

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 24

- Vv. 1-13 *A reminder of God's blessings.* Joshua began his farewell address by reminding all the children of Israel of the blessings which had been given to them by God in their past history. This was the way in which he began his final address to the elders when they gathered at Shiloh. The review here is much fuller than the review he made as is recorded in chapter twenty-three. In his final farewell address, Joshua went all the way back to the time before the call of Abraham and traced the work of God as He had blessed Israel throughout the years until the time when He gave them the Promised Land. Such a reminder was a forceful way in which to begin his final exhortation for the people to be faithful to God.
- Vv. 14-25 *The people's choice to serve God.* After he had reviewed how richly God had blessed the people, Joshua informed the thousands of Israel that he and his house were going to be faithful to the Lord. He asked them to choose whom they would serve. They could choose to serve the gods of the Amorites—the Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites—among whom they dwelt; or they could serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Lord, who had brought them into Canaan and given them the Promised Land. The people said they would serve the Lord.
- Vv. 26-33 *Joshua's last days and death.* One of Joshua's last acts was to erect a stone under an oak in Shechem and appoint it as a memorial of the

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fact that Israel had sworn to put away the foreign gods which were among them and to serve the Lord God of Israel. He also wrote his history of these events and added it to the Pentateuch—the Book of the Law of God (verse 26). When Joshua died, he was 110 years of age; and they buried him in his own inheritance, Timnath-serah, within the boundaries of the tribe of Ephraim. The final appendix to his book recorded how the people remained faithful as long as those elders who are contemporary with Joshua were among them. This time reached down to the end of the life of Eleazar, the son of Aaron who was priest in Joshua's days; and a part of Israel's faithfulness was their remembrance of the promise their forefathers had made to Joseph to bury his bones in the Promised Land. They interred his remains in the land given to the tribe of Ephraim, those who descended from Joseph's younger son.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A man chooses his destiny.* Joshua stood before the thousands of Israel and urged them to choose whom they would serve. In the earlier days, some of their ancestors had served foreign gods. This had been true when they dwelt in Mesopotamia before the call of Abraham. Some had also served pagan gods when they were in Egypt. Joshua knew that there would be a constant temptation before these people in his day to serve the gods of the Canaanites. He wanted them to reaffirm their faith in the Lord God of Israel before he came to the end of his brilliant career.

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STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

2. *A city set on a hill.* Jesus said that Christians were like a candle set on a candlestick or a city set on a hill which could not be hid. He compared his followers to the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16). A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Joshua held up his own decision as an example to be followed by all of his contemporaries. He affirmed with positive conviction how he and his house were going to serve the Lord. He hoped that many would follow his leading.
3. *There is rest for the weary.* The final verses of the book of Joshua record the last days and death of Joshua and also make passing reference to the reverent burial of other leaders of Israel. Joshua lived to be 110 years of age and was buried in his own property at Timnath-serah, the town which the Israelites had given him as his inheritance. This was within the borders of the territory given to the children of Ephraim, Joshua's tribe. Eleazar, the high priest during Joshua's time of leadership, also died and was given a reverent burial in the property which pertained to his son, Phinehas. This territory was also in the borders of the territory given to the tribe of Ephraim since many of the sons of Aaron had received their Levitical cities within the borders of this tribe. Joseph had urged the children of Israel to be kind to him, to carry his bones out of Egypt, and to bury them in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:25). The children of Israel had remembered this promise for over 400 years, and they gave a reverent burial to the bones of Joseph. His bones were also buried within the territory assigned to the children of Ephraim, Joseph's younger son. The parcel of ground is further identified as being a part of the land which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem (Genesis 34).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A Reminder of God's Blessings 24:1-13

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

2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

4 And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

5 I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

6 And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red Sea.

7 And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

11 And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

1. *Why go to Shechem to renew the covenant?* 24:1

Shechem was a place which was sanctified as no other was for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscences from the times of the patriarchs. Joshua therefore summoned all the tribes to Shechem, where Abraham received the first promise from God after his migration into Canaan. Jacob settled here on his return from Mesopotamia. It was here that he purified his house from the strange gods, burying all their idols under the oak (Genesis 33:19; 35:2, 4). Joshua's exhortation to be faithful to the Lord and to purify themselves from all idolatry could not fail to make a deep impression. In the same place the honored patriarch Jacob had done the very same thing. The action meant more in this spot than in any other.

2. *How did Joshua begin his address?* 24:2

Joshua's address contains an expansion of two thoughts. He first of all recalls all the proofs of God's mercy, from the calling of Abraham to that day (verses 2-13). Then because of these divine acts, he calls upon the people to renounce all idolatry and to serve God, the Lord alone

(verses 14, 15). The Lord is described as the "God of Israel" both at the commencement and also at the close of the whole transaction. This is in perfect accordance with the substance and object of the address, which is occupied throughout with the goodness conferred by God upon the nation of Israel.

3. *What "other gods" had Israel's forefathers served? 24:2b*

Nothing definite can be gathered from the expression "other gods," with reference to the gods worshiped by Terah and his family. Nothing further is to be found respecting them through the whole of the Old Testament. We learn from Genesis 31:19, 34, that Laban had *teraphim*, i.e. penates, or household and oracular gods. Some question also whether Abraham was an idolater before his call. This has been answered in different ways, but it cannot be determined with certainty. We may conjecture, however, that he was not deeply sunk in idolatry, though he had not remained entirely free from it in his father's house. Therefore his call is not to be regarded as a reward for his righteousness before God, but as an act of grace.

4. *What is meant by the phrase, "the other side of the flood"? 24:2c*

Evidently Joshua is making reference to the land on the other side of the Euphrates River. This was a line of demarcation and formed a natural boundary line between the territory into which Abraham came when he was called out of Ur of Chaldees. As they were dwelling in Canaan in the days of Joshua, it was natural for him to make reference to the land where the forefathers had lived as land which was "on the other side of the flood."

5. *What difference was made in the inheritances of Esau and Jacob? 24:4*

Jacob had bought Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:29-34). He then deceived Esau and received Isaac's blessing (Genesis 27). In this way, Jacob

became heir of the Promised Land; but Joshua reported how God said He gave Mount Seir to Esau. Mount Seir was south of the Promised Land. The territory extended from the Dead Sea to the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Petra was the most famous city in this territory.

6. *Had any of the people in Joshua's day seen the crossing of the Red Sea?* 24:7

Joshua, himself, was twenty years of age when they left Egypt. He witnessed the miracle at the Red Sea. All of those who were less than sixty years of age when they arrived in Canaan might have witnessed the crossing. At the time they would have been under twenty years of age, but they should have had a vivid remembrance of that great victory. Only those men who were twenty years of age or older when they left Egypt were under the penalty of death which was pronounced upon the Israelites after they listened to the evil report of the ten spies (Numbers 13). Caleb was also spared and would have been another eye-witness to the crossing of the Red Sea. Those who had not seen the event itself would certainly have been thrilled as they heard their elders talk about it. As Joshua recited God's goodness to Israel, it was natural for him to make reference to this outstanding event.

7. *Who were the Amorites?* 24:8

The Amorites who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan were Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan. Both of these strong kings had been beaten in battle as the Israelites fought under the leadership of Moses. Their territory was divided among the three tribes, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. All of Joshua's contemporaries witnessed these great events.

8. *In what way had God refused to hearken to Balaam?* 24:10

Balaam was a prophet who was concerned more about the hire which he would get for his work than for the

truth of his prophecy. God warned him to speak only the things which were revealed to him. At first, God refused to allow him to go with Balak's messengers. As Balaam made his way to meet Balak, God spoke to him in the unusual circumstances of his ass speaking to him. He also confronted him with the Angel of the Lord. All of this was another way of God's throwing an obstacle in Balaam's selfish path. It is fair then to say that God refused to hearken to Balaam.

9. *What was the hornet?* 24:12

As the people of Israel were leaving Egypt, God said, "I will send a hornet before thee which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before thee" (Exodus 23:28). When Moses reviewed the history of the wilderness wanderings, he made reference to the hornet again by saying that God would send a hornet among them until they who were left and hid themselves perished from before Israel (Deuteronomy 7:20). This was a figure of speech by which God referred to the way in which His Spirit would lead and guide the people of Israel. He did indeed fight for Israel.

10. *In what way had Israel been especially blessed?* 24:13

God said He had given them a land for which they had not labored. They had cities which they had not built, and they were allowed to dwell in them. They received the produce of vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted. This was another way of saying the Promised Land was a gift to them. This was a special blessing.

The People's Choice to Serve God 24:14-25

14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

17 For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

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

11. *Were there foreign gods among the Israelites?* 24:14

Joshua was certainly deeply concerned when he urged the Israelites to put away the foreign gods which were among them. When Jacob was on his way back from Haran, he brought his family up to Bethel, and there took the images and idols from among them and buried them. This cleansing of Jacob's family was performed at Shechem; and the idols, the earrings, and every other object of false worship were buried under an oak in Shechem (Genesis 35:4). Although we are not told of their going through a ceremony in the days of Joshua, we presume that there were such objects of worship in Israel at that time and that the people disposed of them when they made the covenant to worship the God of Israel.

12. *What was Joshua's decision?* 24:15

Joshua was crystal clear in his determination to serve the Lord. He put it in a very succinct way—"as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He set his own decision and the decision of his family before the rest of the Israelites in the hope that they would follow his good example and make similar decisions. God had been good to Joshua, and Joshua had no intention of turning his back on God.

13. *What was the decision of the people?* 24:16-18

The people replied that they, too, would serve the Lord. They based this decision on the fact that God had brought them and their fathers out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. They remembered the great signs which had been done in their own times. They were grateful for the preservation of their lives in the long journey which they had taken. They were aware of how it was by God's grace they were delivered out of the hands of their enemies. For these reasons, they cried out that they also would serve the Lord.

14. *Why did Joshua say that the people could not serve God ? 24:19*

Joshua rebuked the people by saying they were not able to serve God. He declared that God was a holy God. He further referred to Him as a jealous God. He said that He would not overlook their sins and their transgressions of His will. Joshua knew his people; he knew they were stiff-necked and hardhearted. He knew their love of sin; and for this reason, he was anxious to chide them in the hope that they would be challenged to a more wholehearted devotion.

Joshua's Last Days and Death 24:26-33

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

29 And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

30 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

31 And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.

32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of

Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

15. *What words did Joshua write in the Book of the Law of God? 24:26*

Joshua certainly wrote down the account of this covenant which the people of Israel had made. This reference may also be a statement of the fact that Joshua wrote the history of which this covenant formed a part. In other words, this is a reference to Joshua's authorship of the book bearing his name. It would be added to the sacred canon, for a book was regarded as a part of the Word of God when it was delivered by an inspired man. It was the inspiration of the book which decided its canonicity. The fact that it was placed with the rest of the sacred writings would indicate the reverence with which it was held by the people of the day.

16. *How old was Joshua when he died? 24:29*

Joshua was 110 years of age when he died. He was among those who were counted at Sinai (Numbers 1). He was also one of the spies who were sent out to go through the length and breadth of the Promised Land (Numbers 13). He must have been a mature man for he was given charge over the armies of Israel when they fought against Amalek before they reached Sinai (Exodus 17). If he was over twenty years of age when they came to Sinai, he was over sixty when they entered into the Promised Land, since they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. We are not told how long it took to conquer the land, and we are not told how long it took for them to make the allotments to the various tribes; but if Joshua

was 110 when he died, he would have had thirty years in which to do this if he were no more than eighty when he entered into the Promised Land.

17. *Where was Timnath-serah?* 24:30

When the land was distributed among the tribes according to its territories, the Israelites gave Joshua an inheritance in the midst of them. This was according to the command of Jehovah. The town was Timnath-serah, in the mountains of Ephraim. He asked for it, and he finished building the city. He dwelt there until the time of his death (see 24:30; Judges 2:9). This was given him "according to the word of the Lord." This does not refer to a divine oracle, but to a promise which Joshua had probably received from God at the same time as Caleb. The promise, however, is not mentioned in the Pentateuch. Timnath-serah, called Timnath-heres in Judges 2:9, must not be confused with Timnah in the tribe of Dan. It has been preserved in the present ruins and foundation walls of a place called Tibneh. This was once a large town about twenty miles to the north of Jerusalem and eight miles to the west of Jiljilia. It really stood upon two mountains containing many caverns which have been used as graves.

18. *Who wrote the last verses of this chapter?* 24:29-33

The last verses of this chapter reach beyond the time of Joshua's death. Someone besides Joshua must have written this appendix to the book of Joshua. The book also reaches down past the time of Eleazar, for the death of Eleazar is recorded in verse 33. Eleazar had been the faithful high priest in Joshua's day. Since the last man to be mentioned is Phinehas, there is some reason for believing he penned these last verses. Phinehas was a faithful defender of God's laws (Numbers 25 and Joshua 22). Although he is never expressly said to have received the Spirit of the Lord, he may have been inspired to write these last verses of Joshua.

19. *Where was Joseph buried?* 24:32

Joseph was buried in a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 34). Joseph's body had been embalmed in Egypt. Before he died, however, he had exacted a promise from his contemporaries that they would not leave his body in Egypt. These Israelites of his day has sworn with an oath that they would take his body with them when they left Egypt (Genesis 50:24, 25). They had kept this promise; and with all due reverence, the body of Joseph was buried in the Promised Land.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 24

1. Where did all Israel gather to hear Joshua's farewell address?
2. What mountain was Esau's possession?
3. Over what people did Balak rule as king?
4. By what figure did God refer to His power among the Israelites?
5. Where did Joshua write the words of Israel's covenant to serve the Lord?
6. What did Joshua set up as a memorial of the covenant?
7. How old was Joshua when he died?
8. Where were Joseph's bones buried?
9. Where was Eleazar buried?
10. Where was Joshua buried?