

Lesson 8 – Joshua 23-24

Text: Joshua 23-24

Key Passages:

- Joshua 23:6-8 – Joshua reminded the Israelites to be strong and courageous and to obey God.
- Joshua 24:14-15 – Joshua encouraged the people not to serve idols and to serve the Lord completely, adding that he and his house had chosen to serve God.

Main Storyline:

A long time after the land had been divided and the tribes had received their inheritances, Joshua called all of the Israelites together. He was nearing the end of his life and wished to give some final exhortations to the Israelites who seemed to be having difficulties with idolatry. He reminded them of many of the lessons that he and Moses had given to them previously. Joshua reminded the people to remember what God had done to the other nations, that is, that He had fought against them on behalf of Israel. As Israel continued to drive the wicked Canaanites out of the land, God was going to continue to fight for them.

Joshua then reminded the Israelites that they needed to continue being strong and courageous as they obeyed the Lord's commandments, using very similar language to what Moses had used (Deuteronomy 5:23). Joshua pointed out that the people needed to be sure not to bow down to any idols, nor even make mention of their names. He told them that they needed to "take heed to themselves" (similar language to Moses in Deuteronomy 4) and not associate with the remnant of the Canaanites, or else they would bring the anger and punishments of God upon themselves. If they sinned, Joshua promised that God would destroy them and take the land away just as He had given it.

Later, Joshua gathered the people again at the city of Shechem to give them more exhortations. He started by telling them things that the Lord had said. God emphasized how He had orchestrated all of the good blessings that Israel had received, from their victories in battle to their inheritance of the good land of Canaan. Joshua drew the conclusion that, because God done all of these things, it was only proper to put away the idols and false gods and to instead wholly serve the Lord.

Joshua also challenged the people to make a commitment to whichever god they were going to serve, whether they would serve the gods of their fathers, the gods of the Amorites, or the true God. Joshua then made the famous statement, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people accepted Joshua's challenge, claiming that they would serve only the Lord. Joshua, perhaps because of the people's idolatry, reiterated that God would not accept their worship if they continued in sin. The people replied that they would only serve Him. Joshua explained that they were all witnesses of the fact that they had committed to the Lord. He set up a large stone in Shechem to be a witness for Israel, to remind them that they had all committed themselves to the Lord.

Having received all of Joshua's encouragement, all of the people returned to their lands. Later, Joshua died and was buried in his city, Timnah Serah, in Ephraim. Israel continued to serve the Lord while Joshua was alive and even while the elders were alive. Joseph's bones were buried in Israel, just as was promised to him (Genesis 50). Also, Eleazar, the high priest (Aaron's son), died and was buried.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) We have seen God working in our lives; therefore, let us be strong and courageous to serve Him.
- 2.) Inter-marriage with non-believers will cause us to have strife in our lives and to lose faith in God.
- 3.) We have seen God working in our lives; therefore, let us put away all of our idols and serve Him.
- 4.) We cannot serve God and idols at the same time; we must commit to whomever we will serve.
- 5.) Even though God has blessed us, He could just as easily take them from us and punish us for sin.