CAPITOL COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

MOPray

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule | Tuesday, April 29, 7:00-7:45 AM | HHR #3
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

Joshua chapter 24 marks the "Covenant Renewal" between God and Israel. Covenant identifies Israel as His own and makes Israel one in community living under God's supreme reign.

24:1 – Then Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, including their elders, leaders, judges, and officers. So they came and presented themselves to God.

The "Covenant Renewal" was set in Shechem thirty miles north of Jerusalem (modern-day West Bank). Shechem was a significant location in Israel's history. It was the place where God first promised Abraham the land, at that time the land was inhabited with Canaanites. God's promise came in an unlikely place, amidst an unlikely people. Great faith was called forth from Abraham (named Abram at that time) Genesis 12:6-7. The promise began in Shechem and was fulfilled in Shechem generations later.

Everyone was to participate in the "Covenant Renewal": to remind them that God started it all. It was His love and dream to establish a special people in relationship with Him, one He could provide for, protect, and prosper. God's mighty hand of power went before them on every turn. He fought for Israel giving them victory from the land of the Amorites East of the Jordan River to Jericho west of the Jordan and through the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites' territory.

It was not their weapons that defeated the seven-waring nations, and it was not their enemies chariots and horses that defeated Israel. It was the LORD who gave them victory, and it was God who gave Israel possession of the "Promised Land", and it was the LORD, not their labor, who gave them towns, vineyards, and olive groves.

24:2-4 – Joshua said to the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River, and they worshiped other gods. But I took your ancestor Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir *(modern-day southern Jordan)***, while Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.**

From beyond the Euphrates River down to Egypt, through the Red Sea and into the wilderness, across the Jordan River, and eventually into the Promised Land went Israel. "[B]eyond the Euphrates River" was Ur, a city among the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia which is modern-day southern Iraq.

It is said that Ur was the center of moon god worship especially Nanna. Other gods like fertility, the sun and the stars were idols. They worshipped the created not the creator. Abraham came from a life of idol worship into a life of worshipping the one true God, the LORD supreme over the created.

24:7 – When your ancestors cried out to the LORD, I put darkness between you and the Egyptians. I brought the sea crashing down on the Egyptians, drowning them. With your very own eyes you saw what I did. Then you lived in the wilderness for many years.

After more than 400 years of slavery and 10-plagues on the Egyptians, Pharaoh forced the Israelites to exit Egypt but Pharaoh's heart was hardened and his army chased after the Israelites. The words of LORD: **"I put darkness between you and the Egyptians"** refer to the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea.

> *The angel of God that had been leading the camp of Israel now shifted and got behind them. And the Pillar of Cloud that had been in front also shifted to the rear. The Cloud was now between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. The Cloud enshrouded one camp in darkness and flooded the other with light. The two camps didn't come near each other all night.* Exodus 14:19-20

The Egyptians could not see Israel while both where in the Red Sea on dry ground. Part of the miracle of the Red

Sea was God blocking the Egyptians ability to see where Israel was as they crossed the Red sea, but Israel had light to see the way through and out of the Red Sea.

24:9-10 – Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, started a war against Israel. He summoned Balaam son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to him. Instead, I made Balaam bless you, and so I rescued you from Balak.

Fearful that Israel would overpower his people, Balak went on the offensive. He initiated spiritual warfare by enlisting Balaam, a pagan prophet to curse Israel. God would have nothing to do with it. He caused Balak to bless Israel not curse them. No spiritual force can overpower the LORD supreme. His power is greater than all; His hand upholds His people with the righteousness of His right hand. His voice created the heaven and the earth and commands all of creation, beings above and below the earth. God determined Israel's history. God determines your history.

24:14-15 – "So fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone. But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."

It is not fear the way we emote when threatened or afraid. It is a recognition that God is all powerful, He sees all, and we are accountable to Him. To serve God alone is to forsake the idols of their ancestors beyond the Euphrates River and idols of the Amorites in the Promised Land.

One of the most notable sayings in Scripture is when Joshua said: "**But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."** The question lives today. It calls out to you, what will you do? Will you serve the created idols of this world or your creator, the one who made you in His image? One cannot follow Jesus halfhearted. Joshua was telling the people you cannot serve God and idols intermittently. Wholehearted service is to give God your everything. Your priorities, your love, your loyalty, your surrender to follow His ways, His words, and His will for your life.

24:16-21 – The people replied, "We would never abandon the LORD and serve other gods. He performed mighty miracles before our very eyes. So we, too, will serve the LORD, for he alone is our God." Then Joshua warned the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you abandon the LORD and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you." But the people answered Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!"

They promised to turn from idols and dedicate themselves to follow and worship only the LORD. The Israelites reaffirmed God's covenant. It was their public declaration of loyalty.

24:22 – "You are a witness to your own decision," Joshua said. "You have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes," they replied, "we are witnesses to what we have said."

Joshua tells them they are accountable for their vow to the LORD. Israelites are witnesses to faithfully obey God's covenant.

24:26-28 –Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God.

Just as in Chapter four the stones were a testimony to God's miracles and fulfillment of promise. In chapter twenty-four, the stone, a physical symbol, serves as a silent witness to their agreement to live by the covenant made with God, and as a witness if they break the covenant.

24:29-32 – Joshua died at the age of 110. The people of Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him. The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought along with them when they left Egypt, were buried at Shechem.

Joshua's life was a tribute to his leadership and to the God he served. Joseph told his brothers,

> *"but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."* Gen. 50-24

From Egypt to the Promised Land. God was faithful across all generations.

Choose Who You Will Serve. The LORD