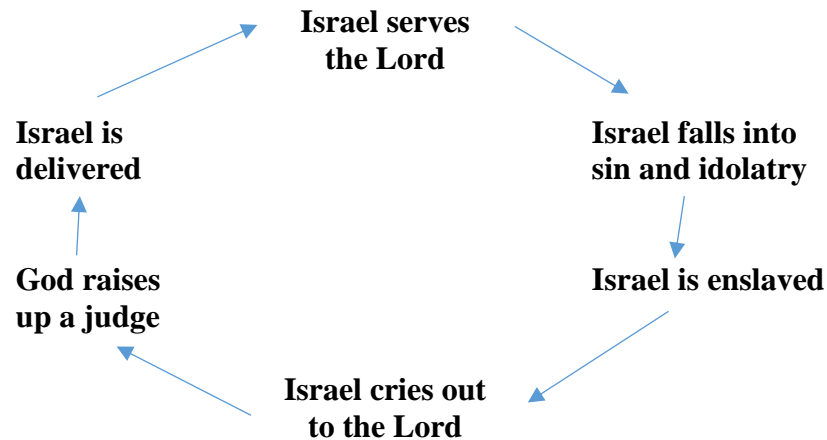


JOSHUA'S FINAL WORDS
To The People Of The Nation Of Israel
Joshua 24

The cycle that **Israel** continually went through...same cycle as Lordship.



Just as it was with his final message to the *leadership* of **Israel**... **Joshua's** parting words to the people were also marked with *deep concern* and *anxiety*. They expressed the sadness that he had...having observed a *growing complacency* on the part of **Israel** towards the remnants of the **Canaanites**. They had to easily accepted the joint occupancy of *a land which was to have been exclusively theirs*.

I. JOSHUA'S APPEAL: (vs. 1-15)

Then **Joshua** gathered all the tribes of **Israel** to **Shechem**, and called for the elders of **Israel** and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before **God** (vs. 1)...

Joshua makes an appeal to the *congregation*...the *laymen*...at **Shechem**. **Shechem** was a few miles northwest of **Shiloh** and was where **Abraham** first received the promise that **God** would give his seed the land of **Canaan**. **Abraham** responded by building an altar to demonstrate his faith in the one true **God** (**Genesis 12:6-7**). Later, **Jacob** also made an altar to worship **God** at **Shechem**.

After the **Israelites** had completed the first phase of the conquest of **Canaan** they also journeyed to **Shechem** where **Joshua** built an altar to **Yahweh**. He also *inscribed* the **Law of God** on stone pillars and *reviewed* those **laws** for all the people there (**Joshua 8:30-35**).

Shechem had now become a special place for **Israel**...replacing **Gilgal** as their place of *worship* and *gathering*.

Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the **Lord**, the **God of Israel**..." (vs. 2a)...

- **Remember** what **God** had done for you (vs. 2-13)

17 times the personal pronoun "**I**" is used to describe the work of **God**. Any greatness **Israel** had achieved wasn't by her effort but through **God's** *grace* and *power*.

It is the **remembrance of God's faithfulness** that becomes the **foundation of one's faith**. What **God** has done allows us to grow in **faith**. *Present faith* is built on *past faithfulness*.

From the first to the last of the conquests that **Israel** experienced, were because of **God's** *mercies*...not because of their own making. *Remember what God has done*.

- **Resolve** to be faithful in serving **Him** (vs. 14-15)

Now, therefore, **fear the Lord** and **serve Him** in sincerity and truth; and **put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord** (vs. 14)...Not only serve the **Lord** with *good intentions*, but base your service on **His truth**. Ie. *Right motive* **and** the *right method*.

Fear the Lord...Heb. *yare*, literally means *awesome*.

"Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good."

~Deuteronomy 10:12-13

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

~Proverbs 9:10

Put away...Heb. *sur*, literally means *to cast out...to remove*.

In this covenant **Israel** was to reject alliances with *any* and *all foreign gods*.

Serve...Heb. *abad*, means *to become a slave*. Between **verses 14-24**, the word **serve** and **served** occurs *14 times*.

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (vs. 15)...Your daily choices will ultimately determine your destiny.

Choose...is in the **present active tense** which means that you don't just **choose one time**, but you *continue* to **choose to serve** God. It is a word that has *duration*.

II. ISRAEL'S ANSWER: (vs. 16-18)

Even though the people responded with *eagerness*...notice the answers that are given by the congregation.

- **They were careless:**

This is why **Joshua** continued to speak to them *forcefully...four times*. He repeatedly *cautioned* them as to what would happen if they *forsook the Lord* and *worshipped other gods*.

The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods" (vs. 16)...Even though they despised the very thought of forsaking the God who had delivered them out of **Egypt**, they were so quick in answering that they didn't weigh the cost.

They answered too quickly. It was an *emotional decision*.

"I will never do that" or "I'll always do this or that..." (Peter) or "God, if you do this, then I'll do that..."

- **They were carnal:**

Even though they acknowledged what God had done for them and they promised that they would serve the Lord...there was a sense of *fleshly disingenuousness* in their response.

For the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God (vs. 17-18)...

Joshua wasn't at all satisfied with their burst of enthusiasm. He detected that trace of *insincerity* or *carnality*. As a result, he was very *blunt* in his response to them and *admonished* them.

III. JOSHUA'S ADMONISHMENT: (vs. 19-20)

Joshua's warning...

Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or 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 good to you." (vs. 19-20)...

Joshua was emphasizing that God was not to be *worshipped* or *served* lightly...*casually*. And that to *forsake Him* to *serve idols* would be *sin...sin* which would result in *disaster*.

There could be *no mixing* or *compromise* of allegiance to God with *idol worship*. A firm choice had to be made...then, as in every generation.

People must choose between:

- **Expediency and principle.**
- **This world and eternity.**
- **God and idols.**

"For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God"

~I Thessalonians 1:8-9

IV. ISRAEL'S ACCOUNTABILITY: (vs. 21-28)

The people responded to **Joshua's** probing words reaffirming their commitment to serve **Yahweh**. They finally give a *careful answer*.

The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." (vs. 21-22)...

Joshua pointedly told them that if they turned aside from God that they would be **witnesses against themselves**. They would have *no excuse* and *no defense*. The people *responded* and *acknowledged* that they understood that they would be **witnesses**.

Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel (vs. 24)...

Joshua had heard the pledge from their lips...he now challenged them to *prove their faith by their actions*. That is, to *put away the idols that were in their midst*.

Joshua then solemnly renewed the *covenant* with God (vs. 25-27).

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And 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. Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God." (vs. 25-27)...

The **Mosaic Covenant** established at **Mt. Sinai** *wasn't* an everlasting covenant...hence it was a covenant that needed to be renewed in every generation. That renewal was now being affirmed.

He took a large stone (vs. 26)...As a reminder, **Joshua** apparently inscribed the statutes of the covenant on a **large stone**.

Stones of remembrance. Joshua 4:2-8, 20-24 at **Gilgal**...and **Joshua 4:9-11** in the middle of the **Jordan River**.

Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God (vs. 27)...

Joshua said that **this stone** was a **witness** as if it had **heard all the words of the Lord** in establishing the *covenant*.

Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance (vs. 28)...

Joshua then completed his last public act as the leader of **Israel**.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **The key to living the victorious Christian life is a continual surrendering to the Lordship of Christ...every moment of every day. Like a servant to a master. Hearing God...serving God...obeying God...experiencing God. Taking every thought captive. Dying to fleshly desires. Living and walking in victory over sin...victory over strongholds.**

"And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me'."

~Luke 9:23

- **Rest on God's unfailing faithfulness.** Recording *three burials* is a strange way to end a book like **Joshua**. But these *three graves* testify to the *faithfulness of God*. **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**.
- **Finish well.**
Joshua finished well. No greater tribute could have been paid him than the fact that he was simply called...**the servant of God**. He was *faithful*.

Others who finished well:

Joseph
Abraham
Elijah
Eleazar (son of Aaron)

Those who didn't finish well:

Moses
Aaron
Samson
David
Saul
Eli
Lot