



Joshua 24:1-15
Choose this Day...

NKJ 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.

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.

3 'Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

4 'To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

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

6 '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.

7 '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.

8 '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.

9 '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.

10 'But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand.

11 '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.

12 '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.

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.'

14 " 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!

15 "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."

It's sometimes interesting when you hear the way that modern Christians talk about the Old Testament and the Nation of Israel, in contrast to the New Testament and the Church. Often they will set up a Dichotomy where the Old Testament is all about Law and the New Testament is all about Grace. The Old is Legality the New is Love. In the Old they had no choice about being part of the people of God, while in the New its all about choosing Christ.

I want to suggest to you today that that view, that supposed dichotomy is all bunk and that the entire Bible, which is not two separate books but one complete revelation is all about salvation by Grace alone through faith alone. And that that is also the message of these verses we have just read. Now how can I make that assertion?

Well if anyone knows something about chapter 24 of Joshua, they generally know part of verse 15 – ***“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.”***

It is good to know that verse, it's probably the most preached on verse in all of Joshua, but that verse comes at the conclusion of a preamble that is vitally important to understanding what is going on here.

The Lord God has once upon called upon Joshua to gather the people of Israel before the Tent of Meeting at Shechem, and that location Shechem was not chosen merely because it was safe and central within Israel, it was also the place where hundreds of years ago, God had a made a covenant in Genesis 12 with their forefather Abraham. So it is fitting that having kept his promises to Abraham and His seed, this is the place that God has chosen for their covenant renewal.

Joshua delivers the words of God to them, and the unusual thing is that from the beginning God starts out by addressing them in a way we wouldn't expect – ***“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.'”***

He says in essence, look when I first called your forefather Abraham he was no great hero of the faith, he was in fact a pagan, a worshipper of false gods. God goes on to say, I was the one who called Him, I was the one who multiplied Him, and then I was the one who multiplied and prospered his descendents, I was the one who brought you out of Egypt. I was the one who brought you through the wilderness who prevented you from being destroyed. And now I am the one who has given you this land you are dwelling in.

Verse 3-13 are essentially a constant repetition of ***I, I, I***, by God. I am the one who chose you, I am the one who called you, I am the one who redeemed you, I am the one who grows you. And not because of anything special or desirable in you O Israelites.

This is essentially the same thing that he said to them in Deut. 7: 6-8 (turn there if you would)

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

8 "but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Why do I love you, why did I choose you, *because I loved you and chose you*. You and your forefathers weren't less pagan than the surrounding nations, or better, or bigger, or smarter. The message there is the same as in Romans 9:13 – *"As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."*

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Their deliverance, their salvation, is all of grace. It is sheer unmitigated sovereign mercy extended to unworthy sinners. And God wants them to remember that, lest their pride carry them away and become the cause of their destruction.

He wants them to know that even in the conquest of Canaan, the destruction of their enemies was His doing, not the result of their own valor. He reasserts this using a metaphor saying that he drove out the nations with hornets. Now no man can reasonably claim to be in command of insects, they are under the command of God alone.

So it is only after God has made that clear, and has shown them that the only reason they are standing there as a nation at Shechem is His grace, that the call in verses 14 & 15 to a reasonable decision is made. God has saved, now they should respond to that saving work, in faith, submission, and obedience.

In that sense, this is very similar to what Paul write in Romans 12. He has spent all of Romans 1-11 outlining and explaining God's sovereign redeeming grace, and then in Romans 12 he makes a transition where he says -

NKJ Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

F.F. Bruce in his Expanded paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul puts what God is saying this way – *"So then brothers, in view of all these mercies that God has bestowed on you, I now make this plea. Present your bodies to God, present them as a sacrifice – a living one, not a lifeless one; a holy one (because it is offered to a holy God), and one in which He will take pleasure. For, when you consider your indebtedness to God, the consecration of your lives in his service is your logical act of worship."*

In view of what God has done, responding to him with your love and obedience is only right. Serve the Lord!

Joshua even frames it in terms of you have to serve somebody in the same way that Paul says we are all ultimately going to be slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness in Romans 6... Interestingly enough Joshua frames it as a choice between the true God or idols -

Ralph Davis:

Tradition – Mesopotamian Gods (Conservative)

Contemporary – God’s of the Society (Trendy)

Neither are really Gods at all!

Put away the Idols – they are with them yet...

Reject the false idol, serve the true God – they must make the choice themselves.

The choice of their forefathers will not save them, it must be personal. Joshua has chosen, he has made his irrevocable but ever ongoing choice. I will Love the Lord.

You are called to the same kind of choice yourselves, whom will you choose to serve...

I will never tire of Guthrie’s quote, because it sums up the necessity of believing in Christ so well.:

“Believing on Christ must be personal; a man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus The just shall live by his faith. (Hab. 2:4.) This says, that it will not suffice for a mans safety and relief, that he is in covenant with God as a born member of the visible church, by virtue of the parents subjection to Gods ordinances: neither will it suffice that the person had the initiating seal of baptism added, and that he then virtually engaged to seek salvation by Christs blood, as all infants do: neither does it suffice that men are come of believing parents; their faith will not instate their children into a right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant; neither will it suffice that parents did, in some respects, engage for their children, and give them away unto God: all these things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predecessors are cast out. Unless a man in his own person have faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart approve and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant, this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is, that it must be personal.”

- William Guthrie, *The Christians Great Interest*

One final Application: Even in that assembly Joshua knew that there were some listening to his voice who still cherished false idols. **“put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt”** I know that in this assembly there are bound to be some hidden idols still being served, idols perhaps your fathers served, or which you had as pagans. A decision to hold on to them is faithlessness to Christ. Jesus himself said this in - Mat. 6:23 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Christ demands our whole heart, he has done all that is necessary to save us.

Col. 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.