

Last Chapter- The Death of Joshua

Joshua 24:5 Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them.

Afterward I brought you out. :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 So they cried out to the Lord; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. :8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you.

The grand review of Israel's history began with Abraham's father, Terah, and the service of other gods. The presence of the teraphim in the household of Laban amply illustrates this truth (Gen 31:19, 30).

Abraham was taken by God from the other side of the flood, i.e. the Euphrates River, and led to Canaan, where Isaac, Jacob, and Esau were subsequently born. When the descendants of Jacob went down into Egypt, God called upon Moses to bring them through the Red Sea unto the land of the Amorites (see 12:1–6; Num 21:21–34; Deut 2:31–36; 3:1–17). *Why is history so important to our faith?*

Joshua 24:9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. **:10** But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. **:11** Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you—also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. **:12** I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow.

Since there is no record of a military attack by Balak, although such was his intention (cf. Num 22:6–11), The weapon he decided to use was Balaam's power to curse, as the verse goes on to relate" (A. Cohen, Joshua, p. 145).

Balak would have fought against Israel, but God superintended through Balaam to bless Israel and deliver them so that they might cross the Jordan.

In preparation for this event, God sent the hornet before the Israelites. The "hornet" has been variously explained by serious Bible students. They may be understood as literal, stinging creatures, or as creatures which were sent as a plague into Canaan to prepare the way for the children of Israel.

Archaeologist John Garstang (who became renowned for his excavation of Jericho) believed the "hornet" to be a reference to Egyptian armies that defeated the peoples of Canaan shortly before the conquest (see Joshua-Judges, p. 259).

But there is no historical evidence that such an invasion actually took place. Besides, the "hornet" was yet a future phenomenon at the eve of the conquest (Deut 7:20). A more likely interpretation is that the "hornet" was a poetic way of describing the terror which struck the hearts of those in Canaan when they heard of the rapid fall of Sihon and Og (2:11; 6:1, see also Ex 23:27–30; Deut 2:25; 7:20).

Joshua 24:13 I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

God had given to Israel a land for which she did not labor and cities which she did not build. She reaped the benefits of vineyards and oliveyards, which she did not plant. Such unmerited grace called for a commitment of service on the part of Israel. *What must we be careful with, in living in the blessings of God?*

Joshua 24:14 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!

Joshua 24:15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of 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."

The choice here was not between the Lord and idols: Joshua assumed that the people had already decided against serving God. So he challenged them to choose between the gods which their ancestors had served in Mesopotamia and the gods of the Amorites that they had found in Canaan.

Joshua's noble decision for himself and his household has been an inspiration to succeeding generations of believers: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What can we learn from this statement?

Joshua 24:16 So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods;

Joshua 24:17 for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. :18 And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God."

Joshua 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Joshua 24:20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."

Idolatry seems to have been one of Israel's besetting sins.

Their earliest ancestors served other gods, as we have seen (v. 2). When Jacob and his family left Laban, it was Rachel who carried off her father's gods (Gen. 31:30–34).

But when they arrived in the land, Jacob ordered his household to put away these "strange gods," and he hid them under an oak tree that was by Shechem (Gen. 35:2, 4).

And in the same place Joshua urged his generation to put away the gods which their fathers served (v. 14).

Joshua 24:21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord!" What can we learn from this verse?

Joshua 24:22 So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses!"

Joshua 24:23 "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel."

Joshua 24:24 And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!"

Joshua comes back at them one more time, reminding them that both they and he are witnesses to their heart covenant with God.

Again, the third time, they repeat, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. This triple affirmation is reminiscent of many Christians who rededicate their lives to the Lord over and over again, but who have never made a real heart covenant with their Lord in the first place.

It is also reminiscent of Jesus' triple inquiry of Peter and Peter's persistent claim of love for the Lord (Jn 21:15–19).

Joshua 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. :26 Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Convinced that Israel would little note nor long remember what she had affirmed at his farewell address, Joshua set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. This time it was in stone that Joshua made a covenant (Heb *berit*, lit., "cut a covenant," a common Hebrew, Greek, and Latin expression for the formation of a covenant which was accompanied by a sacrifice cut into pieces and offered to the deity).

The practice of chiseling a covenant in stone (like the tablets of the Mosaic law) was common in the ancient Near East.

Joshua set the great covenant stone under an oak as a witness unto us of what Israel had covenanted. With these precautions taken against idolatry, Joshua permitted the people to depart to their homes.

Joshua 24:27 And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.”:28 So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

Joshua 24:29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

Joshua 24:30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

Joshua 24:31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.

Joshua 24:32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

The respect given Joseph is again seen in the scrupulous fulfillment of his request to be buried in Shechem. Accordingly, his bones were brought from Egypt in the Exodus and were laid to rest in the parcel of ground (lit., “portion of the field,” see Gen 33:19) which Jacob bought from Hamor.

Joshua 24:33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

To close out the triple conclusion to the conquest of Promised Land, the death and burial of Eleazar (see Ex 6:23; 28:1; Josh 14:1) is recorded. He was buried in a hill that belonged to his son Phinehas.

With the passing of Joshua and Eleazar, an era in Israel’s history comes to a close. But also with the deaths of these stalwart servants of Jehovah, the children passed into a much darker period of history.