

Life In the Land.
Joshua 23:11-16
Sunday evening, October 24,2010.

I. Persevering in the pathway of blessing.

- A. The opening verses (1-11) gave us some principles helping Israel in the pathway of God's favor:
1. Resolve to remember (God's faithful dealings with them in the past).
 2. Continue with courage (there will be obstacles, but the Lord in your midst will prevail).
 3. Flee and forget (Your own former ways and the ways of the Canaanites; choose not to dwell on them).
 4. Love lavishly (Cling to the Lord with purpose of heart).
- B. Vs. 11 summarizes this pathway by saying: "Take careful heed to yourselves that you love the Lord your God."

II. Warning against apostasy.

If the positive precepts were set before Israel in Vss. 1-11, the negative warnings are introduced in Vs. 12, beginning with the words "or else..."

A. If indeed you go back...

Go back to what?

1. Go back to what they were before the Lord visited them with grace in Egypt. They had worshipped idols just like the Egyptians. The religious practices of Egypt had not been lost on them. The Lord had not redeemed them because they were such a holy and upright people; they were not. As such there is repeatedly given the warning in the OT against returning to Egypt in their hearts.
2. Go back to what they were before they were married to the Lord. The covenant was ratified at Mt. Sinai. Vows were taken. The Lord had pledged Himself to them as their God, and they had pledged themselves to Him as His people.

B. And cling to the remnant of these nations...

1. The covenant relationship (as marriage is) constitutes a clinging to...
"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Gen 2:24.
2. This clinging to the remnant of the Canaanite nations is therefore to be understood as a clinging to them in contrast to clinging to the Lord. It is spiritual adultery.
It is a being drawn to, valuing, and appreciating the ways and customs and worship of the Canaanites.

C. And make marriages with them...

1. Some of their girls were lovely and beautiful young ladies; desirable to be courted as prospective wives for their sons.
2. The same was true with handsome young men in the Canaanite communities; desirable prospects to give their daughters in marriage to.

D. The net result of this would be that the loyalties of God's people would be

divided, and that the Lord would have to share His people with the idols of the Canaanites.

III. The certainty of the consequences.

A. Know for certain... Vs. 13

The Lord is a jealous God; He demands the loyalties and commitments of our hearts for Himself. When there is a going astray and a wandering of those loyalties and commitments, there is a corresponding ebbing away of God's grace and favor and His truth, and there is a corresponding increase of hardships, difficulties and darkness.

This is the essence of coming to the Lord's table and examining ourselves. It is an examining ourselves with regards to the loyalties and commitments of our hearts. It is a restoring them and bringing them back again to the Lord.

The alternative being an increase in hardships, difficulties and darkness: "For this reason many are weak and sickly among you."

B. "As all the good things have come upon you... so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you." Vs. 15.

These consequences too are brought to our remembrance at the Lord's table in the words: "...and many sleep." 1 Corinthians 11:30.

In summary, it is all about the loyalties, the commitments and the pursuits of our hearts. It is about life, or death, in the promised land. It is about being set apart to the Lord alone. It is about sanctification. That is how it was in the days of Joshua, and the Lord's table shows us that it is still that way.

IV. It is all about sanctification.

A. This passage shows us that life in the promised land is all about being set apart to the Lord.

B. And yet this piece of information tells us only half of what we need to know in terms of understanding what being set apart to (being married to... being one spirit with...) the Lord is all about.

C. We also need to know what He is all about and what He is up to. How can we be a helper suitable to Him without knowing something of what He is doing? How can we come under His yoke without knowing something of the burden He is carrying and where we are going with it?

D. In John 17:17-19 the Lord's High-priestly prayer speaks about sanctification.

He prays for the setting apart of those who believe in Him. Then He says that it is for their sakes that He is setting Himself apart (sanctify Myself). Here is what He is all about... The gathering, the shepherding, the protecting and feeding and guiding of His own until He has brought them at last to glory.

E. Here, at the right hand of the Savior, under His yoke, is the place of our rest.

There the fountains of living water flow freely, causing us to thirst no more.

There is peace that flows like a river, and joy unspeakable and full of glory; there are pleasures forevermore, and such as do not pass away. There is hope that does not disappoint. There is the fullness and satisfaction of our souls. Where do you seek for these things? Among the Canaanites of this world or by being set apart to the Lord and His people; under the yoke of Christ?