

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

Recap: Where we've come in this series.

Set the Scene: They've been settled in the land for many years, experiencing the rest (Sabbath) from constant war with the surrounding pagan nations.

Joshua is "well advanced" in years—and the next two chapters will record much of his last words—his last exhortation to the people.

There is always new territory to take, always old borders to secure—there will always be battles with pesky pagans who want Canaan back. But the next war is going to be fought on a different front. And the leaders and the people have to be on the same page. They've got to be of one mind about this next war.

Big Idea: The next war is ongoing and never ends until God comes back and restores paradise. The present-future battle is one of faithfulness to God alone, resisting the false idols of their fathers and their neighbors, and receiving the blessings of the covenant for faithfulness.

Transition: We're going to take a look at Joshua 23-24 today. We'll see in these chapters, in this closing message for this series, we'll see what and how to remain faithful in times of blessing and rest.

You see the tendency of Israel (as the book of Judges will document) is that in times of prosperity—the human heart can forget God. It's human (sinful) nature to be faced with great temptations of unfaithfulness after times of rest and blessing. But we are not fated to fail. We can be faithful, grateful, hopeful and obedient in times of plenty.

Now let's make some observations from the text and let's translate that to the modern Christian life.

**Scripture: Joshua 23:1-16**

A long time afterward, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, <sup>2</sup> Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, "I am now old and well advanced in years. <sup>3</sup> And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you. <sup>4</sup> Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. <sup>5</sup> The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, <sup>7</sup> that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, <sup>8</sup> but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day. <sup>9</sup> For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. <sup>10</sup> One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. <sup>11</sup> Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God. <sup>12</sup> For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, <sup>13</sup> know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.

<sup>14</sup> “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. <sup>15</sup> But just as all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the Lord your God has given you, <sup>16</sup> if you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.”

## 1. Remember all that God has done (23).

Joshua gathers the Leaders first and reminds them...

- **Remember the scope of your victory: all the promises (v. 3-5, 9, 14).** “I have driven out all of your enemies...not one word has failed, all of the promises have come to pass.” Enemies who were stronger than you. Enemies who could’ve crushed you—but *you prevailed*. Past victories are part of the cumulative case that we make for future miracles. God has been faithful. And that is irrefutable.

- **A few weeks ago we talked about the scope of the Christian victory:** Victory over sin, death, judgment, over circumstances. Remember that message. Remember there is no weapon the enemy has forged against us that can succeed. The fix is in. Jesus wins—and all who are in Christ are ultimately victorious!

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

**Next, Joshua tells them they must...**

- **Remember the stipulations of your victory: faithfulness (vv. 6-7, 11-13).** “Just as you have done up to this day.” Remember how faithless and disobedient your ancestors were. And God was faithful and patient and longsuffering. But you obeyed. You turned the tide—and now you have experienced the inheritance of the land of abundance. The land of rest. You were strong to keep the Word of the Lord written in the books of Moses. You were relentless in your commitment to keep out pagan and foreign religion from your families.

**The must also...**

- **Remember the source of your victory: God’s power (v.5, 9, 10, 13).** “That the Lord God fought for you.” By yourself you couldn’t take an anthill. With God in your corner, one of you could route 1,000 of your enemies. If the Lord God had not fought for you—in your own strength and with your own resources, you couldn’t have taken a dirt mound—and you’d be taking a dirt nap by now if it weren’t for the Lord. So remember those battles you fought where if the Lord hadn’t come through you’d be toast. Don’t forget his power and his provision in the situation that you’re facing now. You didn’t arrive here because you’re good enough, smart enough, and dogone it people just like you.

**Israel must always...**

- **Remember the stakes: God’s judgment (v.15-16).** What is at stake is their continued “rest” and Sabbath in the land. Joshua gathers all the people, the elders, the priests the leaders, and reminds them, in one solid paragraph, all that God had done for them 24:1-11. “It was not by bow or chariot, or horse—not by your strength or your aptitude—but by the power of God that you were chosen and have inherited Abraham’s blessing—the land of abundance and the land of promise. And all of this can again be in jeopardy if they forget the conditions of the covenant.

**2. Respond to the Challenge (24).** Joshua reminds them of all that God has done. He recalls the faithfulness of God and the consequences for unfaithfulness. Then he calls all of the elders, the priests, the leaders, the people the tribes together and gives them a final challenge.

Chapter 24 starts with a prophetic Word from God. “Thus says the LORD”  
I chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as your ancestors—calling them out of the land of Ur to  
a establish them as the fathers of a new nation.

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

I chose Moses and Aaron to deliver your people from slavery in Egypt—delivering you by confronting their false gods through plagues.

It was me that led you through the desert performing miracle after miracle—drowning the mighty Egyptian army in the sea, providing for you as sojourners bringing you to this land.

It was I who fought against all your enemies and gave you this treasured possession—this rich and abundant land that you did not cultivate, toil over, or harvest.

**And now you have a choice to make.**

- **Resolve to fear and to serve the Lord (24:14).** What is godly fear?
  - **Illus. Almost drowning in the pool at VA beach.**
  - **Illus. Sticking forks into light sockets.**
  - **Hammering a bullet in the bathroom to see what would happen.**
  - **Climbing 100 ft trees to the very top just so I could see stuff.**
  - **Making homemade bottle bombs and blowing up bushes around my yard.** My dad had to rescue me—but I was too little and too uninformed.
  - **The same fire that warms you and provides for you and sustains you can also burn you down.** Our God is an all consuming fire—he is not to be trifled with, to be ignored, to be sidelined in favor of all of other gods. So choose this day whom you will serve

Obedience out of mere obligation is a drudgery. Obedience from a willing heart is refreshing.

- **Confess what is true (24:16-17).** “For it is the Lord God who brought us out of Egypt” Make it part of your confession “this I know that the Lord has done for me...God has brought me this far, God has performed his word and has never forsaken me.”
- **Renounce all forms of idolatry (vv.19-23).**

The gods of modernity are:

Pleasure, sex, power, materialism, self-worship, absolute independence.

The war that we face is a battle against foreign gods. They haven't gone away, they've just moved underground—taking different forms.

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

And these false idols show up on our doorstep as guests...and once we allow them in and give them a place to lodge and take root in our hearts—we discover they turn from being guests to being gods.

**Illus.** When I first began to drive in VA, I had this car that was a 1973 Pontiac Grandville. A big heavy, long car. My tires were mostly bald and we had a rare ice storm and then a rare snow storm. I had never driven in snow before. I remember I was driving to my job at Moore Cadillac where I washed and detailed cars—to pick up my check. I came down around a curve at a familiar intersection—one that I drove by multiple times every day—and that heavy old car just glided on the ice and landed right in the embankment on the right side—if it had gone over the other side it was quite a drop and I would have likely died. But I made it—a little shook up—and a gun in a 4x4 truck behind me pulled me out of the ditch.

In exactly 3 days all of that ice and snow had melted—it was gone like it had never been there. I was driving to work and got to that same intersection—I slowed way down—I was cautious and mindful of how I crossed it.

You see—there are certain temptations like intersections that you and I will cross guaranteed. Egypt always calls us back. Idols always invite themselves in. Those familiar temptations

**So when the god of sex and pleasure threatens to infiltrate the camp** and take back territory—that decision is already been made. God alone is the Sovereign ruler of this life. And no other.

**When the god of materialism and the relentless pursuit of possessions** tries to pull me into its orbit so that my life is just an obsession with stuff—so much stuff that any thought of God is suffocated—then I tell that God “no, that choice has already been made—I serve the God of Israel and I will not serve the God of money—but I choose to serve God *with* the money and resources he’s given me.”

**When the god of food entices me to be consumed by the desires of my stomach** and wrecks my cholesterol levels, my blood pressure, my body—I say to that idol “My decision has already been made—my body is a temple the Lord God almighty—a shrine in which the Spirit inhabits—a tabernacle consecrated to the Lord. So no, I won’t be gorging myself every day and serving the god of the stomach. That choice has already been made.”

Gods at War:  
A Study Through Joshua  
Pt 9: The Next War  
Jeff Kennedy / July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016

**When the god of ego and pride seeks to convince me that my life will be more complete** if I just had more power, a higher status—the temptation to attribute more to yourself than you ought—my answer is, “I am a humble servant of the Lord. It is his power and his Spirit that has enabled me to do everything that I do for his name’s sake.”

I choose to serve the Lord. I choose this day that I will fight this battle against allowing false idols in my culture to usurp the rightful place of God. I have decided to follow Jesus—the cross before me, the world behind me—I follow Christ.

How about you? You with me?

Let’s pray.