

Now is the Time to Choose

Joshua 24:14-18

August 9, 2009

Intro

We come now to the last chapter of the book of Joshua. In this chapter contains one of the most famous verses of the entire Bible, because it contains a challenge to the leaders of Israel that resonates throughout the centuries and challenges us today.

Joshua is old and advanced in years so he calls for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and officers and he gives them his final message. It is a word from God, and it is a word that called them to make a decision. Joshua has been leading them and they have seen great victories as the hand of the Lord has done mighty things for them.

Joshua has reminded them that it was the Lord who drove out great and strong nations from before them. It was because of the Lord that one of their men could put 1000 to flight. He reminded them that not one word of all the good words which God spoke concerning them has failed.

In the early part of chapter 24 he goes back over their long history beginning even with Abraham and reminded them of all that God had done for them that brought them to this point. It was God who took them from nothing and made them something. And here they were standing on the land which God had promised to them, but there was more work to be done. There were still pockets of resistance, pockets of the world which remained amongst the tribes of Israel. There was still much danger and so Joshua wanted to give them the keys to press on to obtain all that God promised them.

There is great application to us because the same challenge that Joshua brought to the leaders of Israel, God brings to us today.

I. Now, Therefore, Fear the Lord

- 1 Joshua spent the first 13 verses of this chapter reviewing for them all that God had done to bring them to the place where they have now obtained the promises of God.
- 2 He then begins verse 14 with the words, "Now, therefore." In other words, he says, "because of all that God has done in your lives and in this nation, you should therefore..."
- 3 Fear the Lord. It means to know that God's hand is mighty and that the Word of God is a two -- edged sword.
- 4 He then tells them how.

A. Serve Him in sincerity and truth

- 5 This is how we should respond to everything that God has done for us as well.
- 6 The word, "serve," is just what it appears to be. It means that we should see

ourselves as those who are servants of God. It means recognizing that he is the Master.

- 7 But as we have seen in our study through the book of Leviticus, there is a type of servant who serves of his own free choice. Willingly choose to serve God because of all that he's done for you.
- 8 Then Joshua said to serve him in "sincerity:" The word sincerity is an interesting word study. The word, sincerity, in the Hebrew, means to be true. In other words, it means to be a man of integrity, completely in accord with truth.
- 9 The actual word, "sincere," comes from a Latin phrase which is literally translated, "sin cere," which means, "without wax."

Illus - the Latin word was commonly used by merchants to signify the quality of a sculptured work of art. It appears that less than scrupulous artists would cover a blemish by mixing marble with wax and applying it over the broken nose, or a chipped out shoulder, etc. Therefore, artisans would stamp the phrase, "without wax," to indicate the integrity of the work.

- 10 The Greek word which is translated, sincerity, comes from a phrase which means, "Judged by sunlight." You can see, of course, that there is similarity there with the Latin, for if a sculpture was made with wax it could not stand the heat of the sun's light.

- 11 Paul used this word when he wrote to the church in Philippi...

Philippians 1:10-11, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- 1 Joshua also said to the leaders of Israel that they should serve the Lord in truth.
- 2 That follows perfectly with the word "sincerity" for they are part of each other. If you serve the Lord in sincerity, then you want to stand in the truth.

Psalm 15:1-5 Walk with integrity and speak truth.

B. Put away the gods of the past

- 1 In verse 14, Joshua gives them an extremely significant key to spiritual victory, to becoming a man of spiritual strength.
- 2 He told them to put away the gods which their fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

- 3 From this verse I think we can safely conclude that there were some people within Israel who still kept hold of some of the gods from Egypt.
- 4 That may seem amazing in light of everything that they had gone through with God, but unfortunately, that is human nature.
- 5 It's also true with many people today. When people come to faith in Jesus Christ, there is commonly a process of letting go of the past. What we see is that many people bring some of the stuff of the world with them in their walk with Christ and so God has to go through a process of cleaning out all the stuff from the past that they cling to.

Illus – When Jordi and I were getting married, I had to go through my house and clean a lot of stuff out. What a revealing process.

- 6 We even see this in the New Testament where the apostle John said something similar in his letter.

1 John 5:21, Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Illus -Modern statistics tell us that 85 to 90% of people polled in our country believe in God, but is believing in God enough? I would venture to guess that 100% of the people in hell will believe in God. In the book of James we are told that even the demons believe and even have the sense to tremble at the thought.

The question is not how many people believe in God, the question is how many people will give Him their heart and serve Him in sincerity and in truth?

- 7 There are many people who believe in God and keep for themselves many idols. We have today the god of pleasure, the god of alcohol and drugs, and the god of mammon.
- 8 Jesus also warned us that we cannot serve two masters.

Luke 16:13, "No servant 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."

- 1 Finally, God tells us another reason why we should put away the god of this world.

Psalm 15:4, 8, Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands... Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.

II. Choose Today whom you will Serve

- 1 Joshua then brought his message to the very point of the matter. "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, then choose for yourselves today whom you will serve."
- 2 Joshua knew this was the key for the fulfillment of God's promises in their lives. He knew they needed to make a decision, man by man, and family by family, for the strength of the nation.
- 3 Joshua knew that to be wishy-washy on this point would make them spiritually weak. We also need to make a decision and then stand on that decision. As we said last week, point your life to the Lord, fix your eyes on Jesus, and do not turn to the left or to the right.

A. You're going to have to serve somebody

- 1 As was said by that great American philosopher, Bob Dylan, "You're gonna to have to serve somebody. It may be the devil, it may be the Lord, but you're gonna to have to serve somebody."
- 2 Joshua was calling them to choose, to decide between the two. Paul wrote something similar to the church in Rome.

Romans 6:16, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

- 1 Some people try to have it both ways. They want to be in God, but they also want to be in the world.
- 2 This is what is called the "miserable middle." There are people who have enough of Jesus to be miserable in the world and enough of the world to not be truly satisfied in Christ.
- 3 Jesus warned the church at Laodicea of the dangers of being in the middle.

Revelation 3:14-20 The church of Laodicea was in the "miserable middle."

B. As for me and my house...

- 3 Joshua is a leader who does not depend on others to make his stand. He knows where he stands, he knows in whom he has believed, and he openly declares what he has decided.

Illus- when Joshua and Caleb stood before the people of Israel more than 45 years earlier,

it was he and Caleb standing alone while the rest of the people lacked the faith to trust God with all of the hearts.

- 4 Joshua challenged the leaders of Israel to make a decision, and God challenges us to make the same decision today. Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.
- 5 Joshua couldn't choose for them, but he could choose for himself. "As for me and my house," is a powerful statement. It means, "This is what happens in this house."
- 6 We need more people today will take their stand against the current of the world.

Illus - Your kids may or may not like it, but that's where leadership comes in. "As for me and my house," means that your house may be different than a lot of other houses up there, and your kids may be quick to point that out to you.

- 7 You take your stand because you know that it's what's best for you and your house, whether or not it's a popular decision.

Illus - One of our kids didn't like our rules and said, "When I'm a parent I'm going to give my kids whatever they want." I responded, "When you're a parent you get to decide for your house, but as for me and my house, this is our decision."

Illus - Don McClure found himself with a rebellious teenage boy who finally had enough and decided to leave. Don said to him as he was leaving, "If you find something out there better than Jesus, you come back and tell me." They didn't see him for months, but finally he came back and said, "There isn't anything out there that's better than Jesus, I want to come home."

- 8 Notice that Joshua said, "Choose for yourselves today." The time to make this decision is now.
- 9 If you're not married yet, then this is the time to decide now. If you're old, then this is the time to decide before any more time goes by.
- 10 Notice that he also says, "As for me." In other words, it starts with you. Don't wait for anyone else. You stand for the Lord and you watch, you wait, and you will see that you will be blessed because of it.