Religion

Last words of Joshua



DAWN **REED**

We have been through the Jordan. When it was at flood stage. On dry ground.

We have marched around Jericho. Seen the walls fall at the greatness of God's Hand.

We have seen the sun stand still because he asked God to do it.

Now, too soon, Joshua — strong, brave Joshua — is preparing to die. Old and well advanced in years, he has summoned all of Israel's leaders to share some crucial last words (Joshua 23-24). Joshua knows the people well. He knows they are drawn to rebellion. This is his last opportunity for instruction.

Though written thousands of years ago, Joshua's words are words for today. For this generation and the next. Let's lean near his tent and soak up his last moments.

"I am old and advanced in years," he began. "You have seen everything the LORD your God has done … it was the LORD your God who fought for you." A good reminder. We see God's deliverance but then can quickly forget.

Joshua went on: "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning to the right of left." Obeying God's Word is always a good idea.

"Hold fast to the LORD your God," he encouraged in verse 8. We hold fast to many people and things. Holding fast to the LORD is best. When storms come, when floodwaters rise, He needs to be our Rock, our foundation.

In verse 11, Joshua said, "Be very careful to love the LORD your God." The internet says be careful means "to pay close attention to what you are doing so you can avoid accidents, mistakes, harm, or damage." So, yes, Joshua, what you said. Pay close attention, people, to loving the LORD.

I love verse 14: "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled, not one has failed." God's promises are good. He does not fail. He. Keeps. His. Word.

After a brief history lesson, Joshua says words that pack a punch. "Now fear the LORD and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

He wasn't finished. "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose you this day whom you will serve … But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," (24:15).

At 110 years old, Joshua was still choosing to serve the LORD and trying to get others to do likewise.

It has been a roller coaster ride through the book of Joshua in our Sunday School class. I am saddened by his passing. He served the LORD fiercely and faithfully.

Choose you this day whom you will serve. Serving the LORD is a choice … a daily choice.

Email religion columnist Dawn Reed at preacherswife7@yahoo.com.

Don't depend on magic wands



AL **EARLEY**

Laurie tells of a Halloween night when she ran out of candy. In a pinch she started dropping quarters into the sacks. A little girl came to the door dressed as a fairy princess, crown and wand and all. Jones put two quarters in the child's bag and said, "I've run out of candy, but tomorrow you can take these coins to the store and turn them into real candy." The girl stepped back, looked up, and said, "Lady, this isn't a real wand."

Halloween is full of pretend wands, pretend spells and pretend power. The Bible is clear that the real version of those things is not a game. "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them" (Leviticus 19:31). When Israel entered the land, they were told not to imitate the nations around them. "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

God does not treat the occult as harmless fun. He treats it as a rival claim on the heart.

Anton LaVey, who founded the Church of Satan, died on Oct. 29, 1997. His daughter and girlfriend kept the news quiet for a week, so it would not disturb followers during their most important holiday, Halloween. LaVey had written the Satanic Bible and taught that Satan stands for indulgence instead of abstinence, and for vengeance instead

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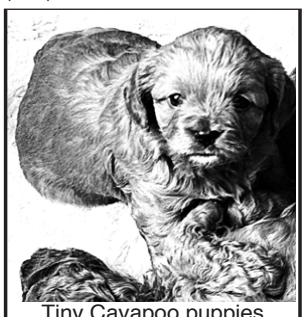
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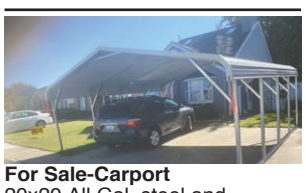
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