CAPITOL COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

MOPray

DR. JOHN BATTAGLIA • MISSOURI STATE MINISTER
P.O. BOX 891, JEFFERSON CITY • MISSOURI, 65102 • (573) 355-4161

Weekly Bible Study Schedule | Tuesday, April 15, 7:00-7:45 AM | HHR #3
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

Joshua 23 is more than history. It is a call to hold fast to the covenant of the LORD. Live in obedience, love, and loyalty to God. Joshua's life is near the end, he is leaving Israel a legacy of faithfulness to God. He gathers Israel's leaders to charge them to obey the instructions of the LORD they received from Moses and Joshua so they can leave a legacy of faithfulness to future generations.

23:1-5 – The years passed, and the LORD had given the people of Israel rest from all their enemies. Joshua, who was now very old, called together all the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel. He said to them, "I am now a very old man. You have seen everything the LORD your God has done for you during my lifetime. The LORD your God has fought for you against your enemies. I have allotted to you as your homeland all the land of the nations yet unconquered, as well as the land of those we have already conquered—from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. This land will be yours, for the LORD your God will himself drive out all the people living there now. You will take possession of their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

God fulfilled His covenant with Israel by settling them in the Promised Land. Each tribe has received their inheritance of the allotted land but some of it was unconquered.

MORE LAND TO POSSESS

Why did the LORD not drive out their enemies within each tribes allotment?

1. **Lack of Readiness to Manage the Land**

> *But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply and threaten you. I will drive them out a little at a time until your population has increased enough to take possession of the land.* Ex. 23:29-30

2. **Military Training for the Next Generation**

> *The LORD was with the people of Judah, and they took possession of the hill country. But they failed to drive out the people living in the plains, who had iron chariots.* Judges 1:19

3. **Israel's Continued Unfaithfulness**

> *So the LORD burned with anger against Israel. He said, "Because these people have violated my covenant, which I made with their ancestors, and have ignored my commands, I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died. I did this to test Israel—to see whether or not they would follow the ways of the LORD as their ancestors did." That is why the LORD left those nations in place. He did not quickly drive them out or allow Joshua to conquer them all.* Judges 2:20-23

God said to drive out all the nations so they would not get tempted to assimilate with them. Rather than conquering the land as God planned, they assimilated into the nations. They were not to intermarry. They were not to take on the customs of the surrounding nations.

God's command had nothing to do with ethnicity, it was a spiritual issue. The Canaanites were exceedingly wicked (Lev. 18:21). The LORD did not want Israel to become morally corrupt, enter into idolatry, and break the covenant. Partial obedience would lead to decline turning focus from their relationship with God to their relationship with unbelieving families and unsanctified customs.

Israel was God's distinct people. They were to be different in morality, spiritual worship, in sacrifices, and in faithfulness to the covenant. They were to be a light to dark nations. A shining light that would capture the attention of wicked nations turning them to the God of Israel.

FUTURE GENERATIONS

> *"When the Lord your God brings you into the land… you must destroy them totally… Do not intermarry with them… for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods…"* Deuteronomy 7:1–5

The post wilderness generation saw all the miracles. They participated in crossing the Jordan River; defeating the citizens of Jericho and Ai; entering into the Promised Land; and dwelling in their allotted land; they followed a great leader in Joshua; and they walk with the presence of God wherever they went.

If the next generation intermarried their devotion to God would be compromised. A divided heart will always migrate toward the lowest denominator. Followers of the LORD will worship the creator, God, not the created, Idols. It is a non-negotiable value.

Solomon exemplified division of devotion.

> *"His wives led him astray... his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD."* 1 Kings 11:1–6

YOKE OR NO YOKE

The Apostle Paul reiterates this principle when he said:

> *"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers…" How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark? Does Christ go strolling with the Devil? Do trust and mistrust hold hands? Who would think of setting up pagan idols in God's holy Temple? But that is exactly what we are, each of us a temple in whom God lives.* 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

The farmer placed the wooden harness on the Oxen linking them together to plow in unison. Animals need to be the same size and strength otherwise one side of the wooden harness would pull right or left causing the load to go in circles or pull in different directions. It could lead to an imbalance making their work strenuous even halting.

Follower's Jesus should date other followers of Jesus who are going in the same spiritual direction. When dating a non-follower of Jesus one's values and priorities are challenged. There is the pressure and temptation to please the other at the cost of devotion to God. The unevenly yoked "affect" significantly increases when a believer marries an unbeliever. It is a natural friction. The one closet to you influence your decisions and help to shape your worldview. Moreover, true for business partners.

When entering into business with a partner one must ensure a unity of purpose, management, financial goals, strategy, integrity and values. Your biblical convictions should not change because of another person. And the best way to prevent conviction slide is to not date, marry, or go into business with someone who does not follow Jesus.

DRIVE BETWEEN THE LINES

23:6-8 – "So be very careful to follow everything Moses wrote in the Book of Instruction. Do not deviate from it, turning either to the right or to the left. Make sure you do not associate with the other people still remaining in the land. Do not even mention the names of their gods, much less swear by them or serve them or worship them. Rather, cling tightly to the Lord your God as you have done until now.

Joshua is on the brink of passing from earth into heaven. Before he departs he reminds Israel to be faithful to the covenant God gave to Abraham. Obey the instructions you received from Moses and Joshua. Hold fast to the LORD. Do not leave the path of relationship with God. Cling to deep love and loyalty to God. Live for His purposes, and leave a legacy of faithfulness to future generations.

> *What are you holding fast to in your life? What are you attached to in your heart? What has your imagination in your mind?*

Living an obedient life to God's Word and His world requires intentionality. It must be a daily decision to stay the course. To wake up each morning and choose that this day you will live for the Lord.

23:12-13 – "But if you turn away from him and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations remaining among you, and if you intermarry with them, then know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive them out of your land. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes, and you will vanish from this good land the Lord your God has given you.

Love what God loves. Anchor yourself in Christ. Live between the lines. Live in the joy of His presence, protection, provision, and peace.

HOLD FAST TO THE LORD