

JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS: A CALL TO DECISION

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : [Joshua 24:1-33](#)

LESSON 178 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Joshua 24:1-33

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

² And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

³ And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

⁴ And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

⁵ I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

⁶ And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

⁷ And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

⁸ And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

[NOTES:](#)

Israel's History

Joshua had served God faithfully all the days of his life. He could see that it was God's power that had led the Israelites from the beginning of their history, and had finally brought them to rest in conquered Canaan.

When he knew he was soon to die, Joshua called together the chief men of every tribe so that he might give them his last message. They were words that Israel would long remember.

Joshua repeated the entire history of the Israelites to them, from way back in the days of Abraham's father, Terah. He had lived with his family in the land of Ur of the Chaldees, and there Abraham had been born. Terah and his people served false gods, just as the other people of that land did. Later, Terah moved his family to Haran, and there he died.

God saw that Abraham was a man who would serve Him; and one day He called him to leave his home, his brother Nahor and other members of his family, and go to Canaan to live. God did not want him to be with the people who worshiped idols, because He wanted to teach him the true religion.

Abraham's Faith

Abraham believed that God would be with him and would not leave him alone in a strange land. He packed everything he had; and with his wife, left Haran to settle in Canaan, as God had commanded.

For many years they had no children; but God had promised them a son through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. When God promises something, it will come to pass. And one day Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah.

Isaac grew up and married Rebekah, a girl who came from Haran where Abraham's people lived. To Isaac and Rebekah were born two sons, Jacob and Esau. God saw that Jacob would serve Him with a whole heart, and He chose him to be the father of the Israelites. Esau was given an inheritance of land in Seir, and he was in no way connected with the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.

But to Jacob and his descendants were given the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). That means that God established the true religion among Jacob's children, who were also called Israelites. God walked with them and talked with them, and gave them the Ten Commandments to teach them how to live. They were God's chosen people.

The True Contrasted with the False

As Joshua was talking to the head men of Israel, he contrasted the great power God had revealed in working miracles for His people, with the complete lack of power of the strange gods. Just think what God had done! When the Israelites were but helpless, mistreated slaves in Egypt, God saw their suffering and sent ten great plagues upon the Egyptians for punishment, and to prove His mighty power over the powerless false gods. The Israelites, who were living in Goshen, were not harmed.

Finally God had brought them out of bondage, and freed them from the Egyptians. Then on that very first day that they left Egypt,

the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

¹⁰ But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; *but* not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

¹³ And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

¹⁴ Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

¹⁶ And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other

they found themselves trapped between mountains on either side, the sea in front of them, and the army of Egypt behind them. But when all seemed lost, God put a cloud between His people and the Egyptians so that the Israelites could not be seen. Then God opened a path through the Red Sea so that His chosen ones might pass through on dry land. No false god could have clone anything like that.

Then there had been the times when God brought water out of a rock for them to drink. And for forty years He had provided manna from Heaven for those 3,000,000 people to eat. Could Dagon have done that? Could Ashtaroath or Baal? Baal was the sun-god, but he could not even send a little fire to light a sacrifice when his followers tried to prove to Elijah that Baal was a true god. He was only an idol, and those people were very foolish to think he could do anything for them.

Only the one great God of Heaven could control the sea, bring water out of a rock, and bread and fire from Heaven. Even the prophecies which Balaam had tried to make against God's people had been turned into a blessing. Was there ever such a god as the God of the Israelites? He is the God we worship today; and He works for His people when they call upon Him with all their hearts.

Only One Defeat

When the Israelites entered Canaan, God dried up a path through the Jordan river so they could walk on dry ground as they had in crossing the Red Sea. Since arriving in Canaan, God had defeated their enemies before them and had given them victory every time — except when they disobeyed. There was only one defeat; that was the first time they went against Ai. Achan had sinned by stealing some gold and fine clothes in Jericho; and for one man's disobedience to God the whole army of Israel was defeated.

God's Gift

Joshua told the Israelite princes these words of God: "And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat" (Joshua 24:13).

All this God has done; and the idols have done nothing. Now comes the call to a decision: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Would the Israelites want to continue to follow God now that their conquests were ended? or would they turn to the idols on the other side of the Flood that Abraham's father had served hundreds of years ago, before the true God had revealed Himself to Abraham, or to the gods in the land where they dwelt?

The Decision

Of course the people answered: "Therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God." We would have said the same thing. We would want to worship the God who proved that He loved His people and would help them.

But it means more than just saying that we will worship God. We must obey all His commandments. Remember that one sin of Achan brought defeat to Israel's entire army. God expects complete obedience from His children; and how sweet it is to yield to Him with our whole heart and know we are in favor with Him!

The Israelites had answered so heartily: "We will serve the LORD," that Joshua was afraid they might not understand how much it meant. So he said: "Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." That must have been quite a surprise to the Israelites. Had not Joshua asked them whom they would serve? and had they not answered as he wanted them to? Then why did he talk like this now? What did he mean, that God would

gods;

¹⁷ For the Lord our God, he *it is* that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

¹⁸ And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the Lord; for he *is* our God.

¹⁹ And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

²⁰ If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

²¹ And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

²² And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.

²³ Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

²⁴ And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

²⁶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the Lord.

²⁷ And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be

not forgive their sins?

Of course Joshua knew that God would answer their prayers and forgive their sins if they asked Him to, and were sorry that they had sinned; but that God would not overlook their sins if they did not repent. People today say they are the children of God, sealed unto the day of redemption, and that they can sin as much as they please. Those are the sins God does not forgive. They do not repent. "If we confess our sins, he *is* faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). A true Christian does not sin.

The people promised Joshua that they would do what he asked; and the Scripture states that during his lifetime and that of the elders who outlived Joshua, the people did serve God.

A Reminder

Joshua set a stone before the Children of Israel, as a memorial, or reminder, of their promises. The stone had been there while Joshua was telling the people all the words of God, and Joshua said it had heard all that had been said. Hereafter, whenever they would look at that stone they would be reminded of their vows before God.

Soon afterward Joshua died and was buried in the land which God had given to his family. He had lived 110 years. Eleazar, the high priest, died also. The generation that conquered Canaan finished their work and went to their reward. We shall now begin our study of the activities of another generation who lived in the period of the Judges in Israel.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did Joshua call together the chief men of Israel?
- 2 What did he tell them?
- 3 Where had Abraham come from? and what had his father worshiped?
- 4 What were some of the promises God made to Abraham?
- 5 Which son of Isaac and Rebekah did God choose to be the father of the Israelites?
- 6 What did God teach the Israelites about religion?
- 7 How did Joshua show the chiefs that God was greater than idols?
- 8 What was the call to decision?
- 9 How did the Israelites decide?
- 10 What did Joshua set up as a reminder?

a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

²⁸ So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

²⁹ And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

³⁰ And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which *is* in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

³¹ And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.

³² And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

³³ And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill *that pertained to* Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.