

# CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## DHW BIBLE CLASS

### LESSON 15B

#### JOSHUA

#### CHAPTER 24

**Joshua 24:15**, *“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.”*

## INTRODUCTION

After the challenging words to the leaders of Israel, Joshua turned his attention to the people of Israel. With godly leaders leading and ungodly people following, the nation of Israel will not be a godly nation to the world. Both groups must work in tandem. Both have to be walking in the will of God according to Scriptures. How would Joshua rally a nation of 2 million people to stand for the LORD and obey their leaders according to the Holy Scriptures?

Joshua will remind them of their past. Humble beginnings are irreplaceable in instilling gratitude and warning present generation that what they are enjoying today did not come out of thin air but hard work. In this instance, it was based upon their “hard” faith. Israel’s forefathers left all to follow the LORD. That was the birth of Israel. Now that she has become a nation owning her own land and living in cities and lord of all they survey, Israel must not forget the LORD who gave all these to them.

To ensure that Israel will not forget the LORD, they were challenged by Joshua to make a choice. Choices are something that one has to make personally. No one can make the choice of which God to follow for another person no matter how close they are. This is the thrust of the last chapter of Joshua.

This last chapter of Joshua gives some valuable insights into making informed choices. This chapter can be divided into the following three sections:

1. Rehearsing the Past (24:1-13)
2. Challenging the Present (24:14-28)
3. Death of God’s Servant (24:29-33).

## COMMENTARY

### Rehearsing the Past – 24:1-13

Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel to Shechem including their elders, the tribal heads, the judges and the officers. Many incidents had taken place in Shechem. Not too long ago, Joshua after conquering Ai had assembled the children of Israel there where he built an altar and led them to recite the Law of Moses from the slopes of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:30ff). It was on these mountains that the blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy were rehearsed for the whole nation to hear and be warned. It was the first place which Abraham laid claim to the Land of Canaan when he first came to it.<sup>1</sup> And this was the place where God had given His first promise of possessing the Land. This was the place where Jacob bought a piece of Land after his momentous meeting with his elder brother Esau on his return journey to Canaan. There Jacob erected an altar, and called it *El-elohe Israel*. It was a high point in his life for he was able to meet Esau in peace. The name he gave to the altar means “God the Mighty One is the God of Israel” (Genesis 33:1-20).

Joshua gave his second and last farewell message but this time to all the children of Israel. He carefully

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:6 And Abram passed through the

rehearsed the history of the people of Israel from Abraham to the present time. He pointed out that their beginning was from an idolatrous background.<sup>2</sup> Terah, the father of Abraham and his brother Nachor (or Nahor) were formerly worshippers of idols living in Ur of the Chaldees.<sup>3</sup> God took Abraham and led him throughout the land of Canaan, and increased his descendants through Isaac and then Jacob. Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. God then sent Moses and Aaron to them in Egypt and brought them out. They crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptians were destroyed in the Red Sea, when they pursued them with their chariots and warriors. The children went through the wilderness for “a long season” (24:7). And they came to the Land on the other side of Jordan, they defeated the Amorites and the Land was given to them. When the king of Moab engaged a soothsayer by the name of Balaam to curse them, the LORD turned Balaam’s curse into a blessing. They crossed Jordan and after the fall of Jericho, they fought and defeated the seven tribes of Canaan, and the Land became their possession.

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<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel also pointed this out: Ezekiel 16:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan; thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 11:27 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.

The fact that the Jews were chosen by God as His special people is not because they were a great and godly people, far from it; but that God in His grace reached down, called Abraham their forefather, and did something for them. God acted in the history of Israel. The LORD God of Israel is no obscure, shapeless and indistinct entity, but a divine personality who entered into real and actual conversation and dealings with the human race from the dawn of Creation. Seventeen times in rapid succession, Joshua forcefully declared God's doings with and through Israel. For examples: *I took your father Abraham; I sent Moses also and Aaron; I plagued Egypt; I have given you a land.* Joshua was indeed anointed by the power and presence of God when he spoke for the LORD their God without flinching but with much passion and courage.

Abraham was the founder of Israel. Joshua had to start from the very beginning. Israel must take heed of her humble beginnings, starting not as a nation but only as a family. She came not from a large family but only a family of three. Through God's gentle leading and careful protection and guidance, Israel became a nation. There were moments in Israel's existence that she was not aware of such as the Balaam incident but the LORD delivered Israel out of them all.

Israel was a spiritual nation, not a political one.

Israel must fulfill the purpose of her founding ethos by God and that was to be a light and a blessing to the world! To accomplish that, she needs to make the right choice.

### **Challenging the Present – 24:14-28**

Having recounted the greatness and the goodness of the LORD their God in all His relationships with the children of Israel, Joshua exhorted them to choose the LORD above all other gods. It was against the back-drop of what God had actually done in and through Israel in her history. The things that Israel had experienced were historical facts, which were locked in space and time. Joshua called the people to choose the LORD and serve Him "in sincerity and in truth" (24:14). Joshua made a passionate and personal appeal: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose ye 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* (24:15). Note that Joshua was not saying that to choose idols is right in the sight of God. He is merely challenging them to make a right choice. Choices of who to worship cannot be made by another. It

must be an individual and personal choice.

Joshua called them to put away the Babylonian gods, the Egyptian gods, and the Canaanite gods and to choose the LORD (YAHWEH).<sup>4</sup> The word “choose” in Hebrew is significant. It expresses a continuous tense but it points to the past. In other words, Joshua was affirming: “I have chosen, and I am and will still choose.” Joshua was not boasting because it was real in his life. His life was known to many of them especially those who were in their sixties. When the people worshipped the golden calf, he did not join them. When the twelve spies entered the Promised Land, he stood with Caleb against the majority by affirming that God was faithful to His word. Joshua knew why Moses was not allowed by the LORD to go into the Promised Land because the LORD had told Moses to do one thing and he did another. He saw the result of making a bad and wrong choice as Moses had done. Joshua kept on choosing the LORD once and for all. He chose to obey God by choice not like a machine or an animal.<sup>5</sup>

The people’s first and immediate response was that “*God*

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 6:2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the LORD: 3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

<sup>5</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History*, p. 311.

*forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods” (24:16).* Joshua wanted them to make a decisive choice to serve the LORD. Once again, he passionately recounted the wonderful deeds of the LORD their God for the sake of Israel. The LORD had delivered them from the bondage in Egypt by performing great signs in their sight. He had preserved them all the way wherever they journeyed and among the people whom they passed. The LORD drove out the Amorites (another word for all the inhabitants of Canaan) before their eyes. Would they not serve the LORD for He was their God!

Joshua knew full well that the Israelites were a stiff-necked people. It was not surprising when he said to 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. 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 (24:19-20).* These two verses must be read together. If verse 19 were read individually, it would be incomplete and easily misunderstood. Joshua wanted Israel to choose with their spiritual eyes fully opened. It was not fun and games when making choices pertaining to one’s eternal destiny. Choosing to worship the LORD or to reject Him has its respective consequences.

The last phrase means that if they turned away from the LORD, thus breaking the covenant, the blessings of the covenant would become curses upon them. The people now responded a second time. They said with a clear and emphatic affirmation (literally in Hebrew): *Nay for the LORD we serve*. As in all covenant-making, there was a need for witnesses. Joshua said to the people that they became witnesses against themselves that they had chosen the LORD and to serve Him. It means that if they broke the covenant, they would be liable to take the curses of the covenant upon themselves as Joshua had just pointed out. The people re-affirmed their commitment: *We are witnesses*.

The very first thing that Joshua told the children of Israel to do was to put away the strange gods which were among them and to incline their hearts to the LORD God of Israel (24:23). This was an injunction that they should discard any idols which they might have brought from Egypt or taken from the Canaanites. One could never know inner workings of the hearts of man. At the same time, Joshua was telling them that they must put away the idols of the inhabitants among whom they lived. The people responded to Joshua the third time: *The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey* (24:24).

On that note, Joshua made a covenant with the people that day. This was not a totally new and different covenant. It was an extension of the covenant God had made with Abraham and later with Moses (Genesis 17, Exodus 19). Joshua then inscribed the word in the book of the Law of God, set it up on a great stone under the oak that was a holy place of the LORD. And Joshua dismissed the congregation to their Land.

### **Death of God's Servant – 24:29-33**

Some time after all these things, Joshua the son of Nun, *the servant of the LORD*, died at the age of one hundred and ten years old (24:29). Joshua lived to a ripe old age (cf. the life-span of a man). However, the significant title is that he was called "the servant of the LORD". In these simple words, his whole life was summed up. It is a great honour to be called servant of the Most High God! Joshua was called Moses' minister at the start of his calling in Joshua 1:1. Few have attained that title in its strictest and fullest sense—one who is simply doing according to Scriptures all that he is told, totally and wholeheartedly devoted and dedicated to serve the LORD God Almighty! Joshua was buried in his hometown, Timnath-serah, which was on the mount of Ephraim, among his own Ephraimites. Indeed, under his leadership, the people had enjoyed all

the things, which the LORD had done for Israel (24:31). Joshua was truly a worthy and faithful successor to Moses.

The bones of Joseph were buried in Shechem in a piece of land, which his father Jacob had bought from Hamor the Shechemite for a hundred pieces of silver.<sup>6</sup> Joseph had requested over four hundred years earlier that his bones be brought from Egypt during the Exodus, carried during the thirty-eight years of wandering and be buried in the Promised Land.<sup>7</sup> This was also significant in that Joseph had faith in God, and in His faithfulness to His covenant promises to his forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Eleazar also died of old age. He had been a priest since the death of his father Aaron. He had left Egypt as a boy, and must have been below twenty years of age when the curse upon all adults was pronounced at Kadesh-barnea, except for Joshua and Caleb, to die before entering

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 33:18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 50:25 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.

Canaan. He was a God-fearing father and had brought up his son, Phinehas in the fear of the LORD. Phinehas had proven himself to love the LORD with all his heart, soul and strength. He succeeded his father as the priest of the children of Israel.

Thus the era of Joshua came to an end. Joshua died but God's eternal plan and purpose is still in motion. It would be many more years later that a virgin maid conceived of the Holy Spirit and gave birth to a baby who is called Emmanuel, being interpreted, "God with us"!

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

What stands out in this chapter is the element of personal choice. Joshua's call to his people to choose whom they would want to serve is still relevant for us today. Do you choose to serve the LORD God or the god of mammon or self or children or husband or wife? There is no basis to doubt God for He has irrevocably revealed Himself in factual history of the nation Israel. God is faithful and true to all His words and promises. Hear Him, obey Him and do His will and you shall be saved and blessed. His will is that no one should perish but that every man repent of his sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved forever.

While God will always be faithful to His covenant promises, He still works with and through His people to accomplish His promises. This is clearly seen in His dealings with Israel. Accordingly, we are challenged to live a life of fearless faith, love and hope in God. AMEN

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2. What possible reason could there be for Joshua to begin his rehearsal of Israel past with the life of Terah and Abraham?

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**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Joshua 24:1-13; John 20:30-31; Ephesians 1:3-12.

**TUESDAY:** Joshua 24:14-28; Matthew 6:24; John 7:17; James 4:4.

**WEDNESDAY:** Joshua 24:29-33; Daniel 12:1-2; John 5:24-29.

**THURSDAY:** Joshua 24:1-33.

**FRIDAY:** Joshua 24:1-33.

3. In Joshua's testimony to the children of Israel, what part did the LORD God play in the history of the nation? List the series of active verbs from verses (3-13).

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**Discussion Questions**

1. Are there places in your life like Shechem where the LORD met with you and spoke to your heart?

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4. In his final farewell message, what characteristics of the LORD God

did Joshua emphasize? Is this emphasis needed today?

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5. At this point of time, in your opinion, how prepared were the children of Israel to face the future with confidence? Do you think anything necessary had been left out of their preparation?

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7. Why is Joshua's choice in 24:15 important for us as it was for the children of Israel?

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6. From what you see in this last chapter of Joshua, what conditions must Israel meet in order to continue enjoying God's blessing in the Promised Land?

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