

New Beginnings

The Power of Choice
Joshua 24:1-28

- » Joshua chapters 10-23 recount battles and territory allotment
- » The book ends with a call for Israel to affirm its faith in Yahweh
- » Joshua asks the nation, 'Whom will you serve?', 'Whom will you choose?'
- » In a polytheistic culture, 'Which God or Gods do you choose to serve?'



Why Shechem?

- » An important place in the history of Israel
- » Abraham hears God's voice in Shechem (Genesis 12:7)
- » Jacob has family destroy their idols at Shechem (Genesis 35:4)
- » Joseph's bones buried at Shechem (Joshua 24:32)

1. The Lord's Benevolent Acts

Joshua 24:2-13

A Treaty

- » Joshua sets his discourse up using an ancient Near Eastern treaty form
- » Superior power & a vassal state
- » The metaphor of kingship – receiving shelter from the king

God's work in Israel's history

- » Joshua begins with the story of Abraham, his call and an overview of God's work in Israel
- » Coming in to Canaan, going to Egypt, redemption from Egypt, entrance into the Promised land

God: the Initiator & Agent of Success

- » God took action on behalf of Israel – 'I took', 'I gave', 'I sent', 'I brought out', 'I rescued'
- » All actions that bring salvation and blessing upon Israel
- » God's work traced back to Abraham in Mesopotamia

II. The Charge to Faithfulness & Israel's Response

Joshua 24:14-18

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.

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.

Joshua 24:14-15

Two Verbs Emphasized

1. To revere (fear) – speaks of devotion, obedience, the posture of the heart
2. To serve – used 9x here
 - a. An inward disposition – to be devoted in sincerity & faithfulness

2. To serve

- b. An outward disposition - actions demonstrate inward devotion - eg. Jacob burning family idols

- » Serving the Lord means not serving the other gods
- » Ends with Joshua's famous declaration, 'but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord'

Israel's Response (v16-18)

- i. Israel rejects the notion of serving other gods (v16)
- ii. God has been and is now our saviour (v17-18)
- iii. The people repeat Joshua's affirmation of v15 with a similar attitude of devotion and service - "He is our God"

III. Joshua's Further Exhortation to Devotion

Joshua 24:19-28

An Antiphonal Response

- » 'We will serve the Lord' (3x - v21, 22, 24)
- » Each a response to Joshua's claim that God is a jealous God
- » Jealous = zealous & wanting complete devotion

- » In a context where the foreign god's are not jealous - everyone is expected to worship other gods
- » "for you shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14)

- » God desires intimacy, commitment, faithfulness from his people as a Zealous God
- » The people respond "we will obey" - listen to his voice (v24b)

Application

1. God desires complete devotion
 - God is a zealous God
 - Not a casual or convenient relationship to God
 - To love God with all our heart, soul & mind

2. The power of our choice
 - To choose now; the day in the present
 - The object of our choice is 'seek first the kingdom of God'

3. Our devotion is to our Trinitarian God
 - Abba & his son, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit
 - 'To eat the body of Christ' (John 6:57-58) standing for a passionate abiding in Christ

4. God has expectations for his people
 - God is not a detached God
 - We are not to go on autopilot in terms of our relationship

- » At every point there is a choice to either turn to God or turn away
- » "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5)