

12/14/03

Joshua, Faithful Until The End
Josh. 24:14-31

The book of Joshua began with the words of God to Joshua, commissioning him to be the leader after the death of Moses, what a fitting thing that after so many years, God was still the One leading and in control, evident of a true servant.

The opening verse of the chapter tells us that the assembly of all Israel gathered by the hand of Joshua at Shechem. Vs. 1

1. Shechem was in the center of the land, in the vicinity where they had built an altar and recited the blessing and the cursings, on Mount Ebal and Gerizim. Deut. 11:29, 27:4, 13, Josh. 8:30, 33
2. Shechem was where God had first promised the land to Abraham and he built an altar. Gen. 12:6-7
3. Here Jacob had built an altar also and had the people put away their idols. Gen. 33:20, 35:1-4
4. It was one of the cities of refuge in the hill country of Ephraim.
5. The elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their officers; all presented themselves before God.

The reference to “before God” could refer to the tabernacle, if so, very possibly it had been moved from Shiloh at this time and then returned?

This gathering, though is gathered by Joshua, is specifically declared to be order by Yahweh by the phrase, “they presented themselves before God”.

Then God proceeded to rehearse their history from Abraham to Joshua, in order to give witness of His faithfulness to them, just as He had promised. Vs. 2-13

* In chapter twenty-three Joshua had given his personal testimony to the leaders about God’s faithfulness and his own, with instruction and warnings against apostasy.

In view of this Joshua proceeds to renewed the covenant with the people, which consists of three movements. Josh. 24:14-31

- I. The people’s free will to choose to enter the covenant. Vs. 14-15
 - II. The people’s free will in commitment to enter the covenant. Vs. 16-24
 - III. The people’s free will was honored as a legitimate covenant. Vs. 25-31
- I. The people’s free will to choose to enter the covenant. Vs. 14-15**
- A. Joshua pleads with the people to repent. Vs. 14
 1. This repentance was in view of their history by the word “therefore”. Vs. 14a

- a. God had taken Abraham, a pagan and make him His heir.
 - b. God had delivered them from Egypt, through Moses.
 - c. God had kept His promises brought them into the land by Joshua.
2. This repentance was in view of their past commitment. Vs. 14b-d
- a. To fear God.
 - b. To serve God.
 - c. To do both in sincerity and truth, marking the genuiness.
 - 1) Sincerity “tamiym” means with a complete heart, motivated by love for God, not compulsion, being unhypocritical.
 - 2) Truth “emeth” means firmness and reliability, referring to God’s word, the revelation of His will.
3. This repentance was in view of their idolatry. Vs. 14d
- a. This was a sharp reality to their unfaithfulness to the covenant. Vs. 14d
 - 1) They were to put away the gods, they had made a choice to be disloyal to Yahweh.
 - 2) They were the gods which their fathers served on the other side of the River and Egypt, they had and idolatrous past.

- 3) They had gone back and worshipped the moon god and others from the other side of the Euphrates River and the Bull or Calf of Egypt.
 - * They were not to continue to their old ways!
4. Their repentance was in view of serving the Lord. Vs. 14d
- a. Fourteen times the word “serve” appears in the book of Joshua.
 - b. Once in chapter twenty-two and once in twenty-three, but twelve times in chapter Twenty-four.
 - c. Five times “served”, one in twenty-three and four times in twenty-four.
- B. Joshua points out their choice. Vs. 15**
- 1. The urgency is in view of sin and fellowship with Yahweh. Vs. 15a-b
 - a. It involved reflection and examination, “If it seems evil to you to serve the LORD”. Vs. 15a
 - b. It involved individual and personal choice, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Vs. 15b
 - 2. The utmost comparisons is in view of reality and eternity. Vs. 15c-f
 - a. The gods of their fathers were physical figures that had no life nor could they give life, they were dead,

“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.” Vs. 15c-d

- 1) They are insensate, the Psalmist says. Ps. 115
- 2) The people become just like their gods.
- b. The God of the covenant was living and able to give life, therefore Joshua choice was, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Vs. 15e-f
 - * This is one of the key verses of the book of Joshua!
 - 1) The choice of Joshua was already made, it remained the same as always
 - 2) The decision was uncompromising and publicly.
 - 3) It included he and his house, not because he made them but most likely because they had seen his life of faith and agreed with him.

Illustration

Six-hundred years later, Elijah gave the same choice to the prophets of Baal, on Mount Carmel. 1Kngs 18:21

Application

1. The New Testament Covenant is entered into by repentance also.
 - a. The word repentance “metanoia” means a change of mind, to turn around, with a change of heart and life.
 - b. It is being truly sorry about sins committed against God first then man.
 - c. It is the understanding that sin separated man from God and ultimately having to give an account of all sins committed.
 - d. It is not merely feeling bad, crying and certainly not being sorry about getting caught.
 - * “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” 2Cor. 7:10
2. Some people have turned away from Jesus and gone back to served the gods of their past.
 - a. Having lost the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom and understanding. Prov. 1:7, 9:10
 - b. By still going through the motions but not in sincerity and truth, being self-deceived and hypocrites.
 - c. Serving other gods takes one from freedom to bondage, be it drinking, drugs, pornography, materialism or self-righteousness.
 - * Peter says, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of

corruption; for by whom a person is **overcome**, by him also he is brought into bondage.” 2Pet. 2:19

3. Every person must make a confession of his or her allegiance, it is not a matter of personal privacy.

- a.** Jesus said, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” Matt. 10:32-33
- b.** The Philippians jailor said to Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:30b-31
 - 1)** Many try a claim that all of their house will be save by this verse, but it is not automatic, each person must exercise faith and repentance towards Christ to be saved.
 - 2)** The members of the family were more influence and more in line with the order beliefs of the home, than those of our fractures society today!
- c.** Paul told the Corinthians, ‘Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation’. 2Cor. 6:2

This reveals the people’s free will to choose to enter the covenant!

II. The people’s free will in commitment to enter the covenant. Vs. 16-24

- A.** The response of the people was one of outrage. Vs. 16-18
 - 1.** The people were ad emit at the very insinuation to choose, “So the people answered and said: “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.” Vs. 16
 - a.** They were sincere but sincerely deceived by their duplicity.
 - b.** They were denying the evidence of their idols, which condemned them of their own unfaithfulness.
 - * Never say never. 1Cor. 10:12
 - 2.** The people were also admitting their relationship to God and thereby their responsibility and accountability to Him. Vs. 17
 - a.** God had delivered them from Egypt, “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, who did those great signs in our sight”. Vs. 17a-c
 - b.** God had protected them till they entered the land of promise, “And

preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed.” Vs. 17d

3. The people were acknowledging their promised inheritance, “And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. Vs. 18a-b
4. The people were committing their lives to serve Yahweh. Vs. 18c-d
 - a. It was voiced, “We also will serve the LORD”. Vs. 18c
 - b. It was personal, “For He is our God”. Vs. 18d

B. The response of Joshua was to reprove the people. Vs. 19-21

1. Joshua reemphasizes the impossibility of their serving Yahweh and idles. Vs. 19
 - a. “But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD.” Vs. 19a-b
* A life of duplicity is very dangerous that leads to destruction.
 - b. “For He is a holy God.” Vs. 19c
* He is of purer eyes than to behold evil with condones. Hab. 1:13
 - c. “He is a jealous God.” Vs. 19d
* He will not tolerated disloyalty, “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Deut. 4:24

d. He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. Vs. 19e
* Ex. 20:5, 34:14, Deut. 5:9

- 1) That is if they persist in their sin and there is no repentance.
- 2) The warning implies danger in two ways; in not repenting or in seeking repentance too late, like Achan.

2. Joshua reemphasizes the warning. Vs. 20-21

- a. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you. Vs. 20a
- b. After He has done you good. Vs. 20b

3. The people are unmoved in their commitment. Vs. 21

* And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD!”

C. The response of Joshua was to reaffirm the commitment of the people. Vs. 22-24

1. Joshua placed them under an oath. Vs. 22

- a. So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.” Vs. 22a-c
- b. And they said, “We are witnesses!” Vs. 22d-e

2. Joshua called the people to give tangible evidence of their repentance. Vs. 23

- a. Now therefore, he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you.”
Vs. 23a-c
 - 1) This is not slander but direct accusation.
 - 2) Faith and works go hand in hand.
Ja. 2:22, 24. 26
- b. And incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel. Vs. 23d
 - * They had left their first love. Rev. 2:4
- 3. The people declared their fidelity and loyalty to God. Vs. 24
 - a. And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve”.
 - 1) Fourteen times the word “serve” appears in the book of Joshua.
 - * Twelve are found in twenty-four.
 - 3) Five times the word “served” in the book of Joshua.
 - * Four times in twenty-four.
 - 4) Service to God is to be sincere and out of love, not compulsion!
 - b. And His voice we will obey!
 - 1) The word alone reveals God’s will.
2Pet. 1:20-21
 - 2) The word of God, alone prepares people to be men and women of God. 2Tim. 3:16-17

A wedding ceremony is not only a joyous occasion but it is a strong warning to each of the individuals about their life long commitment before God and the witnesses present, which one day they will give an account for to God.

Application

- 1. There are some people who get so offended that you would insinuate that they were not living out their Christianity, while is very evident they are a contradiction to their faith.
 - a. Pharisees are ritualists, those who can not see their own hypocrisy and deception, so rather than examining themselves to what they hear, they criticize and get offended.
 - b. Sadducees are materialist, those who say everything belongs to God but God never sees any of their money and they often measure their godliness by their wealth.
 - c. Scribes are spiritual lawyers, those who have an answer to justify everything they do, without any concern for context.
 - * James tells us, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” Ja. 1:22-23

Illustration

2. People must understand that they can not serve God and anyone else or things, for God is not only love but a consuming fire.

- a. He will not allow any rivals, “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.” Deut. 5:9
- b. He will not be appeased, “(for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.” Deut. 6:15
- c. He will not be one with idolatry, “They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger.” Deut. 32:16
- d. He will not allow unfaithfulness, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2Cor. 11:2
- e. He is very possessive, “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?" Ja. 4:5
* “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Heb 10:31

3. Too many today are excepting Christ without being challenged about what it will cost them.

- a. Jesus told the rich young ruler, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” Matt. 19:21-22
- b. Now it happened as Jesus and his disciples journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Lk. 9:57-62

This is the people’s free will in commitment to enter the covenant!

III. The people’s free will was honored as a legitimate covenant. Vs. 25-31

* The covenant performed by the people.

- A.** The covenant was made near the sight of the setting up of the Law when they first entered the land, at Shechem. Vs. 25
- 1.** Joshua made it that very day with the people. Vs. 25a
 - a.** It was a re-commitment to what they had always known.
 - b.** The word covenant “berith” , literally means to cut or divide, as Abraham did to the sacrifice. Gen. 15:10
 - c.** “And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it.” Jer 34:18`
 - 2.** Joshua made statutes and judgments for them. Vs. 25b
 - a.** Statutes, decrees and prescribes boundaries or limits.
 - b.** Ordinance, acts of decisions in court cases.
 - 3.** Shechem was in the center of the land, in the vicinity where they had built an alter and recited the blessing and the cursings, on Mount Ebal and Gerizm. Deut. 11:29, 27:4, 13, Josh. 8:30, 33
 - a.** The first promised of the land to Abraham. Gen. 12:6-7

- b.** The place where Jacob had built an alter also and had the people put away their idols under a terebinth tree. Gen. 33:20, 35:1-4
- B.** The covenant was recorded. Vs. 26-28
- 1.** Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. Vs. 26a
 - a.** The written covenant was a legal contract between the people and God.
 - b.** The written record would be preserved for all future generations to come.
 - c.** The fact that it was written in the “Book of the Law of God”, some have proposed that the book of Joshua is part of the Pentateuch and call it the Hexateuch, but there is no evidence for this theory.
 - 2.** Joshua took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. Vs. 26b-c
 - a.** The last memorial in the land to remind them of God’s faithfulness and their covenant relation.
 - b.** The Lord’s Tabernacle made it solemn occasion.
 - 3.** Joshua declared their accountability to God. Vs. 27
 - a.** He includes himself as one as one the people accountable to God, not above

the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us”. Vs. 27a

- b.** He indicated that creation was a witness to God’s words, holding them responsible, “For it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us”. Vs. 27b
- c.** He instructed them that the stone memorial would be a witness to them, lest they deny your God, having greater judgment for their future unfaithfulness. Vs. 27c-e
 - 1) The Law required two and in certain cases three witnesses.
 - 2) God, the large stone and the third being the people!
- 4.** Joshua finished his ministry well. Vs. 28
 - a.** He let the people depart, each to his own inheritance. Vs. 28
 - 1) He did not attempt to control or rule over the people.
 - 2) He did not set up his sons, the curse of nepotism.
 - b.** He had been faithful to the end.
 - 1) Joshua was a courageous soldier. Josh. 1:1-10:15
 - 2) Joshua was a wise administrator. Josh. 10:16-22:34
 - 3) Joshua was a loyal aged leader. Josh. 23:1-24:33

C. The covenant would not last. Vs. 29-31

- 1.** After these things Joshua the son of Num, the servant of the Yahweh died, being one-hundred and ten years old. Vs. 29
 - a.** He began as a servant of Yahweh by serving Moses.
 - b.** He moved on as a servant of Yahweh to lead and serve the people of God.
 - c.** He finished as a servant of Yahweh, regardless of all the authority, power and prosperity given to him by God.
- 2.** 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. Vs. 30
 - a.** Joshua was a living example, while living.
 - b.** Joshua was a living witness, while dead.
- 3.** Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Vs. 31
 - a.** The life of Joshua impacted and influenced those of his generation.
 - b.** The life of those he influence, did not impact or influence those of their generation, as they turned from the Lord in the book of Judges.

Illustration

I went to visit Manuel Alazon yesterday and shared with him and his family about how Joshua finished well, as a faithful servant. And then I shared with his children and wife about their choice, through the faithful example of their father Manuel.

Application

1. Our commitment to God is one of marriage and He holds us completely responsible.

* Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Eph. 5:24-27

2. The books in heaven make no mistakes, they record everything.

* And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is [the Book] of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the book. Rev. 20:12

3. The number of people who reject or walk away from God is not small.

- a. “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ”. Phil. 3:17-18
- b. Paul said to Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2Tim. 4:7-8

This was the people’s free will and was honored as a legitimate covenant!

Conclusion

Joshua the faithful servant renewed the covenant with the people, which consisted of three movements.

- I.** The people’s free will to choose to enter the covenant!
- II.** The people’s free will in commitment to enter the covenant!
- III.** The people’s free will was honored as a legitimate covenant!