

### Joshua's Farewell Address, Part 1

#### Joshua 24:1-13

Joshua 24:1-13 - *"Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. <sup>3</sup> Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. <sup>4</sup> To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out.*

*<sup>6</sup> 'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. <sup>7</sup> So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. <sup>8</sup> And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. <sup>9</sup> Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. <sup>10</sup> But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. <sup>11</sup> Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. <sup>12</sup> I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. <sup>13</sup> I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."*

#### Background Notes

Joshua's farewell address to the 2 ½ tribes who lived on the east side of the Jordan River is found in Joshua 22. Joshua 23 records his farewell address to the leaders of the children of Israel. In Joshua 24 we find the account of Joshua's final farewell address to all of Israel gathered at Shechem (v1). Shechem was in the central part of the land. Shechem was where Israel had ratified God's covenant (Joshua 8), soon after the battles of Jericho and Ai.

The covenant was reaffirmed, once again at Shechem, about 25 years after the covenant renewal of Joshua 8. This covenant renewal probably took place not too long before Joshua's death, which is recorded at the end of this chapter.

Why two covenant renewals at Shechem? Answer: Why not? It never hurts to renew a covenant before God, especially after 25 years. Covenant renewal before God is a good practice.

In the first part of the covenant renewal in Joshua 24, Joshua summarized God's faithfulness to His people, especially in the way He chose, protected, and guided the nation of Israel. Notice the number of times God says "I." This emphasizes God's sovereign care and concern for His people. We read of this same sovereign care of God for His people in Psalm 44:1-3 - *"We have heard with our ears, O God. Our fathers have told us the deeds You did in their days, in days of old: You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out, for they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them. But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them."*

In reference to God's sovereign care for His people, in this first section of Joshua 24 we see that God is sovereign over nature, God is sovereign over history, and God is sovereign over mankind. God is in full control of all these areas and He works them together for the good of His people. Let's look at these three areas where God is sovereign.

## Doctrinal / Teaching Points

### 1. God is sovereign over nature for His people.

Verse 5: *"Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out."* In the plagues of Egypt -- frogs, lice, flies, livestock, hail, darkness -- God was controlling nature. He was sovereign over nature for His people. In verse 7 we read that at the Red Sea crossing God brought the sea upon the pursuing Egyptians and covered them. God controlled the waters of the Red Sea for His people.

In verse 12 God said *"I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow."* Some commentaries say that the word *hornet* may be figurative for other oppositions that the Canaanites faced, to soften them so that Israel would conquer them more easily. That may be so, but there's no good reason why this word can't be taken literally. As God sent swarms of flies and locusts upon the Egyptians, so God could have sent swarms of hornets and wasps upon the Canaanites. God is sovereign over nature for His people. We see this all the way through the Bible. Our Lord calmed the sea, for example.

Is God sovereign over nature for His people today? Yes, of course He is! Ephesians 1:11 says that God works all things after the counsel of His will, and all things certainly includes nature!

Some years ago, when we lived in Pittsburgh there was a huge snowstorm. As a result, a meeting that I was going to attend was cancelled, and it was never held. I had planned to make a major decision at that meeting, a decision that would probably have changed the entire course of my life -- but God used a snowstorm to cancel that meeting! God is sovereign over nature for His people.

## 2. God is sovereign over history for His people

In verse 6 God said “*Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.*” The Exodus was certainly an event in history and God controlled all aspects of it. In verse 8, referring to the conquest, God said, “*And I brought you into the land of the Amorites.*” And in verse 13 He said, “*I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.*” The conquest was an historical event, and God controlled it from start to finish.

God’s sovereignty controlled the conquest so that the cities and the farms were not destroyed, but were given to His people. This was part of God’s sovereign plans for His people. Listen to the words of Deuteronomy 6:10-11: “*So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build,<sup>11</sup> houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant.*” God controlled every aspect of the conquest for His people.

God is sovereign over history for His people, both then and today. Romans 8:28 says that “*God works all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” But you may think, “How can God do this, controlling circumstances and historical events to work together for good for you and for me and millions of other believers at the same time? That’s a big job!” True, but we have a big God! He can do it. He can pull it off! God is sovereign over history for His people.

## 3. God is sovereign over mankind for His people.

Verses 9-10: “*Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand.*” The account of Balaam and Balak is found in Numbers 22-24. Balak, the king of Moab, hired Balaam, a “diviner” from Mesopotamia, to curse Israel. But God controlled Balaam! God forced him to bless, rather than to curse Israel. God even caused Balaam, this pagan seer, to give a Messianic prophecy in his blessing of Israel! Numbers 24:17 - “*I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob. A Scepter shall rise out of Israel and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.*” Pharaoh and Balaam and all the Canaanite kings and their armies could not stop Israel, because God is sovereign over mankind for His people. The same is true today.

As an example, look at the miracle of the present state of Israel. Back in 1948, God controlled events of history and He controlled the leaders of this world so they made the unlikely decision (humanly speaking) to establish a homeland for the Jewish people in the ancient Promised Land! God is sovereign over mankind for His people!

Emmaus Bible College has been expanding its ministries, and we've seen some amazing decisions on the part of state and local officials in our favor. Why? Because God wants Emmaus Bible College to expand at this time, and God is sovereign over mankind for His people. If God wants you promoted in your job, or wants you to have a certain position, no one can stop it -- because God is sovereign over mankind for His people.

## Practical Application

### Make sure you hear the rest of the story!

Verse 4: *"To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt."* If you didn't know the rest of the story, and you only had this verse, who would you say got the greater blessing? Esau, of course! Esau was given a possession of land, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt. Jacob's descendants became slaves while Esau's descendants enjoyed freedom and the possession of land! But that's not the rest of the story. God brought His people out of Egypt and across the wilderness and into the Land of Promise. We now have the rest of the story.

Some of you may be feeling like you're Jacob in verse 4. It looks like everybody else has been blessed but God is not fulfilling His promises to you. Be patient, because the rest of the story hasn't taken place yet. Too often we look at our present situation and don't wait for the rest of the story to happen. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

"They lived happily ever after" can really be said of all believers -- including you! If you're hurting in some way at this present time, make sure you wait to hear the rest of the story.