



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

Marching though the Book of Joshua: Lesson 20

Well, ladies, this is it! We're on the last lesson in our study of Joshua. In lesson 19, the settlement of the land was finally completed. Joshua challenged the eastern tribes to stay true to their God. We encountered a misunderstanding concerning an altar, but it was soon cleared up and everyone seemed ready to settle down. We've got a lot to read in our lesson this week, so let's jump right in.

First Day

1. Read Joshua 23:1-16. What would you title this chapter?
2. Why did Joshua call everyone together?
3. Briefly discuss the main purpose of his meeting.
4. What would you say is the key verse in this chapter?

Joshua gives what seems to be his farewell speech to the nation of Israel, beginning with the leaders. He strongly encourages them to remember God's goodness, while warning them about God's judgment at the same time.

5. What does Joshua remind them about God and His goodness? What had He already done in the past? What would He do in the future?

6. What was Israel forbidden to do?

7. Three times Joshua tells them what would happen if they weren't obedient. What was his warning? Read Joshua 23:13, 15-16 for your answer.

8. Moses gave a similar speech to Israel in Deuteronomy 31:1-13. Read this passage. What were the similarities? The differences?

9. Joshua admonishes the children of Israel to do three things:
 - a. (Joshua 23:6)
 - b. (Joshua 23:8)
 - c. (Joshua 23:11)

God insisted on absolute obedience, loyalty, and love. We love God because He first loved us (1John 4:19). We are called to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5). Everything we do is in response to that love. Obedience to His Word is a sign of that love. In John 14:21, Jesus says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me." Our love for Him should cause us to cling to Him, for He is our life, as Moses would say (Deuteronomy 30:20). The love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) is a safeguard against apostasy, or a turning away from the faith. It is only as we love the Lord and cling to Him that any enemies are driven out of our life.

10. Joshua told Israel to always keep God's law, love the Lord, and cleave to Him. I believe that these are the most important things to glean from this chapter. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to show us our hearts as we ask ourselves the following questions:
 - a. Are we still supposed to keep the law of Moses today? Read Matthew 5:17-20, 22:34-40; John 15:9-14; Romans 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:11-18.

 - b. Are you listening to, and obeying, God's Word?

c. Do you love God with all of your being? Is it evident by your life?

d. What does it mean to "cleave" to the Lord, and are you doing it?

We'll end our lesson here for today. It's exciting to see Joshua's heart for the people of Israel come through as he gives them his final address. He wants so much for them to be loyal to the one true God and love Him without compromise! I pray that we would take Joshua's words to heart as an encouragement, as well as a challenge. Are you being diligent to "love the Lord"?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Therefore take diligent heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God." **Joshua 23:11**

Second Day

What's your memory verse?

Read over Joshua chapter 23 one more time to plant it in your mind. Joshua gives us some "good stuff."

1. According to verse 13, if Israel intermixes with the remnants of the land, what would those people become to them?
2. How can the world today become a "snare" to us? Be specific.
3. What things can become "thorns" in our eyes?
4. What "traps" has the enemy laid for us today? This week?

5. If we allow sin to remain in our hearts, how does it become a "snare" and a "scourge" in our side?

6. Why did he call the leaders together first?

7. What word does Joshua use three times to describe the Promised Land in verses 14-16? Read Deuteronomy 8:7-10. Is that word appropriate?

8. What verse in this chapter is most encouraging to you today?

9. Which verse is most challenging as a:
 - a. Wife?

 - b. Mother?

 - c. Woman?

Let's stop here for today. I pray that your memory verse is making an impact on your heart this week. I know it's challenging mine. God's love for us is a **"Reason to Rejoice."** Let's give Him a **"Reason to Rejoice"** by loving Him with all of our heart.

Third Day

Recite your memory verse to someone else. Ask them if they are loving the Lord diligently.

1. Read Joshua 24:1-33, then go back and read section 1, verses 1-27. What would you title this section?

We read in verse one that Joshua gathered all the tribes together at Shechem. We remember that it was in Shechem that God promised Canaan to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:7). It was also in Shechem that Jacob called his family to "put away the foreign gods that were among them" (Genesis 35:4). Jacob was buried under the oak in Shechem (Genesis 35:4). Now, about 600 years later, here is Abraham's seed in the Promised Land, being asked again to put away any foreign gods. Shechem was also a city of refuge and "holy ground" to the Israelites.

Joshua begins his address with the words, "Thus says the Lord." This phrase signals the beginning of a prophesy, but these prophetic words recalled the history of Israel, rather than their future.

2. Why do you think God gives Israel a historical account of their past?

3. Where does God begin His account?

4. Why is it important to know that Abraham and his father were serving other gods before the Lord called him? (verse 2)

God gives a very short account of what took many years to transpire. He also makes sure that He shows us that Esau and his family, who were the non-covenant line, got their inheritance, while Jacob and his sons, who were the covenant family, went to Egypt instead, where they were eventually enslaved (Joshua 24:4, Genesis 15:13-16). It is interesting to notice that it was God's chosen ones that experienced hardship and slavery while others had their reward. The writer of Hebrews tells us that God's people subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, and were valiant in battle. In the same breath the writer also points out that many of God's people had trials of mockings, scourgings, were tortured, stoned, were sawn in two, and were slain with the sword (Hebrews 11:32-40). Does God allow His chosen people to experience hardship and persecution? Indeed! But we see God's grace, His sovereignty, and His providence through it all! We see God glorified in our weakness, as we trust and depend on Him for our strength. In our chapter in

Joshua, the Lord is reminding Israel that it was He that brought them to the place where they were at that moment. It was God's amazing grace in the life of His people that carried them through.

5. How many times does God say "I" in verses 2-13?

6. How many times does the passage shift between "your fathers" and "you"? What do you think God is saying to Israel by this distinction?

7. Joshua 24:6-7 is a shortened version of Exodus 14, where God placed Israel in a position of complete helplessness. Why did He do that? Read Exodus 14, along with Jonah 2:9, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 1:29, and Psalm 121:2 to help with your answer.

8. Has God been placing you in a position of complete helplessness? Why? What should be your response? How can God be glorified in **YOUR** situation?

9. God reminds them of the story of Balak and Balaam. Read Numbers 22-25, 31:8, and 14-16 to refresh your memory. Why do you think God uses this story at this time in Joshua 24? Ask God how it is significant to your life.

In verse 12, God says that he sent the "hornet." It is unclear exactly what is meant by this phrase. No one knows for certain what the hornet really is. It may refer to literal hornets, to dread and panic, or to Egyptian campaigns in Canaan (Exodus 23:27-28, Deuteronomy 7:20).

10. What is the main point of verses 12 and 13?

11. What are your first thoughts upon reading verse 13?

Joshua will be calling on the people to make a decision in the next few verses. But before they do, the Lord reminds them of where they came from, who He is, and who they are without Him. God has called us to make a decision for Him also. We will talk more about that decision tomorrow.

12. Verse 13 reminded me of all the things that God has done for me, with me, and through me. I deserve none of them. It's only by God's grace that we have our being, much less receive all the blessings He has chosen to bestow upon us. I hope that you also were reminded of all the blessings that God has so generously given you. Spend some time reflecting on your history and meditating on God's grace. How did He save you? Where has He brought you from? What changes has He made in your life? What blessings has He given you? After you've done that, **write a prayer of thanksgiving** to the Lord for all He has done. Remember, everything was done "not with your sword or with your bow"(Joshua 24:12).

That's it for today. I pray that we will always take the time to reflect on God's goodness and grace in our life. I don't know of any better "**Reason to Rejoice,**" do you?

Fourth Day

Can you say your memory verse? Hide this one in your heart. Make it the prayer of your life.

In Joshua 24:1-13, God is speaking through Joshua. In verse 14, Joshua now takes his turn in challenging the children of Israel. And, boy, does he have a lot to say.

1. Read Joshua 24:14-28. What is Joshua challenging the children of Israel to do?

2. What choice did Moses offer the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19-20?

3. Had Joshua already made his choice for him and his family? What statement tells us this?

It seems like the decision for Israel to enter a covenant with God was a matter for each individual family to decide. Joshua wasn't calling each tribe to make that decision, but each household. It seemed to be the responsibility of the father to make that decision and then train his children in the ways of the Lord.

Joshua's style of evangelism is interesting. He doesn't just say, "Make a decision for the God of Israel." He says, "Either pick the Lord, or pick to serve the gods whom your fathers served." Abraham had served the gods of Mesopotamia before he received his call from God. Their fathers, despite Abraham's call, served the gods of the Canaanites and worshipped the gods of Egypt. They were going to serve someone or something. Who would that be?

4. How many times does Joshua use the word "serve" in verses 14-28?

5. Have you made the choice to serve the God of Israel? Have you chosen to lead your family toward the correct God, the God of the Bible? Can you make the statement, "**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?**" If you haven't, what gods have you chosen to serve?

6. If you answered the above question with a yes, are you serving Him in "sincerity and truth" like Joshua said in verse 14? What exactly does that mean?

7. What was Israel's immediate response in verses 16-18?

We have an overeager Israel responding without really thinking about it. After the Lord had reminded them of all He had done for them, I'm sure they felt there could be no other response. Joshua doesn't let them get away with this. He wants them to count the cost of what they were saying and understand what this covenant really meant.

8. What warning did Joshua give them in verses 19-20? What was he reminding them of? How did Israel respond?

Joshua wanted them to know what kind of God they were dealing with. This God would not tolerate sin, rebellion, or following after other gods. This was a jealous God; this was a holy God. God doesn't want emotional commitments. He expects us to count the costs of being His disciple. He also wants us to understand that He is a holy and jealous God, who desires all of our heart.

9. Read Luke 14:25-33. What is Jesus telling us in this passage about being His disciple?

10. Why is it so important for us to understand that God is holy and jealous?

11. I want to ask you again, have you chosen to serve the Lord? Have you counted the cost? Have you reasoned it through? Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come let us reason together, says the Lord." Is your decision to follow Christ a result of counting that cost or was it an emotional response to someone or something? Make sure you understand what it means to be a Christian, and understand the God whom you are choosing to serve. And if you choose the Lord, put away all the other gods in your life and serve Him with your entire being.

12. What did Joshua do that would be a constant reminder to Israel of that covenant they chose to make that day with God?

Joshua seems to have made a written copy of the statute and ordinance, but also sets up a stone as a silent witness to the transaction that was made! This is the ninth memorial mentioned in the Book of Joshua. These are the nine mentioned:

1. The stones in the midst of the Jordan (4:9).
2. The stones on the western bank of the Jordan (4:20-24).
3. The stones in the Valley of Achor (7:26).
4. The heap of stones at Ai (8:29).
5. The altar on Mt. Ebal (8:30).
6. The stones of the law on Mt. Ebal (8:32).
7. The stones at the cave at Makkedah (10:27).
8. The altar built by the Transjordanic tribes (22:10).
9. Joshua's stones of witness (24:26-28).

We'll end here for today. God is calling us to choose to serve Him. When we respond to that call and accept Him as our Savior, we are one of His kids. I believe that daily we can "choose this day whom we will serve." We can choose to walk in the Spirit and follow Him or we can choose to walk in the flesh and please ourselves. Choose to serve Him today and say, along with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Fifth Day

Write your verse by memory. Can you share it with your family?

1. Read Joshua 24:29-33. How old was Joshua when he died? Where was he buried?
2. Why were the bones of Joseph brought up out of Egypt and buried at Shechem? Read Genesis 50:24-25.

Joshua was buried in the land that was granted to him at the end of the distribution of the land (Joshua 19:49-50). Aaron's son, Eleazar the priest, also died and was buried in the land granted to his son Phinehas.

We end the Book of Joshua on a positive note, with all of Israel serving the Lord. Unfortunately, the Book of Judges tells us that this doesn't last very long. Despite all the stone memorials, all the promises, and all the written copies of the Law, Israel chose to no longer serve God. The Book of Judges records, one by one, the failure of each tribe to drive out the inhabitants of the land. Judges 2:10-12 paints this sad picture for us. It says, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers ..." Obviously, the fathers didn't train up their children in the ways of the Lord. This generation did what was right in its own eyes (Judges 21:25). Joshua did what God had called him to do, and whether or not Israel was obedient, we know that his labor was not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Israel had a great example of a soldier, a servant, a saint, and a leader! We know that he was filled with the Spirit of God (Deuteronomy 34:9), and he enjoyed being in the presence of God (Joshua 1:5, 6:27). He had been prepared for leadership by his unwavering loyalty and devotion to Moses (Numbers 11:28, Joshua 1:1). He loved the Word of God (Joshua 1:8) and was ever obedient to the will of God (Numbers 32:12, Joshua 5:14).

Let's spend some time reviewing our study of the Book of Joshua. It is important to take a look at the book as a whole and see what you've learned. Take some time to read over the whole book, omitting the chapters describing the allotment of the land, if you'd like. Look over your notes, too.

3. What do you think was the general purpose of the Book of Joshua?
4. What was the most significant thing you learned from the life of Joshua?
5. What was the most significant thing you learned about God in the Book of Joshua?

6. What did you learn about Israel? About our Inheritance? About the Promised Land?
7. What did you learn about obedience? About commitment?
8. Have you changed as a result of your study in the Book of Joshua? How?
9. What changes do you still desire to see in your life? What steps can you take to make those changes?

I have enjoyed studying the Book of Joshua with you. I pray that God has given you many new **"Reasons to Rejoice."** I pray that God will use His Word to continue to change your heart and your life. I know He's changed me. And that, my friends, is another **"Reason to Rejoice"!**

God bless you!

"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."

Joshua 24:15

