

## **Joshua 24:15-33– How to Move on from Where you are?**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: In the 1<sup>st</sup> part of Joshua's parting sermon he reflected on the distant past, the more recent pass, and then he challenged Israel to be faithful at the present time. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the sermon Joshua "brought it home" as we say. He made the challenge personal! He wanted God's people to personally recommit their lives to serving the Lord – to carry on in their Christian journey.

Our headings are:

**Joshua Challenged the People to serve the Lord**  
**Israel Confirmed that they would serve the Lord**  
**God then Carried his faithful servants home**

Our goals are: That when you reflect on God's faithfulness through your Joshua, you will **recommit to serving the living God** ensuring that the **next generation remains faithful**.

### **Joshua Challenged the People to Serve the Lord**

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."

#### **1. Joshua challenged Israel in a direct way to choose to recommit to serving the Lord, even as Elijah later did.**

1Kings18:21...Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? **If the LORD is God, follow Him**; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

Joshua did this to show that Christianity is free, not forced.

#### **2. Joshua based his call to recommit to the Lord and serve him, not on blind faith(盲信), but on rational, knowledgeable, and intelligent faith.** Israel had firm confidence in God based on **God's promises to save them** and based on **the evidence of God's faithfulness**. What evidence? Israel could see that the other gods around them were not able to save their followers. Only Jehovah could save his followers. The Canaanites' gods were buried or burned and made of sticks and stones.

a. You cannot find a more faithful Savior and God who has recorded his faithfulness so you can have confidence in your future.

b. God's Word stands up to scrutiny (監督). It is reliable. It never changes! Teach it with confidence. This is how faith comes!

#### **3. Joshua specifically chose the word "serve." He knew that some people don't like the idea that they have to serve!** They think that serving is enslavement. But Joshua knew that in serving the Lord, Israel were not losing their liberty – rather, **they were protecting their liberty – avoiding chaos**. True liberty is only preserved when men bow to Jehovah.

**4. Joshua stated his experience-his testimony 见证- in order to stoke the faith of Israel.** He had seen God's faithfulness in his 110 years – both in his public and private life.

Your life and experiences can and must be a testimony to others. Some churches have made it a part of their worship service to testify in various ways of God's goodness in order to encourage each other. This could be done during the fellowship time. At home, take the time to talk to your children so they can know the God you serve!

**5. After declaring his personal faith first, Joshua included his family,** knowing he was the spiritual covenant head of his family. He did not take the view that "my children will decide for themselves." He trained them in God's truth. He taught his family even with his busy life of being judge of the entire nation. What an example he was for us today.

1Timothy 3:4 one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

### **Israel Confirmed their Commitment to serve the Lord**

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

**1. In unity, the people confirmed their commitment 委身 to Jehovah—to serve him –not hopeless and helpless idols.** There was no equivocation (含糊, 模棱两可的话) here...no playing with words. Their commitment was clear.

But keep in mind that though you may not bow down to a literal idol, bowing down to cultural idols, personality idols, and institutional idols is no better than bowing down to a Hindu idols.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since **we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken,** let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

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, who did those **great signs in our sight,** and **preserved us in all the** way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. 18 "And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. **We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.**"

**Then the people stated why they would serve the true God.** They knew that "Mercy requires duty." (Trapp)

**a. Jehovah had brought them out of Egyptian slavery and gave them a secured future.**

Jehovah confirmed that liberation through the signs and wonders...like opening up the Red Sea, making bitter water sweet, and giving them food directly from heaven every day for 40 years...

**b. Jehovah, with whom they were in covenant, had protected them from their enemies from Egypt to Canaan**-like drowning Pharaoh and his army, and every nation that tried to harm them on the way.

But this was not a simplistic story of "my God being stronger than your god." Jehovah only became Israel's Father because they trusted in the great Covenant Keeper, the Lord Jesus. This is

the same basis of your service to the Lord today. He freed your souls from spiritual captivity (束縛, 囚禁).

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.

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 you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "**No, but we will serve the LORD!**"

**3. Then the people confirmed their commitment for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time to serve the Lord after Joshua asked them one more time if they were sure they were not going to go after idols and abandon serving the true and living God.** Joshua wanted them to know that there were seducers who would want to lure them away from serving Jehovah. He wanted them to know that they needed God's help to follow him. He wanted them to know it was difficult to serve the Lord. He wanted them to know that if they didn't, this one true God would consume them – literally eat them up – for it would be the ultimate contempt (藐視) to abandon the one who made them everything they were and gave them everything they had. (Who knows the power of jealousy?) God "smokes" those who run after other gods. But Israel's response was adamant: They would not run after idols but serve the living God. This was the answer God wanted. This is the answer every dying father wants to hear!

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

**4. This type of vow taking is important.** This is what converts or baptized children who want to profess their faith do. Israel did this to impress on themselves the seriousness of their faith in God. This wanted to fully embrace true Christianity. They were going to take the yoke of following the Lord.

When someone says, "I am Christian, but I am not a subscriber," or "I'm a Christian, but I'm not a fanatic," tell them that they must show they believe by submitting to the Lord's Word and to his church. You will see if they are true believers!

23 "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel."

**5. Joshua then reminded Israel that they had to show their commitment to serve the true and living God and that they had to immediately.** They had to search out their lands and their homes. If they found any idol they had to remove it and destroy it. Joshua started with the key problem of man-not adultery, (奸淫) not theft, but idolatry (偶像崇拜).

24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an **ordinance in Shechem.**

**6. Then for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time, Israel confirmed their commitment to serving Jehovah.** This showed that this was not an empty promise, nor was it an impulsive (冲动的) promise...like Ruth!

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people *shall be* my people, And your God, my God.

26 Then 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. 27 And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone **shall be a witness to us**, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God." 28 So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

**7. And to further cement (巩固) that commitment, Joshua wrote it down on a large stone.** He wanted to make sure that the words were readable. (They are described as "speaking – witnessing-stones.") He set it under an oak tree – knowing that they last for a long time. Signs are important for people. **All rulers in our churches continue to sign a form of subscription to the doctrine of the church to this day! And this is why we continuously teach doctrines...and why we will never stop!**

### **God then Carried his faithful servants home**

29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the **servant of the LORD**, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

**1. It is normal that after a hard day's work one longs to go home and put one's feet up.** So with Joshua's earthly work done, he longed for home. Therefore the Lord carried him home. Upon his death, Joshua was remembered as "the servant of the Lord." He was great, honored, feared, but he was known as God's servant.

This is what your children will remember most about you...how you love and serve God. This is what matters the most.

30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the **north side of Mount Gaash**.

**2. Joshua's body was treated respectfully, but not inordinately (过度地).** There were no statues made of him – like there are of non-Christian rulers. He was the prophet, priest, and king of Israel, but he wanted nothing better than to be buried simply. So the people gave him a simple burial. And notice that he was buried on Mt Gaash – the quaking hill. According to Jewish records, Gaash quaked (震颤) when Joshua died. He died when Israel's freedom was completed. Later, when the greater Joshua died to bring freedom to the world, wasn't there a quaking also?

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

**3. Israel continued to serve the Lord while those who experienced God's goodness remained alive.**

It is your duty to pass on what God has done in the past in your life, but more importantly, what God did in the distant past **on the cross**. If your children or churches don't get timely reminders of God's faithfulness, there is no way that they will remain faithful. "**Candy-coated Sermonettes**" **surely contributes to memory loss**. This is one of the greatest dangers facing our churches.

**Remember the necessity of redemptive historical preaching!**

32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

**4. One more thing about Joseph's bones to encourage Israel.** Joseph had made the people promise to take his bones to Canaan when they left Egypt. This was intended to be an example of his faith in the true God and his promises. He knew the promise that **they would get the land.** He knew from that land Messiah would come and be a blessing. Jesus Christ would not just be a blessing to the Jewish people, but the whole world. Israel saw part of this come true!

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

**5. Then Eleazar the priest died. And he too was buried with the confident hope of the resurrection.** He had faced many challenges in his life. He had to stand up to sin. But when his work was done, it was time for him to go home and put his feet up.

### **Conclusion:**

Joshua Challenged Israel to serve the Lord based on what God had done for them and what he experience in his own life. Israel responded positively to the challenged and confirmed that they would serve the Lord. It was as happy time to die for Joshua and Eleazar. They could indeed die in peace knowing their children were safe.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I challenge you today to recommit your life to serving the true and living Savior who had shown you his power, his promises, and his love. You have seen much more than Israel did. This means you faith should be stronger and your love more intense. If your love is not intense, refit yourself with the knowledge of God's faithfulness. (The weakest people are the ones who hear the least preaching.) And then also rededicate yourself to bring this message to your children or those under you charge. This will help you to move on with your life and truly honor your Savior.

Finally, those who are not Christians are serving a false god-an idol of some sort-that is hopeless-weak-and will be destroyed by the true God. If you are wise, you will consider...use your mind...and run to the true God of heaven and earth. He will forgive those who call to him through the work of Jesus Christ.