



+ This week at Magdalen Road Church we looked at our penultimate message from our series in Joshua. We jumped right to the end of the book where we find 3 sermons from Joshua to the people of Israel before he goes to be with the Lord the Lord. What are the bits we've missed?! Well from chapters 13-21 Joshua divides the land up amongst the people of God, with a separate allotment for each family. Then in chapters 22 to 24 Joshua has his three final sermons.

This is a section that helps us to think about the future, just as Joshua was looking ahead and wanting the people to remain faithful of the rest of their lives, for us it deals with questions of how we will spend our future - will we be faithful? Will the people keep trusting in God? What about the next generation? Will they be faithful to the God who has rescued them, or will they run after the gods of Canaan?

Within this second sermon from Joshua, there are three little cycles that Joshua repeats as he outlines three dangers for the people:

The Danger of...

...not living in the light of past grace (v1-5)

Joshua is talking to the leaders of the people of Israel. He speaks to them both because they are leaders and so represent the people, but also v3 because they have seen the Lord at work. They were eyewitnesses of all that he did. v1 tells us they are 'at rest' in the land but then later from v4-5 we see there is still work to be done as there are still (defeated) people occupying the land. Because the leaders have seen God at work so they can look back to his faithfulness and yet look ahead with hope. They know his track record they know he has the power to help them to finish the job. Sadly if you look at Judges 2v10-13 you see that the people did not remove all the Canaanites, and

so the next generation does not know the Lord, and they engage in idolatrous worship of the Baals and Ashtoreths.

...hearts that drift away from God (v6-13)

The second cycle of warning from Joshua is him urging the people not to let their hearts be led astray by the gods of Canaan. Just as God in 1v7 urged Joshua to be strong & courageous, so here (23v6) Joshua does the same. They have (v8) so far 'held fast to him' but the danger that Joshua outlines is that (v12) they will instead 'cling' to the Canaanites (same word - also used in Gen 2 of the man and his wife). He knows that their hearts wander. He knows that our hearts are fickle. If he knows that if they even slightly associate with the Canaanite people and their gods they are likely to subtly drift and fall and so Joshua covers every base in v6-7. He gives (both positive and negative) motivations for faithfulness in v9-10 and then v12-13.

...forgetting who our God really is (v14-16)

The final warning from Joshua begins with a reminder that God has fulfilled every promise that he gave them (v14) however in v15-16 Joshua urges them to continue to keep trusting the God who makes promises. He ends on a stark warning, reminding them that they are only tenants in the land - if they walk away from the God of life they will be left with nothing.

We ended up again in v11, remembering that we are to be a people who love God.

As always feel free to use these as a starter for 10...

- What has struck you most from this Joshua series?
- Why do you think Joshua speaks to the leaders in this section? What is he talking to them about?
- Why does it matter that they saw God at work? What is this seeing meant to result in? How does this apply to us?
- Why do our hearts drift from God? What did that look like for the Israelites in v7? What does that mean for us? How can we stop the drift?
- How does Jesus affect our reading of this passage?
- What role do warning passages like this serve for believers under the New Covenant? eg Hebrews 2v1-4 or Hebrews 5v11-6v8, 1 Cor 10v1-13