

We have come to the conclusion of Joshua which includes Joshua's farewell challenge and his death. We have seen the faithfulness of God to keep His promises and His justice upon hardened hearts, both of the pagans and within the nation of Israel. They are about to receive a final warning that is applicable to us as well.

¹ Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. ² And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Joshua 24:1-2 Joshua again gathered the leaders of Israel before God at Shechem. This was the place where God had promised the land to Abraham four hundred years before (Genesis 12:6,7ⁱ). The promise had come to pass. They came together not before Joshua but before God. That is what we do each time we gather.

I think we could call this his second farewell address. He began the speech with the prophetic introduction, "*Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,*" which tell us this is prophecy. Was God speaking to Joshua, or was Joshua referring to Scripture? In either case he could say, "Thus says the LORD!" Because this is a recounting of things Moses received from the LORD. The preacher faithfully summarizing the clear message from God's Word can say, "Thus says the LORD," because God speaks through His Word.

The first words from the LORD were to remind them of their origin. Their patriarch Abraham was called out of paganism. Joshua began there because the theme of the message is to stay faithful to God and shun the idolatry of the nations around them. If you are here today there was probably a time when God called you out of idolatry.

³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. Joshua 24:3 The physical children of Abraham were Ishmael, Isaac, and the children of Keturah. But Isaac was the son of promise. When God says He made Abraham's offspring many, we learn from the Apostle Paul that God is speaking of those with the faith of Abraham, faith to leave behind the idolatry of their clan and follow God wherever He leads. Abraham is the father of the people of faith (Romans 4:16,17ⁱⁱ; 9:8ⁱⁱⁱ; Galatians 3:29^{iv}).

God gave Abraham Isaac. It was not a natural birth like that of his other children. Sarah was well beyond the age childbearing. It was a supernatural birth that was a gift from God (Romans 4:19,20^v). Without that gift there would have never been Israel. God is emphasizing their miraculous origin and His plan for them. God is just as involved in each of our lives (Psalm 139:16^{vi}).

⁴ And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. Joshua 24:4 Jacob and Esau went their separate ways. Esau was the father of the Edomite people. Israel had already encountered the Edomites. An Edomite would rule over them in the future, Herod the Great. But Jacob's family, led by Joseph, lived in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. Though subjugated they multiplied and became a mighty nation (Acts 7:6^{vii}).

⁵ And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. Joshua 24:5 Then God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver the people. They knew the story well because their fathers could tell of it firsthand, and probably often did. God showed His superiority over the gods of Egypt by

turning them into plagues. The Nile was worshiped, so it became blood. Each plague dealt with something they worshiped. That was a not-so-subtle message that what they worshiped was not blessing them but instead was cursing them. The God of Israel showed He was superior to all the gods of Egypt, though Egypt had the secular power and exploited the Hebrews. Perhaps that was a message as well, for the Israelites would experience the same thing in the promised land. Nations would subjugate them for a time, but that does not mean their enemies' gods are greater than YHWH. It means the Israelites were unfaithful to God. God's mighty hand delivered them from Egypt and will deliver them again when they turn to Him (Zechariah 1:3^{viii}).

The new covenant does not promise us that we will rule or even that we will be free from being oppressed. Most of the first century Christians were slaves. Many of the slaves in America were believers and sang spiritual songs as they labored. **The hope of the New Covenant is not in conditions of this life, but in eternal life we experience in Jesus.** Abraham was seeking a city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10^{ix}). The Old Covenant promises of protection and prosperity were a physical picture of the spiritual promises that are ours in Jesus and which see us through the physical conditions of our short lives (Romans 8:35-37^x; 1 Corinthians 10:13^{xi}).

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 And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Joshua 24:6,7a The miraculous salvation of God in the nation's past would give them hope for conflicts in the future. What has God done in your past? How should that affect the way you see future conflict or trials? That is a good reason to keep a journal. We too easily forget how God brought us through what we thought was a hopeless situation.

^{7b} And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Joshua 24:7b Did you notice the absence of the reason they were in the desert a long time? Did you notice that all their murmuring is not even mentioned? There is no mention of the compromise and idol worship at Baalpeor, or the revolt at Mount Sinai and the golden calf, or Korah's rebellion. That is grace! The older generation has died. The younger generation was faithful, so the sins of their fathers were not brought up. Surely, they were aware of what happened, being witnesses to most if not all their parents' failures (Ezekiel 18:20^{xii}).

⁸ Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. ⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, ¹⁰ but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. Joshua 24:8-10 There were more victories because of the LORD being for them. Even with spiritual warfare taking place against them, God made them victorious. And so will it be with us in our spiritual battles, for in Christ Jesus we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37^{xiii})!

¹¹ And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. ¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. Joshua 24:11,12 The conquest of the nations

within the land was the next example of God's faithfulness. It was because the LORD fought for them, not because they had forces superior to the Amorites. In the record of the conquest, we don't read of the hornets attacking cities. This tells us it was a metaphor or there was a lot more going on than the record reveals.

¹³ I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant. Joshua 24:13 On top of all the faithfulness and grace just mentioned, they received homes and fields, vineyards, and olive groves. God kept His promise to Abraham in ways greater than Abraham would have imagined. *Their entire history is the record of God's overflowing covenant grace, as is ours.*^{xiv}

The same will be true for us when we cross the Jordan of death and enter our heavenly dwellings that the Lord has been preparing for us (John 14:1,2^{xv}). Even now we walk in victory not because we are so disciplined, but because of the gift of the Holy Spirit and the power of our Savior's life who has made us new creations through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The promised land of faith is ours in Him (Ephesians 1:3^{xvi}). And we know that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it on the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6^{xvii}).

Would you **consider writing your own account of how good God has been to you?** Write it as if the LORD was recounting your story to you. You can leave out all your failures just like God did for them. Mine started like this: I put you in a home where you would hear my Word constantly. I spoke to your heart when you were just five-years-old and called you to be mine. Countless times I saved you from the consequences of bad choices and directed your life in mercy and grace. I walked with you through the painful times and comforted your heart. I listened to your prayers and answered. I met with your Bible study group and let you all know my holy, loving, presence in a way that would change your life. That would be the highlights until about 16 years of age. I did finish writing the rest. Would you write yours out as an act of worship, reminding yourself how grateful you should be to God for His abundant grace?

¹⁴ "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Joshua 24:14 Because of all the goodness, guidance, blessings, and grace we have received, we should now therefore fear the LORD. That is to be in reverential awe of Him. Realizing how prone we are to err; we should fear getting out of His will and the discipline we would incur if we should be ungrateful (Philippians 2:8^{xviii}).

And serve Him with sincerity and faithfulness. That means with a whole heart in a consistent manner. They must have still kept the mini idols that came out of Egypt with their fathers. After all their experiences of God's divine intervention on their behalf, what in the world were they doing with those gods? But before we become too harsh with them, we should search our own hearts. Are there gods we inherited that we keep around, gods we depend on such as alcohol, entertainment, compromising behavior or thought life, trust in wealth or our job, home, car, beauty, just about anything can be put before God. Instead of thanking Him for the good things and using them in moderation, we can depend on them for our happiness and comfort. We can say we trust God when we really trust other things (Proverbs 3:5^{xix}). The test comes when we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to let go of them. Then we see how much we look to them for our pleasure. Food is a big one. You realize that when you attempt to fast and pray. If you think something

may have taken the supremacy over God in your life, try setting it aside for a week such as some people do in the season of Lent. Then you will see your real relationship with it. If you are dependent on it, put it away until you can put it in its proper place. If the Jesus is not Lord of all my life, then he is not really my Lord at all^{xx}, (Matthew 6:24^{xxi}).

¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond 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.” Joshua 24:15 Decision time! Choose between those false gods or the God who did all that is mentioned in verses 2 through 13. The false gods only provide momentary satisfaction and end up costing more than you imagined. Time to choose. They were settling in as a nation, and if there were people who served another god, it was time for them to leave. Joshua gave no doubt where he and his family stood. What an inspirational challenge! I hope we can all say the same.

In verses 16-18 the people of Israel promised to serve the God who had done all those great things for them. *¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.”* Joshua 24:19,20 Here is Joshua's answer to them and to us. You can't do it. You aren't able. God is holy and jealous, and He won't just look the other way when you sin. His holiness demands justice. Yes, He is love, but He is also righteous and just. If you forsake Him and go after some false god after all He has done for you, after vowing not to, what do you think justice should be? A little slap on the hand? No! Just as He has blessed you, in the same proportion He will deal to you the harm you deserve (Romans 6:23^{xxii}). He will consume you! Don't think for a minute you can receive all His blessings and go whoring after some other god and get away with it. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4^{xxiii}). PERIOD! And you won't handle being God's enemy very well!

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:21 Joshua just told them they can't do it. Now they respond, "Yes, we can!" "When you think you can do it you already blew it!" Sounds like Peter telling Jesus that if no one else follows, he will (Matthew 26:35^{xxiv}). I hear a rooster crowing.

They will be faithful while Joshua lived. But after he dies, they will do exactly what they promised never to do. What God is trying to teach us is that we can't do it in our own strength (John 15:5^{xxv}). We need the help of God moment by moment. We need our minds renewed by His Word (Romans 12:2^{xxvi}). We need the fellowship that reminds us to stay on track and challenges us when we fail. We need the conviction of the Holy Spirit to turn us toward Jesus in every situation we face (John 16:8^{xxvii}).

In verses 22 to 28 the people vow to follow serve the Lord and obey His voice. Then Joshua told them to get rid of the little gods their fathers took out of Egypt. Joshua is telling them what Moses told them and repeating what he told them in verse 14. He asked, “Do you mean what you are saying? Then once and for all time throw away your little idols and *incline your hearts to the LORD.*”

This message is just as real today as it ever was. We go to church, give our tithes, call ourselves good Christians, but the secret little idols that we spend the weekdays on have never been put away. What keeps us from keeping Jesus first in private times? What

are you convicted about? If it is a real issue, I don't have to point it out, the Holy Spirit already has. Get rid of it once and for all!

They renewed the covenant again and Moses set up a large stone as a reminder of the commitment they voiced. I believe this is the fourth time they did so in Joshua.

²⁹ After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old. ³⁰ And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. Joshua 24:29,30

I witnessed many saints who have gone on to glory: Ed Reyes, Connie Logan, the Crawfords (Mr. and Mrs. Wayside), Ida Pierce, Bea Waters to name just a few of those who played such a major role in the outreach from Wayside Chapel. There are at least twenty more I could name. I have preached at their memorial services about how their lives honored God. We are but a vapor that appears for a time and then vanishes away (James 4:14^{xxviii}), but what remains are the lives that have been drawn to Jesus through His life in us. We each should consider that before we leave this earth. How has the life of Jesus in us affected those we know and love?

A hero of the faith, Joshua, went to his heavenly reward. His testimony was that he did all that Moses had commanded him (Joshua 11:15^{xxix}). It reminds me of the death of Bill Bright and Billy Graham. They are no longer present, but they and those whom I mentioned previously are more alive now than they ever were while they were here. Their old bodies will be replaced with heavenly ones (Philippians 3:21^{xxx}). In that great cloud of witnesses, they are cheering us on (Hebrews 12:1^{xxxi}). We have their examples and writings to encourage us as we run our race. It is now our turn to look into the face of God and shine with God's glory (1 Corinthians 3:18^{xxxii}).

³¹ Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel. Joshua 24:31 Every generation needs a personal encounter with God. We can't live on our parent's faith. God has no grandchildren.

³² As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. Joshua 24:32 Before Joseph died in Egypt, he had the people promise to take his bones with them back to Israel (Hebrews 11:22^{xxxiii}). He reminded them of the promise God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A small pyramid in Goshen that had been carefully opened was discovered by archeologists. Unlike the raiding of the other pyramids, this was a work done in the open and with great care. The fragments of a statue within appear to be of a Hebrew with a coat of many colors. ^{xxxiv}

³³ And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim. Joshua 24:33 Eleazar, son of Aaron, also died and was buried. His son would be high priest and carry on the prescribed duties. After all the elders passed, the nation entered the era we call Judges. Sadly, the following generation did not stay faithful. For 400 years the nation had ups and downs depending on their faithfulness to God or lack thereof. When they turned to idolatry, God disciplined them through foreign invaders. He would raise up godly judges to bring them back and restore them time after time. Joshua's warning came to pass. The defining statement of those four hundred years was that every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6^{xxxv}). In other words, they set aside the laws of God

and made up their own rules. Is it any different today? And though we have the Spirit of God indwelling us today, their story seems to be our story as well.

Joshua was successful because he believed God's promise given in the first chapter. ⁸ *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* Joshua 1:8 The promise is for all who are willing to believe the Word and act on it. It is for those who declare, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What about you? Will you declare it with me? "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!" As Joshua declared, "You are unable to do it!" *But with God, all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26^{xxxvi})!

Questions:

- 1 Why did God begin with the call to Abraham?
- 2 What had God done for them?
- 3 Why didn't he mention their failures?
- 4 What did Joshua say their response should be?
- 5 How did Joshua say we should serve God?
- 6 What choice did they have to make?
- 7 What did they promise? Have you made the same promise?
- 8 What was Joshua's response?
- 9 What was Joshua's testimony?
- 10 What happened after his death? Are we on the same trajectory?

ⁱ **Genesis 12:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

ⁱⁱ **Romans 4:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Romans 9:8 (ESV)**

⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

^{iv} **Galatians 3:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

^v **Romans 4:19-20 (ESV)**

¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

^{vi} **Psalms 139:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

^{vii} **Acts 7:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.

viii **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

³ Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

ix **Hebrews 11:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

x **Romans 8:35-37 (ESV)**

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

xi **1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)**

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

xii **Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

xiii **Romans 8:37 (ESV)**

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

xiv Jackman, D. (2014). Joshua, People of God's Purpose. (R. K. Hughes, Ed.) (p. 185). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

xv **John 14:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"

xvi **Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)**

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

xvii **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

xviii **Philippians 2:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

xix **Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

xx Attributed to Augustine.

xxi **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

xxii **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

xxiii **James 4:4 (ESV)**

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

xxiv **Matthew 26:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

xxv **John 15:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

xxvi **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

xxvii **John 16:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

xxviii **James 4:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

^{xxix} **Joshua 11:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

^{xxx} **Philippians 3:21 (ESV)**

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

^{xxxi} **Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

^{xxxii} **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

^{xxxiii} **Hebrews 11:22 (ESV)**

²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

^{xxxiv} <https://www.levitt.com/essays/joseph#identification>

^{xxxv} **Judges 17:6 (ESV)**

⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

^{xxxvi} **Matthew 19:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."