16 Joshua 7). Also, what was often required, as Thieme used to put it, was a spiritual Atlas, a man who would carry Israel. We have seen that with Moses and Joshua; and we will have that with King David.

Now here is the point I have been leading up to. Not everyone in Israel has access to the Word of God. Moses has taught it and Joshua has taught it; and it is engraved on stones; but not every man can have a problem and go to living room and pick up God's Word for guidance. This was not available at that time. Therefore, there were certain men upon whose shoulders was the responsibility of honorable and moral leadership—these are the elders: the heads of tribes, the judges and the military leaders. God placed a great burden of leadership on their shoulders.

Today, in the Church Age, it is a whole different ball game. The leaders of a church or any other religious organization, have a great responsibility before God. However, in this dispensation, under this administration of God's household in this age, every individual believer has tremendous responsibility and is in full-time Christian service. Now, the pastor of your church may not know you personally, or even be able to pick you out of a crowd. However,, your contributions spiritually are absolutely necessary. Whether it is by prayer, or giving, or witnessing, or emptying out the waste baskets and sweeping the floors (something which I personally did for a Christian radio station for a half-dozen years, because I did not have the money to give). In fact, when I did that, I did not know a soul at that radio station by name. I don't know if they knew me by name or even had my address. It was what God had led me to do and that was my giving for several years. We all have a place in God's plan, an important function. We have all been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and every single one of us is necessary and has a function in his plan (I Cor. 12:13–27). When I was a janitor in that radio station, my function there was no less important than the men who ran the radio station (regardless of what they or I thought at the time). God may give you a half dozen people in your entire life to witness to. You might actually give them the gospel but once or twice during the twenty or fifty years that you know them. The testimony of your life to them day in and day out is part of your daily ministry. Your life before them should be irreproachable, yet lacking in self righteousness. When you fail before them, then you admit to it. **Confess your faults to one another** (James 5:16a).

You see, once and awhile, since we are delving so deeply into the Old Testament, I have to stop and remind you what has changed and what is different between then and now. No believer in the Old Testament was exhorted to be filled with the Spirit; in fact, their knowledge of the Holy Spirit was sketchy at best (Isa. 48:16); however, we are ordered to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Ours is an individual ministry, tied to a body, however, in such a way that the other parts of the body often don't even realize that we are there. We have our function and we are to act within the guidelines of our Lord and to lead our lives as unto the Lord.

“And you [all] have seen all which Y^ehowah your God has done to all the nations the these from before your faces because He [was] the one fighting for you [all]. Joshua 23:3

“Furthermore, you have all seen that which Jehovah your God has done to all these nations before you; He is the One Who fights for you.

My thinking is that Joshua wrote these thoughts down and handed them to Phinehas after speaking them. Phinehas then added the scrolls to God’s Word, where they likely belonged. The sentence structure is fairly simple again, as is the vocabulary. We don’t have much by way of disagreement in the various translations.

There were several nations which were well-established in Israel—powerful, great nations of tough individuals—and Israel took them down. This is apropos that Joshua point this out to these men. The indigenous nations worshipped other, heathen gods, and God beat them down before Israel because of their heathen worship. As Moses told the people: **“Stand still and watch the deliverance of Jehovah, which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. Jehovah will fight for you while you keep silent.”** (Ex. 14:13b–14; see Deut. 1:30 Joshua 10:14, 42 as well). In days of old, You, with Your own hand, drove out the nations; then You planted them and You then afflicted the peoples, then You spread them abroad, for by their own sword, they did not possess the land, and their own arm did not deliver them; but by Your right hand, and Your arm and the light of Your presence, for You favored them (Psalm 44:1b–3). What should logically follow, without Joshua even mentioning it, is that if Israel pursues other gods, then the same fate will befall Israel. Joshua, not being the type of person to imply anything, will just state this outright.

“Observe, I had caused to fall to you [all] the nations the remaining ones the those as an inheritance to your tribes from the Jordan (and all the nations that I cut off) and the Sea the Great a going in of the sun. Joshua 23:4

“You will certainly observe that I have dropped into your lap all of these nations as your inheritance, from the Jordan all the way to the Great Sea are all the nations which I cut off.

We have a few minor problems with this verse, so let’s look at it a bit more carefully:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Behold, I have allotted to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes,—from the Jordan, and all the nations which I have cut off, even unto the great sea, at the going in of the sun.
NASB	“See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun.
Owen's Translation	Behold! I have allotted to you the nations that remain, those as an inheritance for your tribes from the Jordan (with all the nations that I have already cut off) to the Great Sea in the west.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...see, I have caused to fall to you these nations who are left for an inheritance to your tribes, from the Jordan, (and all the nations which I cut off), and the great sea, the going in of the sun.

The first verb is the Qal imperative of *râ`âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see*. In the imperative, it means *look, see, behold, view*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. The second verb is the 1st person singular, Hiphil perfect of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to be brought down, to settle*. This word is used, in the Hiphil, to mean, among other things, *to cast lots* (I Chron. 26:14 Neh. 10:35 11:1 Esther 9:24 Job 6:27 Psalm 22:19 Isa. 34:17). It appears to have the meaning *allotted to, apportioned in* Joshua 13:6, however, it means *cause her to fall*. Strong's #5307 BDB #656.

The next verb is the Niphal participle of *shâ`ar* (שָׂאָר) [pronounced *shaw-AHR*] which means, in the Niphal, *to remain, to be left over*. In the participle, *shâ`ar* is used as an adjective and it means *the ones remaining, those remaining, the part remaining*. Strong's #7604 BDB #983.

Prior to *inheritance* in the Hebrew, we have the bēyth preposition, which means *in, into, by, with, against*. It looks very much like the kaph preposition (bēyth = ב; kaph = כ). For that reason, you will note that many of the very literal translators rendered this as, *as*; which is how kaph is generally rendered. Young, for some unknown reason, renders this as though it were a lamed (ל).

The nations, the remaining ones refer to those nations which are still in the land of Canaan; *all of the nations which I cut off* refers to those nations in Canaan which Israel had conquered. **He also drove our the nations before them and He apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement, and he caused the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents** (Psalm 78:44).

The last phrase is the masculine singular construct of mā^bvô^ʿ (מַבֹּוֹעַ) [pronounced *maw^b-VOE*], which means, *an entrance, a coming in, an entering*. Strong's #3996 (& 3997) BDB #99. This is followed by the definite article and the feminine singular noun shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced *SHEH-mehsh*], which means *sun*. Strong's #8121 BDB #1039. When they looked to the west in the evening, they would see the sun going down into the Mediterranean Sea.

Between vv. 3–5, Joshua's point will be that God has destroyed the nations in the land of Canaan because of their heathen worship. He brought in Israel and these nations were destroyed before Israel—not because of their strength, but because of the strength of the Lord. They should therefore learn the easy way—they should worship Jesus Christ, the God of Israel; and they should not worship the heathen gods who lurk within the cities of the nations still to be conquered.

“And Y^ehowah your God, He will push them back from your faces and He will cause to dispossess them out from your faces and you will possess their land as that promised Y^ehowah your God to you.

Joshua
23:5

“And Jehovah your God will push them back from you and He will drive them out from before you and you will then possess the land as Jehovah your God has promised you.

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of hādaph (הִדַּף) [pronounced *haw-DAHf*], which means *to thrust out, to push out, to drive out*. Strong's #1920 BDB #213. The second verb we have seen several times in the past; it is the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect of yārash (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*] means *to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants*, *to inherit, to dispossess*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to possess, to cause to inherit, to cause to dispossess*. Strong's #3423 BDB #439. Joshua then uses the 2nd person plural, Qal perfect of the same verb. This is still the Joshua that we know and love; the Joshua with a very limited vocabulary. He promises the Israelites that God will drive the remaining nations from before Israel. As God told Moses Israel back in Ex. 23:30: **“I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land.”** Ex. 33:2: **“And I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.”** Num. 33:53: **“And you will take possession of the land and you will live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.”**

“And you [all] will be strong to keep and to do all the writing in a book of the Law of Moses to not turn from it right and left.

Joshua
23:6

“And you must be steadfast to keep and to do all which is written in the book of the Law of Moses, and not to deviate from it to the left or the right.

The first verb is not in the imperative (as it appears in some Bible translations), but it is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal perfect of chāzaq (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means *to be strong, firm, to strengthen*. Strong's #2388 BDB #304.

One of the latter words in this verse is the feminine singular of yâmîyn (יְמִינֶיךָ) [pronounced *yaw-MEEN*], which means *the right hand, the right side, the right*. Strong's #3225 BDB #411. There is no preceding preposition.

The adjoined noun is the masculine singular of $s^e m\ddot{o}^l$ (שׁ מֹל) [pronounced $s^e MOHL$], which means *th eleft, the left hand*. Strong's #8040 BDB #969.

There is the perfect and there are hundreds of deviations from perfection. God's Law, for the Israelites, was perfect, and all deviations from His Law would bring them great misery.

Now, what is important to grasp is that Joshua recognized the canon as it existed in that day—the Law of Moses. We see this from a far distance away in time, but at that point in time, the idea that the Law of Moses was the Word of God was a relatively new concept. Let's take this in points:

1. So far, no one has quoted from the book of Genesis as *the Word of God*. There is history therein which is referenced to time and time again (primarily to the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); but we do not find authoritative quotations yet.
2. There is no mention of the book of Job. In fact, this book is somewhat of an anomaly in Scripture. It is quoted once in the New Testament, indicating that it stood as the Word of God; and there are great lessons that we learn from this book; but the only time it is quoted is in the New Testament and then the quote is of one of Job's friends, and not a quote from Job himself.
3. Moses, from Exodus through Numbers, was very careful to note when God was speaking and what the general instructions were. However, in the book of Deuteronomy, a collection of Moses' speeches (or, sermons, if you will), Moses is speaking with great authority.
4. Moses affirms the authority of God's Word as he recorded it in Deut. 5:31–33, by speaking what God had directed him to speak: *"But as for you, stand here by Me that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you will teach them, that they may observe these in the land which I have given you to possess. So you will observe just what Jehovah your God has commanded you—you will not deviate to the right or to the left. You will walk in all the ways which Jehovah your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, so that you prolong your days in the land which you will possess."* See also Deut. 17:20.
5. Moses declared again and again that blessing would be afforded to those who obeyed God's Word, which he himself had written: *"Then Jehovah your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in your progeny, as well as the offspring of your cattle and the produce from you ground, for Jehovah will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey Jehovah your God and keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law; if you turn to Jehovah your God will all your heart and soul...I call upon heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live—you and your descendants. Love Jehovah your God and obey His voice, and hold fast to Him, for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give it to you."* (Deut. 30:9–10, 19–20).
6. That Moses wrote this is affirmed several times: *So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests* (Deut. 31:9a). *And it came to pass, when Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, that he commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, saying, "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you."* (Deut. 31:23–26).
7. God affirmed this authority in Joshua 1:7: *"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant, commanded you. Do not deviate to the right or left, so that you will prosper wherever you go."*
8. Joshua seemed to grasp the importance of the canon of Scripture as they had it in that day, and he added to Deuteronomy (the last few chapters) and picked up, without missing a beat, in his book.
9. One of the first things that was done in the land was to engrave God's Word—the Word of Moses—on the stones in Joshua 8:32 in obedience to Deut. 27:2–3.
10. Joshua, over and over again, told his people to cling to the commandments of God, which would be found only in the Word of God. *"Only be careful to observe the commandments and the law which Moses, the servant of Jehovah, commanded you—to love Jehovah your God and to walk in all His ways and to keep His*

commandments and to hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Joshua 22:5). “Be strong, then, and keep and do all the is written in the book of the Law of Moses, so that you may not deviate from it to the right or to the left.” (Joshua 23:6).

11. Therefore, even as early as the inception of the nation Israel, there was known to the people that there existed the Word of God; which consisted at least of the writings of Moses. However, it was also known that Joshua appended this. And 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 Jehovah. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone is a witness against us, for it was heard all the words of Jehovah which He spoke with us; thus it will stand as a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.” (Joshua 24:26–27).

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“To not go in the nations the these the remaining ones the these with you [all] and in a name of their gods, you will not make mention and you will not swear and you will not serve them and you will not bow down to them;

Joshua
23:7

“And you will not go into these nations which remain and, in respect to their gods, make mention of them; nor will you swear by them; nor will you serve them; nor will you do obeisance to them;

One of the verbs in this verse is the Hiphil imperfect of *zâkar* (זָכַר) [pronounced *zaw-KAHR*] means which means *remember, recall, call to mind*. Rotherham renders this *make memorial* and footnotes it as *call to remembrance*. Strong’s #2142 BDB #269.

There were four things forbidden to the Israelites: they were not to ruminate on the heathen gods; they were not to swear of make oaths based upon those false gods; they were not to function in service to these gods; and they were not to show reverence towards these gods. “Do not mention the name of other gods, nor let their names be heard from your mouth.” (Ex. 23:13b). “You will have no gods before Me. You will not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in the heaven above or in the earth below or in the water under the earth. You will not worship them nor will you serve them.” (Deut. 5:7–9). “You will revere Jehovah your god only; an dyou will worship Him and swear by His name. You will not follow other gods—not any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for Jehovah your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of Jehovah your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.” (Deut. 6:13–15). “You will revere Jehovah your god; you will serve Him and you will cling to Him; and you will swear by His name.” (Deut. 10:20). Even this had gotten out of control by the time of the Church Age: **But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; just let your yes be yes, and your no be no; so that you will not fall under judgment** (James 5:12).

The religion of Israel was exclusive. There was no middle ground. All roads did not lead to Rome. “You will not make a covenant with them or with their gods. They will not live in your land, lest they make you sin against Me; for in serving their gods, you will fall into a trap.” (Ex. 23:32–33). “You will revere Jehovah your god and you will worship Him and you will swear by His name. You will not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for Jehovah your God in your midst of you is a jealous god; otherwise the anger of Jehovah your God will be kindled against you, and He will remove you from the face of the earth.” (Deut. 6:13–15). See also Ex. 20:5 23:13 Deut. 7:2–3 10:20 Psalm 16:4. This exclusivity has been characteristic of Christianity and Christian Judaism from time immemorial. We don’t find the same exclusivity in most brands of Judaism today.

“Only in Y^ehowah your God you cling as which you have done until the day the this, and so dispossessed Y^ehowah from your faces nations great and strong and you, not withstood a man in your faces until the day the this.

Joshua
23:8–9

“Only cling to Jehovah your God as you have done up until this day, and Jehovah will continue to dispossess before you the nations, both great and strong; no man has withstood you even until this day.

This is another verse where it should not have been separated, so I placed the verses together. The Hebrew is a little difficult, so I will mention a few other translations:

The Emphasized Bible

But unto Yahweh your God must ye cleave, —as ye have done until this day; therefore hath Yahweh dispossessed from before you nations great and strong,—but as for you not a man hath stood before you, until this day.

NASB

“But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day.”

NRSV

...but hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations; and as for you, no one has been able to withstand you to this day.

Young's Lit. Translation

...but to Jehovah your God ye do cleave, as ye have done till this day. And Jehovah is dispossessing from before you nations great and mighty; as for you, none hath stood in your presence till this day.

V. 8 begins with the *kîy ʾîm* (כיִּם יִם) [pronounced *kee-eem*] which literally is *because if*; however, together they act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered *but, except, unless* and possibly *only*. Strong's #3588 & 518 BDB #471 & 49.

Prior to the proper name Y^ehowah, we have the *he bêyth* preposition, which means *in, among, into, against, with, at, through, by*. No Strong's # BDB #88. The verb which follows is the Qal imperfect of *dâ^bvaq* (דָּבַק) [pronounced *daw^b-VAHK*], which means *to cling, to cleave, to hold close, to keep close, to adhere*. When followed by the *bêyth* preposition, the rendering of *to cling to* or *to adhere to* seems to be reasonable (Deut. 11:22 30:20 Job 19:20). Strong's #1692 BDB #179. All of what Joshua says throughout his book has been said before by Moses; or recorded by Moses: **“You will revere Jehovah your God; you will serve Him and you will cling to Him; and you will swear by His name.”** (Deut. 10:20). There were a couple of commentaries that I read which said that apostasy had already crept into Israel, as implied by the phrase *as you all have done until this day*. However, that refers to the clinging of Israel to God. It was because of this steadfast faithfulness to God that God gave Israel victory over the indigenous nations of the Land of Promise.

After the adjectives *great and mighty*, we have the *wâw* conjunction and the 2nd person masculine plural pronoun. Most of the translators have gone with *and as for you*. I rendered literally simply as *and you [all]*.

The final verb, accompanied by a negative, is the Qal perfect of *ʿâmad* (עָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAHD*], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763. **“And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.”** (Deut. 7:24; see Deut. 11:23 and Joshua 1:5 as well).

Joshua encourages these people to cling to God, as they have in the past, and to continue to do so in the future. It is because of their adhering to God that no one has taken a stand against them in the land of Canaan. McGee: *The grave dangers of crossing the Jordan River, facing an enemy in a strange land, encountering the unknown on every hand, and meeting fear on every side, had kept Israel close to the Lord. Joshua recognized that now since they had entered into rest and were enjoying prosperity and plenty, they would drift away from god. That is the story of human nature. It never changes. At the time of this writing, I feel that the United States is facing a similar situation. After World War II, I was disturbed that God had judged Europe and even Russian and Korea.*

How these nations suffered, but we came through unscathed! While other nations went through a period of hardship, our nation entered an era of prosperity and affluence. I could not understand why God did not judge us. Then I realized that He was testing us with prosperity. The most dangerous period any people can go through is not the time of grave danger and suffering, but the time of peace and plenty. This is the reason Joshua is giving Israel this charge. "God has done these wonderful things for you; now stay close to Him, and obey Him. If you do this, God will continue to bless you." Then he warns them what will happen if they turn from their God.⁸

"A man—one from you [all]—pursues a thousand because Y^ehowah your God, He [is] the One fighting for you [all] as which He promised to you [all]." Joshua 23:10

"One man of you will put to flight a thousand of your enemy because Jehovah your God is the One Who fights on your behalf, as He had promised."

This is an interesting statement, considering the size of the fighting force of Israel (roughly 600,000 men strong). This makes Israel huge with respect to fighting force. As I have mentioned in the past, I feel as though the population of Israel could be reduced by a factor of ten to be more realistic. However, I do not have a basis for this right now other than a gut feeling. I have not spent any amount of time researching this particular topic. The principal is true, either way. With God as their ally, the Israelites were unstoppable.

This principle, like most mentioned in this book, is not original with Joshua. We read in Lev. 26:7–8: "You will chase you enemies and they will fall before you by the sword. Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand; furthermore, your enemies will ball before you by the sword." We read about one of those men in Judges 3:13: *and after him came Shamgar ben Anath, who struck down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad; he also delivered Israel.* Sampson killed a thousand (Judges 15:15).

"And take care to your souls to love Y^ehowah your God." Joshua 23:11

"Just take care to love Jehovah your God in your soul."

The first verb is the Niphal perfect of *shâmar* (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*] and it means *keep, guard, watch, preserve*. The Niphal has several different meanings, depending upon sentence structure and context; here it would mean *take heed, take care, be careful to*. Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. Here, it is followed by the lamed preposition and the feminine plural of *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced *NEH-fesh*], a word which occurs around 800 times in the Old Testament. This means *soul, life, living being, desire*; since volition is a part of the soul, this word is tied occasionally to *volition*. Strong's #5315 BDB #659. With this is a 2nd person masculine plural suffix. Joshua so ordered his people in Joshua 22:5 and Moses in Deut. 6:5. Jesus reaffirmed this in Matt. 22:36–37: **And a lawyer asked Him a question, testing, Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."**

As we have seen throughout the Old Testament, the God of the Old Testament is not simply a God of vengeance Who has been made more palatable in the New Testament as a God of love. God is love throughout Scripture and there is no difference between the God of the New and the God of the Old Testament. This is ignorance passed along by people who have superficially read a few passages here or there in both testaments.

"Only a turning [to], you turn and you cling in a remnant of the nations the these the ones remaining here in your midst and you marry with them and you go into them and they into you;" Joshua 23:12

"However, if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations which are in your midst; and you marry them and you have relations with them,"

Let me just give you a couple other translation options:

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 102.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But if ye do in any wise turn back and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, those which remain with you,—and intermarry with them and go in with them and they with you;
NASB	“For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you,…”
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	‘But—if ye at all turn back and have cleaved to the remnant of these nations, these who are left with you, and intermarried with them, and gone in to them, and they to you,…”’

There is not much difference in the meanings of these various translation (there rarely is a serious difference between these three), there are a few things that you would miss. This verse begins exactly as did v. 8; literally, it is *for if*; however, together the two Hebrew words often means *only*. Note the difference:

	KJV	NAB, NASB, NRSV, Owen	NJB	NKJV	NIV, Rotherham, Young
v. 8	but	but	on the contrary	but	but
v. 12	else if	for if	but	or else, if	but if

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The use of the *if* in v. 8 was rendered unnecessary because it was quickly followed by a lamed preposition. The verb, *shûw^bv* (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*], is found twice at the beginning of this verse; first as a Qal infinitive absolute and then as a Qal imperfect. It means *to return, to turn, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to recover something, the make restitution*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996.

The turning is both a turning away from God and a turning toward these other nations. There is not a *returning* per se, but a *turning toward*.

Moses warned against intermarriage in Deut. 7:3–4: “Furthermore, you will not intermarry with the people of the land; you will not give your daughters to their sons nor will you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of Jehovah will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you.” (see also Ex. 34:15–16). In Ezra 9:1–4 and Neh. 13:25–26 Psalm 106:34–35, we read about intermarriage and problems connected thereto. The NIV Study Bible: *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.*⁹ That being said, the reference to intermarriage and to sexual relations in this verse is not something that we can hold out as a Scripture which forbids interracial marriages. The intention was to keep Israel pure from apostasy and religious heresy, not from other groups of people. If you become closely involved with someone who opposes the faith, then you are making one of the biggest mistakes of your life. This is the meaning here. Time and time again we will have people in the line of Christ who were not of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (two quick examples which come to mind are Rahab the prostitute and Ruth the Moabitess).

Zodhiates: *In the last two chapters of the book, Joshua addressed Israel twice. One of the features of this first speech was a stern warning about the consequences of apostasy. Although God intended to drive out the remaining Canaanites (Josh. 13:2–6), He would not do it if Israel was unfaithful to Him. The book of Judges reveals the tragic story of Israel's infidelity and the consequences that followed.*¹⁰

⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 319.

¹⁰ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 635.

“A knowing, you [all] will know that will not continue Y^ehowah your God to dispossess the nations the these¹¹ from before your faces; and they will be to you [all] for a bird-trap and for bait and for a scourge against your sides and for thorns in your eyes until your perishing from unto the earth the good the this which has given you Y^ehowah your God.

Joshua
23:13

“You will clearly know that, under those circumstances, that Jehovah your God will not continue to dispossess these nations from before you; they will be to you a snare and a trap and a scourge to your sides and thorns in your eyes until you perish from this good earth, which was given to you by Jehovah your God.

In v. 13, Joshua gives the result of v. 12. The first thing which these nations will be is the masculine singular of *pach* (פַּח) [pronounced *pahkh*], which means *a bird-trap*. Strong’s #6341 BDB #809. The second word is the masculine singular of *môhqêsh* (מִוְקֵשׁ) [pronounced *moh-KAYSH*], which means *the bait or lure for a trap*. Strong’s #4170 BDB #430. *Joshua crowds his figures together to depict the misery and oppression which would be sure to result from fellowship with the Canaanites, because, from his knowledge of the fickleness of the people, and the wickedness of the human heart in its natural state, he could foresee that the apostasy of the nation from the Lord, which Moses had foretold, would take place but too quickly; as it actually did, according to Judg. 2:3ff., in the very next generation.*¹²

As has been mentioned, the problem is not simply that these other people are foreign or different, but that they will ensnare Israel with their heathen religion, often through their women, and thereby Israel away from Jehovah their God. Ex.34:12: **“Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, so that it does not become a snare in your midst. But, you will tear down their altars and you will smash their pillars and you will cut down their Asherim; and you will not worship any other god, for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”** And Num. 33:55: **“However, if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it will come to pass that those who remain will be as thorns in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land which you live.”** The classic case history test is King Solomon, who had the potential of being a king perhaps as great as David. **For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to Jehovah his God as the heart of David his father (I Kings 11:4).** The eventual result of their unfaithfulness to God is found in II Kings 25:21, one of the saddest verses in Scripture: **Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Tiplah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was led away into exile from its land.**

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Joshua’s Final Remarks

“And lo, I am departing the day in a way of all the land and you [all] know in all of your heart and in all of your soul for not fallen word one which promised Y^ehowah your God concerning you; the all has come in for you; not fallen from Him word one.

Joshua
23:14

“Now, listen carefully, I am about to go this day the way of all earth and all of you know in your heart and in your soul that not one word which God has promised has failed concerning you. All has been fulfilled; not one word has failed you.

In the closing remarks of the last few verses, *Joshua sums up briefly and concisely the leading thoughts of the first part, giving greater prominence, however, to the curse which would follow the apostasy from the Lord.*¹³

¹¹ Four early printed editions records this as *all of these nations* (Joseph Bryant Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 257).

¹² Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 165.

¹³ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 165.

The meaning of this verse is easy to ascertain, but there are a few words here that you may not have guessed at; therefore, let me give you a few renderings:

- The Emphasized Bible* But lo! I am going to-day, in the way of all the earth,—ye must acknowledge, therefore with all your heart and with all your soul that there hath not failed a single thing, out of all the good things which Yahweh your God spake concerning you, the whole hath come to pass to you, there hath not failed thereof a single thing.
- NASB* “Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.”
- Young's Lit. Translation* ‘And lo I am going, to-day, in the way of all the earth, and ye have know—with all your heart, and with all your soul—that there hath not fallen one thing of all the good things which Jehovah your God hath spoken concerning you; the whole have come to you; there hath not failed of it one thing.’

After the wâw conjunction we have the demonstrative particle hinnêh (הֵן הַיּוֹם) [pronounced *hin-NAY*] *lo, behold*. More freely, we can go with *observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out, holy crap*. Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243. The first verb is the Qal active participle of our old friend *hâlak* (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229. It is preceded by the personal pronoun *I*. After this, we literally have *the day*, which is generally rendered *today*, and, in some instances, such as now, we could get away with translating it *this day*. This indicates that this was Joshua's last day to speak to these people. It is likely that this is his last day on this earth. He knew that he was dying and he called for the heads of state to speak to them one last time and to warn them one last time. Although it is possible that chapters 23 and 24 occurred on the same day (or during the same month), and were not really separated by any significant period of time, I think that the surrounding verses of Joshua's speech in chapter 24 indicate that this was a particularly stirring speech which Phinehas saw as a fit memorial to Joshua's life. Either he wrote down the speech word-for-word on the day that it happened, or Joshua gave him a copy of the transcript of the speech with the purpose that it be placed into God's Word. Despite the fact that the speech in Joshua 24 took place ten years prior, it was befitting that it be placed as a eulogy to the great life of Joshua.

It is this view of the chronology of the final chapters of Joshua which takes into consideration that *place* is mentioned in Joshua 14:6 18:1 and 24:1, but not in 23:1. If Joshua is nearly on his deathbed in his hometown and he summons the elders of Israel, he (actually, Phinehas) is less likely to record the place. He didn't go anywhere—he simply summoned the people from where he was. This chronological ordering also allows for this day to be Joshua's last day. It would make most sense that, on his last day, that he remain at home, or very nearly home (in his own city); and what he would say to the elders would be brief and to the point. Furthermore, it would summarize what was most important and what was foremost on the mind of Joshua. Chapter 23, in this way, sounds most like the final words of Joshua to his people. In Joshua 24:1–28, we have no mention of him being old, of him going the way of all flesh or even of an end to his life. In fact, what he says in Joshua 24:15b: **“But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah!”** These are not the words of a man who is about to die. Finally, this speech of Joshua's in chapter 24 is more rowdy than chapter 23. In Joshua 24, he speaks and then the people respond; he speaks, and then the people respond. This is uncharacteristic of a man on his deathbed. Now, I don't know if this is taught in any other commentary. It was not in the ones which I use, and I believe that Barnes and Keil and Delitzsch have two outstanding verse by verse commentaries. However, it's immaterial whether someone taught this before—that is not an issue—that this is the way it is and you can take that to the bank.

In the middle of this verse with have the negative and the Qal perfect of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. We had this word back in v. 4. Strong's #5307 BDB #656.

Later we have the Qal perfect of *bôw* (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. The point is obvious—these men have all been witnesses to the fact that God will bring to pass what He has promised.

One of the primary themes of what Joshua wrote and said was the fact that God had fulfilled all that He had promised to Israel. **Not one of the good promises which Jehovah had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass** (Joshua 21:45). As Jesus said, **“Point of doctrine: this race will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”** (Luke 21:32–33).

The key to the summary of the final statement here of Joshua is simple, although you may have missed it. Those hearing Joshua can testify that God has fulfilled all that He promised to them. However, just as He fulfilled His promises to Israel for good, He will also fulfill His promises to Israel for evil. If they turn from Him, He will turn from them. They can depend upon that because His Word is dependable. Here is one place where Joshua's reasoning is crystal clear to his hearers. It is likely that this is the most succinct and logical from a Pauline standpoint that we ever see Joshua. Edersheim: *The second part of Joshua's address dwells upon the absolute certainty with which judgment would follow, as surely as formerly blessing had come.*¹⁴

“And he is which came in upon you all the word the good which promised Y^ehowah your God unto you; so Y^ehowah will bring upon you all the word the evil until His destroying you [all] from off the ground the good the this which gave to you Y^ehowah your God.

Joshua
23:15

“But it will come to pass that all the good things which Jehovah your God promised you will come upon you; likewise, Jehovah will bring upon you all the evil things until He has destroyed you from off this good ground which Jehovah your God gave to you.

Being that this is not the most clearly constructed sentence in the Hebrew, let me offer some other translations:

The Emphasized Bible

But is shall be that as all the good things have come unto you, which Yahweh your God spake unto you, so will Yahweh bring upon you all the evil things, until he hath destroyed you from off this goodly soil, which Yahweh your God hath given unto you.

NASB

“And it shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.”

Young's Lit. Translation

‘And it hath been, as there hath come upon you all the good thing which Jehovah your God hath spoken unto you, so doth Jehovah bring upon you the whole of this good ground which Jehovah your God hath given to you;...’

The main problem for us is that the verbs precede the subject, and sometimes by several words. We have the same verb twice in this verse, which hooks up with a subject somewhat later in the verse. The verb is the very common *bôw* (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. We find it first in the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; its subject is *all the good word*; and then it is found in the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect, and *Jehovah* is the subject.

One of the later verbs at the end is the Hiphil infinitive construct of *shâmad* (שָׁמַד) [pronounced *shaw-MAHD*] means *to lay waste, to annihilate, to exterminate*. Strong's #8045 BDB #1029. Quite obviously the Israelites will never be completely annihilated, as they play a major part in the end times; however, the land upon which they live will be devastated and they will be scattered throughout the world. They have two choices; either to receive all of the good which God has for them or all of the evil. Insofar as the latter goes, we have the phrase *all of the*

¹⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 337.

word of the evil, the latter word being רָע (ר) [pronounced *rahó*], which it means *evil, bad*. Rotherham suggests *calamitous*.¹⁵ Strong's #7451 BDB #948.

You will recall how Joshua ended Joshua 21, one of the last things which he wrote was: **And Jehovah gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and not one of all their enemies stood before them; Jehovah had given all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which Jehovah had made to the house of Israel failed; all of them came to pass** (Joshua 21:44–45). It would only stand to reason that this would have been one of the major points that he would make for his last talk to the leaders of Israel. Solomon, in his benediction, also said, **“Blessed by Jehovah, Who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised through Moses His servant.”** (I Kings 8:56).

The choice which God gave Israel is found throughout Scripture. Moses spoke to the people in Deut. 28: **“If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, Jehovah your god, then Jehovah will bring extraordinary plagues on you and upon your descendants...then you will be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you did not obey Jehovah your God. And it will come to pass as Jehovah delighted over you to prosper you, and to multiply you, so also Jehovah will delight over you to make you perish and to destroy you and you will be torn from the land that you are entering.”** (Deut. 28:58–59a, 62–63). In fact, Deut. 27–28 contains the blessings spoken at Gerizim and the curses spoken at Mount Ebal. And we have studied the cursings which could come over Israel back in Lev. 26—both passages were spoken prior to Israel entering into the Land of Promise. The fulfilment of God's cursings for Israel are also found throughout Scripture: **“Therefore, observe, I will bring calamity upon the house of Jeroboam and I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone.”** (I Kings 14:10). Thus says Jehovah, **“Observe, I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it will not be quenched.”** (II Kings 22:16–17). **“Listen, O earth: observe that I am bringing disaster upon this people and upon the fruit of their plans, because they have not listened to My words. And, as for My law, they have rejected it as well.”** (Jer. 6:19). And Jehovah said to me, **“Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I solemnly warned your fathers in the day that I brought them upon from the land of Egypt, even to this day, warning persistently, saying, *Listen to My voice*. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but they walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart; therefore, I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.’”** (Jer. 11:7–8; see also Jer. 35:16–17).

“In your transgressing of a covenant of Y^ehowah your God which He commanded you [all]; and you [all] go and you [all] serve other gods and you [all] do obeisance to them and will be kindled anger of Y^ehowah against you [all] and you will perish from off the land the good which He gave to you.”

Joshua
23:16

“If you transgress the covenant of Jehovah your God that He commanded you, and if you go and serve other gods, doing obeisance to them, then the anger of Jehovah will be kindled against you and you will perish off this good land which God has given you.”

One of the verbs here is the Qal perfect of אָבַד (אָבַד) [pronounced *aw^b-VAHD*], which means *to perish*. Strong's #6 BDB #1. The people to whom Joshua is speaking and to those who read this later, they will literally and personally die if they oppose God's plan and worship false deities.

McGee points out that these last couple verses are more a prediction than a warning; and these predictions, as we know, became history and the basis for most of the book of Judges.¹⁶

¹⁵ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 257.

¹⁶ Paraphrased from J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 103.

A footnote from *The Amplified Bible: All depended on whether or not Israel would continue faithful to the covenant. Joshua's words do not conceal his apprehension. Seven time she refers to the idolatrous nations still left in Canaan. He knew the snare they would be to Israel, and the therefore prescribed three safeguards. First, there must be brave adherence to God's word (v. 6. Second, there must be a vigilantly continued separation from the Canaanite nations (v. 7). And, there must be a cleaving to the Lord with real and fervent love (vv. 8–12).*¹⁷

This recalls a stirring portion of one of the last speeches of Moses: “For Jehovah your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and then act corruptly and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah your god, provoking Him to anger, then I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will certainly perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You will not live long on it, but you will be completely destroyed. And Jehovah will scatter you among the peoples and you will be left few in number among the nations, where Jehovah will drive you.” (Deut. 4:24–28).

The Bible inspires a great many theological arguments. Will the end times be fulfilled by a literal Israel or have all the promises to Israel fallen upon the church, her spiritual seed? Do we have any sort of free will or are those who choose to believe in Jesus Christ are given not only the act of faith, but even the volition to do so in the first place? That is, is there true free will or is God’s sovereignty over all even to the excluding of any free will of man? Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit a separate experience for some Christians which often results in speaking in tongues or are all baptized with the Spirit at salvation? And one theological issue which should have come to mind as a result of reading this—is the Land of Promise a free gift of God to Israel or is it conditional?

First of all, the gift to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was unconditional. Throughout Gen. 12–15, we find several unconditional promises made to Abraham. *And Jehovah said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are—northward and southward and eastward and westward—for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.”* (Gen. 13:14–15; see also Gen. 12:1–3 15:1–5, 18–21 17:8). Now, Abraham was a spiritual hero; but his son Isaac and grandson Jacob were not near as impressive. Regardless, God promised Isaac this same inheritance (Gen. 26:2–3) as He did Jacob (Gen. 28:13–14). God laid no conditions upon these promises. Abraham was told unconditionally that his seed would receive that land apart from anything that Abraham or any of his progeny did.

Now, as the fulfillment of these promises—we have already seen that what was promised Israel and what Israel actually possessed were very different. God promised to Israel all of the land from Egypt up to Lebanon, and from the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Euphrates River. Israel never occupied that amount of land. In fact, the population of Israel was never even large enough to occupy that land. Secondly, although God promised this land as an inheritance to Israel forever, it is obvious that has not been the case. Thirdly, we have seen message after message where Israel can either obey God’s laws or face being removed from the land and scattered into all of the nations. Paul himself alludes to apparent dichotomy: *What I am saying is this: the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise* (Gal. 4:17–18).

The incorrect way to deal with this is to say that we, the Church, are the heirs to these promises and that Israel is no longer in the picture. We are the spiritual seed of Abraham and we are heirs to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and an eternal inheritance which neither rots nor fades away (I Peter 1:4). But nowhere are we specifically promised anything to do with the Land of Promise. That is a promise specifically made to Israel and a promise which is clearly future. That Israel has been pruned from the tree is taught in Rom. 11:17, 20; however, that she can be grafted back in is also taught (vv. 23–27). That Israel still has a future with God is seen in Revelation with the 144,000 Israelite evangelists in the end times (Rev. 7:4–8 14:1–3). This simply tells us that Israel, as a nation, does have a future before God. We, as Church Age believers are no longer named in the end times (other than our resurrection to life). And the key to understanding God’s relationship to Israel is that they have been promised a huge plot of land and God will deliver on that promise. This is analogous to our promise of eternal life. There

¹⁷ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 285. The apparently took these points from *Explore the Book* by Sidlow Baxter.

are times when we don't feel as though we will have it; and we are certainly mortal right now; but we can rest assured that eternal life is ours and that will never be removed from us. However, there is also Israel in time in the land of Israel. That is a day-by-day process. When they pursue other gods, they can expect to be punished by God. When they pursue Jehovah, their God, Jesus Christ, then the nation is blessed. At the present time, Israel is under serious discipline, so much so, that Israel is not longer being used directly by God as a nation at this time. Once the Church is removed from this earth, then the Age of Israel, the Jewish Age, will resume and there will be seven more years to complete that dispensation. We all know this time period as the tribulation. Israel's place as a nation today is analogous to our walk in time out of fellowship. When we are out of fellowship, then we are completely worthless to God in His plan. We play absolutely no part in His plan. This is where the nation Israel is today.

Let's close out this chapter with the marvelous conclusion written by John Calvin: *The pious solicitude of Joshua furnishes an example worth of imitation by all who have the charge of others. For just as a father would not be regarded as sufficiently careful if he merely thought of the interests of his children up to the time of his own death, and did not extend his thoughtfulness on their behalf still further, and as far as was in his power endeavour to provide for their welfare when he himself should be dead; so good rulers ought to look forward that they may not only leave behind them a well-organized state, but may also strengthen and secure its existence for a long time to come.*¹⁸

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¹⁸ Quoted from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 163.