

Joshua 24

We finally come to the end of the book of Joshua. Appropriately, we now read Joshua's farewell address to the nation of Israel, his final words. It's a look at **history** and a call to **sincerity**. Joshua is just about to die, and the cry of his heart is that the people of God would come **back** to God, commit to God and then never, ever go away from God. It was all about God and His people.

Warren Wiersbe said this, *"At the end of a long and full life, Joshua's greatest concern wasn't himself. His greatest concern was the people and their relationship to the Lord. He didn't want to leave until he had challenged them once again to love the Lord and keep His commandments."*

We will see that the commitment Joshua calls them to is a Suzerainty treaty – which consists of a Preamble (1-2a), an historical prologue (2b-13), stipulations for the vassals with the consequences of disobedience (14-24), and the writing of the agreement (25-28).

I. GEOGRAPHY

V. 1

"Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel..."

When we studied Joshua 23 I mentioned the fact that many Bible teachers see chapter 23 as directed to the **leaders** of the nation, while chapter 24 might be directed to the entire nation.

Joshua gathers all the tribes of Israel to this place called **"Shechem"**

It was a special place. There God appeared to Abraham and promised him and his descendants this very land (*Genesis 12:6-7).

There Jacob had a 'family revival' as he went to Bethel (*Genesis 35:1-4).

Shechem was in between mount Ebal, and mount Gerizim where the people had rededicated themselves to the Lord after entering the land (Joshua 8:30-35).

"Being in a special place can sometimes make it easier for us to meet with God." – Wiersbe

The most special part of this place was being, “before God.”

In Shechem was the Tabernacle of the Lord, at this juncture in history.

First Geography, second:

II. HISTORY

V. 2

Joshua traced the nation’s roots to the reality that **God** had chosen them.

If you remember, Noah had 3 sons; Shem, Ham and Japheth; Shem’s descendants are chronicled in Genesis 11, and among them is a man by the name of Terah. Terah is the father of Abraham and here we see that he was a pagan man...as were all the people of the land of Ur, of the Chaldeans from where he was called.

The ancestors of Abraham were lost.

V. 3-4

In order to get all the details here, you would have to read Genesis 11 all the way to Exodus 2.

God called Abraham out. God blessed Abraham with their son Isaac, when Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100 years old. That **had** to be God!

Isaac had 2 sons, Jacob and Esau, but just as God chose Abraham and then Isaac, He chose Jacob, not only to carry-on line of the Israelites, but also to suffer affliction.

They went down to Egypt and were preserved from the famine, but they were eventually persecuted by the Pharaoh.

And yet, in the midst of that, we read in Exodus 1:7, “But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.”

We read in Exodus 1:12, “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew...”

It’ didn’t happen overnight, but God **blessed** Abraham with descendants and they multiplied tremendously in the land of Egypt. It was clearly **God!**

V. 5

When they were slaves in Egypt, God **saw** the oppression of His people, He **heard** their cries, He **knew** their sorrows (Exodus 3:7), so God sent Moses and Aaron, He sent the 10 plagues; we read all this in Exodus chapters 3-13. This was to be to the children of Israel, the sign for all centuries, they were to always look back and remember the mighty miracles God wrought in order to set them free.

God not only emancipated them from Egypt, but He annihilated the Egyptian army:

V. 6-7a

We read this amazing account in Exodus 14.

History really is HIS-story, wow - how God wiped out the chariots, the charioteers, the most powerful army in the world and buried them in the Red Sea!

V. 7b

“Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time...”

God sustained them in the wilderness for 40 years, to be exact, we read in Deuteronomy 29:5-6, “And I have led you 40 years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. You have not eaten bread, nor have drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”

God did not give them bread, but He gave them manna, He gave them water from the rocks, springs in the desert.

It was so amazing what God did!

V. 8

The defeat of the Amorite King is found in Numbers 21:21-32.

It's interesting that the defeat of Sihon is retold, over and over again in the Bible, in essence saying to God's people, look, the same God who has granted great victories in the past is alive and well today, waiting and willing to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to Him.

Moses mentioned the defeat of Sihon as a motivation (Deut. 2:24-37).

Even Israel's enemies spoke of the defeat of Sihon (Josh. 2:10; 9:10).

Joshua mentioned Sihon earlier to the people as a motivation (Josh. 12:2, 5).

This victory is mentioned by Jephthah (Judges 11:12-28)

The leaders in the days of Nehemiah spoke of this victory (Nehemiah 9:22)

The Psalmists bring it up (Psalm 135:11; 136:19), as well as Jeremiah 48:45

And as the enemy came against God's people in different forms, the Ammonites, the Ammorites, the Moabites, the Midianites, God gave them the victory, time and time again. Even so-called great men, like Sihon, Og, Balaak and Balaam were defeated by God:

V. 9-10

This war was a type of religious war, a mysterious war, in which God, once again, graciously and wonderfully gave victory to His people.

Balaam was hired to try and curse God's people, but God would not let him.

We read this account in Numbers 22-24, and I love what we read specifically in Numbers 23:20-21, the reason Israel could not be cursed: **"Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He has not observed iniquity in Jacob. Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them."**

V. 11-13

Of course this successful military campaign is laid out in the book of Joshua, where, generally speaking, their great General, Jesus Christ, gave them victory, after victory, after victory, supernaturally.

It wasn't their swinging sword that gave them the victory, it wasn't the blow of the bow and arrow, it was the Lord who gave them cities and vineyards and droves of olive groves.

God even sent the hornets before them; we see that in v. 12.

Have you ever been moved or chased by a bee, a bumble bee, a wasp or a hornet?

And whether you take this literally or symbolically it doesn't matter, we see it was done miraculously.

Henry Morris said, *"The term is probably used here to symbolize the fear which God sent among the Canaanites in advance of the Israelite armies."*

If that's true, we know how huge the fear factor can be!

Bottom line is, and the thrust of Joshua's message is that all this history, all this victory, was totally the Lord. He chose them, He guided them, He delivered them and He defeated their enemies, and He, God, blessed them big-time.

So...we move from Geography and History to:

III. SINCERITY

V. 14-15

Therefore...it's so logical, it's so reasonable, what should they do?

Fear the LORD

Serve the LORD

This "therefore," reminds me of a couple of other important therefores in the Bible (Ephesians 4:1; walking, warring; Romans 12:1-8; working)

Joshua brings them to that significant geography, He reminds them of their amazing history, and calls them to the state of sincerity.

Sincerity = free from pretense; genuine; the real deal; walk the talk; live the life; let it be a setting apart that takes place in the deepest part of the heart.

In v. 14, what Joshua is essentially saying is that if you don't serve the true and living God, the LORD God almighty, than you will serve these other wanna-be gods...it's just the way it is, as the song goes, "you gotta serve somebody."

Joshua brings up the fact that some people believe that a true and total commitment to God is wrong, and even evil (v. 15a). Why would they think such things?

One reason they say we're evil is that we claim to know and have the only way to heaven. Well, they need to remember, this claim is not our claim, it's God's claim. And it shouldn't create a problem that God has provided a freeway, as a matter of fact it should lead to praise - praise God we have the way to heaven through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Another objection people have to Christianity is the belief that the God of the Bible restrains them from their "natural" behavior. "Shouldn't I be able to do my own thing?"

Think my own thoughts; say my own words, party, have fun, satisfy the sexually loving appetites of my body, and not suffer for it?"

But for those of us who have walked a few miles in these mocca-sins, we've seen the devastation of all those sins – we've seen and learned, God's way really is the right way, proven and true.

Isaiah spoke of the fact that they day would come, when they would call good evil, and evil good (Isaiah 5:20).

Apparently in the days of Joshua, some were wondering, "This whole God thing seems evil," and their hearts were divided, but Joshua says to the people, "You really need to make a choice, what's it going to be? The loving, living God, or will it be the philosophies and fantasies of the fallen world?"

The fact is, if one does not make a choice **for** the LORD God, they are choosing **against** Him...you can't have both.

Henry Morris said, *"This is the same choice confronting each person in every age. One can either choose to serve the true God of creation and redemption, now revealed in Jesus Christ, or the pagan nature-gods of the world system (evolutionary pantheism), or attempt to serve both (as Terah and Nahor had done). But the true God is a jealous God."*

It's so beautiful so see how Joshua challenges the society, and makes a choice for his family. ***"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."***

"Adding example to exhortation, Israel's leader assured them that whatever their choice his mind was made up, his course clear; as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." - BKC

This is the responsibility of the **heads** of families. Husbands, Fathers, single moms, single people – knowing the influence we have and the account we will give, one day.

Joshua presents the challenge...and the people respond:

V. 16-18

They made a public declaration, they would follow the Lord;

It appears they had been listening, to Joshua's reasoning, how their History, really was HIS-story.

Joshua double-checks

V. 19-20

Joshua basically says, whatever you do, don't take this lightly, do this in sincerity, are you sure? Remember God will not tolerate two-timers, either He's LORD of all, or not Lord at all; and if you say you'll follow Him and you do not follow Him, He will discipline you and deal with you – even more severely - are you sure?

What does Joshua mean when he says, there in v. 19, “He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins?”

He meant that God was not to be worshiped or served lightly, and that to forsake Him deliberately, to serve idols defiantly, would be a presumptuous, willful, high-handed sin for which there was no forgiveness under the law (Numbers 15:30).

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” ~ 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

V. 21-28

This was a renewal of the covenant.

As I mentioned earlier, the commitment Joshua calls them to is a Suzerainty treaty – which consists of a Preamble (1-2a), an historical prologue (2b-13), stipulations for the vassals with the consequences of disobedience (14-24), and the **writing** of the agreement (25-28).

Are we really lined up with the Lord, are we really signed up with the Lord? Joshua does everything he can, to make sure this was a real deal.

Warning, Writing, Witnesses, Rocks as Reminders;

V. 26 – “A large standing stone, dating from about the period of the conquest, has been found in Shechem. It possibly could be Joshua's stone.” – Henry Morris

Joshua says, take action now, burn up all that is bad, 86 the idols, get rid of, repent of, put away anything that's getting in the way of, your real and radical relationship with the Lord.

There's so many things we could speak of:

1Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I **put away** childish things.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be **put away** from you, with all malice.

1Corinthians 5:13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “**put away** from yourselves the evil person.”

It might be an evil influence you need to distance yourself from, or maybe even cut-off. It might be dirty magazines, or dirty movies; the Lord will show you. I recall the account in the book of Acts, where in the province of Ephesus, the problem was books:

“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.” ~ Acts 19:18-19

Joshua calls the congregation to a complete commitment...right before he dies.

Have you made that complete commitment, if not, I pray you would do that right here, and right now. Turn from your sins, and trust Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior.

In closing, we read not only of Joshua’s death, but of the burials of 3 great men, Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar.

V. 29-31

The death and burial of Joshua

“No greater tribute could be paid to him than the fact that he was called simply the servant of the LORD. He aspired to no greater rank than this.” - BKC

Eric Fromm wrote, *“To die is poignantly bitter, but the idea of having to die without having lived is unbearable.”*

V. 32

The burial of the bones of Joseph

“His dying request was that he be buried in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:25). Moses knowing of this request, took Joseph’s bones with him in the Exodus (Exodus 13:19).” - BKC

V. 33

The burial of Eleazar

All three were buried in Joseph's territory

"Recording three burials is a strange way to end a book like Joshua! But these three peaceful graves testify to the faithfulness of God, for Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar once lived in a foreign nation where they received God's promise to take His people back to Canaan. Now all three were at rest within the Promised-Land. God kept His word to Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar – and to all Israel. And this encourages God's children today to count on God's unfailing faithfulness." – BKC

It might even be significant in noting the names of the 3 names:

Joshua = Jehovah is salvation

Joseph = Jehovah has added

Eleazar = God has helped.

Most reading this text are saved, but add to that salvation, the character and call of Jesus Christ, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...and then keep in mind, the cool thing is this, Eleazar means God has helped...God will help us we are not in this all alone...the LORD is my helper, the LORD is your helper!

God's **History**, should ultimately, reverently and faithfully lead to my **Sincerity** and then one day to the day of glory, where we pass on, having finished the race God's called us to run.