

"It's Your Choice!"

Joshua 24

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“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 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.

1. The grace of God defines Israel from beginning to end. Joshua preaches the grace of God had been with Israel in the past.

2. In the beginning, Abraham was chosen, even though he was an idolater. The precise meaning of “other side of the flood” is unclear, but it doesn’t matter. “On the other side” is the meaning. It was when Abraham and his family lived in what is now Iraq, before the call of God came to Abraham.

3. There is nothing in the story that indicates any worthiness in Abraham or his family. God would take away every pretext that the Jews might have for boasting, for this whole chapter is about the grace of God and the necessity for Israel to cling to the grace and mercy of God, humbling themselves in the fear of God.

4. The worshipped idols. How had the family of Shem departed so quickly from the fear of God after the flood that that come upon the earth and swept everyone away? Even Abraham and his family were serving other gods, living in the darkness of idolatry. It is important to know that the gifts and callings of God are by the grace of God and cannot be merited by those who receive them. The calling does not result from any worthiness in the one who is called, but is according to God’s purposes as plan, as God makes clear in Romans 9 and Ephesians 1 and in many other places.

5. God worked mightily in the children of Abraham, giving Mt. Seir to Abraham’s grandson Esau, although Esau did not inherit the promises of God, which were reserved for Jacob, according to the will and plan of God. God in his providence sent them to Egypt where he sent Moses to bring out, destroying all the might of Egypt in the Red Sea. It was not because of the worthiness of the nation of Israel, but for His own purposes and plans that God did these things. God did all these things; none of them came to their hands because of the worthiness of Abraham, or Moses, or the children of Israel.

6. The conquest of the land was by the grace of God. He would not allow Balaam to curse Israel, but gave the land on the East of Jordan, and then the land of the Canaanites and the other inhabitants of the land. He gave them an inheritance for which they did not labor, cities they did not built, and vineyards and oliveyards which they did not plant. It was all by the grace and mercy of God to Israel. They didn’t even raise the hornets that God sent before them to drive out the inhabitants of the land.

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 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.

1. Their present standing was in the grace of God.

2. They, even at that time, were not serving the Lord in sincerity and in truth, for they still harbored the same gods that their fathers had served before the call came to Abraham, and ones that they picked up in Egypt.

a. Idolatry is a pernicious evil and is passed down from father to son to many generations. It lurks in families and nations, often disguised in Christian language.

b. They did not necessarily have carved idols, but the idolatry lingered in their hearts. How do you know whether you serve a false god:

i. Who decides the future. How do you think the future will come?

ii. Who makes the laws: How is your life ruled in reality?

iii. Who gets the glory; who is praised for good things?

c. Sincerity and truth: This is the same thing that Jesus said to the woman in Samaria: God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. In Spirit means from the inner man, cleansed by the Holy Spirit, so that truth reigns there. Peter said the same thing in his second epistle:

“18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [as] silver and gold, from your vain conversation [received] by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1Pe 1:18-23 AV)

3. If God did not forgive their idolatry, none of them would be saved, but He would have destroyed them all.

4. Joshua calls them to serve the Lord.

a. The providence and sovereignty does not excuse you and me from choosing that which is good.

b. Our choice follows His choice. There is not a shed of evidence that God chose Israel because they chose Him; it is the other way around. He does not love us because we love Him; We love Him because He first loved us. We owe everything we have, all our physical being, our faculties, our affections, and our

will and purposes to the power of God. This does not mean that we are imaginary be-ings who do not think and feel and choose, because we are, and our being is real. But God did not give up His rule over all things when He created the world.

c. His choice does not depend upon our choice; our choice depends upon His. It is true that they had a real choice on this occasion, but it was God who had brought them to this place, and they would not have had a choice, if God had not made many choices before. If God had not made HIS choices, Abraham would have died in Ur and his sons' bones would have been there in the sand.

5. They still didn't get it, and made presumptuous claim "We will serve the Lord".

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 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.

1. Ye cannot serve the LORD. Who do you think you are? The proud presumption of the flesh is seen here, or Joshua would not have spoken so harshly.

2. Jesus did the same thing to the Rich Young Ruler, who came expecting to do something to enter the kingdom of God.

3. Jesus did the same thing on more than one occasion, debased the confidence of the flesh.

a. Let me go bury my father and mother.

b. The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests....

c. Count the cost. Enter not presumptuously into the service of the Lord.

d. Take up your cross.....But how can I suffer enough to atone for my sins.

4. "Incline your heart" Put away the strange gods. "Incline your heart" Means to "stretch

out” As Jeremiah would say in his lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem many years later, “Let us lift our hearts with our hands.” It is easy to stretch out the hands; only God can stretch out the heart. . . . “

5. What shall we say to these things. Let us say what Paul said: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby I am crucified unto the world and the world unto me.”

a. The gospel does not say to the proud flesh, “Do this and live,”

b. The gospel says, “Look to Christ crucified and believe that He died for a miserable sinner like you.” This is the bread for your soul and health to your bones.

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.”

Summary: the death of Joshua, the burial of Joseph’s bones; the death of Eleazar. Amen and Amen. May God bless you.