

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE AND MOVE ON

LESSON 19

Series Subject: Accept the Challenge and Move On!

Lessons 17-19: The Final Admonition: To Live a Full and Victorious Life in the Promised Land Josh. 22:1-24:33

Lesson 19: Challenge to the Nation of Israel Josh. 24:1-33

Today's Study: Josh. 24:1-33

1. Called to Shechem v. 1
2. Commemorating Israel's History Vv.2-13
3. Challenge to Make a Decision Vv. 14-18
4. Called to Heed the Warning of Judgment Vv. 19-24
5. Covenant Renewed Vv. 25-28
6. Ceremonies for Three Great Men Vv. 29-33

Time is available only for a brief discussion of review questions from previous lesson.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Highlights from Lesson 18** (Josh. 23:1-16)

(a) **Call-in of the Leaders of Israel** (Josh. 23:1-2)

- (1) The account begins by acknowledging the blessedness of rest given by God to His people (v. 1a).

"... a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies ..."

- They were living a life of peace and security and experiencing God's wonderful blessings and provision in the land flowing with "milk and honey".
- Likewise, as with Israel, God offers "**rest to everyone!**" (Matt. 11:28-30).
- The **rest God** is talking about is not rest from our daily work or physical exhaustion when we labor. It is that profound peace that **God gives** to those who love and obey Him, regardless of circumstances. When there is wholehearted loyalty given to God, He will definitely stand by His promises to us!!
- Despite the troubling times, the testing and turmoil, there is rest found in God. The rest that God gives assures you of peace!!
 - "**A contended heart is a calm sea in the midst of all storms!!**"
 - Beloved, Jesus gives you the assurance! Give it all to Him, serving Him wholeheartedly, He will bless you!!! (see Matt. 6:25-34).

(2) Joshua was advanced in age (Josh. 23:1b, 2b).

- Some years earlier God had reminded him that he was getting old (Josh. 13:1b); now he is personally acknowledging the reality of his age (Josh. 23:2b).
- His age and experience were contributing factors in helping to make his address to the leaders even more effective.
 - He actually spent all his life in their (Israel's) service and therefore what he had to say was to be readily accepted by them.
 - They should also realize that his time with them was limited and it was necessary for them to carefully adhere to what he had to say and faithfully apply his admonition practically.

(3) This meeting involved all the leaders of Israel and no one was exempted (Josh. 23:2); this was a matter of top priority!

(b) **Compliance and Strict Separation** (Josh. 23:2-8)

As noted above, Joshua in his old age, gathered all the leaders of Israel to give them a farewell address; to communicate to them the things that were near to his heart, the things that were most important for them to hear.

(1) Joshua began his address by remembering God's bountiful blessings to Israel.

- He did not focus on his accomplishments as a military leader but was far more interested in glorifying God!!
- Note a brief review of some areas God blessed them in regards to victory over their enemies:
 - Many great and mighty nations were driven out to make room for Israel (Josh. 23:3a).
 - The enemies of Canaan were not only driven out but were trampled down (subdued) (Josh. 23:3b).
 - God did not only promise the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; etc.) but He fulfilled His promises; in fact, **He fulfilled all His promises** (Josh. 21:45).
 - Continued victory over the remaining enemies in Canaan was guaranteed (Josh. 23:5a).

(2) He reinforced the necessity to be committed (Josh. 23:6-8).

- The leaders had to be courageous in order to remain committed!!
 - They need to be fearless in order to steadfastly focus on and be obedient to God's Word.
 - **Lip service is easy to do but to sincerely and consistently follow God and His Word is not something for the faint hearted.**
- Joshua placed emphasis on obedience to God's Word:

Josh. 23:6a NKJV

"Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses . . ."

- The leaders and the entire nation were to **obey ALL God's law** (*this charge is applicable to all believers*).
 - Unfortunately, some are OK with doing somethings in God's Word but will not adhere to what is not their likings.
 - Joshua cautioned the leaders that they were not to turn away from God's Word, neither to the right or the left (Josh. 23:6b).
 - Whether to the Israelites or to any other nation of all times, God's greatest provision is His Word!!
 - The Israelites knew of God's faithfulness to them and it was their obligation to exercise diligence and effort to remain steadfastly committed to God!!
 - For them it meant having a made-up mind to keep moving forward in faith and obedience, not diverting to the right nor the left (Josh23:6b).
 - Satan doesn't care about which extreme anyone gets off to, either legalism or licentiousness pleases him.
 - **Beloved, no one can continue to experience the grace of God if they refuse to manifest the character of God; (example, see Deut. 5, note carefully verses 32-33).**
 - **Rom. 8:5-8 NKJV**
 "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. **So those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**"
 (Read Rom. 8:1-17)
- (3) A brief review for emphasis by noting the following pointers:
- The leaders were to be courageous, strong and careful in obeying God (v. 6).
 - They were to faithfully and consistently keep that which was written in the Book of the Law of Moses (v. 6).
 - They knew of God's faithfulness to them and likewise they must be faithful to Him (Vv. 4-5; etc.)
 - They were to take heed not to compromise with sinful practices but to maintain a consistent distinctive lifestyle (v. 7).
 - The fact is, if they compromised the standards, they would become a distraction and hindrance instead of being light to those in darkness (v. 7; etc.).
- (4) In our previous lesson I also noted some **"Practical Lessons"** as they relate to our text (*A brief review*):
- We must be: **"Admirably Obedient to God"** (Josh. 23:6).

- As believers there must be: **“Absolute Separation from the World”** (Josh. 23:7a).
- We must: **“Abstain from False Worship or False Gods”** (Josh. 23:7b).
- We must faithfully and consistently: **“Adhere to the LORD”** (Josh. 23:8)
- We also noted: **How to Avoid Stepping Away from God? Two things seen in Josh. 23:7:**
 - **First**, do not mingle with the rebellious people (v. 7a)
 - **Second**, do not give attention to the gods they worship nor their pernicious lifestyle (v. 7b).

(c) **Charge to Love the LORD** (Josh. 23:9-11)

- (1) Joshua once more places emphasis on the necessity of loving God (See also Josh. 22:5).
- (2) He also continues to focus on the blessings of God.
 - After leaving Egypt, Israel was constantly complaining (Example Ex. 16, NB Vv. 7-8, also Num. 14:1-2; 16:8-33; 20:1-4; etc.)
 - Joshua displayed an attitude of gratitude and continued to focus on the goodness of God towards Israel (note Josh. 23:9).
- (3) Joshua charged the leaders to focus on the great things that God has done for Israel.
 - Many great and mighty nations were driven out of this fine land to make way for Israel (Josh. 23:3).
 - These mighty armies were subdued before their very eyes (Psa. 44:5; Josh. chaps. 6, 8, 10, 11).
 - God has fulfilled **all** His promises to Israel, **not one failed** (Josh. 21:45).
- (4) God who was so faithful to Israel deserved to be sincerely and faithfully loved (Josh. 23:11).
 - Love is the root of all obedience as stated in the Book of Deuteronomy, it is the primary attitude people should have toward God!! (Example see Deut. 6:5).
 - Jesus Christ re-emphasized this most essential requirement and went further by adding that we must “love our neighbors as we love ourselves” (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31).
 - **Psa. 31:23 NKJV**
“Oh love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person.”
 - Loving the LORD means to walk in His ways, to obey His commandments and to cling or hold fast to Him with one’s heart and soul (Josh. 22:5).

(d) **Caution! Heed the Judgment of God** (Josh. 23:12-16)

- (1) He strongly warned them about the danger of forsaking God.
“... if indeed you go back...” (v. 12a NKJV)

- Nothing would more certainly draw them (Israel) away from their allegiance to God than for to have close up relationships with the unrighteous.
 - For them to continue in God’s love required them to be separated from the ungodly influence around them, they must keep themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27).
- (2) How Joshua describes the apostasy which he warns the leaders against?
- **The first step of this compromising act would be by growing intimate with idolaters (v. 12).**
 - The next step would be intermarrying with them (v. 12), and the Canaanites would find ways to create attractions to these forbidden unions by their deceit and they would be delighted to give their children in marriage to these wealthy Israelites.
- (3) Joshua warned the leaders if they do not separate themselves from the ungodly influences around them, those influences would become instruments of torture, leading to their destruction (Josh. 23:13b).
- **Beloved, the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with sinners cannot avoid having fellowship with sin.**
 - **“How often do we see that the temptation we have pampered and encouraged and indulged in become a scourge and thorn in our side! The compromising Christian is not a happy man! Let the enemy remain in a Christian life, let him have a foothold, and he soon become a scourge.”**
(Alan Redpath).
- (4) **God’s faithfulness (v. 14) served as a guarantee that similarly the LORD will judge Israel if they transgress the covenant (Josh. 23:15-16).**
- If they harbor and indulge with the Canaanites, they will become snares and traps to them, leading them away from God to a depraved lifestyle.
 - The judgment of God would mean destruction to them as a nation . . . **three times these warnings are mentioned:**
 - *Your enemies will irritate you until you perish from off this good land (v. 13).*
 - *God will plague, until you have perished from off this good land (v. 15).*
 - *Heaven and earth will collaborate to root you out so that you shall perish off the good land (v. 16).*
- (5) Beloved, judgment is certain, anyone who does not honor God by believing Him and following Him will face the eternal judgment of God!
John 5:28-29 Amp. Bible
“Do not be surprised and wonder at this, for the time is coming when all those who are in the tombs shall hear His voice. And they shall come out—those who have practiced doing good [will come out] to the resurrection of [new] life and those who have done evil will be raised for the judgment [raised to meet their sentence]. [Dan. 12:2].”

2. Summary of Joshua 24

In the final phase of his life, we witnessed Joshua reaching out to his people with critically important reminders and challenges to serve God wholeheartedly. In chapter 22, he addressed the East Jordan Tribes after they were discharged from active military duties and were allowed to return to their homes. Joshua charged them to sincerely and faithfully love and serve God consistently. In chapter 23, his challenge to all the leaders of Israel may be condensed in a threefold challenge: (1) to put God's Word first in their lives (23:6,7); (2) to live before God faithfully (23:8-10); and (3) to love God supremely (23:11-13). In chapter 24, he addressed all Israel through the leaders, and in essence his message is similar to what we have in chapter 23. In chapter 24 we have a more solemn occasion and the meeting was fully charged with the presence of God.

Once more Joshua assembled the tribes of Israel at Shechem to call the nation to renew their covenant with God; he did similarly after they conquered the city of Ai, the close of the Central Campaign, (Josh. 8:30-35). This would be Joshua's final act as the servant and mediator of the LORD'S people. He was hereby following the example of Moses, whose final act was also a call for Israel to renew their covenant, as it has documented and preserved in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Upon this occasion (Josh. 24), Joshua summoned all the leaders (v. 1) and the entire nation (Vv. 1, 2) to be in attendance. He once more took great care and effort to confirm, to the people of Israel, what is involved in true faith and sincere worship of God that they might faithfully adhere after his death. Upon carefully analyzing the account (Josh. 24), it was obvious that this gathering was inspired by God. It was an occasion where God communicated to the nation through Joshua to the leaders, who in turn informed the nation accordingly.

He reminded them that their forefathers in olden times worshipped pagan gods (v. 2). He told them that God brought Abraham out of that idolatrous lifestyle, brought him through Canaan and gave him many descendants. He also reminded them of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and their crossing of the Red Sea by God's miraculous power. He went on by reminding them of their victories over various enemies, including the Perizzites, the Amorites, the Canaanites and all those who tried to prevent them possessing the Promised Land. He reminded the Israelites that they have been given land that they did not work for, cities they did not build, and vineyards and olive groves they did not plant (Vv. 12-13).

Joshua emphasized the necessity for them to serve the LORD and to avoid any involvement with idols as it was with their ancestors. He allowed them to make their choice as to who they want to worship but he was wholeheartedly committing himself and his family to be faithful in serving the true and living God (Vv. 14-18). He once more warned the Israelites that if they did not serve God He would certainly

bring judgment that would result in their destruction. In response they pledged their allegiance to God (Vv. 19-24).

At Shechem, they made a covenant with God, which was recorded and a memorial stone was set up under an oak. Joshua reminded them that the stone would be a witness to the covenant they made (Vv. 25-28). The chapter closed with three burials ceremonies: for Joshua, burying the bones of Joseph and for Eleazar (Vv. 29-33).

NOTE:

There are some areas of this account that have been disputed. As usual, I will stay away from the unnecessary debates, however, I will highlight two things.

First, some teach that this meeting (Josh. 24) is the continuation of what we have in chapter 23. Obviously, we do have two distinctively different meetings.

Second, who were in attendance: only the leaders or all the people. The important factor is that **all** the people were informed of what God had to say to the nation. The nation could be addressed through the leaders as they had done before.

It should also be noted that the account noted: “all the tribes” (v. 1); “all the people” (v. 2); etc. Another important factor is the natural features of Shechem (1) the area was able to accommodate large gatherings, (2) **The acoustical advantage was another major contributor**. It has been stated that one person standing on one of the mountains could be easily heard by someone standing on the other mountain.

Irrespective of how it was done, the fact remains certain that all the people were informed of what God wanted the nation of Israel to hear!!

3. **Excerpts from Josh. 24 (Josh. 24: 1-3, 13, 14-16, 19, 24, 25, 26, 29-30, 32-33 NKJV)**

“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. And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus say 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. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him through all the land of Canaan and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.
. 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.’

‘Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’

So the people answered and said: ‘Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;’

.

And the people said to Joshua, ‘The LORD our God we will obey!’

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the Sanctuary of the LORD.

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Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in the hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountain of Ephraim.”

A. Called to Shechem Josh. 24:1

Introduction

When Joshua addressed Israel, as noted in the preceding chapter, he may have thought it was his final farewell address to the nation; note his statement: “I am old, advanced in age . . .” (Josh.23:2 NKJV); “I am old well advanced in years . . .” (ESV). However, God graciously continued his life longer than expected, and renewed his strength in order that Israel would benefit.

Matthew Henry states:

“We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and if He lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because He has some further service for us to do.”

Paul was not depressed, discouraged or disillusioned by his imprisonment but saw it to the glory of God (Phil. 1:12-19). He knew that his imprisonment could result in him being released or executed but, either way, it was to the glory of God who was in control of the situation (Phil. 1:20-30, NB Vv. 21-24).

Phil 1:23-24 NKJV

“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

1. Heeding to God’s Directives (Josh. 24:1)

- (a) This call was the desire and command of God and was obediently carried out by Joshua.

- (1) Note Joshua's acknowledgment of this divine charge in his address.
- Verse 2: Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel" (NKJV)
 - Note Joshua reporting as the second person, verse 3: "I took your father Abraham from ..." etc.
 - Joshua was a channel through whom God was speaking.
- (2) Note also in verse 1: "... they presented themselves before God." (NKJV).
- (b) In obedience to the LORD, Joshua summoned all the people of Israel for this solemn occasion at Shechem.
- (1) Scholars Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch noted the magnitude of this meeting: "For this solemn act he [Joshua] did not choose Shiloh, the site of the national sanctuary, . . . but Shechem, a place which was sanctified as no other was for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscence from the times of the patriarchs!"
- (2) The people came and presented themselves not only before Joshua but before God.
- "... and they presented themselves **before God.**"* (Josh. 24:1b NKJV).
- They came together in a solemn religious manner into the special presence of God.
 - They came expecting God to speak to them through His servant Joshua.
 - *Some scholars believe the Ark of God was brought to the place of meeting, which as a result reference was made to "... **the sanctuary of the LORD**" (v. 26 KJV)*
 - The Ark is symbolic of the very presence of God (Ex. 25:22, read Vv. 10-22).
 - Such awareness would make the event more solemn and create an awe upon those in attendance (*Keep in mind there were restrictions regarding the Ark which would be in force. For example, see Josh. 3:4, 6; 2 Chron. 35:3; 1 Sam. 6:19-21*).

2. Historical Significance of Shechem (Josh. 24:13)

Shechem was a place of significance in the history of Israel; Note some highlighted pointers:

- (a) Abraham travelled from Ur, across the Fertile Crescent and down to Canaan, the Bible mentioned Shechem as the first city to which Abraham came (Gen. 12:6). There God appeared to him and promised him and his descendants the land of Canaan, after which he built an altar (Gen. 12:7).
- (b) Abraham spent most of his life along the Route of the Patriarchs, example: **Shechem (Gen. 12:6)**, Bethel and Ai (Gen 12:8 ... "Haion" KJV... "Ai" NKJV and other translations), Hebron (Gen. 13:18; 14:13) and in Gera (Gen. 20:1).
- (c) When Jacob returned from Padan-aram, he camped at Shechem, he purchased land, built an altar and named the place Elelohe-Israel (God, the God of Israel) (Gen. 33:16-20).

- (d) While living in Shechem, Jacob's daughter, Dinah, was raped by Shechem, the ruler's son. Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi deceptively lured the men of Shechem into a deceptive pact and murdered them all, in revenge of Dinah (Gen. 34, NB Vv. 13-31).
- (e) In a season of recommitment to God in Jacob's life, God told him to go back to Bethel. Jacob did so and commanded all his household to put away their idols. Jacob took those idols and buried them under the oak tree near Shechem (Gen. 35:1-5).
- (f) Joseph, at the age 17, went from Hebron to Shechem in search of his brothers, found them in Dothan; because of their hatred for Joseph they sold him into slavery (Gen. 37, NB Vv. 18-29).
- (g) When Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage, they were commanded to enter the Promised Land and go to Shechem to pronounce the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant on the nation (Deut. 27:4; note chaps. 27 and 28). This was done by Joshua after the conquest of Central Canaan (Josh. 8:30-35). In our current lesson, we have Joshua gathering the whole nation to Shechem once more, reminding them of their previous pledge and the blessings and curses they themselves pronounced. Through Joshua, God brought Israel back to its beginnings. It was a solemn occasion, a time to remember, and to rededicate to God.

B. Commemorating Israel's History Josh. 24:2-13

Introduction:

How often do we forget where we are coming from, what it would be like if God didn't deliver us from sin? Israel was to remember their history of deliverance, victory and the outpouring of God's blessings. God, through Joshua, took them back to the beginning of them becoming a nation of chosen people. It was God who chose them to be peculiar, to be His loyal subjects and witness! It was God who delivered Abraham from an idolatrous lifestyle and given him, as well as his descendants, the hope of acquiring the Promised Land.

This concise historical account (Josh. 24:2-13) placed emphasis on the saving acts of God. The recitation of these miraculous acts of God was designed to inspire faith in God's power. Because God had faithfully supplied every need up to the time of this account (Josh. 24), Israel was to be assured that He was willing and able to meet their needs in the future.

For us believers, we can join Alison Krauss, in her song, "**Remind Me, Dear Lord**"

Partial Quote

So remind me, remind me dear Lord
 Nothing good have I done
 To deserve God's own Son
 I'm not worthy of the scars
 In His hands
 Yet He chose the road to Calvary

To die in my stead

1. **Hear the Word of God** (Josh. 24:2a)

“And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel . . . ’” (v. 2a NKJV)

(a) Joshua spoke to them in God’s name, and as from Him, addressing them in the language of a prophet.

(1) **“Thus says the LORD ...”**

- He is Jehovah the great God
 - “I am” in Ex. 3:14 refers to *“Yahweh”* (Jehovah).
 - He is “the present One, He who is”.
 - He is **always** there and will never forsake His own! (Deut. 7:9; 31:8; Psa. 103: 17-18)
 - He is your God in Covenant (Deut. 7:9; 31:8; Psa. 103:17-18); to Him you are obligated to whom you are to hear and heed.

(2) Matthew Henry notes:

“The Word of God is to be received by us as His, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it, His sermon consists of doctrine and application.”

(b) Herein, Joshua spoke as a prophet (Vv. 2-13)

(1) We do not often think of Joshua as a prophet, but here he spoke as an inspired messenger of God.

(2) How do we define a prophet?

- In Christianity, a **prophet** (or seer) is one inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to deliver a message.
- “Foretelling” and “Forth-Telling” . . . *Briefly noted:*
 - Prophecy can be **“foretelling”** which is the declaration of future events as revealed from the LORD, pertaining especially to the kingdom of God.
 - A very simple definition for **“forth-telling”**: is to tell forth, publish abroad. It is to utter forth, publish abroad a thing which is revealed by divine revelation it comes from God to the purposes and glory of God!!`

(3) There was no question regarding the message of Joshua as to its divine source:

- These are the final words that he would ever speak to the people of God.
- He knew who he believed and served and presented Him to the people.
 - “. . . thus says the LORD . . .” (2a NKJV)
 - “. . . choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . .” 15b NKJV)
- He was a voice saying: **“Thus says the LORD”** (Ex. 4:22; Josh. 7:13; Judges 6:8; 1 Sam. 2:27; etc.).

2. **Historical Review** (Josh. 24:2-13)

The following is a quote from The Preacher’s Outline Sermon Bible:

“The focus of redemptive history is God Himself. Note each of the points or steps of redemption covered by Joshua, how each one was initiated by God. It was God who saved and delivered His people, beginning with Abraham and stretching all the way through history up until the time of Joshua. The very subject of redemptive history began with God. In fact, the LORD is referred to over twenty times in this chapter alone.”

(a) **God brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees** (Josh. 24:2-3a)

- (1) That’s where Abraham is coming from, he and his ancestors served other gods.
 - It was a norm, the way of life for the citizens of Abraham’s homeland.
 - It is believed that his father made idols, so he was deeply involved from childhood. He grew up in a pagan idolatrous home.
- (2) Abraham who became, the friend of God (Isa. 41:8; James 2:23) and the great favorite of heaven, was raised in idolatry and lived for a long time in it until God by His grace snatched him as a branch from the burning (Jude 23).
- (3) What is Idolatry? (*Briefly Noted*):
 - Anything which we keep in our hearts in the place which God ought to have is an idol, whether it be an image of wood or stone or gold, or whether it be money, or desire for fame, or love of pleasure, or some secret sin which we will not give up.
 - **If God does not really occupy the highest place in our hearts, controlling all, then something else does, and that something else is an idol.**
- (4) In our text, God through Joshua reminded the people: “Your past heritage is one in which your ancestors were not God’s people.” That’s who they were but redeemed by His grace!!
 - **Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, lest they regress into that sin from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered.**
 - Abraham’s justification is referred to by the apostle as an example of God’s justifying the ungodly (**Rom. 4:1-5**; also 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:24).
- (5) The expression: **“On the other side of the flood ...”** (Josh. 24:2b KJV)
 - **NKJV:** “... the other side of the River”
 - Used also in verses 3, 14 and 15
 - This is a reference to Ur of the Chaldees, beyond the Euphrates River.
 - **The Amplified Bible:** “. . . beyond the Euphrates River” (*Similar translation in the RSV*).

(b) **It was God who brought Abraham to Canaan** (Josh. 24:3b-4).

- (1) God not only took Abraham to the land promised but built up his family.
 - The very location, Shechem, where they were now gathered (Josh. 24) was the first city where Abraham came (Gen. 12:6).

- It was at Shechem that God promised Abraham and his descendants the Promised Land, Canaan, (Gen 12:7).
 - Abraham was called to be separated from family, his native country, a pagan lifestyle and eventually he was blessed abundantly, above and beyond, not one of God's promises failed (Josh. 21:45).
- (2) It was God who gave Isaac to Abraham . . . the promised seed (24:3)
- The "promised seed" . . . is hereby making reference to both Abraham and his descendants . . . note v. 3: "... his seed" (KJV) ("his": "**Abraham**"; "seed": "**descendants**")
 - It was God who multiplied Abraham's descendants (v. 4).
 - It was a promise made (Gen. 12:2; 17:6-7) that seemed unattainable (Gen. 15:4-6; Chap. 16) **but God is an "on time God!" He never fails!! His Words are sure!!** (Gen. 18:9-15; 21:1-8; 2 Peter 3:9).
 - The promised seed is also a reference to the Messiah, the Savior of the world (Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3:8, 16; Gen. 12:3; 18:17-18; etc.)
 - The promised seed also refers to all the descendants of faith, to all believers of all generations . . . we are the household of faith (**Rom. 4:11-13, 16; Gal. 3:26, 29; Gal. 6:10**)
- (3) It was God who gave to Isaac, Jacob and Esau . . . His promises continue to materialize (Josh. 24:4).
- God provided an inheritance for Esau in Mount Seir (v. 4).
 - It was God who blessed Jacob with his sons as the promised descendants.
 - The entire land of Canaan was reserved for Jacob's descendants.
 - The descendants of Esau knew what land was theirs and what was reserved for the descendants of Jacob.
- (c) **It was God who delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage with signs and wonders** (Josh 24:5-7a)
- (1) The defiant Pharaoh crumbled, humbled by God's power and was glad to let Israel go.
- (2) Regretting his decision to free Israel, he pursued them as a roaring lion but only to experience a humiliating defeat by the power of God.
- The same waters that guarded Israel became a grave for the pursuing Egyptians (Ex. 12, NB Vv. 31-42).
 - Note also: while Israel murmured, Moses prayed and God overlooked the grumblers' folly and answered the prayer of the penitent (Ex. 14, NB Vv. 10-31).
- (d) **It was God who kept them during the wilderness wandering** (Josh. 24:7b).
- (1) The wilderness wandering was a result of Israel's rebellion against God's will (Num. 13:26-14:12).
- (2) Through the years of wandering, etc. God kept them as if they dwelt in a walled city.

- (e) **It was God who gave them victory over the Amorite enemy** (Josh. 24:8)
- (1) Sihon king of the Amorite felt he had to be intimidating and felt secured that he would be able to destroy Israel but only to experience defeat by the people of God (Num. 21:21-35).
 - (2) Israel controlled the entire territory east of Jordan and north of Arnon because God fought for them.
- (f) **God gave His people victory over Balak of Moab and the false prophet Balak** (Josh. 24:9-10).
- (1) He caused Balaam to bless instead of cursing Israel.
 - (2) God saved His people from the false prophet.
- (g) **It was God who safely brought His people to Canaan** (Josh. 24:11-12)
- (1) God led His people across the Jordan River; The symbol of the beginning of a new life.
 - (2) God gave His people victory over all enemies who opposed and tried to defeat them.
 - (3) "I sent **hornet** before you . . ." (v. 12)
 - Literally, "*hornet*" refers to large wasps, also used in Ex. 23:27-28., Deut. 7:20.
 - There are several thoughts on what is meant in reference to "*hornet*" in this and other passages noted. This we do know, that God promised to put fear upon the enemies of Israel (See Deut. 2:25). Their morale became so low that their fear made them unable to resist the invasion!
 - See Rahab's report to the spies regarding the dread that characterized the Canaanites (Josh. 2:8-11); as well as the terror that overshadowed the people as the invasion was anticipated (Josh. 5:1; 6:1; etc.)
 - During the battles of the conquest of Southern Canaan, note Josh. 10:10-11, 12-14.
 - Other accounts can be seen in the Book of Joshua and other references. God is a God of battles (Ex. 14:14; 23:27; etc.) and fights for His people (2 Chron. 20:17, 29; Deut. 20:4; etc.)
 - (4) The victory Israel realized was not because of their ability, or by their own power but of God!!
Psa. 44:2 Amp. Bible
 "You drove out the nations with Your hand and it was Your power that gave [Israel] a home by rooting out the [heathen] people, but [Israel] You spread out."
- (h) **It was God who freely gave Israel the Promised Land** (Josh. 24:13).
- (1) Where they were for the recommitment, Shechem, was given by God.
 - (2) They were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other peoples' labors (v.13)

(3) Such was a promise of God (Deut. 6:10-11).

3. **Highlighting These Historical Facts** (Josh. 24:12-13)

By repeating these past events as recorded in Josh. 24, two facts are emphasized.

This will involve some repetition mainly for emphasis.

(a) **First**, these accomplishments were made possible, “**not with your sword or with your bow**” (v. 12 NKJV).

(1) Israel had no foundation for boasting in the gallantry of their warriors (Deut. 9:5).

(2) It was not “by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord” (Zech. 4:6).

(3) Throughout the account, God is the agent by whom success was accomplished. Any defeat, which came to the people of Israel, was the result of ignoring God’s plan.

(b) **Second**, God had given them “**a land for which you did not labor**” (v. 13 NKJV).

(1) For Israel, the present, as well as the past, was a testimony of God’s loving care for His people.

(2) He had provided for them the land, the cities, and the productivity of the ground which they were farming.

(3) Their surroundings were a constant testimony of their total dependence on God.

These facts should have invigorated a reaction of gratitude to the One who had given to them so freely. People who had received so much had no excuse for murmuring against God. They should have expressed to Him unwavering confidence and hope. **The history of God’s faithfulness was intended to serve as a foundation and incentive for faith in Him for the future.**

Lam. 3:22-23 Amp. Bible

“It is because of the Lord’s mercy and loving-kindness that we are not consumed, because His [tender] compassions fail not. [Mal. 3:6]. They are new every morning great and abundant is Your stability and faithfulness. [Isa. 33:2]”

C. Challenge to Make a Decision Josh. 24:14-18

Introduction

Joshua was an outstanding leader and there was no better person with such powerful managerial skills, accomplishments and **godly example**, to invoke such a treaty with the people of Israel. He was worthy of challenging Israel to commit themselves to faithfully serve God.

The procedure of Joshua’s dealing with them (the people of Israel) clearly showed his earnestness, his convictions and his commitment to God which demonstrated that it

was his heart's desire to leave them under all possible obligation of a choice and a covenant.

In verse 14 note carefully the word **“now”**. What we have here is a clear indication that the LORD'S personal message to Israel had now been concluded and that it was now Joshua himself giving the admonition to Israel. What we have seen previously (in preceding verses) was God's servant, Joshua, declaring the prophetic message of the LORD, at this point we have Joshua sharing from his own heart. As we have noted before, this is Joshua's final message to the people, the last opportunity he will ever have to extend an invitation, to call the people to make a decision for God.

There is a sense in which every blessing is undeserved, but some are more obvious. When Israel enjoyed vineyards and olive orchards in Canaan, it should have made them especially grateful for undeserved blessings (see Vv. 12-13). **They should also have remembered that those who planted the vineyards and orchard were removed by God's righteous judgment, and if they (Israel) disobeyed and rejected God, they will also be judged.**

1. **Strong Exhortation** (Josh. 24:14)

The following include some quotes from The Preacher's Outline Sermon Bible.

(a) Fear the LORD (v. 14a)

“Now therefore, fear the LORD . . .” (v. 14a NKJV)

(1) The word **“fear”** . . . it's general definition:

- The word means to be afraid; to stand in awe, to revere or reverence; to dread; to frighten or intimidate; to be stricken with a deep sense of honor, reverence awe and worship.
- The word means recognizing the exalted position of a person and standing in reverence and awe of him, acknowledging the honor due to the person.

(2) **In spiritual terms, the word “fear” means to honor and reverence God to such a point that a person worships Him.**

- The person who truly fears God surrenders his life to serve God, to obey just as He commands.
- It should be noted that the word **“fear”** means more than just reverence and honor: it means to respect the justice and judgment of God, to fear what God can do to a person if he disobeys the commandments of God.

(3) **Believers are to fear God.**

- . . . reverence and worship Him, surrendering their lives to Him, obeying His commandments and living exactly as He says.
- . . . respect His holiness and justice lest their disobedience arouse the judgment of God.

(4) This is an established fact and should be remembered: **“fear” is one of the saving qualities of life.**

- Anything that can hurt a person or destroy him must be feared, or else the person can hurt or lose his life.
 - The destructive object should be avoided, shrunk back—lest it destroys the person. Thus the dread, frights, and intimidation of fear can be healthy and even save a person.
 - Fear does mean to reverence and stand in awe, but it also means to dread, be frightened or intimidated. It is the dread and frightening emphasis that can protect the person from damaging or destroying himself.
- (5) *“Now therefore, fear the LORD . . .” (v. 14a NKJV)*
The charge is reverence for a God of such infinite power, fear to offend Him and to forfeit His goodness. Keep up an awe of His majesty, a respect for His authority, a dread of His displeasure, and a continual regard to His all-seeing eyes upon you.
- (b) Forsake false gods and false worship (v. 14b)
- (1) The people must serve the LORD, putting away all false gods and false worship.
 - (2) One scholar noted: “We might say that God contrasted His great work with sets of gods associated with three waters.
 - **Josh. 24:2-4**, shows that on the other side of the Euphrates were the Sumerian and Babylonian cultures—**gods of heritage** (*Terah, Abraham’s father worshipped the moon god and was an idol maker*).
 - **Josh. 24:5-7a**, shows that on the other side of the Red Sea were the gods of Egypt—**gods of upbringing** (*Israel spent approximately 430 years in Egypt; the Egyptians had many gods and goddesses*).
 - **Josh. 24:7b-13**, shows that as they crossed the Jordan River there were gods of the Amorites—**gods of your culture** (*the Amorites worshipped their own deity of gods*)
 - (3) The reality of the facts was made known by Joshua: “The LORD God of Israel is greater than **ALL** these idols, therefore **“Serve the LORD!!”**
 - (4) The LORD alone was (is) to be served—exclusively and there was (is) no neutral ground!!
“Let your practice be in accordance to this principle, and faithfully serve the LORD both by your outward acts of worship and every occasion in your entire way of life and this must be done in sincerity and in truth, with a single eye and an upright heart, and inward impressions answerable to outward expressions.”
 - (5) This exhortation to put away false gods and false worship was an exhortation that would be needed down through the generations and an exhortation that God’s people still need today, no matter who they are or in what generation that are living. It is a warning that is constantly needed by the believer!

2. Serve the LORD a Choice Must Be Made! (Josh. 24:15)

Josh. 24:15 NKJV

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

(a) Joshua fairly and impartially present the necessity of their choice.

(1) There was no coercion, no tricks, etc., the choice was for them to make by exercising their God given free will.

(2) **NOTE:** “*And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD . . .*” (v. 15a)

- Joshua had just given a strong exhortation to serve the LORD (v. 14); now it was for them to choose!
- Not everyone is willing to pay the price of discipleship (Matt. 16:24-27; Luke 14:25-35); not everyone is willing for the old self to die (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1-17).

(b) Joshua presented the necessity for them to make a choice:

“*. . . choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . .*” (v. 15b NKJV)

(1) Choose this day, now that the matter is laid plainly before you, speedily focus on it without hesitation.

- Later in Israel’s history Elijah addressed the controversy between Jehovah and Baal (See 1 Kings 18, NB v. 21).
- Joshua, by presenting this matter, plainly communicated two things:
 - **First**, that it is the will of God that everyone should make the worship of God his serious and deliberate choice.
 - **Secondly**, relationship with God has so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side that it may safely be referred to everyman to freely consider to accept or reject it; and yet the benefits are so obvious that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it.

(2) The decision to be made is one of total commitment!

- It is a commitment of devotion and consecration, of loyalty and faithfulness.
- It is a commitment and allegiance that will obey God, keeping His Holy Word and Commandments.

(3) **Beloved, this challenge to make a decision to serve God is one of the most heartfelt and straightforward invitation to be offered; it is one of the most clear-cut decisions ever presented to people.**

(4) For Israel (Josh. 24), if they choose not to serve the LORD, they were to choose who they will serve:

- “*. . . the gods which their forefathers served* on the other side of the Euphrates.
- “*. . . or the gods of the Amorites . . .*” the gods of Canaan.
- Israel had to make a choice! **Everyone serves some kind of god or the true and living God!!**

(c) He directs their choice in regards to this matter by an open declaration of his own resolution:

“But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (v. 15c)

(1) **He declared his personal position ...**

“As for me I will serve the LORD.”

- The service of God is not below the greatness of men, the very opposite is true because righteousness exalts (Prov. 14:34).
- Observe how positive he was: **“I will serve the LORD!”**
- It would not just be his family (house) without him!!
 - he would not engage them to that work which he would not set his hands to.
 - He was saying, I will not just send my family to church or require of them certain standards without himself practically and sincerely setting the example.

(2) **He committed his family to be actively engaged!**

“... and my house, we will serve the LORD”

- “House” here refers to family and that would include any servants that he had.
- **Those that have the charge of many families as public officials and ministers must take special care of their own (1 Tim. 3:4-5); “I and my house... we will serve the LORD”**
- It will not be just me without my family... we will do this together!!... Indeed, “The family that prays together stays together!!”

(3) **Obviously, Joshua was resolved to serve God, no matter what other families did.**

- He was acknowledging that even if all families in Israel revolt, he and his family would serve the LORD!
- Matthew Henry Notes:
“Those that resolve to serve God must not mind being singular in it, nor be drawn by the crowd to forsake His service. Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but do as the best do.”

(d) Joshua could make this statement because he had lived a life that continuously chose to *“Serve the LORD”*... *Note some highlighted examples:*

- (1) Joshua chose to fight the Amalekites—choosing when it might cost everything (Ex. 17:8-16)
- (2) Joshua chose to reject the golden calf—choosing when the appeal was the satisfying of the flesh (Ex. chaps. 32 and 33, NB 33:11)
- (3) Joshua chose to serve the LORD by serving Moses—choosing a humble place (Num. 11:28; Josh. 1:1).
- (4) Joshua chose to believe God’s promises about the Promised Land—choosing against the majority (Num. 13:31-14:12)

- (5) Joshua chose to recognize the leadership of the Captain of the LORD'S army—choosing surrender to God (Josh. 5:15-6:7)
- (6) Joshua chose to take leadership of Israel and lead them into the Promised Land—choosing faith instead of unbelief (Josh. chap, 1, NB Vv. 1-9; etc.)

3. Settled Decision (Josh. 24:16-18)

(a) Declaration of Intention (Vv.16-18a)

(1) General use of "Declaration of Intention"

- All naturalized Americans knows what this term means.
 - After the citizenship exam and interview the candidates make the "Declaration of Intention" . . . which is an oath.
 - Under the "declaration of Intention" we pledge under oath that we intend to renounce all allegiance to any foreign government; and become a (loyal) U.S. citizen.
- the term also applies, every time you enter into a legal transaction; you must express your intention to cooperate.

(2) **Israel**, the matter being presented to their choice (Josh. 24:16-18); they immediately determined the response by a free well-grounded and intelligent declaration, they committed themselves to the God of Israel, who is above all gods and to whom none can be compared (Ex. 15:11; Psa. 89:6).

(3) They agreed with Joshua in his resolution, they were highly influenced by the example of so great a man, who had been a blessing to them.

(4) They were somewhat terrified at the thought of drifting away from God to a life of apostasy.

- **"God forbid"** (v. 16a NKJV) . . . these words communicated their greatest dread and detestable act imaginable; God forbid that such an idea of them drifting away from God!
- The NIV translates as: *"Far be it from us."* Such thought is unimaginable that we should ever forsake the LORD and serve other gods.

(5) In reality, **all** the people made a strong confession never to forsake the LORD. They were affirming . . . *"God had been good to us and we will serve Him wholeheartedly"*:

- It was the LORD who took Abraham out of idolatry and gave him a new life!
- It was the LORD who delivered us from Egyptian bondage . . . He is the one who saved us!
- It was the LORD who led us and supplied all our needs during the wilderness wandering!
- It was the LORD who protected us from all the enemies who intended to destroy us!
- It was the LORD who gave us the Promised Land and gave victories over the most formidable armies and has given us rest!! (v. 18). Israel declared

that they would serve the God of the victorious life, the God who fulfilled all His promises and not one failed (Josh. 21:45).

(b) Dedication to God assured (Josh. 24:18b)

“We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God” (v. 18b NKJV).

“Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for He is our God” (Amp. Bible).

“So we, too will serve the LORD, for He alone is our God” (LASB).

(1) They recommitted themselves to serve the LORD. In this confession they were renewing their commitment and covenant with God.

- Based on their relationship, they remained steadfastly committed to God and His covenant with them.
- **“We will serve the LORD” (v. 18b) for He is our God, who has graciously engaged Himself by promise to us, and to whom we have by solemn vow dedicate ourselves.”**

(2) *“We will also serve the LORD, for He is our God” (Josh. 24:18b NIV)*

- This is essentially the same attitude reflected by Jesus’ disciples in John 6:60-69.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (John 6:68 NKJV).

- In our service to God, when sometimes it seems too difficult, ask yourself: *“What better alternative do I have?”* Jesus Christ went all the way to Calvary!! I will serve Him!

D. Call to Heed the Warning of Judgment Josh. 24:19-24

Introduction

Joshua challenged Israel to continue their relationship with God determinedly and to express a wholehearted commitment to Him. Joshua has now reached a point in his presentation where the people were in a good state of mind so he drove his message home forcefully, in order to have the people secure in their loyalty to God.

He called Israel to heed the warnings of judgment (see also 23:6-16, NB Vv. 11-16). It may seem ironic that just as he had the people making a decision to serve the LORD (Josh. 24:1-8, NB Vv. 14-19), Joshua further challenged them that they were not able to serve the LORD (24:19). But what did he mean?

The caption that I have used for each of the sub-points (for these verses ... Vv. 19-24), may not clearly include the word **“warning”** but the **“warning appeal”** is clearly found in these verses. We cannot afford to disregard God’s warning and the call to a life of righteousness and true holiness. **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”** (Rev. 2:7 NKJV; also Vv. 11, 17, 29, etc.).

1. Awesome/Holy God! (Josh 24:19) (Briefly Noted)

(a) **God is indeed awesome!!**

(1) The refrain of **“Our God is an Awesome God”**

Our God is an awesome God
 He reigns from heaven above
 With wisdom, power, and love
 Our God is an awesome God.

(2) Israel, knew from experience, the marvelous acts of God. They had a review of His goodness as he spoke to them through His servant Joshua (Josh. 24:1-13).

(3) The attributes of God are well known!

- For example: omnipresent (Psa. 139:7-12); omnipotent (Psa. 147:13-18; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26); omniscient (Psa. 139:1-6); transcendent (*He is different and independent from His creation*) (Ex. 24:9-18; Isa. 40:12-26); etc.
- Emphasis has been placed on certain attributes of God while others are neglected (*Details Not Possible*).
 - for example, we have placed so much emphasis on “love” (*indeed God is love!! 1 John 4:8*) that some believe that they can **habitually** sin and still secure eternal life (*Please see 1 John 3, NB Vv. 1-10*).
 - We all need to remember God’s attribute of being “**holy**” (Lev. 11:44-45) and also He is “**just**” (Deut. 32:4; I John 1:9)

(4) God’s holiness and justice have been clearly and forcefully presented by Joshua.

The following can only be presented briefly but it will help to see why Joshua required the people to seriously consider their choice.

- **God is holy**

NOTE:

“Holiness is the foundation on which the whole concept of God rests. God is righteousness, love, and mercy. God expresses wrath and jealousy; however, these are always understood in Scripture as holy righteousness, holy mercy, holy wrath, and holy jealousy. **Holiness is that which qualifies and conditions the other attributes of God. The holiness of God must be viewed as being at the heart of all true biblical theology.**” (Church of God Study Guide for Ministerial Licensure . . . Ordained Bishop)

- **God is just**

- The justice of God flows out of His holiness.
- Sin is a crime against God, and justice demands a penalty of death and separation from Him (Rom. 1:18-32; etc.)
- It was His justice why He sent Jesus Christ (John 3: 16-17; etc.)
- Sin must be confessed and forsaken (Acts 17:30; John 8:11; etc.); to reject Jesus Christ is to reject God’s mercy (John 3:36; Rom. 2:8; etc.)

(b) **“You cannot serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:19a)**

(1) You cannot serve the LORD “without showing a much greater degree of single-mindedness and loyalty than you (Israel) had shown up to that time.

- (2) Joshua was not trying to discourage their faith but trying to discourage light commitment to following the LORD.
- They needed to be reminded that they are serving God under a covenant that promised they would be cursed for disobedience (Deut. 28:15-68; Josh. 8:30-35).
 - Christ Himself, clearly laid out “The Cost of Discipleship” in Luke 14:26-27, note carefully v. 27 . . . “**. . . cannot be my disciple.**”
- (3) Joshua was emphasizing the fact: “The LORD their God would never be satisfied with some temporary burst of enthusiasm.”
- (c) “**. . . He is a holy God . . .**” (Josh. 24:19b)
- (1) He is completely without sin and absolutely righteous (Lev. 11:44-45; Psa. 145:17; Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16).
 - (2) He will not deal superficially with sin. He is so holy and pure that He cannot look upon sin.
 - (3) God is so holy that He is unapproachable and His presence cannot be violated by sinful man.
 - God’s holy presence is protected by His zeal for holiness.
 - We enter in His presence **only** through Jesus Christ!! (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22). (See also Isa. 35:8; John 14:6; 15:1-8).
- (d) “**. . . He is a jealous God . . .**” (Josh. 24:19c)
- (1) Israel knew from the start that their covenant prohibits them from worshipping or calling upon any of the gods of other nations (Ex. 20:1-5).
 - (2) He is a “**jealous God**”; therefore, others cannot be given the affection or rights which are His alone!!
 - (3) “**He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.**” (Josh. 24:19d).
 - The fact remains, God will not condone semi-loyalty, nor tolerate insincerity.
 - **People who live two-facedly cannot serve the LORD!!**
 - No man can serve two masters!! (Matt. 6:22-24, similar in Luke 16:13-15).
 - Such a person does not sincerely trust God!! **He is NOT given over to God (James 1:6-8).**
 - (4) What was required?

*“All the descendants of Israel must be justified (they must not only be physically delivered but live righteous lives) and they must **glory in the LORD alone as their righteousness.**” (See Isa. 45:24-25).*
- (e) Joshua knew the strength and weakness of Israel.
- (1) He was well aware of their tendency to compromise and procrastinate.
 - (2) They are generally inclined to make promises of loyalty with ease.
 - (3) **Upon this occasion Joshua wanted their devotion to be genuine and meaningful.**
 - (4) It was essential for them to know with deep conviction that, compromise was neither reasonable nor possible in this covenant.

2. **Admonition—God will Judge!!** (Josh. 24:20-21)
- (a) Where there is responsibility there will be accountability!!
- (1) Israel was responsible to maintain their commitment to God, if they failed they would be held accountable (Josh. 24:14-24)
 - (2) As we saw in previous lesson, just as God was faithful in all His promises (Josh. 21.:43-45; 23:9, 10); even so He can be relied on to judge, if they forsook Him (Josh. 23:6-16).
 - (3) Responsibility requires accountability is linked to an increase in commitment as to who we are in-Christ, the outcome of our consistent loyalty and sincere obedience to all His commandments.
 - (4) **We have** the opportunities to make choices, whether or not **we** make the right choices depends on how **we** exercise our God given ability to choose. **We are** responsible for our **actions** because the choice made was **ours**. Blaming our **actions** on other people won't solve anything (see 2 Cor. 5:10; Ezek. 18:20).
- (b) **Joshua's strong warning to Israel (v. 20)**
- (1) Joshua warned that, if Israel violated this exchange of promises, God "**will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good**" (v. 20b NKJV).
 - (2) Joshua wanted Israel to remember that God desired undivided loyalty and genuine devotion.
 - (3) Reminder of two facts mentioned above:
 - Jesus Christ taught that, "*no man can serve two masters*" (Matt. 6:24).
 - James emphasized this truth by saying, "*a double minded man is unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:8).
 - (4) If the Israelites forsook the LORD and engaged in the worship of false gods and false worship of their neighbors, they would face a terrible end.
 - The LORD would destroy them and this would be most tragic, for He had been so good to them.
 - The blessings of the Promised Land that are given to the obedient would cease, and God's people would experience the curse of the covenant (Deut. 28:15-68; Josh. 8:30-35).
- (c) The people were even more insistent that "**we will serve the LORD**" (v. 21).
- (1) It was an emphatic response by the people after Joshua's second warning.
 - (2) They shouted loud and clear that at all cost they will serve the LORD!!
- (d) **The practice of artificial—loyalty to God later resulted in Israel being cast off from their source of blessing.**
- (1) God's plan insisted that the people eradicated evil nations from their midst (Num. 35:5-56; Deut.12:1-4; 20:16-18). This was a protective measure against being led to apostasy (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-5).
 - (2) Because they refused to follow this basic guideline, God would allow them to reap as they sowed.

- They would be hurt and consumed by their enemies.
- When He, who had been the undisputed Source of their benefits, was eliminated from their program of life, He had no opportunity to do them good.

(3) **A covenant with the true and living God was the most serious type of relationship man could experience**

(4) A brief comment on Jer. 4:13. *Judah's tragic condition was brought on by her own sins of which Jeremiah list two categories:*

- **First**, the corruption of those who claimed to be spiritual leaders (Jer. 26:7-11, 16; Ezek. 22:26-28).
- **Second**, the people's trust in human and political alliance rather than in God (Lam. 4:17).

Oh, that we ALL would take heed today, and sincerely and consistently give God the preeminence!!

3. **Accountability Must Be Understood** (Josh. 24:22-24)

(a) *"You are witnesses against yourselves . . ." (v. 24)*

(1) Joshua required that the covenant be confirmed by the testimony of two witnesses (Deut. 19:15), in this case the witnesses were the people and the stone (Josh. 24:24-28).

(2) The warning was that they would be witnesses against themselves—**they would be accountable for whatever decisions they made.**

(b) Prove your sincerity, remove any strange gods among you!! (v. 23).

(1) Joshua asked Israel to evidence their sincerity by **putting "away the foreign gods which were among you . . ."** (v. 23a NKJV)

- We do not know how prevalent the use of idols was among them.
- However, the facts that Joshua urged them to discard idols in their possession, indicate some usage was practiced.

(2) Joshua knew that before they could *"incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel"* (v. 23b), all other loyalties would have to be surrendered.

(3) Adam Clark notes:

"As you have promised to reform, begin instantly the work of reformation. A man's promise to serve God soon loses its moral hold of his conscience if he does not instantaneously begin to put it in practice. The grace that enables him to promise is that by the strength of which he is to begin the performance."

(c) For the third time in this meeting the people firmly declared **"The LORD our God we will serve and His voice we will obey."** (24:24 NKJV; see also Vv. 18 and 21).

(1) Apparently the people were trifling with elements of apostasy and not yet sensed the extreme risk of harboring that which God denounced.

(2) **The eradication of all that displeases the LORD was the price of His favor!**

(3) Before Israel could truly serve, they would need to make an unconditional surrender to God's whole program for their lives.

- (4) These verses represent ancient Israel's greatest hour spiritually (*Note Vv. 21-25*). In our lives also there is no greater hour than when we make the commitment: "*The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.*" (*Josh. 24:24b NKJV*).

E. Covenant Renewed Josh. 24:25-28

Introduction

The service of God was made by the people's deliberate choice and Joshua binds them to this commitment by a solemn covenant (24:25). On two occasions Moses publicly confirmed this covenant, (a) at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24), and (b) in the plains of Moab (Deut. 29:1). Similarly, Joshua did it once before (Josh. 8:30-35, NB v. 31) and now he is doing it a second time (Josh. 24, NB Vv. 25-27).

It is here referred to as "*a statute and an ordinance*" (v. 25) because of the strength and continuousness of its obligation, and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were previously by divine command. On this occasion Joshua's presentation involved three very important features: (1) the documenting of the agreement (2) he erected a memorial as a visible witness and (3) they were their own witnesses. Some scholars **believe** that as it was in Josh. 8:30-35, this occasion involved offering sacrifice, with the solemn declaration that idolatry would not be tolerated.

1. Documentation and Declaration (Josh. 24:25-27)

(a) The agreement arrived at was documented (Vv. 25-26).

(1) Joshua made this final public affair a solemn occasion.

- *He made for them a statute and ordinance . . . wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God.*" (Vv. 25b-26a NKJV).
- *" . . . made a covenant with the people . . . "(v. 25b) . . . consisting of the pledges they had agreed to and the decrees and laws from God.*
- It was documented in "*the Book of the Law of God.*" (v. 26a).
 - Hereby, making reference to the original which was kept in the side of the Ark of God.
 - It is also believed that it was transcribed into several copies and made available to the princes (heads) of each tribe for continued education.

(2) The covenant between Israel and God was that the people would worship and obey the LORD alone.

- Their purpose was to become a holy nation that would influence the rest of the world for God.
- There it was written, that their obligation to God by divine precept, and by their own promise, will remain on record. This was a permanent binding contract.

(b) Joshua then erected a large stone memorial (Vv. 26b-27a).

(1) "*Behold this stone shall be a witness to us . . .*" (v. 27a NKJV).

- It marked the location where the covenant had been made between them and God.
 - Hereby, not only the ear, but also the eye, were being enlisted to impress upon their memory of the renewed covenant.
- (2) It was the people's responsibility to take every precaution ". . . **lest you deny God.**" (v. 27b).
- The stone memorial would always stand as a witness for God's people to remember, never forgetting the covenant they had made with God: that they would serve the LORD (Vv. 18, 21, 24).
 - If they ever broke the covenant or their commitment, then the memorial would stand as a witness against them.
- (c) Joshua's astounding declaration that he made to the people (**v. 27b**).
- (1) He declared that the stone memorial would be a witness against the people if they broke their covenant.
- (2) Joshua amplified every known appeal by which he might persuade his people to give God their allegiance.
- He had been diligent to make his own life a worthy example.
 - Nothing was more desired by Joshua than Israel's undying devotion to the LORD their God.

2. **Departure of the Attendees** (Josh. 24:28)

"So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance." (Josh. 24:28 NKJV).

- (a) The final act of one of God's choicest, dedicated, etc., humble leader.
- (1) The brilliant military commander and strategist had just spoken his final words to the Israelites, this was the last exhortation he would ever give them.
- (2) Facing the reality that his time was near to depart and be with God, there is no doubt that he shared a final farewell with his beloved people.
- (3) This must have been a touching scene and highly emotional as he said goodbye, especially as we think of his commanders who served so closely with him through the years.
- (b) We can imagine what it was like as the crowd faded away and he stood alone with his thoughts.
- (1) He had carried these people on his heart for years.
- Memories of them worked through his mind.
 - Every thought was permeated with an awareness of God's great love for them.
- (2) Israel would be purified by the love of God if they truly allowed Him, the God of holiness, to work out His program for their lives. The choice is theirs!
- (3) The time of his departure was at hand; he must leave the future with his Commander in Chief, the true and living God!
- (4) Once more the words, which had frequently crossed his mind during the past years, were the focal point of his attention: ". . . *Be strong and of good*

courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go!” (Josh. 1:9).

F. Ceremonies for Three Great Men Josh. 24:29-33

1. Burial of Joshua (Josh. 24:29-31)

(a) Death . . . the way of all men.

- (1) Joshua knew his time was drawing near to be with the LORD (Josh. 23:2).
- (2) King David was also aware that his time to depart was near ... he similarly instructed Solomon and mentioned his time to depart was near (1 Kings 2, NB v. 2).
- (3) All men will eventually die (2 Sam. 14:14; Job 30:23; Psa. 49:10; Heb. 9:27); the difference is having Jesus Christ as our Savior (Matt. 16:25; Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 15, NB v. 22; etc.). See also 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

(b) Joshua’s final day had come to be with his LORD.

- (1) The day arrived when this brilliant military commander and strategist left this earth.
- (2) Jewish historians stated that Joshua lived in Canaan for approximately twenty-seven or twenty-eight years.
- (3) Joshua died at 110 years.
 - Joseph also died at 110 years (Gen. 50:26).
 - Joshua was buried in the land of his inheritance . . . Timnath Serah (Josh. 24:30).

(c) **“Servant of the LORD”** (Josh. 24:29)

- (1) This was the first time Joshua was referred to as **“the servant of the LORD”** (Josh. 24:29).
- (2) This was a title that had been given to only one other person in all of Israel’s history and that was Moses.
- (3) Although Joshua was in many ways regarded as inferior to Moses, in this account (24:29) he was equal to him.
 - He (Joshua) was committed in his work, he proved himself to be a diligent and faithful servant of God.
 - Whatever talents he had was fully invested to the glory of God and he was honored as a good and faithful servant and elevated to a position of distinction just as Moses had been.

(d) **The blessed, long-lasting results of dedicated leadership** (Note carefully Josh 24:31).

- (1) The Israelites were faithful to God throughout the entire lifetime of Joshua and the elders who served with him.
- (2) Such reality is a significant testimony to the faithfulness of Joshua in setting a dynamic example for the LORD! What a powerful impact he had upon the life of others!
- (3) Israel seemed to have produced no other generation which was equally faithful to the LORD!!

2. **Bones of Joseph Buried** (Josh. 24:32)

- (a) Some centuries before Joseph died in Egypt and upon this occasion his bones were being buried.
 - (1) He commanded that his bones should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19; Heb. 11:22).
 - (2) The children of Israel brought Joseph's coffin with his bones out of Egypt. They carried these bones through the wilderness wandering and kept them in camp until Canaan was conquered.
 - (3) At this time (Josh. 24), they would bury his bones in the piece of ground his father gave him near Shechem (Gen. 28:21-22).
- (b) The burial of his bones was an event that portrayed reverence in which the name of Joseph was held in Israel.
 - (1) Although they had left Egypt hastily, they had arranged to take with them the remains of this highly honored man.
 - (2) Some contended that the burial of Joseph's bones was done before Joshua's death. The time of the burial is not especially important. The event itself is significant in that it served as another means of vindicating the faith Joseph had concerning God's purpose for His brethren (Gen. 50:25).
- (c) The Expositor's Bible Commentary states:

"The burial of 'Joseph bones' symbolized the completion of an era and the fulfillment of God's promises to the Patriarchs. When he gave instructions for his remains to be buried in Canaan, Joseph manifested great faith in the promises of God (Gen. 50:24-25; cf. Exod. 13:19: in both passages Joseph's remains are a symbol of God's promise being fulfilled; cf. Heb. 11:22). ... The burial plots purchased by Abraham and Jacob were symbolic of their faith that God would give the whole land to their descendants. The burial of Joseph's remains provides a fitting conclusion to the long saga that began with the call of Abraham."

3. **Bold and Faithful Eleazar Buried** (Josh. 24:29-33)

- (a) Please note a few highlighted features about Eleazar (Details Not Possible)
 - (1) Eleazar was Aaron's third son and the second High Priest.
 - (2) He played a number of roles during the course of the Exodus, such as: creating plating of the altar; etc.
 - (3) During the wilderness wandering he had several areas of responsibilities, example: supervising and securing the safe carrying of oil for the lamp stand; he oversights the carriage of the Ark, etc.
 - (4) Along with Joshua he was one of the key figures in the distribution of the Promised Land.
 - (5) Etc.
- (b) Eleazar served faithfully and wholeheartedly.
 - (1) He performed his duties under two of Israel's greatest leaders: Moses and Joshua.

- He had been appointed chief over the principal (leading) Levites (Num. 3:32).
 - Just before his father's death he was invested on Mount Hor with the sacred garments for the office of High Priest (Num. 20:28).
- (2) Death claimed Eleazar, the High Priest, and he was buried at Gibeah (Josh. 24:33). The grave site was in Epharim on a tract of land given to him by his own son Phineas, who was to succeed him as High Priest.

Psa. 27:4 Amplified Bible

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, and [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold and gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, and inquire in His temple [Psa. 16:11; 65:4; Luke 2:37]."

2 Tim. 2:15

KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Amplified Bible

"Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth."

LESSON 19 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain what is meant by “rest” that God offers.

2. Complete by choosing the correct answer:
“Unfortunately, some are OK with doing somethings in God’s Word but will not adhere _____.”

- (a) to what they do not remember
- (b) to what they like to hear
- (c) to what is not their likings
- (d) to what is not properly explained

3. For anyone to continue experiencing the grace of God, what must be consistently demonstrated?

4. In his admonition to the leaders (Josh. 23), what two areas of caution were recommended to be avoided so they would not turn away from serving God, as noted in verse 7?

5. Joshua, in his address to the leaders (Josh. 23), repeated three times the warnings of judgment, if they transgress their covenant with God. Quote all three instances with their references.

6. We noted that Joshua’s challenge to the leaders (Josh. 23) can be considered in a threefold challenge, list all three with references.

7. In essence, why did Joshua had the people of Israel gathered at Shechem (Josh. 24) and at what other time he did similar (give reference)?

8. Complete the following:

“We must (a) _____ think our (b) _____ for God (c) _____ till our (d) _____ is done; and if He (e) _____ out our (f) _____ beyond what we thought, we must (g) _____ it is because He has some further (h) _____ for us to do.” (Matthew Henry)

9. What proof do we have that the meeting at Shechem (Josh. 24) was in obedience to God’s directives and that He was actively involved?

10. **“Thus says the LORD”** (Josh. 24:2). Briefly explain **“I am”** as used in Ex. 3:14; how does this relate to Israel and to all people . . . what facts are hereby implied?

11. Complete the following by choosing the correct answer:

“The _____ received by us as His, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it, His sermon consists of doctrine and application.” (Matthew Henry)

- (a) words of politicians are to be
- (b) Word of God is to be
- (c) errors of false teachers must be
- (d) emotionally charged words we must always

12. Discussing God’s redemptive history of Israel, what are the various steps taken, up to the account in Josh. 24, and as noted in our lesson (**Briefly** and with references)?

13. Briefly note (a) Abraham’s early religious experience and (b) what significant changes in relation to his relationship with God.

14. Define idolatry.

15. Isaac was that promised seed or descendant promised to Abraham by God (Josh. 24:3). As discussed in our lesson list the ways “Promised Seed” may be referred to.

16. Explain: "I sent ***hornet***" before you . . ." (Josh. 24:12)

17. Explain the spiritual application of ***fear***" (noted in Josh. 24:14a).

18. What two things are clearly communicated in Joshua’s challenge to the people to make a choice who they would serve (Josh. 24:15b)?

19. Complete the following:
“This challenge to make a (a) _____ to (b) _____ God is one of the most (c) _____ and (d) _____ invitation to be (e) _____; it is one of the most (f) _____ decisions ever presented to (g) _____.”

20. In making his declaration that he and his family would serve the LORD; what are three outstanding features to be noted in Joshua’s statement (Josh. 24:15c)?

21. We briefly mentioned a few attributes of God in our lesson; (a) briefly explain (1) God is holy (2) God is just. List with references four other attributes of God.

22. Briefly explain: "Where there is responsibility there will be accountability."

23. Complete by choosing the correct answer:

"A covenant with the true and living God was (is) the most serious type of _____
_____."

- (a) relationship man must avoid
- (b) relationship man could experience
- (c) mistake made by anyone
- (d) relationship to be ignored

24. Renewing the covenant upon this sacred occasion (Josh. 24); what three important features were involved in Joshua's presentation?

25. In Josh. 24:29, Joshua was referred to as "Servant of the LORD"; in what way this was significant?
