

PLACE OF NEW BEGINNINGS
JOSHUA 24:1-31



CONNECT

What is the most difficult decision you have ever had to make? What was the easiest?

WORD

Joshua 24:14-15 (ESV) - 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. ¹⁵And 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.”

Joshua 24:23-24 (ESV) - ²³He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.” ²⁴And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.”

WHAT

What does the Bible say?

In this passage, Joshua gathers the people of Israel together at Shechem. He recounts to the people all the glorious things that God has done for them. He tells them that this majestic and powerful God who has given them the land that they have conquered, desires to be their sovereign ruler. He wants to be intimately involved in the governance of their nation. The blessings will be enormous, but the choice is theirs.

The Covenant Renewal Ceremony at Shechem follows a format very similar to other ancient treaties. Joshua begins by introducing the suzerain or sovereign with whom the treaty is being made (v. 2). He recounts the suzerain's past gracious dealings with the vassal or subordinate (v. 2-13). He outlines the vassal's responsibilities to the suzerain (v. 14-24). In verses 25-27, he outlines measures for the preservation of the covenant including record keeping and witnesses.

The people of Israel would have been familiar with this form of covenant or treaty. As such, this was not some nebulous, mystical arrangement between them and a vague concept of the divine. This was not a philosophical concept or way of looking at the world. This was a very real, concrete, and binding agreement with God.

In order for this to be a valid agreement, the people had to go into it with a full understanding of what was entailed. They had to consider the grace of God and all the things that he had done for them. He had set them apart as special, he had preserved them through adversity, he had freed them from bondage and captivity and he had strengthened them to overcome their enemies and conquer the Promised Land.

They were confronted with a choice to follow the ways of the people whose land they had just conquered or to follow the path that God would set before them. They knew the law. They knew what God required of them. They knew the blessings they would receive for following God and the consequences of choosing to violate the covenant. The choice was theirs.

Once the people made their choice, they had to consecrate themselves to God's service. They had to clear out all the idols in their lives and dedicate themselves to the service of their Lord.

Christ's birth, life, sacrificial death and resurrection presents us with a new covenant in him. He has dealt graciously with us. He has set us apart and delivered us from our sin and shame. He has conquered death and invited us to follow him as his disciples and enter into his kingdom. He presents us with a choice. We can choose to accept him or choose to reject him. He tells us of the blessings and consequences of our choice. If we choose him, we must set aside the things that are keeping us from serving him and crown him as Lord of our lives.

SO WHAT

What is the relevance to my life?

- What really stood out to you in today's message and lesson? What would you like to discuss further with the group?
- What has Jesus done for you? Share how Jesus has blessed you. How has Jesus demonstrated grace to you?
- What are our responsibilities as followers of Jesus? What does he require of us if we choose to accept his covenant?
- What do we receive as a result of our service to Jesus? How will we be blessed for our submission to him?
- What kind of things keep us from serving him effectively?

- What are the “gods our fathers served” in our lives? How have we been influenced by the values of the world around us?
- What are the consequences of choosing to follow our own way?
- How do we consecrate ourselves to our covenant with Jesus?

NOW WHAT

How do I apply the word to my life?



How does this lesson change the way you think about our relationship with Jesus? Why did God choose this moment to bring this lesson to you?



What has God laid on your heart with this lesson? How does understanding this covenant change your relationship with him?



What does God want you to do differently this week as a result of this lesson? What will you do to deepen your relationship with Jesus and demonstrate your gratitude for his great gifts to us?

How can we help you and hold you accountable? How can we pray for you? What can we do to show our love for you this week? Who do you know that needs to hear this lesson? Who can you share it with?

