

# Joshua 24 Commentary

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Paul J Bucknell - Biblical Foundations for Freedom

LAND ALLOTMENTS  
(Joshua 13-21)  
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Click charts to enlarge Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

<b>JOSHUA</b> <b>A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST</b> <b>HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS</b>			
<b>CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>		<b>DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>	<b>CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>		<b>ALLOCATION</b>	<b>APPEAL</b>
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45	Josh 22:1-24:33
<b>WARLORDS IN CANAAN</b>		<b>LANDLORDS IN CANAAN</b>	
<b>ENTERING CANAAN</b>	<b>CONQUERING CANAAN</b>	<b>DIVIDING CANAAN</b>	
<b>SECURING THE LAND</b>		<b>SETTLING THE LAND</b>	
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Conquest</b>	<b>Possession</b>	<b>Consecration</b>
<b>ca. 1 Month</b>	<b>ca 7 Years</b>	<b>ca. 18 Years</b>	

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

<b>COMPARISON</b> <b>JOSHUA 23 &amp; 24</b>		
	<b>JOSHUA 23</b>	<b>JOSHUA 24</b>
<b>TIME</b>	FUTURE	PAST, PRESENT
<b>THEME</b>	GIFT OF LAND	RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
<b>DANGER TO AVOID</b>	MARITAL ENTANGLEMENT	APOSTASY

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**Joshua 24:1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God.**

- **Shechem:** Ge 12:6 33:18,19 35:4 Jdg 9:1-3 1Ki 12:1
- **called:** Jos 23:2 Ex 18:25,26
- **presented:** 1Sa 10:19 Ac 10:33
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 8:30-35+ Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in [Mount Ebal](#), 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. 33All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of [Mount Gerizim](#) and half of them in front of [Mount Ebal](#), just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 **Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law.** 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.

Genesis 12:6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of **Shechem**, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

Genesis 33:18-20 Now Jacob came safely to the city of **Shechem**, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. 19 He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. 20 Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Genesis 35:4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near **Shechem**.

Joshua 21:20-21 Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, even to the rest of the sons of Kohath. 21 They gave them **Shechem**, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands,

Joshua 24:25; 32 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in **Shechem**. (24:32) Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up

from Egypt, at **Shechem**, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

## JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS TO ISRAEL

See Jensen's chart at top of page - he entitles Joshua 22-24 the (1) **Close of Joshua's Life**, (2) **Consecration**, (3) **Appeal**.

[Sidlow Baxter](#) has an interesting summation of the distribution portion of Joshua writing "In these last two chapters, then, the emphasis is upon the need and the way of continuance. Thus, in this third part of the Book of Joshua, we have:

- Joshua 13-19. Partition of Canaan - faith rewarded.
- Joshua 20. The Cities of Refuge - faith protected.
- Joshua 21. The Levite's portion - faith preserved.
- Joshua 22. The Altar of Witness - faith unifying.
- Joshua 23-24. Farewell of Joshua - faith continuing.

[Don Anderson](#) - chap. 23 - Joshua gives a message that has to do with separation from the pagan people that still reside in the land. chap. 24 - The focus of this chapter is upon service. It was SEPARATION in chap. 23 and SERVICE in chap. 24. "THE SHECHEM SUMMIT ON SERVICE"

1. THE GATHERING - verse 1
2. THE GENEROSITY - verses 2-13
3. THE GRATITUDE - verses 14-24
4. THE GUARANTEE - verses 25-27
5. THE GRADUATION - verses 28-33

In Joshua 23:2-13 God speaks through Joshua to the people reminding them of all the amazing graces He has shown the young nation (notice He leaves out mentioning their multiple times of disobedience). Then in Joshua 23:14-28 Joshua gives his parting exhortation and warning, sealing his words by cutting a covenant with Israel. And so we see in the farewell chapters Joshua 22-24, Joshua gives three strong closing exhortations replete with warnings for disobedience (Joshua 22:5-6 to the 2.5 tribes, Joshua 23:6-13 and here in Joshua 23:14-28)

**Woudstra** - Though there is great similarity between chs. 23- 24, the emphasis of each is somewhat distinct. In both chapters exhortations are made to remain faithful to the Lord of the covenant. However, while ch. 24 stresses particularly God's acts in the past, ch. 23 also speaks of what he will still be doing in the future. ([The New International Commentary on the Old Testament The Book of Joshua](#))

I like Our Daily Bread author Dave Branon's title for Joshua 24 - **Showdown at Shechem**.

**Then** - This conjunction generally marks progression in a narrative and in this context seems to refer to another assembly that followed the assembly in Joshua 23, though it probably was held not long after the previous assembly.

**Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem** - Shechem was a sacred site for the patriarchs (Ge 12:6-7; Ge 33:18-20; Ge 35:2-4 [see all uses below](#)). This site is located just south of [Mount Ebal](#) and north of [Mount Gerizim](#) (see [map](#)), which is essentially where Joshua's journey in the Promised Land began as this is where he and Israel set up memorials as described in Josh. 8:30-35+. This is the same site "Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel" (Josh 8:30+) and the site Joshua "read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law." (Josh 8:34+)

**Donald Campbell** comments on the significance of **Shechem** - The geographical setting is of interest. Shechem, a few miles northwest of Shiloh, was where Abraham first received the promise that God would give his seed the land of Canaan. Abraham responded by building an altar to demonstrate his faith in the one true God (Ge 12:6-7). Jacob too stopped at Shechem on his return from Paddan Aram and buried there the idols his family had brought with them (Gen. 35:4). After the Israelites completed the first phase of the conquest of Canaan they journeyed to Shechem where Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, inscribed the Law of God on stone pillars, and reviewed these laws for all the people (Josh. 8:30-35). Joshua had good reason, therefore, to convene the Israelites at this location. Certainly the stones on which the Law had been written were still standing, vivid reminders of that significant event. From this moment on, that beautiful valley between [Mount Ebal](#) and [Mount Gerizim](#) would be associated with this

poignant farewell scene as their honored leader spoke to them for the last time. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** on the appropriateness of Shechem for Joshua's last words - It was at **Shechem** that God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land (Ge 12:6–7), and there Jacob built an altar (Ge 33:20). Shechem was located between [Mount Ebal](#) and [Mount Gerizim](#), where the people of Israel had reaffirmed their commitment to the Lord (Josh. 8:30–35). **Shechem** was indeed "holy ground" to the Israelites.

**TSK note** - As it is immediately added, that "they presented themselves before God," which is supposed to mean at the tabernacle; some are of opinion that Joshua caused it to be conveyed from Shiloh to Shechem on this occasion, to give the greater solemnity to his last meeting with the people. The Vatican and Alexandrian copies of the Septuagint, however, read [Selo,] both here and in verse 25; which many suppose to have been the original reading. Dr. Shuckford supposes that the covenant was made at Shechem, and that the people went to Shiloh to confirm it. But the most probable opinion seems to be that of Dr. Kennicott, that when all the tribes were assembled at Shechem, Joshua called the chiefs to him on that mount, which had before been consecrated by the law, and by the altar which he had erected.

**Shechem** - 66x in 57v - Gen. 12:6; Gen. 33:18; Gen. 34:2; Gen. 34:4; Gen. 34:6; Gen. 34:8; Gen. 34:11; Gen. 34:13; Gen. 34:18; Gen. 34:20; Gen. 34:24; Gen. 34:26; Gen. 35:4; Gen. 37:12; Gen. 37:13; Gen. 37:14; Num. 26:31; Jos. 17:2; Jos. 17:7; Jos. 20:7; Jos. 21:21; Jos. 24:1; Jos. 24:25; Jos. 24:32; Jdg. 8:31; Jdg. 9:1; Jdg. 9:2; Jdg. 9:3; Jdg. 9:6; Jdg. 9:7; Jdg. 9:18; Jdg. 9:20; Jdg. 9:23; Jdg. 9:24; Jdg. 9:25; Jdg. 9:26; Jdg. 9:28; Jdg. 9:31; Jdg. 9:34; Jdg. 9:39; Jdg. 9:41; Jdg. 9:46; Jdg. 9:47; Jdg. 9:49; Jdg. 9:57; Jdg. 21:19; 1 Ki. 12:1; 1 Ki. 12:25; 1 Chr. 6:67; 1 Chr. 7:19; 1 Chr. 7:28; 2 Chr. 10:1; Ps. 60:6; Ps. 108:7; Jer. 41:5; Hos. 6:9; Acts 7:16

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Shechem - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Shechem](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Shechem](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Shechem](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Shechem](#)
- American Tract Society [Shechem](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Shechem](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Shechem](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Shechem \(2\)](#) [Shechem \(1\)](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Shechem](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Shechem \(2\)](#) [Shechem](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Shechem](#)

**And called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God** - In Joshua 23:2 Joshua "called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers." Note that they did not present themselves before Joshua, but **"they presented themselves before God."** So clearly there was something here that represented the presence of Yahweh. The Hebrew word for before ([panim/paniym/paneḥ](#)) is literally face and then by extension in the presence of the face and so in front of, at the face of or before the face of. The Septuagint translates [panim/paniym/paneḥ](#) with the preposition apenanti which literally means opposite or in front of (cf Mt 27:61). BDAG says apenanti means "in a position that faces against an object or other position, opposite" and here in the genitive means "opposite someone or something." The point is that there was some representation of Yahweh at Shechem. Some think they moved the Tabernacle from Shiloh for the purpose of this covenant renewal ceremony and that seems to be one of the best explanations. The truth be told, we simply cannot be dogmatic except to say Yahweh was present in a special revelatory manner.

[Utley](#) - There are several terms that describe leaders within Israel. Their exact meaning is often speculation: Elders, Joshua 8:33; 23:2; 24:1, Heads, Joshua 23:2; 24:1, Judges, Joshua 8:33; 23:2; 24:1 and Officers, Joshua 8:33; 23:2; 24:1

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 1-14. We must never think our work for God done, till our life is done. If he lengthen out our days beyond what we expected, like those of Joshua, it is because he has some further service for us to do. He who aims at the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, will glory in bearing the last testimony to his Saviour's goodness, and in telling to all around, the obligations with which the unmerited goodness of God has bound him. The assembly came together in a solemn religious manner. Joshua spake to them in God's name, and as from him. His sermon consists of **doctrine** and **application**. The **doctrinal** part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. The **application** of this history of God's mercies to them, is an exhortation to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favour, and that it might be

continued.

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Gathered all the tribes.** That is, the heads, elders, and chief men of the tribes, though not them exclusively. See on Joshua 23:2. Joshua probably found his life prolonged beyond his expectation, and, like Peter in his old age, thinking it meet 'as long as he was in this tabernacle to do his utmost towards 'putting' and keeping his people 'in remembrance' of the great things of their duty (cf 2Pe 1:12-13, 14,15+, 2Pe 3:1-2+), embraces one more opportunity of convening the tribes by their representatives, and giving them a solemn parking charge. **The pious servants of God may be disabled through age and infirmities from continuing their personal exertions, but they will never relax their zeal in the service of their divine Master; and what they want in effective labors, they will endeavor to supply by stimulating and confirming the zeal of others.** As Moses, at an advanced age, renewed the covenant in the plains of Moab which had been first entered into at Horeb forty years before (cf Dt 5:1-3,4+), so Joshua on this occasion imitates his example, and makes it his last labor to engage the tribes of Israel once more to give themselves up to God, in a perpetual covenant. Thus the good effects of his influence would remain when he himself was taken from them (ED: BUT SADLY THE "GOOD EFFECTS" LASTED ONLY WITH THOSE WHO SURVIVED JOSHUA, NOT WITH THE NEXT GENERATION WHO DID NOT PERSONALLY KNOW JOSHUA - Jdg 2:8-9, 10, 11+). 'We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to do' Henry.

**To Shechem.** As it is immediately added that 'they presented themselves before God,' the natural inference would be that this transaction took place in the presence of the ark and the tabernacle, the usual meeting place of God and his people, which were now, as far as we know, at Shiloh instead of Shechem. This has occasioned some difficulty to commentators, especially as the Greek of the Sept. has Σηλω, Shilo, both here and v. 25, though the Aldine and Complutensian editions have Συχημ, Sychem, in both places, which leads us to suppose that the former reading is a designed alteration, made with a view to obviate an apprehended discrepancy in the original. At any rate, there is no sufficient ground for questioning the genuineness of the present Hebrew text. The two following solutions, therefore, may be proposed; either, (1) By Shechem here is meant not the city so called, but the territory adjacent, extending to the distance of several miles, within the limits of which it is conjectured that Shiloh stood. But this is less likely, as Shiloh was at least ten miles distant from Shechem, and if the meeting had been at Shiloh we can see no reason why it should not have been expressly so stated. Or, (2) that Shechem was really the place of the convocation, but that the tabernacle was for the present occasion transferred there, as we learn Jdg. 20:1, 18; 1 Sa 4:3; 2 Sa 15:24, that it was sometimes on extraordinary emergencies temporarily removed. There were several reasons why Shechem should be considered the most suitable place for the assembling of the tribes on this occasion. It was a Levitical city, and nearer than Shiloh to Timnath-serah, Joshua's residence, whose age and infirmities might at this time have incapacitated him from travelling even a short distance from home. It was the place where the covenant was first made with Abraham ages before, Gen. 12:6, 7, and so would be a peculiarly appropriate place for renewing that covenant, which was one end to be answered by their now coming together. It adds to the force of this reason, that it was in this immediate vicinity, between the two mounts [Mount Gerizim](#) and [Mount Ebal](#), that Joshua had before, on their first entrance into Canaan, convened the nation for a similar object, ch. 8:30-35. So that all the associations connected with the place would tend eminently to heighten the solemnity and impressiveness of the transaction in which they were about to engage. If, moreover, as from v. 32, many suppose it was on this occasion that the bones of Joseph, and perhaps of the other patriarchs, Acts 7:15, 16, were deposited in the piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, it would constitute another strong reason for selecting this, in preference to Shiloh, as the place of the present meeting. That such was the fact, however, whatever might have been the reasons, and whatever the imagined difficulties involved in the supposition, there can be no doubt as long as we adhere to the letter of the sacred record.

**Presented themselves before God.** As intimated above, the presumption is that this presentation of themselves was before **the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle**, the visible residence of God among his people, and now removed to Shechem to give additional solemnity to the proceedings of the assembly. This impression is confirmed by Joshua 24:26, where it is said that '**a great stone was set up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord;**' i. e. by the place where the sanctuary temporarily stood during the time of that convention. Yet the words do not necessarily demand this construction. The phrase '**before God,**' or '**before the Lord,**' is sometimes equivalent to religiously, devoutly, as if under the inspection of the divine eye. Thus Isaac, Gen. 27:7, is said to have blessed Jacob, '**before the Lord,**' i. e. as in his presence, in his name, in a very solemn and devout manner. So Jephthah is said, Jdg. 11:11, to have uttered all his words '**before the Lord;**' in the same sense. See on Josh 4:13.

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## Theodore Epp [All of Grace](#)

In this final part of his discourse, Joshua rehearsed God's wonderful deliverances of Israel, beginning with God's calling of the people in Abraham and His protection and leading of the patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army are briefly retold.

God's protection and provision for them in the wilderness, His deliverance of them from the Amorites, from those who would have enslaved them and tried to curse them, and His bringing Israel safely into Canaan, giving them a glorious land as a gift, are recounted.

Then Joshua added that God did not give them the possessions in Canaan because they deserved them. They did not merit His gifts.

God said, "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."

This is true, too, with our eternal salvation. We do not merit it by good works (see notes Ephesians 2:8; 2:9) or by keeping the Law (see notes Romans 3:20;21; 22).

Salvation becomes ours only as we believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (see note Romans 11:6).

**Joshua 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.**

- **Your fathers:** Ge 11:26,31 12:1 31:53 De 26:5 Isa 51:2 Eze 16:3
- **served other gods:** Jos 24:15 Ge 31:19,30,32,53 35:4
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## YOUR ANCESTORS WERE IDOL WORSHIPPERS

**Joshua said to all the people** - Joshua is old and could not have addressed all of Israel except through the officers and elders.

**Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel** - Joshua is speaking God's words (beginning in next verse personal pronoun "I" occurs 17x), so in effect he is functioning as God's "mouthpiece," thus functioning as a prophet (in sense of speaking forth). Later when Joshua is speaking his own counsel to Israel he does speak words of a prophet in the sense of predicative of future events (e.g. see Josh 24:19)

**The LORD, the God of Israel** - 66x in 66v - Exod. 5:1; Exod. 32:27; Jos. 7:13; Jos. 7:19; Jos. 7:20; Jos. 8:30; Jos. 9:18; Jos. 9:19; Jos. 10:40; Jos. 10:42; Jos. 13:14; Jos. 13:33; Jos. 22:24; Jos. 24:2; Jos. 24:23; Jdg. 4:6; Jdg. 5:3; Jdg. 5:5; Jdg. 6:8; Jdg. 11:21; Jdg. 11:23; Ruth 2:12; 1 Sam. 10:18; 1 Sam. 14:41; 1 Sam. 20:12; 1 Ki. 1:30; 1 Ki. 1:48; 1 Ki. 8:15; 1 Ki. 8:17; 1 Ki. 8:20; 1 Ki. 8:23; 1 Ki. 8:25; 1 Ki. 11:9; 1 Ki. 11:31; 1 Ki. 17:1; 2 Ki. 9:6; 2 Ki. 10:31; 2 Ki. 14:25; 2 Ki. 18:5; 2 Ki. 19:15; 2 Ki. 19:20; 2 Ki. 21:12; 1 Chr. 16:36; 1 Chr. 28:4; 2 Chr. 2:12; 2 Chr. 6:4; 2 Chr. 6:7; 2 Chr. 6:10; 2 Chr. 6:14; 2 Chr. 6:16; 2 Chr. 6:17; 2 Chr. 34:23; Ezr. 1:3; Ps. 41:13; Ps. 106:48; Isa. 17:6; Isa. 24:15; Isa. 37:21; Isa. 45:3; Jer. 11:3; Jer. 13:12; Jer. 25:15; Jer. 30:2; Jer. 42:9; Jer. 45:2; Mal. 2:16

**From ancient times ([olam](#)) your fathers lived beyond the ([Euphrates](#) - [map](#)) River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of [Nahor](#), and they served ([abad](#)) other gods** - NET = "They worshiped other gods" **Served ([abad](#))** is translated with [latreuo](#) which means carrying out religious duties in a spirit of worship (Jesus uses it in Mt 4:10, Lk 4:8 where it is translated "worship"). In short, they were idolaters (see related note on Joshua 23:16).

**Terah** Personal name perhaps meaning, "ibex." The father of Abraham, Nahor, and Haran (Genesis 11:26). Along with a migration of people from Ur of the Chaldees, Terah moved his family, following the Euphrates River to Haran (Genesis 11:31). He intended to continue from Haran into Canaan, but died in Mesopotamia at the age of 205 (Genesis 11:32). A debate has centered on Terah's religious practices, for Joshua 24:2 apparently points to his family when it claims records that the father worshiped gods other than Yahweh. ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**All 12 uses of Terah in Scripture** = Gen. 11:24; Gen. 11:25; Gen. 11:26; Gen. 11:27; Gen. 11:28; Gen. 11:31; Gen. 11:32; Num. 33:27; Num. 33:28; Jos. 24:2; 1 Chr. 1:26; Lk. 3:34



**Utley** - "they served other gods" Ur and Haran were both centers of the worship of the [Moon goddess](#). ...Abraham was obviously involved to some extent. God chose him in grace, not because of his theology or unusual merit. The rabbis say he was persecuted by his neighbors because he was against idolatry. The hero in this text (and all other texts) is YHWH, not the human beings. The choice of Abraham was an act of pure grace and redemptive purpose (cf. Gen. 3:15; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Luke 22:22).

**Served other gods** is translated in the NET, NLT, NIV in this verse as "worshiped other gods." It is notable that the verb **serve\*** ([abad](#)) is a **keyword** in Joshua 24 occurring **19 times** (Josh 24:2, 3 times in Josh 24:14, 4 times in Joshua 24:15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 31) and virtually every time is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [latreuo](#) which means carrying out religious duties in a spirit of worship (Jesus uses it in Mt 4:10, Lk 4:8 where it is translated "worship"). The NET translates every occurrence of **serve\*** as worship. I think that definitely picks up the gist of this chapter, which in the final analysis is about worship and who one chooses to worship. There can be no middle ground in our worship. Jesus was very clear when He said "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (Mammon = an idol - see picture of "[Mammon](#)")." (Mt 6:24+)

**Keil** (this is not the same as KEIL & DELITZSCH) - Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran (Gen. 11:27). Only the first two are mentioned here, as it was from them that the people of Israel descended, from Nahor, on the mother's side, through Rebekka and her nieces Leah and Rachel, Gen. 22:23, and 29:10, 16 ([Commentary on Joshua - go to page 484](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Terah in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**F B Meyer** - throughout the story, the entire stress is laid on the grace of God. I took; I gave; I sent; I brought; I destroyed; I gave; I delivered. Not a mention is made of Israel's mighty men. All is attributed to the ultimate source of nature, history, and grace--the supreme will of God. We cannot get beyond that. However many links we interpose between ourselves and the causes of things, ultimately we are shut up to acknowledge the determining counsel and foreknowledge of God

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**Serve** (worship) ([05647](#)) [abad](#) means to work (to cultivate, till - Ge 2:5, 15 - Lxx = [ergazomai](#) before the fall! Ge 3:23 after the fall, Lxx = [ergazomai](#)), to serve (be enslaved or hold in bondage - Ex 6:6 - Lxx = [katadouloō](#) = make a slave; Lev 25:38, 39 Lxx = [douleuo](#))(Ge 14:4, 15:13, 14 - Lxx = [douleuo](#)), worship. Labor (as when Israel was in Egyptian bondage - Ex 1:13,14 but same word **abad** translated worship after redemption Ex 3:12, 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, et al where Lxx = [latreuo](#)). Notice that **abad** is translated **serve** in some translations translate it as **worship** (Ex 3:12 vs Ex 3:12KJV; Dt 6:13 vs Dt 6:13KJV). In sum, there is a very clear association between what (who) one serves and who one worships. When the focus of the labor is the Lord, it is **a religious service to worship Him**. In other words our service is really an act of worship. Moreover, in these cases, the word does not have connotations of toilsome labor but instead of a joyful experience of liberation (Ex. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; Josh. 24:15, 18). Unfortunately, this worship service was often given to false gods (Deut. 7:16; 2 Ki. 10:18, 19, 21-23).

**Abad in Joshua especially in Joshua 24!**- Jos. 16:10; Jos. 22:5; Jos. 22:27; Jos. 23:7; Jos. 23:16; Jos. 24:2; Jos. 24:14; Jos. 24:15; Jos. 24:16; Jos. 24:18; Jos. 24:19; Jos. 24:20; Jos. 24:21; Jos. 24:22; Jos. 24:24; Jos. 24:31

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Joshua said unto all the people.** All the people now assembled, consisting mainly of the elders, chiefs, &c., v. 1, but in addition to them of such portions of the body of the people as found it convenient to attend.

**In old time.** Heb. מְעוֹלָם *mēolām*, from everlasting; i. e. from an indefinite period of remote antiquity; as the same term often signifies an indefinite period of time future.

**Served other gods.** From this it seems clear that Abraham's grandfather and father, and perhaps himself in the first instance, worshipped the idols of the country in which they lived. By this, however, we are probably not to understand that they had no knowledge of, or reverence for, the true God, but that they did not render to him that exclusive worship which was his due. In fact, we may conclude them to have been in much the same condition as Laban, who at a subsequent period represented that part of the family which remained beyond the Euphrates, and who certainly revered Jehovah, but who also had idols which he called his gods, and the loss of which filled him with vexation and anger. The partial idolatry of their ancestors, however, was humiliating to Israel. Even Abraham, the father of their nation, in whom they gloried, and who was subsequently so highly honored of God, was born and bred up in the worship of false gods. This fact would cut off all vain-boasting in the worthiest of their ancestors, as far as native character or early conduct was concerned. The father of the faithful himself became what he was purely by the grace of God



and not in virtue of his own innate tendencies to good. Indeed his justification is expressly set forth by the apostle, Rom. 4:5, as an instance of God's 'justifying the ungodly.'

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## **James Smith - BLESSINGS REVIEWED; OR, MOTIVES FOR SERVICE Joshua 24:1–13**

"I place me, Lord, 'neath Thy touch that thrills.  
Wilt Thou, O wilt Thou me melt?  
Give me the power Thine own arm fills  
To impart whate'er of grace I have felt."

In Joshua 24:14 we notice:

- (1) That service is demanded. "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him." Every blessed one should arise and serve (Mark 1:31).
- (2) How this service should be given. "In sincerity and truth." Mere perfunctory service is an abomination (Luke 19:20–23).
- (3) What this service implies. "A putting away of other gods." The Lord's will alone must be the ruling principle of the life. The god, self, must be put away. HIM only shalt thou serve (Ro 15:3). "Now, therefore." This word "therefore" suggests some foregoing reasons why this service should be rendered.

We observe the following. There had been—

### **I. Deliverance.**

"I brought you out" (Josh 24:5). They were emancipated through blood (Exod. 12:13). So are we (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Once the slaves of sin, now the children of God. Delivered to serve (Luke 1:74).

### **II. Separation.**

"The Lord put darkness between you and the Egyptians" (Josh 24:7). The darkness of death still lies between the saved and the unsaved (John 5:24). The Lord doth put a difference (Exod. 11:7). No human power will ever be able to bridge the great gulf fixed between death and life.

### **III. Victory.**

"I gave them (enemies) into your hand" (Josh 24:8). All the enemies of the believer are conquered foes. They need not have dominion over you (Rom. 6:14; Micah 7:9). He giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:25).

### **IV. Protection.**

"When Balak called Balaam to curse you he blessed you still" (Josh 24:9, 10). He can turn the counsel of the wicked to naught (Neh. 4:15). "The Lord is thy keeper; He shall preserve thee from all evil" (Ps. 121:5, 7).

### **V. Possession.**

"I have given you a land for which you did not labour," etc. (Josh 24:13). "Not of works, lest any man should boast." What did the prodigal do for the benefits he received? (Luke 15:22, 23) What have we that we have not received (Eph. 2:7). "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him."

**Joshua 24:3 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.'**

- **I took:** Ge 12:1-4 Ne 9:7-8 Ac 7:2-3
- **gave him Isaac:** Ge 21:2-3 Ps 127:3
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Nehemiah 9:7-8 "You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham. 8 "You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him

To give him the land of the Canaanite, Of the Hittite and the Amorite, Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite— To give it to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, For You are righteous.

Acts 7:2-3 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

## YAHWEH EXTRACTED ABRAHAM FROM HARAN

**Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the (Euphrates) River** - This passages reflects Yahweh's amazing grace (and mercy), His free, unmerited favor, in extracting a man out of a family and nation of idol worshippers. In Ge 12:1+ God **took** him by speaking to him "the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you." The Hebrew word for **took** ([laqach](#)) is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [lambano](#) which in the active voice (as in this case) means bringing under one's control take, with nuances such as taking hold of with the hand (Acts 27.35), taking away or removing (Rev 3.11) or taking for oneself or into one's possession (Lk 19.12).

**Bush** explains **I took your father Abraham** - I (YAHWEH) exercised such an influence upon him as induced him to leave that land of idolaters; I (YAHWEH) prompted him to go. Though no violence was employed, it implies that he would never have gone thence unless God had 'taken' him, unless by a **divine impulse** he had moved him to go. (**ED**: ABRAHAM'S "SEPARATION" OR SETTING APART WAS EVIDENCE OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ABRAHAM'S LIFE - THE SPIRIT WAS ACTIVE IN SAVING AND SANCTIFYING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT!) See on Ge 2:15, relative to God's 'taking' Adam and putting him into the garden of Eden. So it is the special grace of God that 'takes' a sinner out of a state of impenitence and unbelief, and puts him in the way to eternal life, the road to the heavenly Canaan, that better country where lies the inheritance of the saints. ([Notes](#))

As noted above, Joshua is speaking as Yahweh's "mouthpiece" (prophet) and beginning in this verse and through verse 13, Yahweh uses the **personal pronoun (I)** 17 times in 10 verses - Jos. 24:3; Jos. 24:4; Jos. 24:5; Jos. 24:6; Jos. 24:7; Jos. 24:8; Jos. 24:10; Jos. 24:11; Jos. 24:12; Jos. 24:13. Joshua served as the intermediary but the recapitulation of Israel's history reflected the words of Yahweh.

**and led him through all the land of Canaan** - God guided and protected Abraham in this foreign land.

**Calvin** on Yahweh beginning with Abraham - "He commences with their unpurchased elevation, which God had so truly originated, **that they could not boast of any excellence or merit.** God had bound them to himself by a tighter chain, in that, when they were on an equality with all others, he had taken them under His care as His own people, for no other reason than His own good pleasure. And in order that it might be evident that they had nothing to boast of, He refers them to their origin, and shows that their fathers who dwelt in Chaldea worshipped idols as well as others, and were not in any respect different from the multitude."

**And multiplied his descendants** - Yahweh fulfilled His promise to multiply **his descendants**, declaring in Ge 12:2 "And I will make you a great nation." And in Ge 13:16 Yahweh promised "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered."

**And gave him Isaac** - "So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac." (Ge 21:2-3) The psalmist writes "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward." (Ps 127:3)

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Led him through out all the land of Canaan**, Gave him my gracious guidance and protection during all his wanderings to and fro in that land of promise.

**Multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.** That is, multiplied his seed by giving him Isaac. As this 'multiplication' however, could not be said to be accomplished merely by the birth of a single son, it is to be understood, not of Isaac alone, but of the long and spreading line of his posterity, among whom he enumerates Jacob and Esau, including their issue in the next verse.

**Joshua 24:4 'To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.**

- **Isaac:** Ge 25:24-26
- **Esau:** Ge 32:3 36:8 De 2:5
- **Jacob:** Ge 46:1-7 Ps 105:23 Ac 7:15
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 36:7-8 For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock. 8 So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

**To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it-** Note the repetition of the verb **gave** (3x in Josh 24:3-4) reflective of God's gift, His gracious character to sinful men (Jacob's name even meant "supplanter" or "cheater").

**Utley** - "**Mount Seir**" This refers to the land south of the Dead Sea to the [Gulf of Aqaba](#) usually associated with Edom. YHWH gave this land to the descendants of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 16:7-14; 17:18, 20).

**But Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt -**

**Believer's Study Bible** - Note the contrast between Esau's apparent blessing and Jacob's apparent lack of blessing. Experience and the course of history often seem to conflict with God's purposes.

#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**I gave unto Esau mount Seir.** See on Ge 36:7-8. In order that the land of Canaan, by the removal of Esau, might be reserved entire to Jacob and his posterity.

**But Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.** Where they suffered a long and grievous bondage, the particulars of which the speaker does not deem it necessary to recite.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Esau in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the story of Jacob and Esau? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God love Jacob and hate Esau \(Malachi 1:3; Romans 9:13\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Jacob in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does Israel mean in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 24:5 'Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out.**

- **Then I sent Moses and Aaron:** Ex 3:10 Ex 4:12-13 Ps 105:26
- **I plagued Egypt :** Ex 7:1-12:51 Ps 78:43-51 Ps 105:27-36 135:8,9 136:10
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MOSES, AARON, & PLAGUES DELIVERANCE FROM IN EGYPT**

**Then-** Marking progression in the divine narrative. Yahweh is presupposing that they had acquaintance with the adversity Israel experienced under Egyptian bondage.

**I sent Moses and Aaron** - Notice again this was all undertaken at God's initiative, not man's. His sovereign grace permeates all of these passages. In Exodus Yahweh told Moses "Therefore, come now, and I (AT HIS INITIATIVE) will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex 3:10+).

**And I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst-** A summary statement of Yahweh's 10 plagues that demonstrated His sovereignty, omnipotence and dominance over the greatest kingdom in the world at that time.

Moses records Yahweh's promise of powerful plagues against Egypt

"So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. (Ex. 3:20+)

**And afterward I brought you out** - Yahweh **brought** them **out** because He had forced Pharaoh to let them go! The sovereign God brought the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and strictly speaking this referred to the first generation (although a few of the second generation may have been born at that time).

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**5. According to that which I did among them.** Heb. עשיתי בקרבו asilhi bekirbo, which I did in the midst of him. A peculiar phraseology, and not capable perhaps of being fully reached in any other language. It implies the essential reality of any thing compared with the outward manifestation, sign, or expression of it. Thus it is said of the butler and baker in prison, Ge 40:5, that they each dreamed a dream, 'according to the interpretation of his dream,' i. e. one of which the event answered to the dream itself; a dream capable of a sound interpretation, which Joseph gave, and which the actual fulfilment confirmed. So here the plagues of Egypt corresponded in fact, in reality, with all that had I been predicted of them beforehand, with all that was recorded of them afterwards, and with all that struck the senses at the time of their actual occurrence. There was no illusion about them in any manner or degree. It was all reality.

**Afterward I brought you out.** Spoken of the present generation, though strictly true only of their fathers. Of the usus loquendi here involved, see note on Joshua 4:23. So also in the ensuing verses, where the reader will notice that the words your fathers and ye, them and you, are remarkably interchanged.

**Joshua 24:6 'I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.**

- **I brought:** Ex 12:37,51 Mic 6:4
- **Egypt:** Ex 14:1-15:27 Ne 9:11 Ps 77:15-20 78:13 136:13-15 Isa 63:12,13 Ac 7:36 Heb 11:29
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ISRAEL DELIVERED BUT TRAPPED AT THE RED SEA

**'I brought your fathers out of Egypt and you came to the sea** - He repeats the declaration that He **brought** Israel **out of Egypt** describing their initial journey to the edge of the Red Sea.

**And Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea** - This prepares the audience for a review of Yahweh's second act of salvation of the nation from what otherwise would have been complete eradication by the powerful, well-equipped (**chariots and horsemen**) Egyptian army. See Uteley's topic [Chariots](#).

**Joshua 24:7 'But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time.**

- **And when:** Ex 14:10
- **he put:** Ex 14:20
- **brought:** Ex 14:27,28
- **your eyes:** Ex 14:31 De 4:34 29:2
- **you lived:** Jos 5:6 Nu 14:33,34 Ne 9:12-21 Ps 95:9,10 Ac 13:17,18 Heb 3:17
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ISRAEL CRIED, GOD HEARD EGYPTIANS DESTROYED

**But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians** - Here Yahweh describes when **"The Angel of God**, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along

with the **darkness**, yet it gave **light** at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night." (Ex 14:19-20+). There was darkness on Egypt's side, light on Israel's side (cf darkness of the 9th plague - Ex 10:22+).

**And brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt-** There is no mention of Israel's time at Mount Sinai or the giving of the Law.

**And you lived in the wilderness for a long time-** This is euphemistic way of saying Israel was punished for their disbelief by wandering in the wilderness. He does not deal with the failure of the nation at Kadesh-Barnea. He does not have anything worthwhile to say about the wilderness wandering.

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GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Dwelt in the wilderness a long season.** A mild term for their being condemned to wander for forty years in the wilderness as a punishment for their sins.

**Joshua 24:8** 'Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you.

- Jos 13:10 Nu 21:21-35 De 2:32-37 3:1-7 Ne 9:22 Ps 135:10,11 Ps 136:17-22
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SUMMARY OF CONQUEST OF SIHON AND OG

**Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond(EAST OF) the Jordan** - Note **I brought** indicates God's guidance and protection, referring in this context to the Second Generation of Israel, the First Generation having died off. **The land of the Amorites** refers to the kingdoms of the two Amorite kings, [Sihon](#) and [Og king of Bashan](#).

**And they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you** - Note the repeated pattern of God's sovereignty (**gave them into your hand...destroyed them**) and Israel's responsibility (**you took possession**).

**Related Resource:**

- [Who were the Amorites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Sihon, king of the Amorites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Og king of Bashan? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 24:9** 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

- Nu 22:5,6-21 De 23:4,5 Jdg 11:25 Mic 6:5
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### BALAK AND BALAAM AGAINST ISRAEL

**Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought** (NET = "launched an attack," NIV = "prepared to fight") **against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you** - There is no record of an actual physical battle between Balak and Israel. The "war" that eventually was waged was a war that was on a spiritual front.

**Utley** - "**Balah ... Balaam**" This false prophet's attempt to curse Israel (cf. Numbers 22) is alluded to several times (cf. Dt. 23:4-5; Josh 13:22; here; Neh. 13:2; Micah 6:5).

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GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Then Balak—arose and warred against Israel.** From the previous history, Nu. 23-24. and also from Jdg. 11:25, it would appear that **Balak did not at any time actually engage in conflict with Israel.** He is said, therefore, in this place to have **'warred'** against them because he intended it, because he cherished a hostile purpose, and concerted his schemes and made his preparations accordingly. The Scripture idiom often speaks of men as doing what they fully design and endeavor to do, and it is a very slight stretch of language to denominate him a warring enemy who has all the will and lacks only the opportunity to become so. See Gen. 37:21; Ezek. 24:13; Mat. 5:28; John 10:32, 33. A similar phraseology occurs in v. 11, in reference to the men of Jericho, which is perhaps to be explained on the same principle.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Balak in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Balaam in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 24:10 'But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand.**

- Nu 22:11-12,18-20,35 23:3-12,15-26 24:5-10 Isa 54:17
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 22:11-12+ 'Behold, there is a people who came out of Egypt and they cover the surface of the land; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" 12 **God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."**

### BALAAM FORCED TO BLESS ISRAEL

**But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered (natsal; Lxx = [exaireo](#) - rescue) you from his hand (yad - keep in mind "hand" in Hebrew use often speaks of power as in this context) - Yahweh rescued Israel from Balak.** Yahweh does not mention the 24,000 Israelites who died.

**Bless** (Lxx = [eulogeo](#)) (01288) **barak** is a verb which literally can mean to kneel (to go to one's knees - Camel in Ge 24:11, Solomon in 2Chr 6:13) as contrasted with standing position or even a bowing at the waist). And so barak can refer to an act of adoration sometimes on bended knee. To give divine blessings (Ge 1:22, 9:1-7) To esteem greatly or adore God for His blessings (Ge 24:48, Ps 103:1) To invoke blessings upon another (Ge 24:60, 27:4, 27) The Hebrew is usually translated in the Lxx with [eulogeo](#) which literally means to speak well of and in this context to pronounce or bestow a blessing or gracious benefit upon the recipient. The English definition of to bless means "pronounce words in a religious rite, to confer or invoke divine favor upon; ask God to look favorably."

**Barak** in **Joshua** - Jos. 8:33; Jos. 14:13; Jos. 17:14; Jos. 22:6; Jos. 22:7; Jos. 22:33; Jos. 24:10

#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**I would not hearken unto Balaam.** Would not comply with his secret wish and purpose, nor allow him to curse to you; would not fall in with or favor the ruling desire of his heart.

**Delivered you out of his hand.** Out of the hand of Balak, and all the wicked machinations which he had set on foot against you.

**Joshua 24:11 'You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand.**

- **You crossed the Jordan** : Jos 3:14-17 4:10-12,23 Ps 114:3,5
- **the citizens of Jericho fought against you**: Jos 6:1-27 10:1-11:23 Ne 9:24,25 Ps 78:54,55 105:44 Ac 7:45 13:19
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL CROSSED JORDAN YAHWEH DELIVERED ENEMIES

You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite - Yahweh reviews Israel's powerful enemies which humanly speaking could not be defeated by a relatively untrained and smaller force.

Thus I gave them into your hand - I gave = God's power and your hand = Israel's responsibility.

The Lord is silent about their failure at Ai and with the Gibeonites.

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**The men of Jericho fought against you.** Heb. 'the masters or lords of Jericho.' This is understood by many expositors of the rulers or magistrates of Jericho, but as the ensuing words, '**the Amorites, the Perizzites,**' &c., seem to stand in immediate apposition with 'men,' or masters, we take it that they are meant by the term, and are called 'masters' of Jericho from the fact that that city belonged to an extensive confederacy composed of the various neighboring nations here specified, of whom it is obviously true that they 'fought' against Israel, and were signally delivered into their hand. If, however, the phrase be understood of the citizens, or chief men of the city of Jericho, though they did not actually meet Israel in the field, yet they may be said to have fought against them, inasmuch as they stood upon the defensive, and opposed them by shutting their gates, and probably in making what resistance they could after an entrance had been gained into the city. See on v. 9.

**Joshua 24:12 'Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow.'**

- **I sent:** Ex 23:28 De 7:20
- **not:** Ps 44:3-6
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 23:28+ (**NOTE THIS IS A PROPHETIC PROMISE**) "I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you.

Deuteronomy 7:20+ (**NOTE THIS IS A PROPHETIC PROMISE**) "Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish.

Psalms 44:3-6+ (**YAHWEH'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER ISRAEL'S ENEMIES**) For by their own sword they did not possess the land, **And their own arm did not save them,** But **Your (YAHWEH'S) right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence, For You favored them.** 4 You are my King, O God; Command victories for Jacob. 5 Through You we will push back our adversaries; Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us. 6 For I will not trust in my bow, Nor will my sword save me.

## YAHWEH SENT HORNETS AND DEFEATED AMORITE KINGS

**Then** - Marks progress in the divine narrative.

**I sent the [Hornet](#) before you** - Were these hornets literal or figurative? We cannot be dogmatic. **NET** renders it "I sent terror ahead of you to drive out before you the two Amorite kings." The important point (whatever "**hornet**" means) is that the Israelites understood that God had once again fulfilled His promises given to the first generation in Exodus 23:28+ and repeated to the second generation of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:20+. Once again this underscores God's faithfulness to fulfill every word, as recorded in Joshua 21:45+ and again in Joshua 23:14-15+.

**Uteley** - "**hornet**" This is possibly a metaphor of divine activity causing fear because, although it is mentioned several times (cf. Ex 23:28; Dt. 7:20), it is never listed as actually happening. The metaphor is also used in Dt. 1:44 ('**BEES**'). (**ED**: "hornet" is used only 3x in Scripture - Ex 23:28; Dt. 7:20; Jos 24:12)



**And it drove out the two kings of the Amorites**([Sihon](#) and [Og](#)) **from before you, but not by your sword or your bow-** The victory was the LORD's. Their victory was all of grace, not self effort. He is not saying Israel did not fight or use swords, etc, but that the reason they defeated a more powerful enemy was because of God's intervention.

**Related Resource:**

- [What does the Bible say about the hornet? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**I sent the hornet before you.** Understood by some literally of the insect so called, by others figuratively of the anxieties, perplexities, and pungent terrors which invaded the minds of the Canaanites on the reported approach of the hosts of Israel. For further remarks on the subject, see on Ex 23:28, and 'Illustrations of the Scriptures,' p. 66. The writer of the apocryphal book entitled '[The Wisdom of Solomon](#),' seems to have taken the words as literally true. ch. 12:8-10, 'Nevertheless, thou didst send wasps, forerunners of thine host, to destroy them by little and little. Not that thou wast unable to bring the ungodly under the hand of the righteous in battle, or to destroy them at once with cruel beasts, or with one rough word: But executing thy judgments by little and little thou gavest them place of repentance, not being ignorant that they were a naughty generation, and that their malice was bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed.'

**Not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.** Not that these implements were not made use of in their wars, but that they would have used them in vain unless God, by his secret or open judgments, had previously smitten and paralysed the power of the enemy. See the passage before quoted from Ps. 44:3.

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**Dr. Woodrow Kroll Not For Sale**

Joshua 24:13 - "I [God] 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."

Not for Sale - During the Spanish-American War, Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross, was working in Cuba. One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her and offered to buy food for some of his sick and wounded Rough Riders. But she refused to sell him what he wanted. Roosevelt could not understand. He cared about his men, and he was willing to pay for the supplies out of his own funds. So he went to the surgeon in charge, who said to him, "Colonel, just ask for it!" A smile broke over Roosevelt's face. Now he understood--the provisions were not for sale. "I will ask for it," he said, and when he did, he got the food at once.

Joshua reminded the people that all they possessed--their land, their cities and their vineyards--were not the result of their own efforts. Certainly they had confronted the enemy. Obviously they had engaged in many dangerous and bloody battles. But those victories were not the ultimate source of their possessions. Instead, all that they owned was a gift from God.

God is not in the retail business. All of our good deeds, our generous gifts, our religious activities could not begin to buy our salvation. But God is willing to give it to us. When we receive Christ as our Savior, all that God has is ours for the asking.

Enjoy God's gracious gifts today. Thank Him for providing them without price and without cost. They are yours not because you buy them, but because God gives them.

**God's gifts are free, but they are not cheap.**

**Joshua 24:13 'I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'**

- **I gave you a land** : Jos 21:45
- **cities**: Jos 11:13 De 6:10-12 8:7 Pr 13:22
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 6:10-15+ "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, **great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not**

**dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,** 12 then **watch** yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (**THIS THE PROBLEM WHEN WE ARE MATERIALLY PROSPEROUS**). 13 “You shall **fear** only the LORD your God; and you shall **worship** Him and **swear** by His name. 14 “You shall **not follow other gods**, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 15 (**A STRONG WARNING**) for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a **jealous God**; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

## **GOD'S GIFTS OF LAND AND CITIES**

**I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant** - Note again that the verb **gave** (Josh 24:3, twice in Josh 24:4, Josh 24:8, 11, 13) occurs repeatedly (six times) in this section emphasizing God's free, unmerited favor to Israel. God allowed Israel to plunder the Canaanites and take control of the Canaanite cities and agriculture.

**Utley** - The Promised Land was an undeserved grace gift from YHWH for the purpose of establishing a people who would reflect His character and love to the nations

In summary, from Joshua 24:3-13 God was emphasizing His great deeds on behalf of Israel with the clear implication that any greatness Israel had come to experience was not based on their efforts but on God's gracious enablement. Israel stood at this moment in world history because of the mercy and grace of God!

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**For which ye did not labor.** Heb יָגַעְתָּ לֹא *yôgâtâ, thou didst not labor.* The whole body of the nation addressed collectively as one person

**Of the vineyards and olive-yards—do you eat.** That is, of their fruits; a usage of speech of not uncommon occurrence. Thus Gen. 3:11, 'Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof,' &c., i. e. of the fruit of the tree. So also Rev. 2:7, 'I will give to him to eat of the tree of life.'

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### **Joshua 24:2,8-14 We Have Fruit!**

I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build. Joshua 24:13

The young mother sighed as she scraped together lunch for her 3-year-old daughter. Spying the empty fruit basket on the table in their tiny kitchen, she sighed and said aloud, "If we just had a basket of fruit, I would feel rich!" Her little girl overheard her.

Weeks passed. God sustained the small family. Still, the struggling mom worried. Then one day her little girl bounded into the kitchen. "Look, Mommy, we're rich!" she exclaimed, pointing at the full fruit basket on the table. Nothing had changed except that the family had purchased a bag of apples.

When Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, was about to die, he shared a message from the Lord that recounted all God had done for them. And he noted, "You lived in the wilderness for a long time" (Josh. 24:7). Then he said, "[God] 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" (Josh 24:13). Joshua set up a large stone to remind Israel of God's provision (Joshua 24:26).

Like the Israelites, after a time of challenge and scarcity, that family now lives in a different place and enjoys fruit trees in a spacious yard, planted years earlier by a previous owner. If you visit them, you'll find a bowl of fruit in their kitchen. It reminds them of God's goodness and how a 3-year-old infused her family with faith, joy, and perspective.

Thank God for how He has provided in the past. Thank Him for what He will do. Ask Him what He wants you to do. Then trust Him.

Remembering God's provision for yesterday gives hope and strength for today.

**INSIGHT:** In Genesis 15, God promised Abraham that He would give his descendants possession of a great stretch of land that was occupied by other people. Several hundred years later, under the leadership of Joshua, God fulfilled His promise, and the people of Israel took possession of the Promised Land. In today's passage, Joshua reminds the Israelites that it was not by their own military might that they did this, but it was God who gave them the land. As a result of God's provision (defeating the armies of the other people), Joshua reminded them to fear and serve the Lord. J.R. Hudberg ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand](#)

**Joshua 24:14** "Now, therefore, **fear** the LORD and **serve** Him in sincerity and truth; and **put away** the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and **serve** the LORD.

KJV Joshua 24:14 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.

NET Joshua 24:14 Now obey the LORD and worship him with integrity and loyalty. Put aside the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and worship the LORD.

BGT Joshua 24:14 καὶ νῦν φοβήτε κριὸν καὶ λατρεύσατε αὐτὸν ἐκ τῆς καρδίας καὶ δικαίως καὶ περὶ λείψαντα τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἑξ ἄλλοτρου οὗ οὗ λατρεύσαν οἱ πατέρες μὴ νῦν τὰ πάντα τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ λατρεύετε κύριον

NLT Joshua 24:14 "So fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone.

ESV Joshua 24:14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

NIV Joshua 24:14 "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.

YLT Joshua 24:14 'And now, fear ye Jehovah, and serve Him, in perfection and in truth, and turn aside the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve ye Jehovah;

LXE Joshua 24:14 And now fear the Lord, and serve him in righteousness and justice; and remove the strange gods, which our fathers served beyond the river, and in Egypt; and serve the Lord.

CSB Joshua 24:14 "Therefore, fear the LORD and worship Him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and worship Yahweh.

NKJ Joshua 24:14 "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!

NRS Joshua 24:14 "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

NAB Joshua 24:14 "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve him completely and sincerely. Cast out the gods your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

NJB Joshua 24:14 'So now, fear Yahweh and serve him truly and sincerely; banish the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh.

- **fear the LORD:** De 10:12 1Sa 12:24 Job 1:1 28:28 Ps 111:10 130:4 Ho 3:5 Ac 9:31
- **serve Him in sincerity and truth:** Jos 24:23 Ge 17:1 20:5,6 De 18:13 2Ki 20:3 Ps 119:1,80 Lu 8:15 Joh 4:23,24 2Co 1:12 Eph 6:24 Php 1:10
- **put away the gods which your fathers served** Jos 24:2,23 Ge 35:2 Ex 20:3,4 Lev 17:7 Ezr 9:11 Eze 20:18 Am 5:25,26
- **in Egypt:** Eze 20:7,8 23:3
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 10:12 (SEE NOTES ON CIRCUMCISE THE HEART) "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear the LORD your God**, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Romans 12:1-2+ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And **do not be conformed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) to this world, but **be transformed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

## FEAR & SERVE THE LORD PUT AWAY IDOLATRY

**Now, therefore** - In view of the multiple manifestations of Yahweh's amazing grace and mercy to the nation of Israel (cf a similar charge in Ro 12:1). The LORD's words would have been ringing in their ears. Joshua is now issuing the commandments in light of what Yahweh had just stated in reviewing Israel's history.

Divine truth calls for a right (-eous) response!

**Keil** - After having thus briefly reviewed the great and glorious acts of God, and set them before the eyes of the Israelites, Joshua calls upon them for gratitude, and urges them to worship their God in sincerity and truth, on account of the abundance of his mercy towards them...**now**, as ye have received from your God such inexhaustible proofs of His love, ([Commentary on Joshua - go to page 484](#))

**NET NOTE** points out - Joshua quotes the LORD's words in Joshua 24:2–13 (note that the LORD speaks in the first person in these verses); in Josh 24:14–15 Joshua himself exhorts the people (note the third person references to the LORD)

**Believer's Study Bible** - This passage consists of four statements by Joshua (Josh 24:14, 15, 19, 20, 22a, 23), beginning and ending with a demand for commitment to Yahweh, and includes four responses by Israel (Josh 24:16-18, 21, 22b, 24). **Now therefore** indicates that the commitment Joshua is demanding is the logical result of what God has done (cf. Ro 12:1).

**Fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity** (NET - integrity) **and truth** - Joshua is a general to the very end, here issuing his final commands. **NLT** = "So fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly." Based on the incredible bestowal of divine grace on the sons of Israel, Joshua now issues 5 commands (4 here and **choose** in next passage). See **fear** in Lev. 19:32; 25:36, 43; Dt. 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24; 10:12, 20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; Josh. 4:24. Note that godly fear lead to godly activity (**serve Him in sincerity...**). The idea of **in sincerity and truth** is to serve Yahweh without hypocrisy.

**John Gill** on **fear** - "Since He has done such great and good things, fear the Lord and His goodness, fear Him for His goodness' sake; nothing so influences fear, or a reverential affection for God, as a sense of His goodness; this engages men sensible of it to fear the Lord, that is, to worship Him both internally and externally in the exercise of every grace, and in the performance of every duty".

**Keil** on **sincerity and truth** - The whole stress of this exhortation is laid upon וְבִתְהִימוֹת וּבְאֵמֶת in integritate et veritate, i.e. integro et vero s. sincero animo (**ED: sincerity and truth**). For they already worshipped him with **words** and **deeds**; there was no gross idolatry existing amongst them then. Their heart, however, was not given completely and undividedly to the Lord, but still clung to the foreign gods, which their fathers had worshipped beyond the river and in Egypt. These they were to **put away** and to worship Jehovah with entire and sincere heart....Masius has well said: "Integrity is here opposed to feigned religion, a fault so prevalent amongst men in the present day, that it might almost be thought to be inherent." ([Commentary on Joshua - go to page 484](#))

Remember that when God gives a **commandment**, He always gives an **enablement**. See the **notes on circumcision of the heart** and how this relates to Israel's ability to keep these commandments.

Note that the verb **serve** ([abad](#)) is a **keyword** occurring **19 times in Joshua 24** - (Josh 24:2, 3 times in Josh 24:14, 4 times in Joshua 24:15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 31)

**Sincerity** is translated in **NET** as integrity. The English word integrity speaks of the state of being whole and undivided (sounds like a "Caleb-like" spirit in Nu 14:24+ = "followed Me fully") The word **truth** ([emeth](#)) often conveys the sense of one who is faithful. Together the picture is that of without hypocrisy.

**Utley** - The JPSOA (The Jewish Publication Society of America) translation has **"with undivided loyalty."** These terms focus on an inner attitude and outer lifestyle (cf. Dt. 6:4–5). The term "truth" (BDB 54) is the OT root for faith, believe, trust, which is paralleled to the NT term (pistis, pistos, pisteuō). See

**And put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the (Euphrates) River and in Egypt** - In Stephen's sermon in Acts, he alludes to foreign gods that were carried about by the second generation in the wilderness, declaring "YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON." (Acts 7:43+)

The same Hebrew verb **put away** was used in Joshua 23:6+ in his charge to

"**Be very firm**, (be strong - [chazaq](#)) then, to **keep** and **do** all that is written in the book of the law of Moses (IN A WORD - "OBEY"), **so that** (PURPOSE CLAUSE) you may not **turn aside** ([sur](#)) from it to the right hand or to

the left."

Yahweh used this same verb ([sur](#)) in giving Joshua His "marching orders" at the beginning of this book...

"Only **be strong** and very **courageous**; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; **do not turn** ([sur](#)) from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. (Joshua 1:7+)

(COMPARE) "So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you (**OBEY**); you shall **not turn** ([sur](#)) aside to the right or to the left. (Dt 5:32+)

**TSK** has an interesting note on **put away the gods** - : From this exhortation of Joshua, we not only learn that the Israelites still retained some relics of idolatry, but to what gods they were attached. 1. Those whom their fathers worshipped on the other side of the food, or the river Euphrates, i.e., the gods of the Chaldeans, fire, light, the sun, etc. 2. Those of the Egyptians, Apis, Anubis, serpents, vegetables, etc. 3. Those of the Amorites, Moabites, Canaanites, etc., Baal-peor, Astarte, etc. How astonishing is it, that after all that God had done for them, and all the miracles they had seen, there should still be found among them both idols and idolaters!

**Spurgeon** - JOSHUA knew that the people who surrounded him, while ostensibly serving Jehovah, were, many of them, secretly worshipping the ancient idols of their Mesopotamian fathers—those seraphim which were once hidden in Rachel's tent and were never quite purged from Jacob's family. Some of them, also, harbored the Egyptian emblems. And some had even fallen into the worship of the gods of the people whom they had displaced and were setting up the images of Baalim in their homes. The people were nominally worshippers of Jehovah, but in reality, many of them had turned aside unto strange gods. Never, in their best days, had the children of Israel been quite divorced from idols, for, as Stephen said of them, even in the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of their god Remphan, figures which they made to worship (Acts 7:43). **Now, being a thorough-going, decided, down-right man, Joshua could not endure double-mindedness and therefore, he pushed the people to decision, urging them to serve the Lord with sincerity and, if they did so, to put away altogether all their graven images.** He demanded from them a determination for one thing or the other. He shut them up to a present choice between the true God and the idols, and gave them no rest in their halfheartedness. Anticipating the cry of Elijah on Carmel, he demanded, in effect, "**How long will you waiver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.**" Joshua, like his friend Caleb, "**remained loyal to the LORD**" (Dt 1:36). He might have taken for his motto the word "thorough"; he belonged to Jehovah, heart and soul and mind and strength. As the successor of Moses and the type of the Lord Jesus, he put on zeal as a cloak and girded himself with fidelity as a garment; his appointed duty was fulfilled with martial strictness and unswerving steadiness; he had a single eye and a firm hand; he was strong and of good courage, and the Lord was with him. It was no idle boast when the old warrior and prince in Israel said, "As for me and my family, we will worship the LORD."([Decision](#))

**And serve the LORD** - God wanted their whole hearts before service. Do not serve idols but the true and living God.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Moloch/Molech/Molek? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about child sacrifice? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Sincerity** (without blemish, perfect, integrity) ([08549](#)) **tamim** from the verb **tamam** = to be complete, entire or whole (literal sense in Lev 3:9, Ezek 15:5), refers to a action which is completed) has both physical (sacrificial animal without defect - Nu 29:2, 8, 13, 17, etc) and spiritual (blameless, devout, upright) significance. **Tamim** has the idea of completeness or wholeness and deals primarily with a state of moral or ceremonial purity (e.g., animal sacrifices - 51x tamim refers to unblemished animals - Passover lamb in Ex 12:5 picturing of course Christ sinless perfection - 1Cor 5:7, "knew no sin" = 2Cor 5:21). **Tamim** is used in Dt 18:13 in the charge to Israel that "You shall be **blameless** (tamim) before the LORD your God."

The Septuagint translates **tamim** in Joshua 24:14 with [euthutes](#) which literally means straightness and figuratively refers to the quality of life characterized by honesty, integrity, justice, righteousness, uprightness.

**Truth** (faithfulness, faithfully) ([0571](#)) **'emeth** from the verb **aman** = to confirm, support, believe, be faithful) is a feminine noun meaning truth, faithfulness, that which gives complete reliability. The first use fittingly describes Jehovah's **faithfulness** (Ge 24:27, cp Ge 32:10, Ps 30:9, Neh 9:33, Ps 54:5, Ps 91:4) Who is described as the "God of **truth**" (Ps 31:5) Jacob asks Joseph to deal with him in **faithfulness** (Ge 47:29) In Ge 42:16 Joseph tests the brothers to see if their words are **truth**. God told Moses to select men of **truth** to be judges which He characterized as those who hate dishonest gain (Ex 18:21). Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses as "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and **truth**."

**Put away** (repeated in Joshua 24:23) (turn aside, depart, remove, take away)([05493](#)) **sur** basically means to change direction, to



turn away, to go away, to desert, to quit, to keep far away, to stop, to take away, to remove, to be removed, to make depart. Literally of turning aside or departing from the road a person is traveling (Jdg 18:3, 15) or departing from a road or path by turning aside from the original course (Ex 3:3). Used figuratively, **sur** has to do with the moral direction someone is taking as when turning from the right road (cf "do not turn to the right or the left"). Israel turned aside from the way of their ancestors walked (Jdg. 2:17) and away from God's commands (Mal 3:7). Israel's leaders exhorted them not to turn aside from the right way (Dt. 17:20; Josh 23:6; 1Sa 12:20, 21). To stay on course is to turn neither to the right or to the left (Dt. 2:27; 5:32; Joshua 1:7+; 2 Ki 22:2).

**Strong's** has this note for [sur](#)- ) to turn aside, depart 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to turn aside, turn in unto 1a2) to depart, depart from way, avoid 1a3) to be removed 1a4) to come to an end 1b) (Polel) to turn aside 1c) (Hiphil) 1c1) to cause to turn aside, cause to depart, remove, take away, put away, depose 1c2) to put aside, leave undone, retract, reject, abolish 1d) (Hophal) to be taken away, be removed

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Now therefore fear the Lord, &c.** The address of Joshua to Israel has thus far been occupied with a recital of the leading events of their national history, events going to show, in the most striking manner, the interposition of the divine hand in their behalf. He would thus lay a foundation for that deep sense of obligation and obedience, which he aims in the remainder of his discourse to impress upon their minds. From this point, therefore, he begins a practical application of the various facts he had before enumerated, turning the whole into a powerful appeal to the consciences and the hearts of his hearers.

**Serve him in sincerity and in truth.** In uprightness, in integrity; not in pretence and outward semblance only, but in reality and in truth. Do not serve or worship other gods in private, while in public, in the eyes of men, you maintain the form of the worship of the true God.

**Put away the gods which your fathers served, &c.** From the general character of this generation, as evinced by their conduct, and from the commendation bestowed upon them by Joshua, Joshua 23:8, it is difficult to conceive that the positive practice of idolatry was now fairly chargeable upon them. If the secret sin of Achan, in stealing certain forbidden articles at the siege of Jericho, brought such fearful tokens of wrath upon the congregation, have we not reason to suppose that the act of paying divine honors to idols, however hidden from human observation, would have incurred, at least, an equal measure of divine indignation. And if such a sin were actually prevalent among them, how is it to be accounted for that Joshua had not warned them against it before? But perhaps the words of Joshua, in just construction, do not necessarily force upon us such a sense. The phrase, '**Put away the gods,**' **&c.**, may mean simply, keep away, renounce, repudiate, have nothing to do with, being equivalent to a charge to preserve themselves pure from a contagion to which they were peculiarly liable. We prefer, therefore, to understand the expression of a vigorous and determined purpose of mind to which the speaker exhorts the chosen people, while at the same time we cannot deny that there may have been in solitary instances some lingering relics of actual idolatry which Joshua would effectually extinguish by this solemn mandate. But that the offence was now prevalent to any considerable extent among the people, we have no idea. Not but that there was sufficient corruption in their natures for such a propensity to live and act upon, but the tenor of the narrative does not, we conceive, justify the supposition in respect to them at this time. We are warranted, however, in drawing from Joshua's words the practical inference, that God requires the heart in his worship, without which there is no acceptable service; and that that is still an idol, to which our affections cleave more than they do to God himself.

**In Egypt.** This fact is nowhere else expressly asserted respecting the Israelites in Egypt, although Ezek. 23:3, 8, and Acts 7:42, 43, **go strongly in confirmation of Joshua's words.** Considering the idolatrous tendencies of human nature, it is not surprising that they should have suffered themselves to become infected with an evil so everywhere rife around them, and it was, perhaps, in part owing to this that their sufferings were so aggravated and embittered in that 'house of bondage.'

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## James Smith - CONSECRATION AND SERVICE Joshua 24:14-28

"How scant and measur'd are our gifts,  
Each on the other duty shifts;  
Upon ourselves we lavish spend,  
And paltry nothings His cause send.  
What cost it Him to save thy soul,  
Ere thou on Him thy sins didst roll?"

It has been said that "Entire consecration embraces three things—being, doing, and suffering. We must be willing to be, to do, and to suffer all that God requires. It covers body, soul, and spirit. These are to be used when, where, and as God requires, and only as He requires. Must be made deliberately for all time coming, without any reserve, and in reliance upon divine strength. This is a faithful and true witness. Here is—

## I. A Call to Decision.

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve” (v. 15). Ye cannot serve two masters. To halt between the opinions of self and God is to tarry upon the plain of destruction, like Lot’s wife (Luke 16:13). “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves, His servants ye are?” (Rom. 6:16). Yielding to sin makes us the servants of sin. Yielding to God makes us the servants of God.

## II. A Noble Determination.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (v. 15). The Lord in some way will publicly acknowledge those who, in the fear of God, command their children and their households (Gen. 18:19). But let this be an individual decision, “As for me.” “What wilt Thou have me to do?” Every man shall give an account of himself to God. To serve the Lord implies making Him your Master. Not I, but Christ. One is your Master. Who is He? Self or Christ?

## III. A Stirring Reflection.

The people answered and said, “The Lord our God, He it is that brought us out of Egypt, ... and did those great signs, ... and preserved us all the way, ... and drove out the Amorites, ... therefore will we serve the Lord” (vv. 16–18). Their calling to mind the past goodness of God led them to a definite surrender of themselves to Him. Shall the memory of Christ’s sufferings and victory for us not constrain us to yield ourselves in loyal service to Him? “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits which are His.”

## IV. A Solemn Declaration.

Joshua said, “Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God” (v. 19). It is an easy thing to say that we will serve the Lord, but it is a very different thing to put it into daily practice (see Matt. 26:33–35). The service of God is an holy service, and only holy ones can render it (Lev. 19:2). “Who shall be able to stand before this holy Lord God?” (1 Sam. 6:20). Those cleansed by the blood and filled with the Spirit. Ye cannot serve God if Mammon or self has any authority over you, for He is a jealous God, jealous because He is Love (1 John 4:8).

## V. A Decided Affirmation.

“Nay, but we will serve the Lord. We are witnesses” (vv. 21, 22). They were witnesses against themselves that they had chosen the Lord to serve Him. Peter and the rest of the disciples affirmed that they would rather die than deny their Lord, but they all forsook Him, and fled when danger appeared. Self-confidence is ever the arm of flesh that fails. A strong will may be a blessing or a snare. All depends on whether the strength is merely human or divine. Be strong and very courageous (Josh. 1:7).

## VI. An Indispensable Condition.

“Now therefore put away the strange gods, and incline your heart,” etc. (v. 23). If the Lord is to be served every other usurping god must be put away, and the whole heart inclined leaning only upon the Lord. Everything that takes the place the Lord alone should have in our hearts is a strange god to Him; that with which He can have no fellowship. Service must always be associated with holiness. Work for God is to be the fruit of personal consecration to God. David would not offer to God what cost him nothing (2 Sa 24:24). The ministry of the Son of Man was to give His life (Matt. 20:28). So should we first give our own selves to the Lord. “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:5).

**Joshua 24:15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**

NET Joshua 24:15 If you have no desire to worship the LORD, choose today whom you will worship, whether it be the gods whom your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But I and my family will worship the LORD!"

BGT Joshua 24:15 ε δ μ ρ σκει μ ν λατρειν κυρ λεσθε μ ν αυτο ς σ μερον τ νι λατρε σητε ε τε το ς



θεος των πατρων μντος ντ πραν το ποταμο ετε τος θεος των Αμορραων νος μες κατοικε τε π τς  
γς ατν γ δ κα οκαμου λατρε σομεν κυρ τι γις σιν

NLT Joshua 24:15 But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."

ESV Joshua 24:15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond 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."

NIV Joshua 24:15 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."

YLT Joshua 24:15 and if wrong in your eyes to serve Jehovah -- choose for you to-day whom ye do serve; -- whether the gods whom your fathers served, which are beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorite in whose land ye are dwelling; and I and my house -- we serve Jehovah.'

LXE Joshua 24:15 But if it seem not good to you to serve the Lord, choose to yourselves this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods of your fathers that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, among whom ye dwell upon their land: but I and my house will serve the Lord, for he is holy.

CSB Joshua 24:15 But if it doesn't please you to worship Yahweh, choose for yourselves today the one you will worship: the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. As for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh."

NKJ Joshua 24:15 "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."

NRS Joshua 24:15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region 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."

NAB Joshua 24:15 If it does not please you to serve the LORD, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

NJB Joshua 24:15 But if serving Yahweh seems a bad thing to you, today you must make up your minds whom you do mean to serve, whether the gods whom your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now living. As regards my family and me, we shall serve Yahweh.'

GWN Joshua 24:15 But if you don't want to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Even if you choose the gods your ancestors served on the other side of the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live, my family and I will still serve the LORD."

BHT Joshua 24:15 wū'im ra` Bū]`ênêkem la`áböd ´et-yhwh(´ädönäy) BaHárû lâkem hayyôm ´et-mî ta`ábödûn ´im ´et-´élôhîm ´ášer-`äbdû ´ábôtêkem ´ášer (Bū`ëber) [më`ëber] hannähär wū'im ´et-´élôhê hä´émörî ´ášer ´aTTem yöšbîm Bū`arcäm wū`änökî ûbêtî na`áböd ´et-yhwh(´ädönäy)

- **choose:** Ru 1:15-16 1Ki 18:21 Eze 20:39 Joh 6:67
- **whether the gods:** Jos 24:14
- **or the gods:** Ex 23:24,32,33 Ex 34:15 De 13:7 Dt 29:18 Jdg 6:10
- **as for me:** Ge 18:19 Ps 101:2 Ps 119:106,111,112 Joh 6:68 Ac 11:23
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- Joshua Portrait of the Man God Uses

#### Related Passages:

Ruth 1:15-16 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

John 6:67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" :68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

Exodus 23:24 "You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces.

Exodus 23:32 "You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. 33 "They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

Exodus 34:13-15 "But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim 14—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— 15otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,

Deuteronomy 13:6-7 "If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, 7of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end),

Deuteronomy 29:18 so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.

Judges 6:10 and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.""

Psalms 119:112 I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, even to the end.

## **IT IS YOUR CHOICE: SERVE THE LORD**

**If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve ([abad](#)) the LORD - NET** = "If you have no desire to worship the LORD" It was "D-Day" for Israel - Decision Day. Who would they choose to serve?

**Choose** for yourselves today whom you will serve ([abad](#)) : whether the gods which your fathers served ([abad](#)) which were beyond the (Euphrates) River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living - NLT = "But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live?"

**THOUGHT** - While **choose** is a command, God will not force them (or us) to make the right choice. He always leaves the choice to our **will** - **will** I walk His **way** or my **way**? His **way** is the highway of holiness, while my **way** is the road to ruin! Beware. Be wise, beloved and you will be blessed!

**Spurgeon** - Joshua demanded from them a determination for one thing or the other, and cried, "If it seems evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites among whom you dwell." He shut them up to a present choice between the true God and the idols and gave them no rest in their halfheartedness. Anticipating the cry of Elijah upon Carmel, he demanded, in effect, "How long halt you between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him." He demanded a decision and rightly so. Can either earth or heaven be quiet while such a matter is in suspense? To compel them to assert their decision, he declared his own. A man's own personal example is eloquent beyond the power of words. Hear the grand old man. He cries, "You may hesitate, but my mind is made up once and for all. Judge you as you will, my verdict is already given and my children agree with me—as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah. We have no reverence for the demons of Canaan or the myths of Egypt, who could not preserve their own worshippers—our hearts are loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who brought us up out of Egypt and gave us this land for a heritage. So far as myself and my sons and my daughters are concerned, the die is cast and Jehovah alone will we serve." This clear avowal on the part of Joshua was not a trick of eloquence or a resolve made for the first time in order to influence his audience—he had so lived that his declaration carried weight with all who heard it, else it had been idle to have uttered it. He had always been a man of firm steps and determined mind. ....Each age had its man whose heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord, to serve as a landmark for weaker saints to steer by, and a rock against which the tumult of the people raged in vain([Decision](#))

**but** (striking term of contrast) **as for me and my house, we will serve ([abad](#)) the LORD** - Joshua now substantiates his previous

words of exhortation with his words of affirmation of loyalty to Yahweh, which would have been a powerful example to the people who greatly respected their commander over the past 25+ years. The head of the house will influence those under his influence. Scripture never mentions Joshua's wife or children but presumably he had a family for here he says **my house**.

- Maranatha Chorus - [As For Me and My House](#) (The Family Prayer Song)

We see an echo in Jesus' words "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.." (Mt 6:24+)

**Believer's Study Bible** - Joshua was not inviting, but demanding that Israel serve the Lord. The choice he laid before them only existed if they refused his demand. The issue was whether to obey or to choose. If they refused to obey the Lord, they had to choose which pagan god to serve. Our contemporary pluralistic society presents us with a confusing display of values, goals, and life-styles. It is not a godless society, but a society full of gods pleading for our attention. The issue is whether to obey our mighty and loving Creator, or to be lost in a hellbound madhouse of confusion.

**Henry Morris - choose you this day.** This is the same choice confronting each person in every age. One can choose to serve the true God of creation and redemption (now revealed in Jesus Christ), or the pagan nature-gods of the world system (evolutionary pantheism), or attempt to serve both (as Terah and Nahor had done). But the true God "is a jealous God" (Joshua 24:19). He will not share His glory with another. Joshua's exhortation is still needed: "Put away...the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel" (Joshua 24:23).

**Morris - gods which your fathers served.** Abraham's father Terah had indeed served the gods of the Chaldeans when he was in Ur, on the other side of the "flood" (meaning the great river Euphrates). Pantheism and polytheism did become widespread soon after Nimrod introduced it at Babel. At Ur, the principal deity was the moon god, but there were also shrines to many other gods.

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 15-28. It is essential that the service of God's people be performed with a willing mind. For LOVE is the only genuine principle whence all acceptable service of God can spring. The Father seeks only such to worship him, as worship him in spirit and in truth. The carnal mind of man is enmity against God, therefore, is not capable of such spiritual worship. Hence the necessity of being born again. But numbers rest in mere forms, as tasks imposed upon them. Joshua puts them to their choice; but not as if it were indifferent whether they served God or not. Choose you whom ye will serve, now the matter is laid plainly before you. He resolves to do this, whatever others did. Those that are bound for heaven, must be willing to swim against the stream. They must not do as the most do, but as the best do. And no one can behave himself as he ought in any station, who does not deeply consider his religious duties in family relations. The Israelites agree with Joshua, being influenced by the example of a man who had been so great a blessing to them; We also will serve the Lord. See how much good great men do, by their influence, if zealous in religion. Joshua brings them to express full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. They must come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be in vain. The service of God being made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a solemn covenant. He set up a monument of it. In this affecting manner Joshua took his last leave of them; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads. Though the house of God, the Lord's table, and even the walls and trees before which we have uttered our solemn purposes of serving him, would bear witness against us if we deny him, yet we may trust in him, that he will put his fear into our hearts, that we shall not depart from him. God alone can give grace, yet he blesses our endeavours to engage men to his service.

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**If it seem evil in your eyes** Unjust, unreasonable, or attended with too many inconveniences.

**Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.** Not implying that it was previously a matter of indifference, whether they served God or no, or that they were really at liberty to refuse his service if they saw fit. He adopts this rhetorical mode of speech, in order to impress upon them more forcibly a sense of their duty, and the utter absurdity, as well as impiety, of devoting themselves to any other than the true God. It is a striking way of bringing the matter to an issue. His aim is to bring them to a decided stand; to a free, intelligent, firm, and lasting choice of God as their portion. In effecting this he makes use of a style of address which evidently implies that the service of idols compared with the service of God is so irrational, absurd, and brutish, that no man in the calm exercise of his understanding could hesitate which to choose. If reason and conscience could but be allowed to speak, they would not fail to speak on the side of God. A similar course, having the same object in view, was pursued by Elijah, 1 Kings 18:21, who 'came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' The grand inference to be drawn from this mode of address is,—that the service of God is matter of voluntary choice, and that it is his will that we should all seriously and solemnly make this choice. He would have us weigh the matter well, compare the respective claims of his service and the service of sin and the world, and if our candid judgment, as it surely will, pronounces on the side of that which is good, and true, and right, and saving, to resolve at once to embrace it, and adhere to it with a constancy

stronger than death. As the evidences in favor of religion are so clear and indisputable, and its infinite advantages so obvious, the man who declines making the choice here enjoined must be considered as deliberately preferring Satan to Christ, death to life, hell to heaven. He who acknowledges the paramount claims of God and his Gospel, and yet does not act accordingly, does not sincerely and solemnly choose his service, as that better part which cannot be taken from him, must stand self-condemned both here and hereafter.

**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.** Ye may act your pleasure in this matter, but whatever may be your election, I am decided as to my own course. As far as myself and my household are concerned, the question whom we shall serve is settled. Whatever halting or wavering there may be in other cases, there is none in mine. This declaration of their venerated leader, while devoid of the least air of dictation, and apparently leaving them the most unrestrained liberty of choice, was in fact the most powerful argument he could have used to influence their minds in the direction he wished. For the force of example is in proportion to the depth of respect and estimation in which an individual is held, and he could not fail to perceive that the reverence with which he was regarded would give to his example a weight and authority almost amounting to absolute law. Gratitude for his services, confidence in his wisdom, and love for his person would all combine to make his conduct a pattern for theirs and how blessed is it when those who possess these immense advantages for exerting a salutary influence on others, are disposed, like Joshua, to make it available to the salvation of their fellow-men! This noble resolution of the captain of Israel obviously suggests the following reflections; (1) The service of God is nothing below the most distinguished of men. It is no diminution of their greatness, no disparagement of their rank, reputation, or honor, to be decidedly pious, and to be openly and avowedly so. On the contrary, it heightens every other distinction, and makes all honor still more honorable. (2) In regard to the great interests of religion and the soul, we are to be concerned for others, particularly our households, as well as for ourselves. It should be our earnest aim to unite our families, our wives, children, and servants, those that come under our special care and influence, with us in every pious resolution and labor. Heads of households should feel not only anxiety, but deep responsibility, in respect to those thus entrusted to their charge. (3) Those that lead and rule in other things should be first in the service of God, and go before in every good work. (4) We should resolve to do right and to do good, whatever others may do. Though others may desert the cause of God, we should stand by it at all hazards, whatever charge of singularity or expression of popular odium it may bring upon us. 'Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.' Henry.

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#### **Joshua 24:2,13-18 D-Day**

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.  
—Joshua 24:15

Recently I asked my older sister, Mary Ann, if she remembered when our family moved into the house where we lived for many years. She replied, "You were about 9 months old, and I remember that Mother and Daddy stayed up all night packing boxes and listening to the radio. It was June 6, 1944, and they were listening to live coverage of the Normandy Invasion."

Today marks the 70th anniversary of what has become known as D-Day—a military term for the day on which a planned operation will begin. Over the years, D-Day has also come to mean a moment of decision or commitment in our personal lives.

At one point in ancient Israel, their leader Joshua, now an old man, challenged the people to another kind of D-Day. After years of struggle to possess their inheritance in the land God had promised them, Joshua urged them to faithfully serve the One who had been so faithful to them (Josh. 24). "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve," he said. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

The day we decide to follow the Savior is the greatest turning point in our life. And each day after, we can joyfully renew our commitment to serve Him.

Lord, what a privilege it is to say "yes" to You each day. Thank You for loving me and forgiving me. Guide me in all my choices today and help me to serve You faithfully. Life's biggest decision is what you do with Jesus.

INSIGHT: Joshua 22–24 records Joshua's speech to the Israelites as they begin to occupy the Promised Land. Reminding them that the land was God's gift to them (Josh 24:13), Joshua urged the people not to worship their ancestral gods from Mesopotamia or the gods of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, but instead to fear and serve the Lord in sincerity and in truth (Josh 24:14-15).

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#### **G Campbell Morgan - Jos. 24:15**

These were the words of a fine irony. In spite of a constant use of them, they did not constitute an appeal to choose between God and idols. Joshua was supposing that they had decided not to serve God, -and he called them then to choose between the gods their fathers had abandoned, and those which they had found in the land. He had traced their history from the call of Abraham to that time. This history he had expressed in the form of the speech of Jehovah; and in the compass of eleven verses the Divine pronoun

"I" occurs no less than seventeen times. It was a great statement of the truth that everything of greatness in their history was of God. From that fact, Joshua made the natural deduction: "Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve Him." But if not—then let them choose between these other gods. The implicate of the appeal was the recognition of a great necessity in all human life. Man must worship, he must have a god. That is universally true. If men will not serve the Lord, then let them choose whom they will serve, only let them make their decision in the clear light of what the kingship of God really means of light, and love and life and liberty. This is a great method of appeal. If to-day men say of God's anointed and appointed King. "We will not have this Man to reign over us," then let us urge them to choose as between the alternatives which are offered them; only let them compare the results of the reign of Christ over human life with those of any other authority to which loyalty may be yielded. Such comparison compels us to Joshua's decision: 'As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.'

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A young soldier from Glasgow was talking to a comrade. In their ears was the muffled sound, the "Dead March in Saul," as a comrade was carried to his last resting-place; and this Glasgow soldier, converted up there at Maryhill, was talking to his friend, and pleading with him to come to Christ. The young Highlander there in the funeral march was terribly impressed, and he said, "Jack, I will be a Christian when I leave the service." He had just nine months to put in. He said, "I am determined to be a Christian when I leave the service." Ah! that was his decision. Next week there came orders for the 79th to embark for Egypt. The two friends were in the march across the sands to the Arab encampment of Tel-el-Kebir, marching side by side--the one with the acceptance of salvation in his heart, and the other putting it off till he should leave the service. Softly did they walk across these sands, silently did they steal through the darkness of midnight to the camp of the slumbering Arabs; but the sentinels were on the alert, and they saw a flash of light, and five hundred rifles from the Arab encampment poured their bullets on the advancing Highlanders; and there, dead and cold, was the body of the man who put off the acceptance till he should leave the service. Oh, comrade, what a fatal decision! (J. Robertson.)

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

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### **Joe Stowell - Where Have All the Heroes Gone?**

"As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" Joshua 24:15

What's with celebrities? The last few years have been littered with famous people behaving badly . .

I'm sure it would only take a minute for you and I to come up with a dozen recent examples...

I'm not a real uptight person. I have a pretty wide berth for weirdness and foolish behavior. I guess I've seen enough of it in my own life and have come to believe that if we knew the extent of the fall we would be surprised that anything good happens at all. But this is ridiculous!

And, while I'm in this mood, what's with the tabloids that grab our attention while we are waiting in the grocery line? Who are these people who have been caught naked by a hiding photographer at some secluded beach? and who cares who's getting divorced, sleeping with someone's best friend, or having another baby out of wedlock?

But that's just it, isn't it?! Lots of people seem to care. They find it all interesting and stimulating. That's why this stuff sells. All this behaving badly tickles the public fancy, grabs headlines, and fills up tons of minutes on talk shows. Which leaves me wondering . . . Isn't there anything more important for us to be taken with, for us to talk about? Where have all the really cool heroes gone?

I hate to sound like I am above it all and on to better things—which would come across as arrogant and judgmental—so forgive me. That's not my intention. But there is a great alternative to cohabiting in the sludge of the seamy side of life.

I find that living and thinking in the world of God's Word, God's ways, and God's will is like fresh air to my soul. And I do in fact have a Hero who after all these years I find to still be compelling, amazing, adventuresome, challenging, and worthy of my praise and admiration. Today, Jesus is more wonderful to me than He has ever been before!

I don't want to live with a pointed finger at a world that seems to be spinning out of control with no moral compass. What our wild world needs is not another self-righteous declaration of how terrible it all is. After all, what do we expect from people who without Jesus are left to their own desires and instincts? What I want is to get my life in gear with the solid stuff that keeps my heart intrigued with the pure fresh water of God's Word and to walk the path of life that Jesus walks, to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

My heart beats with Joshua, who in the midst of lots of sordid pagan options declared, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." And like Jesus, I want to remember to love and care for sinners. What our world really needs is the life-changing power of a new life in Jesus. So that will be my prayer!

YOUR JOURNEY...What is your reaction to news about celebs? Are you intrigued? Self-righteous? Disgusted? Ask the Lord to turn your heart toward prayer for those who need the life-changing power of new life in Him. What do you admire about your heroes? What do you admire the most about Jesus? Read Philippians 4:8, and do what it says! Next time you're tempted to indulge in the toxic stuff of this world, choose instead to feed your mind on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy!

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#### **TODAY IN THE WORD Joshua 24:15; Proverbs 4:10-19**

In "The Road Not Taken," the poet Robert Frost ponders how his life might have been different had he made different choices. Frost concludes,

**"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference."**

This poem reminds us of an important truth: life is a journey and the path we take makes all the difference. Not all paths lead to the same place. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are ultimately on the path to eternal life. But during our lives in this world, we make choices that lead either to abundant life or to spiritual dryness. Proverbs is like a road map that shows us what these two paths look like.

Today's passage develops this path metaphor. Yesterday we saw that those who sought wisdom found life—a promise echoed in Joshua 24:10. Here we see that the way of wisdom is a straight path (Joshua 24:11) because it leads to rightness or justice. Thus the way of wisdom allows one to walk unhindered by deception or fear of falling because of sin. Because wisdom leads to life, it's to be guarded and applied (Joshua 24:13).

In addition to seeking wisdom, we must avoid evil. We shouldn't put even our big toe on this path! This may seem overstated until we consider that initially evil rarely looks bad. In fact, most sins look adventurous and enticing . . . at first. But Proverbs shows us what the end of the road looks like. And here, the end of the evil path really doesn't look that exciting. Here are people so consumed by greed, lust, revenge, or some other evil, that they can't even sleep at night. Unless they harm someone, they aren't content. We may call this thinking psychopathic today, but Proverbs shows that this is where the path of evil leads.

As if to drive this home, Joshua 24:18-19 compare the two paths. Using the familiar imagery of light and dark, the stark difference between the two paths couldn't be more vividly drawn.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** We would like to emphasize an earlier point: as believers, our ultimate destination is eternal glory with Jesus. But between now and then, we make choices that either promote or hinder abundant life. So it's worth considering which of these two paths you are on today. Are you asking the Lord to show you how to bless other people's lives, or are you harboring grudges and vengeful thoughts? These are hard questions. But if you know you're on the wrong path, it's not too late to change direction and head down the path to life!

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#### **Oswald Chambers - The Will To Loyalty**

Choose you this day whom ye will serve. — Joshua 24:15

Will is the whole man active. I cannot give up my will, I must exercise it. I must will to obey, and I must will to receive God's Spirit. When God gives a vision of truth it is never a question of what He will do, but of what we will do. The Lord has been putting before us all some big propositions, and the best thing to do is to remember what you did when you were touched by God before – the time when you were saved, or first saw Jesus, or realized some truth. It was easy then to yield allegiance to God; recall those moments now as the Spirit of God brings before you some new proposition.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve." It is a deliberate calculation, not something into which you drift easily; and everything else is in abeyance until you decide. The proposition is between you and God; do not confer with flesh and blood about it. With every new proposition other people get more and more "out of it," that is where the strain comes. God allows the opinion of His saints to matter to you, and yet you are brought more and more out of the certainty that others understand the step you are taking. You have no business to find out where God is leading, the only thing God will explain to you is Himself.

Profess to Him – 'I will be loyal.' Immediately you choose to be loyal to Jesus Christ, you are a witness against yourself. Don't consult other Christians, but profess before Him – I will serve Thee. Will to be loyal – and give other people credit for being loyal too.

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#### **Theodore Epp We Must Choose Joshua 24:14,15 2 Corinthians 6:14-18**

Joshua admonished the people first of all to fear the Lord. This does not mean to be afraid of Him but to place reverential trust in Him. With such trust in the Lord they would follow Him with confidence. With such fear of the Lord there would be a hatred for evil.

So what he was asking the Israelites to do was to have an attitude of heart of complete trust in God. Because of this, then, they would avoid evil and walk in faith.

The second admonition was to serve the Lord. Israel was to serve Him in sincerity and in truth. After a proper attitude of heart comes the activity of the mind and the body.

To serve in truth means to serve in perfection and with stability. For us this means to serve the Lord now with a perfect heart.

We must put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the wiles of the Devil. We need this in order to fight the battles of the Lord successfully.

Joshua warned the Israelites, in the third place, to put away those things that God did not allow. The idolatry so characteristic of Canaan, with all its attendant evil, unbelief, carelessness and backsliding, was to be put away.

It was not a matter of following majority opinion but of finding out what God wanted and doing it. Joshua made it very plain that the Israelites had to choose whom they would serve. We, too, face the same issue.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

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### **Vance Havner - Joshua's Decision "As for Me and My House"**

Almost two hundred years ago a redheaded Virginian stood in an old church in Richmond and made a speech that helped to turn the tide of history. He was tired of finagling with George III. He was tired of the olive-branch men and peaceful coexistence. He reached his climax when he declared, "I know not what course others may take but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" [*Italics, mine.*] No applause followed that speech. The effect was too profound. The grandfather of Robert E. Lee arose and supported it. One man expressed a desire to be buried on that spot when he died—and he was. Patrick Henry had made a great decision. America is the product of great decisions.

Today some laugh at old-fashioned oratory, but when one considers most of the speeches we hear nowadays, it is a poor time to ridicule Patrick Henry. On the other hand, long-haired radicals try to use the American Revolution to justify their Communist-inspired anarchy. The words of the redheaded Virginian will be remembered as long as freedom endures. Patrick Henry made a momentous choice when he said, "but as for me...."

Centuries ago Joshua made a great speech to the children of Israel. Near the close of his life he gathered the people for a farewell message. It has all the marks of a revival sermon. He began with a rundown of past blessings. He called upon Israel to renounce their idols and serve God. It was negative and positive, both barrels of the gun. Then he gave the invitation to action: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" and climaxed it with his own decision, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (See Joshua 24:15.)

It was high time for a decision. The Israelites were in the Promised Land, but they had not driven out their enemies as God had commanded. They were trying to live in peaceful coexistence, peace without victory. Whether with Canaanites then or Communists now, it cannot be done. Douglas MacArthur made that clear when he said, "There is no substitute for victory."

Joshua knew the weakness of Israel. Abraham had been called out of idolatry, and the seeds of evil lay dormant ready to spring into weeds of apostasy. He remembered how at Sinai they had promised to serve God, only to worship a golden calf six weeks later.

The church today would live at peaceful coexistence with the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is as much idolatry among us as there ever was in Israel. The love of money, of sensual pleasure, of ourselves—these evils beset us as never before. John's last word in his First Epistle was, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."... Revival comes when we pray:

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;  
I want Thee forever to live in my soul,  
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;  
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

JAMES NICHOLSON

Charles Finney said: "Revival is a new beginning of obedience to God." It means a decision to renounce idols and serve God. It is personal. "But as for me...."



Paul wrote to Timothy in his first letter, chapter 6 about the peril of things, of the times, and concerning the truth. Each time he followed it with the injunction but as for you, as some new translations put it. "The love of money is the root of all evil but as for you [*Italics, mine*], flee these things." "Perilous times shall come but as for you, continue in the things you have learned"; "The time will come when they cannot endure sound doctrine but as for you, watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." We must decide about things, about the times, and about the truth.

The people responded to Joshua's challenge declaring that they too would serve the Lord, but it was not an enduring revival. As we move from Joshua into Judges, we see that the misery in the Book of Judges is due to the mistakes recorded in the Book of Joshua. The last verse in Judges reads, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." When there is coexistence with evil, false peace without victory, superficial religion, we are on the way to lawlessness. Authority goes out and anarchy comes in. There is no king in Israel and every man does what is right in his own eyes. We have arrived at this point today with civil disobedience, contextual morality, situation ethics and anarchy.

When the congregation vowed their resolve to follow Joshua's decision, he replied, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." (See Joshua 24:19.) He threw cold water over their dedication. It is scriptural to challenge cheap dedication. Alexander Maclaren says, "The best way to deepen and confirm good resolutions too swiftly formed is to state very plainly the difficulty of keeping them." I have long since been disgusted with church members who promise God their devotion on the Sunday night of a revival only to forsake the revival by Friday night for a ball game!

On one occasion when many believed on our Lord, we read that He did not believe in them (same Greek word) because He knew what was in man (see John 2:23-25). Joshua reminded the people that God is holy and jealous. He will not look upon sin and He will not share the throne of our hearts with another. (See Joshua 24:20.) We are in a day when cheap grace is being preached with no repentance to begin with and no discipleship to follow. We need to be cured of shallow discipleship that has no root or depth as our Lord indicated in the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soil. Sometimes I think we church members have just about rededicated ourselves to death!

The revival under Joshua took place at Shechem. There was another revival at the same Shechem long before the days of Joshua. Jacob had wandered from Bethel to Shechem where his daughter Dinah got into trouble. His sons took vengeance on the Shechemites and Jacob was sorely distressed. Then God commanded him to return to Bethel and dwell there and make an altar unto the Lord. Jacob obeyed promptly, ordered his household to put away their strange gods, change their garments, and return to the place of blessing. (See Genesis, chapters 34 and 35.) Like Joshua, as for Jacob and his house, he would serve the Lord. He did not ask the family whether or not they wanted to go. He did not take a vote. He was not afraid of frustrating Junior. He simply announced that they were returning to Bethel. More fathers like that would answer a good many problems of broken homes and wayward youngsters.

The family obeyed, gave up their strange gods and earrings, which Jacob buried under an oak. If American homes and churches followed a similar procedure, we would fill all the national forests in the country with surrendered idols! Paul had a book burning at Ephesus and Savonarola witnessed a similar sight in Florence. We need also to change our garments. The garb many Christians wear needs to be brought back to New Testament standards of modesty. Also, our spiritual wardrobe is in bad shape; we wear the filthy rags of self-righteousness, the spotted garments of worldliness, and the gray vestments of compromise. The prodigal was received by the father just as he was, but he had to put on a new robe for fellowship; so must we.

Joshua was the head of the nation and the leader of God's covenanted people. Jacob was the head of a family. Together, they represent the nation, the church, and the home. Joshua did not lament what a failure Israel had been; he gloried in her past and called the people to return to the standard under which they had begun. Jacob did not apologize for his failure as a father; he ordered his family back to Bethel. It is fashionable nowadays to apologize for the failure of America, the church, and the home. Politicians, sociologists, educators, preachers, parents—everybody is doing it. I have never seen such a strange crowd as there is at the mourner's bench, weeping on one another's shoulders about how we have failed the young people; how we need to make amends for our stupid past; how we need to get with it and be relevant, involved, and meaningful—whatever that means. The magazines are full of it; television is full of it. It is the in thing to sob and sigh about it. The psychology of it is devastating, for the more we cringe and crawl and confess, the more impudent and arrogant this petted and spoiled generation becomes.

Frankly, I am not in the mood to join these Jeremiahs, berate the establishment, and apologize for America. I am proud of my country's illustrious past. It is still a land that people are trying to get into, not out of! I would like to load up all who like it better somewhere else and wave good-bye, as long as I could see them, while they sail for the land of their heart's desire. This is my country; may she always be right, but right or wrong, my country. No mother says, "My boy, as long as he's right, but when he is wrong, he is not my boy." God does not say, "This Christian is my child so long as he is right, but when he is wrong he is not my child." When my country is wrong it is my duty to call it back to God. Some things were wrong when I was a boy, but we did not try to burn down everything we disliked because we were not prepared to put something better in its place. That is right for today as well.

I am not bemoaning the failure of the church. We are not called to preside at the funeral of Christianity. The church of Jesus Christ is not dead. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (See Matthew 16:18.) They say the church has failed in not updating her terminology, in her social program, in not getting through to youth. I will tell you where the church has failed; she has failed at the point of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Lordship of Christ, the sovereignty of the Spirit, the separation from the world, and the discipleship. She has gone into religious socialism, building bigger and better hog pens in the far country instead of getting prodigals home to God. The world had more respect for the church when she was attending to her own business instead of making moral issues out of political projects.

I am thankful for my own denomination. I was pastor of the mother church of Southern Baptists and I know what they have stood for. I agree with one of their stalwarts of the past who said, with reference to certain dissenters, "When they get right, they'll be with me for I'm standing where they used to be." I have no intention of leaving my denomination. If any people leave, let it be the ones who do not believe what we used to believe. The mutineers should not be allowed to take over the ship. Some old-timers are accused of rocking the boat, but it is better to rock the boat than to wreck it. Old-fashioned Baptists should not leave the denomination; we were here first. Nobody from headquarters has ever told me what to preach. It would not make any difference if they did, but they have not.

If this sounds out-of-date, I can only say that after over half a century of preaching, I still keep an itinerary of preaching engagements booked two years ahead. If I am a back number, I am not alone. More than seven thousand have not bowed to Baal! (See 1 Kings 19:18.)

What the church needs is a Joshua who will glory in the blessings of the past and call on God's people to turn from their idols to God. We are emphasizing everything but revival, and that is a trick of the devil to keep us from facing the real issue. If people in our great gatherings spent their time emphasizing revival instead of evangelism, seeking the joy of salvation restored and a new spirit; then transgressors would be taught God's ways, and sinners would be converted.

Back of the nation and the church lies the home. I offer no apology for the old-fashioned home. We still have some where father is the head and mother the heart instead of a two-headed monster. We still have some homes where children are being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but by and large, America is a disaster area homewise. Nowhere has the devil scored a greater success. The automobile took the family out of the home, and television brought the world into the home. Now age has surrendered to youth, and Jacob is no longer able to lead his family back to Bethel; they have become permanent residents of Shechem.

Back of the nation, the church, and the home stands the individual. We need Joshuas who have made the great decision, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord, and who will call the nation and church away from idolatry to serve the Lord. We need Jacobs who have met God themselves and who can lead their families out of Shechem back to Bethel, the House of God—better still, to El Bethel, the God of the House of God.

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### **Joshua 24:15 Dr. Woodrow Kroll You've Got to Choose**

Joshua 24:15 - "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."

You've Got to Choose - Sometime ago many newspapers carried a story about a woman who was divorcing her husband after discovering he had two other wives and several children by each of them. His explanation? He couldn't bear the thought of hurting any of them, so he had married all three. He was a traveling salesman, so he was able to carry out the farce for several years. Rather than facing a hard choice, he took the easy way out.

Once established in the Promised Land, the Israelites also were confronted with a multitude of choices. And the choices weren't necessarily easy. They could worship the gods of Egypt. These were gods that their parents had known from their long years of servitude. Familiarity made that tempting. On the other hand, the gods of the Amorites, the nation they had conquered, offered opportunities to indulge the flesh, which many likely found attractive. Some may have stood betwixt and between, but Joshua was not afraid to make the hard decision. Boldly he declared, "As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

Choosing to serve the Lord is not always an easy decision. Sometimes it means going against the religious beliefs of your family. Other times peer pressure and the desire to "fit in" make us hesitant to declare openly our commitment to the Lord. Many people find it easiest to behave like a chameleon, changing colors to fit whatever group they happen to be with. But that only temporarily avoids making the hard decision.

Today, decide to take a stand. Whom will you serve? Will it be yourself? Will it be the gods of pleasure or wealth or ease? Or will you

choose the God who loves you? Making a decision for Christ may be hard, but it's a choice you will never regret.

### **The easy choice is seldom the right choice.**

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#### **One Small Choice**

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.  
—Joshua 24:15

As a boy, my father often played violin in the local symphony. This budding young talent continued improving into his high school years.

Then one day he decided to join his buddies in a harmless prank. As they raced through the school hallways and out the door, my dad hurried to follow them. The door slammed just as he reached it. His left hand smashed the glass of the door—severing the tendons to three fingers. All the doctors could do was tie the tendons in knots, rendering his fingers useless and taking the violin out of his life forever.

I wonder how Dad's life might have been different had he not made that one small choice. "What-ifs" have dubious merit—we can always second-guess ourselves. But we cannot underestimate the impact of our choices. One choice can produce lifelong consequences, for good or bad.

Joshua's counsel is a good place to start. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve," he told Israel. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Serving God will not always be the easy choice. But it is a choice that brings the kind of consequence we can live with. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I am resolved to follow the Savior,  
Faithful and true each day;  
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth—  
He is the living way.  
—Hartsough

What you will be tomorrow depends on the choices you make today.

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#### **Choose!**

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. —Joshua 24:15

All of us have times when we'd like to be completely free to do whatever we want. We long to break out of our restricting circumstances. But total freedom or complete independence is never an option for us. The Bible declares that we are servants by nature, even though we might not realize it.

I read about some slave-making ants of the Amazon that illustrate man's predicament. Hundreds of these ants periodically swarm out of their nest to capture neighboring colonies of weaker ants. After destroying resisting defenders, they carry off cocoons containing the larvae of worker ants. When these "captured children" hatch, they assume that they are part of the family and launch into the tasks they were born to do. They never realize that they are forced-labor victims of the enemy.

Just as these little creatures are captives from the time of their birth, so we enter the world enslaved to sin and Satan. But there is a solution. By turning to Christ in faith, we are released from the condemnation of sin. Then by the Holy Spirit's power we can begin serving the Lord.

We are all servants. Our decision, as Joshua pointed out, is not whether we will serve, but whom. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The freedom to choose is a gift from the Lord,  
He wants you to serve Him of your own accord;  
Right now He is calling for you to decide  
To give Him your talents and serve by His side.  
—Hess

True freedom is found in submission to Christ.

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## As for Me and My House

“But if it doesn’t please you to worship the LORD, choose for yourselves today the one you will worship: the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. As for me and my family, we will worship the LORD.”—Joshua 24:15

Serving God was not Joshua's only option. He could have adopted the religious beliefs and practices of his family heritage in the pagan land of Egypt. He could have accepted the idolatrous religion of his neighbors in the region where he now lived. These options probably looked like easier choices than worshiping God. But Joshua had witnessed God's faithfulness (Josh. 23:14). He was convinced that his Lord was the only true God and that serving Him would bring victory and blessing.

Joshua decided to serve God alone. He was determined to teach his entire household to honor his Lord as well. He had trusted God for victory on the battlefield, and he knew that God could also give him spiritual victory in his home.

You, too, must decide whom you will serve. An assortment of popular religions clamors for your allegiance. If you come from a Christian heritage, you may choose to embrace the faith of your parents and grandparents. If you did not grow up in a Christian home, you can decide, as Joshua did, to reject your heritage of unbelief and begin a generation that serves the Lord.

If you set your mind wholeheartedly on serving God, your example will bring a tremendous blessing to your family. If you place your confidence in God, those around you will witness your faith, and they may decide to trust Him too. Choose, as Joshua did, to serve God unashamedly with all your heart, and then watch to see how God blesses your family.

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**Handbook of Scripture - Kenneth Boa** - Many begin well and end poorly, but Joshua finished his race well and remained faithful to the Lord throughout his one hundred and ten years. In his message to the leaders of his people, Joshua reminded them of the Lord's gracious and powerful works on behalf of the children of Israel and in the past until the present day. With this perspective fresh in their minds, Joshua moved into application by exhorting his countrymen to fear the Lord, to serve Him in sincerity and truth, and to put away all forms of idolatry. Joshua warned the people that the Lord is a jealous God who will not endure faithlessness or rebellion, but they vowed to serve the Lord, and Joshua made a covenant with them.

Prayer Lord, it is clear that the only options before me are service to You or service to idolatry by putting anything in the created order higher in my affections and priorities than You. Help me remember that You are a jealous God who will not let Your children stray away from You without being disciplined.

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## Choose Your God

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.  
—Joshua 24:15

I recently saw a commercial for an online game based on Greek mythology. It spoke about armies, mythological gods, heroes, and quests. What got my attention was the description of how to get the game started. You go online to register, choose your god, then build your empire.

Wow! **“Choose your god.”** Those words, though presented casually in the ad, struck me as being characteristic of one of the most dangerous things about our world. In a game, it may be insignificant what “god” you choose; but in the real world that choice has eternal consequences.

To a generation of Israelites surrounded by the gods of their day, Joshua declared that they must choose their god—but it must not be done in a cavalier way. He set the example as he said, “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” (Josh. 24:15).

Today, as in the days of Joshua, there are many options. But there is only one wise choice—the true God. Joshua made the right choice. “We will serve the Lord.” ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The gods of this world are empty and vain,  
They cannot give peace to one's heart;  
The living and true One deserves all our love—  
From Him may we never depart.  
—D. DeHaan

**Nothing can fill the emptiness in your heart except God.**

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### **Choosing Our Leader**

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.  
—Joshua 24:15

Today, millions of people in the United States will cast their votes for a slate of political leaders, including President. After months of campaign speeches, television ads, and debates, each voter has the opportunity to say to one candidate, “I choose you.” Not everyone’s favorite will win, but every voter has a choice.

Unlike a political election in which the majority rules, each of us is given the opportunity to select our personal leader each day. In the spiritual election deep within our hearts, our choice will stand no matter what others may decide.

After many years in the Promised Land of Canaan, the aged Joshua called the people of Israel together and issued this challenge: “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” (Josh. 24:15). In a great collective response, the people said, “We will serve the Lord!” (Josh 24:21).

Everyone serves some kind of god. Whom will we choose to have rule in our hearts today? [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Thy will I choose; I give to Thee  
All of the life Thou gavest me;  
Thy will I choose, no life I ask  
Except to do Thy given task.  
—Anon.

**Each day we choose the one we will follow in life.**

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### **It’s Your Choice**

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. —Joshua 24:15

As Joshua was nearing the end of his life, he gathered the children of Israel together at Shechem. And there, from the lips of a man who was close to death, came an appeal that throughout the centuries has moved the hearts of many. Joshua said, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

This challenge, viewed in the light of the New Testament, suggests three outstanding lessons regarding our salvation. First, we must make a choice between God and the devil. To refuse Christ leaves us automatically on the devil’s side. Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Matthew 12:30).

Second, this choice is a personal choice. Joshua said, “Choose for yourselves . . . whom you will serve.” Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be born again and become a child of God. But we must do the believing ourselves.

Third, there is an urgency in this charge. “Choose for yourselves this day,” not next month, not a week from today, not tomorrow, but this day.

Have you made that all-important choice? Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? If not, do so right now! Remember, the choice is yours. [\(Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved\)](#)

Now is the time to choose the Lord—tomorrow may be too late.

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Abe Lincoln told the story of a blacksmith who heated a piece of iron in the forge, not knowing what he was going to make. At first he thought of shaping it into a horseshoe but changed his mind. After hammering on the iron for a while, he decided to try to make it into something else. By this time the metal was no longer malleable. Holding it up with his tongs and looking at it with disgust, the blacksmith tossed it into a vat of water. “Well,” he shrugged, “at least I can make a fizzle out of it!” Joshua would have seen an important lesson in that story. He knew that a meaningful life must have a clear purpose. “Choose!” he urged his followers. If you’re not going to live for God, then decide against Him. If you are going to live for God, then let your life reflect that decision. But whatever you do, decide! Joshua made it clear that he and his family had made their choice to serve the Lord (24:15). For him, life was not an amusement park but an arena where important decisions had to be made.

What about you? If you don't choose to trust Christ and serve Him, all you will have to show for the living of your days will be a loud fizzle. --H W Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Joyfully enlisting  
By Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord's side,  
Savior, we are Thine. -  
-Havergal

If you decide not to choose,  
you've already made the wrong choice.

**Joshua 24:16 The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods;**

- 1Sa 12:23 Ro 3:6 6:2 Heb 10:38,39
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 19:8+ All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

Exodus 24:3; 7+ Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "**All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!**" (24:7) Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient! (AND BY EXODUS 32 THEY WERE FLAGRANTLY DISOBEDIENT MAKING A GOLDEN CALF TO WORSHIP!)**

### IS THIS INSINCERE SINCERITY?

**The people answered and said** - This is their first affirmation of faith and covers Joshua 24:16-18.

**Far be it from us that we should forsake**(abandon - ['azab](#); Lxx - [kataleipo](#)) **the LORD to serve**([abad](#) - NET, CSB = "worship" Lxx - [latreuo](#)) **other gods** - The people immediately respond to their esteemed leader's example of loyal affirmation. They say in essence "Perish the thought that we would ever forsake Yahweh." But were they sincere? At that moment given the gravity of the passing of Joshua and his charge (and example of choosing Yahweh), they responded just as the children of Israel in Ex 19:8+ and Ex 24:3,7+. However note what happened to Israel within just one generation after Joshua and the elders died (Jdg 2:8-11+)! See related note on Joshua 23:16.

**THOUGHT** - "TEARS AT THE ALTAR" mean nothing by themselves: OBEDIENCE IN THE "CRUCIBLE" of everyday life IS WHERE THE METAL IS PURIFIED, REFINED AND STRENGTHENED.

**Forsake** (leave) ([05800](#)) ['azab](#) basically means to depart from something -- to leave, to forsake (48x), to leave (26x; "left" 22x), to loose, to depart, to abandon. Things that can left behind or forsaken include persons (Ge 44:22; Nu 10:30; Ru 1:16; 2Ki4:30), people who should left behind (Ge 2:24); places (2Ki 8:6; Jer 18:14; 25:38) and objects (Ge 39:12,13; 50:8; Ex 9:21). Men can forsake God (apostatize) (Dt 28:20, 31:16, Jer 1:16), can abandon qualities of virtue (1Ki 12:8, 2Chr 10:8, 13), the way (of righteousness) (Pr 15:10), instruction/wisdom (Pr 4:2, 6), reproof (Pr 10:17 - "ignore" = forsake), kindness (lovingkindness, faithfulness) (Pr 3:3). God promises to not forsake His people (Ge 24:27, 28:15, Dt 31:6,7 contrast what God's people will do = Dt 31:16). In a use similar to Pr 28:13, we are instructed to "forsake wrath." (Ps 37:8)

**Azab - 5x in Joshua** - Joshua 1:5, Joshua 8:17, Joshua 22:3, Joshua 24:16, Joshua 24:20

GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**The people answered and said, God forbid, &c.** Joshua has the pleasure of finding the people ready from their hearts to concur with him in his pious resolution. By an emphatic expression, denoting the greatest dread and detestation imaginable, they show that

they startle at the thought of apostatizing from God, as if it would imply their being utterly lost to justice, gratitude, honor, and every generous feeling. At the same time, they give such substantial reasons for their choice, as to show that it was not purely out of compliment to Joshua, highly as they esteemed him, that they made it, but from a full conviction of its intrinsic reasonableness and equity. They professedly and justly found their obligations, first on the consideration of the great and merciful things which God had done for them, in bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, where they were now planted in peace; and, secondly, of the relation in which they stood to God as a covenant people. 'He is our God;' he has graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and we have bound ourselves by solemn vow to him. Woe be to us if we prove false and treacherous to our plighted (pledged) faith.

**Joshua 24:17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.**

- Jos 24:5-14 Ex 19:4 De 32:11,12 Isa 46:4 63:7-14 Am 2:9,10
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who **brought you out of the land of Egypt**, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 5:6 'I am the LORD your God **who brought you out of the land of Egypt**, out of the house of slavery.

### ISRAELITES EXPLAIN THEIR CHOICE TO SERVE GOD

**for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved** (guarded, protected - [shamar](#)) **us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed** - Their statement regarding God's power, protection and preservation are true and laudable. These statements serve to underscore the horror that they would apostatize from such a faithful and powerful God.

**Calvin** - "The substance of their reply is this, that as God by his wonderful deliverance has constituted them his peculiar people, and has constantly assisted them, and proved that he is their God, the ingratitude on their part would be despicable, if they were to reject him, and turn to other gods."

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**Preserved** (guarded, kept, observed, watched) ([08104](#)) [shamar](#) conveys the basic idea = exercise great care over something. Thus it means to keep, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, be circumspect, to be on one's guard. Hedge about as with thorns - the word the Hebrews used for a shepherd's keeping watch over a flock of sheep. Conveyed the idea of protection as in Ps 121:7-8+ (used 3 times!) In the great Aaronic blessing Nu 6:24+. The first use of **shamar** in Ge 2:15 is instructive as Adam was placed in the garden (a perfect environment) and was commanded to "**keep**" it which in the [Septuagint](#) is translated with [phulasso](#) (which is used to translate many of the OT uses of **shamar** and is **used here in Joshua 23:6**) which means to guard like a military sentinel would at his post, to keep from escaping, be on guard from being lost or perishing (2Ti 1:14). Clearly Adam did not do a good job at "keeping" the garden safe from intruders! And because of this failure he was cast out of the garden and angels stationed to "**guard** (Lxx = [phulasso](#)) the way to the tree of life" so that he would not eat of it (Ge 3:24+). **Hedge keeps outsiders out and insiders in!** After Cain murdered Abel he answered God "Am I my brother's **keeper**?" (Ge 4:9) **Keep** the Law (**shamar torah**) = 8x in OT: 1Chr 22:12 Ps 119:44, 55, 136 Pr 28:4, 29:18 Jer 16:1 Eze 44:24 Translated in NASB a few times as a noun: bodyguard, doorkeeper, gate keeper, guardsman, sentries, watchman, watchmen.

**Joshua 24:18 "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."**

- **We also will serve:** Ex 10:2 15:2 Ps 116:16 Mic 4:2 Zec 8:23 Lu 1:73-75
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## GOD'S POWER OVER THEIR ENEMIES

The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve ([abad](#); [latreuo](#)) the LORD, for He is our God - The rehearse God's victories over their enemies in the Promised Land. The sons of Israel further underscore why they would serve only God.

**Joshua 24:19 Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins."**

KJV Joshua 24:19 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.

NET Joshua 24:19 Joshua warned the people, "You will not keep worshiping the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God who will not forgive your rebellion or your sins.

BGT Joshua 24:19 κα ε πεν ησο ς πρ ς τ ν λα ν ο μ δ νηθε λατρε ει ν κυρ τι θε ς γι ς σιν κα ζηλ σας ο το ς ο κ ν σει μ ν τ μαρτ ματα κα τ νομ ματα μ ν

NLT Joshua 24:19 Then Joshua warned the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

ESV Joshua 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

NIV Joshua 24:19 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.

YLT Joshua 24:19 And Joshua saith unto the people, 'Ye are not able to serve Jehovah, for a God most holy He is; a zealous God He is; He doth not bear with your transgression and with your sins.

LXE Joshua 24:19 And Joshua said to the people, Indeed ye will not be able to serve the Lord, for God is holy; and he being jealous will not forgive your sins and your transgressions.

CSB Joshua 24:19 But Joshua told the people, "You will not be able to worship Yahweh, because He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not remove your transgressions and sins.

NKJ Joshua 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

NRS Joshua 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

NAB Joshua 24:19 Joshua in turn said to the people, "You may not be able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God who will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

NJB Joshua 24:19 Joshua then said to the people, 'You will not be able to serve Yahweh, since he is a holy God, he is a jealous God who will not tolerate either your misdeeds or your sins.

GWN Joshua 24:19 But Joshua answered the people, "Since the LORD is a holy God, you can't possibly serve him. He is a God who does not tolerate rivals. He will not forgive your rebellious acts and sins.

BHT Joshua 24:19 wayyö<sup>er</sup> mer yühôšû<sup>a</sup>` ´el-hä`äm lö´ tû|klû la`áböd ´et-yhwh(´ädönäy) Kî|´-élôhîm qüdôšîm hú´ ´ë|l-qannô´ hú´ lô|´-yiSSä´ lûpiš`ákem ûlûHa††ô´wtêkem

BBE Joshua 24:19 And Joshua said to the people, You are not able to be the servants of the Lord, for he is a holy God, a God who will not let his honour be given to another: he will have no mercy on your wrongdoing or your sins.

- **You will not be able to serve the LORD:** Jos 24:23 Ru 1:15 Mt 6:24 Lu 14:25-33
- **holy:** Lev 10:3 19:2 1Sa 6:20 Ps 99:5,9 Isa 5:16 6:3-5 30:11,15 Hab 1:13
- **a jealous:** Ex 20:5 Ex 34:14 1Co 10:20-22
- **he will not:** Ex 23:21 34:7 1Sa 3:14 2Ch 36:16 Isa 27:1

- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages:

Joshua 24:23 "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

Matthew 6:24+ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Luke 14:25-33+ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exodus 34:14 –for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God–

1 Corinthians 10:20-22 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

Deuteronomy 29:14-21+ "Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, 15 but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today 16 (for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; 17 moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); 18 so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. 19 "It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry.' 20 "The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 "Then the LORD will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law.

Numbers 15:30 'But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

## AN UNEXPECTED WARNING ABOUT THEIR FALLEN FLESH

**Then** - Marks progression. After the affirmations and declarations of loyalty to Yahweh. You cannot serve the LORD is Joshua's way of sternly warning them of the seriousness of their covenant promise

**Campbell** remarks that Joshua "was not at all satisfied with their burst of enthusiasm. Did he detect some traces of insincerity? Had he hoped that the people would bring forth their idols for destruction as Jacob's family had done here some centuries before? (Ge 35:4; Josh. 24:14, 23) There was no such response." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able(yakol) to serve(abad; Lxx = latreuo) the LORD** - In the Septuagint the the word "not" is the strong double negative in Greek (ou me = absolutely not)! Strictly speaking this is true. Fallen men absolutely cannot love and **serve** God in their own strength but only in the strength supplied by the Spirit! See [George Bush's explanation](#) of

this somewhat enigmatic passage. In the Septuagint [yakol](#) is translated with [dunamai](#) describing capacity or ability, to be able, be capable of, have power to.

**Utley** - “**You will not be able to serve ([abad](#)) the LORD**” This follows the revelation to Moses in Deut. 31:16–22. Joshua seems to be emphasizing the difficulty in serving a holy God. The sacrificial system of Leviticus was a means for sinful people to approach a holy God and maintain fellowship (i.e., covenant). **It is impossible in our own strength. (ED: THE ONLY WAY IS SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH, THE SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT).**

**John Butler** - Joshua spoke of the qualifications to challenge them about the difficulty of serving. Joshua did not white wash service and make it sound easy.

**Grant** - Joshua responded by setting before them the solemnity of their undertaking and the seriousness of the consequences should they fail. It was essential that they clearly understood what they were doing when they declared that they would serve the Lord. If they relied on their own strength and resources, it was an impossible task. “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord” (v. 19), “by your own resolution only, and without the assistance of divine grace, without solid and serious conversion from all idols and without true repentance and faith” (J. H. Michaelis, quoted by Keil & Delitzsch).

Joshua’s challenge to the Israelites was not about the past. It was about the future. He challenged them to worship only the one true God. Because “He is a jealous God” (Josh. 24:19), the Lord will not tolerate worship of any other.

O Lord, help us to recognize  
Your sole authority;  
And may our worship of You be  
A high priority. —Sper

Your heart cannot feel at home with a foreign god.

Earlier we see this same verb [yakol](#) used when Achan had committed his sin bringing judgment on the entire nation...

“Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.”’ (Jos. 7:12)

**Madvig** - After encouraging the Israelites to make a commitment to the Lord, he told them they would be unable to keep it. There is irony in his statement. His purpose was not to discourage them but to lead them to count the cost and to mean what they said (cf. Luke 14:25–35). Some interpreters, however, take these words literally—the people cannot serve the Lord. They are not in the right state of mind. They are in need of NT grace. The fact is, however, they did serve God faithfully for many years (cf. Josh 24:31). Of course, they were only able to do this by the grace of God: OT grace (**ED: WHICH IS NO DIFFERENT THAT "NT GRACE" IN MY HUMBLE OPINION - THE OT SAINTS NEED THE SPIRIT OF GRACE JUST LIKE WE DO - Heb 10:29b, cf Zech 4:6**). To be God’s people they too must be holy—set apart (cf. “Be holy, because I am holy,” Lev 11:44). Because the Lord “is a jealous God,” he will not tolerate any rival deities or condone apostasy (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 5:9). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Keil** - Joshua is not satisfied with this declaration, but represents to the assembly how difficult it is to serve Jehovah, the holy and jealous God, in order that they may be led seriously to consider, under what kind of obligation they are placing themselves, and may not afterwards thoughtlessly break their vow by idolatry. “Joshua points out the holiness of God, and the necessity that his worship should be most holy, and concludes from this that his service is most difficult.” (Masius.)—“Ye cannot serve Jehovah,” i.e. not in the state of heart in which you are at present. “Ye will not be able from merely human resolutions, and apart from the help of the grace of God, without seriously turning away from all idols, or without true penitence and faith.” (J.H. Michaelis.)

**for** - Term of explanation.

**He is a holy God** - He is holy and those who serve Him must be holy. (Ps 101:6b)

**Richard Phillips** - What Joshua told Israel is also true for us, until we have turned to Christ’s cleansing blood: “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God” (Josh. 24:19). Therefore let us turn to Jesus, whose blood has all the power to cleanse us from our sins. (Hebrews Commentary)

**De Witt S. Clark** - “**Ye cannot serve the Lord.**” It was a staggering admonition. It embodied what theologians have called the doctrine of “moral inability.” The seat of the disorder is in the will. There is the conflict. Till that is established in the choice of holiness it will still be true, as in the case before us, that one can not serve God. “Ye cannot” should still read for many, loath to abandon

practices and ideas and hopes which He condemns, "Ye will not." (Biblical Illustrator)

**John Gill - cannot serve the Lord** - he said not to discourage or deter them from serving the Lord, since it was his principal view, through the whole of this conversation with them, to engage them in it, but to observe to them their own inability and insufficiency of themselves to perform service acceptable to God; and therefore it became them to implore grace and strength from the Lord to assist them in it, and to depend upon that and not to lean to and trust in their own strength; as also to observe to them, that they could not serve him perfectly without any defect and failure in their service, for there is no man that does good and sins not; and therefore when a man has done all he can, he must not depend upon it for his justification before God; or consider it as his justifying righteousness, which was what that people were always prone to; some supply it, "you cannot serve the Lord with your images,"

**John Trapp - Ye cannot serve the Lord** You that are yet unregenerate, and that would fain make a mixture of religions, cannot serve the Lord; for he must be served like himself, that is, truly, that there be no halting; and totally, that there be no halving; he will not take up with a seeming or slubbering service. "Offer it now to thy prince; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." {Mal 1:8}

**Vance Havner** - He must have feared a superficial dedication when he said, "Ye cannot serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:19). At any rate, he committed himself. Whatever else others might do, his mind was made up. (Josh 24:15) (Peace in the Valley)

**Life Application Study Bible** - We are incapable, however, of properly worshiping him because of our rebellion and sins (Josh 24:19)

**John Gill - for he [is] an holy God:** perfectly holy, so that the best of men, and the heat of their services, are impure and unholy before him and will not bear to be compared with him, and therefore by no means to be trusted in; and it requires much grace and spiritual strength to perform any service that may be acceptable to him through Christ. In the Hebrew text it is, "for the Holy Ones [are] he": which may serve to illustrate and confirm the doctrine of the trinity of, persons in the unity of the divine Essence, or of the three divine holy Persons, holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit, as the one God, see Isa 6:3;

**Michael Grant** - Serving the Lord was not like serving other gods: "He is an holy God; he is a jealous God" (v. 19). His holiness meant that those who serve Him must be holy (Lev 19:2). As a jealous God, He would not accommodate any rival for their devotion (Ex 20:4–6). In the New Testament the character of the Lord brings the same demands upon the Christian for exclusive and holy service (James 4:4–5; 1 Pet 1:16).

**Reformation Study Bible** ([see note](#)) - You cannot serve the LORD. This paradoxical statement will all too soon be proved true (Joshua 31 note; 7:1–26 note; 23:12, 13 note; Jdg. 2:7, 10–13; 2 Kin. 17:7–23; Deut. 31:16). It is based on the holiness of God, who cannot be approached casually (Ps. 15:1, 2; Eccl. 5:1, 2). Also, Joshua warns the people because he knows their rebelliousness himself (22:17 and note).

**Nelson Study Bible** - Immediately after Joshua exhorted the Israelites to serve God (Josh 24:14), he **stated you cannot serve the LORD!** This use of exaggeration emphasizes the gravity of the obligation to which the people committed themselves. Theirs was not to be a nominal, superficial faith. Subsequent history shows that Israel's record was poor in this regard. Joshua's challenge is also for Christians. Although salvation is God's free gift through Jesus Christ to those who believe, truly following Christ is the difficult way of the cross (Matt. 16:24; John 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:1–5).

**Dale Ralph Davis** - Joshua's is a shocking refusal. **'You cannot serve Yahweh, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not go on forgiving your rebellion and your sins' (v. 19). If you desert him, he will consume you (v. 20).** Don't lightly mouth your profession of faith, Joshua is saying. Don't you realise the sort of God you are dealing with? He is a holy, jealous God. You don't dare come to him thinking, 'though it makes him sad to see the way we live, he'll always say, "I forgive" '. Yahweh is not a soft, cuddly Santa in the sky who drools over easy decisions during invitation hymns. Joshua seeks to put down that blathering self-confidence that makes emotional commitments rather than shutting its mouth and counting the cost. 'You cannot serve Yahweh.' Neither Israel nor the church could hear a more beneficial word than that. It was precisely when the Jesus bandwagon was going great guns (Luke 14:25) that Jesus emphasised who 'cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26, 27, 33). Rather, one must carefully 'count the cost' (Luke 14:28) before yielding allegiance to Jesus. The church should note this. Too frequently, the Jesus we present is some variety of prepackaged joy, peace, and provision that works twice as fast as aspirin. He is our cellophane Christ. We should not sell Christ like that but warn people about him! Our task is not to bait people into saying, 'I will lay down my life for you' (John 13:37), but to get them (and ourselves) to squirm under his searching, 'Do you love me?' (John 21:15–19). **Too many of us perjure ourselves before a holy Judge as we sing, 'I surrender all', or 'My Jesus, I love thee'.** There are stanzas in some hymns that I dare not sing (**ED: I LOVE THIS STATEMENT - THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN I OMIT A LINE LESS IT BE SUNG HYPOCRITICALLY!**) . One of the healthiest things a Christian can do is to doubt and question his easy expressions of commitment. (**ED: THIS SOUNDS A LOT LIKE PAUL IN 2 Cor 13:5+!**) One of the ordination vows my denomination asks of me is: *Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal or*

*relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer? [I would not touch that with the proverbial ten-foot pole](#). It asks too much of a proud, angry, lustful, covetous man. I affirm it only because there is that clause, **by the grace of God**, in it. Otherwise, I would have to turn away, for it would be too much to promise. Baptismal, membership, and marriage vows should receive the same scrutiny. We must retain Joshua's paradox, must constantly stand between his '**serve Yahweh**' (Joshua 24:14) and his 'you cannot serve Yahweh' (Joshua 24:19). His purpose is not to drive us from Yahweh but to him. Only we must not make our commitment easily, lightly, flippantly, casually, but cautiously and fearfully Joshua 24:21, 24).*

**Douglas Redford** - Joshua's response may seem at first like an effort to discourage the people. But his purpose was to remind them of the seriousness of what they were committing themselves to. They needed to understand clearly some important truths about the Lord. God is holy. He is altogether good, separated from anything that is bad or even questionable. His word to the people was, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Were the people of Israel ready for that? Are we? God is jealous. He will not tolerate a rival in the minds and hearts of his people (Exodus 20:3–6). He wants their total devotion. Were the people of Israel ready for that? Are we?

**He is a jealous God** - He will tolerate no rival gods.

**Matthew Poole** - He is a jealous God; he will not endure a co-rival or partner in his worship; you cannot serve him and idols together, as you will be inclined and tempted to do.

**Keil - a jealous God**, is not merely ζηλωτής, an eager avenger of sin, but ζηλότυπος, one who requires of his people, whom he has married, the unbroken fidelity of marriage (**ED: SEE ISRAEL WIFE OF JEHOVAH**), and punishes most inflexibly any attachment to another God, any departure from him (νῦν); whilst he continues his blessings upon love and fidelity even to distant generations; see Ex. 20:5; Deut. 5:9; and Ex. 34:14; Deut. 4:24, 6:15.

**John Trapp** - For he is a holy God.] And requireth to be sanctified in all those that draw near unto him; it will be worse with them else. {Lev 10:3} Neither profaneness nor formal profession will he endure; but least of all idolatry. **For he is a jealous God** And will not be yoked with idols, neither will he give his glory, which is as his wife, to another. If any cast but a leering look toward it, he shall smart and smoke for so doing.

**He will not forgive your transgression (pesha') or your sins (chattat/chattath)** - This is **hyperbole**. Of course Joshua is not saying God would not forgive sins, but gives a warning against sinning with impunity. There is also in a sense a warning to be careful not to answer affirmatively too quickly for they would be held accountable by God.

**Campbell on He will not forgive** - Joshua did not mean that God was not a God of forgiveness. He meant that God was not to be worshiped or served lightly, and that to forsake Him deliberately to serve idols would be a presumptuous, willful, high-handed sin for which there was no forgiveness under the Law (Nu 15:30). Such sin would result in disaster. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**John Trapp - He will not forgive your transgression** - Unless you forego them: or if he do forgive them, yet he may take vengeance, temporal vengeance, of their inventions; {Ps 99:8} and for that matter their repentance may come too late. {Dt 1:37 2Sa 12:16} All this Joshua speaketh, not to **weaken** but to **waken** their diligence in God's service.

**John Gill - he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins**, even the transgressions and sins of such that forsake the worship and service of him, and fall into idolatry, or who seek for justification by their own services, these are both abominable to him; otherwise he is a God pardoning the iniquity, transgression, and sin, of all those who seek unto him and serve him, confess their sins, and renounce their own righteousness; see Ex 23:21.

**Matthew Poole - He will not forgive your transgressions**; if you who own yourselves for his people and servants, shall wickedly and wilfully transgress his laws by idolatry or other crimes, he will not let this go unpunished in you, as he doth in other nations; therefore consider what you do when you take the Lord for your God; weigh your advantages and inconveniences together; for as if you be sincere and faithful in God's service, you will have admirable benefits by it; so if you be false to your professions, and forsake him whom you have so solemnly avouched to be your God, he will deal more severely with you than with any people in the world.

**Related Resource:**

- [In regards to forgiveness, is there a difference between willful sin and ignorant sin? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Able** (can, prevail, overcome) ([03201](#)) **yakol** means to be able, to have power, to prevail, meaning "can" (can do something). Baker "It indicates to be able to endure something, to be capable, to have the ability or power to do something: of God's ability (Num. 14:16; 2 Chr. 32:13, 15; Jer. 44:22) or a person's ability (Gen. 13:16); it is used of God not being able to stand Israel's false worship any longer (Isa. 1:13); not being able to endure a prideful, arrogant person (Ps. 101:5). It takes on the meaning of being incapable of



maintaining an attitude or state of condition (Hos. 8:5); or indicates the ability to cause something to happen, as when Balak hoped he would be able to defeat Israel and drive them out of the land (Nu 22:6, 11). It indicates the ability to render or not to render (if negated) judgment about an issue (Gen. 24:50). It may take on the inference of daring to do something, e.g., eating in a restricted area, which, when negated, means people dare not or are not allowed to eat (Dt. 12:17). It indicates being an overcomer, a victor, to prevail over something or someone (Gen. 30:8); Rachel prevailed (yāqal) over her sister. (See also Ps. 13:4; Isa. 16:12). In an intellectual discussion, it means to grasp or understand something (Job 31:23; Ps. 139:6), to attain a mastery of it. ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament](#))

Uses of **yakol** in Joshua - Jos. 7:12; Jos. 7:13; Jos. 9:19; Jos. 15:63 = "the sons of Judah **could** not drive them out"; Jos. 17:12 = "But the sons of Manasseh **could** not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land."; Josh 24:19

**Gilbrant** - Cognates of this verb occur in all branches of Semitic. Its most common meanings are "to be able," "to succeed" and "to prevail," although other senses occur rarely, such as "to be allowed," "to be superior," "to be victorious over," "to grasp," "to bear" and "to endure." The word occurs nearly 200 times in the OT, always in the Qal stem. It is usually followed by an infinitive, either with the preposition *le* (HED #3937) to complete the verbal idea (122 times) or without *le* (27 times). When it appears with an infinitive only implied, the meaning is always negative, as in Gen. 29:8, "We cannot" (go and feed them). In fact, it is used with a negative about 85 percent of the time; the text speaks more often about what people are not able to do. **The most common usage of the word is "to be able," usually in regard to humans and their lack of ability.** For instance, Joseph was unable to control his emotions (Gen. 45:1). Other people were unable to control circumstances, as in the case of Moses' mother and her inability to hide the baby (Exo. 2:3; cf. also Gen. 13:6; Exo. 7:21). Often, a person cannot perform some act because one simply does not have the capacity or ability required to complete it. The Egyptian magicians could not duplicate the miracles of Moses after a certain point (Exo. 9:11). The twelve tribes were unable to finish driving out the remaining Canaanite pockets of resistance (Josh. 15:63; 17:12; Judg. 2:14). A blind man cannot see (Gen. 48:10; 1 Sam. 4:15), nor can one see in the dark (1 Sam. 3:2). Moses could not "go in and out" any more because of his advanced age (Deut. 31:2). The nation of Israel was to grow so populous that they would not be able to be counted (Gen. 13:16). The king of Assyria boasted that no one could be rescued from his power (2 Ki. 18:29). The prophets described the wicked as being like a sea that cannot rest (Isa. 57:20; Jer. 49:23). Ecclesiastes stresses the powerlessness of humanity and our inability to find meaning in life (Ecc. 6:10; 7:13; 8:17). **Sometimes**, a human can do nothing because one is powerless to oppose the might of God. Laban and Bethuel could not refuse to send their daughter to become Isaac's bride, because God had clearly made his will known (Gen. 24:50). David could not make his dead child return to life (2 Sam. 12:23). Job could not stand up before the presence of God (Job 31:23). Balaam could not speak in opposition to the Lord (Num. 22:18, 37f). When God moves to bring judgment, gold cannot rescue anyone from his hand (Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18). **In some situations**, a person can do nothing because one's action is blocked by a prohibition from God. The regulations in Deuteronomy are stated in legal format, so that the word takes on the legal sense "be permitted by law." Israelites were not allowed to choose a foreigner as king (Deut. 17:15). A man with two wives could not discriminate harshly against the sons of the least-loved wife (Deut. 21:16). Anyone who found property lost by a neighbor could not avoid the duty to return it (22:19, 29). **Rules for worship** also placed limitations on the people of God. In Exo. 19:23, the Israelites were not allowed to approach Mount Sinai. The Passover sacrifice could not be killed within any of the towns of the land (Deut. 16:5). Any person who was ceremonially unclean could not participate in the Passover (Num. 9:6). **Sometimes** it was the presence or glory of God that made something impossible. Joshua 24:19 warned that the people could not serve Yahweh because of his holiness. Moses could not view God's face in Exo. 33:20. And the glory of the Lord was so overpowering that Moses could not enter the Tabernacle (Exo. 40:35), nor could the priests, under Solomon, enter the Temple (1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Chr. 5:14). **This verb is used with God as the subject occasionally.** Although it would seem appropriate to describe the power of the Lord, it actually appears most often in negative expressions. In Num. 14:16 and Deut. 9:28, Moses raises the possibility that God's reputation might be marred if He were to destroy the Israelites in the wilderness, since the pagan nations might assume that He was not able to bring them safely into Canaan. God is described as being too pure to look at sin (Jer. 44:22; Hab. 1:13). In Ps. 78:19, skeptics mock at God's ability to provide for his people. And in 2 Chr. 32:14, the Assyrians scoff at the idea that Yahweh or any other god could rescue Jerusalem from destruction. Of course, equating the Lord with other gods led to the destruction of the besieging Assyrian army. **Only three passages describe God's positive ability.** In Job 42:2, God can do all things, and no purpose of his can be thwarted. Jeremiah 20:7 speaks of God's power prevailing over the prophet, and Jer. 18:6 compares the Lord to a potter, who can do whatever he wishes with his clay. **When the word is used without an infinitive, it carries additional meanings.** It can mean "bear" or "endure." For instance, God cannot endure Israel's "iniquity and solemn assembly" (Isa. 1:13) or those who are haughty and arrogant (Ps. 101:5). **A more frequent use without an infinitive is in the setting of a battle or wrestling match, where it means "to overcome" or "to be superior."** This meaning is found in Goliath's boastful challenge (1 Sam. 17:9) and Jacob's wrestling with the angel in Gen. 32:26. It occurs with this sense in Gen. 30:8; Num. 13:30; Est. 6:13; Pss. 13:4; 21:11; 129:2; Isa. 16:12; Jer. 1:19; 20:7; 20:10f; 38:22; Hos. 12:4 and Obad. 7. ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

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## Vance Havner - Revival at Shechem

IN THE LAST chapter of Joshua, Israel's great leader gathers the people together for a farewell message and a call to revival. They are now in the promised land, but living in that perilous state known as peace without victory. They have not driven out the inhabitants of the land and now they are in danger of being engulfed by the idolatry around them. They had grown tired of fighting and had settled for peaceful coexistence, but it did not work then, any more than it works today with Communism. There is no substitute for victory. There is only the alternative: defeat.

They ensnare their children's children  
Who make compromise with sin.

Joshua began his message with a rundown of past blessings; then he called upon the people to renounce their idols and serve the Lord—a negative and positive exhortation. He knew the weakness of Israel. Abraham had been called out of idolatry, and the seeds of that evil lay dormant ready to spring into weeds of outright apostasy. The people still possessed household images such as Rachel stole from Laban. He remembered how even at Sinai they had promised to serve God, only to worship a golden calf six weeks later. So deeply ingrained was this evil propensity that he met it head on.

Any genuine revival must begin with the renouncing of strange gods. There is as much idolatry in our churches as there was in Israel. The love of money (1 Timothy 6:10), our lower natures (Philippians 3:17-21). pleasure (2 Timothy 3:4), our own selves (2 Timothy 3:2); all these are false gods we serve today. John's First Epistle closes with the words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Real revival begin when Christians pray:

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;  
I want Thee forever to live in my soul,  
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;  
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Charles G. Finney (ED: I DO NOT LIKE FINNEY FOR HE DENIED THE SINFUL NATURE OF MAN! - SEE [Who was Charles Finney? | GotQuestions.org](#))** says that revival is "a new beginning of obedience to God" (**ED: THIS CERTAINLY SOUNDS GOOD BUT SEE FINNEY'S BELIEFS!**) and that obedience is both negative and positive, renouncing idols and saying with Joshua: "... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Somebody must start a revival; Joshua began with himself and so should every pastor. Our Lord's letters to the churches in Asia, calling for repentance and revival, were addressed to the angel—the pastor of the church.

The people responded, "**God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods.... therefore will we also serve the Lord for he is our God**" (Josh 24:16, 18). It sounded good, but Joshua sensed superficiality and unreality in it. Their dedication was too glib and shallow.

He answered, "**Ye cannot serve the Lord**" (Josh 24:19). Instead of encouraging their vows of allegiance, he threw cold water on them. What strange procedure is this? Should he not have nourished such weak affirmations, in the hope that they would grow stronger? It is Scriptural to challenge cheap dedication.

**Maclaren** says:

"The best way to deepen and confirm good resolution **too swiftly formed** is to state very plainly the **difficulty of keeping them.**"

I have been much exercised about this matter in my own ministry. I have seen crowds promise God their full devotions on a Sunday night in special meetings, only to find them missing by Friday night's ball game! **Such people do not mean business.** They are like these Israelites of old whom we are now studying, and of whom the Psalmist wrote:

"Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant" (Psalm 78:36-37). (NASB = "But they deceived Him with their mouth and lied to Him with their tongue. 37 For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.")

**We do such people a great wrong when we accept superficial dedication, for it confirms them in their hypocrisy and leads them to mistake the false for the real, deceiving themselves. It would be better if they made no profession at all.**

**We are afraid to take Joshua's position today for fear of scaring away prospective church members.**

It was exactly the attitude of our Lord in this matter. He had something to say about superficial dedications. He spoke of the son who said, "I go, Sir," and went not. He spoke of those who receive the word with joy, but have no roots in themselves. He answered three



prospective disciples with his stern word about the foxes and the birds, letting the dead bury their dead, and looking back after putting one's hand to the plow. He sobered the enthusiasm of a multitude with three "cannot's" of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33+). He let the rich young ruler go away sorrowful rather than be a cheap follower.

We suffer today from "cheap grace." [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) says that after Luther,

**Germany became Christian and Lutheran, but at the cost of true discipleship.**

**Our Lord does not cast out those who come to Him, but they must mean business; after coming to Him, they must come after Him.**

Coming to Him we receive rest, but as we learn of Him we find rest. It is easy to **BECOME** a Christian, for the gift of God is eternal life; in another sense it is difficult to **BE** a Christian, because it costs us ourselves—all we are and have. Our Lord said that if we come **TO** Him but do not come **AFTER** Him, we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:26, 27+).

Grace is God's unmerited favor but that grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. (Titus 2:12+)

**Joshua reminded the people that God is a holy and jealous God.**

We are not going to have a revival until people see God in His **holiness**—a God Who will not look upon sin, and a **jealous** God who will not share His throne in our hearts with another. **Until we face up to that, we cannot serve the Lord.**

There was another revival at this same Shechem long before the days of Joshua (cf Ge 35:2 =**Henry Morris** comments - "His family and servants still had some of the pagan images and charms they had brought from Syria, not to mention the spoils of Shechem. These spoils had to be buried before they could meet God at Bethel. Like many modern believers, they tried to retain some of the accouterments of ungodliness from which they had been delivered."). Jacob had wandered from Bethel to Shechem where Dinah, his daughter, got into trouble. His sons took vengeance on the Shechemites and Jacob was sore distressed. Then God commanded him to return to Bethel, and dwell there and make an altar unto the Lord. We live at Shechem today, the place of broken vows, broken homes and broken hearts; we need to return to Bethel. Jacob obeyed promptly, ordered his household to put away their strange gods, change their garments, and return to the place of blessing. Like Joshua, as for him and his house he would serve the Lord. Like Joshua, he was the head of the house. He did not ask his household whether or not they wanted to go, nor was he afraid of frustrating Junior; he simply announced that they were returning to Bethel. More fathers like that in America today would answer a good many problems of broken homes and wayward youngsters.

**The family obeyed, giving up their strange gods and earrings which Jacob buried under an oak.** If American churches followed a similar procedure, we would fill all the national forests in the country with surrendered idols! Paul had a book burning at Ephesus, and Savonarola witnessed a similar sight in Florence. There was considerable joking sometime ago, when members of a certain sect made a bonfire of worldly trinkets: tobacco, evil books, and other miscellaneous items not consistent with godly living. It is no laughing matter. We might well check our own premises, and see what we have to contribute to a holy bonfire.

**We need also to change our garments.** There are a few like those saints in Sardis who have not defiled their garments (Rev 3:4), but too many wear the filthy rags of self-righteousness, the spotted garments of worldliness, or the gray garments of compromise. The prodigal was received by the father just as he was, but he had to put on a new robe for fellowship, and so must we.

We read that Jacob and his company journeyed, and the terror of the Lord accompanied them. God's presence and power are with the man who is headed for Bethel—who has decided that he and his house will serve the Lord. When they arrived at Bethel, Jacob renamed it "El-beth-el": the God of the house of God. God had become more important than any place.

Once earthly joy I craved;  
Sought peace and rest;  
Now Thee alone I seek,  
Give what is best.

**This is true revival, deep and definite. We are living at Shechem. It is not enough to make cheap dedication. Our God is holy and jealous. Let us confess, and forsake sin. Let us give up our strange gods, and change our garments. Let us be on our way in the path of obedience, and the terror of the Lord will attend us.**

**ED: DO YOU WANT REVIVAL? DO YOU REALLY WANT IT? THEN PRAY AND THEN OBEY AS THE WORD AND SPIRIT ENABLE YOU...**

My soul cleaves to the dust;  
**Revive** me according to Your word.

Psalm 119:25

Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,  
And **revive** me in Your ways.

Psalm 119:37

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### Theodore Epp The People's Choice

The people were decided and definite in their reaction to Joshua's admonition. They responded with a definite decision to follow the Lord.

**Warning the people that they were making no light decision**, Joshua said to them, "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" (Josh. 24:19).

They needed this reminder. God is holy and cannot coexist with sin. He is a jealous God and will not take a secondary place. We cannot serve God and live in sin.

The Israelites assured Joshua that they would obey the Lord, for they said (Josh. 24:21,22), "Nay; but we will serve the Lord. 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."

There was even a covenant made, and Joshua took a great stone and placed it under an oak as a witness of the people's intention to serve God.

The generation that made the promise was true to its word. We learn in Joshua 24:31: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel."

This was a good beginning, and what a different history we would have had if each succeeding generation of Israelites had reached the same decision and stayed with it.

"For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there few that find it" (see note Matthew 7:14).

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### A B Simpson - SELF-CONFIDENCE

In the closing chapter of the Book of Joshua we read, that when that great leader had gathered the people together at Shechem, and had given them his parting charges, they answered with unreserved assurance, "We will serve the Lord, for He is our God," and Joshua answered them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:19).

Doubtless what Joshua meant was they could not in their self-confident strength do anything but fail and sin. But they had not learned the lesson, and confident in their self-sufficiency they did fail and sink into the lowest depth of sin and misery, and the triumphs of Jericho, Bethhoron, Hebron and Gibeon ended in the tears of Bochim, and the captivity of their foes.

Thank God there is an antipodes to Bochim. It is that other place of which the inspired prophet has said, "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah" (Isa. 62:4). Bochim is the place of weeping; Beulah is the place of love and joy. Bochim means the failure of our strength; Beulah means married unto Him, and kept by His power from stumbling and from failure.

Let us go to Bochim and learn our helplessness, and then let us go forth to Beulah, and leaning upon His love and strength go forward, singing: "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus"; "I can do all things through Christ, who is my Strength."

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### The Great Probing By Oswald Chambers

Ye cannot serve the Lord. — Joshua 24:19

Have you the slightest reliance on anything other than God? Is there a remnant of reliance left on any natural virtue, any set of circumstances? Are you relying on yourself in any particular in this new proposition which God has put before you? That is what the probing means. It is quite true to say — "I cannot live a holy life"; but you can decide to let Jesus Christ make you holy (ED: BUT EVEN HERE IT IS THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES YOU THIS DESIRE - Phil 2:13NLT+). **"Ye cannot serve the Lord God"** — but you can put yourself in the place where God's Almighty power will come through you. Are you sufficiently right with God to expect Him to manifest His wonderful life in you?

“Nay, but we will serve the Lord.” It is not an impulse, but a deliberate commitment (ED: ENABLED BY THE SPIRIT). You say — “But God can never have called me to this, I am too unworthy, it can’t mean me.” It does mean you, and the weaker and feebler you are, the better (cf James 4:6+) The one who has something to trust in is the last one to come anywhere near saying — “I will serve the Lord.” (cf Pr 3:5-6)

We say — “If I really *could* believe!” The point is — If I really *will* believe. No wonder Jesus Christ lays such emphasis on the sin of unbelief. “And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” If we really believed that God meant what He said — what should we be like! Dare I really let God be to me all that He says He will be?

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### The difficulty of serving God

I. SOME OF THEIR DIFFICULTY WOULD BE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF GOD. “He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins” so as to fail to punish them. “He will turn, and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good.”

1. If Jehovah is to be served at all, He must be served alone. There can be no possible rivalry between Him and any other claimants to be gods. We may think of three things that are ever pressing in our day to be gods with God--the luxury of wealth; self-seeking pleasure; mere mind knowledge.

2. If God is served at all He must be served in righteousness. God will search through and through every form of service offered to Him, and it must be sincere, it must be “clean every whit,” or it cannot be acceptable to Him. The service of a holy God must be the service of intention and resolve, not of mere accident. It should be thought about, resolved upon, prayed about, made the most earnest thing in the whole life.

II. SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES WERE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF ISRAEL. “**Ye cannot.**” “Ye are too frail. Ye are too much exposed to the power of temptation. Ye have too serious inclinations to evil. You do not know yourselves, or you would not promise too readily. You do not fully estimate the influences of the past, or you would fear for your future.” They who know themselves learn to pray, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall have respect unto Thy commandments.” (The Weekly Pulpit.)

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**Matthew Poole** - Ver. 19. Ye cannot serve the Lord: he speaks not of an absolute impossibility, (for then both his resolution to serve God himself, and his exhortation to them to do so, had been vain and ridiculous,) but of a moral impossibility, or a very great difficulty, which he allegeth not to discourage them from God’s service, which is his great design to engage them in; but only to make them more considerate and cautious in obliging themselves, and more circumspect and resolved in answering their obligations. The meaning is, God’s service is not, as you seem to fancy, a slight and easy thing, as soon done as said; but it is a work of great difficulty, and requires great care, and courage, and resolution; and when I consider the infinite purity of God, that he will not be mocked or abused; and withal your great and often manifested proneness to superstition and idolatry, even during the life of Moses, and in some of you whilst I live, and whilst the obligations which God hath laid upon you in this land are fresh in remembrance; I cannot but fear that after my decease you will think the service of God too hard and burdensome for you, and therefore will cast it off, and revolt from him, if you do not double your watch, and carefully avoid all occasions of idolatry, which I fear you will not do, but I do hereby exhort you to do.

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**Moral inability** - Their inability was wholly of the moral kind. They could not do it because they were not disposed to do it, just as it is said of Joseph’s brethren (Gen 37:4) that they “could not speak peaceably unto him,” so strong was their personal dislike to him. But an inability arising from this source was obviously inexcusable, on the same grounds that a drunkard’s inability to master his propensity for strong drink is inexcusable. In like manner the “cannot” of the impenitent sinner, in regard to the performance of his duty, is equally inexcusable. (George Bush.)

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### Entire change needed

A man deeply exercised about his soul was conversing with a friend on the subject, when the friend said, “Come at once to Jesus, for He will take away all your sins from your back.” “Yes, I am aware of that”; said the other; “but what about my back? “I find I have not only sins to take away, but there is myself; what is to be done with that? And there is not only my back, but hands and feet, and head and heart are such a mass of iniquity that it’s myself I want to get rid of before I can get peace. (British Evangelist.)

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### Discouragement useful

Discouragements, rightly put, encourage. The best way to deepen and confirm good resolutions which have been too swiftly and inconsiderately formed is to state very plainly all the difficulty of keeping them. The hand that seems to repel often most powerfully

attracts. There is no better way of turning a somewhat careless “we will” into a persistent “nay, but we will,” than to interpose a “ye cannot.” Many a boy has been made a sailor by the stories of hardships which his parents have meant as dissuasives. Joshua here is doing exactly what Jesus Christ did often. He refused glib vows because He desired whole hearts. “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest!” was answered by no recognition of the speaker’s enthusiasm, and by no word of pleasure or invitation, but by the apparently cold repulse: “Foxes have holes, birds of the air roosting-places; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. That is what you are offering to share. Do you stand to your words?” He will have no soldiers enlisted under false pretences. They shall know the full difficulties and trials which they must meet; and if, knowing these, they still are willing to take His yoke upon them, then how exuberant and warm the welcome which He gives 1 There is a real danger that this side of the evangelist’s work should be overlooked in the earnestness with which the other side is done. (A. Maclaren, D. D.)

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### Reasons why man will not serve God

Dr. Tucker, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, said: “In our journey we came to the country of Taita. The people of Taita are not a very interesting people, and are adverse to Christianity. I visited a chief there, and asked him why they were so unwilling for Christian people to settle in their midst, and I said, ‘If I sent you a couple of missionaries would you not be glad to have them?’ ‘No.’ ‘Why?’ I asked. The chief replied, ‘If they come and settle among us they tell us that stealing cattle and fighting are not right.’ ‘Yes!’ I replied. ‘**Well, that would never do; for we are very fond of stealing cattle, and also of fighting.**’ It was a most straightforward reason, and I think if many of the heathen at home would be as honest in giving the reasons why they will not come to Christ they would say much the same. ‘If I came to Christ I should require to quit getting drunk, and I am very fond of getting drunk,’” &c.

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### F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Joshua 24:19 Ye cannot serve the Lord.

It seemed as though Joshua sought to damp down the enthusiasm of the people. They were all on fire to serve, but he repressed their ardor, crying, “Back, back! This is no place for you.” We are reminded of a precise analogy in the Gospels, where our Savior said to Peter and the rest, “Ye cannot follow Me now” (John 13:31–38). Why this Divine reluctance?

The answer is clear, when we consider the sequel in each case. In the one, we have only to turn a page in our Bibles, to come on all the disobedience, anarchy, and backsliding of the Book of Judges (Jdg 21:25); in the other we see that Peter denied and the rest forsook Him. How obviously it was shown that there was a moral incompatibility between their **self-confident assertions** and **the** (ED: SPIRIT ENABLED) **service of the Holy God**. But this incompatibility was present to the Spirit’s discernment when these strong asseverations were made, first by the Israelites, and secondly by the Apostles.

**So it becomes us to speak very reverently and leniently of our ability to obey. We are probably over-estimating our powers.** (cf Zech 4:6) Created might wanes and fails beneath the searching demands of the Holy One. Perpetual failure has weakened us; for when once a door has been broken through a wall, that spot is always ways weaker. A fallen ancestry has predisposed us to fail. To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not (Ro 7:16, 19, 20, 21+ cf Mt 26:41+). No one can look thoughtfully into the workings of his own nature without realizing the terrible paralysis which has befallen it. We need then that God should counteract our fickleness by upholding us with **His steadfast, or constant, Spirit** (Psalm 51:10+).

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**Rod Mattoon** - Joshua responds by telling the people, “You cannot serve the Lord.” He detected insincerity and lightness in their response. It is easy to promise obedience and it’s difficult to perform it and be persistent.

Jeremiah 17:9—The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?: The nation promised to serve the Lord but soon went astray.

Judges 2:10-12—And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. [11] And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: [12] And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

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### J J Knapp - Ye Cannot! Joshua 24:19

At the large national assembly, we were confronted with yesterday, Joshua stood before the youthful nation as an old and sober minded man. With Caleb he was the only one that remained of the Israel that had been delivered from Egypt. All the others had fallen in the desert, even Moses and Aaron had not been allowed to enter the land of rest. When he placed the nation before the choice, whom they would serve in the future, the God of Israel or the gods of the Amorites in whose land they lived, they had not hesitated for a moment, but had exclaimed with the passion of the youthful years: “**God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt!**” A glorious promise when she is found in the mouth of the youth. How depressing may it seem to us at first instance, that the aged Joshua

dampened this enthusiasm with the sobering word: **“Ye cannot,”—“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.”**

Behold the old age with its ripened life’s experience and its profound knowledge of the human heart. A man like Joshua knew that to remain faithful to the service of the Lord amidst all temptations and oppressions required more spiritual strength than the people in its overconfidence expected. So it was not to counsel them from keeping the Lord’s service, but **to keep them from an overestimation of their own strength**, that he fatherly admonished them with the word that witnessed great seriousness of life: **“Ye cannot!”**

This word also has something to say to our youth. Many enter in their younger years the arena of life clutching the unfolded banner of the cross in the tight fist, and with a promise of eternal faithfulness in the heart. Often it is seen that their lives later become a defamation of the Name of the Lord, **because they depended vainly upon their own strength**, just like the history of Israel that continued in the Book of Judges, became nothing else but a succession of miserable failures. **It is better, much better, to be convinced of our own inability.** When the Lord Jesus Christ calls unto us His “Follow thou me”,—do come, but whisper at the same time in the innermost of the heart: **“We cannot”**. When the Lord invites us to confess His Name in the midst of the world,—do speak, but with the intimate thought: **“We cannot”**.

**Let us think little of ourselves.**

**Let us have a deep sense of our own inability.**

**Let us in this way look up in dependency to Him, whose strength is fulfilled in weakness—  
that is the way to remain faithful unto death.**

(With Loins Girded)

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#### **Spurgeon’s Notes on Joshua 24:19 - Joshua 24:19 “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord.”**

In answer to Joshua’s challenge, the people had said, **“We will serve the Lord, for he is our God”** But Joshua knew them too well to trust them, and reminded them that they were undertaking what they could not perform. They did not believe him, but cried, **“Nay, but we will serve the Lord”**; but their after history proved the truth of Joshua’s warning.

**God’s word knows us better than we know ourselves.**

God’s omniscience sees each part of our being as an anatomist sees the various portions of the body, and he therefore knows our moral and spiritual nature most thoroughly. A watchmaker is the best judge of a watch; and he who made man has the best knowledge of his condition and capacity. Let us dwell upon his verdict as to human ability.

#### **I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRUTH THAT UNRENEWED MEN CANNOT SERVE GOD.**

It is not a physical but a moral inability, and this is not in their nature, but in their fallen nature; not of God, but of sin. It may be said that they could serve God if they liked; but in that **“if”** lies the hinge of the whole question. Man’s inability lies in the want of moral power so to wish and will as actually to perform. This leaves him with undiminished responsibility; for he ought to be able to serve God, and his inability is his fault. Jer. 13:23.

- 1. The nature of God renders perfect service impossible to depraved men.** “Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God, he is a jealous God.” See context of Joshua 24:19.
- 2. The best they could render as unrenewed men would lack heart and intent, and therefore must be unacceptable.** Without love and faith men cannot please God. What are the prayers, alms, and worshippings of a Christless soul? Isa 1:15.
- 3. The law of God is perfect, comprehensive, spiritual, far-reaching: who can hope to fulfil it?** If a look may commit adultery, who shall in all points keep the law? Matt. 5:28.
- 4. The carnal mind is inclined to self-will, self-seeking, lust, enmity, pride, and all other evils.** “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Ro 8:7.
- 5. Let men try to be perfectly obedient.** They will not try it. They argue for their ability, but they are loth enough to exert it.

#### **II. THE DISCOURAGEMENT WHICH ARISES FROM THIS TRUTH.**

It is alleged that this will drive men to despair, and our reply is that the kind of despair to which it drives men is most desirable and salutary.

### **1 It discourages men from an impossible task.**

They might as well hope to invent perpetual motion as to present a perfect obedience of their own, having already sinned. If a man should try to hold up a ladder with his own hand, and at the same time climb to the top of it, he would have less difficulty than in causing his evil nature to attain to holiness.

### **2. It discourages from a ruinous course.**

Self-righteousness is a deadly thing; it is a proud refusal of mercy, and a rebellion against grace. Self-confidence of any sort is the enemy of the Saviour.

### **3. It discourages reliance upon ceremonies or any other outward religiousness, by assuring men that these cannot suffice.**

### **4. It discourages from every other way of self-salvation, and thus shuts men up to faith in the Lord Jesus.** Nothing better can befall them. Gal. 2:22, 23.

## **III. THE NECESSITIES OF WHICH WE ARE REMINDED BY THIS TRUTH.**

Unregenerate men, before you can serve God you need,—

- A new nature, which only the Spirit of God can create in you: the old man cannot serve the Lord. An impure fountain must pour out foul streams. The tree must be made good, or the fruit will not be good.
- **Reconciliation.** How shall an enemy serve his king? There must be forgiveness, friendship, mutual delight. God and you must be made friends through the Mediator, or else you cannot be the servant of God.
- **Acceptance.** Till you are accepted, your service cannot please God. Only a perfect righteousness can make you accepted of a holy and jealous God; and none but Jesus can give you a complete justification.
- **Continued aid.** This you must have to keep you in the way when once you are in it. 1 Sa 2:9.; Jude 24–25.

If you cannot serve God as you are, yet trust him as he manifests himself in Christ Jesus; and do this just as you are.

This will enable you to serve him on better principles.

This change of your nature will be effected by the Holy Spirit, who will come and dwell in you.

This will fit you for heaven, where “his servants shall serve him.”

## **STRIKING PIECES**

No wasp will make honey; before it will do that it must be transformed into a bee. A sow will not sit up to wash its face like the cat before the fire; neither will a debauched person take delight in holiness. No devil could praise the Lord as angels do, and no unregenerate man can offer acceptable service as the saints do.

Their inability was wholly of the moral kind. They could not do it because they were not disposed to do it, just as it is said of Joseph’s brethren (Gen. 37:4) that they “could not speak peaceably unto him,” so strong was their personal dislike to him.... But an inability arising from this source was obviously inexcusable, on the same grounds that a drunkard’s inability to master his propensity for strong drink is inexcusable. In like manner, the “cannot” of the impenitent sinner, in regard to the performance of his duty, is equally inexcusable.—George Bush, in Notes on Joshua.

The existence of sin within us entails on us certain consequences which we have no more power to evade than the idiot has power to change his look of idiocy; or the palsied hand has power to free itself from its torpor.—B. W. Newton.

“A little girl when reprov’d by her mother for some fault, and told that she should teach her little brothers to do right, replied, ‘How can I do right when there is no right in me?’ Did not Paul make the same confession?” Ro. 7:18.

“Man cannot be saved by perfect obedience, for he cannot render it; he cannot be saved by imperfect obedience, for God will not accept it.”

A man deeply exercised about his soul was conversing with a friend on the subject, when the friend said, “Come at once to Jesus, for he will take away all your sins from your back.” “Yes, I am aware of that”; said the other: “but what about my back?” I find I have not only sins to take away, but there is myself; what is to be done with that? And there is not only my back, but hands and feet, and head and heart are such a mass of iniquity that it’s myself I want to get rid of before I can get peace.—British Evangelist.

It is possible I may do an occasional service for one whose servant I am not, but it were mean that a great person should be served

only by the servants of another lord.—John Howe.

**“Run, run, and work, the law commands,  
But gives me neither feet nor hands;  
But sweeter sounds the Gospel brings,  
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.”**

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**You will not be able to serve (abad) the LORD.** It cannot be supposed for a moment that Joshua intended to deter the people from the service of God by representing it as impracticable or dangerous. On the contrary, his design is to enlist them more sincerely and steadfastly in it, but his knowledge of the weakness and corruption of our fallen nature, prompted him to do this in a manner that savors of discouragement and repulsiveness. Finding them now animated by a glowing zeal, forward and abundant in their professions, and unconsciously prone to trust to their own strength, Joshua, in these words, designs to administer a wholesome check to their ardor, by setting impressively before them the holy and sin-avenging character of the God with whom they had to do, and the fearful consequences of disobedience and apostasy. This would beat them off from that overweening self-confidence which they were so prone to indulge. It would convince them that it was no light and easy matter to persevere in the strict observance of the divine precepts, and thus they would be more cautious, circumspect, and humble in their professions, and go forward in their walk with more awe upon their spirits, and a more trembling sense of their dependence on a higher power than their own. This Joshua well knew was the only frame of mind which could be trusted to for permanent and happy results, and he therefore aims to have their present lively zeal based upon the only foundation that would ensure its continuance.

He would have them count the cost of the engagements into which they proposed to enter, and be fully aware of the temptations, tribulations, conflicts and self-denials which they would involve; and above all would have their inmost souls pervaded by a deep and awful reverence of God, the essential principle of all true religion. In like manner, it deserves very serious deliberation whether there is not danger of representing the sincere service of God as a matter of very little difficulty, provided only there be evidence of a present vigorous resolution, and whether it be not better in such cases wisely to repress, chasten, and even dampen the warmth of present zeal by considerations like those which Joshua now pressed upon the children of Israel. The same infallible authority which assures us that the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden light, assures us also that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, that leads to life, and that there is need of striving as well as seeking to enter in. Certain it is, that great wisdom is requisite in every spiritual guide in digging deep and laying the foundations sure of a life of consistent, uniform, and devoted piety. Nor are we of opinion that the policy of such eminent servants of God, as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Peter, and Paul, will ever be out of date in the church. The more the sinner despairs of his own sufficiency, the better security will he give for his ultimate stability and perseverance in the faith.

**He is an holy God.** Heb. **אלהים קדשים** *elohim kedoshim*, he is holy Gods; the adjective being plural as well as the substantive. The expression is remarkable and contrary to usual analogy, but whether carrying with it any special implication in regard to the divine nature, it is perhaps impossible to say. We imagine, on the whole, that to a Hebrew ear the phrase would merely convey the idea of more emphasis, solemnity, and awfulness in respect to the attribute here affirmed of Jehovah.

**He is a jealous God.** As he has no equal, so neither can he suffer a rival. To pay to idols that worship which he alone deserves, or even to associate them with the homage which is paid to him, is to contest with him, to take from a part of that perfect holiness which constitutes his glory, and is what the Scriptures call profaning his holy name.

**Will not forgive.** Or, Heb. **לא יסא** *lo yissâ*, will not bear, will not tolerate. The meaning is, not that God was implacable, or that he would not show mercy to the penitent, however great their sins, but that they could not offend against him with impunity, that he would certainly punish their transgressions. However it might be with others, they would be sure to be visited for their iniquities.

**Utley** - **“He will not forgive your transgressions and sins”** Covenant obedience is crucial. God is faithful, but the covenant is conditional. Sin has consequences! YHWH will not overlook rebellion (cf. Ex 23:21). This is the problem of the first covenant—fallen human inability to maintain fellowship with a holy God.

**Joshua 24:20 "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you."**

KJV Joshua 24:20 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.

NET Joshua 24:20 If you abandon the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will turn against you; he will bring



disaster on you and destroy you, though he once treated you well."

BGT Joshua 24:20 ν κα ν γκαταλ πητε κ ριον κα λατρε σητε θεο ς τ ροις κα πελθ ν κακ σει μ ς κα ξαναλ σει μ ς νθ ν ε πο ησεν μ ς

NLT Joshua 24:20 If you abandon the LORD and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you."

ESV Joshua 24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

NIV Joshua 24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

- **He will turn:** Jos 23:12-15 1Ch 28:9 2Ch 15:2 Ezr 8:22 Isa 1:28 63:10 65:11,12 Jer 17:13 Eze 18:24 Ac 7:42 Heb 10:26,27,38
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Judges 2:10-12+ All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, 12 and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

## IDOLATRY WOULD BE PUNISHED

**If** - This introduces a conditional statement which is a strong warning from Joshua to the people.

**You forsake** (abandon - ['azab](#); Lxx - [egkataleipo](#)) **the LORD and serve** ([abad](#), NET - "worship") **foreign gods** - This "if/then" clause introduces the conditional nature of the covenant. Joshua is challenging them in light of their declaration in Josh 24:16 "Far be it from us that we should **forsake** the LORD to serve other gods." And again in Joshua 24:19 they say **'NO'** they won't forsake Yahweh. Sadly this is exactly what the generation after Joshua proceeded to do (see **Related Passages** above).

**Then** - This introduces the clear conclusion/consequence of forsaking.

**He will turn and do you harm and consume** ([kalah](#)) **you after He has done good to you** - This is a strong warning of the danger of deserting Yahweh for idols. Disobedience would bring harm and they would be removed from the promised land.

**Matthew Poole** - **He will turn**, i.e. he will alter his course and the manner of his dealing with you, and will be as severe as ever he was kind and gracious. **Consume you, after that he hath done you good**; he will repent of all his former kindness, and his goodness abused will be turned into fury.

**Utley** - **"if"** The "if" shows the conditional nature of YHWH's covenant and promises to Israel (e.g., Deut. 28:1–2, 15). All of YHWH's blessings of Deuteronomy 27–28, as well as His land promises, are conditioned on a faithful, obedient, believing Israel. This is true of the Old Testament and the eschaton!

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**Forsake** (leave) ([05800](#)) ['azab](#) basically means to depart from something -- to leave, to forsake (48x), to leave (26x; "left" 22x), to loose, to depart, to abandon. Things that can left behind or forsaken include persons (Ge 44:22; Nu 10:30; Ru 1:16; 2Ki4:30), people who should left behind (Ge 2:24); places (2Ki 8:6; Jer 18:14; 25:38) and objects (Ge 39:12,13; 50:8; Ex 9:21). Men can forsake God (apostatize) (Dt 28:20, 31:16, Jer 1:16), can abandon qualities of virtue (1Ki 12:8, 2Chr 10:8, 13), the way (of righteousness) (Pr 15:10), instruction/wisdom (Pr 4:2, 6), reproof (Pr 10:17 - "ignore" = forsake), kindness (lovingkindness, faithfulness) (Pr 3:3). God promises to not forsake His people (Ge 24:27, 28:15, Dt 31:6,7 contrast what God's people will do = Dt 31:16). In a use similar to Pr 28:13, we are instructed to "forsake wrath." (Ps 37:8)

**Azab** - 5x in Joshua - Joshua 1:5, Joshua 8:17, Joshua 22:3, Joshua 24:16, Joshua 24:20

**Consume** (destroy)([03615](#)) [kalah](#) basically means to cease or stop and so to be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished, or spent. To bring a process to completion. To [consummate](#). It can have a positive connotation (Ge 2:1-2), but more often is used in a negative sense. (qal) perish, i.e., be in a state of ruin or destruction w focus on a lack of state of existence (Job 4:9; Pr 22:8)

In (piel) to destroy, end, wipe out, ravage, eliminate, consume (2Sa 21:5) In a negative sense (AS IN JOSHUA 24:20) it means "to complete" something may mean "to make it vanish" or "go away." Kalah is used in this sense in Dt. 32:23, when God says: "I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them." In other words, His arrows will "vanish" from His possession. This nuance is used especially of clouds: "As the loud is consumed and vanisheth away ..." (Job 7:9). Another negative nuance is to "destroy" something or someone: "the famine shall consume the land" (Ge 41:30). Along this same line is the use of kalah in Isa. 1:28: "They that forsake the Lord shall be consumed"; here, however, the verb is a synonym for "dying" or "perishing."

**Kalah in Joshua** - Jos. 8:24; Jos. 10:20; Jos. 19:49; Jos. 19:51; Jos. 24:20

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Strange gods.** Heb. **אלהי נכר** *elohē nēkâr*, gods of the stranger or foreigner.

**Then he will turn, &c.** Not in himself or in his dispositions towards his creatures, for we are elsewhere told that with him there is 'no variableness nor the least shadow of turning.' But the character of his dispensations, the course of his providence towards them should be entirely changed, in view of the change in their conduct towards him. He would henceforward be as severe and vindictive, as he had before been kind and gracious.

**Consume you, after that he hath done you good,** Nothing so embitters the judgments of God, as the reflection that they have been incurred after the experience of his tender mercies. The fact that we have made him to repent of his past kindnesses to us, and forget all the good he had wrought in our behalf, barbs and envenoms the arrow of remorse beyond the power of language to describe.

**Joshua 24:21** The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD."

- Ex 19:8 20:19 24:3,7 De 5:27,28 26:17 Isa 44:5
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passage:

Exodus 24:3-8+ (**NOTE SAME AFFIRMATION BY ISRAEL TO THE COVENANT CUT AT MOUNT SINAI - THE COVENANT THEY QUICKLY BROKE!**) Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "**All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!**" 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD (**THE WORDS OF THE COVENANT**). Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the **blood** and put it in basins, and the other half of the **blood** he sprinkled on the altar. (**MOSES IS NOW RATIFYING THE COVENANT WITH BLOOD!**) 7 Then he took the **book of the covenant** and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!**" 8 So Moses took the **blood** and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold **the blood of the covenant**, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

## SECOND AFFIRMATION OF LOYALTY

**The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve (abad) the LORD** - Again the people affirm their loyalty to Yahweh Alone. Joshua will cut a covenant with Israel (see Joshua 24:22-27, 25 below). Their affirmation would then be binding on them as discussed.

Joshua had said, "**You are not able to serve the Lord**" (Joshua 24:19). To that the people responded, No: it is not so! They said, We will serve the Lord. They were pledging to meet all the demands of such service, to be holy and obedient to God.

**Madvig** writes "When the people said, "No! We will serve the LORD," Joshua could see that his exhortation was producing the desired result." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)) Editorial note - yes, the desired words, and words that would prove true for the generation of Joshua, but would not prove true for the generation after Joshua and the elders (see Jdg 2:8-13).

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**We will serve the Lord.** This shows that they understood the words of Joshua to imply no moral inability on their side, and notwithstanding his statement of difficulties, and the seeming discouragements which he throws in their way (Joshua 24:19), but which are really intended to quicken and invigorate their resolutions, they declare a firm and fixed purpose of obedience. **In so saying they did virtually confirm and ratify by their own express consent the covenant which Joshua would now impose upon them, and by voluntarily engaging, as he intimated would be the case, to be witnesses against themselves, provided they turned aside from God, they did in effect affix their name and seal to that solemn covenant, and bind themselves under fearful sanctions to its faithful observance.** Thus we have a sacred renewal, an authentic confirmation, of the covenant into which their fathers had entered with God, as their King, Exodus 24:3-8+ which after this they could no more infringe, without being guilty in the highest degree of perjury.

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### The Definite Choice

We will serve the Lord! —Joshua 24:21

Coming from someone who used to value ancestral gods, my 90-year-old father's statement near the end of his life was remarkable: "When I die," he spoke laboriously, "nobody should do anything other than what the church will do. No soothsaying, no ancestral sacrifices, no rituals. As my life is in the hands of Jesus Christ, so shall my death be!"

My father chose the path of Christ in his old age when he invited Jesus into his life as Savior. His contemporaries mocked him: "An old man like you shouldn't be going to church!" But my father's choice to follow and worship the true God was definite, like the people Joshua addressed.

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve," Joshua challenged them. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15). Their response was resolute—they chose to worship the Lord. Even after Joshua warned them to count the cost (Josh 24:19-20), they still resolved to follow the Lord, recalling His deliverance, provision, and protection (Josh 24:16-17,21).

Such a confident choice, however, calls for equally confident actions, as Joshua strongly reminded them: "Put away the foreign gods . . . and incline your heart to the Lord" (Josh 24:23). Have you made a choice to live for God?

Teach me all it means, Lord, to choose You. I want my words, actions, and attitudes to show the love for You that I have in my heart. You are worthy of far more than I could ever do. ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A definite choice demands definite actions.

**Joshua 24:22 Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses."**

- **witnesses:** De 26:17 Job 15:6 Lu 19:22
- **have:** Ps 119:11,173 Lu 10:42
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL WITNESSES AGAINST ITSELF

**Joshua said to the people** - Joshua speaks a third time.

**Butler** - Joshua accepts their decision to serve the Lord and then seeks to firm and confirm their commitment to the Lord.

**You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve(abad) Him** - His point was that they said they would be faithful, so if instead (at any time in the future) they turned away from the commitment they had affirmed to Yahweh, they would prove to be **witnesses** against themselves.

**Utley** - **you are witnesses against yourselves**" The covenant has rights and responsibilities. To say "yes" has definite privileges and consequences. Israel had affirmed their covenant relationship to YHWH in 24:16–18 and again in v. 24. The words of the people attest their commitment to serve Jehovah.

**And they said, "We are witnesses** - The people were willing to accept that they would be witnesses, so sure they were that they would never forsake Yahweh.

**TSK** - Ye have been sufficiently apprised of the difficulties in your way--of God's holiness, and the nature of his service--your own weakness, inconstancy, and insufficiency--**your need of the Divine help...**and the awful consequences of apostasy: and now ye make your choice. Remember then that ye are witnesses against yourselves; and your own conscience will be witness, judge, and executioner.

**Joshua 24:23 "Now therefore, **put away** the foreign gods which are in your midst, and **incline** your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."**

- **put away**: Jos 24:14 Ge 35:2-4 Ex 20:23 Jdg 10:15,16 1Sa 7:3,4 Ho 14:2,3,8 1Co 10:19-21 2Co 6:16-18
- **incline**: Pr 2:2 Heb 12:28,29
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 35:2-4 (**JACOB GAVE A SIMILAR COMMAND WHICH WAS ALSO GIVEN AT SHECHEM!**) So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "**Put away the foreign gods which are among you**, and purify yourselves and change your garments; 3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and **Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem**.

1 Samuel 7:4 So the sons of Israel **removed** (put away, got rid of) the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the LORD alone.

Ps 119:36 **Incline my heart** to Your testimonies And not to dishonest gain.

Ps 141:4 Do not **incline my heart** to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

Proverbs 2:2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, **Incline your heart** to understanding;

Psalms 44:18 Our heart has not turned back, And our steps have not **deviated** (inclined - natah) from Your way,

### **JOSHUA'S FINAL COMMANDS FIRST NEGATIVE, THEN POSITIVE**

**Now therefore** - Term of conclusion based on the fact that their words would be a witness against them if they were guilty!

**Put away the foreign gods which are in your midst** ([qereb](#)) - This command could be literal if any held fast to idols (and they were physically in their midst) or it could have been speaking their inner being (see [qereb](#) below), commanding them put away desires for foreign gods in their minds and hearts.

This is the second time he has given this charge, having given 4 commands earlier...

Joshua 24:14 "Now, therefore, **fear** the LORD and **serve** Him in sincerity and truth; and **put away** the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and **serve** the LORD.

We see the **foreign gods** creep back into Israel in Judges...

The sons of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day." **So they put away the foreign gods from among them** and served the LORD; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer. (Jdg 10:15,16+)

**Campbell** interprets Joshua as alluding to literal idols writing Joshua "had heard the pledge on their lips; now he challenged them to prove their sincerity by their works. Knowing that many of them were secretly practicing idolatry Joshua forthrightly demanded that they remove their foreign gods." (Others see these idols as referring to the heart but not literal idols). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Matthew Poole** - The strange gods which are among you; those idols which yon either brought out of Egypt, or have taken in Canaan, which I have too much reason to believe that some of you, contrary to God's command, do keep, whether for the preciousness of the matter, or rather for some secret inclination to superstition and idolatry, as the following words imply. See Jos 24:14.

**Utley** - "**put away** foreign gods which are in your midst" (**qereb**) The VERB "**put away**" is a Hiphil IMPERATIVE, cf. Josh 24:14; Gen. 35:2; 1Sa 7:4). The gods were already in their midst (i.e., the Canaanite gods). Amos 5:27 seems to confirm this possibility, but the second half of the verse implies attitudes, ("**incline** your hearts," Hiphil IMPERATIVE), not actual objects. This verse calls on Israel to "**incline**," but 1 Kgs. 8:58 calls on YHWH to cause His people to "**incline**" (cf. Pr 21:1; Ps. 141:4 negated). The Hebrew can mean either. The text does not say they actually put away their foreign gods (as it does in Ge 35:2-4).

**And incline** (**natah**) **your hearts** (**lebab**) **to the LORD, the God of Israel**- Joshua give a command which is the best defense against **foreign gods**, a heart bent toward the LORD. We need the Spirit to **incline** our hearts to Yahweh, for our fallen flesh by default goes the opposite direction! The Septuagint renders **euthuno** which means literally to cause to be straight and is in the **aorist imperative** (see **our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey**). The idea is direct your heart straight to the LORD. Remember your heart (**lebab**) is like the "control center" of your soul.

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**Midst** (**07130**) **qereb** means midst, middle, interior, inner part, inner organs, bowels, inner being. Qereb is the center or inner part of anything, but especially referred to the inner organs of the body (Ex 29:13, Ps 36:1, Ps 51:10, Ps 55:4, Ps 64:6), including the heart (1Sa 25:37, Jer 23:9, Ps 39:3, 55:4) and the psychological center (1Ki 3:28, Ps 94:18, Jer 4:14), man's inner being (Zech 12:1). David prays "renew a steadfast spirit within (qereb) me." In Ezekiel we see God will put a new spirit (Spirit) within Israel (alluding to the New Covenant). (Ezek 11:19, Ezek 36:27)

The basic idea behind qerev is the location of something or someone in the middle, the center or "the midst" of someone, something or of a group of people. Genesis 45:6 refers to a famine being "in" the land, and Gen. 18:24 refers to persons who are "within" the city. Qerev is used of what is inside a creature, such as the inner parts of animals (Exo. 12:9). Thus, it came to mean all the inner aspects of a person's nonmaterial self, paralleled with the Hebrew word nephesh (HED #5497), translated "soul" in Ps. 103:1. Thoughts are said to be within (Ps. 94:19), as well as anguish of heart (Ps. 55:4). Treacherous people say one thing but "inwardly" they intend harm (Ps. 62:4). This word is used for the way Sarah laughed "within herself" (Gen. 18:12), which could not be observed by others.

**Qereb/qerev in Joshua** - Jos. 1:11; Jos. 3:2; Jos. 3:5; Jos. 3:10; Jos. 4:6; Jos. 6:25; Jos. 7:12; Jos. 7:13; Jos. 8:35; Jos. 9:7; Jos. 9:16; Jos. 9:22; Jos. 10:1; Jos. 13:13; Jos. 16:10; Jos. 18:7; Jos. 24:5; Jos. 24:17; Jos. 24:23

**Incline** (stretch, turn aside) (**05186**) **natah** means to stretch out, to extend; to pay attention. It has 3 primary nuances (1) spreading or stretching things (used literally in this sense in Joshua 8:18, 19, 26). (2) To turn aside - alteration in the present course of action (Nu 20:17, 21, Nu 22:23, 2 Sa 3:27, Ge 38:16 a bad turning aside!). "Turn aside justice (pervert) (Ex 23:6) (3) To bend (Ge 24:14, Ge 49:16, Hos 11:4, 2 Sa 22:10, Ps 144:5). Incline your ear (Ps 17:6, Ps 31:2, 45:10, 49:4, 71:2, 78:1, 86:1, 2, 116:2, Pr 4:20, Pr 5:1, 5:13, 22:17) A prayer for one's heart in Ps 119:36 and Ps 141:4 (**A GOOD PRAYER TO PRAY!** cf Ps 119:112)

Most usages are figurative. One's heart may "turn away" (Solomon in 1 Ki 11:2-4, 9, 2 Sa 19:14). On the other hand one's heart may be inclined to God and his commands (Josh 24:23; 1 Ki 8:58; Ps 119:36). Also common is the expression "to incline the ear" (listen with intent to obey God) (Jer 7:24, 26; Jer 11:8; Jer 17:23 et al.). God inclining His ear toward men (2 Ki 19:16; Isa 37:17; Da 9:18). Men inclining their ear to the words of a sage (Pr 4:20; Pr 5:1, 13; Pr 22:17). Natah is used meaning "decline" = a shadow (2 Ki 20:10), day (Jdg 19:8-9), rapid physical decline (Ps 102:11; Ps 109:23). The Lord extends His arm or hand to deliver His people (Ex. 6:6; Dt. 4:34; Jer. 32:21); or to bring judgments on them and the nations (Isa. 5:25; 23:11; Ezek. 6:14). A measuring line is "stretched over" a city (2 Ki 21:13; Zech. 1:16; cf. Isa 44:13).

Inclining one's heart a certain way, of giving attention -- of turning from being loyal (1 Ki. 2:28); turning from righteousness or justice (Ex. 23:2; 1 Sa 8:3); or preventing it (Pr 18:5). Turning one's heart in a certain direction (1 Sa 14:7); of being loyal (Josh. 24:23); to turn, to show love (**hesed**) to someone (Ezra 7:28). Natah is used of iniquities and sin turning away the good benefits of God from His people (Jer. 5:25). There are those who turn aside, away, to twisted, crooked ways (Ps. 125:5).

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#### GEORGE BUSH **Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24**

**Put away the strange gods, &c.** See above on v. 14. Rabbi Levi, son of Gerson, a Jewish commentator, remarks upon this passage, that Joshua 'says this to them, in order that if their hearts had been enticed by any of the idolatries of the people of that

land, they should put away the pernicious thoughts that were in them.' Augustine is of the same opinion in relation to the true meaning of the passage.

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## Still Climbing

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." - Hebrews 12:1

Few experiences match the challenge and exhilaration of mountain climbing. Those who participate in this exercise of endurance and skill like to compare peaks and share experiences. When European climbers get together to swap stories, they often tell of passing a certain grave along the trail to one famous peak. On the inscription: HE DIED CLIMBING.

To me, mountain climbing is a picture of the life of faith. Throughout our lives we are to continue moving upward -- learning more about God, growing in our relationship with Christ, becoming stronger in our battle with temptation, pushing ahead in telling the lost about Christ.

The author of Hebrews put it this way: "Let us run with endurance." The words "with endurance" may be translated "with perseverance," or more commonly, "to the end."

Joshua was just such a man of God. His "climb" began in Egypt and ended in the Promised Land. He won great battles. We are told that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua" (Josh. 24:31). At the close of his life, Joshua was still urging Israel to serve God faithfully (Josh 24:23).

Lord Jesus, help us to serve You faithfully. May we still be climbing to the very end. -- D C Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I want to scale the utmost height  
And catch a glimpse of glory bright;  
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found,  
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."  
-- Oatman

Faith grows stronger as we climb higher.

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## Joshua's Challenge

Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God. — Joshua 24:23

Today's Scripture: Joshua 24:1-25

Call it the **Showdown at Shechem**. Joshua gathered the people of Israel at this town so he could give them the challenge of their lives.

Aware of their interest in the history of their forefathers, Joshua began with a dramatic recounting of things past. He told how God had spared them from Terah's homeland to Jericho.

As Joshua talked, the people must have re-lived in their minds the exciting stories they had heard from their grandparents—the plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and all the battles with surrounding enemies.

**But more humbling than all those instances of God's intervention must have been the reminder that despite God's goodness, the people were still worshipping the false gods of their forefathers.**

Joshua's challenge to the Israelites was not about the past. It was about the future. He challenged them to worship only the one true God. Because "He is a jealous God" (Josh. 24:19), the Lord will not tolerate worship of any other.

We too have seen God work—both miraculously in giving us eternal life, and more routinely in His daily care. So in gratitude to the Lord, let's cast aside our "false gods"—anything that competes with our devotion to Him—and incline our heart toward the only true God. Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, help us to recognize  
Your sole authority;  
And may our worship of You be  
A high priority.  
—Sper



Your heart cannot feel at home with a foreign god.

**Joshua 24:24 The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice."**

- De 5:28,29
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ISRAEL'S THIRD AFFIRMATION OF LOYALTY

**The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice-** Apparently without any hesitation, they witness against themselves again by declaring they would be faithful and loyal to Yahweh as would be shown by their obedience to Him.

This recalls the words of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 5:28; 29+

"The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. 29 **'Oh that they had such a heart in them,** that they would **fear** Me and **keep** all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

**Campbell** points out that "The words "serve," "served," and "serving" occur 13 times in Joshua 24:14–24" ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Joshua 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.**

- **made a covenant:** Ex 15:25 Ex 24:3,7,8 De 5:2,3 Dt 29:1,10-15 2Ki 11:17 2Ch 15:12,15 2Ch 23:16 29:10 34:29-32 Ne 9:38 10:28,29
- **in Shechem:** Jos 24:1,26
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 29:1 (**AT THE END OF HIS LIFE MOSE ALSO MADE A COVENANT WITH ISRAEL**) These are the words of the **covenant** which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant** which He had made with them at Horeb.

Deuteronomy 29:10-15 "You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, 11 your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, 12 that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, 13 in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 14 "Now not with you alone am I **making this covenant** and this oath, 15 but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today

### JOSHUA CUT A COVENANT

**So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day-** The "cut a covenant," the most solemn, binding agreement known in the ancient world. One writer says Joshua cuts a covenant because he does not think the people would long remember what they had pledged above. This covenant would serve as a testimony to the sincerity of their willing consecration to Yahweh.

**And made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem - NLT -** "committing them to follow the decrees and regulations of the LORD." The nature of **a statute and an ordinance** is uncertain. The previous passages had recorded their pledges, so it is



possible the statutes in some way related to those pledges.

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Joshua made a covenant.** Heb. יכרת ברית yikrōth berith, cut a covenant; alluding to the sacrifice usually offered on such occasions (**ED: THE COVENANT PARTIES WOULD WALK BETWEEN THE PIECES OF THE DEAD ANIMAL AND AFFIRM SUCH A FATE WOULD BE ON THEM IF THEY BROKE THE COVENANT**).. But whether the ordinary rites were performed at this time is uncertain. The use of this term does not perhaps necessarily imply that they were. The ceremonies usual in forming and in renewing a covenant might not have been the same.

**Set them a statute and an ordinance.** That is, as some suppose, on renewing the covenant he formed the whole into a statute and ordinance which was promulgated for all Israel to receive and obey. Both they and their posterity were to regard it in the light of a binding enactment, having all the force of a divine ordinance. Otherwise the phrase, '**he set them a statute,**' &c., may mean that he declared or propounded to them, he set before them, the sum and substance of the Mosaic statutes, which their covenant obliged them to observe. But from what is said in the next verse of his writing these words in the book of the law, we think the former the most correct interpretation.

**Joshua 24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.**

- **Joshua:** Ex 24:4 De 31:24-26
- **took:** Jdg 9:6
- **set it:** Jos 4:3-9,20-24 Ge 28:18-22
- **under:** Ge 35:4,8 Jdg 9:6
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE COVENANT RECORDED ON A LARGE STONE

**And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD** - The practice of chiseling a covenant in stone (cf the tablets of the Mosaic law) was common in the ancient Near East. The stone would serve as a monument of this public transaction. And presumably this would serve to help them remember their pledges.

Some like **Donald Campbell** see this as a renewal of the Mosaic Covenant explaining that "The Mosaic Covenant established at Sinai was not an everlasting covenant; hence it needed to be renewed in every generation. That renewal was now transacted in a formal and impressive ceremony." He adds that "Archeologists excavating the site of Shechem have uncovered a great limestone pillar which may be identified with the memorial referred to here." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Matthew Poole - These words**, i.e. this covenant or agreement of the people with the Lord. In the book of the law of God, i. e. in that volume which was kept in the ark, Dr 31:9,26, whence it was taken and put into this book of Joshua. This he did, partly, for the perpetual remembrance of this great and solemn action; partly, to lay the greater obligation upon the people to be true to their engagement; and partly, as a witness for God, and against the people, if afterwards he severely punished them for their detection from God, to whom they had so solemnly and freely obliged themselves.

**Henry Morris** - In effect, Joshua here places his own writings (our present book of Joshua) on a par with those of Moses. Moses and Joshua were the human writers, along with editorial inserts made for clarification by later scribes, but the end product in every case had been "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

**Matthew Poole - Set it up there**, as a witness and monument of this great transaction, according to the custom of those ancient times, as Ge 28:18 Ge 31:45 Ge 35:14 Ex 24:4 Dt 27:2 Josh 4:3 8:32. Possibly this agreement was written upon this stone, as was then usual.

**Ryrie - by the sanctuary of the LORD.** Perhaps a reference to an old altar still standing, perhaps to an altar Joshua built on nearby [Mount Ebal](#) (Josh 8:30), or perhaps the translation should be "beneath the oak tree which was sacred to the Lord" (cf. Gen. 12:6). The important fact is that the covenant, written on the stone, could be read by all (v. 27).

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**Wrote these words in the book of the law of God.** He made a record of the transaction, particularly of the solemn engagements of the people, and inserted it on some blank space of the great roll on which the sacred canon was originally inscribed. There it was written, that their obligation to obedience by the divine precept and by their own promise, might remain on record together. It would thus, as intimated in Josh 24:25, from its very position, serve more effectually as 'a statute and an ordinance,' and be in fact an everlasting witness against them in case they should prove unfaithful to the compact, for it was probably transcribed from thence into all the other copies of the law which were multiplied in after ages for the benefit of the nation.

**Took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak.** To insure still more effectually the memory of this solemn transaction, Joshua reared a pillar of stone on the spot, according to the custom of ancient times, Ge 28:18; Dt. 27:2, as an enduring monument of the event which had now occurred. Whether the stone contained an inscription defining the purpose of its erection, is not certain, though not improbable. The 'oak' here mentioned is supposed by some to have been the same with that under which Jacob buried the idols and images that were found in his family, Ge 35:4, but in Jdg. 9:6, the original term is translated 'plain,' and the place where the stone was set up is called 'the plain of the pillar.'

**That was by the sanctuary of the Lord.** Near the place where the ark and the tabernacle now stood, during their temporary continuance at Shechem.

**Joshua 24:27** Joshua said to all the people, '**Behold**, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.'

- Jos 22:27,28,34 Ge 31:44-52 De 4:26 30:19 31:19,21,26 1Sa 7:12
- **it has heard:** De 32:1 Isa 1:2 Hab 2:11 Lu 19:40
- **deny:** Job 31:23 Pr 30:9 Mt 10:33 2Ti 2:12,13 Titus 1:16 Rev 3:8
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE WITNESS OF THE STONE

**Joshua said to all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God -** The stone had heard the affirmations of the people and thus would serve as the witness.

**It hath heard all the words, &c.** A strong figure of speech, by which he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and if they should forget what was now done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it, as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them. Williams very appositely cites from Livy the following instance of a similar phraseology;—"The general of the Æqui informed the Roman ambassadors (sent to complain of a plundering excursion) that they might deliver their message to an oak which shaded his tent. On this one of the ambassadors, turning away, said: 'This venerable oak and all the gods shall know that you have violated the peace; they shall now hear our complaints; and may they soon be witnesses, when we revenge with our arms the violation of divine and human rights.' By a like usage of speech the sacred writers frequently call upon the heavens and the earth to hear their addresses to the people of Israel. Deut. 32:1; Is. 1:2.

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**F B Meyer** has some interesting thoughts on text beginning in Joshua 24:14 - (Keep the context in mind -- Yahweh has just finished giving the sons of Israel an overview of His goodness to them as a nation, from birth at the Passover to the present day, speaking through his "prophet" or mouthpiece Joshua. Now Joshua senses the time is "ripe" to challenge Israel).

**JOSHUA'S APPEAL.**(Josh 23:14-15) —It would appear that the people largely maintained the worship of household gods, like those which Rachel stole from Laban. This practice was probably perpetuated by stealth. But the germs of evil were only awaiting favorable conditions to manifest themselves, and Joshua had every reason to dread the further development of the insidious taint. The human heart is always so willing to substitute the material for the spiritual; and where the idol takes the place of God, man forfeits the only antagonistic force strong enough to counteract the workings of his passion. Thus in every nation under heaven idolatry has sooner or later led to impurity. Therefore, with marked emphasis, Joshua appealed to the people to put away the gods

which Terah and others of their ancestors had served beyond the river, and those which they had vainly invoked in the slave-huts of Egypt. He did this first at the close of his address (Josh 23:14), and again just before the memorable interview closed (23).

The work of idol-renunciation runs parallel with our deepest experiences in the blessed life. Even John, at the close of his first Epistle, bids his disciples keep themselves from idols. In fact, it is only as the clearer light of heaven falls upon us that we come to see the true nature of many things which we had counted innocent, and hugged as dearer than life. We may choose death once for all in some solemn hour of consecration, but we only gradually come to learn all that it involves. Self is our greatest idol; and it is so ubiquitous, so insidious, so protean! Scotched in one place, it breaks out in another. It clings and twines about things which are innocent enough in themselves, but which it transforms into idols, and then they have to be put away. Our Isaacs! our Rachels! our right hands!

Our only hope is to be strong in our choice of God. The negative destruction of self is unsatisfactory. We must deliberately set ourselves toward God. Our will must crown him. Our soul must make him first. Our life must be subdued to the least syllable of his command. If thou wouldst do this, peace would come to thee. "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 beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

THE PEOPLE'S FIRST REPLY. (Joshua 23:16-18)—They professed that they had no desire to forsake Jehovah and serve other gods. They freely acknowledged that they owed everything to him from the exodus to the possession of Canaan. They also expressed their determination to serve the Lord.

JOSHUA'S ANSWER. (Joshua 23:19-20)—Whether they uttered all these vows in thunderous unison, or by the mouth of chosen representatives, or whether the historian gathered up thus the consensus of their feeling as it passed from lip to lip, we cannot tell. But surely Joshua detected some traces of insincerity in their voice. Perhaps he felt the unreality of their professions because they gave no sign of abandoning their strange gods. Had he hoped for a repetition of the scene that had taken place on that very spot so many years before, when at the challenge of Jacob his household gave unto him all the strange gods which were in their hands, and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them beneath the oak which was by Shechem? Did he expect that the leaders of the people would first bring out their contributions to a pile similar to that which, in Christian centuries, rose in the great square of Florence, at the summons of Savonarola?

But there was no such response. The people contented themselves with their affirmations, but made no sacrifices. There was no holocaust, and Joshua was deeply conscious of the unreality of profession that went no deeper than words. This, said he in effect, is no way to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will search out these secret sins of yours; he will not be content with the service of the lip; he will not pass over transgression and sin, even though they be hidden in the recesses of your tents and the depths of your hearts. Notwithstanding all the good that he has done to you, he will not pass over the declensions and backslidings of his people.

THE PEOPLE'S SECOND REPLY. (Joshua 23:21) —They were full of self-confidence, and vowed, come what might, that they would serve the Lord. There was the energy of their own self-will, the strength of their own resolve, the persistent insistence on their choice of Jehovah. Standing there with Joshua they forgot the many failures of the past, mocked at his fears, derided his suggestions of possible declension, and cried, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

What a commentary on those proud words is given by the Book of Judges! Serve the Lord! The very first sentence which follows the record of Joshua's death in that book tells us that "the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers." And this record recurs with melancholy monotony on nearly every page. We are reminded of that other scene when beneath Sinai, burning with fire, the people pledged themselves to do all that the Lord had spoken; and within six weeks were worshipping him under the form of a calf, with lascivious dance.

In point of fact, resolution, however good and however strongly expressed, is not sufficient to carry us forward into a life of obedience. Our moral nature has become so weakened by repeated failure that it is not able to resist the appeals of sense. To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. No one can look thoughtfully into the workings of his own nature without realizing the terrible paralysis which has befallen it. The will sits amid the vassals of the inner realm, issuing commands which it is not able to enforce, like a puppet-king in the midst of mighty chiefs who dispute his authority.

Thus it is that so often young hearts are embittered with disappointment, because in some high moment of resolve they determine that all life shall be new, inspired by constant resolve, and climbing with undeviating purpose the steep of purity and devotion; but when they descend to the plain of commonplace, to the routine of daily life, they discover that the impetus has died away, and that the power to execute the high purpose of the soul is gone. No; consecration is only possible when it is conceived, prosecuted, and consummated in power not our own, and in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

JOSHUA'S SECOND ANSWER. (Joshua 23:22a)—"Ye are witnesses," he said, "against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to

serve him.” In other words, he appealed to them on the ground of their own asseverations, and sought to bind them to the vows they had made. Did he not intend to probe them deeper, to make them realize the solemnity of the occasion, to compel them to face the greatness of the responsibility they had assumed? By the magnitude of the interests involved, by the mercies and deliverances of God, by the memory of their ancestors, by the great days of Abraham and Isaac, by their own solemn protestations, he urged them to be true.

THE PEOPLE’S THIRD REPLY. (Joshua 23:22b)—“We are witnesses,” they cried; as in after days the people met Pilate’s repeated challenge by the imprecation upon themselves of the blood of Jesus. Alas, for their self-confident boast, for their headstrong pride of purpose! “By strength can no man prevail.” O my soul, be warned, that when thou art challenged as to thy resolves, thou makest thy boast in God; setting up thy banners in his name, intrenching thyself within the circle of his environing Almighty. Only by thy God canst thou leap over a wall, or run through a troop. Ask the Holy Spirit to bind thee by cords to the altar of self-surrender by the blood-red cord of Calvary; by the silver cord of hope in the second Advent; by the golden cord of daily fellowship.

JOSHUA’S RESPONSE. Joshua 23:23—Further words were fruitless, and so he set up a memorial of the pledges by which the people had bound themselves. He wrote their words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the slab. “Behold,” said he, “this stone shall be a witness against us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest ye deny your God.” Then he dismissed the people to their homes.

**Joshua 24:28 Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.**

- Jdg 2:6
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CEREMONY CONCLUDED

**Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance** - The people return to their homes in the various tribal sections of the land.

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GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**28. So Joshua let the people depart, every man to his own inheritance.** Heb. יִשְׁלַח yeshallâh, sent away, or dismissed. This verse occurs in nearly the same words Jdg. 2:6, with the added clause, ‘to possess the land;’ i. e. that every one might manfully exert himself to expel the Canaanites and obtain the complete possession of his destined inheritance.—‘In this affecting manner Joshua took his leave of Israel, went from this last and perhaps best source to God and them, and was speedily taken to his rest in heaven.’ Scott.

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**Irving Jensen - Covenant Renewal (Joshua 24:1–28)**

This is the last recorded ministry of Joshua to his beloved people. His dying wish was that they would burn four great impressions on their heart and in their life: covenant, history, present blessing, and consecration.

### 1. Covenant

This was the reason for gathering Israel to Shechem, for this was the place that suggested the original covenant made by God with His people. Here God first promised Canaan to Abram (Gen. 12:6–7); here Jacob built an altar (Gen. 33:20); here Joshua built an altar and renewed Israel’s covenant relationship with God (Joshua 8:30–35). Joshua’s appeal to Israel was to rest its destiny on the foundation of the covenant. At the end of his speech on this momentous day, “Joshua made a covenant with the people ..., and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” (Joshua 24:25).

### 2. History

Joshua’s appeal here was to remember history. From the divine call of Israel’s father Abraham to their inheritance of the land, God was the gracious Deliverer (Joshua 24:2–12).

### 3. Present Blessings

“Count your present blessings” is the effect of the few words of 24:13. Israel was now enjoying the gift of a

fruitful land to dwell in.

#### 4. Consecration

This was the appeal to the will, and Joshua did not intend to let the people make their choice lightly. The dialogue proceeded in this order:

- a. the clear option: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"—Jehovah, or the gods (Joshua 24:14–15).
- b. Joshua's example: "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24:15).
- c. Israel's hasty commitment: "We also will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24:18). There was no flaw in the words of this commitment. But Joshua sensed that the words probably were spoken too quickly, without due deliberation, and the words "far be it from us that we should forsake Jehovah" had the sound of dangerous self-confidence.
- d. Joshua's challenge: "Ye cannot serve Jehovah; for he is a holy God" (Joshua 24:19). The sole purpose of this strong statement was to disarm Israel's self-righteousness.
- e. Israel's deliberate insistence: "Nay; but we will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24:21)

When Joshua was satisfied with the genuineness of the people's consecration, he solemnly renewed the covenant, laid down statutes and decrees for them, wrote the precepts in the book of God's law and, "taking a large stone, he set it up there beneath the oak tree which was sacred to the Lord" (Joshua 24:26), which would be a witness to the people's renewal of their consecration to God.

Joshua's earthly ministry thus came to a close. Satisfied that his people's consecration was in earnest, he "sent the people away, every man unto his inheritance" (Joshua 24:28)([Joshua- Everyman's Bible Commentary: Rest-Land Won](#))

**Joshua 24:29** It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

- **after these:** De 34:5 Jdg 2:8 Ps 115:17 2Ti 4:7,8 Rev 14:13
- **an hundred:** Ge 50:22,26
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Joshua 5:14+ (**JOSHUA REFERS TO HIMSELF AS SERVANT USING SAME WORD USED HERE IN V29**)  
He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"

Genesis 50:26 So Joseph died at the age of **one hundred and ten years**; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

### **JOSHUA SERVANT OF THE LORD DIED AT AGE OF 110 YEARS**

**John Butler** - THE CEMETERY OF LEADERS - Joshua 24:29–33

**It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old** - This book begins with the death of Moses one servant of the LORD and now ends with the death of Joshua, another servant of the LORD.

**Henry Morris** - after these things. The last five verses of Joshua were obviously written by an unknown scribe living after "all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Joshua 24:31). This in no way brings into question the divine inspiration of the writings themselves.

**Ryrie** points out that (vv. 29-33) "The Book of Joshua ends with three burials. This is not a sad note, however, but a triumphant one, for these three leaders were buried in the Promised Land. Especially significant is the burial of Joseph, whose faith had led him to request it (Gen. 50:24-26; cf. Ex. 13:19).

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 29-33. Joseph died in Egypt, but gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave till Israel had rest in the land of promise. Notice also the death and burial of Joshua, and of

Eleazar the chief priest. The most useful men, having served their generation, according to the will of God, one after another, fall asleep and see corruption. But Jesus, having spent and ended his life on earth more effectually than either Joshua or Joseph, rose from the dead, and saw no corruption. And the redeemed of the Lord shall inherit the kingdom he prepared for them from the foundation of the world. They will say in admiration of the grace of Jesus, Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Joshua—died, being a hundred and ten years old.** Precisely the age of his renowned ancestor Joseph; yet he was not buried in the same place with him, but in his own inheritance, which seems to have been the general practice.—How long he lived after the entrance of Israel into Canaan we have no means of determining. Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years, but the Jewish chronologers generally fix it at twenty-seven or twenty-eight. There is no mention of any public mourning at his death, as there was for Moses and Aaron, and his only epitaph was, in effect, couched in the brief terms, ‘THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.’ This however comprehended the sum of the highest eulogiums that could be bestowed on his character. Though inferior in many respects to Moses, yet in this he was equal to him, that according as his work was in the sphere in which he was placed, he had approved himself a diligent, devoted, and faithful servant of the Most High; and no man need desire a more honorable testimonial to record his worth to his own or future generations.

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### **James Smith - THE DEATH OF JOSHUA Joshua 24:29–31**

“When the dangerous rocks are past,  
When the threatening tempests cease.  
Oh! how sweet to rest at last  
In a silent port of peace.

Though that port may be unknown,  
Though no chart its name may bear.  
Brightly beams its light on One,  
Blest to find his refuge there.”

The spiritual mariner’s port of rest has no place on the business charts of earth. Port Death is a haven where those greedy of the world’s gain have no desire to cast anchor. Some do rush into it in stress of weather to escape what seems more terrible than the separation of soul and body. The Christian’s “port of peace” is the bosom of God. To him death is but the placid waters in the bay that speak of the nearness of the rest that is in the harbour of His all-satisfying presence. To die is gain. The death of Joshua was the final triumph of a conqueror. It suggests—

#### **I. A Great Honour.**

**“Joshua, the servant of the Lord”** (v. 29).

What a privilege to have one’s name and character so closely linked with the Lord! To be known as “the servant of the Lord” is a heritage worth coveting earnestly. It is infinitely better than being known as a successful man or a millionaire. There is no degree that will tell in eternity like this. Of many it may be truly written, “John, the servant of the world.” “Samuel, the servant of sin.” “Mary, the servant of self.” “Martha, the servant of fashion.” Such have their reward, their crown of honour is in the dust instead of in the Lord.

#### **II. A Passing Privilege.**

**“It came to pass that Joshua died”** (v. 29).

Yes, even those who are reckoned indispensable to the success of God’s work die. No matter how great the burden of responsibility it must be put aside. Life itself, with all its great and eternal possibilities, is but a passing opportunity. The key-note of Genesis 5 is, “And he died.” “It is appointed unto men once to die.” But this quickly vanishing “little while” is enough to fulfil the work God has given us to do if the time is redeemed. Did not our Lord realise this when He said, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day” (John 9:4). His working day was a short one, but, oh, what wealth of labour was in it.

#### **III. A Rebuke to Covetousness.**

**“They buried him in the border of his inheritance”** (v. 30).

It does not matter how large our earthly possession may be, a little hole in the border will suffice when the

spirit departs. Those who pride themselves in adding house to house and land to land should remember that a few odd shillings will be enough to pay for their shroud. There are many graves in the border land. That lair in the cemetery may mean the border of your inheritance. The grave is not only in the border of our earthly heritage, it is also in the border of eternity. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). The border is the last point of contact with the old and the perishing before we touch the new and the eternal. Set your affections on things above, and not on the things which are on the earth.

#### IV. An Encouragement to Faithfulness.

**"Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (v. 31).**

Another evidence of the posthumous influence of a holy life. "He being dead, yet speaketh." The king that knew not Joseph dealt hardly with his brethren. The memory of the wicked shall rot, while the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance. Think of the posthumous influence of Jesus Christ. The higher the life, or light, the farther will the radiance of its power and glory go. Jesus Christ has been exalted to Heaven, "far above all," that His influence might reach out to the uttermost parts of the earth, and down to the uttermost depths of human need, and on to the uttermost end of the ages. In so far as our lives are lived in the heavenly places will they tell with restraining or encouraging power upon those who may come after. The sun may set, but the effect of its healing beams is still felt by every living thing. To me to live is Christ.

**Joshua 24:30 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash.**

- **Timnath serah:** Jos 19:50 Jdg 2:9
- **Gaash:** 2Sa 23:30
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Joshua 19:50 In accordance with the command of the LORD they gave him the city for which he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it.

### JOSHUA'S BURIAL IN HIS OWN TOWN

**And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mount Gaash.**

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GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**Buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah.** In the compass, in the limits of his inheritance. See the remark on the import of the word 'border' in the note on ch. 19:25. Of Timnath-serah, see on Judg. 2:9.

**Joshua 24:31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.**

- **served:** De 31:29 Jdg 2:7 2Ch 24:2,17,18 Ac 20:29 Php 2:12
- **survived Joshua:** De 11:2,7 31:13
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ONE GENERATION AWAY FROM APOSTASY

Why this title? Read the notes below.



Israel served ([abad](#); NET = worshiped) the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel - NET = "Israel worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive. These men had experienced firsthand everything the LORD had done for Israel." Judges 2:7+ records a similar description that "The people served ([abad](#); NET = worshiped) the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel." But if we read on further in Judges we find the next generation is not faithful...

Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. 9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and **there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.** 11 Then (marks progression in this case beginning of a downward spiral, a downward progression!) the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and **served** the Baals (**NET** = "by **worshipping** the Baals"), (Jdg 2:8-11+)

Remember Joshua 4. It looks like as good as the peers of Joshua had been in worshipping Yahweh, the next generation completely "dropped the ball."

Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. 21 He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' 22 then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.' 23 "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever." (Joshua 4:20-24)

They forgot the value of the stone memorials in Joshua 4:20-24 and for some reason failed to teach the next generation this vital truth about God. And was was the result? We call it the book of Judges!

In **Psalm 78** we see this vitally important principle of "passing on the baton" to the next generation (cf Jesus' command in Mt 28:19- to make disciples and Paul's exhortation to teach faithful men who make disciples - 2Ti 2:2+).

Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. 4 We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. 5 **For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children,** 6 **That the generation to come might know,** even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, 7 That they should put their confidence in God **And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments,** 8 And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Psalm 78:1-8+)

#### Related Resources:

- [Only One Generation Away - Gone in One Generation](#)

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**Moody - Today in the Word** - On the first day of the month, we looked at a quote from Andrew Jackson, and we'll revisit that thought today. He said, "One man with courage makes a majority." That sums up Joshua's life as a leader in Israel. Not many leaders in all of history could lay claim to what is said of Joshua in verse 31. His nation served the Lord until the day he died, and even after that throughout the lives of the other leaders who served under him. Through a summary glance at Joshua's leadership, it doesn't seem difficult. God gave him clear directions, Joshua followed them, and Israel was greatly blessed. So why is Joshua's example such a rare item in the history of the world? Maybe because Joshua understood that he wasn't primarily a leader; he was a follower of the Lord. He let God call the shots. When Joshua acted without God's specific direction, he made mistakes. But when he did listen to God's commands, he followed them with unparalleled courage. God commanded him to lead His people, which involved being strong, courageous, and obedient. Courage, strength, and submission don't often materialize in one man, but when they do, it makes for a powerful combination. Joshua did that. He lived up to the name Moses had given him: "The Lord brings salvation." If you're looking for that secret ingredient that made Joshua a great leader, don't look at Joshua. Look to God. His power, His Word, and His faithfulness are all available to you. Then you have to look at yourself. If making money, having fun, and being popular are among your top goals, you can never be the leader Joshua was. But if serving the Lord is your definition of success, God will give you the strength and courage to fulfill your purpose.

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**The elders that over-lived Joshua.** Heb. 'that prolonged their days after Joshua.' Intimating that the salutary influence of Joshua's exemplary life and character extended beyond the term of his natural existence, and served for a number of years to keep the people in a general course of obedience. Whether for good or for evil the effect of our example may be expected to live after us. This shows that this part of the book must have been written a considerable time after the death of Joshua. See on ch. 4:9.

**Which had known all the works of the Lord.** Who had been eye-witnesses of them, who had profoundly and devoutly regarded them; who had not only seen them, but pondered upon them with those sentiments which they were calculated to excite. Such is the genuine import of 'known' in this connexion.

**Joshua 24:32** Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

- **bones:** Ge 50:25 Ex 13:19 Ac 7:16 Heb 11:22
- **buried:** Ge 33:19 48:22
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Resources:

Genesis 50:22-26 (**JOSEPH WAS SURE GOD WOULD FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM**) Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. 24 Joseph said to his brothers, **"I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."** 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Hebrews 11:22 **By faith Joseph**, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

Exodus 13:19 And **Moses took the bones of Joseph with him**, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God shall surely take care of you; and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

### THE SECOND BURIAL JOSEPH'S BONES

**Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons** - This was a reminder of Joseph's faith in God's promise to give Israel the promised land of Canaan. Shechem was also in the land allotment of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

**The bones of Joseph buried they in Shechem.** Joseph's death took place in Egypt about two hundred years before that of Joshua, and we learn, Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19, that prior to his decease he had given a strict charge that his bones should be conveyed away out of Egypt by his people when they themselves went up from thence. Accordingly they had carried these precious relics with them in all their wanderings through the wilderness, and never attempted to bury them till they were peaceably settled in the promised land. The act of sepulture, though here related after the account of the death of Joshua, undoubtedly took place before it, and not improbably at the time of the general convention at Shechem described in the present chapter. The occasion, at any rate, would seem to have been a very suitable one for such a solemn ceremony, although it be true that a considerable long interval had now elapsed since the conquest and occupation of Canaan. If any one prefers to translate the original 'had buried,' instead, of 'buried,' implying that the circumstance took place some years before, when the children of Joseph first received their inheritance, which they would naturally be disposed at once to consecrate by depositing within it the remains of their venerated ancestor, we know of nothing to object against it.

Which Jacob bought, &c. See on Ge 33:19.

**Joshua 24:33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim**

- **Eleazar:** Jos 14:1 Ex 6:23,25 Nu 3:32 20:26-28
- **died:** Job 30:23 Ps 49:10 Isa 57:1,2 Zec 1:5 Ac 13:36 Heb 7:24 Heb 9:26,27
- **Phinehas:** Jdg 20:28
- [Joshua 24 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE THIRD BURIAL: ELEAZAR

**And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim**

**Donald Campbell** - Recording three burials is a strange way to end a book like Joshua! But these three peaceful graves testify to the faithfulness of God, for Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar once lived in a foreign nation where they received God's promise to take His people back to Canaan. Now all three were at rest within the Promised Land. God kept His word to Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar—and to all Israel. And this encourages God's children today to count on God's unfailing faithfulness. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Joshua begins with a death (Moses) and ends with 3 burials, so in a sense is bookended in death of God's servants (Moses and Joshua). Why? I am not sure but one thing it suggests is we just have this life in which to possess our possessions and be servants of the LORD. I am reminded of the poem

**Only one life  
Twill soon be past  
Only what's done for (in) Christ  
Will last.**

Lord remind us all of the brevity of our existence on earth as James said (James 4:14)

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

The psalmist adds (Ps 144:4)

Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.

**What's the conclusion?**

(1) Pray Ps 90:12

So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

(2) Live out in the power of the Spirit Eph 5:16

Redeem the time (making the most of every opportunity), because the days are evil.

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 24](#)

**And Eleazar—died.** Probably about the same time with Joshua.

**In a hill that pertained to Phinehas.** As the cities assigned to the priests lay in the lots of Judah, Benjamin and Simeon, neither father nor son could properly inherit a portion located in Mount Ephraim. But such a portion might be given them there, and the probability is that the people voluntarily gave to the high priest a place of residence situated at a convenient distance from Joshua and the tabernacle, and that this was called the 'hill of Phinehas,' because he dwelt longer there than his father Eleazar had done.