

CbC to Aug 9

August 3 Su Reading A215 — Joshua 23 — Joshua's Charge

Audio: [Joshua 23 \(ESV\)](#)

The Guiding Word — Moses passed the leadership of Israel to Joshua just before they were to cross the Jordan River. The book of Joshua began with God's reminder of Moses' charge to Joshua to *"be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law ... Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go ... be careful to do according to all that is written in it... Be strong and courageous"* (Josh. 1:7-9). In chapter 23, near the time of his own death, Joshua gave a very similar set of commands. There is one big difference, however. Whereas Moses the leader had given his charge to his successor, the new leader, Joshua, was giving his charge to a large group of leaders, Israel's *"elders and heads, its judges and officers"* (v. 2). This large group was now assuming the primary leadership of this huge nation of people. How was that going to work? God would not give them specific directions like He had given to Moses and to Joshua. That sounds somewhat like our own position, doesn't it? Who is telling us what to do day by day? Yes, we have spiritual leaders in our church, but we see them only once or twice a week and may talk to them only once a month. One thing we have in common with the leadership committee of Israel is that we have the Word of God. That is our primary guide. We are to *"be careful to do according to all that is written in it."* We are exposing ourselves to it every day, and we should be striving to be obedient to its commands and directions.

August 4 M Reading A216 — Joshua 24 — Joshua's Final Challenge

Audio: [Joshua 24 \(ESV\)](#)

Choose to Serve — The last chapter of the book of Joshua ends with a summary of the previous 700-year history of God's work with Israel (vv. 1-14). It ends with the death of Joshua, who, like Joseph, died at the age of 110 years. The rest of the chapter emphasizes serving God, using the Hebrew word for "serve" 16 times. First, Joshua challenges the future Israelite leaders to *"fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness"* (v. 14) as he had set an example, saying, *"... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (v. 15). Then, the leaders committed themselves to follow Joshua's example and obey his challenge: *"...we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God"* (v. 18). Joshua's response is somewhat surprising: *"You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God"* (v. 19). Man's promise is rather weak without God's help. The same is true for us. We must ask for and depend upon God's power to be made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Joshua made a covenant with these leaders and set up a stone as a witness to their promise. The generation of leaders that carried on after the death of Joshua did well because *"Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua"* (Josh. 24:31). After that, however, the commitment of Israel to Yahweh began to crumble as we will read about tomorrow in the book of Judges.

August 5 Tu Reading A217 — Judges 1 — Incomplete Conquest

Audio: [Judges 1 \(ESV\)](#)

Disastrous Disobedience — Israel started out well following the death of Joshua, when *"the people of Israel inquired of the LORD..."* for direction (v. 1). God responded by choosing the leadership tribe of Judah to go first to further conquer their territory. With the help of the tribe of Simeon, they had success capturing the important cities of Jerusalem, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron (vv. 8, 18). However, they were not able to hold any of those cities from resettling by the Canaanites and Philistines. The reason appears to have been twofold: their lack of faith and reliance on God and their incomplete obedience. Judah *"could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron"* (v. 19). Those words, *"could not,"* sound like a lack of ability, but it was also a lack of faith. Earlier, when Ephraim in the hill country asked Joshua for larger territory since they could not drive out the Canaanites on the plain because of their chariots of iron, his answer was, *"you shall*

drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron" (Josh. 17:18). If they trusted God to help them, Ephraim could do it, and so could Judah. It is significant that following that "*could not*" excuse of Judah are eight statements that six other tribes "*did not*" drive out the Canaanites from their territories. Those were expressions of disobedience; they didn't do what God commanded them to do. Perhaps their inactivity was motivated by fear, laziness, or compassion, but it was disobedience that resulted in the beginning of the spiritual decline that dominates the whole book of Judges. Disobedience is harmful for us as well. We are not to make excuses or decide that our logical conclusions are better than what God told us to do.

August 6 W Reading A218 — Judges 2 — Patterns of Rebellion

Audio: [Judges 2 \(ESV\)](#)

The Way of Testing — The book of Judges is about several generations that came after Joshua and the leaders who were alive at the time of his death. There is a repeated pattern throughout the book of God's warning, Israel's turning to other gods, God's punishment through enemies, a judge's victory over the enemy, peace during the life of the judge, and another relapse into worshipping false gods. The end of this chapter reveals that all of this was "*to test Israel ... whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not*" (v. 22). God continues to test us in our day. Will we obey Him, or will we suffer His discipline? Often, we must learn to obey through the pain of the consequences of our sin. God's way is always the best way. Israel's repeated failure provides a warning example for us.

August 7 Th Reading A219 — Judges 3 — The First Three Judges

Audio: [Judges 3 \(ESV\)](#)

Cycles of Rescue — Chapters 3-16 tell the stories of 12 judges that God raised up to save Israel from enemies. It covers a period of over 400 years. There is a common pattern for almost all of these judges: Israel sinned by turning from Yahweh to other gods and were conquered by enemies, they cried out to God for help and God delivered them through the military strength and/or leadership of a judge, and then they experienced a period of rest without oppression. The stories of three judges are told in this chapter. Othniel, the son-in-law of Caleb, was raised up from the southern tribe of Judah to defeat the army of the king of faraway Mesopotamia who had ruled them for 8 years (see attached map from the ESV Study Bible). This provided 40 years of subsequent peace. The second judge was left-handed Ehud from the tribe of Benjamin, just northwest of the Dead Sea, who rescued Israel in a very graphic way from invasion and being ruled for 18 years by the king of Moab, whose people lived just east of the Dead Sea. Eighty years of rest followed for Israel. A very brief account was provided for the third judge, Shamgar, who was from an area just north of the Sea of Galilee.



Using Weak Things — We see another cycle in this chapter of Israel's pattern of falling away from Yahweh to serve other gods. This time, God had used a king within Canaan to oppress Israel. King Jabin had his headquarters in Hazor, just north of the Sea of Galilee. It was surprising that God used two significant women to accomplish His plan. Deborah was a godly woman, a prophetess, a civic leader, and a judge (v. 4). She lived in Ephraim, northwest of the Dead Sea (see yesterday's map), but she called on Barak, who lived far north near the Sea of Galilee (v. 6), to fight a war in the north near Mt. Tabor in Issachar (see today's map from the ESV Study Bible). Another surprise was that God used a cowardly man to conquer Canaan's army and their much feared chariots of iron. Barak responded to Deborah's call by saying *"If you will go with me, I will go"* (v. 8). As one woman was used to start the war, another was used to end it. Jael welcomed the fleeing Canaanite general into her tent, only to drive a tent peg through his head while he slept. Deborah used her brain and Jael used someone else's brain! Women in those ancient times were normally held in low esteem, but *"God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong"* (1 Cor. 1:27). We should not be held back from God's powerful work by excusing ourselves because of our weaknesses.



Giving Credit — Although this psalm was sung by Deborah and Barak (v. 1), the personal references to Deborah (vv. 3, 7, 9, 13) suggest that it was written by her. She began by singing praise to God, the ultimate cause of victory (v. 3). We should be like her, always giving primary credit to the Lord for what He accomplishes through us. Our human tendency is to point to ourselves in praise. Next, she gave praise to *"the leaders [who] took the lead ... [and that] the people offered themselves willingly"* (v. 2). Then, she praised the five tribes of Israel who were willing to fight in this war: Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun (v. 14), Issachar (v. 15), and Naphtali (v. 18). Again, women were prominent in this song: Deborah as the leader (7), Jael as the heroine (v. 24), and the grieving mother of the enemy's general, Sisera (v. 28). When we tell a story of something good that happened to us, we should remember Deborah's pattern of praise: give God the primary praise and then recognize the good that others contributed to the outcome.