**Joshua’s Farewell to the Leaders and the Covenant Renewed at Shechem**

The final 2 chapters of Joshua record the last times Joshua addressed the people of Israel. Chapter 23 begins by noting that God had given Israel rest from its enemies and that Joshua was old. He summoned the leaders of the tribes and told them that they had seen everything that God had done, how He had fought for them. It is thought that this meeting took place at Shiloh which was the location of the tabernacle. Joshua, perhaps in a moment of pride, said that he had conquered the Canaanite nations (the KJV uses the term “cut off”) and that God would drive out the inhabitants of those nations. While the kings had been defeated, many of their subjects remained. Joshua told the leaders to be strong and to carefully obey everything in the Book of the Law of Moses without turning to the left or right (See Matt. 7:14). He also told them not to associate with the Canaanites or worship their gods. He reminded them that their ability to defeat forces greater than their own was only because of God’s power. He then described their fate if they turned away from God and allied with the survivors of the nations that had been subdued. He said that God would not drive them out and that they would become snares the Israelites who would perish from the land.

Joshua ended his address by saying that he was about to die and telling them that all of God’s promises had been fulfilled, not one had failed. He warned them that God would be just as faithful to render judgement as he had been in providing blessings. If they violated the covenant, and serve other Gods, then they would perish from the land.

In chapter 24, Joshua summoned all the tribes to Shechem. While Shiloh was the headquarters of Israel, Shechem was the site of numerous significant events in Jewish history. It was there that Abraham received God’s promise (see Gen. 12:6-7). When Jacob returned to his home land after leaving Laban, he first settled at Shechem and built an altar there. The city was later defiled by the murderous acts of Simeon and Levi seeking revenge for the rape of their sister. Finally, Shechem was the resting place of Joseph’s bones after years of journeying through the desert.

Joshua began his sermon by quoting God, tracing the history of Israel back to the days of Terah and Nahor, noting that they had worshipped other gods. God continued in describing how He had established Israel through Abraham and had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and given them the land of Canaan and driving out their enemies. Note that He omitted their numerous rebellions (but see Acts. chap. 7). Joshua then told the people to fear God and serve Him. He told the people to throw away their false gods, indicating that some had kept idols. He then presented them with a choice: they could serve God or worship false gods (see also Deut. 30:15). He then stated his famous declaration: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”. The people replied that they would also serve God but Joshua told them they were not able. The people insisted they were able and Joshua held them to their promise, drawing up a written covenant which he recorded in the Book of the Law of God. This was a repeat of the covenant first given at Mount Sinai (see Ex. Chap. 24) and later reaffirmed (see Deut. 26:17). The chapter concludes by recording the death of Joshua at the age of 110 and the death Eleazer.

Joshua, like Moses repeated the history of Israel for the purpose of showing the people how God had provided for them through their 40 years in the desert and their occupation of Canaan, a warning not to take credit for what God had provided. This past Sunday, Steve quoted Moses in Deuteronomy when he told the people to be careful not to forget the Lord when they lived in cities they did not build and ate from vineyards and trees they did not plant, a reminder that we need to be thankful all year long, not just on Thanksgiving. We should also remember to give God praise regardless of our circumstances (see Hab. 3:17-18).