

Within the Word

A Study of Joshua 23 & 24

A Note from Kathy

In these two chapters, we see the Israelites were presented with a challenge, a choice, and a commitment. Joshua called for a decision, faithfulness to God or choosing the things of this world. Believers are faced with the same challenge, the same choice and the same commitment. I am praying you choose wisely.

Observation

Read the chapter, at least twice, before beginning the study guide. This will give the Lord an opportunity to help you see the things He desires for you to know.

1. In Joshua 23:1 we saw a measurement of time. What do you believe this mark of time was referring to? You might want to look back to see the last event of Joshua 22. Keep this in mind as you study chapters 23 and 24.
2. What did you learn about Joshua in Joshua 23:1?
3. As with most good leaders who are nearing the end of their time of service, Joshua was concerned about the future of those he has faithfully led. Who does he summon?
4. Notice the points of Joshua's speech that day.
 - a. I am very _____.
 - b. You have _____ everything the LORD your God has done...for your sake.
5. In verses 4-5, what were they instructed to remember? What had they been given and why?
 - a.
 - b.
6. Joshua, this great man of God and leader of God's people, was about to give some of his last instructions; what did he try to help them see? What instructions were they given (vv. 6-8)?
7. Notice the history lesson in Joshua 23: 9-10. Try to draw these two verses. Stick figures are fine.



8. Joshua spoke with great authority. You could almost hear him take a breath as he began his warning. What was the four-part warning in verses 11-12? Could the Israelites say they did not know this was wrong? Could they honestly say, they had no idea this would displease the LORD?
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
9. Then with another deep breath Joshua declared the consequences for disobedience. What did he say would happen in verse 13? Complete the sentences below.
- ...then you may be sure
- ...they will become
- ...until you perish from this good land
10. Joshua was old; he realized his days on the earth were drawing to an end. He longed for the Israelites to follow God even though he would no longer be leading them. What did he remind them (v. 14)?
11. Read the verses below; these are the words of Moses. Moses and Joshua had both laid out the course of blessing. What was it?

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

12. Joshua 23:16 stated the warning one more time. Finish the sentence below.
- If you...
13. Chapter 24 began in much the same way as chapter 23. Who did Joshua summon together? The text says they came and presented themselves before _____ that day at Shechem.
14. Once again, Joshua spoke in the name of the LORD. How far back does he go as he recalls the history of God's dealings with Israel? List the events in verses 2-5 in one color ink. If you have a few extra minutes use a different color ink to add any extra details you might recall from previous studies of Genesis 11- Exodus 15.

15. Now, do the same thing with verses 6-13. List the details from the text and add any details you recall in another color ink. Joshua 24:6-13 coincides with Exodus 12-Joshua 22. The events of Joshua 24:9-10 can also be found in Numbers 22-24.

16. Joshua clearly stated their choice and his allegiance in verses 14-15. Highlight the word “serve/worshiped” in these verses. What was the people’s choice, as presented by their leader Joshua?

17. Briefly state the people’s answer to Joshua in verses 16-18.

18. God is holy; sadly, what can be seen regarding their service for the LORD in verse 19?

19. Joshua 24:20-25 begins with a conversation between Joshua and the leaders of Israel. Was the commitment they made that day to be a binding commitment? What type of commitment was it?

20. What did Joshua do that would serve as a reminder of the commitment made this day?

21. Joshua died at the rich old age of 110 years. Scripture tells us they buried him at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. What glorious testimony concerning Joshua’s leadership did you see in these last few verses of Joshua 24?

22. What other important death is recorded in this chapter? _____

The Hebrew word “abad” is used 7 times in verses 14-15. Abad means to serve, to labor, to worship, to be subject.

Application

1. We read in this chapter that Joshua was very old. What do wise elderly people long to do? When one is young and they have their whole life ahead of them, they may feel there is plenty of time for making a difference, for doing things of eternal purpose. Is that always true?

2. Joshua called the elders, leaders, judges and officials to him for one last call to holiness. These were the men who led the Israelites as heads of the families. They were the men who carried out the administrative and judicial duties for the Israelites. And they were the men with civil authority to keep the peace. He reminded them that they had been eyewitnesses to all God had done on Israel’s behalf. Do you desire to be a Joshua? Do you remind others of the goodness and the faithfulness of God? Are you encouraging others to live for Him? Are you pointing them to the only true book of life and hope? Be prepared to share in your small group specifically how are you doing these things? This discussion will be helpful as we share ideas for serving the Lord.



3. Joshua called on Israel to stay the course, to follow the LORD, and not associate with those who would only lead them away from God. Where are your associations and friendships leading you? Are you being drawn closer to God or led farther away? Are you prepared to end associations that God might be speaking to you about?
4. The Israelites were instructed to carefully cling to the Lord and keep his commands. They had been told not to associate or intermarry with the pagan nations, so they would not be tempted and drawn away from the LORD. What areas of temptation can you identify in your own life? We all have them, but the key to successfully standing strong against them is having a strategy for success before they get a foothold. Are there areas of weakness that you have struggled with in the past? How are you planning to be successful in the future?
5. In Joshua 23:8 and 12 the word “Dabaq” is used. It means to cleave, stick to, adhere, hold to, to unite. Look at the two verses below; what were the two choices? Believers have the same choice today. To what are you clinging? Would those who know you best agree?

Joshua 23:8

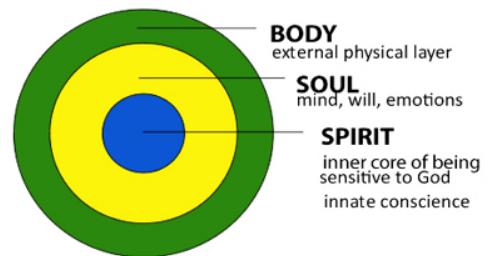
but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day.

Joshua 23:12

For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you.

6. Every person is made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. We are spirit; we have a soul; and we live in a body. Read the verses below, before answering the following questions.

What part of us was dead and is now made alive by Christ?



Now we see what the Psalmist has to say. There is that word “Dabaq” again, in Psalms 63:8, “My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me.”

Do you feel this kind of commitment to the Lord?

Ephesians 2:1-5

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of the flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

1 Corinthians 6:17

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

7. Could you say with the Psalmist that your soul clings to the Lord?

If so, you should also be experiencing his right hand upholding you. This does not mean there will never be problems or trials, but you will experience his power and peace. If you are clinging, you will see his hand. Why not share the last time you recall experiencing being held up by his right hand? Like the Psalmist, we should continually express praise and thankfulness for his care.

8. The Israelites had been given the choice: obedience or turn away from God and suffer the consequences and curses. Joshua 23:16 carried very serious consequences. Do you believe the Lord desired a greater allegiance from the Israelites than He does from believers today? _____
Are there things that have the potential to draw your heart away from God? _____
Is the Lord just as concerned with your obedience? _____

We have the potential to be world changers...at least in the world around us. Why not spend the day today (or better yet this week) simply weighing every situation and thought against the desire to obey and be blessed?

9. Who is your master? Read Matthew 6:16 and Matthew 6:24, before you answer.

Matthew 6:16

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness.

Matthew 6:24

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...

10. In one or two sentences, summarize the truth taught in Joshua 23.
11. In chapter 24, Joshua carefully laid out the history of God's dealings with Israel, before he called for a commitment from the people. What can we learn from this amazing leader, that we can apply to helping others be fully committed followers of Christ?
12. This might be a good time to make a list of your family history with God. How has God led you and your family? A list like this is very helpful for developing a heart of thankfulness to God. Without a thankful heart we cannot properly worship the Lord. Try to describe in detail the last time you experienced a victory that was not by your own strength, but Gods.

13. As we noted in the Observation section, the Hebrew word “abad” is used 7 times in verses 14-15. It means to serve, to labor, to worship, to be subject. Write these two verses in your own words, with your name added to personalize them.
14. Our worship and service for the Lord is never to be taken lightly. He is full of grace and mercy, but we must not forget He is a jealous God. Take a few minutes to write your own description of God. What do you know about His power, His majesty, His glory, His works, and His character?
15. Do you believe Joshua was sincere as he spoke of his love and allegiance to the Lord? If you have never written a testimony of your commitment to the Lord, why not stop and do it now? Open up the front of your favorite Bible, and write your statement of commitment. It will become a treasure as you look back on it through the years, and it will be a great comfort to your loved ones after you are gone.
16. Joshua 24-25 spoke of a covenant made between the people of Israel and God, at Shechem. This covenant differs from a contract, in that it is meant to be a permanent and binding agreement between Israel and their God. Sadly, they would not remain faithful. They did not complete the task of clearing the land of the influences that would draw their focus away from God. Believers today suffer needless pain when they are distracted and their focus is taken off the Lord who saved them. What distractions are stealing your focus? Why not stop and recommit your heart to the Lord right now? James 4:17 says, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”
17. This chapter ends with the death of two great leaders, Joshua and Eleazar, the priest. The people had followed well during the lives of these two men, but now things will be much different. It is easier to be obedient when your leaders are strong, Godly leaders. How do you handle the transition from someone else’s leadership to self-government? Are you more likely to seek a clear word from God personally when He has removed a leader from you? Think of a situation where you had been under someone else’s leadership, and now you’re faced with personal responsibility and choices of your own. Jot some notes, so that you may share this in your small group.