

Joshua 24:1-33 (2)

As the book of Joshua comes to an end, Israel once again assembled at Shechem to hear Joshua rehearse their covenant history and, in light of that history, to call the nation to rededication and whole-hearted devotion to God.

That is the choice that lies before each of us. In light of all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ, the question we must answer is: 'Will we serve Him or someone else?'

Summary

Joshua 24:1–33 tells believers how to go on serving God and how to deepen our commitment to the Lord.

1. Rehearsed Covenant History & Recommitted Covenant Loyalty Revisited vv. 1-19

Joshua gathered all the tribes at Shechem where he surveyed Israel's history and summarized God's great acts (**Josh 24:1-13**). This provided the redemptive basis upon which to make his subsequent appeal to fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness (**Josh 24:14-15**). **Having reconnected with their covenant history, Israel needed to recommit to their covenant loyalty.** With a robust determination, they confirm their resolution to follow the Lord (**24:16**), reaffirming that the Lord is their God, who had redeemed them from the house of slavery to the new-found freedom of service (**Josh 24:17-18**).

In response to Israel's affirmation, Joshua (Josh 24:19) sternly warned the Israelites of just how serious the promise was that they had made (**Josh 24:19**).

2. Solemn Warnings vv. 20-28

Joshua next spelled out the implications of what God demands (**Josh 24:20**). If Israel failed to live up to their covenant obligations, **First**, the Lord will turn, **secondly**, He will do them harm, and **thirdly**, He will consume or exterminate them. When Israel did subsequently turn from God to the idolatry of Canaan and the surrounding nations, the Lord brought this judgment upon them.

Joshua's words are a cautionary tale for every professing believer (**Luke 9:62**).

The dialogue between Joshua and Israel concluded with the people insisting that they will serve the Lord in spite of the dire warning (**Josh 24:21**).

They understood and accepted that by their decision and profession they would serve as their own witnesses against themselves if they failed to follow the Lord (**24:22**).

In light of this commitment, Israel now had a two-fold responsibility: to put away any foreign gods and incline their heart to the true God (**Josh 24:23**).

To this responsibility they answered with a further affirmation of their resolve (**24:24**).

In response to their restated commitment to the Lord, Joshua then immediately ratified the covenant by doing three things. First, he made ('cut') a covenant and put in place for them statutes and judgments (**24:25**). This renewal ceremony was a means to renew and deepen their commitment to the Lord.' Secondly, Joshua wrote all the

words in the book of the law (**Josh 24:26a**). Thirdly, Joshua erected a large stone under the terebinth tree to serve as a witness (**Josh 24: 26b-27**).

The three elements of a sacrifice, a book, and a witness continue to point the way for believers to engage in covenant renewal today. Like Israel, we need to go back to the cross and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, back to the authority of God's holy law, and back to the witness-bearing work of the Holy Spirit.

3. Three Graves in Canaan vv. 29-33

The first grave is that of Joshua (**Josh 24:29-31**). He died at the age of 110. His burial took place at Timnath-serah, the very place he had received as his inheritance (**19:50**). As for the people of Israel, they served the Lord during Joshua's lifetime and during the leadership of the elders who survived Joshua (**Josh 24:31 cf Judg. 2:10; 17:6**).

Next, we have the record of Joseph's burial (**Josh 24:32**). In obedience to his instructions, the Israelites carried Joseph's bones from Egypt and buried them in Shechem (**Gen. 50:24-25**). Shechem was the land that Jacob bought from the sons of Ham or, the father of Shechem (**Gen. 33:19-20**). Shechem was also the first place in Canaan mentioned in connection with Abraham (**Gen. 12:16**). In Shechem, at 'the oak of Moreh', he built an altar. The place, the oak or terebinth, and the altar tie this passage to Genesis 12 and the promise given to Abraham when he first entered Canaan. Now, hundreds of years later, the pledge is fulfilled because God keeps every promise of his word. Shechem also became an inheritance for the sons of Joseph. Joshua was buried in his inheritance, and Joseph was as well.

The book ends with the record of Eleazar's death and burial (**Josh 24:33**). He served as the high priest during Joshua's era of leadership (**Num. 20:25-28; Josh. 14:1; 17:4; 19:51; 21:1**). As a Levite, he did not have an inheritance in the land, but Gibeah, in the hill country of Ephraim, was given to him as a place to live, and he was buried there.

The concluding words of the book of Joshua present us with the record of Israel's leader (Joshua), their Saviour (Joseph), and their high priest (Eleazar) all dead and buried in the land of promise. They were buried in the land because God fulfilled his word, just as Joseph said he would (**Gen. 50:24-25**). They all died, however, and after the era of the elders, the people turned away from the Lord.

The book of Joshua ends, therefore, with assurance and hope but also with a sense of longing and incompleteness. It leaves us with the desire for a leader, a Saviour, and a high priest who, though crucified and buried in the land of promise, rose again to everlasting life to give us an eternal inheritance, one that is pure and undefiled reserved in heaven for all those who put their hope in Him.

The book of Joshua leaves us longing for and looking for a greater Joshua, the Saviour Jesus Christ.