

Courageous

Claiming Canaan, Lessons from the Book of Joshua

Lesson 21: The Choice (24:1-33)

Joshua could not force them to admit what they were doing behind closed doors. He could not make them listen, or repent, or obey; he could only present them with a choice and warn them of the consequences.

He had long since resolved Whom he served, now Israel must choose whether they would hang onto the past or bow down to their present. (Joshua 24:15) Their decision would be made apparent not by the "pledge of their lips... but by the sincerity of their works".¹

Alan Redpath has said, "God regenerates us and puts us in contact with all His divine resources, but He cannot make us walk according to His will; the practicing is ours, not God's... [We must] beware of the tendency to [ask how] when we know perfectly well."

Read Joshua 24:1-13.

1. What occurred the last time all of Israel was called to Shechem? (Review Joshua 8:30-35.) Why might Joshua have called them to this place again?
2. What is the purpose of recounting Israel's history, particularly these details? What is Joshua attempting to communicate?

Read Joshua 24. Verses 14-28.

3. According to Joshua, how ought Israel to serve the Lord because of His actions toward them? (v.14)
4. What does it mean to serve the Lord with sincerity and truth? Consider the opposite position.

5. If individuals are going to "serve" the Lord in this fashion, what might be motivating their actions? In other words, why serve Him at all?

6. Per verses 14-15 of Joshua 24, what were the people trying to retain? What does this reveal about their devotion to God?

7. What do "*the gods which [their] fathers served that were on the other side of the river*" and "*the gods of the Amorites, in whose land [they dwelt]*" represent?

8. What had Joshua long since decided? (v.15)

Jonathan Edwards said of his devotion: "Resolved: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: that whether others do or not, I will."

9. What did the people acknowledge? What did they fail to admit? (vv.16-18)

10. Why did Joshua tell them they couldn't serve the Lord? (v.19)

11. How do many professing Christians attempt to do this today?

12. What position ought the Israelites have taken before they declared their strength to serve the Lord? (v.21) (Consider Matthew 23:12, James 4:4-10.)

How does 1 Corinthians 10:12-14 apply? (Note the context of these verses.)

13. Return to Joshua. What would their declaration require of them? (24:23)

"Joshua here recognizes an issue which would plague Israel through its life, and which has continued to plague the church through the ages. This is the problem... in which people are prepared to claim the benefits of life in covenant with God but not live out its demands."ⁱⁱ

14. What does it mean to be a witness against yourself?

15. Of what value are adamant statements and good intentions? (See Proverbs 14:12, James 2:17-18, 4:17.)

16. Return to Joshua. What three actions did Joshua take to remind the people of their covenant? (vv.25-27)

17. Turn to Judges 2 and read verses 1-9. What does this passage reveal about the sincerity and truth of their words to Joshua at Shechem?

How had their sin increased?

18. Who confronted and challenged their insincerity and lack of action?
19. What indicates that many repented? (vv.4-5, 7)
20. Describe the ways God had demonstrated longsuffering and mercy toward them. (Also consider Ezekiel 20:18.)

Finally, read Joshua 24:29-33.

21. Upon his death, how is Joshua described? (Matthew 25:23)
22. How can a faithful remnant affect a nation? (v.31)
23. What is fulfilled in the death of these men and in the burial of Joseph's bones? (Genesis 50:25-26, Exodus 13:19, Hebrews 11:22) Read Hebrews 4:8-10.
24. Now read Judges 2:10. Why did the successive generation fail to know God?

The phrase "did not know" means "to become familiar with something through experience".ⁱⁱⁱ

25. What do the following verses tell you about knowing and acknowledging God? Exodus 5:2, 1 Samuel 2:12, Proverbs 3:6, Galatians 4:8, Titus 1:16, and James 2:19. Also read Romans 1:18-25.

"The new generation of Israelites that grew up after their faithful fathers died was distinguished by its faithlessness toward the Lord. That they knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel could imply a failure of the older generation to communicate God's acts to them (cf. Deut. 6:7). But the word "knew" probably has the sense of "acknowledge" (cf. Prov. 3:6, where "know" is trans. "acknowledge"), thus indicating unbelief rather than ignorance. They rejected both the Lord's grace toward them and their responsibilities toward Him. This led to the idolatrous practices cited in the verses that follow."^{iv}

26. In closing, reread Joshua 1:8-9. What is the difference between those who live victoriously in Jesus Christ and those who live in defeat and/or bondage?

ⁱ Campbell, D. K. (1985). Joshua. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 370). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ Firth, D. G. (2015). The Message of Joshua. (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.) (p. 221). Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Logos Bible Software. Judges 2:10.

^{iv} Lindsey, F. D. (1985). Judges. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 382). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.