

## August 20

**Scriptures:** Read Joshua 23 & 24

**Key Verse:** "...Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

### Overview

The first of Joshua's two farewell speeches before his approaching death was directed to all the leaders of the congregation. God was gracious in allowing Joshua to live "a long time" (possibly as much as twenty years) within the Promised Land and enjoy the rest that only God could give.

He charged all the leaders to remain faithful to their God, since, as they had experienced, God had always been faithful to them. He fought and won their battles and gave them the land, something, for which they were to be always grateful to God. Joshua gave all the glory and honor to God, talking none for himself.

Joshua, like Moses, strongly warned Israel about the evil of idolatry and the divine punishment it would bring. He warned them about the great harm that would result if Israel mixed in any way with the heathen of the land (especially by intermarriage, 23:12). Their presence was a constant test of Israel's faith and obedience to God and also a reminder that Israel was to drive them out to the Promised Land. If they remained faithful to God, He would see this finally accomplished; but in the meantime, Israel was to love God, remain pure and separated from all evil, have courage, and remain loyal to God and His covenant—in other words, "to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses" (23:6).

These leaders would be responsible for the spiritual condition of Israel after Joshua had died, so his words were probably spoken with great emotion. This generation of leaders had an awesome responsibility, but they faithfully fulfilled it, for while they lived, they kept the nation faithful to God (24:31).

Joshua's call for the assembling of the whole nation (chapter 24) came as a direct result and follow-up to Joshua's meeting with the leaders (chapter 23). The purpose was to reconfirm and renew the covenant of God with all Israel. In so doing, he reminded them of God's faithfulness, goodness, signs and wonders, protection, and presence by tracing their history from the time of Abraham to the present when He graciously gave them a land prepared and ready to occupy and enjoy (24:13).

By all these examples, Joshua wanted to make Israel understand their duty to serve God and Him only. Joshua aimed his speech against idolatry, the major temptation facing Israel, which would not only lead to the destruction of individuals but the nation as well.

Joshua set before the people two radically different choices: worship of the true God or idolatry. He publicly declared his and his household's allegiance to the God of Israel (24:15), probably to bring out a similar response from the people. They followed Joshua's example and enthusiastically affirmed three times that the God of Israel was the God they would serve (24:17, 21, 24), even after Joshua warned them that this was not easy (24:19-20). God's faithfulness to

His children today should evoke within us a similar enthusiastic response like that of Israel's, to serve and obey the Lord with our whole hearts.

The book of Joshua closes with the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar the high priest, as well as the burial of Joseph's bones in the Promised Land, fulfilling the oath sworn to him on his deathbed (Gen.50:25). These three burials within the Promised Land, where Israel was now established, give further evidence to the theme of the whole book: the faithfulness of God.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, we choose You. Give us more grace that we and our house will serve You faithfully. Amen.