

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Joshua gathers all the tribes together at Shechem, Joshua 24:1; and gives them a history of God's gracious dealings with Abraham, Joshua 24:2, Joshua 24:3; Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, Joshua 24:4; Moses and Aaron, and their fathers in Egypt, Joshua 24:5, Joshua 24:6. His judgments on the Egyptians, Joshua 24:7. On the Amorites, Joshua 24:8. Their deliverance from Balak and Balaam, Joshua 24:9, Joshua 24:10. Their conquests in the promised land, and their establishment in the possession of it, Joshua 24:11-13. Exhorts them to abolish idolatry, and informs them of his and his family's resolution to serve Jehovah, Joshua 24:14, Joshua 24:15. The people solemnly promise to serve the Lord alone, and mention his merciful dealings towards them, Joshua 24:16-18. Joshua shows them the holiness of God, and the danger of apostasy, Joshua 24:19, Joshua 24:20. The people again promise obedience, Joshua 24:21. Joshua calls them to witness against themselves, that they had promised to worship God alone, and exhorts them to put away the strange gods, Joshua 24:22, Joshua 24:23. They promise obedience, Joshua 24:24. Joshua makes a covenant with the people, writes it in a book, sets up a stone as a memorial of it, and dismisses the people, Joshua 24:25-28. Joshua's death, Joshua 24:29, and burial, Joshua 24:30. The people continue faithful during that generation, Joshua 24:31. They bury the bones of Joseph in Shechem, Joshua 24:32. Eleazar the high priest dies also, Joshua 24:33.

Verse 1

Joshua gathered all the tribes - This must have been a different assembly from that mentioned in the preceding chapter, though probably held not long after the former.

To Shechem - As it is immediately added that they presented themselves before God, this must mean the tabernacle; but at this time the tabernacle was not at Shechem but at Shiloh. The Septuagint appear to have been struck with this difficulty, and therefore read ἱερόν . Shiloh, both here and in Joshua 24:25, though the Aldine and Complutensian editions have ἱερόν, Shechem, in both places. Many suppose that this is the original reading, and that Shechem has crept into the text instead of Shiloh. Perhaps there is more of imaginary than real difficulty in the text. As Joshua was now old and incapable of travelling, he certainly had a right to assemble the representatives of the tribes wherever he found most convenient, and to bring the ark of the covenant to the place of assembling: and this was probably done on this occasion. Shechem is a place famous in the patriarchal history. Here Abraham settled on his first coming into the land of Canaan, Genesis 12:6, Genesis 12:7; and here the patriarchs were buried, Acts 7:16. And as Shechem lay between Ebal and Gerizim, where Joshua had before made a covenant with the people, Joshua 8:30, etc., the very circumstance of the place would be undoubtedly friendly to the solemnity of the present occasion. Shuckford supposes that the covenant was made at Shechem, and that the people went to Shiloh to confirm it before the Lord. Mr. Mede thinks the Ephraimites had a (proseucha), or temporary oratory or house of prayer, at Shechem, whither the people resorted for Divine worship when they could not get to the tabernacle; and that this is what is called before the Lord; but this conjecture seems not at all likely, God having forbidden this kind of worship.

Verse 2

On the other side of the flood - The river Euphrates.

They served other gods - Probably Abraham as well as Terah his father was an idolater, till he received the call of God to leave that land. See on Genesis 11:31 (note); Genesis 12:1 (note).

Verse 9

Then Balak - arose and warred against Israel - This circumstance is not related in Numbers 22:1-41, nor does it appear in that history that the Moabites attacked the Israelites; and probably the warring here mentioned means no more than his attempts to destroy them by the curses of Balaam, and the wiles of the Midianitish women.

Verse 11

The men of Jericho fought against you - See the notes on Joshua 3:1-16 (note) and Joshua 6:1 (note), etc. The people of Jericho are said to have fought against the Israelites, because they opposed them by shutting their gates, etc., though they did not attempt to meet them in the field.

Verse 12

I sent the hornet before you - See the note on Exodus 23:28.

Verse 14

Fear the Lord - Reverence him as the sole object of your religious worship.

Serve him - Perform his will by obeying his commands.

In sincerity - Having your whole heart engaged in his worship.

And in truth - According to the directions he has given you in his infallible word.

Put away the gods, etc. - From this exhortation of Joshua we learn of what sort the gods were, to the worship of whom these Israelites were still attached.

1. Those which their fathers worshipped on the other side of the flood: i.e., the gods of the Chaldeans, fire, light, the sun.

2. Those of the Egyptians, Apis, Anubis, the ape, serpents, vegetables, etc.

3. Those of the Canaanites, Moabites, etc., Baal-peor or Priapus, Astarte or Venus, etc., etc.

All these he refers to in this and the following verse. See at the conclusion of Joshua 24:33 (note). How astonishing is this, that, after all God had done for them, and all the miracles they had seen, there should still be found among them both idols and idolaters! That it was so we have the fullest evidence, both here and in Joshua 24:23; Amos 5:26; and in Acts 7:41. But what excuse can be made for such stupid, not to say brutish, blindness? Probably they thought they could the better represent the Divine nature by using symbols and images, and perhaps they professed to worship God through the medium of these. At least this is what has been alleged in behalf of a gross class of Christians who are notorious for image worship. But on such conduct God will never look with any allowance, where he has given his word and testimony.

Verse 15

Choose you this day whom ye will serve - Joshua well knew that all service that was not free and voluntary could be only deceit and hypocrisy, and that God loveth a cheerful giver. He therefore calls upon the people to make their choice, for God himself would not force them - they must serve him with all their heart if they served him at all. As for himself and family, he shows them that their choice was already fixed, for they had taken Jehovah for their portion.

Verse 16

God forbid that we should forsake the Lord - That they were now sincere cannot be reasonably doubted, for they served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and the elders that outlived him, Joshua 24:31; but afterwards they turned aside, and did serve other gods. "It is ordinary," says Mr. Trapp, "for the many-headed multitude to turn with the stream - to be of the same religion with their superiors: thus at Rome, in Diocletian's time, they were pagans; in Constantine's Christians; in Constantius's, Arians; in Julian's apostates, and in Jovinian's, Christians again! And all this within less than the age of a man. It is, therefore, a good thing that the heart be established with grace."

Verse 19

Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God - If we are to take this literally, we cannot blame the Israelites for their defection from the worship of the true God; for if it was impossible for them to serve God, they could not but come short of his kingdom: but surely this was not the case. Instead of *לֹא תַעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* (lo thuchelu), ye Cannot serve, etc., some eminent critics read *לֹא תַעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* (lo thechallu), ye shall not Cease to serve, etc. This is a very ingenious emendation, but there is not one MS. in all the collections of Kennicott and De Rossi to support it. However, it appears very possible that the first *ו* (vau) in *לֹא תַעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* did not make a part of the word originally. If the common reading be preferred, the meaning of the place must be, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is holy and jealous, unless ye put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the flood. For he is a jealous God, and will not give to nor divide his glory with any other. He is a holy God, and will not have his people defiled with the impure worship of the Gentiles."

Verse 21

And the people said - Nay; but we will serve, etc. - So they understood the words of Joshua to imply no moral impossibility on their side: and had they earnestly sought the gracious assistance of God, they would have continued steady in his covenant.

Verse 22

Ye are witnesses against yourselves - Ye have been sufficiently apprised of the difficulties in your way - of

God's holiness - your own weakness and inconstancy - the need you have of Divine help, and the awful consequences of apostasy; and now ye deliberately make your choice. Remember then, that ye are witnesses against yourselves, and your own conscience will be witness, judge, and executioner; or, as one terms it, index, judex, vindex.

Verse 23

Now therefore put away - As you have promised to reform, begin instantly the work of reformation. A man's promise to serve God soon loses its moral hold of his conscience if he do not instantaneously begin to put it in practice. The grace that enables him to promise is that by the strength of which he is to begin the performance.

Verse 25

Joshua made a covenant - Literally, Joshua cut the covenant, alluding to the sacrifice offered on the occasion.

And set then a statute and an ordinance - He made a solemn and public act of the whole, which was signed and witnessed by himself and the people, in the presence of Jehovah; and having done so, he wrote the words of the covenant in the book of the law of God, probably in some part of the skin constituting the great roll, on which the laws of God were written, and of which there were some blank columns to spare. Having done this, he took a great stone and set it up under an oak - that this might be "ed" or witness that, at such a time and place, this covenant was made, the terms of which might be found written in the book of the law, which was laid up beside the ark. See Deuteronomy 31:26.

Verse 27

This stone - hath heard all the words - That is, the stone itself, from its permanency, shall be in all succeeding ages as competent and as substantial a witness as one who had been present at the transaction, and heard all the words which on both sides were spoken on the occasion.

Verse 28

So Joshua - After this verse the Septuagint insert Joshua 24:31.

Verse 29

Joshua the son of Nun - died - This event probably took place shortly after this public assembly; for he was old and stricken in years when he held the assembly mentioned Joshua 23:2; and as his work was now all done, and his soul ripened for a state of blessedness, God took him to himself, being one hundred and ten years of age; exactly the same age as that of the patriarch Joseph. See Genesis 50:26.

Verse 30

And they buried him - in Timnath-serah - This was his own inheritance, as we have seen Joshua 19:50. The Septuagint add here, "And they put with him there, in the tomb in which they buried him, the knives of stone with which he circumcised the children of Israel in Gilgal, according as the Lord commanded when he brought them out of Egypt; and there they are till this day." St. Augustine quotes the same passage in his thirtieth question on the book of Joshua, which, in all probability, he took from some copy of the Septuagint. It is very strange that there is no account of any public mourning for the death of this eminent general; probably, as he was buried in his own inheritance, he had forbidden all funeral pomp, and it is likely was privately interred.

Verse 31

And Israel served the Lord, etc. - Though there was private idolatry among them, for they had strange gods, yet there was no public idolatry all the days of Joshua and of the elders that overlived Joshua; most of whom must have been advanced in years at the death of this great man. Hence Calmet supposes that the whole of this time might amount to about fifteen years. It has already been noted that this verse is placed by the Septuagint after Joshua 24:28.

Verse 32

And the bones of Joseph - See the note on Genesis 50:25, and on Exodus 13:19. This burying of the bones of Joseph probably took place when the conquest of the land was completed, and each tribe had received its inheritance; for it is not likely that this was deferred till after the death of Joshua.

Verse 33

And Eleazar - died - Probably about the same time as Joshua, or soon after; though some think he outlived him six years. Thus, nearly all the persons who had witnessed the miracles of God in the wilderness were gathered to their fathers; and their descendants left in possession of the great inheritance, with the Law of God in their hands, and the bright example of their illustrious ancestors before their eyes. It must be added that they

possessed every advantage necessary to make them a great, a wise, and a holy people. How they used, or rather how they abused, these advantages, their subsequent history, given in the sacred books, amply testifies.

A hill that pertained to Phinehas his son - This grant was probably made to Phinehas as a token of the respect of the whole nation, for his zeal, courage, and usefulness: for the priests had properly no inheritance. At the end of this verse the Septuagint add: - "In that day the children of Israel, taking up the ark of the covenant of God, carried it about with them, and Phinehas succeeded to the high priest's office in the place of his father until his death; and he was buried in Gabaath, which belonged to himself. Then the children of Israel went every man to his own place, and to his own city. And the children of Israel worshipped Astarte and Ashtaroth, and the gods of the surrounding nations, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Eglon king of Moab, and he tyrannized over them for eighteen years."

The last six verses in this chapter were, doubtless, not written by Joshua; for no man can give an account of his own death and burial. Eleazar, Phinehas, or Samuel, might have added them, to bring down the narration so as to connect it with their own times; and thus preserve the thread of the history unbroken. This is a common case; many men write histories of their own lives, which, in the last circumstances, are finished by others, and who has ever thought of impeaching the authenticity of the preceding part, because the subsequent was the work of a different hand? Hirtius's supplement has never invalidated the authenticity of the Commentaries of Caesar, nor the work of Quintus Smyrnaeus, that of the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer; nor the 13th book of Aeneid, by Mapheus Viggus, the authenticity of the preceding twelve, as the genuine work of Virgil. We should be thankful that an adequate and faithful hand has supplied those circumstances which the original author could not write, and without which the work would have been incomplete. Mr. Saurin has an excellent dissertation on this grand federal act formed by Joshua and the people of Israel on this very solemn occasion, of the substance of which the reader will not be displeased to find the following very short outline, which may be easily filled up by any whose business it is to instruct the public; for such a circumstance may with great propriety be brought before a Christian congregation at any time: - "Seven things are to be considered in this renewal of the covenant.

- I. The dignity of the mediator.
- II. The freedom of those who contracted.
- III. The necessity of the choice.
- IV. The extent of the conditions.
- V. The peril of the engagement.
- VI. The solemnity of the acceptance.
- VII. The nearness of the consequence.

I. The dignity of the mediator. - Take a view of his names, Hosea and Jehoshua. God will save: he will save. The first is like a promise; the second, the fulfillment of that promise. God will save some time or other: - this is the very person by whom he will accomplish his promise. Take a view of Joshua's life: his faith, courage, constancy, heroism, and success. A remarkable type of Christ. See Hebrews 4:8.

II. The freedom of those who contracted. - Take away the gods which your fathers served beyond the flood; and in Egypt, etc., Joshua 24:14, etc. Joshua exhibits to the Israelites all the religions which were then known:

1. That of the Chaldeans, which consisted in the adoration of fire.
2. That of the Egyptians, which consisted in the worship of the ox Apis, cats, dogs, and serpents; which had been preceded by the worship even of vegetables, such as the onion, etc.
3. That of the people of Canaan, the principal objects of which were Astarte, (Venus), and Baal Peor, (Priapus). Make remarks on the liberty of choice which every man has, and which God, in matters of religion, applies to, and calls into action.

III. The necessity of the choice. - To be without religion, is to be without happiness here, and without any title to the kingdom of God. To have a false religion, is the broad road to perdition; and to have the true religion, and live agreeably to it, is the high road to heaven. Life is precarious - death is at the door - the Judge calls - much is to be done, and perhaps little time to do it in! Eternity depends on the present moment. Choose - choose speedily - determinately, etc.

IV. The extent of the conditions. - Fear the Lord, and serve him in truth and righteousness. Fear the Lord. Consider his being, his power, holiness, justice, etc. This is the gate to religion. Religion itself consists of two parts.

- I. Truth.

1. In opposition to the detestable idolatry of the forementioned nations.
2. In reference to that revelation which God gave of himself.
3. In reference to that solid peace and comfort which false religions may promise, but cannot give; and which the true religion communicates to all who properly embrace it.

II. Uprightness or integrity, in opposition to those abominable vices by which themselves and the neighboring nations had been defiled.

1. The major part of men have one religion for youth, another for old age. But he who serves God in integrity, serves him with all his heart in every part of life.
2. Most men have a religion of times, places, and circumstances. This is a defective religion. Integrity takes in every time, every place, and every circumstance; God's law being ever kept before the eyes, and his love in the heart, dictating purity and perfection to every thought, word, and work.
3. Many content themselves with abstaining from vice, and think themselves sure of the kingdom of God because they do not sin as others. But he who serves God in integrity, not only abstains from the act and the appearance of evil, but steadily performs every moral good.
4. Many think that if they practice some kind of virtues, to which they feel less of a natural repugnance, they bid fair for the kingdom; but this is opposite to uprightness. The religion of God equally forbids every species of vice, and recommends every kind of virtue.

V. The peril of the engagement. - This covenant had in it the nature of an oath; for so much the phrase before the Lord implies: therefore those who entered into this covenant bound themselves by oath unto the Lord, to be steady and faithful in it. But it may be asked, "As human nature is very corrupt, and exceedingly fickle, is there not the greatest danger of breaking such a covenant; and is it not better not to make it, than to run the risk of breaking it, and exposing one's self to superadded punishment on that account?" Answer: He who makes such a covenant in God's strength, will have that strength to enable him to prove faithful to it. Besides, if the soul do not feel itself under the most solemn obligation to live to God, it will live to the world and the flesh. Nor is such a covenant as this more solemn and strict than that which we have often made; first in our baptism, and often afterwards in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, etc. Joshua allows there is a great danger in making this covenant. Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy, strong, and jealous God, etc. But this only supposes that nothing could be done right but by his Spirit, and in his strength. The energy of the Holy Spirit is equal to every requisition of God's holy law, as far as it regards the moral conduct of a believer in Christ.

VI. The solemnity of the acceptance. - Notwithstanding Joshua faithfully laid down the dreadful evils which those might expect who should abandon the Lord; yet they entered solemnly into the covenant. God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, but we will serve the Lord. They seemed to think that not to covenant in this case was to reject.

VII. The nearness of the consequence. - There were false gods among them, and these must be immediately put away. As ye have taken the Lord for your God, then put away the strange gods which are among you, Joshua 24:23. The moment the covenant is made, that same moment the conditions of it come into force. He who makes this covenant with God should immediately break off from every evil design, companion, word, and work. Finally, Joshua erected two monuments of this solemn transaction:

1. He caused the word to be written in the book of the law, Joshua 24:26.
2. He erected a stone under an oak, Joshua 24:27; that these two things might be witnesses against them if they broke the covenant which they then made, etc.

There is the same indispensable necessity for every one who professes Christianity, to enter into a covenant with God through Christ. He who is not determined to be on God's side, will be found on the side of the world, the devil, and the flesh. And he who does not turn from all his iniquities, cannot make such a covenant. And he who does not make it now, may probably never have another opportunity. Reader, death is at the door, and eternity is at hand. These are truths which are everywhere proclaimed - everywhere professedly believed - everywhere acknowledged to be important and perhaps nowhere laid to heart as they should be. And yet all grant that they are born to die!

On the character and conduct of Joshua, much has already been said in the notes; and particularly in the preface to this book. A few particulars may be added.

It does not appear that Joshua was ever married, or that he had any children. That he was high in the estimation of God, we learn from his being chosen to succeed Moses in the government of the people. He was the person alone, of all the host of Israel, who was deemed every way qualified to go out before the congregation, and go

in: to lead them out, and bring them in; and be the shepherd of the people, because the Spirit of God was in him. See Numbers 27:17, etc. He is called the servant of God, as was Moses; and was, of all men of that generation, next in eminence to that great legislator.

Like his great master, he neither provided for himself nor his relatives; though he had it constantly in his power so to do. He was the head and leader of the people; the chief and foremost in all fatigues and dangers; without whose piety, prudence, wisdom, and military skill, the whole tribes of Israel, humanly speaking, must have been ruined. And yet this conqueror of the nations did not reserve to him self a goodly inheritance, a noble city, nor any part of the spoils of those he had vanquished. His countrymen, it is true, gave him an inheritance among them, Joshua 19:50. This, we might suppose, was in consideration of his eminent services, and this, we might naturally expect, was the best inheritance in the land! No! they gave him Timnath-serah, in the barren mountains of Ephraim, and even this he asked Joshua 19:50. But was not this the best city in the land? No - it was even No city; evidently no more than the ruins of one that had stood in that place; and hence it is said, he builded the city and dwelt therein - he, with some persons of his own tribe, revived the stones out of the rubbish, and made it habitable.

Joshua believed there was a God; he loved him, acted under his influence, and endeavored to the utmost of his power to promote the glory of his Maker, and the welfare of man: and he expected his recompense in another world.

Like Him of whom he was an illustrious type, he led a painful and laborious life, devoting himself entirely to the service of God and the public good. How unlike was Joshua to those men who, for certain services, get elevated to the highest honors: but, not content with the recompense thus awarded them by their country, use their new influence for the farther aggrandizement of themselves and dependents, at the expense, and often to the ruin of their country!

Joshua retires only from labor when there is no more work to be done, and no more dangers to be encountered. He was the first in the field, and the last out of it; and never attempted to take rest till all the tribes of Israel had got their possessions, and were settled in their inheritances! Of him it might be truly said as of Caesar, he continued to work, nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum: for he considered nothing done, while any thing remained undone.

Behold this man retiring from office and from life without any kind of emolument! the greatest man of all the tribes of Israel; the most patriotic, and the most serviceable; and yet the worst provided for! Statesmen! naval and military commanders! look Joshua in the face; read his history; and learn from It what true Patriotism means. That man alone who truly fears and loves God, credits his revelation, and is made a partaker of his Spirit, is capable of performing disinterested services to his country and to mankind!

Masoretic Notes on Joshua

The number of verses in the Book of Joshua is 656, (should be 658, see on Joshua 21:36 (note), etc.), of which the symbol is found in the word $\times^{\text{a}}\times^{\text{Y}}$ (vetharon), (and shall sing), Isaiah 35:6.

Its middle verse is Joshua 13:26.

Its Masoretic sections are 14; the symbol of which is found in the word $\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{“}}$ (yad), (the hand), Ezekiel 37:1. See the note at the end of Genesis.