

JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS: A CALL TO DECISION

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Joshua 24:1-33

LESSON 178 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Joshua 24:1-33

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

² And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

³ And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

⁴ And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

⁵ I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

⁶ And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

⁷ And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

⁸ And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

Joshua's Rehearsal of God's Blessings

1 Joshua assembled Israel at Shechem, and rehearsed God's blessings, Joshua 24:1; 23:2;

1 Samuel 10:19

¹⁹ And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands.

2 The Lord called Abraham, Joshua 24:2,3;

Genesis 11:26-32

²⁶ And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷ Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

²⁸ And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

²⁹ And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

³⁰ But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child.

³¹ And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

³² And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Genesis 12:1

¹ Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

Acts 7:2-4

² And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

³ And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

⁴ Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

3 Jacob and his children went into Egypt; the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and also sent plagues upon Egypt, Joshua 24:4,5;

Genesis 46:1-6

¹ And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

² And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here *am* I.

³ And he said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

⁴ I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

¹⁰ But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; *but* not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

¹³ And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

¹⁴ Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

¹⁶ And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other

⁵ And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

⁶ And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

Exodus 3:7-11

⁷ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

¹¹ And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Deuteronomy 4:34

³⁴ Or hath God assayed to go *and* take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

4 Israel was brought out of Egypt; the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, Joshua 24:6,7;

Exodus 14:5-10

⁵ And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?

⁶ And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:

⁷ And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

⁹ But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.

¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.

5 The Lord delivered Israel from their enemies and turned Salaam's curse into a blessing, Joshua 24:8-10;

Deuteronomy 23:4-5

⁴ Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

⁵ Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.

6 Jericho was delivered into their hands, and the Amorites were defeated, Joshua 24:11, 12;

Joshua 6:1-2

¹ Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

² And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into

gods;

¹⁷ For the Lord our God, he *it is* that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

¹⁸ And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the Lord; for he *is* our God.

¹⁹ And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

²⁰ If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

²¹ And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

²² And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.

²³ Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

²⁴ And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

²⁶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the Lord.

²⁷ And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be

thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, *and* the mighty men of valour.

Exodus 23:28

²⁸ And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

7 The Lord gave Israel cities, vineyards, and oliveyards, Joshua 24:13;

Deuteronomy 6:10-11

¹⁰ And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

¹¹ And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

II A Call to Decision

1 Joshua exhorted them to fear the Lord, Joshua 24:14;

Deuteronomy 10:12

¹² And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

Deuteronomy 18:13

¹³ Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

Genesis 17:1

¹ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 Joshua told them his decision: that he and his family would serve the Lord, Joshua 24:15;

Ruth 1:15-17

¹⁵ And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

¹⁶ And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:

¹⁷ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me.

1 Kings 18:21

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Genesis 18:19

¹⁹ For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Ezekiel 20:39

³⁹ As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

John 6:67

⁶⁷ Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

3 The people solemnly promised to serve the Lord, Joshua 24:16-18

4 Joshua showed them the holiness of God, and the danger of apostasy, Joshua 24:19,20;

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

5 The people promised obedience, Joshua 24:21-24;

a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

²⁸ So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

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

³⁰ And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which *is* in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

³¹ And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.

³² And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

³³ And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill *that pertained to* Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

Genesis 35:2

² Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

1 Samuel 7:3

³ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Psalms 119:173

¹⁷³ Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

6 Joshua made a covenant with the people, Joshua 24:25-28;

Exodus 15:25

²⁵ And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

Genesis 28:18

¹⁸ And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Genesis 31:48

⁴⁸ And Laban said, This heap *is* a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

Deuteronomy 31:19

¹⁹ Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:21

²¹ And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.

Deuteronomy 31:26

²⁶ Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

Judges 9:6

⁶ And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

2 Kings 11:17

¹⁷ And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord'S people; between the king also and the people.

III Death and Burial of Joshua and Eleazar

1 Joshua died at the age of 110 years, and was buried in Mount Ephraim, Joshua 24:29, 30;

Judges 2:6-9

⁶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

⁷ And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

⁹ And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

2 For a time Israel served the Lord as they promised, Joshua 24:31

3 Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem, Joshua 24:32;

Genesis 50:25

²⁵ And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

4 Eleazar, the high priest, died, and was buried in Mount Ephraim, Joshua 24:33

NOTES:

Shechem

We again find Shechem the gathering place for all Israel. It was to this place that Abraham came and built an altar when he first entered Canaan. Shechem was the scene of many sacred associations. The situation of the town was one of surpassing beauty. It lay in a fertile valley, protected by Mount Ebal on the north and Mount Gerizim on the south. Springs of water flowed from the mountainsides westward and made this little valley one of the garden spots of Canaan.

Joshua

Joshua, Israel's second great leader, was about to depart from the Land of Canaan to the heavenly land. His testimony could have been like Paul's who said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).

We first hear of Joshua as Moses' young minister, going with him up the side of Mount Sinai. He remained there on the mountainside while Moses was with the Lord in the thick darkness on the top of the mountain for 40 days and nights. At the end of that time they came down the mountain together to find Israel dancing around the golden calf. Joshua faithfully stood by Moses all through Moses' life, and at Moses' death became Israel's leader.

Joshua led the armies of Israel in their first battle and remained their general all through the conquest of Canaan. He was defeated but once, at the battle against Ai, when sin had entered the camp. When sin was put away, God gave Israel the victory they should have had previously.

On another occasion, when the great battle in the conquest of Canaan was being fought, Joshua was so intent on defeating the enemy that when he saw the sun going down he realized the day was not long enough to give complete victory; so, with a faith and courage no one had ever exercised before, he stepped forth before the people and said: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (Joshua 10:12). Never before had the heavenly bodies obeyed the voice of man.

It seems that this last great gathering of Israel before Joshua's death was to draw them into a closer covenant with the Lord and also to give them a final warning against idolatry. We believe Joshua threw his whole heart and soul into his last address to the nation of people with whom he had come out of bondage, and whom he had seen the hand of the Lord guide across the desert into the land of their inheritance. Just as a pastor watches over every sheep in the fold of God and desires to help each one enter the portals of Glory, so Joshua had guided and cared for all Israel until every family had received their inheritance in Canaan.

Joshua's Last Words

Children stand around the bedside of departing parents to catch their last words; and just so, we believe, Israel lent a listening ear to the last words of their beloved leader. He rehearsed the many blessings the Lord had bestowed upon

them. He reminded them that God had brought them out of Egyptian bondage, across the Red Sea, through the terrible wilderness, and at last into the promised Canaan land.

Joshua also used this excellent opportunity to dissuade the people against idolatry. He knew their weaknesses and seeming readiness to conform to the manner of life of the nations around them. He reminded them of God's goodness to Israel, from the call of Abraham to their now happy establishment in the land of promise.

Joshua told Israel that they were indebted to God for their national existence, not through any merits or virtues of their own, but through the free grace of God. Their fathers who had dwelt on the other side of the flood, the other side of the river Euphrates, were idolaters. But the Lord had called Abraham and led him through Canaan and multiplied his seed, and had given him the promise of that land for an inheritance; and now the Lord had established them in that goodly land — a land for which they did not labor, with cities which they did not build. They were eating from oliveyards and vineyards that they did not plant. All this they had inherited because of the free grace of God.

The blessings that came to Israel, in the natural, are typical of the spiritual blessings given to us in this Gospel dispensation. There is not one thing we can do to merit salvation. It comes from God's bountiful hand as a free gift, purchased for us on Calvary. But just as Israel's blessings depended upon their obedience to God's law, so our spiritual blessings depend upon obedience to God's Word today.

Joshua's Call to a Decision

After having enumerated many grounds for national gratitude, and while they were assembled, Joshua called on them to declare in a solemn manner whether they would be faithful and obedient to the God of Israel and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; or "If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15). It was a solemn moment in Israel's national life. It is also a solemn moment in every one's life when the Spirit of the Lord calls him to make a decision for Christ. Some have felt that they were hearing their last call. This was Israel's last call by their great leader, Joshua. He felt the seriousness of the situation and challenged them by setting an excellent example and by saying: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Crossroads

We sometimes speak of coming to the "crossroad" in one's life. Ruth and Orpah came to the crossroad in their lives when they followed Naomi, their mother-in-law, out of their city to go to the Land of Canaan. They came to a turning point. The question before them was: Would they go to the Land of Canaan and serve the God of Israel, or would they go back and serve the gods of Moab? Many are making the same choice Orpah made — to serve the gods of this world. But Ruth clave to her mother-in-law and spoke some truly immortal words, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16), which have stirred many souls to seek and serve the Lord. The prophet Joel caught the import of the time of decision in his prophecy: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3: 14).

Elijah's Call to Backslidden Israel

More than 500 years later, Elijah stood on Mount Carmel and sent out a challenge to backslidden Israel: "How long halt ye

between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The people did not answer him a word; but when Elijah proved to them who the true God was, they fell on their faces and said: "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

Have you answered the call of Christ to your heart? Have you turned your back on the world, the flesh, and the devil, and from your heart have said like Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"? In Jesus' time, when the way became too narrow for many of the people and they turned back from following Jesus, He turned to His disciples and said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67, 68).

Stones as Monuments

In ancient times it was a custom to erect stones as monuments of public transactions. Joshua took a great stone and set it up under an oak by the sanctuary of the Lord, as a witness unto Israel that the Lord had heard the words of the Covenant. When we make a covenant with the Lord, He sends His Spirit to bear witness with our spirit that the covenant has been made, that our prayer has been heard.

The Burial of Three Great Men

Before Joseph died in Egypt, he told his brethren that the Lord would surely visit them and bring them out of Egypt into the land which He swore He would give unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (**Genesis 50:24-25** ²⁴ And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ²⁵ And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.). He had wonderful faith in God's promises. In all their journeyings from Egypt to the Promised Land, they had carried with them the bones of Joseph in a stone coffin. And now that the Lord had established them in the land, they buried Joseph's bones in Shechem, and it became the inheritance of the Children of Joseph.

This chapter records the death and burial of Joshua and also of Eleazar, the high priest. We are told that the people obeyed the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. The Lord called Joshua to Heaven at the age of 110 years. He was a type of Christ, and stands among the great men of the earth. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Name several events that made Shechem an important town.
- 2 Why did Joshua gather all Israel at this time?
- 3 Where is Joshua first mentioned in the Bible?
- 4 What was Israel's besetting sin?
- 5 Tell some of the things that Joshua enumerates in his last words.
- 6 What was the challenge Joshua gave to Israel?
- 7 What decision was Israel called to make that day?
 - 8 Why did not Joseph want to be buried in Egypt?