

Sunday, March 18, 2018—Joshua 22-24

Goodbyes are special. When a relationship comes to the point of separation, what each says to the other is important. The farewell may be temporary, as with family heading to respective homes after a holiday gathering, or it may be forever, as a missionary leaving to build the Kingdom in a faraway, dangerous place. When the parties know there is the possibility of never seeing one another again, they choose their words carefully and share words of deep truth and hope.

Joshua blessed the trans-Jordan tribes as he dismissed them to their assigned territory. They had done what they promised to do in conquering the land, so now they were free to go home and build their families and land. What did he tell them? “Only carefully obey the command and instruction that Moses the LORD’s servant gave you: to love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways, keep his commands, be loyal to him, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul” (22:5).

Above all things, the choice to worship and obey God is the most important. His call is one to daily repentance—choosing Him over self and the tempting idols of life. When the two-and-one-half tribes settled across the Jordan, they built an altar, not for idolatry but as a witness to them and the future generations that they were choosing Yahweh and fully connected to Him and His people. When Joshua knew he was nearing death, he called the leaders to him and reminded them of the call to choose Yahweh (24:15).

Pray for daily renewal and repentance in surrendering to the Lord.

Saturday, March 17, 2018—Joshua 19-21

The assignment of land to each tribe was an important process—a recognition of the blessing and sovereignty of God as well as an acceptance of responsibility by each tribe. This allotment, therefore, was overseen by the priest Eleazar, Joshua, and leaders from each of the tribes (19:51). They represented the spiritual and temporal and the leadership and the people.

God’s graciousness was on display designated six cities of refuge, places where someone could flee for protection if he killed someone unintentionally. They chose three cities on the east side and three cities on the west side of the Jordan River. The one fleeing harm was to stand trial before an assembly in that city and then remain there until the death of the high priest. (20:6). He was placing himself at the mercy of the jury and under the life of the high priest for his personal innocence and survival.

Then, each tribe gave some of their land to the Levites. They had no possession of their own, yet they would receive livestock from the people through the sacrificial system. They needed a place to tend the flocks and provide for their families, and each tribe obeyed.

Some might protest about giving away possessions, but the wise one realizes every possession is a gift of God. He fulfills His promises (21:45). His people can gladly set aside some for those who serve because they have done nothing to deserve any of it. Worship through obedient sacrifice and enjoy Him.

Friday, March 16, 2018—Joshua 16-18

Easter eggs are a common sight during the Easter season as adults place colorful, oblong orbs, sometimes filled with candy, in places obvious and hidden for children to find. The term “Easter egg” has become part of popular culture as well to refer to items hidden in plain sight in movies and TV shows which refer to other characters or storylines. In either case, finding the egg requires effort and yields results.

Joshua provides an “Easter egg” at the end of chapters 15 and 16 (as well as in 17:13) that speaks volumes about the present and the future of the book’s contemporaries. In these places, the author briefly notes that the tribe was not able to drive out the previous inhabitants completely. God had commanded the people to rid the land of its evil people, and He Himself had driven many of them out himself. By not removing them from the land, Israel was putting themselves at risk of being influenced by their sinful ways, even if the pagan people were subservient to God’s people.

The people told Joshua driving out the Canaanites was difficult because the Canaanites had iron chariots (17:16). They were claiming the call of God was impossible to fulfill because of the ability of man. They were in danger of making the same mistake their ancestors had made in not taking the Promised Land in the first opportunity, and they were establishing a pattern of tolerance for idolatry that would cost them dearly.

Pray for obedience which relies solely on the call and power of God rather than personal ability or the seeming power of circumstances.

Thursday, March 15, 2018—Joshua 13-15

Springtime is a time of renewal. As the earth wakes up from a dormant winter, trees begin to bud, grass begins to grow, and caretakers begin to plan. This new growth has to be maintained. The caretaker is responsible for bringing all of what is owned under control.

God called Israel to their new home, the Promised Land, and He gave them responsibility for it. Moses had led them to the land. Then, Joshua led them to take possession. When Joshua began to grow old, God reminded the people of all He had given them. As they prepared for the future, a reminder of the past was important. Where they had been and what they had been given were vital for knowing where they needed to go and what they needed to do in the future. God wanted them to add to their possession (13:2-3), and He had Joshua distribute it to the people as if they already had possession, acting in the present as if the future were a reality.

Caleb had waited 45 years for the promise of God to be fulfilled (14:10). He remained faithful, and he asked the elders to assign a portion specifically to him as God had promised. Again, remembering the past was critical to obedience in the future. Caleb called his place Hebron, changing it from the name of the strongest man among the former inhabitants.

Ask God for reminders of His past provision. Use those as motivation for praise, obedience, and searching for His will.

Wednesday, March 14, 2018—Joshua 10-12

God calls His people to obedience and service, but He never leaves them to themselves. What they accomplish is not due to their ability alone but a credit to His continual presence, provision, and power. When Joshua began leading the people into battle, they had success, but Joshua notes more people were driven out and killed by hail than by the military actions of Israel (10:11). When Joshua requested more time to battle, God made the sun stand still (10:13). A nation that had faced very few battles in its history suddenly had rousing success against tribe after tribe. The people were active, but God was the one at work.

No one surrendered to Israel except the Gibeonites. Everyone else took their chances in battle and lost. Joshua says the reason for their decision was the hardening of their hearts (11:20). God was working His judgment against these peoples, tribes, and nations for generations of sinfulness, and He was using Israel and nature to deliver His punishment. As a result, Israel was gaining a reputation and a homeland, and Yahweh was gaining glory as the god against whom no one wanted to battle.

In the 40 years under Moses, the people disposed of two kings. In the first few months under Joshua, they defeated 31 kings. When God's people are obedient, He can work in ways that boggle the mind, upend history, and provide unexpected blessing. Pray for a faith which acts in obedience but never loses sight of complete dependence on Him.

Tuesday, March 13, 2018—Joshua 7-9

"No man is an island entire of himself." These words of John Donne in *Meditation XVII* remind all readers that the actions of one affect everyone. God has made us for community, and we thrive when we find that group of believers for which He has made us. Our sin, therefore, has impact on all those we call family. Nothing is ever in isolation.

When the Israelites attacked Jericho, they received instruction to keep nothing for themselves. Achan, however, saw a few items he thought he could not live without and was unfaithful to the order. The nation received the judgment. "The Israelites, however, were unfaithful regarding the things set apart for destruction" (7:1). His personal sin brought judgment on the entire nation as they soon fell to a much smaller city.

Achan eventually confessed to his sin and said the things he kept were buried in his tent. Deep inside, he knew what he had done was wrong because he had to hide it, and he and his family paid the ultimate price to purge the nation of his evil. After the cleansing, God urged His people to take heart. Their setback was

only temporary. He had called them to Canaan with great purpose, and He was going to see it fulfilled. God gives His people courage, but He continues to call them to faithful obedience.

Dedicating everything to Yahweh kept the people from hoarding items and seeing each city as potential for personal gain. God was glorifying Himself through their obedience, and He would be the source of their provision, not the people they attacked. Ask God to remind you of the power of your obedience and your need solely for Him.

Monday, March 12, 2018—Joshua 4-6

Following faithfully requires good memory. God established the Sabbath to give His people an opportunity each week to remember His power and faithfulness, to reset their priorities and goals around His reality rather than whatever the week offered as an alternative for worship. He commanded them to gather three times each year to remember Him as a gathered nation, but He also commanded unique expressions of worship that would give opportunities for remembrance for generations.

One of those moments came as Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. A leader from each tribe was to take a stone from the riverbed and make a monument that would testify to what God had done. When children asked in the future, parents would be able to teach how God had brought the people through the desert and allowed them to pass on dry land. Faithful and powerful in the past, God would be so in the future.

Though preparing for battle, the people first observed the Passover. For the first time in a generation, there was no manna. Instead, the people ate of the produce of the land. Who God was and what He had done in the past was now becoming a fascinating reality in the present. In a powerful encounter, the commander of the army of the LORD informed Joshua he was neither for Joshua or his enemy. God was for Himself, and His people had the privilege to represent and obey Him.

In obedience, the people marched around the city and saw its walls fall. Remember those times God has destroyed your enemies. Praise Him!