

14. *What was the meaning of the name given to the altar?*
22:34

The word, *ed*, means "a witness." The eastern tribes called this altar by that name for it was indeed a witness to their being an integral part of Israel. Joshua used this same word when he erected a stone as a memorial of Israel's making a covenant to serve God faithfully. Of his stone, Joshua said, "Behold, this stone shall be a *witness* to us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a *witness* unto you, lest ye deny your God" (Joshua 24:27).

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 22

1. Name the three tribes which settled east of the Jordan?
2. From what point were these three tribes dismissed?
3. Where did these three tribes erect an altar?
4. What name was given to the land possessed by the eastern tribes?
5. Whom did the children of Israel send to accost the eastern tribes?
6. How many princes of Israel were with him?
7. What earlier tragedy in Israel did the erection of the altar call to mind?
8. To the sin of what man did they compare this act of the eastern tribes?
9. What name was given to the altar erected by the eastern tribes?
10. What was the meaning of the name given to the altar?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 23

Vv. 1- 5 *A review of Joshua's work.* Joshua 23 is a digest of Joshua's address to the elders and officers of the children of Israel. The address was given sometime after the conquest was

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finished and the assignments had been made to the various tribes of Israel. The address to this group of representatives of the people forms an introduction to the longer address given to all the Israelites and recorded in the following chapter. The first part of this speech is a resume of Joshua's activity among his people.

Vv. 6-11 *Promises of blessings for obedience.* Joshua was anxious for his people to obey the Lord, and he began his discourse to their leaders by reminding them of the many blessings which would come to them when they obeyed. Joshua especially foresaw the danger of their falling away into idolatry and serving the gods whom the Canaanites served.

Vv. 12-16 *Warnings of punishment for disobedience.* Joshua emphasized the positive by mentioning the blessings first, but he knew the Israelites needed to be warned of the punishments which would come upon them if they disobeyed God. It was just as inevitable evil would befall them when they disobeyed as it was sure that they would be blessed if they were faithful to God. Joshua knew they would lose the land in which they dwelt if they turned away from God.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Forget not His benefits.* A constant reminder of God's goodness is before all when they count the blessings which they have received. Joshua recounted these blessings for his people as an introduction to his exhortation for faithfulness on their part. Many times people turn

their backs on God because they forget His benefits. A little time spent in remembering the good things which befall a Christian will keep him faithful to his Lord. Joshua knew this would be true for his people as well.

2. *One and God make a majority.* Joshua said one man of Israel would be able to chase a thousand enemies (verse 10). He was like Elisha who reminded his servant that they who fought for Israel were more than they who fought for their enemies (II Kings 6:16). If the Israelites in Joshua's day remained faithful, they would know that the Lord fought for them even as Elisha's servant knew that God was fighting for Israel in his day when his eyes were opened and he saw the Lord's hosts on the mountains around Samaria.
3. *The soul that sins shall die.* God had made it clear that the soul who sinned would die. The wages of sin is death and has always been. What was true for an individual was true for a nation. If a nation of individuals sinned against God, they would doom their souls eternally, and they would also bring physical destruction upon their society. Joshua tried to impress this on his people.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A Review of Joshua's Work 23:1-5

And it came to pass a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:

3 And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you.

4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the Great Sea westward.

5 And the Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you.

1. How much time had elapsed between the settling of the land and Joshua's last address? 23:1

The Scripture says that a long time had elapsed after the people of Israel had finished their conquest before Joshua gave his address to the leaders. Joshua was at least sixty years of age when he came into the Promised Land, since he was numbered at Sinai among those who were twenty years of age and over. After the people left Sinai, they wandered for forty years in the wilderness; and Joshua would therefore have been at least sixty when he came into Canaan. Caleb said that he was forty years of age when he was sent out as a spy (14:17). We may assume that Joshua was about the same age. Joshua was one hundred and ten years of age when he died. No more than twenty-five years would have elapsed between the end of the conquest and the death of Joshua if Joshua was of the same age as Caleb. Twenty years would have certainly been "a long time."

2. To what point did Joshua call the leaders? 23:2

Joshua must have called the leaders to Shiloh. This is where the tribes had assembled when they received their final allotments. His final address was delivered at Shechem, but there is a special mention of their assembling

there in 24:1. Since there is no mention here of their moving, it is assumed his address to the smaller group of leaders was given at Shiloh.

3. *How did Joshua call for all Israel?* 23:3

The address consists of two parts which run parallel to one another so far as the contents are concerned. Part one is verses 2b-13, and part two is verses 14-16. In both parts Joshua commences with a reference to his age and his approaching death. In consequence of this impending event, he felt constrained to remind the people once more of all the great things which the Lord had done for them and to warn them against falling away from the gracious covenant of God. Joshua, in the last act of his life, was treading in the footsteps of Moses, who had concluded his life with the exhortations to the people to be faithful to the Lord (Deuteronomy 1:30). Joshua's address contains reminiscences from the Pentateuch, more especially from Deuteronomy. He had little new to announce to the people, but he wished to impress the old truth upon their minds once more. He called for all Israel by asking their leaders to assemble.

4. *Who were the "officers"?* 23:2

The term *elders* is the general term used to denote all the representatives of the people, who were divided into heads, judges, and officers. The heads were those who stood at the head of the tribes, families, and fathers' houses; and out of their number the most suitable persons were chosen as judges and officers (Deuteronomy 1:15). Some had jurisdiction over thousands, hundreds, and fifties (Exodus 18). Others served in different capacities.

5. *How had Joshua divided the remaining nations by lot?*
23:4

Joshua had not assigned different tribes to attack separate nations. There is no record that he told Reuben,

for example, to drive out the Ammonites. We find no mention made of his telling Benjamin to drive out the Jebusites. Incidental references are made to certain people such as the Perizzites who lived in the midst of the children of Joseph (17:15). Since he had divided all the remaining territory by lots and these Canaanite nations lived in the territories, it was assumed that the different tribes would drive out those foreign nations which were in the land assigned to them. In this way, it could be said that Joshua had divided by lot the nations which remained.

6. *What general boundaries of the Promised Land did Joshua mention? 23:4*

Joshua gave the eastern boundary as being the Jordan. He called the western boundary "the great sea westward." This was a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. Although Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh lived east of the Jordan, it was reasonable to speak of the Jordan and the land which pertained to it as the eastern boundary. There was no land for them to possess beyond the Mediterranean Sea.

Promises of Blessings for Obedience 23:6-11

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;

7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

8 But cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9 For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.

7. *Was the Pentateuch written in the days of Joshua?*
23:6

Joshua urged his people to "do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses." The book of the law of Moses is an evident reference to the five books of the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses compiled the writing of the book of the Law and commanded the priests to keep it where it could be read regularly to the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:9, 24). Joshua urged his people to keep this law and not to turn aside from it in either direction—to the right or to the left. Certainly the book was written and was known to the people or this passing reference on the part of Joshua would have had no meaning. Here is good evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

8. *How had God fought for Israel?* 23:3, 10

When Moses and the people of Israel stood at the edge of the Red Sea with the Egyptians behind them and no way of escape to the right or to the left, Moses said, "The Lord shall fight for you" (Exodus 14:14). God did fight for Israel. By His providences the chariot wheels were removed from the chosen chariots of Egypt. The armies of Pharaoh were overthrown in the midst of the sea. When the sun and moon stood still so that the people could avenge themselves upon their enemies, it was said again, "The Lord fought for Israel" (10:14). These people had experienced God's providences on their behalf and knew of the times when God had fought for Israel in the days of their ancestors.

9. *What great nations had been driven out?* 23:9

A list of thirty-one kings whom the Israelites had beaten is given in chapter twelve. The kings beyond the Jordan had also been defeated. Some of these nations were great and powerful nations. Only by the providences of God were the Israelites able to overthrow these kingdoms.

10. *Why say one man could chase a thousand?* 23:10

Joshua was expressing the unusual strength which would come to the Israelites when they followed the Lord. Moses had earlier said that five of them would chase an hundred and an hundred would put ten thousand to flight (Leviticus 26:8). Later Moses had used this very terminology to express the unusual strength which would be Israel's as he said one would chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight (Deuteronomy 32:30). Unusual feats of courage were performed by these Israelites. Shamgar slew six hundred men with an ox goad (Judges 3:31), and Samson slew a thousand men with a new jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:15). One of David's mighty men was famous for his fighting against eight hundred men (II Samuel 23:8). Even though individual feats of this nature can be isolated in the Scripture, Joshua's reference was a general allusion to the fact that they would be able to overcome great odds as they followed the Lord faithfully.

11. *Why did Joshua urge the people to take good heed to themselves?* 23:11

Joshua's exhortation was really quite explicit. A stronger translation of this passage would indicate that he urged them to "guard carefully" their souls. Here was an exhortation that they should love the Lord with all their hearts, souls, and minds. They were to give Him first place in their thoughts and in their devotions. Joshua was most concerned over their spiritual attitudes and made this clear as he gave this exhortation.

Warnings of Punishments for Disobedience 23:12-16

12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

13 Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

12. *What was the special danger posed by the remaining nations? 23:12*

Joshua foresaw the day when the Israelites would intermarry with those among whom they dwelt. When they did this, he knew they could no longer remain a

separate and peculiar people devoted completely to God. There would then be the danger of their making mention of the names of the gods of the Canaanites and swearing by them. Eventually they would serve them and bow down to them (verse 7). Such a state of idolatry would mean that they would perish from off the good land which the Lord their God had given to them. Moses had forbade such a condition of intermarriage as he spoke to the Israelites in his day and said, "neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son" (Deuteronomy 7:3).

13. *What was "the way of all the earth?"* 23:14

This was another way for Joshua to say that he was nearing the end of his earthly sojourn. The day of his death was at hand in his estimation. He knew that he was old and stricken in years and that his term of service could not be much longer. This fact made it imperative for him to give these final exhortations to the people among whom he had worked and served.

14. *What evil things would the Israelites suffer if they disobeyed God?* 23:15

Moses had warned that God would send a terror, consumption, and burning ague among the people if they disobeyed God (Leviticus 26:16). He further predicted that they would sow their seed in vain. In addition, he foresaw the land being overrun by wild beasts which would rob them of their children, destroy their cattle, make them few in number, and cause their highways to be desolate (Leviticus 26:22). Moses had later pronounced five curses upon the people—in the city, in the field, of basket and store, fruit of body and of land, and increase of kine and flocks. In short, he saw them being completely devoid of God's blessings (Deuteronomy 28:15, 16). Joshua must

have had a similar God-forsaken condition in mind when he warned his people about the results of disobedience. He said that they would be destroyed from off the good land which God had given them.

15. *What covenant had the Lord commanded?* 23:16

The Old Testament was God's covenant with the people of Israel. The epitome of its provisions was in the Ten Commandments. These people had received this covenant at Mount Sinai and had agreed to live by it. When they broke their part of the covenant, God could only punish them for their disobedience. The terrible prospect of their losing the Promised Land was held before them. Joshua wanted to encourage them to be faithful to God's covenant, for this would insure their remaining in the land they had received as an inheritance.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 23

1. What representatives of the people assembled at Joshua's call?
2. What was the eastern border of the Promised Land?
3. What was the western border mentioned by Joshua?
4. To what book of commandments did Joshua make reference?
5. How many men did Joshua say one Israelite would chase?
6. Why were the Israelites unusually strong?
7. To what danger and annoyances did Joshua compare the remaining Canaanites?
8. Had any good thing failed to come to pass for the Israelites?
9. Did Joshua believe the people would be in danger of losing the Promised Land if they disobeyed God?
10. Did Joshua approve of Israelites marrying members of the foreign nations among whom they lived?