

Choose Today, Whom You Will Serve!

Joshua 24:1-18 (ESV)

The Covenant Renewal at Shechem (vs. 1-13)

24 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. ² And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, ^[a] Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. ³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. ⁴ And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. ⁵ And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

⁶ “Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. ⁷ And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. ⁸ Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. ⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, ¹⁰ but would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. ¹¹ And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. ¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. ¹³ I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.’

Summary:

Vs. 1-13 = A whirling tour of their history, from Terah to the possession of the Promised Land. It was all the doing of the LORD. From idolatry to an intimate relationship with YHWH.

Choose Today, Whom You Will Serve!

Joshua 24:1-18 (ESV)

Choose Whom [*This Day*] You Will Serve (Vs. 14-18)

¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond 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.”

¹⁶ Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ¹⁷ for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

Notes & Comments

“Choose Today, Whom You Will Serve!”

Joshua 24:1-18 (ESV)

- In this chapter, Joshua is fulfilling his final act as the commander / leader of the people of God. This act entailed a renewal of the covenant with the people. Joshua is functioning as the mediator or spokesperson for YHWH. **Note**, “**Thus says the LORD**” in v. 2. It has a prophetic ring to it.
- He masterfully traced their history (family tree), hitting the high points, showing them their journey **from idolatry to an intimate relationship with YHWH** (Vs. 1-13) Now, he is warning them against reverting back to idolatry vs.13-18).
- This would have indeed be tragic – unfortunately it was the case for them and it caused them much grief. **Idolatry is the source of most of our grief.**
- There is a word of warning here for us also. **We need to so live, that after we have come to know the Lord, our posterity do not revered to idolatry** - our position before we came to KNOW the Lord. We can ensure (to a certain extent) that our future generations (posterity) will serve the Lord. We do not have any guarantees. Contrary to what many believe, there is no “*household salvation*” taught in the Scriptures. Everyone has to personally choose to follow the Lord. However, we can increase the odds of our posterity being faithful to the Lord by: our godly example to them (**Modeling**), the proper education of our children (**Mentoring**) and intercession for them (**Mediators**hip) - cf. Deut 6:1ff.
- In vs. 14ff, Joshua gives us **a strategy for combating and eradicating idolatry and being faithful to God:**

1. We Must Choose Today to:

– **Today** is not only within the current 24-hour period. It is today and every other day, while we have the opportunity to do what we must. Redeeming time (Eph 5:16).

a) **Fear the Lord** – Fear Him as you should, and you will fear no one or nothing else!

b) **Serve the Lord** – Serve Him as you should, and you will serve no one or nothing else!

[c] *Make a commitment to do the above. Write it own and seal it – Establish a memorial to remind you of your commitment and revisit it often.*

In order to do this . . .

2. We Must Reject Idolatry

(throw away the false gods and refrain from serving them).

Joshua gave **three sources of “false gods”**:

a) **The gods of your ancestors** – gods beyond Euphrates - Where your ancestors came from.

b) **The gods of the land of your captivity** – beyond the Red Sea – in Egypt - Whence you came.

c) **The gods of our neighbours** – where you currently live – gods of Amorites – Where you are now.

- Joshua knew very well, the propensities of the people, hence his challenge and warning.
- He tried to discourage the people from making **shallow and hollow**, or **speedy and superficial** commitments to the LORD.
- The people, to their credit, chose and served the Lord and did so through out the rest of Joshua’s life and that of the elders who outlived him (v. 31). What more can a leader ask for? We are only one generation from extinction. We must run our leg of the relay race well and pass the baton diligently.
- In the rest of the chapter, we see the people made their commitment, they covenanted together to “*throw away*” their idols and serve the Lord – sometimes we need to also tear down the altars. They wrote it down and established a memorial to remind them of their choice / decision /commitment / resolution. **These are lessons for us.** We need visible reminders to help us make good our promises.
- Their resolution to fear and serve the LORD in sincerity and in faithfulness, brought revival to the nation. What would it take to bring it to ours? To our home; our church?
- We must constantly / daily / moment by moment, remind ourselves that we do not “belong” to the land in which we are living. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our God, goals, values and perspectives are different. Our devotion to God must be counter-cultural – other worldly. How do we become world Christians, yet not a part of the world? We must not “*serve the gods of the people in whose land we are living*”. We must “*first the kingdom of [our] God and His righteousness*” . . . (Matt 6:33)
- *We must remember that the Lord created, bought, preserved, protected and provided for us. Forsaking Him is being unfaithful and faithless.*
- *The Living and True God is not a “throw away” God. We must keep Him, because He keeps us! We are His, and He is ours.*
- *How then should we live? **Keep ourselves from idols** ! (1John 5:21)*