

Joshua's Farewell to Israel

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[0 : 00] Let's get to our passage tonight and it's Joshua and really it's two chapters.

! We've got a lot of ground to cover and one night I'm determined to make this my last! from Joshua or this series of sermons from Joshua. I'm sure I'll preach out of Joshua again sometime. But in this series, book series, Joshua, this will be the last message. And again, we're going to be looking at the final two chapters, chapter 23 and 24. And what we're looking at here are Joshua's farewells. There are a couple of them. And the second one is divided into two parts. And we started to look at this last time. The two farewells. The first one is Joshua's farewell to the tribes who settled on the eastern side of the promised land. That's what we looked at last time. That's chapter 22. What scholars, of course, remember, call the Transjordan tribes. Trans across Jordan, the Jordan River. That would be the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. So we looked at that last week. Tonight, we want to consider Joshua's second farewell address. Again, it's divided into two parts. And the second farewell is given to Israel, the people, the people of Israel, verses 20 or chapters 23 and 24. Now, instead of right now here at the beginning, reading two chapters and just, you know, kind of do that on the front end, I've decided to kind of hold it and we'll read portions of it as I work my way through the outline of this passage of this text of these two chapters. So we'll do that. Now, by way of introduction, Israel has, I don't know if you could say for the most part, conquered the land. I don't know if they had for the most part conquered it.

I do know that they were not finished with it. They had not completed that. In fact, you could even argue they never did complete it completely. That's redundant. And so Joshua is now an old man. I mean, he's been around a while. He and Caleb, of course, you know, came, only ones allowed to come in to the promised land from that generation. All others perished in the wilderness because of their disobedience, their lack of faith. Joshua and Caleb entered in. Joshua was a pretty old guy. And so being old, you know, we're near to death, nearer to death. And he was very near to his death and would die very shortly after he gave his farewell addresses. And so he would die and he would be buried.

And we have that at the close of chapter 24. And Joshua has been a faithful leader all the way through, as was Moses before him. And Moses passed the mantle on to Joshua. And he's been very faithful.

And God used him in incredible ways, not only at the crossing of the Jordan River, but of course, Jericho and Ai and other points along the way. God's been very faithful and used Joshua to be a great leader of Israel. And now he's about to die. And before he departs this life, kind of like a faithful soldier breaking camp, he has some important things to say to God's people. And it's a very appropriate time to do this. He'll be out of the picture. And he needs to tell them some things, some very important things. And so he calls for two meetings, two gatherings. The first meeting is recorded in chapter 23.

[4 : 14] And it is held with really just the elders and leaders of Israel. That's what verse 2 tells us. Joshua, verse 2 of chapter 23. Joshua called for all Israel. But then it's specific about who represented, who was the representative, who were the representatives for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers. So he gathers together all the leadership of Israel for this first part of a two-part farewell address. The second meeting is recorded in chapter 24.

And it is held or issued before the, quote, the tribes of Israel. Verse 1. The tribes of Israel. All right, so two meetings. And yet the subject matter is somewhat the same in both meetings. Led some scholars to believe that we just have a repetition. There's some mistake here.

But really the two meetings, subject pretty much the same, just issued to two different groups of people. All right, so what is Joshua doing here in these kind of farewell addresses?

Well, you could sum it up this way. Joshua is encouraging Israel to stay the course. I mean, he's been leading them and they've been following him. And God has been doing great and wondrous things right before their very eyes as each step of the way, God really conquers their enemies for them and so forth. And so he wants to encourage them to keep going, to stay the course for God. And Israel needed this at this juncture in their history, in their lives.

[6 : 04] And they needed it for several obvious and practical reasons. First of all, it would be easy for them at this point to just kind of sit back and become lax in their commitment to God.

We kind of suffer those kind of things. I mean, we go through some periods of growth and blessing and God does wonderful things. And then we just kind of kick back, you know.

We have a tendency to want to just give it a break. You know, we can't stay in that mode, or at least we don't think we can. And so there's always, at several junctures in life, this temptation to just kind of let it go for a while, you know.

And that was what could happen and very easily happen to the people of Israel. I mean, much of the land had been conquered and subdued. Not all of it, but much of it.

Now the land has been divided, officially divided, among the tribes of Israel, including those on the eastern side. That's all been done. The Transjordan tribes, they've gone home.

[7 : 08] They were permitted to go home, and they've done that. And so it would be the most natural thing in the world to relax and just kind of settle into some kind of different normal. You know, a new normal for life.

And we can't fault them for that because it's human, human nature. And so Joshua wanted to warn them of that, encourage them of that, to stay the course and don't lighten up and keep going.

But also, Joshua was old, as I've said. He was old, and so were many of Israel's long-standing leaders. And so at this juncture, the old guard is dying off.

They're very soon going to be out of the picture. In fact, the book closes with really the last of the old guard dying and being buried. And Joshua, soon Joshua will be gone.

He and Caleb were the oldest of them. And so this is an appropriate time. You know, there's a new guard that has to take up the mantle. And so this will be an appropriate time to encourage the people to stay the course.

[8 : 19] And along with that, thirdly, I guess you could say, the newer generation that's coming along, they did not have the benefit of seeing many of the miraculous and wondrous things that God did.

I mean, to most of the youngest of the Israelites, the crossing of the Jordan River was something of legend. Even the defeat of Jericho, many of them at this point had not really seen.

And it was just a legendary thing. And so this is an appropriate time for Joshua to call upon the people to take stock in where they are and where they need to go and to keep going.

Stay the course. And I guess we could say that the same scenario exists for every generation of God's people. Not just Israel. We could say that about the generations of the church that have come and gone and the guard that has passed on, hopefully passed on the mantle to the next generation. And so that scenario is very, very common and we need to be aware of that. And I think that's one of the lessons that we can learn from this farewell address given by Joshua.

[9 : 38] Because, you know, and I've said this before and I really mean it, and this doesn't minimize God's sovereignty and God's power, but every, you know, we're always just one generation away from forgetting and forsaking the Lord.

And we can look at our own country and see that very readily, sadly. And so that's why we need to remind the next generation that's coming along, just like Joshua was reminding the newer generation that would take up the leadership of Israel, to remind them to love God and to obey His Word and to keep God's work alive.

And this is what he's doing. All right, so I think we can combine these two farewell addresses. I thought about taking them separately, but there's so many similarities. That is kind of in the thrust or theme of the farewells.

We can just combine the two addresses and kind of reduce it down to three main things that Joshua was doing. I'm going to have a number of sub-points under these, but these are the three main things that we need to get from Joshua's farewell addresses, first to the leadership and then to the people of God in general.

And so I want you to see, first of all, Joshua's concern for God's people. Joshua's concern for God's people.

[11:06] And so let me just read, to begin with, chapter 23 and the first eight verses. Now it came to pass, a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age.

And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, for their officers, and said to them, I'm old, advanced in age.

You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is he who has fought for you. See, I've divided to you by lot these nations that remain to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off as far as the great sea westward.

That would be the Mediterranean. And the Lord your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight, so you shall possess their land as the Lord your God promised you.

Therefore, be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among those nations, these who remain among you.

[12:31] See, they've not conquered and dealt with all of them. They continue to remain among them. So, that you would go, lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you, you shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them.

You shall not serve them, nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.

For the Lord has driven out from before you great and strong nations, but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. That went one verse a little long there.

All right, now, this is pretty clear, really, when you look deeply into these eight, nine verses, that Joshua apparently was beginning to see some things taking place, some things that were happening in the lives of God's children, Israel, some things that caused him concern.

And we can, of course, look at things in our time that give us cause for deep concern. And really, some of the same things that Joshua saw, we can see, in this generation, in our world today.

[13:56] Joshua saw three things he was concerned about. Joshua, first of all, was concerned about complacency, about complacency, that God's people would become complacent.

In fact, I think it was already beginning to set in, because God had, quote, given them rest from the enemies round about them, though they were not finished with the task. And so there was the danger, and Joshua was very concerned about it, that they would become complacent.

Verse 6 says, Therefore, be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left.

Now, this is more than just simply mere disobedience that Joshua was addressing here. Joshua was concerned. Indeed, already, I think, was seeing some of the symptoms.

He was concerned that the people were taking God's word for granted, His law, His word, and were becoming complacent in their walk before God.

[15:01] And they were starting to let some things slide in their commitment to God's word, which, by the way, is exactly what Israel did, eventually, sadly.

That's why, immediately following the book of Joshua, what do we have? The book of Judges. The book of Judges, and if you're familiar with that book, then you understand that what Joshua was concerned about and saw the symptoms of, indeed, really did come to pass.

They did not take Joshua's farewell dress to heart because there soon would rise up a generation, the next generation, that did not know God, that did not follow God.

And, you know, I think we could say that the sin of complacency, and it is a sin, a very significant spiritual sin, a sin of complacency, I think is perhaps one of the most common sins among God's people, that we just become complacent.

It's the sin of the Laodiceans. Revelation chapter 3, verse 14. Remember, God said, I know your works, that you're neither cold nor hot, either cold nor hot, that I could wish that you were cold or hot, but you are what?

[16:22] Lukewarm. It's complacency, which is really no commitment whatsoever. And so this situation existed there with Israel in Joshua's day, and it would grow to epidemic proportions.

God would have to judge Israel over and over again. And the situation certainly exists in the church today, in America today. I mean, there's always the temptation to become kind of self-satisfied and too sure of our own spirituality.

So we just kind of become complacent. So we turn aside from keeping and doing God's Word. So this was Joshua's concern for Israel. And that leads to Joshua's second concern.

Joshua was concerned about compromise. Not just complacency, but it's close cousin. Or maybe we could even say the ultimate next step from complacency, and that is compromise.

They're compromised. He said in verse 7 again, And lest you go among these nations, the nations of the Canaanites, those who remain among you, and they still do remain among you, lest you go to them, you shall not make mention of the name of their gods.

[17:44] Don't even mention their names. Don't even mention their names. Nor cause anyone to swear by them. Certainly not. And you shall not serve them, nor bow down to them. And we would be thinking, you know, as we kind of look back at this time, say, well, why would they?

And yet they did, didn't they? I mean, strange, isn't it? I've always thought this very strange, and I'm sure you have as well. To see the things that Israel saw.

To know the things that Israel knew about God, and what God had done for them, and how with a mighty hand He delivered them out of Egypt, and with a mighty power He parted the Red Sea, and brought them through the wilderness, and brought them across the Jordan miraculously, and defeated Jericho, and Ai, and so many other cities.

To know and see what they knew and they saw. It's incredible that they would even think about worshiping and bowing down to the gods of the Canaanites.

And yet they did. That's exactly what happened. And it's as if Joshua could see the future, you know, because, and I think maybe he could, because that's exactly what Israel eventually did.

[19:00] And how did, did that have to happen? No, it didn't have to happen. Did it, does it have to happen to us?

In our culture? No, it doesn't have to happen. But what about our generation? Again, if the chief sin is complacency, then the clear result of that sin, the sin of complacency, is the sin of compromise. And all we have to do is just examine our own lives, and ask the question, are there things that we do today that some years ago we wouldn't dream of doing? Participating in, or thinking, or saying, or whatever.

It's compromise. So Joshua was concerned about complacency, concerned about compromise.

And third, and finally in this first point, Joshua was concerned about commitment, about Israel's commitment, or rather the lack of commitment when it came to Yahweh God.

And on the other side of the shift of commitment to when it came to the Canaanite deities, he was concerned about that, that their commitment was shift from God to the Canaanite deities and the pagan culture.

[20:27] Verse 8 says, But you shall hold fast to the Lord your God as you have done to this day. See, you can just sense very clearly Joshua was concerned for Israel.

He's about to die. The old guard, many of them are already gone, and the last remaining ones will be gone very soon, and a new generation will take up the mantle, or hopefully they will.

Joshua is concerned about what is going to happen. Was there some danger that he detected that Israel would go back on their commitment to the Lord?

Yes! It's always a danger. Always. Even for the, quote, most spiritual of us, end quote.

There's always that danger. The danger exists today. Always. Were there some indications that Israel would go back on their commitment to God?

[21:26] I think so. And Joshua could see that. That's what precipitated this kind of a farewell address to God's people. Very shortly after Joshua's death, Israel would violate their commitment to God almost totally amazing.

In fact, Judges chapter 2 verse 16 repeats a line from one of the closing verses of Joshua chapter 24. Joshua chapter 24 and verse 31.

It repeats it in Judges 2 verse 16, and this is what it says. So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, the old guard, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which he had done for Israel.

So wonderful, fantastic. They served the Lord, remained committed to the Lord all the days of Joshua and even the remnant of his leadership afterward. What happened when they were all

gone?

Well, Judges adds this to that. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation rose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which he had done for Israel.

[22 : 41] It was this very generation Joshua was speaking to, the seed of which were present that very day when he gave this farewell address. And so after Joshua's gone, his leaders are gone, the old guard is gone, the children of Israel, a new generation would come to power who did not know the Lord.

Then the children of Israel, Judges goes on to say, did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, the Canaanite gods, and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them, and they provoked the Lord to anger.

The exact thing that Joshua was concerned about and was warning them about is the exact thing they did. So Joshua's concern for God's people.

Second, Joshua's challenge. Joshua's challenge to God's people. And this rings clear really in both addresses in chapters 23 and 24, and it covers a lot of ground here.

Let me just name several things that Joshua challenged the people of God with. First of all, Joshua challenged them with the wrath of God.

[24 : 05] He challenged them with the wrath of God. We could just kind of sum up Joshua's challenge this way. If you will serve the Lord, He will bless you. But if you disobey the Lord and serve other gods, His wrath will come upon you.

His judgment will come upon you in the form of strong chastisement. This is what Joshua was saying in chapter 23, starting with verse 9.

Let me read that to you and continuing on to verse 23. Chapter 23, verse 9. For the Lord has driven out from before you great and strong nations, but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day.

One man of you shall chase a thousand, a thousand. For the Lord your God is He who fights for you. He fights for you as He promised you.

Therefore, take careful heed to yourselves that you love the Lord your God. Boy, these are strong words, challenging words. Take heed.

[25 : 14] Be very careful that you love the Lord your God or else. I love that. Well, I don't love it. Or else. Or else what?

If indeed you do not go back and cling to the remnant of these nations, these that remain among you and make marriages with them and go into them and they to you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you, but they shall be snares and traps to you and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes.

Boy, that would hurt. Until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you.

All have come to pass for you. Not one word of them has failed. Therefore, it shall come to pass that as all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things.

The promise is equal on that side. All harmful things until he has destroyed you from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God which he commanded you and have gone and served other gods and bowed down to them then the anger of the Lord will burn against you and you shall perish quickly from the good land which he has given you.

[26 : 50] It's pretty strong, isn't it? This is his challenge to challenge them with the wrath of God. And the key to it all is there in verse 11, isn't it?

Therefore, take careful heed to yourselves. Be very careful that you love the Lord your God or else. Or else. No in between. No middle ground there. All right, now the same goes for God's people today. Doesn't it? You can love your life or live your life within the confines of God's word and within the boundaries of his will and be blessed.

Be blessed. That's the promise of God. Obedience brings blessing. Or you can live live it outside of the word and outside of the will of God and be chastised.

For a believer we can make those two one of those two choices. But be sure that God will chastise us and it's a good thing that he will prove that he loves us. Isn't that what Hebrews 12, 5 and following is all about?

[28 : 03] Where the Bible says and have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons, as children? My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him.

For whom the Lord loves he chastens. He chastens. This is what he promised Israel. And the promise was sure.

All right, so Joshua's challenged then challenged them with the wrath of God. Second, Joshua challenged them with the works of God. He challenged them with the very works that he performed in their presence and that they witnessed and was for their benefit.

In chapter 24, we move on into chapter 24 verses 1 through 13. Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel for their heads, for their judges and for their officers and they presented themselves before God.

So now he's got not just the officers and leaders but all the people with their officers and leaders. And Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers, including Tira, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the river in old times and they served other gods.

[29 : 22] So Abraham came out of an idolatrous pagan family and culture but God called him out. That's another story. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the river, led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess. But Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. Also I sent Moses and Aaron and I plagued Egypt according to what I did among them.

Afterward I brought you out. 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.

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 and I brought you into the land of the Amorites 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 destroyed them from before you.

[30 : 37] 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. But I would not listen to Balaam therefore he continued to bless you so I delivered you out of his hand.

Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho and the men of Jericho fought against you also the Amorites and the Perizzites the Canaanites the Hittites the Girgashites the Hivites and the Jebusites but I remembered them delivered them into your hand.

I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you that he sent confusion also the two kings of the Amorites but not with your sword or with your bow.

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 the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.

That's interesting these are all the mighty works of God and so he's challenging them with these works you know reminding them of these works certainly I mean that's really the main idea that's a very simple idea remember all the works of God in your behalf that's what he's saying to Israel and you know if they would always remember God's works God's works in their behalf God did for them if they would always remember them then they would be more likely to continue to obey him and live for him that's the idea and it's a pretty good one because listen the works of God on our behalf when we begin to think about them and number them those works of God on our behalf are always a great motivator for loving loving God and worshiping God and serving God I mean remember how he died for us remember the cross you remember how he loved us when we were lost sinners not seeking for him and he loved us anyway called us to himself for salvation forgives our sins promises us heaven meets our needs blesses our lives and on and on we could go remember all the works of God on our behalf so Joshua challenged them with the works of God third Joshua challenged them with the will of God the will of God verses 14 through 18 look at that 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 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 so the people answered and said far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods 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 things the great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed 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 that's a tremendous commitment at this point but again the idea here is

[34 : 13] Joshua is challenging them to continue to serve the Lord that's his will for them that's the challenge here to submit to God's will for worship for service to serve him which by the way is an all encompassing word it includes everything that we do service does in fact really it speaks of worship worship worship is not something we just do in here worship is a word that describes all that we do for God our service for him and this is what Joshua is challenging them to continue to do and so I want to just focus primarily on verses 14 and 15 that's the famous part of this passage and want to have you notice that there are five kind of five aspects of our service our worship and you might just jot these down and they just come right from the scripture really starting with verse 14 we're to serve the Lord reverently reverently what did he say in verse 14 now therefore fear the Lord not quake in your boots because of God fear him so that you want to go hide but it's it's talking about revering him and adoring him reverencing him in our worship and if there's any fear involved it is the fear that we might dishonor him in some way with our lives and decisions we make in life that we don't want to dishonor him or disgrace him or demean him or minimize his person and his work and his greatness and to somehow in some deliberate fashion or sinful way to degrade his work and to thwart his work we ought to fear that but it's it's a reverence toward God we're to serve him reverently second we're to serve him sincerely or really I think the idea is wholeheartedly and that's what he says serve him in sincerity in sincerity third serve the

Lord honestly we just got to run through these quickly serve him honestly how are we to serve him serve him in truth says in verse 14 serve him in truth the truth of his word our service must then always be guided within the parameters of God's word we don't serve him in any way that God does not prescribe in his word we're to serve him in truth and also we could say we're to serve him in truth in the sense that we're serving him and not ourselves we're to serve the Lord exclusively that's number four serve him exclusively he says put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the river and in Egypt serve the Lord no doubt about what he's saying here exclusively him we don't serve other gods or him most of the time and and serve ourselves the other part of the time we're to serve him exclusively when you serve God exclusively every other person that God wants us to serve even himself will always get a better deal we serve him exclusively fifth we serve the Lord resolutely and boy this is this is you know that famous passage verse 15 and it if it seems Joshua says if it seems evil really disagreeable if it seems like it's just not really what you want to do for you to serve the Lord if you have some qualms without a problem with that then choose for yourself this day whom you will serve sit on the fence make a decision here whether it is the gods which your father served which were on the other side of the river and he's really speaking of Abraham and Tira his father if it's those false gods serve them or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell all right choose them and then of course this testimony from Joshua but for me as for me not just me but my house we will serve the Lord I love that succession of pronouns me my we me my we and this was his commitment we shall serve the Lord and you cannot get more resolute than that can you than this passage in verse 15 so there's the challenge and then a fourth challenge Joshua challenged them with the witness of God the witness of God verses 19 and 24 in chapter 24 listen to it where am I there I am 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 he's talking about a given situation we'll get to that here in a minute 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 and all the people said to Joshua no but we will serve the Lord so Joshua said to the people you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves he said choose this day and they say they've chosen your witnesses that you've chosen the Lord for yourselves to serve him and they said we will we are witnesses now therefore he said put away the

foreign gods which are among you and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel and the people said to Joshua the Lord our God we will serve and his voice we will obey very resolute but it's the challenge here he's challenged them with the witness of God Joshua you see clearly I mean you see it's so clear in this passage that Joshua had detected a double mindedness a dual commitment on the part of God's people that's the scenario that he's addressing when he says you cannot serve the Lord for he is a holy God and a jealous

God he will not forgive your sins well of course you can serve him of course he'll forgive your sins but not in this particular scenario that is with you loving and worshipping and bowing down to other gods as long as that exists you can't serve me you cannot really love me and your sins are not going to be dealt with and taken care of and wiped away because you're serving other gods at the same time and so that was the issue and many of God's people had already embraced the false gods of the Canaanite people that was already taking place and many of and so many of these people wanted the Lord too you know they wanted these false gods because you know there are some certain benefits always benefits of sin feeds the flesh and gratifies the cravings of the flesh and so they wanted to kind of participate in these fertility gods I don't have to go into detail about that but they also wanted to remain committed to the

[41 : 44] Lord you know because they feared to do anything different and God said there's no deal that's no deal you can't have it both ways and so Josh said you cannot flirt with the false gods and serve the Lord too he's a holy God and a jealous God so what did the people say to that well what they said was very positive very good very hopeful but they said no but we will serve the Lord and so Joshua said let those words be a witness against you if you forsake the Lord that's on down the road if you forsake the Lord very things you said this day will be a witness against you and they said so be it it'll be a witness and of course things on down the road really became quite critical and bad all right so we cannot have it both ways can we there's no middle ground when it comes to serving and worshipping the

Lord and our commitment to him no middle ground between that and serving and worshipping other gods you say I don't have any other gods well how about self self how about the world and the affections of this world the cravings of this world the philosophies and way of thinking of the world materialism that's another big god we could go on and on and so there's there is not a combining of allegiances that won't work 1 Kings 18 21 another famous passage Elijah came to all the people and he said how long will you falter or hesitate between two allegiances or two opinions if the Lord is God follow him if Baal follow him but you can't have both you can't have both I saw that we're looking at Joshua's farewell address need to wrap this up and just about there Joshua's concern for God's people Joshua's challenge to God's people and third this is interesting I think Joshua's covenant for or on behalf of God's people his covenant Joshua led the people to bind themselves or covenant with themselves to serve and obey God and Joshua essentially utilized two types of stone two stones as a witness of this covenant and the two stones would represent or reveal the seal of this covenant to obey God to serve God only now what are these two stones well first you have a great stone and then you have some grave stones some grave markers grave stones alright so let's just take those two real quickly here first the covenant was sealed by a great stone great stone see the people of

Israel said no we will serve the Lord let those words be a witness to you if you don't okay so be it you'll be a witness we're going to serve the Lord we've chosen this day the Lord is the one we're going to serve and so Joshua erects a great stone as a seal of that covenant verse 25 of chapter 24 so Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem then Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of Moses and he took a large stone and set it up there upon the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord and Joshua said to all the people behold this stone shall be a witness to us that it is that 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 so Joshua let the people depart each to his own inheritance so he set up this big stone he erected a great stone a monument to the people's covenant to serve and obey the Lord and so whenever of course they passed by this place and saw this stone it heard their words in a metaphoric sense and when they passed by that stone they would remember their oath of the covenant to serve and obey God that's what they said they would do and that stone was a reminder of that it was the seal for it now for us we don't erect great stones you know monuments and such but for us the great stone is Jesus it's Jesus he's the rock of our salvation as the Bible says and every time we look to the cross

we look to the empty tomb we're reminded of our covenant to serve and obey the Lord but also the covenant was sealed not only by a great stone but it was sealed by some grave stones grave stones and so the book of Joshua closes with three funerals kind of interesting look at verse 29 now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of noon the servant of the Lord died being 110 years old and they buried him within the border of his inheritance in Timnath Sarah which is in the mountain of Ephraim on the north side of Mount

[47 : 20] Gaash 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 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 100 pieces of silver and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph 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 all right so three funerals here three funerals three gravestones in a sense and we can apply these to our lives as seals as testimonies of our covenant to serve and obey God only the first gravestone is faithfulness it speaks of faithfulness first funeral was that of

Joshua himself and Joshua had faithfully led the people of God and his tombstone then proved was a testimony to God's faithfulness to his people through the leadership of Joshua really an extension of Moses Moses would be included in that Moses and then Joshua as it was passed on to him and their faithful leadership and it stood as a monument to God's faithfulness a monument to God's covenant keeping faithfulness second the gravestone of fulfillment the second funeral was that of Joseph Joseph remember Joseph had died many many years before where in Egypt in Egypt he died in Egypt and on his deathbed Joseph uttered these words to his brothers the sons of Israel who become the tribes of Israel he uttered these words to his brothers in Genesis chapter 50 50 and verse 24

I am dying but God will surely visit you and bring you out of the land to the land of which he swore to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel his brothers saying God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here from Egypt and that's what they did when they came out of Egypt they took a sarcophagus or whatever form it was in the bones of Joseph he was not to be buried in Egypt he was to be buried in the land that had been promised God's people and so it stands his death and his gravestone stands as a reminder of the fulfillment of God's promise and now of course now several years later a grave is dug coffin is lowered and a body is placed in the very ground that was promised hundreds of years before testament to the faithfulness of God a seal of the covenant a promise of fulfillment and then one more the gravestone of finality

I call it finality the third and final funeral was that of Eleazar who was he he was the son of Aaron but more significantly he was the first high priest the high priest of Israel and his gravestone speaks of finality it marks the changing of the guard this is how we kind of began our discussion here tonight Joshua is dead Joseph's bones been laid to rest Eleazar is dead all the old timers are now gone they're gone and it's time for a new generation to pick up the mantle and the mantle of service and do something for the Lord and that's the whole idea here to carry on this work to keep the course over the past several years you know we think of our generation and maybe the generation just before us we've seen a lot of great great people of God specifically great preachers pass on and their gravestones stand as a reminder of a new to a newer that a newer generation must take up that work to carry it on there's kind of a statement of finality and finality of that former generation God mightily used in our country and in the world great preachers great theologians great men and women of God and they're now dead and their stones picture finality of that generation but they also point to a new generation a younger a newer generation that must take up the work remind God's people of their covenant service and obedience and to lead God's people to serve and obey God you know that next generation is represented some of them are represented right here in this church a couple little boys down here and some younger boys and girls seated back there they must take up the mantle!

[52 : 47] or what's going to happen remember we are always just a generation away from forgetting and forsaking the Lord so we need to encourage this next generation don't we maybe we'll have an opportunity hopefully this next week to do that and see ultimately one day for a newer generation to take up that mantle faith and to to to!

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