

Refuge City Church — September 5, 2021

“Choose this day” [Joshua 23-24]

Joshua 23

1 A long time afterward, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, **2** Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, “I am now old and well advanced in years. **3** And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you.

- Joshua’s final charge
- He brings them to Shechem: a return to the site where their covenant with God is renewed [chapter 8; after the defeat of Ai].
 - From Abraham to Joshua, Shechem was a special site.
 - **Genesis 12:7**, “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord..”
- He warned on multiple occasions of falling away from God, and dangerously intertwining with the other nations that still resided in the land.
- **Verse 6-7**: “Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them,”
 - The warning was so stern, he mentioned ‘other nations’ 7 times.
 - **“Cling to the Lord”**: In obedience = God’s faithfulness & provision
 - **“If you transgress the covenant”**: In disobedience = God’s judgement/discipline
 - **Jude 1:20-21**, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **keep yourselves in the love of God**, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”
 - **James 1:27**, “...to keep oneself unstained from the world.”
 - **Romans 5:5**, “...God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit...”
 - **John 15:9**, “...Abide in my love.”
 - Our continued, faithful obedience to the Lord should stem from a heart of gratitude for all He has done for us, and all He will do. His promises never fail!

Joshua 24

Verses 1-13: a ‘review’ of God’s faithfulness from Abraham to the present day.

- Quickly review the ‘God moments’.
- How many times did God pronounce what He did for His people? [17-20 based on how you split it up]

Verses 14-15: It’s time to make a choice

14 “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. **15** And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, **choose this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond 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.**”

- In this prophetic charge by Joshua, there is a hint of future blessings. He's calling on them to be sincere and faithful in their love and service to God as they move forward from here on out.
- There is no semblance of 'passing the baton' to the next single leader for Israel.
 - Israel will now be without single leadership for the first time since Moses led the people out of Egypt, and Joshua led them in to the promised land.
 - The charge to be sufficient in faith to God is one we ALL have to take on individually. We are responsible for our faith, and how we serve God. No one else.
 - **Jeremiah 29:11-13**, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."
- **"Choose this day whom you will serve."**
 - We're reminded of God's faithfulness continually, yet we still sin.
 - His grace overwhelms us, yet we take advantage of it.
 - We are perpetually inundated with thoughts, visions, choices every day, and we stand at the proverbial 'fork in the road' and are required to make a choice: holiness/obedience vs. sin/disobedience.
 - Abraham stood at the 'fork in the road', and could have said "no thanks".
 - **Hebrews 11:8**, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."
 - Moses stood at the 'fork in the road', and could have said, "nah, I'm good".
 - **Hebrews 11:24-27**, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."
 - But both, along with many others, answered the call to faithful obedience.
- **"As for my and my house, we will serve the Lord."**
 - Parents, we have the great responsibility that if we understand and choose to follow the Lord, it is because we see something greater than ourselves in Him.
 - If we have been transformed by the Spirit of God in us, then He can do the same for others.
 - Our great responsibility is to raise our children in the light of who Jesus is.
 - The young are inundated with the choices of an evil world on a minute by minutes basis.
 - They hear the anti-God state of mind on social media, in school, and at every turn.
 - If we don't show them the power, love, and faithfulness of God in our lives and homes, then the choice will be extremely easy for them. They will go the way of the world in a heartbeat.

- [Christ modeled for us] **Philippians 2:7-8**, “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
- [We model for our children] **1 Corinthians 11:1**, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”
- Make a decision today that your house will be a house dedicated in love, to love and serve the Lord [more to come in our next series on Family & Marriage]
 - **Deuteronomy 6:5-7**, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Verses 16-24

- The challenge is put forth. Now is the time to make a commitment.
- **Verse 19**: “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.”
 - This is not just a simple, passing commitment. Our commitment to the Lord is a deep, life-altering, forever-lasting covenant/agreement.
 - **QUOTE**: “The real test of our faithfulness to God is in most cases is our power to continue steadfastly in one course of conduct when the excitement of conflict is removed, and the enemies with which we have to contend are the insidious allurements of ease or custom amid the common place duties of life.” [Alan Redpath]
 - 3 times the people declare that they will obey and serve the Lord, because of all He has done for them. They are now accountable to their words before the Lord.

Application

- The recent phenomena called “the deconstruction of faith”
 - Many today are re-evaluating their faith against what they were told or taught to believe.
 - It has led many to deconstruct all the way to atheism, or ‘hopeful agnosticism’, as one ‘former Christian’ stated.
 - Even in this ‘deconstruction’, one has a choice: belief or unbelief
 - **Matthew 24:12-13**, “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”
 - If one needs to deconstruct to a point, only to *reconstruct* to a true biblical faith in Jesus, then by all means.
 - There is so much division and convoluted teaching in the church today, we shouldn’t be surprised by the amount of people currently going through a questioning phase in faith.
 - **LISTEN**: If that’s you, then please hear me, seek counsel from scripture and those in the church you can trust to help you through this process.
 - We are all called to ‘count the cost’ of discipleship with Jesus.
 - **Luke 14:26-27, 33**, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate [disavowal of primary allegiance] of his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple... So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

- Jesus said, “You want to follow me? Foxes have holes. Birds have nests. But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Ready to be homeless, follow me.” [Matthew 8:20]
- Jesus said, “You want to follow me? Sell everything you have and give to the poor. Ready to live in poverty, follow me. [Mark 10:21]
- Jesus said, “You want to follow me? Eat my flesh and drink my blood. Everything in this world will leave you unsatisfied and wanting more.” [John 6:53]
 - **John 6:28-35, 66-69**, “Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst... After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”
 - Many fall away because their shallow faith rested wholly on the faith of others, what they could see and be satisfied only by what they received from church [selfish, consumer-driven faith]

Conclusion

- Remember, as Christians, we are disciples of Jesus.
 - We trust, follow, observe, and ask questions when we don’t understand.
 - Don’t see that as a sign of weakness... it’s biblical humility and dependency on someone greater than yourself.
 - Jesus lays down the call and challenge. But don’t forget that He loves you, and desires nothing more than to bless you and fill you with all certainty and wisdom to navigate this fallen world.
 - That’s why He came to give us life abundantly.
 - **Ephesians 3:14-21**, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”