

CHOOSE LIFE!

Joshua 23 & 24



No one likes to say good-bye. And yet those times of departure are often some of the most meaningful moments in our lives. The young son goes off to college, the daughter stands with her mother in the bride's dressing room just before she is to walk down the aisle, the husband sits with his wife of fifty years in the hospital room. The disciples would recall their last hours with Jesus in the upper room; the Ephesian elders remembered their tearful farewell to the apostle who had brought them the message of life. These are times when superficial things no longer matter — the important suddenly comes into focus.

This was one of those moments for the nation of Israel and its beloved leader, Joshua.

What does it say?

What does it mean?

Joshua 24:1-33



¹ Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

² Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

⁵ " Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶ When I brought your fathers out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. ⁷ But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the desert for a long time.

⁸ " I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They

[Joshua's farewell actually takes place twice, once in Chapter 23 and again in Chapter 24. Our study will focus on the second of these addresses, yet there are some noteworthy points in the first.]

How long is the "long time" of verse 1? (see chart "g" in the Introduction)

Verse 2 says that Joshua is "old and well-advanced in years." How old is that? (24:29)

According to verse 5, has Israel finished possessing the land yet?

Joshua challenges the nation that its future success will come from doing two things (verses 6,7). What are they?

[Here in Chapter 24 Joshua says many of the same things, but there is much more of a formal or official atmosphere.]

Why is Shechem the site for this gathering? (This is the only specific mention of Shechem in the book, but here are some clues:

- Joshua 8:30
- Genesis 12:6,7
- Genesis 33:18-20
- Look up "Shechem" in a Bible Dictionary

What does it say?

fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you.¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ "Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands.¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you -- also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'

¹⁴ "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

¹⁶ Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you,

What does it mean?

In verses 2-13 Joshua reviews the history of Israel. Note the crucial characters or events he mentions:

verse 2 (character) _____

verse 3 (character) _____

verse 4 (character) _____

verse 5 (character) _____

verses 6, 7 (character) _____

verse 8 (event) _____

verses 9,10 (event) _____

verses 11-13 (event) _____



What is "the hornet" of verse 12?

"The Hebrew word does not refer to insects but to a condition of irrational fear or panic ... the expression is figurative, referring to the panic-producing power of God. This is supported by Exodus 23:28, Deuteronomy 2:25 and 7:20. The expressions "terror" and "hornet" appear to refer to the same idea. That this view is historically correct can be argued from Joshua 2:11 and 5:1, (where it is stated that when the Canaanites heard of the approaching Israelites, their "hearts melted" from fear.)"

John J. Davis

What is the "River" that is referred to in verses 3, 4, and 15?

According to verse 31, did the people of Israel keep their promise?

What does it say?

What does it mean?

after he has been good to you."

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

²³ "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. ²⁶ And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

²⁷ "See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

²⁸ Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.

²⁹ After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ³⁰ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

³¹ Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

³² And Joseph's bones, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem in the tract of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. This became the inheritance of Joseph's descendants.

³³ And Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried at Gibeah, which had been allotted to his son Phinehas in the hill country of Ephraim.

Joshua takes his stand in verse 15. What is it?

Summarize the rest of the dialogue after that – What is the people's response, and how does Joshua react to their response?

According to verse 31, did the people of Israel keep their promise?

Read Judges 2:10-13. *How long* did the people of Israel keep their promise?

Note: In Joshua 24:29, what is Joshua called?

"Looking back upon the sacred history in which Joshua had played such a valiant part, the writer, guided as he is by the Spirit, senses that Joshua's place is equal to that of his predecessor., Moses. Hence he accords him the honorary title "servant of the Lord", a title held by only a few individuals in the history of Old Testament redemption."

M.H. Woudstra

In light of this, think of the great honor with which we should read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3:6 -

"our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant."



APPLICATION - So What Does This Mean in My Life?

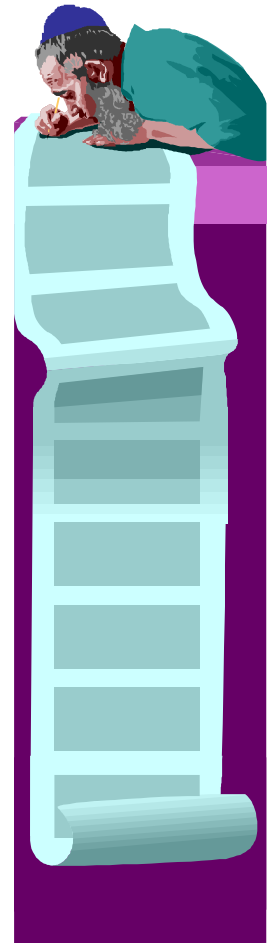
1. What would it take to imitate Joshua's stand in your own life? (24:15) What are the "gods" that you have to resist?

2. Joshua traced Israel's history, which was full of events showing God's power and faithfulness. Write down three events in your own "life history" which are reminders to you of His power, compassion, or faithfulness towards you?

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"Back in Joshua's day when the master conquest was over God was the same, His promise was the same, His power was the same. But the people did not possess their possessions because of their desire for peace and for tribute. We Christians stand in the same danger. It is all too easy to fail to possess the possessions God has promised because we either draw back out of fear of the troubles that being a Christian will bring us or we become caught up in the affluent society where people sail their little boats upon this plastic culture."

Francis Schaeffer



3. What kind of character qualities make Joshua stand out as the servant of the Lord?