

Message #42**Joshua 24:29-33**

What an amazing story this book of Joshua is. What an amazing man of God Joshua was. We have followed him as he led Israel from the east side of the Jordan River. We have marched with him as he went to Jericho and Ai. We followed him as he conquered all of the land of Canaan. The first seven years were intense years of war and now over twenty years of settling in the land was over.

We have seen walls fall flat; we have seen altars built; we have seen the sun stand still; we have seen cities conquered and constructed and now we come to the end of an incredible saga, the end of an incredible man.

The story of the book of Joshua began with a story of triumph. But in some ways it ends in tragedy. What should have taken place when Joshua was gone didn't take place. What could have happened didn't happen. The truth is all of the problems Israel has today concerning her land can be traced right back to what she didn't do when Joshua died.

What we see here is this:

REGARDLESS OF HOW GREAT AND GODLY THE LEADERSHIP FOR GOD, IT WILL EVENTUALLY END AND IF GOD'S PEOPLE DO NOT KEEP THE SAME FOCUS OF THAT LEADERSHIP THAT BROUGHT GOD'S BLESSINGS, THOSE BLESSINGS WILL SOON BE GONE.

Under Joshua's leadership the nation Israel saw God do a great deal. One blessing after another, one victory after another was experienced by the nation. Oh there were some setbacks, but for the most part it was a story of major victory. God did remarkable things for Israel through Joshua and it is almost inconceivable that they could forget that in just a few years.

I cannot help but think of what happened to GRSBM. It was an amazing school, blessed by God. As soon as Mr. Miles stepped down, the school started departing from the philosophy God had so blessed. As a result the very buildings that were once a campus of great blessing for the Lord is now a series of buildings owned by the city. That is the story of Israel today. Land that was once hers is no longer hers. Jewish land is now Arab land. What a tragedy.

In these final verses of Joshua we get the death report of three critical people:

DEATH REPORT #1 – The report of the death of Joshua. 24:29-31

If the Lord carries, no matter how glamorous, glorious or triumphant the life, it will end in a funeral. Joshua was an old soldier for God. He was a powerful man and a very useful man for God, but it was his time to leave. We may recall that the last official act of Joshua was to admonish the people to be faithful to God. **Joshua never focused on what he did; he focused on what God did.**

In this final look we get of Joshua, there are five final facts brought out.

Final Fact #1 - Joshua had been the son of Nun. **24:29a**

We again are reminded that Joshua was the son of Nun. This was not some big name Biblical superstar. What this shows us is that you do not have to come from some big impressive family name to do a big work for God.

Joshua was somebody's son. He was flesh, bone and blood to real parents. He was a human and he was raised in a family. In the end, what Joshua accomplished for God would make any parent proud.

When it comes time for us to leave this world, we do have a name and if our name is good for God, it is better than silver or gold.

Final Fact #2 - Joshua had been the servant of the LORD. **24:29b**

This is a very high honor and accolade. When the book of Joshua opened only Moses held this title (Joshua 1:1, 7, 15). Joshua's was Moses servant or aid. Only an elite few of the O.T. men were called servants of Jehovah. At the end of his life, Joshua made it to this level. He had earned this status by his consistent faithfulness.

Joshua's willingness to follow God no matter what the enemy or obstacle had earned him this great title. What a tremendous legacy. What a great epilogue to one's life. He was a great servant of God.

When famous people die, people say nice things about them. What a great entertainer. What a great singer. What a person. But when it is time for us to die, the greatest of all memories will be what a great servant of God. That was Joshua.

Final Fact #3 - Joshua lived to be 110-years-old. **24:29c**

In the O.T., long life was a great sign of blessing (Ps. 91:16). Moses lived to be 120-years-old (Deut. 34:7). Joshua did not live as long as Moses, but he did live a long life.

Age at this time was age as we know it. Living to this age was in fact a blessing of God. This age of 110 was the exact same age that Joseph lived to be (Gen. 50:26). What I find amazing about both of them is that the greatest years of their lives to enjoy the peace and prosperity of God actually came to both of them in the later years of life.

It is a sad thing when someone ends their life short because they will never know what God would have done in remaining years of life.

Just because one is older does not mean that God's best blessings are over. God's greatest blessings of all may occur in our twilight years. They certainly did for Joseph and Joshua. The most enjoyable time of our lives may be near the end.

Final Fact #4 - Joshua was buried in his land inheritance. **24:30**

It doesn't matter how great the leader, sooner or later life on this earth ends. We don't like this reality, but this is reality. When Joshua's life ended there are a couple of burial matters to think about:

(Burial Matter #1) - Joshua was buried in the place where he ended his life.

He was in the Promised Land and he was in the land of his families' inheritance.

(Burial Matter #2) - Joshua as buried in a place that was primarily barren and not beautiful.

Joshua was not buried in some beautifully kept cemetery that features massive and expensive monuments. Truth is today you can't even find his grave. There is a rock cave that is northwest of Ariel near an Arab village that claims it is the grave site of Joshua and Caleb. In fact, on May 5th every year some modern Israelis gather there to pray. May 5 was a traditional date assigned to Joshua's death. But no one really knows if this is even the place. What is interesting is that if Israelis are gathering there to pray and it is near an Arab village, they ought to wonder why there are Arabs in land that Joshua said was ours.

What really matters here is not where he was buried, but that he was a servant of the Lord.

Naturally he would want to be buried in the Promised Land. Truth is any way you view it, a grave is still a grave. You can only spruce it up so much. What really matters at death is the relationship with God one had before the grave. The grave doesn't really matter.

Final Fact #5 - Joshua was impacting in his life and death. **24:31**

There is no greater testimony of a man's life than what we read right here. If the legacy of a man is the people served the Lord, it is the greatest legacy a man can have.

Joshua had made a big difference in people's lives, at least for a while. Israel served God all the days of Joshua and as long as the Elders who survived Joshua were alive. Joshua had been a true leader for God and true leaders always influence others.

But the truth is Joshua's influence will be short-lived because when we turn to Judges 2:8-11 just one generation after Joshua, it was gone. The people did not know the Lord and they didn't even remember Joshua.

There are some observations to make before we move on:

- 1) Leadership does impact people. We will lead others in some direction. We want to influence people to move in the ways of God.
- 2) When a great leader is gone, it is the Elder's responsibility to keep the focus right where it was when God blessed the people. They need to stay focused on the same goals and objectives.
- 3) When a great leader passes off the scene, there can be a real danger of departing from the very things that brought about God's blessings.

It doesn't take long if the place does not stay focused.

DEATH REPORT #2 – The report of the burial of Joseph. 24:32

Joseph was a great man of faith. His life's story was incredible. Just before he died, through faith, he knew God would ultimately bring Israel to the land He promised to Abraham. Just because it didn't happen in his lifetime did not mean it would not happen (Gen. 50:23-25).

Joseph had said to his brothers when this does happen, take my bones and bury them in the Promised Land.

Joseph had not been forgotten. He had two sons—Manasseh and Ephraim. They brought their father's bones through the wilderness into the Promised Land and they buried the body at Shechem.

Jacob had purchased this piece of property from Hamor's sons for 100 pieces of silver (Gen. 33:18-19) and that is where Joseph was buried. So this very fact confirms the land ownership.

So for a while, things looked good; but the next generation forgot about them and it wasn't long until Israel was not obeying God.

DEATH REPORT #3 – The report of the death of Eleazar. 24:33

Aaron had been the first priest who died and now Eleazar, Aaron's son, the second priest died. **Eleazar had been to Joshua what Aaron had been to Moses.**

Now on the surface level of things this seems all so serene and peaceful. You have Israel in the land and they are not fighting for it, but they are just burying some bodies. But there is more to this than meets the eye.

What you actually have here is the story of great leadership, godly leadership dying off and then the next group lives and just forgets about these faithful people.

In the N.T., the Apostolic Age was an exciting time. But about 400 years after the Apostles until about 1500 years after the Apostles there was a period of time known as the dark ages.

It wasn't until a man named Luther started reading and studying the Bible again and when he did, things started to happen.

What went wrong? Some of the big names of Christianity lived in that time frame after the Apostles. There was Polycarp, Athanasius, and Augustine. What went wrong is that their focus was forgotten.

These were men dedicated to the Word of God and when they were gone so was that focus.

LESSONS:

- 1. Don't ever take great, godly leadership for granted because they will not be with us forever.**
- 2. Don't ever forget about the blessings God gave when they were leading and stay focused on the same objectives.**
- 3. When all of these great leaders were buried, none of them arose from the dead; but One came who did. Jesus Christ is the Only One who can save from sin and the Only One who can give life to one who dies.**