

Joshua 11:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

Analysis

As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

This verse summarizes Joshua's defining characteristic: complete obedience to the Mosaic covenant. The chain of command—LORD to Moses to Joshua—establishes the unbroken transmission of divine revelation through faithful human agents. The emphatic conclusion, "he left nothing undone" (lo-hesir davar, literally "he removed/turned aside not a word"), uses the strongest possible negative to assert Joshua's comprehensive faithfulness. This stands in stark contrast to later generations who would partially obey, compromising with Canaanites and adopting their practices.

The Hebrew construction emphasizes both precision and comprehensiveness. Joshua didn't select which commands to obey based on personal preference, cultural accommodation, or pragmatic calculation. He obeyed "all" (kol, כֹּל), a term appearing twice in this verse, stressing totality. Reformed theology recognizes this as the proper response to divine revelation—Scripture's authority extends to all its teachings, not merely those we find congenial. The Westminster Confession states that "the whole counsel of God" must be received (WCF 1.6).

This obedience resulted from relationship, not mere duty. Throughout Joshua, the

recurring phrase "the LORD said to Joshua" indicates intimate communication between God and His servant. Obedience flows from knowing God, not just knowing rules. Jesus would later say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), establishing love as obedience's motive. Joshua models the gospel pattern: relationship with God produces faithfulness to God's word, which in turn advances God's kingdom purposes.

Historical Context

The author's explicit testimony to Joshua's complete obedience serves historiographical and theological purposes. Ancient Near Eastern literature frequently praised rulers for piety and devotion to divine mandates, but typically as royal propaganda. The biblical account differs by making obedience the criterion for success rather than military prowess or political cunning. The later historical books (Judges, Samuel, Kings) will use this same standard to evaluate Israel's leaders, with most failing where Joshua succeeded.

The emphasis on complete obedience anticipates the troubling reality that Joshua's generation would be the last to serve Yahweh faithfully (Judges 2:7). The next generation would compromise, leading to the cycle of apostasy, oppression, and deliverance characterizing Judges. This makes Joshua's obedience both exemplary and poignant—it represents the ideal that Israel would consistently fail to maintain. Only Christ would perfectly fulfill the obedience Joshua modeled, becoming obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8) and fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

The chain of revelation (LORD-Moses-Joshua) establishes the principle of apostolic succession not in terms of institutional office but of faithful transmission of God's word. Later generations must maintain this chain by faithful teaching and obedience (2 Timothy 2:2). When the chain breaks—when leaders fail to teach God's word completely or when people refuse to obey what they've been taught—spiritual decline inevitably follows. The book of Judges demonstrates this tragic trajectory.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. In what areas of Christian teaching or practice are you tempted toward selective obedience, emphasizing preferred commands while minimizing others?
2. How does Joshua's complete obedience challenge the contemporary tendency to adapt biblical teaching to cultural acceptability?
3. What relationship exists between knowing God personally and obeying God comprehensively, and how can we cultivate both?

Interlinear Text

רְאֵשֶׁת	צְדָקָה	יְהִי	אֶת	מֹשֶׁה:	עָבֵד	וְ	מֹשֶׁה:	צְדָקָה	רְאֵשֶׁת
H834	command	As the LORD	H853	Moses	his servant	H3651	command		
	H6680		H3068		H4872	H5650			H6680
מֹשֶׁה:	יְהֹוָשָׁעַ	עָשָׂה	לֹא	יְהֹוָשָׁעַ	עָשָׂה	לֹא	הָסַרְךָ	רְאֵשֶׁת	לֹא
Moses	H853	Joshua	H3651	and so did	Joshua	H3808	he left	nothing	
	H4872		H3091		H6213	H3091			H1697
מֹשֶׁה:	אָשֶׁר	צְדָקָה	יְהִי	אֶת	מֹשֶׁה:				
H3605	H834	command	As the LORD	H853	Moses				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 1:7 (References Moses): Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Acts 20:20 (Parallel theme): And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

Deuteronomy 7:2 (References Lord): And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Acts 20:27 (Parallel theme): For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Deuteronomy 4:5 (References Lord): Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

Deuteronomy 31:7 (References Lord): And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

Deuteronomy 4:2 (References Lord): Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

2 Chronicles 30:12 (References Lord): Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.