

## **Joshua 24:1-14 – How You Got Where You Are!**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There is much hoopla (噱头) about ancestry.com, a website that tracks down people's ancestry (世系、血统). Many people want to know where they have come from and if they have any special people in their past. Others do it to find out if there is any kind of disease in their family tree so they could work to prevent it. Maybe you've wondered about your own ancestry. But have you ever wondered about your spiritual ancestry? Have you tried to track them down? Those who were from China who do historical studies know that there was a remarkable historic understanding of biblical knowledge, both in practice and in language. For example: You knew about the principles of the scapegoat sacrifices (替罪羊献祭). And your word for "desire" was a woman reaching for a fruit. That is your spiritual ancestry. Looking back at your spiritual past teaches you about the good you should grab hold of, and the wrong things you should reject.

Knowing this, Joshua made Israel look back to see what God had done for them in the past – how he rescued their ancestors and developed a relationship with them – a covenant relationship- which brought much blessing. In doing this, Joshua wanted Israel to honor God so they would continue to receive God's blessing.

Our headings are: **Long, long ago. Long ago. Now.**

Our goals are: **That you will see God's faithfulness throughout history to you his people, that the more you see God's faithfulness that you draw even closer to him.**

### **Long, Long Ago -God guided their fathers**

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

**1. Joshua gathered all the leaders together to preach to them so that they would then preach to those under them.** (By the way, this is Joshua's second go-around (回合) at a farewell sermon. In Chapter 23, he thought he was "going the way of all the earth" but God gave him more time. But now he was certain that he was going to die and wanted to speak to the leaders one last time.)

**2. Who were these leaders whom Joshua met? Elders** – older men. **Heads** – like political leaders. **Judges**- who made decisions on legal matters. **Officers** – like spiritual overseers. And notice that these leaders "presented themselves before God." This was for proper worship (合宜的敬拜). Surely the Ark of the Covenant (约柜) was there, the ark which represented Jesus Christ. There is no worship without Christ. **There is no worship without blood.**

**3. Why did Joshua choose to speak to Israel at Shechem? This was not an accident.** At Shechem Abraham had met with God when he first came into Canaan. There God solemnly promised to give his descendants the land. **Abraham responded by building an altar to worship the Lord there.**

So Shechem was a place of Divine goodness. Shechem means “shoulder” maybe pointing to the fact that God was promising to carry his people.

Genesis 12:6 Abram passed through the land **to the place of Shechem**, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, **"To your descendants I will give this land."** **And there he built an altar to the LORD**, who had appeared to him.

Furthermore, Shechem was conveniently located near Mt Ebal and Mt Gerazin, the mountains where God pronounced the curses and blessings of the covenant. Today, worship is the principal place of Divine goodness. Here is where you are fed by Word and Sacrament (圣礼). This is your Shechem.

2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including **Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River** in old times; and **they served other gods.** 3 'Then **I took your father Abraham** from the other side of the River, **led him throughout all the land of Canaan**, and **multiplied his descendants** and gave him Isaac. 4 'To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

**4. Joshua then recounted the history of Israel's redemption (救赎、得救), as God dictated.** This is why Reformed ministers call our method of preaching redemptive/historical. We preach about a series of events by which God redeems his people. This was Joshua's method of preaching. Look at the history of redemption he preached.

**a. Terah was the father of Abraham and Nahor.** They lived east of the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia, which was in modern day Iraq. The specific area was Ur of the Chaldees. Terah worshipped idols (偶像) and raised his sons to worship idols. Fire was a chief god. But God adopted them...unworthy as they were. Jews say Abraham was put out of the Chaldees because he would not worship fire. This is false. They are trying to give stolen credit to Abraham.

**b. God then called Abraham from Ur through a Divine impulse.** Abraham was not searching for truth. He was not frustrated with his religion. He was not needy and looking for a change in his fortunes. Rather, he was graciously called by God. It was all of God's doing. Abraham was called a friend of God because worked in him so that he looked forward to the Redeemer, who, in God's plan, would come from Abraham himself.

John 8:56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

Romans 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, (惟有不作工的，只信称罪人为义的神，他的信就算为义。)

**c. Abraham did not immediately go to Canaan.** He stopped and built Haran. Haran is sometimes spelled “Charan.” **d. An aged Abraham finally went to Canaan where God gave him, through his barren wife Sarah, a son, a special seed, Isaac, through whom the Promised Son would come to save the world.** Isaac then had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was special

to God and God gave him 12 sons. (This is election. 拣选) Then those 12 sons multiplied and soon became 70 who went to Egypt. (Even the wicked Ishmael had 12 princes also from his body, and the wicked Esau was given Mt. Seir as a home – a whole country. (This was common grace.)

**5. Oh, indeed what marvelous deeds God has done for you long ago. Every one of you can go back and find idols in your past.** This is why God wants the history of your redemption clearly preached and implanted on your very souls. Learn your history from your ancestors. Abraham was your father. Jacob was your brother. Sarah was your grandmother. Never forget who you are and whose you are. If you do, you will never worship as you ought to.

### **Long Ago – God gave them freedom**

5 'Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. 6 'Then **I brought your fathers out of Egypt**, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 'So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time.

**1. After 400 years in Egypt God multiplied Israel even more until they were over 2,000,000 strong, and rescued them from the tyranny of Egypt and Pharaoh (法老) .** Remember the Moses' song at the Red Sea? (Some survivors from Egypt who were there with Joshua would have remembered this.) This was the doctrine of sovereignty (上帝主权的教义) . God's hand secured their future.

**2. Indeed Israel's did rebel against the Lord but he did not reject them.** Look at some examples:

Exodus 14:11 ... "Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? 12 "*Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?'* For *it would have been* better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

**Surely God had grounds for rejecting Abraham** for his sins against his wife. **He had grounds for rejecting Isaac** for trying to bless the wrong son. **He had grounds for rejecting Jacob** - a deceiver. Absolutely no one would have been saved were it not for God's gracious covenant promises...to Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

8 'And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. **9 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab**, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 'But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he **continued to bless you**. So I delivered you out of his hand. 11 'Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand.

**3. Then God destroyed all the nations that stood in the way of Israel traveling to capture the land of Canaan and after they crossed over the Jordan to enter the Land of Canaan.** What amazing protection! What great love!

**a. God destroyed Balak, the Moabite.** Balak had hired Balaam to curse Israel (an act of war) but he ended up blessing them. God literally turned the tongue of the talker to blessing instead of cursing.

**b. Then Jericho and the other nations fell.** The Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and the Jebusites were all destroyed. (They were collectively called Canaanites because the Canaanites were more powerful than the other nations.)

12 'I sent the hornet (黄蜂) before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow.

**4. Then God sent hornets to do his work and help his people.** God is always free to choose whatever means he desires to help him people. He could work miraculously – through overwhelming floods, fire, and lightning, he could use human means, like how he used Balaam, or use hornets. Ultimately, however, he is the one who deserves all praise.

Joshua 24:12 'I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. Exodus 23:27 "I will send My fear before you, **I will cause confusion among all the people** to whom you come...

13 '**I have given you a land for which you did not labor**, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

**5. Finally, God gave them the land, a land with rich abundance.**...not a dry desert or a dense jungle.

**Now God commanded them to Fear him**

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!

**1. Based on the history of God redeeming his people (and the expected redemption in Jesus Christ), he then called on them to respond.** Which story (or history) is taught without a moral or a duty? Israel were not saved to do whatever they wanted. No one is ever saved for no purpose. They were saved to serve the living God. And so were you!

**2. Specifically, what did God expect them to do?**

**a. They had to fear the Lord—a heart matter—for his greatness and for their salvation.**

Hosea 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

Psalms 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Only by trusting in Jesus' work will a man fear God...so Joshua was telling them to depend upon the coming Savior.

**b. They had to serve the Lord because of his greatness and for their salvation.** They had to worship with a single focus. They had to diligently obey his law in their daily life. They were not free to worship and live however they wanted. The Lord said that his yoke is easy...but it is a yoke. God principles had to guide their practice. Only if they were guided by his word they could serve him in truth and sincerity. There could not be any hypocrisy (伪善) in their service. There could not be half-hearted either. And you too!

**c. They had to put away false gods, as Abram.** This was one unique way to show their service of God. They were to stomp on their idols, spit on them, and separate from them. You see, there is no room in the Christian church for dunghill-deities (Baals). Take care that you do not bring gods into your homes...gods that rule you...like you smart phones (what a terrible misnomer 误称)...foods...and egos. Anything that takes the place of God is an idol. Kill it.

Genesis 35:2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, **"Put away the foreign gods that are among you,** purify yourselves, and change your garments. 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and **Jacob hid (buried) them under the terebinth tree** which was by Shechem.

### **Conclusion:**

Joshua traced God's faithfulness from the distant past with Abram, to the more recent past as Israel journeyed from Egypt to Canaan to get the land, and then to the present, where he called on Israel to remain faithful to their faithful Savior. Israel were to be faithful in their hearts, mouths, and hands.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Abraham's story, Moses' story, and Joshua's story is your story. You are blood brothers...you were all redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. And nothing could stop God from doing what he promised to do for you. He promised the Savior and he fulfilled that promise. He kept his word and didn't leave you in your historical darkness. Doesn't this make you come closer to him? Shouldn't you serve him with more knowledge and passion? Wouldn't you want to tell others how faithful your God is?

Finally, we know our God cares, but if you are not a Christian, do you think your present god – who is the Devil – will care for you? I hope you realize his goal is to steal, kill, and destroy. May you not want to remain in his clutches (控制), but may you run to the only one who redeems sinners.