

Joshua 24

You gotta serve somebody

Intro

Joshua 24:1

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

- Now that Joshua's departure is at hand he will commission the **people** and **leadership** to follow and serve the Lord

The book of Joshua ends much in the same way the book of Deuteronomy did.

- In Deuteronomy Moses' season as Israel's leader reached an end.
- And he ordained Joshua to carry the mantle to the next generation.

Deuteronomy 31:23

*Then He (Moses) inaugurated **Joshua** the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."*

- We find the same thing happening at the time of the death of David

1 Kings 2:1-3

*Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and **he charged Solomon** his son, saying: "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;*

- It was also the commission Paul passed on to Titus

Titus 1:5

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

- And to Timothy

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- And to us

2 Timothy 2:1-2

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Without giving away the whole book of judges I want you to notice that just as Joshua ends the way Deuteronomy did, so judges begins the same way Joshua did.

- We have a new generation, facing new challenges and about to step into a new calling from God

Unfortunately judges is a book of tragedy rather than success and the key behind it is found in

Judges 2:7-10

*So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, **another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work, which He had done for Israel.***

The failure of a generation was systemic.

It grew out of a failure of the people to educate the next generation in the things of God

- They failed to invest in the people and raise up a new generation of leaders.
- And the result was they had a whole generation that was biblically illiterate and wandered from the ways of God

Application

We all bear the responsibility to know the word of God **AND** to teach the word of God to others.

There is no excuse for us to be illiterate in the word or ways of God

- We have vast resources available to us
- We must learn to carefully navigate our way through these by always completing what we hear with what the word actually says

As Joshua comes to a close we hear his final words as he pleads with the people to follow after and serve the Lord.

The chapter divides neatly into 3 parts.

Verses 1-13

Joshua reminds Israel of their history and the faithfulness of God

Verses 14-28

Joshua calls the people to publicly commit their lives and families to the Lord

Verses 29-33

Is an epilogue, which records the death of Joshua

Part 1

Verses 1-13

Joshua reminds Israel of their history and the faithfulness of God

In these verses Joshua refers to

- The call of Abraham
- The redemption of Israel
- Their victory over enemies

- And the distribution of the land

In Abraham we see the **call** of God

Joshua 24:2

And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.

- Joshua points out that Abraham was raised worshipping false gods. Yet was chosen by God as the figurehead of the people of God.
 - This reminds us of This God works
 - When he wants to accomplish a work in the world He chooses a man

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

Application

- As the eyes of God scanned the planet he found Abraham an idol worshipper from Iraq and chose him, called him and commissioned him
 - **We can be assured that God is doing the same today**

Who is the man God selects?

We get a little insight from

- 2chron 16:9 - loyal

Loyal - The context implies a person who will look to the Lord for direction when they face challenges to life and ministry

- The call of David

He is described as a **man after God's heart**. This can imply that he sought God but also that he had a heart for the things of God. God is the god shepherd who lives for the sheep. David looked at his role that way. Not what the sheep could do for him but what he could do for them

- The selection of the 12
 - They were **disciples** who bore their crosses to follow Jesus
 - They were men who **spent time with Jesus**
 - They were men **willing to step out** and serve Jesus
 - They were men **willing to be corrected** by Jesus
- The selection of deacons in Acts 6
 - They **participated** in church ministry
 - They were full of **faith, wisdom** and the **Spirit** of God
- Finally we see something in Paul's writing to Titus and Timothy regarding the character of the elders and deacons

Are you that man?

2 Timothy 2:20-21

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

- Conversely the Bible also Warns that Satan's eyes scan the planet

Job 1:7

And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

- Whether or not you choose to be a vessel of honor you are in the sites of the wicked one.
- That being said it is not uncommon to experience more of his attacks the more you stand for the Lord

This is why the Bible exhorts us

- not to be ignorant of the enemies devices
- and to arm ourselves with the weapons of our warfare
- and be clad in the armor of God

In Moses we see **redemption** provided

Joshua 24:5

Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out.

- The story of Israel's deliverance is an illustration of the redemptive work of God

Israel was

- bound as slaves in Egypt,
- under a harsh task master,
- living with the fear of death
- And having no means of saving themselves

God sent 9 plagues upon the Land all of which were incapable of delivering the people

Finally salvation was provided through the sacrificial death of a lamb

It is not difficult to see the parallels between their deliverance and our salvation.

In battle we see the work of the **Spirit**

Joshua 24:6-12

*'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. **So they cried out to the Lord; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them.** And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. And I **brought you** into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I **gave them** into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I **destroyed them** from before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I **would not listen** to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I **delivered you** out of his hand. Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—also the Amorites, the*

*Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But **I delivered them** into your hand. **I sent the hornet** before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow.*

- The power of God was the source of all their victories
 - Red Sea parted
 - Amorites were defeated
 - Jericho's walls collapsed
 - The Land was conquered
- Joshua reminds the leaders as they step into a new stage of ministry that in every generation the power of God is available to the child of God
- And in every generation the power of God is accessed the same way. As we walk in the spirit and take steps of faith a God always supplies what is needed
 - An important biblical principle is that power for ministry is found when we step out.
 - We wish it worked like a top that we could wind and let lose. But god simply gives what we need as we go

And in the land we see the marvelous **grace** of God

Joshua 24:13

I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

- All the blessings israel experienced were by grace
 - Paul spoke of the exceeding riches of God 's grace and even spoke of that grace being toward us.
 - James declared that when we humble ourselves God is with us but when we exalt ourselves God will resist us

All in all Joshua reminds Israel that God has been with them.

Their past success has been determined by clinging to the Lord and their future success will be no different.

Whatever obstacles their forefathers faced in the past God was able to overcome.

If they move forward trusting in the Lord they will find the same thing to be true

Part 2

Verses 14-28

Joshua calls the people to publicly commit their lives and families to the Lord

Joshua 24:14-15

*“Now therefore, **fear** the Lord, **serve** Him in sincerity and in truth, and **put away** the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to **serve** the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will **serve**, 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. But as for me and my house, we will **serve** the Lord.”*

The passage begins with a plea and ends with a pattern

The plea

The plea can be divided into 4 parts

First - **Fear the lord**

- The fear of the lord could be defined as a desire to do what is pleasing to God.

We are demonstrating the fear of the Lord when we are more concerned with doing what He wants than anything else.

We are failing to fear the Lord when we

- Take the easy way out
- Give in to temptation
- Make decisions without consulting the Lord and His word

The fear of the Lord will guard us when

- We are alone
- The boss is not around
- The professor steps out of the room
- We are alone in a hotel on a business trip

- Or when an unsolicited email shows up in your inbox

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;

Pride and arrogance and the evil way

And the perverse mouth I hate.

But the fear of the Lord will also help us to make wise decisions in all areas of our life

Job 28:28

And to man He said,

'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,

And to depart from evil is understanding.' "

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,

But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Someone who fears the Lord will avoid evil, even building high walls to protect themselves from easily besetting sins

And someone who fears the Lord will consult His word for how to live and how to make a good decision

Second - serve the lord

- 6 times in 2 verses Joshua calls upon the people to serve the Lord.

He is compelling them to participate in the work of the Lord

We participate when we invest our **time, talents** and **resources** to God.

- The tabernacle was **funded** when the people brought their treasures and offered them to God.
- The tabernacle was **built** when people brought their talents and participated in the building
- The ministry of the tabernacle was **sustained** as a variety of people used their gifts in serving the Lord.

- Not all the gifts looked the same but combined they provided what was necessary to help the people encounter the Lord.

God is doing the same thing today.

- He is calling people who fear the Lord to join with Him in the cause of reaching the lost, discipling the saved and raising up a new generation of leaders.
- The book of Haggai addresses a group of people who were failing to serve the Lord because they were consumed with the cares of life

Hag 1

This chapter is a call to participate

Hag 2

The next chapter explains that the people responded and the temple was built

Ezra 5 records the narrative

Perhaps it is time to give a little less attention to our own pursuits and a little more attention to participation in what God wants to do in the world.

If we are worried about family time, perhaps it is time to educate the family in the value of selfless sacrificial service for the kingdom

Third - Put away false gods

Jesus told a parable that gives insight into what happens when the Bible is taught. He compared the word to seed and the preacher to a farmer. He used 4 different soils to represent the hearers of the message.

- One such hearer was represented by good soil that had not been weeded. When the seed of the word was planted the weeds choked out the word.
- This is often the case.
 - A person hears the call of God and is stirred up.
 - They decide to respond to that call and devote themselves to the Lord and His cause.
 - However because they do not take an honest inventory of their lives they allow many things to remain that have the ability to choke out their desire to serve the Lord.

John knew the reality of this when he exhorted believers to keep themselves from idols.

1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Idols represent things that we hold on to that should be let go of

- Relationships
- Habits
- Attitudes

Things left from our pre-Christ days will come back to haunt us if we do not lay them aside

If we are honest we can all speak to a time when we sensed God speaking to us, we made a commitment to act only to see that desire wane because we failed to let go of something

Fourth - Make a decision

- Joshua calls them to choose today to serve the Lord

He calls them to evaluate the benefits of serving God or serving something else

- We all serve and worship something
- Not all worship provides the same return

Disposable income- you get little or nothing in return for your investment

Ponzi scheme - you got ripped off

Serving anything other than Christ is a Ponzi scheme

The apple made great promises to Eve that it lacked the ability to fulfill

- The psalmist wrote that we actually become like the objects we worship

Psalms 115:4-8

Their idols are silver and gold,

The work of men's hands.

*They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;
They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.
Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.*

A life-less idol will not produce life but the living God will transform you

Paul described the Christian being transformed by the word of God unto the image of the Son of a God.

He wrote that this would continue until we reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

The pattern

- Joshua uses his own life as an example

We are all examples

"I am not totally useless I can be a bad example"

Don't be a bad that Guy

- Regardless of the decision from the masses Joshua was determined to commit himself to the Lord and do all he could to influence his family to walk with the Lord

We might wonder how one man's commitment can have any impact in such a broken world

Scripture has something to say about that

- When **Gideon** took down his father's altar 30,000 joined him for battle
- When **Jonathan** and his armor bearer attacked the Philistine camp, the rest of the army stepped into battle

- When **David** conquered the giant those who had been cowering in their tents joined forces on the battle field
- **Hudson Taylor** ventured into inland China. Hundreds chose to disregard their national customs, don classic Chinese apparel and venture into the unknown. Shortly after his death in 1905 there were nearly 5,000 missionaries in China. Today it is estimated that there are 100 million believers in China!
- How many high school and college campuses have been impacted because 1 believer takes a stand, how many families and social circles have been impacted when 1 person comes to Christ and stands boldly for Him

Tonight we need to respond to Joshua's exhortation and determine to take a stand as followers of Christ.

We are choosing

- To fear God
- To participate in furthering the kingdom
- And remove anything from our personal life that stands in the way

Conclusion

As his journey comes to a close Joshua calls the leaders and the nation to a public commitment of themselves and their families to serve the Lord.

This very commitment would be a testimony to them and even against them that they are the people of God and should rise above the tide of the culture around them

We are people of another king and another kingdom. We want the culture of the kingdom to become our culture.

The final chapter of his story is written and an epilogue to this book is added

Joshua 24:29-33

*Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, **died**, being one hundred and ten years old. And 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.*

***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.*

***The bones of Joseph**, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground, which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.*

*And **Eleazar** the son of Aaron **died**. They **buried** him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.*

Lets stand together and publicly declare that we are choosing this day to fear and follow God
AND TO do whatever we can to positively influence our children to do the same