

APRIL 21

Joshua 22:21-23:16

Joshua 22:21-34

One point of interest I saw today as I was reading my German Bible was the place where the altar was built. In 22:10, it says *the region of the Jordan*, in the English versions; but in the German it says, *The Stone Circles*.

The Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT) says "Gilgal (which means circle)." This is the place where Israel had crossed over the Jordan seven years earlier. The nation had lived there for some time as it began to fight against Jericho and other cities. More importantly, if this place was Gilgal, it is where they set up a circular monument made of "stones" that they brought up out of the waterless bed of the Jordan as the people had passed across the dry river bed.

When the two and a half tribes came to this place after seven years of absence from their families, and after all the battles and campaigns, the sight of this "literally monumental" place must have stirred them. It might have been that the events in the wilderness, as well as the crossing of the Jordan, all seemed so long ago. Now they realized it was possible that the other tribes would forget that they were all related.

Vs. 21-23 This is a very heartfelt and motivated rebuttal of the accusations. What they did here might have not made sense to me, but they had very sincere motives.

Vs. 24-28 Notice how often their children or descendants are mentioned here. In a perfect world this wouldn't have been a problem, because they would have begun gathering at the tabernacle for the feasts three times a year; and so, there would have been a means of gathering and communication. After Joshua's death, few obeyed the Lord.

V. 29 It is notable that they affirm that the tabernacle was the only place to worship God through offerings.

Vs. 30-31 Phinehas is the spokesman and says that through this potential crisis, they have seen that the Lord was in their midst.

Vs. 32-34 What I find interesting is all the unity: the unity of the nation to find out why the altar had been built, the unity of the 2.5 tribes, and then the unity of the entire nation regarding the resolution. The people had learned lessons in the wilderness, and up to this point, everyone was following God. This unity was a sign of God's blessing.

Joshua 23:1-16

This is the first half of Joshua's final address to Israel. Today the message is to the leaders (v. 2). Tomorrow the message will be to the people and the book will come to an end. Get ready to celebrate with a McCanaan and a Milk&Honey shake.

Vs. 1-4 This is the second time now that we have seen a leader of Israel hang up his sandals. If you were leading a group of disciples, what would your final address be?

Joshua seems to be telling them that he is about to change his residence to God's zip code, and he briefly recounts how God had used him to give the people their land and to destroy their enemies before them.

Vs. 5-13 It seems here that Joshua is exhorting them to follow deeply the promises of the Lord. Based on what God had promised, they could be strong and courageous, following the Lord and taking the initiative as God led. Obeying the Lord and loving Him would be the key.

Vs. 14-16 All of what God promised had come true and they could have had total victory. It is sad to think that all of what Joshua warned them of would come true in Judges. Notice how

Joshua says that just as God fulfilled the promise of giving them the land, if they disobey, He will just as certainly fulfill the promise to remove them.

There are three things that stand out to me in what Joshua says.

First, he directs the people to understand that God had blessed them and fought for them. They were to be grateful and focused on God.

Second, in v. 11, Joshua focuses them on God's love. Following as disciples, too, has to originate out of His amazing love for us.

Third, Joshua warns them of the danger of leaving the Lord by not obeying. As disciples, there is a lot of distraction in life and in the church. Our mission has always remained very simple for each individual and for every church. But life on earth blurs our vision, and the body of sin wears us down. Daily refocusing is necessary. That is why disciples need to be in the Word daily. And that is why Jesus showed us the model of being with a group of disciples, reaching out and making disciples. We need to keep one another encouraged and sharp in Christ.

Luke 20:27-47

We've had these same events before. God is giving us this repetition for a reason.

Vs. 27-38 While the question about taxes was designed to get Jesus in trouble either with the Romans or with the Jews, depending on His answer, this issue was meant to make Jesus look foolish. The Sadducees had probably used this on many Pharisees and had great success with it. Instead, Jesus turned this into a very simple, but powerful, moment of teaching. Actually, I still find what Jesus says in vs. 37 and 38 profound.

Vs. 39-40 Even the enemy, *the scribes*, were pushed to sincerity and silence by the truth, honesty and insight of what Jesus had just said.

Vs. 41-44 But rather than Jesus schmoozing up to the scribes, He pressed the point. Jesus gives them another one of those simple, obvious, and extremely profound insights. Again, Jesus isn't doing this to prove any point or further the conflict. He is fishing in the harvest. I guess that's what you call a "mexed mitiphor."

Vs. 45-47 Jesus had said this earlier to the Pharisees, but *the scribes* (lawyers) were a branch of the Pharisees. This is not the worst thing Jesus has said about *the scribes*, but in this situation, it was like throwing gas on a fire. The judgment of God would come on Israel because of their leaders, so Jesus' condemnation was more than just. At the same time, we noticed that when Jesus honestly stood against these leaders, others like Matthew the tax collector understood that the way to God stood open through Jesus. I think that is why Jesus is being so bold and so open in what He is saying. There are people standing by whom He is hoping to reach.

I was reading this morning Jesus telling His disciples, "*even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Matt. 20:28) Even under pressure, near His death and in the face of His enemies, Jesus was still honest and caring and reaching out to anyone who would hear. As His disciples, we are to abide in Him and do the same in our particular part of the harvest.

Psalm 89:14-37

This part of the psalm is like reminding God how He has blessed David and promised him a perpetual reign.

Vs. 14-18 Because they rest and hide in God's righteousness, faithfulness, and love, and because they exalt in Him, He is their strength and shield. This is a way of saying they have made themselves dependent on God. God is their only help.

Vs. 19-26 When we first meet David, he will be a young teen who is surprisingly anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel. He was God's choice and God had promised. And then we will watch God exalt David's faith. And then we will watch David run for his life for a decade. It is during this waiting and running and crying out that David became "a man after God's own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14) And in all of that, God proved over and over, that David was His man and confirmed His steadfast love and faithfulness to him. Why do we think we should expect any other treatment if God loves us as much as He loved David? We are servants and slaves of our Savior.

Vs. 27-37 In light of what Scripture says about a future bodily reign of David on earth under the Messiah, this promise to David was very profound. David, for all of his faults, became a model of the Messiah. We have already seen that Jesus was both the Son of David and the Lord of David.

Even though this is a great and exalted promise, notice what is said in vs. 30-33. Even though a son of David may stumble in his walk with God, God would still regard the promise to David. Solomon would be the first and real threat to this covenant, but I think the occasion for the writing of this psalm was Absalom's rebellion. If so, the psalmist, with David sitting in, is asking God not to allow the rebellion of David's son to make Him forget the kindness He has promised to David. Punishment was promised, but so was covenantal love and loyalty.

In reading these last verses I am amazed at the promise of God. And to think, that as disciples, we have something that makes the promise to David look like a two-year-old's Sunday school drawing. Our Savior has promised amazing things to us eternally and also as we follow Him into the harvest making disciples, who make disciples.

Proverbs 13:17-19

As a disciple, v. 19 hits me. To do what we need to do at this time in this harvest, we need to be able to say, "No," to our desires, not just when they are evil, but also when they are a silly use of time. For us as followers, the biggest temptation is to fritter away time with little endeavors that are not evil. These things come under our radar and they occupy our time and blur our focus. "No longer being a fool," to me, means to stop following the rabbit trails that, while not evil, lead me away from abiding in Christ, His love, His passion and His mission.