

# Love and Serve God

Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15, 21-24

SS Lesson for 12/09/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Matt 6:19-24

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Joshua 24:15*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### BRINGING ABRAHAM TO CANAAN (JOSH 24:1-3)

*Presenting his people before God (1)*

By positioning oneself to listen to God (Acts 10:33)

By accurately studying God's word (2 Tim 2:15)

By consistently praying to God (Phil 4:6)

Through the reconciliation of Jesus (Col 1:21-22)

*Receiving a promise (3)*

Promise of being a blessing to many nations (Rom 9:4-5)

Promise of Gentile salvation (Rom 15:8-9)

Promise of many off-springs (Gen 15:5)

Promise of father of many nations (Gen 17:5)

#### ABANDONING IDOLS (JOSH 24:13-15)

*By fearing the Lord (14)*

Is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10)

Is turning from evil and doing good (Ps 34:11-14)

Is seeking God's word and wisdom (Prov 2:1-5)

It teaches wisdom (Prov 15:33)

Is the key to God being our foundation, salvation and wisdom (Isa 33:5-6)

*By serving the Lord with sincerity and truth (14)*

Starts with worshiping in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)

God looks at the motives of the heart (1 Sam 16:7)

God wants a humble and willing servant (Ps 51:17)

Serve with love (Gal 5:13-15)

Serving God by serving man (Eph 6:7)

*By stopping idolatry (14)*

Stop exchanging the truth for a lie (Rom 1:20-25)

Stop yielding to the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)

Deny and put to death the acts of idolatry (Col 3:5)

*By choosing to serve God (15)*

Serving the Lord in humility (Acts 20:18-21)

Serving so that the grace of God can be seen (Acts 11:23)

Serving with whatever gifts God has provided (1 Peter 4:10)

Serving prompted by love and faith (1 Thess 1:3)

#### SERVING THE LORD (JOSH 24:21-24)

*By being accountable for commitments (22)*

Accountable for thoughts and words (Matt 12:36)

Accountable to God for what has been given (Matt 25:29)

Accountable to keep vows (Eccl 5:4-7)

*By choosing God out of love (23)*

By loving one another (John 13:34-35)

By loving with the love of God (1 John 4:7-8)

Choosing anything else is worshiping the created (Rom 1:25)

Out of love by seeking God's approval (Gal 1:10)

*By being obedient (24)*

Obedience confirms love (John 14:15)

God respects obedience more than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)

Obedience out of love is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:33)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM ALAN CARR

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many nations observe a day each year to honor their military veterans. Such days feature expressions of appreciation to the men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way in defense of the nation. Societies deem it important that the next generation learn to acknowledge and appreciate the sacrifices that veterans have made on their behalf. In today's lesson, from the final chapter of the book of Joshua, Joshua presents to the nation of Israel what amounts to his farewell address. By this time, Joshua was an old man and a true "veteran" whose career included a host of experiences, serving first as Moses' apprentice and then leading the Israelites in the conquest of the promised land. It was important, before Joshua's death, that the next generation hear his testimony and learn to appreciate the wisdom that he had to offer God's people. Joshua had seen it all. The first time he is mentioned in the Bible is when Moses commanded him to choose some men to fight the Amalekites who had attacked Israel not long after the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17:8–13). Exodus 24:13 describes Joshua as Moses' aide, a word that could be considered the equivalent of an assistant or an apprentice. Joshua was with Moses when the two came down from Mount Sinai after Moses had received God's laws written on tablets of stone by "the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). They found the Israelites taking part in sinful, degrading actions that sparked Moses' anger (32:15–20). Along with Caleb, Joshua was one of the two spies who voiced confidence that the Lord would lead the Israelites into the promised land (Numbers 14:6–9). Tragically, their voices were drowned out by the defiant unbelief of the other 10 spies. Given this background, it seems inevitable that Joshua would be selected as Moses' successor to lead the nation into the promised land and complete the task Moses had begun. Deuteronomy 31:1–8 records Moses' charge to Joshua to assume the leadership of the people. The final chapter of Deuteronomy tells us that "Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses" (34:9). The book of Joshua then chronicles the conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership and the allotment of territory to the various tribes. By the time of today's text, Joshua had become "a very old man" (Joshua 23:1). It was in this condition that he called an assembly.

### Key Verse: Joshua 24:15

*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.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

. Joshua's last meeting with the people took place at Shechem. Whether this second gathering occurred soon after the previous one, whether it was held on an anniversary of the earlier, or whether it was after a long interval cannot be determined. The geographical setting is of interest. Shechem, a few miles northwest of Shiloh, was where Abraham first received the promise that God would give his seed the land of Canaan. Abraham responded by building an altar to demonstrate his faith in the one true God (Gen. 12:6-7). Jacob too stopped at Shechem on his return from Paddan Aram and buried there the idols his family had brought with them (Gen. 35:4). After the Israelites completed the first phase of the conquest of Canaan they journeyed to Shechem where Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, inscribed the Law of God on stone pillars, and reviewed these laws for all the people (Josh. 8:30-35). Joshua had good reason, therefore, to convene the Israelites at this location. Certainly the stones on which the Law had been written were still standing, vivid reminders of that significant event. From this moment on, that beautiful valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim would be associated with this poignant farewell scene as their honored leader spoke to them for the last time. The literary form of this discourse has occasioned much interest and comment. It is now rather well known that the rulers of the Hittite Empire in this period (ca. 1450-1200 B.C.) established international agreements with their vassal states obligating them to serve the Hittite kings in faithfulness

and obedience. These suzerainty (overlordship) treaties followed a regular pattern and required periodic renewal. Joshua 24 contains, in the standard suzerainty treaty form of that time, a covenant renewal document in which the people of Israel were called on to confirm their covenant relationship with God (cf. “Structure” in *Introduction* to Deut.). The parts of the covenant renewal, like a suzerainty treaty, included a preamble (vv. 1-2a), a historical prologue (vv. 2b-13), the stipulations for the vassals with the consequences of disobedience (vv. 14-24), and the writing of the agreement (vv. 25-28). The Mosaic Covenant established at Sinai was not an everlasting covenant; hence it needed to be renewed in every generation. That renewal was now transacted in a formal and impressive ceremony.

**24:1-13.** God was identified as the Author of the covenant and **Israel as the people** (vv. 1-2a). Following this preamble is the historical prologue (vv. 2b-13) in which Yahweh reviewed His past blessings on His subjects. He brought them out of Ur of the Chaldees (vv. 2b-4), **out of Egypt** (vv. 5-7), and into Canaan (vv. 8-13). Some have said **the hornet** (v. 12; Ex. 23:28; Deut. 7:20) refers to Egyptian armies that may have attacked Canaan before the Conquest. Others say the hornet refers figuratively to the panic experienced by the people of Canaan on hearing of what God had done for Israel (cf. Deut. 2:25; Josh. 2:10, 24; 5:1). Still others suggest that this referred to literal hornets. It was God who spoke in this recapitulation of Israel’s history; 18 times the personal pronoun “I” is used: **I took... I gave... I assigned... I sent... I afflicted... I brought... I delivered**, etc. Like a Hittite king reviewing the benevolent acts he had performed for his vassal subjects, God reviewed the marvelous deeds He had performed for Israel’s benefit. Any greatness Israel achieved was not by her effort but through God’s grace and enablement. From first to last Israel’s conquests, deliverances, and prosperity were because of God’s good mercies and were not of their own making.

**24:14-15.** The stipulations of the covenant renewal were then stated: Israel must **fear the LORD and serve Him**. In the Hittite treaties all other foreign alliances were to be rejected; so in this covenant Israel was to reject alliances with all foreign gods. Joshua boldly challenged them to **choose** between **the gods** of Ur their ancestors **worshiped** (cf. v. 2) **beyond the River** (i.e., the Euphrates), **the gods of the Amorites** in Canaan, and Yahweh. Then, adding example to exhortation, Israel’s venerated leader assured them that whatever their choice his mind was made up, his course clear: **as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD**.

**24:16-18.** **The people** responded with alacrity, moved by the force of Joshua’s arguments and the magnetism of his example. They despised the very thought of forsaking the **God** who had delivered them **out of Egypt... that land of slavery... protected** them in the wilderness, and brought them into the land of promise. “Perish the thought that we should ever be guilty of such ingratitude,” was their instant reply. They promised that they too would **serve the LORD**.

**24:19-21.** Joshua spoke again. He was not at all satisfied with their burst of enthusiasm. Did he detect some traces of insincerity? Had he hoped that the people would bring forth their idols for destruction as Jacob’s family had done here some centuries before? (Gen. 35:4; Josh. 24:14, 23) There was no such response so Joshua bluntly declared, **You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins**. Of course Joshua did not mean that God was not a God of forgiveness. He meant that God was not to be worshiped or served lightly, and that to **forsake** Him deliberately to **serve** idols would be a presumptuous, willful, high-handed sin for which there was no forgiveness under the Law (Num. 15:30). Such sin would result in **disaster**. Once more **the people** responded to Joshua’s probing words, earnestly reaffirming their purpose to **serve** Yahweh.

**24:22-24.** Joshua spoke a third time, pointedly challenging them to serve as **witnesses against** themselves if they did turn aside from God. And the people immediately replied **Yes, we are witnesses**. Joshua then spoke a fourth and final time, coming again to the point he had mentioned at the beginning. **Now then... throw away the foreign gods that are among you** (cf. v. 14). He had heard the pledge on their lips; now he challenged them to prove their sincerity by their works. Knowing that many of them were secretly practicing idolatry Joshua forthrightly demanded that they remove their foreign gods. Without the slightest hesitation the people shouted, **We will serve the LORD our God and obey Him**. They said they would be obedient servants of God, not slaves of Egypt or of other gods. (The words “serve,” “served,” and “serving” occur 13 times in vv. 14-24.). There could be no mixing of allegiance to God with idol-worship. A firm choice had to be made then as in every generation. People must choose between expediency and principle, between this world and eternity, between God and idols (cf. 1 Thes. 1:9).

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Bringing Abraham to Canaan (Josh 24:1-3)**

1 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.

2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, 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.

3 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.

### **Presenting his people before God (1)**

*By positioning oneself to listen to God (Acts 10:33)*

So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

*By accurately studying God's word (2 Tim 2:15)*

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

*By consistently praying to God (Phil 4:6)*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

*Through the reconciliation of Jesus (Col 1:21-22)*

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

### **Receiving a promise (3)**

*Promise of being a blessing to many nations (Rom 9:4-5)*

4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

*Promise of Gentile salvation (Rom 15:8-9)*

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs 9 so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."

*Promise of many off-springs (Gen 15:5)*

5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

*Promise of father of many nations (Gen 17:5)*

5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

## **Abandoning Idols (Josh 24:13-15)**

13 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 of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

14 "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!

15 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."

### **By fearing the Lord (14)**

*Is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10)*

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

*Is turning from evil and doing good (Ps 34:11-14)*

11 Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, 13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. 14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

*Is seeking God's word and wisdom (Prov 2:1-5)*

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

*It teaches wisdom (Prov 15:33)*

The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

*Is the key to God being our foundation, salvation and wisdom (Isa 33:5-6)*

5 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. 6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

### **By serving the Lord with sincerity and truth (14)**

*Starts with worshiping in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)*

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

*God looks at the motives of the heart (1 Sam 16:7)*

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

*God wants a humble and willing servant (Ps 51:17)*

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

*Serve with love (Gal 5:13-15)*

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

*Serving God by serving man (Eph 6:7)*

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

### **By stopping idolatry (14)**

*Stop exchanging the truth for a lie (Rom 1:20-25)*

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-who is forever praised. Amen.

*Stop yielding to the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)*

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*Deny and put to death the acts of idolatry (Col 3:5)*

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

### **By choosing to serve God (15)**

*Serving the Lord in humility (Acts 20:18-21)*

18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

*Serving so that the grace of God can be seen (Acts 11:23)*

23 When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

*Serving with whatever gifts God has provided (1 Peter 4:10)*

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

*Serving prompted by love and faith (1 Thess 1:3)*

3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Serving the Lord (Josh 24:21-24)**

21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord!"

22 So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses!"

23 "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel."

24 And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!"

## **By being accountable for commitments (22)**

*Accountable for thoughts and words (Matt 12:36)*

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

*Accountable to God for what has been given (Matt 25:29)*

For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

*Accountable to keep vows (Eccl 5:4-7)*

4When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. 6Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the [temple] messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? 7Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

## **By choosing God out of love (23)**

*By loving one another (John 13:34-35)*

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

*By loving with the love of God (1 John 4:7-8)*

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

*Choosing anything else is worshiping the created (Rom 1:25)*

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

*Out of love by seeking God's approval (Gal 1:10)*

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

## **By being obedient (24)**

*Obedience confirms love (John 14:15)*

"If you love me, you will obey what I command.

*God respects obedience more than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)*

But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

*Obedience out of love is the greatest commandment (Mark 12:33)*

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### *Concluding Thoughts from Alan Carr*

#### **IT'S TIME TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND**

**Intro:** These were exciting times for the people of Israel. They had defeated their enemies and claimed the promised land. Each of the tribes had received their inheritance and now they could settle down and enjoy life a little. It was a time of hope, prosperity and blessings.

It was also a very dangerous time for these people! There was the danger that they would forget where they came from, how they had gotten to where they were and what the Lord had done for them. There was the danger that they would begin to adopt the idolatrous religion of the Canaanites who still lived around them. There was the danger that they would fall into a state of complacency. A state in which they might feel that they could let down their guard just a little. These were dangerous times for Israel indeed!

In the midst of this situation, Joshua stands up to deliver to the people a challenge from the Lord. God wants them to dedicate themselves to Him and to His work. He does not want them trying to live for Him on the one hand and the gods of Canaan on the other. He wants wholehearted dedication or nothing! That is the clear message of this passage.

I would just remind you that these are dangerous times for the church as well. We are seeing the church develop an appearance that is more and more like that of the church in Laodicea in **Revelation 3:14-22**. A church that has everything it needs, except for the presence, power and glory of God. Just as the Lord issued a call through Joshua, all those centuries ago, for His people to make of their minds as to whom they would serve, so He issues the same call to His people on this day. Let's take some time this morning to look into these verses and hear the call God is giving to us this morning. I want to preach for a few minutes on the thought, It's Time To Make Up Your Mind! And, it is! You will have an opportunity today to decide who will have your worship, your love and your obedience: God almighty, or you and all the things that want to capture your minds.

#### I. V. 1-13 **A TIME OF CONTEMPLATION**

(III. Joshua begins his remarks by calling them to a time of contemplation. He wants them to remember who they are ,where they came from and what the Lord has done for them. It would do us good to think back on those things ourselves!)

A. V. 1-12 **To Contemplate God's Power In Their Lives** - They are reminded about God's choice and call of Israel. How He redeemed them and delivered them from Egypt. How He manifested His power and glory on their behalf time and time again. They are reminded of the victories they have enjoyed and the blessings that have been theirs because of the Lord's work in their lives. (**Note:** We need to contemplate all the Lord has done for us! Remember where He found you. What He did for you. How He has blessed you. How He has worked on your behalf time and again. How He has answered prayer and met needs. Remember His power in your life.)

B. V. 1-12 **To Contemplate God's Presence In Their Lives** - Israel is reminded that God has ever been with them. In everything they faced, He was there to help them and to see them through. (**Note:** We need to remember that since the day we were saved by grace, God has never left us nor had He forsaken us, as He said, **Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20**. Remember His presence in your life.)

C. V. 13 **To Contemplate God's Provisions In Their Lives** - Now they are reminded of how they enjoy blessings that they do not deserve. They are clearly partakers of grace and have more than they could have ever imagined! (**Note:** We need to contemplate the fact that we have much this morning that we simply do not deserve! Think of it! We are saved, secure and headed to a home in Heaven! We are here and in the body of Christ. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and live in the presence all the time. We have more than anyone can understand or imagine! God has been so good to us!)

(**Note:** In light of these truths, I wonder why so many of God's children seem to have a hard time just simply loving and serving Him as they should. Of course, this is nothing new! Israel was guilty of walking out on God even when He had been so good to them, **Jer. 2:5-19!** I wonder if we would not have to admit to the same kind of sin? Everything under the sun is allowed to come before the Lord in our lives. This simply is not right! Perhaps we need to contemplate what the Lord has done for us once again. Remember where He found you and all that He has done for you.)

## II. V. 14-15 **A TIME OF CONFRONTATION**

A. V. 14 **Confronted By A Command** - Joshua's command to the people was three-fold. They were commanded to "*fear*" God; clean up their lives by putting away their other gods; and they were to serve the Lord. This would put them in a position to put God back in the forefront of their lives. (**Note:** This is a command that God's people need to take heed to today! We need to 1.) **Fear the Lord** - That is, we need to reverence and honor Him for Who He is. He deserves to be respected and loved by those He has redeemed! 2.) **Put away our other gods!** All those things in our lives that come ahead of the Lord need to be put away forever! 3.) **Serve the Lord with sincerity.** The word "*serve*" means "*to fulfill the role of a slave.*" We are His possessions and should live as such, **1 Cor. 6:19-20.** The word "*sincerity*" means "*wholeheartedly, completely, with integrity*" The English word "*sincere*" comes from two Latin words which mean "*without wax*". It was used to refer to scrupulous pottery dealers who sold first class pottery that did not have cracks patched with wax. When patched pottery was held up to the light, the wax patch was easy to spot. So it is with people who live insincere lives. When they are held up to the light, their hypocrisy shows! The implication for us is that God does not want His people to live lives of hypocrisy! He wants us to be what we claim to be!

B. V. 15a **Confronted By A Choice** - Joshua challenged the people to choose who they would serve and to get about it! (**Note:** The same choice stands before us this morning! It's about time people got off the fence and made up their minds who's team they are on. Ill. The people Elijah confronted on Mt. Carmel - **1 Kings 18:21.** Friend, you cannot have both God and the world! You cannot have Him and all your distractions. Either He is in first place, or you have a different god!) (**Note:** The question that comes to my mind is this: "*Why would anyone think it evil to serve the Lord?*")

C. V. 15b **Confronted By A Challenge** - Joshua set the example and laid down the gauntlet for the rest of the people by stating his clear intention to serve God. (**Note:** We need some Joshuas in our day! We need some men and women who will settle it in their hearts that Jesus Christ and His Word and will be going to come before everything else in life! We need some who will set the example for others. We have too many who, by their lives, give justification for slackness in life. We need some who have a backbone of steel and who would rather die than let something come ahead of God in their lives. (Ill. Daniel - **Dan. 1:8-19;** The 3 Hebrews - **Dan. 3:1-30;** Daniel - **Dan. 6:1-28;** Ruth - **Ruth 1:16-17.**) (**Note:** does your life stand as a challenge to godly living, or as an encouragement to godless living? It is one or the other!)

## III. V. 16-28 **A TIME OF CONSECRATION**

A. V. 16-18 **The Resolve Of The People** - The people consider all that the Lord has done for them and they declare their allegiance to Him alone! They seem almost incredulous when offered the

opportunity to serve other gods. (**Note:** Is the Lord your choice this morning? If He has to compete for your time, your attention, your money and your love, it calls your whole profession into question! If you had to rank God on a list of priorities in your life, where would He end up?)

B. V. 19-23 **A Reminder To The People** - Joshua takes the opportunity to remind them that God is holy and righteous. If they serve Him, He will bless them, but if they renege on their end of the agreement, there will be a high price to pay. (**Note:** God's people need to remember that while God is a God of love, grace and mercy; He is also still a holy and righteous God. He will not tolerate sin in the lives of His children! Friends, there is a terribly high price to pay for disobedience, **Heb. 12:6-12**. Sadly, many people pay the price for their sins in their children, their health and in their homes. You better understand today that you will reap exactly what you sow, **Gal. 6:7**.)

C. V. 24-28 **The Reaction Of The People** - The people respond by setting about the business of serving the Lord. They and Joshua set up a memorial, a record if you will of their decision. There was a record of their decision and it would be used to hold them accountable. Sadly, Israel did not keep their vows to the Lord and they paid a terribly high price. Just read Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. (**Note:** God keeps good records! He will hold us to the vows we have made, **Eccl. 5:1-7**. He wants us to serve Him, love Him and honor Him. When we do that, He will bless our lives. When we choose to walk in a way that does not please Him, then we can expect Him to chastize us, if we are truly His children.)

**Conc:** Don't you think that it's time to make up your mind? If the Lord be God then serve Him. If He isn't, then go ahead and serve whatever has your heart. Whatever you do, stop trying to have the best of both worlds! A Christian that refuses to live for the Lord is a poor advertisement for the Lord Jesus Christ! While a life lived in His power and victory is a powerful advertisement indeed! Which are you?

Perhaps you aren't even saved. You know that if you were, your life would be vastly different than it is. Today would be a great day to come to Jesus. Others may want to come before the Lord and just let Him do a spiritual checkup on your heart. Let's get it right so that the church can grow and go for the glory of the Lord!

*(Adapted from URL:[http://www.sermonnotebook.org/old%20testament/Josh%2024\\_1-28.htm](http://www.sermonnotebook.org/old%20testament/Josh%2024_1-28.htm))*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

It is noteworthy that the names Joshua and Jesus come from the same Hebrew verb, meaning "to save." As Joshua brought the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan, Jesus, the "pioneer of [our] salvation" (Hebrews 2:10), leads us toward our promised land of Heaven. And as one ponders Joshua's words in our text and the degree of commitment to the Lord that he called the Israelites to demonstrate, it is not difficult to recognize similarities to Jesus' teaching about what is required to be his disciple (Luke 14:25-33). One must "estimate the cost," as Jesus put it, and that is what Joshua encouraged the Israelites to do. For us as Christians to say that "We will serve the Lord" means we will honor Jesus as Lord and demonstrate that commitment by serving him faithfully every day. Like Joshua's audience, we too must reject the "gods" that threaten to undermine that commitment. Those gods may not be statues or images of pagan deities; they can be material objects (money and possessions) or a degree of devotion to a career, to sports, to education, or something else that has claimed, for all intents and purposes, the status of a "god" in our lives. In whom or what are we placing our trust? Where is our heart inclined? The words of Joshua still issue a resounding call to New Testament believers: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."

## ***Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

Have you ever chosen to serve the Lord? Has there ever been a time in your life when you have said you will give yourself to Him? It is easy to get into the habit of going to church and concluding that everything is OK between you and God just because you attend faithfully. God, however, demands more than just regular attendance at worship services. Our text presents us with the response of the Israelites to all that God had done for them (Josh. 24:1-15). Joshua recounted all that God had done for them; then he challenged the people to commit themselves to serve God. Paul did much the same thing in Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." The phrase "mercies of God" refers to all the gracious acts God has taken to secure the salvation of His people. Paul enumerated them in the first eleven chapters of Romans. He concluded by slating that in light of all that God has done for us, the logical step for us to take is to present our bodies to Him. God considers such an act holy. He accepts it as an offering to Him. Have you taken this step? Have you considered all that God has done to save His people? The ultimate act was the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, to bear our sin on the cross. Have you confessed your sin and trusted in Christ to save you? If so, why not take the next step and present yourself to God? Be a living sacrifice for God. Let God use you wherever, however, and whenever He chooses. Be constantly available to Him. At the same time you must take a third step: Pattern your behavior after the mercies of God. This is the point of Romans 12:2. You must stop letting the world and its thinking and viewpoints determine your behavior. Instead, you must let the great truths or doctrines of God's dealings with mankind transform your thinking and behavior. When you do this, you will find that God's will is something that you enjoy doing. It will no longer be a burden to serve God. You will find that the enjoyment of life is truly a gift from God. Notice the exhortation given to believers by John: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). Have you stopped letting the world control your behavior? Who or what determines how you spend your money and your time? How do you choose your friends? How do you decide what kinds of clothes to buy? Do your lusts and your pride determine all these things for you, or does God? You must make the choice. Whom will you serve and obey? Will you serve your desires or God? Remember that your choice will affect you in the next life, not only in the present. Let I John 2:17 guide your decisions.