

The Book Of JOSHUA

JOSHUA'S COVENANT AT SHECHEM *Joshua 24:1-33*

History Of Israel

Joshua 24:1-13

Introduction To Joshua's Address

Who Is Present

Joshua 24:1

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel

This is the second of two farewell addresses given by Joshua

- The first address Leaders of Israel **Joshua 23:2**
- The second address Tribes of Israel **Joshua 24:1**

they presented themselves before God

- This is not a political, military or social assembly
- This is a religious assembly

Who Is Speaking

Joshua 24:2

Thus says the Lord God of Israel:

In Joshua's first address (to the leaders of Israel):

- He spoke with the authority of a leader anointed by God
- But he did not speak the words of God

In Joshua's second address (to the tribes of Israel)

- He is speaking the words of God
- He has heard from the Lord and is communicating what he has heard

The message from the Lord is recorded in **Joshua 24:2-15** and comprises of

1. God's historical dealings with Israel **Joshua 24:2-13**
2. God's challenge to Israel **Joshua 24:14-15**

Faithfulness of God

Two characteristics of God are seen in this message:

- Sovereignty of God
- Faithfulness of God

Faithful In Origins

By recounting the history of Israel

- The Lord reveals His faithfulness to Israel

Joshua 24:2-3

Israel's origins were in Abraham

- Before God's calling, Abraham, like all the other people, worshipped idols
- God called Abraham out of idolatry, out of Mesopotamia
- Into the promised land; into a new life

- Before God called us, we were like all other people - sinful, worldly, lost
- But God called us out of idolatry; out of the world; out of darkness
- Into the kingdom of His beloved Son; into His marvellous light

God's faithfulness was seen in

- First by bringing Abraham safely to Canaan (as He promised)
- Second by giving the land to Israel (as He promised)

Faithful In Protection

Joshua 24:4

God's faithfulness was further demonstrated by taking Israel to Egypt

- There God preserved and provided for Israel in a time of famine
- There they grew from a small family to a mighty nation

Faithful In Deliverance

Joshua 24:5-7

God's faithfulness was demonstrated once more by delivering Israel from Egypt

- He did not forget or abandon His people in a land of slavery
- But raised up Moses and Aaron through whom plagues were wrought on the Egyptians
- He led Israel through the Red Sea
- He destroyed their enemies in the same Red Sea

Faithful In Battle

Joshua 24:8-10

God's faithfulness was seen in the victories they won on the east of the Jordan (as He had promised)

- The Amorites were overthrown
- Balak and the Moabites were confounded
- Balaam was neutered

Joshua 24:11-13

God faithfulness was seen in the victories they won on the west of the Jordan (as He had promised)

- He did not lead them into a place of defeat, but a place of victory
- The victory they God had promised, God faithfully gave
- The land of milk and honey they had been promised, God faithfully provided

Sovereignty of God

God is the supreme authority and all things are under His control

Joshua 24:3 *I took your father Abraham...*

Joshua 24:4 *To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau...*

Joshua 24:4 *To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir...*

Joshua 24:5 *I sent Moses and Aaron...*

Joshua 24:5 *I plagued Egypt...*

Joshua 24:6 *I brought your fathers out of Egypt...*

Joshua 24:8 *I brought you into the land...*

Joshua 24:10 *I would not listen to Balaam...*

Joshua 24:12 *I sent the hornet before you which drove them out...*

Joshua 24:13 *I have given you a land for which you did not labour...*

Sovereignty & Freewill

God's sovereignty has brought Israel thus far

- But it is Israel's freewill that will determine where they go from here
- Will they serve God and let Him lead their lives?
- Or will they serve foreign gods and be led away from the Lord?

There is difficult theological question that seeks to understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's freewill

Question: If God is sovereign (has supreme authority and all things are under his control) how can mankind have freewill and make any meaningful decisions?

Question: How can any decision made by mankind, using freewill, not undermine God's sovereignty?

Question: If God is in complete control, how can we be truly free in the decisions we make?

Calvinist View

Calvinism argues that

- God cannot provide humanity with freewill; to do so is to compromise the Sovereignty of God
- Man is free, but his freedom is within limits, and those limits are defined by the sovereignty of God

The natural consequence of this view on the Sovereignty of God is the doctrine of limited atonement

- That God determines who will be saved and who will not
- Thus, Jesus Christ died for the elect only

Arminian View

Arminianism argues that:

- The Sovereign God provides man with freewill (sometimes called permissive freewill)
- This freewill provides man with the grace to believe or reject God, to accept or reject salvation

The natural consequence of this view on the Sovereignty of God is the doctrine of conditional salvation

- That man determines who will be saved and who will not
- Thus, rejection of Jesus Christ and saving faith will cause a loss of salvation

Calvinism Overstates the Sovereignty of God

Arminianism Overstates the freewill of Man

Calvinism Justification is limited to those predestined to salvation, completed at Christ's death

Arminianism Justification made possible for all through Christ's death, but only completed upon choosing faith in Jesus

Challenge To Israel

Joshua 24:14-15

Serve The Lord

Choose To Serve

Thirteen times the word "serve" is employed in this chapter

- This is the emphasis of Joshua's challenge and Israel's choice
- Mankind is created to serve (not to rule)

Whether Israel recognises it or not

- Their lives will be spent serving one of two masters
- The Lord God who has been faithful to them
- The foreign god's who have failed their followers

Whether we recognise it or not

- Our lives will be employed in serving one of two masters
- The Lord God who has been faithful to us
- The foreign gods of self, sin and Satan

- The choice presented to Israel
- Is the same choice presented to us

Fear The Lord

Joshua's exhortation is plain and clear:

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth

The fear of the Lord will result in service that is

- In sincerity, and
- In truth

- *fear the Lord* Have reverence, awe, honour and respect for the Lord
- *in sincerity* Serve the Lord completely, wholeheartedly – give Him your all (with excellence)
- *in truth* Serve the Lord firmly, with faithfulness, reliability, loyalty

Renounce Idolatry

Institutional Idolatry

and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt.

There are no flies on Joshua, no wool covering his eyes

- He may be old, but he's not stupid
- He can see the idolatry rising in Israel
- He can see the compromise and apostasy settling in
- He can see the foreign gods that are being worshipped among his countrymen
- He calls them to, "*put away the gods*"

You can sense the righteous indignation in Joshua

- As he sees the compromise and corruption
- As he resolutely declares, "*Serve the Lord!*"

To Serve Or To Drift

God has taken Abraham out of Mesopotamia

- Out of a life of idolatry and worldliness
- But now Israel were drifting back to that life

Unless people make a firm decision to serve the Lord

- They will drift back to their old life
- To the old way of thinking and behaving

Up until this point they had served Joshua

- Now they had to make a choice to serve God

Illustration

- Early Christian life, I followed a crowd of believers (Genesis)
- Came the day, when Genesis dispersed, I need to choose whom I would serve
- No group to prop me up
- No crutch to rely on

We all have this choice to make

- Christian home - No longer rely on your parent's faith
- Church family - No longer rely on your churches support

Choice Of Idols

choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve

The choice the Lord will present to Israel

- Is not between God and idols
- But between idols and idols

This is not Joshua speaking but God

- This is not Joshua assuming Israel has decided against serving God
- This is God knowing they have decided against serving Him

So the Lord challenges them to choose between:

- The gods of their ancestors in Mesopotamia (*the other side of the River*)
- The gods of the Amorites in Canaan

This is damning inditement of Israel's spiritual condition

- No doubt designed to shock them into a moment of clarity
- To wake them up to the drifting nature of their lives

Personal Service

Joshua's Choice

Then comes the noble and faith-driven decision Joshua makes for himself and his household:
But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Question: How many Christian houses have had this framed on their wall?

Question: How many have it framed above their number one idol, the television?

Forgive my cynicism, but familiar words can lose their meaning if we're not careful

Question: What does it mean to serve the Lord?

Covenant With Israel

Joshua 24:14-28

Public Challenge

Israel Declaration

Joshua 24:16-19

Perhaps burned by Joshua's words

- Israel swears blind their loyalty to the Lord God
- Rejects the notion of serving foreign gods

A married couple sometimes renew their vows

- To mark an occasion like a wedding anniversary
- Here Israel gives voice to renewing its vows to serve the Lord

However, there is an emptiness and hollowness to their words

- In public, they declare fealty to the Lord
- In private, many have their household idols secreted in their tents

Joshua's Comeback

Joshua 24:20-21

You cannot serve the Lord

Joshua is not easily assuaged

- Israel cannot serve both God and idols
- Idols will pull you away from the Lord
- The Lord will not share His glory with another

Character Of God

He is a holy God. He is a Jealous God

Joshua then declares two more characteristics of God

1. The Holiness of God
2. The Jealousy of God

Holiness Of God

To be holy is to be separate

- From sin
- From corruption
- From idolatry
- From all defilement

In this context, God's holiness prevents Him from being associated with foreign gods

The four living creatures of heaven declare:

Revelation 4:8

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

R. C. Sproul (Holiness of God)

“Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy. The Bible never says that God is love, love, love; or mercy, mercy, mercy; or wrath, wrath, wrath; or justice, justice, justice. It does say that he is holy, holy, holy that the whole earth is full of His glory.

Jealousy Of God

Within the law of Moses the word “jealous” is mentioned seven times

- Two times in relation to man
- Five times in relation to God

In relation to man

- It is always when a spirit of jealousy come on a husband who suspects his wife of being unfaithful
- She is his wife, and he will not share her with another

In relation to God

- It is always in relation to bowing down and serving foreign gods
- Israel is God’s wife, and He will not share her with another

In this context, God’s jealousy prevents Him from sharing Israel with foreign gods

Sam Storms (*Amillennial, Calvinistic, charismatic, credo-baptistic, complementarian, Christian Hedonist*)
Divine jealousy is thus a zeal to protect a love relationship or to avenge it when it is broken. Jealousy in God is that passionate energy by which He is provoked and stirred and moved to take action against whatever or whoever stands in the way of His enjoyment of what He loves and desires. The intensity of God’s anger at threats to this relationship is directly proportionate to the depths of His love... Jealousy in God is not a “green-eyed monster” but a “red-faced lover” who will brook no rivals in His relationship with His people.

Warning Against Apostasy

Do You Harm

Because

- God’s holiness prevents Him from being associated with foreign gods
- God’s jealousy prevents Him from sharing Israel with foreign gods

Joshua says,

Joshua 24:19b-20

He [God] will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.

There is no mercy for the persistent apostate

If you reject God

- God will “do you harm”
- i.e. bring discipline into your life
- Discipline designed to bring correction
- Discipline designed to bring restoration

Persistence Of Israel

The peoples persist in their commitment to the Lord

- “No, but we will serve the Lord!” they say

Even so, Joshua doesn’t make it easy on them

- “You are witnesses against yourselves” he says
- He holds them to account
- On your own head be it

You have to wonder at a people

- Who adamantly declare, “...we will serve the Lord!”
- When the Lord has exposed the foreign gods they’re harbouring in their tents and their hearts

- Who are warned of receiving harm at the hands of the consuming fire, which is God
- Yet, embrace promised discipline knowing they're in the path of that said fire

This is spiritual blindness.

Christian Hypocrisy

It's reminiscent of Christian's who read

Romans 1:18

for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Paul then goes on to describe this "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" to include:

Romans 1:27

men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful

Despite the clear declaration of Scripture

- Bless same sex unions
- Homosexual vicars, bishops, etc.
- Or say, "we need to have a conversation about homosexuality"

Question: What planet are you on if you don't take the word of God seriously?

Question: What planet is Israel on?

Joshua's Third Exhortation

In light of Israel's insistence

- Joshua, who is not deceived in this matter, delivers one last exhortation:
- *Now therefore...put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.*

Drop the pretence

- Get rid of the idols
- Come to the Lord wholeheartedly
- Show God you mean it

Covenant Of Rededication

The Stone Statue

Joshua 24:25-28

Joshua makes a covenant with Israel

- To mark the commitment they're making
- Despite the evidence to the contrary
- Marks it with a stone statue

This statue is not an idol

- But a sign of the covenant Israel are making
- It would serve as a reminder of the vow they make
- Like a ring is a reminder of the vows made in a marriage

He took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

The location of this statue is particularly interesting

- It was under an oak tree (terebinth tree – ESV, NLT)
- By the sanctuary of the Lord

The Terebinth Tree

The tabernacle was in Shiloh

Question: So what is this sanctuary of the Lord?

Answer: A place where Jacob rededicated himself to the Lord

Genesis 35:1-4

After Jacob had drifted away from the Lord

- This terebinth tree is the location God restored Jacob

- This terebinth tree is the location Jacob buried his household idols

As such the terebinth tree has become a sanctuary of God – holy ground

Joshua uses this terebinth tree to be

- The place where Jacob rededicates himself to the Lord once more
- The place where Jacob, once again, buries his household idols

There is nothing special about the terebinth tree

- There is everything special about the God who manifested Himself at the tree
- God has revealed himself to me in a special way in a warehouse, a car park, a footpath
- These places would hold no significance for anyone else standing there
- But if I were return to those places a sensation would go down my spine
- Because I know how I encountered God in those places

The Death Of Joshua

Joshua 24:29-33

Last Of The Godly Men

A Godly Generation

The book of Joshua ends with the burial of three great and godly men

- With these burials comes the death of the last godly generation of Israel
- The generations that follow will do evil in the sight of the Lord

One cannot help but look on our generation and think of the great and godly men who have died

- And wonder where are the godly men of today in the church?
- What generations will follow?

Apostasy will follow Israel

- Apostasy is foretold in the last generation of the church
- These are evil days
- It's all downhill from here

Three Deilverers

The book of Joshua ends with the burial of three great and godly men

Joshua has served the Lord faithfully his entire life

- He spied the land with Caleb and brought back a good report
- He fought under Moses leadership and fought a good fight
- He led Israel under God's direction and did a good work
- Now he is buried in the land of his inheritance and is with the good Lord

Joseph had died in Egypt

- But had died in faith, believing God's promise to bring Israel into the land of Canaan
- He had given commands in faith, that his bones be buried in Canaan
- Now laid to rest in Shechem, the object of his faith is fully realised

Eleazer, the son of Aaron, was the High Priest

- He along with Joshua and Joseph were buried in the territory of Joseph
- He along with Joshua and Joseph had served their God and country well
- He along with Joshua and Joseph were great deliverers

Joshua and Joseph had delivered Israel in their lives

- Eleazer, delivered Israel in his death
- For when the High Priest dies, all those who had fled to the cities of refuge we free to leave
- Just as we were set free upon the death of our High Priest, Jesus Christ