

Introduction

Why do we have the book of Joshua in the Bible? Scripture does not record everything; it records God's revelation of Himself and His will. Joshua is not a book about history; it is a book about God.

The book of Joshua primarily teaches two things about God and briefly discusses how we should respond to those things. First, Joshua teaches that God is faithful. God has promised to give this land to Abraham's descendants. God was faithful to His word. Second, Joshua teaches that God gives His people rest. In Joshua, God gave them rest from wandering in the wilderness, living in tents, and fighting every nation around them. The response to God's faithfulness and God's gift of rest is that they should love the Lord and be devoted to Him.

God's nature and God's work has not changed since Joshua. Only the context has changed. God is still faithful; therefore, we can trust His promises. God still gives rest - not as a land to live in, but rest for our souls in Christ ([Matt 11:29](#)). The right response is still loving the Lord and devoting ourselves to Him.

[Joshua 23-24](#) wraps up this book and summarizes these themes.

Covenant faithfulness

God's faithfulness

God was faithful to His word. God's faithfulness is not conditional. There are conditions to God's promises, but not His faithfulness.

[Joshua 23:1-2](#) "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."

What do we know about the timing of Joshua's speech? It occurred a long time later ([Josh 23:1](#)), meaning either a long time after [Josh 11:23](#) when God gave them rest or a long time after the previous chapter's events. Also, Joshua is very old ([Josh 23:1-2](#)). He dies soon after this at the age of 110 ([Josh 24:29](#)).

What had God given to Israel? God had given them rest ([Josh 23:1](#)). This book talks about God giving them rest seven times ([Josh 1:13](#), [15](#); [11:23](#); [14:15](#); [21:44](#); [22:4](#); [23:1](#)). The book of Hebrews also mentions that this book is about God giving rest ([Heb 4:8](#)).

[Joshua 23:3-5](#) “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. 4 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. 5 The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you.”

*In verse 3, what had God done for His Israel? He fought against the nations for them ([Josh 23:3](#)). From the beginning God had promised that He would **give** them the land ([Josh 1:2-3, 6](#)).*

In verse 5, what would God do for Israel in the future? God would drive out the remaining people as Israel fought against them. This is a good example of God’s promises being conditional. God had promised this same thing to the Exodus generation, but they did not receive it because they lacked faith to go to battle ([Num 14](#)). As we will read in Judges, the following generations will not continue fighting; therefore, the nations will remain. Nonetheless, God is still faithful.

The covenant condition

The right response to God’s faithfulness is love and devotion. This is the same response we expect in the covenant of marriage. Marriage is a covenant of love and devotion. A relationship with God is a covenant of love and devotion.

[Joshua 23:6-8](#) “6 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, 7 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, 8 but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day.”

In verse 6, how should they respond to God’s faithfulness? They should do all that is written in Scripture ([Josh 23:6](#)). Scripture is God’s revelation of Himself and His will. Devotion to the Lord requires submission to Scripture.

*In verse 7, what would be a direct violation of Scripture? They should not intermarry (mix) with the nations that remained in the land ([Josh 23:7](#)). This was not a racial command; this was a religious command. Notice that the result God was saving them from was turning to false gods. Rather, they were to **cling** to the Lord. Just as flirting with someone else is dangerous to a marriage, flirting with idolatry is dangerous to our covenant relationship with the Lord. Devotion requires complete separation, not flirting.*

[Joshua 23:9-11](#) “9 For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. 10 One man of you puts to flight a

thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. 11 Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God.”

Verses 9-10 once again remind of God’s faithfulness. *In verse 11, how should they respond to God’s faithfulness?* They should love the Lord ([Josh 23:11](#)). This was the command God had given Israel in [Deut 6:5](#). Jesus said this was the greatest command in Scripture ([Matt 22:37-38](#)).

[Joshua 23:12-13](#) “12 For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13 know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.”

In verse 12, what would prevent Israel from experiencing the fulfillment of God’s promises? If they cling to the remaining nations and marry them ([Josh 23:12](#)). Again, this is not a racial command; this is a religious command. Notice the contrast between verses 8 and 12. [Joshua 23:8](#) “8 but you shall **cling** to the Lord your God ...” [Joshua 23:12](#) “12 For if you turn back and **cling** to the remnant of these nations remaining among you ...”

In verse 13, what would happen if they clung to those nations? First, God would allow the nations to remain. Second, God would allow them to lead Israel astray. [Romans 1](#) says the same thing about God’s response to idolatry. [Romans 1:24](#) “24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...” [Romans 1:26](#) “26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions...” [Romans 1:28](#) “28 ... God gave them up to a debased mind...” Often, God’s judgment against sin is to allow people to remain in sin. **Sin is its own judgment.** Third, they would lose the land. We see this fulfilled in the OT when Israel is taken into exile by the Babylonian Empire by God’s own hand.

[Joshua 23:14-16](#) “14 “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. 15 But just as all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the Lord your God has given you, 16 if you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.””

Verse 14 once again reminds Israel of God’s faithfulness. Not one word of His promises has failed ([Josh 23:14](#)). Verse 15 explains that God’s promises were not just to bless Israel. God’s promises were to bless Israel’s faithfulness and curse Israel’s unfaithfulness.

In verses 15-16, what would be the physical consequence of unfaithfulness toward God? In God's wrath toward Israel, they would be destroyed from the land God had given ([Josh 23:15-16](#); cf. [Josh 23:13](#)). Their possession of the land was conditional upon their faithfulness to the Lord. He would remain faithful, but his promises were conditional.

Summary

It is important that we do not reduce Christian faith to legalism. Christian faith is not primarily about obeying commands. Obeying God's commands is the result of faith, but it is not primary. Christian faith is primarily about a covenant relationship with the Lord ([John 17:3](#)). God is perfectly faithful; therefore, He is faithful to that covenant relationship. Our response should not be legalistic checklists. We should respond with love and devotion.

Covenant renewal

God's faithfulness

In chapter 24, Joshua pushes Israel to make a commitment to covenant faithfulness. He begins by again reminding Israel of God's faithfulness. **God is always faithful to His people.**

[Joshua 24:1-4](#) "1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. 4 And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt."

*In verse 2, how does Joshua describe their ancestors? They were idolators ([Josh 24:2](#)). Israel had been chosen **out of** idolatry. Their relationship with God was based on that separation.*

[Joshua 24:5-7](#) "5 And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagues Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. 6 " '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. 7 And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time."

Who brought Israel out of Egypt? God sent Moses and Aaron, but the Lord brought Israel out ([Josh 24:5](#)). This was clear by the plagues that God struck Egypt with.

What did God do to Egypt when they pursued Israel? God covered them in the Red Sea ([Josh 24:7](#)). He opened up a path for Israel to cross, but He used the same path to destroy the Egyptians.

[Joshua 24:8-10](#) “8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. 9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, 10 but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.”

In verse 8, whose land did God give to Israel? God defeated the Amorites (Og and Sihon) and gave the land east of the Jordan to the Israelites. This is the land where the two and a half tribes of [Joshua 22](#) lived. God also delivered them from Balak. As we discussed last week, Balak successfully led Israel into idolatry through inter-marrying at Peor ([Numb 23-25](#)). This is exactly what Joshua warned Israel about in [Joshua 23](#).

[Joshua 24:11-13](#) “11 And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. 12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. 13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.”

How did Israel win the battles we read about in Joshua? Their victories were by God fighting for them. God gave them into their hand ([Josh 24:11](#)). God drove them out before them ([Josh 24:12](#)). It was not by sword or bow that they had victory ([Josh 24:12](#)). God gave them lands, cities, vineyards, and orchards that they did not earn ([Josh 24:13](#)).

Israel's response

So, how should Israel respond to God's faithfulness. Joshua charges them to commit to covenant faithfulness with God. **A covenant relationship with God requires fidelity.**

[Joshua 24:14-15](#) “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.””

Joshua instructs Israel to fear the Lord and serve Him. *Whose gods does Joshua instruct them to put away?* He tells them to put away the gods of their fathers, meaning the idols that Israel

had already fallen into worshipping. The gods beyond the River (Euphrates) refers to Abraham's family. The gods in Egypt refer to Israel sharing in idol worship while in Egypt. Verses 1-13 were primarily describing God moving Israel around (the River, Canaan, Egypt, wilderness, Canaan). They were describing God bringing Israel out of idolatry. Salvation is spiritual, not political.

[Joshua 24:16-21](#) “16 Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, 17 for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.” 19 But Joshua said to the people, “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. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” 21 And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.””

How does verse 19 describe the Lord? He is a holy God. Holiness refers to complete devotion. For example, the temple vessels were holy because they were only used in the temple, never for common use. God is holy, meaning He is completely devoted to His own glory and righteousness. There is no sin in Him.

The Lord is also jealous. Jealousy is a sin when it involves coveting what is not yours. God often describes Himself as jealous in relation to idolatry ([Exod 20:5](#)). God's jealousy for our love and devotion is not sinful because He is not coveting something that does not belong to Him. Just as a husband or wife is right for not sharing his/her spouse, God is right for not demanding complete devotion to Him.

Why does verse 19 say that God will not forgive their sins? This is actually a common thing in the OT. God does not overlook sin ([Exod 34:7](#); [Nah 1:3](#)). The point here is not that God does not forgive sin when people are repentant. Notice that the following verse describes them turning to idolatry. God has provided a means of atonement for sin to those who repent and believe the gospel. But His forgiveness does not continue to those who continue in unrepentant disbelief.

Witnesses

Israel established two witnesses of their commitment to a covenant relationship with the Lord.

[Joshua 24:22-24](#) “22 Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” 23 He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the

God of Israel.” 24 And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.””

What was the first witness mentioned in verses 22? The people’s own words were witnesses against them. If they turned to idols, their own words would testify that they had made a covenant commitment.

[Joshua 24:25–28](#) “25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. 26 And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. 27 And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” 28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.”

In verse 27, what is the second witness? The memorial stone that Joshua set by the Tabernacle would be a lasting testimony of their covenant commitment.

Death and Burial

The book of Joshua ends by describing the death of its leaders.

[Joshua 24:29–31](#) “29 After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old. 30 And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.”

How old was Joshua when he died? Joshua was 110 years old ([Josh 24:29](#)). *How long did Israel serve the Lord?* They served the Lord as long as the elders who outlived Joshua were alive. We will see more detail about this in Judges, but this is already a hint that Israel will not serve God in the future.

[Joshua 24:32](#) “32 As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.”

Why did Israel bury Joseph’s bones at Shechem? Before Joseph died, he made his family promise to take his bones back to Shechem for burial ([Gen 50:25](#)). [Heb 11:22](#) says that this was an expression of faith. He believed that God would be faithful to His promise to give them the land.

[Joshua 24:33](#) “33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.”

The book concludes with the death of Eleazar. Eleazar was the son of Aaron. When Aaron died, Eleazar became the high priest ([Num 20:26-28](#)).

Conclusion

The point of [Joshua 23-24](#) is that God is faithful; therefore, we should be faithful to Him.

The New Testament teaches a couple of important things about God’s faithfulness. First, God’s faithfulness does not depend on our faithfulness. [2 Timothy 2:13](#) “13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.” God’s nature it to be faithful. That is unchanging.

Second, the New Covenant is distinct from the old covenant because we remain in the covenant by Christ’s faithfulness, not our own. [Hebrews 10:14-18](#) “14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” 17 then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”