

## Sermon Outline

# **“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

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## GOD WITH US, ALWAYS (JOSHUA 24:29-33)

### I. Introduction

### II. The End of an Era (Joshua 24:29-33)

- A. We come to the end of Joshua’s life as well as the book that bears his name: “After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old” (v 29).
- B. Joshua was able to live to a tremendously ripe old age. This is not surprising given how active and fit people were in those days.
- C. Yet, Joshua’s death itself is an important theological statement.
  - 1. It reminds us that as holy and faithful as Joshua was, he too was under the curse.
  - 2. The fact that Joshua succumbed to death is itself a reminder that he too was a sinner just like any person.  
—Romans 6:23: “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
  - 3. Although Joshua served as an anointed one of God, Joshua himself was not the final Savior who is to come. He is not the One who will crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15), and bring about the new heavens and the new earth. That honor is reserved for someone else, the greater Joshua who is to come.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What major event is recorded in Joshua 24:29? (2) How is Joshua’s death a theological statement? What does it tell us about Joshua himself?

### III. A Steadfast Nation (Joshua 24:31)

- A. Verse 31 affirms what we already know about Israel’s conduct throughout the days of Joshua: “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel” (v 31). Just as Joshua began with a faithful Israel, Joshua ends with a faithful Israel.
- B. Israel lives and functions as God’s priesthood in the world.
- C. If later generations of Israelites want to know what it means to serve God, they can look back to Joshua to see what faithful service to God entails.
- D. While the holy wars would not go on forever, at least not in their military form, later generations of Israelites can learn from their forefathers’ strict and faithful attention to the Law of the Lord.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does verse 31 speak about Israel? (2) How could Israel’s conduct in Joshua serve later generations of Israelites?

#### IV. The Remains of Joseph (Joshua 24:32)

- A. In verse 32, we have a reference to the remains of Joseph.
- B. This detail was most likely included to record that Joseph's own descendants have fulfilled the promise they made to their ancestor.  
—Genesis 50:24-25: “And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What purpose does v 32 serve? Why are the remains of Joseph mentioned? See Gen 50:24-25.

#### V. Concerning Eleazar (Joshua 24:33)

- A. Finally, verse 33 tells us about Eleazar the priest.
- B. Eleazar was the priest who served next to Joshua all throughout this period of history.
- C. While he does not seem as central of a figure as Joshua, it seems fair to say that Joshua could not have made many of his decisions if it were not for Eleazar's guidance.  
—Numbers 34:17 tells us that the two men who are in-charge of dividing the land for Israel are “Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun.”
- D. Eleazar too deserves some mention: “And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) According to Num 34:17, what was Eleazar's importance in Joshua? (2)

#### VI. When Will Death End?

- A. In the end, all's well that ends well. Under the God-centered leadership of Joshua and Eleazar, Israel has fought the good fight.
- B. Yet, we also know the theological significance of Joshua's and Eleazar's death—they too were sinners. They share in the common curse that afflicts all the children of Adam and Eve, whether Jew or Gentile.
- C. The book of Joshua leaves us with a question at the end: *When will all this death end?* When will Eden be restored? Who is going to be the leader of Israel whose story will not end with the statement, “After these things, so-and-so died”? And which generation of Israelites will see the end of the curse and live forever?
- D. Hebrews 4:8 invites us to ask those questions: “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.”
  - 1. This statement helps us to read Joshua in proper perspective.
  - 2. The idea is that Joshua did not bring God's people to the final Sabbath rest that God had in store for them.
  - 3. If he had, there would be no more remaining Canaanites to fight—and absolutely no more sin.

4. “So then,” Hebrews goes on to say, “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his” (vv 9, 10).
5. Joshua is not the final answer. He may have been God’s answer to Israel for one specific moment in their history, namely, the entrance into the land of promise. But he is not the ultimate Answer to all the needs of Israel, much less the needs of the world. And so, there is much that remains to be done, as Israel will soon discover for themselves. There is still a final Sabbath rest to come. Only then will humankind be set free from the power of the curse.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What major event is recorded in Joshua 24:29? (2) How is Joshua’s death a theological statement? What does it tell us about Joshua himself?

## VII. “I Am the Resurrection”

- A. Which brings us to the words of our Lord Jesus in John 11. In this passage of Scripture, Jesus had come to see the two sisters Mary and Martha whose brother Lazarus had died. And the conversation he had with Martha was instructive.
  1. Martha: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”
  2. Jesus: “Your brother will rise again” (v 23).
  3. Martha: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” (v 24).
  4. Jesus: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (vv 25, 26)
  5. Martha: “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (v 27).
- B. Joshua the Son of Nun could not have said “I am the resurrection and the life” of himself.
  1. While Joshua brought Israel into the Promised Land, Joshua could not give Israel the ultimate reality to which the Promised Land points—and that reality is the resurrection and the eternal Sabbath rest from the oppressive power of sin and death. That honor has been given to Jesus the Son of God.
  2. Joshua the messiah is a symbol of the even greater Messiah to come.
  3. Just as Joshua freed God’s Church from the human agents of the false gods, Jesus the Christ will liberate God’s Church from the false gods themselves. —He does this by fulfilling the Law for them; dying for their sins, and rising from the dead to take his place at the right hand of God. This is the Gospel that we preach.
- C. We must heed the words of Jesus: “Do you believe this?”
  - Do you believe that he is the Son of God?
  - Do you cast your hope in him?
  - Do you rest in him for resurrection and eternal Sabbath rest?
  - Do you depend on Jesus alone for your reconciliation with God and all the goodness that God desires for his people to have?

- D. If we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in him alone for all good things, God promises that we will have those good things through Jesus Christ.
- E. So as we read Joshua or any other book of the Old Testament, and as we marvel at the holiness of each Old Testament saint, we must be sure to read those things the way God himself intended. We must see the light of Christ Jesus in those people.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What does our Lord’s conversation with Martha show about (a) Jewish beliefs concerning the resurrection and (b) Jesus’ belief about himself? (2) How does Joshua compare to Jesus? (3) Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Have you entrusted yourself to Jesus?

### VIII. God with Us Now and Evermore

- A. Since Jesus Christ is the goal of all history for God’s people, we can see that even when we lose our fathers, father-figures, or trusted authorities in this world, we are never alone.
- B. God is committed to bringing us home to himself in Jesus Christ.
- C. Although these last verses of Joshua do not say it in so many terms, God continues to be with Israel even after Joshua has died.
- D. At the end of the day, Joshua was never the main character—even in the book after his name.
  1. The One who led, fought, and saved Israel has always been the LORD.
  2. Because of his unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord will never ever abandon his people.
  3. Even when their sins become so crimson and dark, even when the Lord does bring the curses of the Law upon Israel, his steadfast love for his people remains.
  4. For that reason, God will come back for his people and save them from their sins.
- E. Where are you feeling uncertainty in your life?
  - Where have you lost a father, father-figure, or some stable source of authority in your life and you are now driven into anxiety?
  - Where is your future unclear?
  - Where do you feel insecure?
- F. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, the God of the Lord Jesus is now your God.
- G. Since the God of the Lord Jesus is the God of Israel, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this means that you too have come under the orbit of his unconditional promise and covenant. You have come under the rule of his steadfast love. He will never leave you or forsake you.
- H. “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38, 39 ESV).

**God is with us now and always.  
So, “Be strong and courageous” (Josh 1:6).**

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How do we know that God is with us? (2) “At the end of the day, Joshua was never the main character.” Who was the true leading figure in Joshua’s book? (3) Where are you experiencing uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety in your life? (4) What promise does Rom 8:38, 39 offer us?