

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

Part IV: Concluding Events Concerning Israel's Inheritance Of The Promised Land, Joshua 22:1-24:33

C. Joshua's Final Admonition To Israel's People: A Lesson In Always Abounding In God's Calling (Joshua 24:1-33)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In today's unsettled era, the need exists for us to know how to live our lives so that they produce lasting value:

(1) Monte Burke's op-ed, "College Coaches Deserve Their Pay" in The Wall Street Journal, August 31, 2015, p. A13, told how the highly regarded late coach Paul "Bear" Bryant of the University of Alabama had the "personal policy" of taking "a salary of exactly one dollar less than the university's president." Coach Bryant thus signaled to his players and to the entire AU student body that a college education is more important than playing football.

However, "(t)imes have changed. Last year, the current Alabama coach . . . made \$7.2 million, roughly 11 times the salary of Alabama's president," Ibid. Thus, the importance of the message on getting an education left by a great coach and man at Alabama University has been overridden by the drive for money.

(2) Dr. Bruce Kleinman, an M. D. from Oak Park, Illinois, wrote a letter to the editor in the same paper (Ibid., p. A12) in response to Dr. Brittany A. Bettendorf's op-ed, "The Unforgettable Death of My Forgotten Patient" in which Dr. Bettendorf had told of "a noncommunicative, indigent woman with no family, health-care proxy or living will, who clearly was at the end of her life" who also had had "no voices to speak for her since she couldn't speak for herself," so she was left to die with no unusual effort being exerted to prolong her life.

Dr. Kleinman critiqued: "In days past . . . physicians were . . . esteemed by society not only because of their rigorous education and training, but because they were committed to the principle of putting the patient first. Patient can't speak for herself? No family? No health-care proxy? No living will? Are these excuses for not doing what is best for your patient?" (Ibid.) Thus, there existed a low value to the life of this patient in the minds of the health care people around her or even a low value of the careers of the health care parties who did not highly value her life.

(3) We face this matter as Christians at the local level: several believers I know have recently made efforts to evaluate their lives to see how they might adjust their actions and thinking to make them of greater lasting value.

Need: *So we ask, "With the seeming futility to how some lives are lived, can my life really count, and if so, how?!"*

I. When Joshua was old, he addressed the nation of Israel at the town of Shechem, Joshua 23:1 with 24:1-2.

II. That address, like Joshua's life, showed him fully abounding in God's calling for him, Joshua 24:3-28:

A. Joshua's closing address to Israel's people displayed a rigorous commitment to the Lord, Joshua 24:2b-28:

1. He followed "the customary form of a suzerainty treaty between a king and his vassals" that culturally strongly impressed the people to rededicate themselves to heed their King (the Lord) as His vassals (the people of Israel), Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Joshua 24:1. The address was thus composed of a preamble (Jos. 24:1-2), an historical prologue that rehearsed the King's (God's) goodness toward His vassals (Israel, Jos. 24:3-13), the stipulations of the renewed covenant (Jos. 24:14-24) and the final writing and depositing of the agreement in a certain location (Joshua 24:25-28), Ibid.
2. Yet, in calling Israel to make a commitment to God, Joshua stated his claim that, regardless what Israel's people chose to do (Joshua 24:15a,b), he and his house would serve the Lord, Joshua 24:15c.
3. This great statement sparked a unanimous, similar commitment from all of the people, Joshua 24:16-18.
4. However, Joshua did not accept this initial verbal commitment as being true, but he charged that the people could not serve God, and they replied with a stronger claim that they would truly serve Him, Jos. 24:19-22. Joshua thus urged them to put away the false gods they were serving (Jos. 24:23), to which the people agreed, Jos. 24:24. Thus, Joshua made a covenant with the people, and recorded their commitment in writing on a large stone at Shechem as a witness against them were they to violate it, Joshua 24:25-28.

B. Similarly, throughout Joshua's life, he had abounded in God's calling for his life and ministry:

1. Having faithfully assisted the great godly leader Moses (Joshua 1:1 ESV, NIV), having risked his life with Caleb at Kadesh-barnea by daring before an opposing nation of 2 million people to encourage them to trust God to defeat the Canaanites (Numbers 14:6-10a), Joshua had heeded the Lord in leading Israel to conquer and inherit the Promised Land, Joshua 1:2-22:34. This work had involved great feats such as God's answering Joshua's prayer to stop the earth's rotation for a day to accomplish great victory (Jos. 10:12-14) and defeating many Canaanite chariots and foot soldiers by Israel's foot soldiers (Jos. 11:1-15).

2. Then, instead of selecting a choice Canaanite-free, agriculturally rich plot to inherit, what he could have done with God's blessing (Jos. 19:50a), Joshua exemplified his call to his tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8) to defeat the pagans in their land and to clear its woods by choosing to inherit Timnath-serah in Ephraim's hill country, defeating its pagans, cutting down its trees and building a city there, Jos. 19:49-50; 17:15-18.
3. Joshua had also led Israel to move their spiritual hub of God's tabernacle up from Gilgal to Shiloh in heeding this admonition of his, striving to teach the people to finish God's assignment for them, Jos. 18:1.

III. Joshua then died at the age of 110 and was buried in Timnath-serah, Joshua 24:29-30.

IV. All during the lives of Joshua and the elders of his generation, Israel served God (Joshua 24:31), but, as we will learn in the book of Judges, after these men died, Israel began a long slide down into apostasy!

V. We might think that Joshua's life was lived in futility, but an event 1,400 years proves otherwise:

- A. When Jesus in A. D. 31 made a journey into Samaria to speak with a Samaritan woman (Harold W. Hoehner, Chron. Aspects of the Life of Christ, 1979, p. 60), and she got her town to come out to meet Him (John 4:1-30), Jesus told His disciples that other men had labored, that they were entered into their labors, John 4:38.
- B. Indeed, the Samaritans, despised, half-Gentiles who had centuries before gone apostate from God (2 Kings 17:24-41), came to believe in Jesus in their own words as "the Christ, the Savior of the world," John 4:42, but this event was in part the product of the labors of Old Testament servants of God, including that of Joshua:
 1. Jacob's well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman and her townspeople, was near the town of Shechem where Joshua in old age had addressed Israel back in Joshua 24:32, John 4:5-7, 30; B. K. C., N. T., p. 285.
 2. Joshua had chosen this place for this meeting since he had earlier led Israel there to rehearse the curses and blessings of the Law in Joshua 8:30-35 in accord with Moses' Deuteronomy 27:1-26 call to do so; *Ibid.*
 3. Moses in turn had directed this spot be used for this ritual as Abraham before him had built an altar there when God told him this was the land He would give his seed, Gen. 12:6-7; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Gen. 12:6.
 4. Also at Shechem, in line with Joseph's wish, Israel buried Joseph's mummy in the plot that Joseph's father Jacob owned in witness of God's faithfulness in giving the land to Israel, Jos. 24:32 with Gen. 50:24-25.
 5. Since Abraham's altar there had expressed commitment to the Lord upon being told his seed would inherit that land, his altar followed the precedent of his ancestor Noah who had also built an altar to the Lord upon exiting the ark in appreciation for God's giving him and his sons a new earth after the Flood, Genesis 8:20.
 6. Thus, the ministries of Old Testament Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joseph and Joshua relative to the Shechem area coupled with the Scripture writers who had long predicted the coming of the Messiah had so impacted the Samaritans over the centuries that when Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah finally arrived there, the outcast, apostate, needy Samaritans in John 4 would put their trust in Him and be saved!
- C. So, in the case of the Samaritans, the labors of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joseph and Joshua with the other Scripture writers bore fruit in Jesus' ministry long after all of these men had lived their earthly lives!

***Lesson:* Since Joshua in his life constantly abounded in the work of the Lord, even though immediately following generations of Israel went apostate, God effectively used his life and ministry for the evangelism of the Samaritans.**

***Application:* (1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) May we rely on the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) and (3) always abound in God's calling, for our labor is not in vain in Him! (1 Cor. 15:58)**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Between 1515 and 1517, before he nailed up the Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Church at Wittenberg in Germany on October 31, 1517 that started the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther had already begun to teach out of the New Testament books of Romans and Galatians that justification was by faith alone in Jesus Christ (James Atkinson, The Great Light, 1968, p. 30-34, 42). He then wrote commentaries on those books (A. Skevington Wood, The Inextinguishable Blaze, 1968, p. 111). But as he neared the end of his life in 1545, Luther was "bitterly distressed that Wittenberg, the very cradle of the Reformation," had produced only "meagre fruits of spirituality and morality," *Ibid.*, Atkinson, p. 121. Martin Luther then died, and, in his own words, described himself as "'(o)ld, spent, worn, weary, cold and with but one eye to see with,'" *Ibid.*

However, 220 years later, in 1738, Charles Wesley read Luther's commentary on Galatians and his brother John read Luther's Preface to Romans, and both men trusted in Christ and were used of God in the Great Awakening that led to fundamental Christianity in America, of which we at Nepaug Church are a part, *Ibid.*, Wood, p. 53-246.

Thankfully, God made Luther's efforts later bear fruit, and we are its beneficiaries exactly 500 years after him!
May we trust in Christ, and abound in life and ministry for Him, for our labor is not in vain in Him!