

Introduction to Judges

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Preacher: Joe Sutton

[0 : 00] All right, so we're going to begin a new study in the book of Judges today, although the text that we'll cover today is actually going to be Joshua 24.

! I felt that it was valuable for us to take a week to set the scene before we then go ahead and introduce the book. So that is what we're going to do today. We'll look at Joshua chapter 24. It gives us a good summary backdrop, and it also has some good challenge and a couple of good application points as well for us today, which I shall draw out. So, the book of Joshua, funnily enough, closes with the death of Joshua.

Joshua and Caleb, I think we all know, were the two spies who went into the land of Canaan after just, you know, a couple of weeks after coming out of Egypt.

Go check out the land. They went along with ten others. However, we know the story. The people en masse were faithless and refused to go in.

[1 : 12] And as a result of that faithlessness, Joshua and Caleb were then forced to wander the wilderness for 38 years, waiting for that generation to die, everyone 20 years old and up.

And during that period, the people of Israel knew continual blessing from God. They knew, what did they have? They had clothing that didn't wear out, shoes that didn't wear out.

They had, every day, there was literal miracle food on the ground, manna. There was the rock twice that gave them water to drink.

And, moreover, they saw the pillar of fire and the pillar of clouds. So, there could be no doubt that they were receiving the benefits of God.

And, of course, at the end of Moses' life, who was leading the people, he explicitly handed over leadership to Joshua. Joshua, in Joshua chapter 1, verse 5, God says to Joshua, Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.

[2 : 21] Joshua was the leader of God's people. And then the book of Joshua is all about the entry into the promised land, which is the land of Canaan. And, indeed, God was with them.

We have, what do we have? We have Jericho, you know, the incredible, miraculous victory. You know, Joshua could never say, that was my great military strategy that brought Jericho down. No, no, no. March around the city. Now, and then what happened, of course, is there was an apportioning of the land. And I thought I would show you this little map, because I thought it's just a bit helpful.

I find it helpful to visualize what's going on. So, Jericho is here, just for context. And the people, of course, came in through this way from the east.

And if you remember the story, Reuben, Gad, and the half of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan after they dispossessed a couple of kings, which we'll talk about, actually, because they'll come up.

[3 : 22] But this is how the land is going to look. And the point is, is all of this apportioning out is done by Joshua.

I think half of the book of Joshua is this, actually. Well, a big chunk of it is, from Joshua 13 on or so. But the land isn't theirs yet.

There's a lot. And actually, there's another map that I'll show you briefly now. They've only managed to take... This much.

So the red is what they've taken. So this was all taken from those kings. And they've taken, you know, they started to make some inroads in the other areas. But mostly, it's still green.

You know, Gath, Ekron, Ziklag there. There's lots and lots of land that's still to be taken. But it's all been apportioned out. Joshua said, this is your land. Go take it. And that's pretty much where we are at the end of the book.

[4 : 24] So the context of our chapter 24, then, is Joshua standing before the community of Israel as their leader. He's led them for probably 25 years or so.

The book of Joshua is not long, about 25 years, I would estimate. And he probably is, in fact, 20 to 30 years older than every other person there.

Except for Caleb, of course. You know, because they were all the younger generation. So Joshua is standing there as one of the two elders, if you like. And he says, I'm going.

I'm old. I'm going the way of all the earth, he says. And then his final act is that of a prophet. Telling God's word to the people and urging them to remain faithful.

Now, one thing that I wanted to draw out, just to bring your attention to now, is that, well, Joshua 24, 29 will say, it came about after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old.

[5 : 32] Brilliant. So we've just read the end of the life of Joshua. And then in Judges chapter 1, verse 1, we read, now it came about after the death of Joshua, that a bunch of stuff happened. So great.

We're happy that we're reading a chronological order. Except that when we get to Judges chapter 2, verse 8, we will read, then Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110.

And we find ourselves going, huh? And what we have to conclude then is that the events that we're about to read are not necessarily in chronological order. In fact, it's not that they are not necessarily. It is that they are not in chronological order. And, you know, whether we have the result of, you know, a compiling of different authors is not clear. But I just want to make that point up front.

And what we have then is a fairly tricky narrative, if our objective is to try and sort it into order. Oh, one other thing I wanted to make mention of, again, at this point, is that when we get to the end of Judges 2, which we may do by next week, and going to Judges 3, the Lord makes one point very, very clear to the people.

[6 : 47] And that is that he has left some nations undefeated on purpose. And he's leaving them there in order to test their hearts in future generations.

Actually, what he says there is, I'm leaving them here because the future generations need to know war. I'm like, what? That's what the Lord God says. If I need to leave them so that they will know war.

And I think we should read that as, so that they'll know they need to trust me. So, that's probably enough about that. So, let's look then at, so we'll turn to Joshua 24.

So, Joshua 23, just before we get there, was Joshua speaking to the elders and the leaders. So, elders, as it were, being they're all at least 20-odd years younger than him, but the elders and the leaders, and interestingly, the judges, he says there.

But I'll leave that word for next week. And to the leaders, he says, again, the land is apportioned out. It's yours for the taking. Go take it. You've seen how mighty nations, well, you've defeated them.

[7 : 56] And you've defeated them by my might, he says. And then he says, focus on keeping true to the book of the law of Moses. And specifically, don't associate with the other nations.

And don't mention the names of their gods. Don't serve them. Don't bow down to them. Because if you do, God won't drive them out anymore, and they'll be a snare. And ultimately, Joshua says, the promises that God made to you that you've seen come to pass, God also made the promise of some cursings, and they also will come to pass.

So that was, that's what he said to the elders. And then we're ready now for Joshua 24 at last. So, Joshua 24 verse 1, where he is now addressing the whole of the congregation.

So then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. That's a lot of people. Yeah, it's a lot. It's quite a lot of people.

Yeah. He calls for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their officers, and they present themselves before God. But again, all the people are there, and the leaders, I mean, I don't think Joshua, Joshua's probably had a pretty loud voice at this point, but whether he could communicate to an entire nation, I think he's going to need to pass along.

[9 : 12] So, Shechem, Shechem is a very important place. You may recall that it is the very first place that Abraham came to, when he came to the promised land.

Way, way back in Genesis chapter 12, he built the first altar there. In fact, actually, look, it's right here on the map. Shechem is there.

And you may also observe that it's about equal distance, from Mount Ebal, and on Mount Gerizim, which are, of course, the mountains of blessing, and the mountains of cursing.

So, it's a very poignant place. It is a place between two choices. So, when Joshua likes to say, choose this day, you can, it kind of sets the scene, doesn't it, I think.

So, we read that they presented themselves before, literally, that before the face of God. It's a pretty, it's a pretty solemn occasion, I would say.

[10:19] So then, verse 2, Joshua said to all the people, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, from ancient times, your fathers lived beyond the, Euphrates River, that is, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served, other gods.

This is what the God of Israel says, or, if you prefer, thus says the Lord. I think, one of the, more traditional NASB, renders it. Thus, this is what the Lord says, as I said, Joshua is very, firmly taking the role of prophet here.

This is what the Lord says. And also, this is, I wanted to show you where, Ur of the Chaldeans is, and then I discovered actually, we don't really know exactly where it is.

So, I can't show you where it is on the map, because we don't know exactly, but it's somewhere over there. Possibly it's in Iraq, possibly it's further north. Yeah, the reality is, it's not certain binding means, even today.

Yeah. There's a few points, there's a few options. But what we note here, and interestingly, I didn't know this, until I read a commentary, but this, this here, in Joshua 24, is where we read explicitly, that Abraham served other gods.

[11:36] We didn't read that explicitly in Genesis. We don't know it from anywhere else. This is how we know, that he was an idolater. He, so, yeah, Terah, Abraham, Nahor, they served, other gods.

Verse 3, Then, I took your father, Abraham, Abraham, from beyond the river, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants, and gave him Isaac.

To Isaac, I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau, I gave Mount Seir, to possess it. But Jacob, and his sons, went down to Egypt. And then, I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, by what I did in its midst.

And afterwards, I brought you out. So, I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you, now talking to, of this generation, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen from the Red Sea.

And when they cried out to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them, and your own eyes, saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness, for a long time.

[12:46] And I do wonder, you know, again, this is the generation of youngsters. You know, the oldest among them would have been 19, the youngest, you know, would have been babes. So, I wonder what it was like, to be a child at that time, and see, the drama of, the Egyptian army, and seeing the Lord, smooch it, with water, and, you know, I wonder, I wonder what it was like, but, the point that Joshua was making is, you saw this.

You saw this. Verse 8, Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you, but I handed them over to you, and you took possession of their land, when I eliminated them before you.

Then Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, rose up and fought against Israel, and he sent messengers, and summoned Balaam, the son of Beor, to curse you.

But I was not willing to listen to Balaam, so he had to bless you, and I saved you from his hand. You crossed the Jordan, and came to Jericho, and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Therefore, I handed them over to you, and then I sent the hornet before you, and it drove out the two kings, the Amorites, from you, not by your sword, nor your bow, and I gave you a land on which you had not laboured, and cities which you had not built, and you lived in them, you were eating a vineyard and olive groves, which you didn't plant.

[14:34] Lots there. The story of Balak and Balaam, of course, we can read that in Numbers 22 through 24. A very colourful story, which I won't take the time to rehearse now.

The two kings of the Amorites, as far as I can tell, I can't see any other candidates. This is Sihon, the king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan.

And again, the narrative for those guys would be Numbers 21, which, if it is those two guys, that would put it before Balak and Balaam, which is why I'm a little uncertain on that, but I couldn't find any other two kings.

So, and those guys, so this, that's this territory, this red territory here on the east of the Jordan, that's the area they were from, and they took it.

What's the point? The point that Joshua is making to the people of Israel is that God did it all.

Joshua says, it wasn't by your sword or bow.

[15:42] And I do wonder, like, you know, Numbers 21, 24, says this, speaking of Sihon and Og, it says that Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Yabok, as far as the sons of Ammon, for the border of the sons of Ammon was Jazeera.

So, yeah, I don't know exactly whether it's on that. Sorry. But the point, the point is, is that they did use their swords to take him out. But Joshua says, it was God who did it.

God sent the hornets before you. God effectively weakened them. Um, there is an interesting detail about Og, King of Bashan, in the scripture records for all posterity, the size of his bed.

Do you remember that? The size of Og's bed is recorded, and it's massive. Um, I wish I'd written down the scripture now. That's been the same, it's just a scripture. Oh, gosh.

Okay, you know what, I'll find it real quick. Hang on. uh, so the, the, the, the, the point I'll be getting at while I scramble to find this verse, is that he was a huge guy.

[16:56] He's actually one of the Rephaim. I think the scriptures say he was the last of the Rephaim. Um, and, uh, here it is. Oh, it was Deuteronomy 3, verse 11, was the scripture.

Um, and it says, for only Og, King of Bashan, was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bed was a bed of iron. Sounds comfy. Uh, it is in rubber, of the Sons of Ammon.

Its length was nine cubits, and its width four cubits, by the usual cubit, Christine, and it says there, just, just, it's the usual cubit. What's that mean?

Uh, nine cubits, there's nine times 1.5. So you're looking at about 14, 15 foot long. Um, no, yes, no, yes, yes, 14 or 15 feet long is his bed.

Uh, and, six, seven feet wide. Huge, huge bed. Huge, huge man. Um, um, so, yes, so I think, again, so yes, Israel were required to use their swords in the, the, the taking of, uh, in, in the killing of all.

[18:07] But actually, God says, look, I've handed him over to you. Just go, go take him out. I've handed him over to you. And what, and what Joshua was saying is, God sent before you the hornet.

I don't know, candidly, I don't know how literally we should read that, whether he literally sent a whole bunch of hornets, uh, to, to soften them up, or whether it's more figurative in that God, you know, did something in order to weaken them.

I mean, we'll read an example later in the life of Gideon, actually, where, God has given the army visions and bad dreams, just getting taken out. Um, and, uh, so, that's the kind of thing that the Lord does, when he is saving his people, is he just weakens the enemy.

It's got a scary thought. Hornets. Hmm. What was a giant bed? Well, two people, out of a whole nation, wanted to go into the land.

Because there's giants in there, and we like grasshoppers. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, this is the last of them. Or is it the last of them? Well, Caleb took a few out. Yeah. If memory serves. David hasn't done his one yet, but.

[19:15] No, yeah, the last of the Rephaim, and not necessarily the last of the Nephilim, I think. Um, so, how far did we get? Fourteen. Yes. So, um, oh yeah, just, I, I, I distracted myself.

I did want to share just a couple of verses, because this is a key point. Um, a couple of verses on this theme of how God saves people, and, you know, he may use their swords.

So, Psalm 33, verse 16 through 18, um, a familiar passage. It says this, And then another, another great verse on this theme is found in Zechariah 4, verse 6.

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of armies. Again, it, it, it is a theme worth dwelling on, because again, it's a theme that comes throughout Judges.

What we will see as we get into Judges is a, an altogether unworthy people, being saved time and time again, by God, by God's power.

[20 : 44] You know, and he, again, Gideon, God says, you've got too many people. I need to whittle that down to just a few hundred. So, what was it?

What is it that unlocks the power of the Lord on behalf of the people? Um, and I was pondering on that. You know, what, what is it that, that does that? And in Hebrews 11, I think has the answer. The answer, of course, is faith, which is to say, believe it. When God said, go in and take the land, it's yours. you've got the choice of either saying, yeah, I believe it. And therefore going in or saying, but there's guys and not believing.

It is faith that unlocks the power of the Lord on behalf of his people. And naturally the writer to the Hebrews in Hebrews 11 refers to the time of the judges. In verse 32 and following, he says, um, for time would fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel, and all the prophets who did what?

By faith, conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong.

[21 : 57] That's got to be Samson, right? Um, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. That's got to be Gideon, right? Faith is the one thing, and I think it is really the only thing that God expects and requires of us.

And of course, by that I mean faith that's worked out in action. It would have been, it would have been a fine thing for the people to say, yeah, we believe that God can take out the king of Bashan and then not pick up swords.

Faith working out in action, that is what the book of Joshua is all about. And there's a, there's a clear application point there for us. Um, faith working itself out in action.

Um, Ali will tell you that I have a tendency to overwork a lot of times. Hey babe. Hi. Um, and I have to, and it's, it challenged me as I read this over the week, um, to remember that it is not by might or power or by strenuous study or activity.

Uh, it is not by, uh, I mean, there is a place for wrestling with the scriptures, of course, but you know, if, if this is going to be a productive and useful Bible study for you guys, and if it's going to speak into your hearts, then, um, that isn't going to be me doing that.

[23 : 16] That's going to be the Holy Spirit. Um, and I need to believe that it's his work and I need to be praying for that. Uh, uh, I need to pray that the spirit will be the one to instruct us for sure.

Um, so hearing the word, the word mixed with faith, faith, not in me, but faith in the word that is spoken, you know, so for this to be a productive study, there needs to be faith around.

We all need to believe this is the power of God. This is the word of God that, uh, you know, divides between soul and spirit. This is the word that brings conviction. So there's a big point of application there, but let's move on before we blow all our time, because I do want to finish this chapter.

So Joshua now will bring this home for the people. Again, this is all the people that shared by the leadership. You've seen God's blessing and power.

You are today, you know, you can just imagine him sat down on the grass eating these grapes, that they picked from vineyards. They did not plant because they took them from these guys.

[24 : 27] Yeah. And we didn't plant these. So verse 14. Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth and do away with the gods, which your father served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord, which I find incredible.

How could it possibly be necessary for Joshua to say, you've got to remove these gods? How can they still be kicking around? They are, they're still there.

They're still there. Verse 15. But if it's disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today, whom you will serve, whether the gods of which your father served, which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. It's important, I think, to zoom in on exactly what Joshua is saying here.

Um, he's saying, if you're not going to follow Yahweh, if you're not going to follow the Lord, then you've got, you make a choice. You've got nice selection. You've got the gods that Abraham and Nahor used to worship when they draw over in the other Chaldeans, or you could adopt the gods of the Amorites and the gods of Canaan.

[25 : 57] And there's a lovely selection for you to pick them on. If you are going to embrace rebellion. And, you know, and it got me to thinking that for the one, for any person who chooses not to worship God, they've got many other things they could worship instead.

Um, whether it is the worship of work or money, whether it is the worship of sports, or just plain old self. People have got their choices and they make their choices.

But the idea that one can worship nothing is foolish. But notice how the word that Josh was using, actually the word serve.

Serve. And obviously in the context, he means service of worship. But serve, I think is an interesting word, isn't it? And it got me to thinking, where does my energy go?

What am I working on? What is it that I spend my time on? Because that's the thing I'm serving. Where is my physical energy going?

[27 : 06] Where is my emotional energy going? Where, where am I, what are the things that occupy my thoughts? What am I serving? Interesting.

So, uh, anyway, we'll probably come back to that, but I do want to, let's make sure we finish the text. Numbers, uh, no, Joshua, 24, 16, we're as far as. So, the people answered and said, far be it from us, that we would abandon 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 slaves, and did these great signs in our sight, and watched over us, through all the way in which we went, and among the peoples, through whose midst we passed.

the Lord drove out from before us, all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for he is our God. I think, good answer, I think.

Remembering, repeating, what Joshua said, and I think it's good to, it's good for us, to remind ourselves, what God has done for us. Why, why is it that it's worth, serving God?

[28 : 26] Why is God worthy of our worship? Because, of all the great, and wonderful things, we sung about this morning. Because, because, for many, many reasons. And the people here, are reminding themselves, exactly, why.

It's good for our hearts, to remind, of our salvation. But verse 19, Joshua said to the people, you will not be able, to serve the Lord. For he is a holy God.

He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your wrongdoing, or your sins. If you abandon the Lord, and serve foreign gods, then he will turn, and do you harm, and destroy you, after he has done good to you.

I wonder what you think, of Joshua's words there. I think, the New American there, saying you will not be able to. New King James, and King James has, more simply, you cannot serve the Lord. Full stop. And I thought, you know, I thought I'd pause there, and just open that, for a little bit of conversation. Amen. Is it, really true, that, God, demands, a level of service, that we are not able, to fulfill?

[29 : 43] Question. Hmm. In the flesh.

Yes. Hebrews 11, verse theta. Say that again. Without thinking, no, yeah.

So, if you serve him, purely in the flesh, you don't fail. What we know is coming, is the book of Judges. What we know is coming, is that sin cycle, where, they leave the Lord, he raises up, people to persecute, and cause difficulty for them, he then raises up, they cry out, he raises up a judge, who delivers them.

Yeah. And then, that cycle repeats, and repeats, repeats throughout the book. And it's like, this, this warning is coming, and we, you know, 4,000 years later, are reading this going, come on, don't be so stupid.

And in the back of my mind, I'm thinking, come on, don't be so stupid, Tony. How many times have I poured into that same title?

[30 : 53] How dumb are you? So, but we don't, I suppose, sometimes, we just don't realise, the holiness of God. I think if we thought of that more, then we would, honour him, and do what we could.

And, he's a holy God, and sometimes, we don't take hold of the word, holy. And, and I think, this is where a lot of Christians, in the so-called, sort of churches, that they're in, there's not the, you know, the holiness of God is not brought out.

And, and so, therefore, they just, you know, the way they speak, or the way they, they do things, or what they're bringing in, doesn't actually bring in the holiness of God.

God. And, I think, yeah, if we realise the holiness of God, more, and, we are able to do that, you know, sometimes, I get people say, but yeah, but I'm only human, and I'm bound to fail. But actually, you're only bound to fail, because you're not, actually realising, how great God is. That's interesting, because I, I agree with you, although I would say that the, the holiness of God, is a fearful thing, because it elevates the standard.

[32 : 18] Yeah. You know, Jesus says, I forget the verse now, Matthew 6, maybe, but he says, you, you be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect. You're like, no, I can't do this.

And that's true, and you know, and to Tony's point, it is only by faith, that we are able to, come anywhere near that, but of course, even by faith, we can't do it, we need the perfection of Jesus Christ.

So, Adrian, sorry, did you want to comment on this question? I mean, it's interesting, because we haven't gone into the second verse, and these two verses are also very interesting, aren't they? Basically. And we're just talking about, we're just talking about the holy God, we haven't. Actually, the next statement is, he is a jealous God. Yep, in the second verse, and then, Joshua goes on to say, if you forsake the Lord, and serve foreign gods, then he will turn, and do your harm, and consume you, and after you, it's done good to you.

So, this is a book of, if you do this, I will do this, but by the way, I'm warning you as well, if you don't do this, in that sense.

[33 : 32] And I think, I think, what we're finding, increasingly, I mean, it's come to light, with just our conversations, with Dave, and, and by the last night, about some of the things, that are happening, in a, so-called church, in St. Helms, and right now, and, how seriously, do we, take the issue, that God is a jealous God, for instance, there is only, you know, he has stated, very clearly, I am, the way, the truth, and the life, no one, comes to the Father, except through me, that's right, and, that is, a statement, that I think, as Christians, we're going to find, very difficult, sometimes, to, portray, because, we've been told, all the time now, and, in the society, we're in, man has become, their God, in all types, of behaviours, and everything else, and if we were to, emphatically say that, there's a possibility, we might get into trouble, in certain, contexts, and, and of course, we've got, em, increasing many, other religions, particularly Islam, is huge, and, huge, yeah, so, does God demand, a level of service, from his people, that is impossible, for them to fulfil, because they, em, yes, because, because of this, if that's true, it could speak to, the inevitability, of sin, and then, before you know it, you want to fast track, to Calvinism, and, so I think, that's why I wanted, to sort of pause on this, because I think, it is, it is true, that the standard, that God requires, is perfection, and that standard, is only achievable, on our behalf, by Jesus Christ, and it is also true, that if the Lord, asks us to, to do things, we can only do them, through faith, as you brought out, and I think, the thing, the thing that came to me, to my mind, as I was pondering, on this, was, that, with, apart from me, continually, consciously, and deliberately, renewing, my,

I guess, renewing, my relationship, with God, you know, continually, choosing to, confess who he is, I'll drift, you know, my mind will drift, my priorities will drift, my attitude will drift, and I will sin, and I, and I got to thinking, you know, how, Jesus gave the disciples, the commission, and we read, from last week actually, but then he said to them, you better wait, until the Holy Spirit comes, you know, go to Jerusalem, and wait, wait for my empowerment, to do it, and then I thought of, just, you know, there are verses that are, you know, sound like they're setting a really, ridiculous, so, 1

Thessalonians 5:17, is one of those three, three word verses, it just says this, pray without ceasing, there you go, you've memorized the verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, good job, pray without ceasing, how, how, how, how do you do that, how do you pray, without ceasing, and this is kind of, what I had on mind, when I was saying, continual conscious, reminder of,

I am, the, I'm saved by the Son of God, and His Spirit dwells within me, to do, works, He's got works for me to do today, and I guess what it came down to, in the end is, you can't, worship and serve God, in a casual manner, no one can do that, you know, to the point that you raised, about the holiness of God, God is not, to be considered, a, an option, a lifestyle choice, to sort of, to bring alongside, and, and fit into, a section of your, of your calendar, together, and I think that's the, that's the commitment that Joshua, sorry, the challenge, that Joshua is, is making, you know, if you're going to, call on the name of the laws, then you need to be, clear on what that means, and I actually think that there's a, there's a point, for us when we are, if we are witnessing to people, and, oh yeah, yeah, yeah,

I'm interested, you know, I think the last, the last, episode, the last session, on the Christianity Explored, course, is called, Come and Die, and, and, because the point, or, the point is, is that for the one, who comes to the Lord, and says, yes, I'm going to, I'm going to, receive a salvation, that is offered, through the gospel, that isn't a, cool, thanks very much, I feel better about my life, now I'm going to move on, this is, this is it, you are, you are gods, it's not a casual thing, you can't add this in, you can't think that you can add this in, and then, you know, do, do the bits that the law requires, and how I can get on with my own, no, the calling is, is full, and comprehensive, don't make a casual commitment, to serve the Lord, he will not be treated lightly, verse 21, I'm sorry, yeah, yeah, verse 21, chapter 24, and 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 for yourselves, the Lord, to serve him, and they said, we are witnesses, now then, do away with the foreign gods, which are in your midst, and incline your hearts, to the Lord, the God of Israel, and the people said to Joshua, we will serve the Lord, our God, and obey his voice, so Joshua made a covenant, with the people that day, and made for them, a statute, and an ordinance, in Shechem, 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 oak, that was by the sanctuary, of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Lord, was there, then Joshua said, to all the people, behold, this stone, shall be a witness, against us, because it has heard, all the words of the Lord, which he spoke to us, so it shall be, a witness against you, so that you, do not deny your God, and then Joshua, dismissed the people, each to his, inheritance, so again, Joshua, is repeating, that call, put away, these foreign gods, do away, is what the modern, NASB, renders it, same command as verse 14, and I thought it was worth, just making sure, we've understood, the fullness of that, verb, the Hebrew verb, sur, three, of the most common, translations of that, verb are, number one, depart from, so for example, the pair of cloud, did not depart, from the ex-dicination, or the spirit of the Lord, departed, depart, it also means, remove, Hezekiah, King Hezekiah, removed the high places, during his reign, Noah removed, the covering of the ark, back in Genesis 8, so depart from, remove, and also turn aside, is another rendering, of that verb, for example, Moses turning aside, to look at the burning bush, Samson, is going to turn aside, to eat honey, out of the lion carcass, disgusting, and, a nice one, [41 : 43] Sisera, is going to turn aside, into Jael's tent, that doesn't go well, for him when he does that, so, Sur, is depart from, remove, or turn aside, and all of those are good, you know, foreign gods, we need to depart from them, they need to be removed, they need to be, we need to turn away, from them, and so, there is, for the, for the one, who would call on the name, of the Lord, there is a, turning away from, as well as a turning to God, and for, the one who comes, to the Lord today, there is a turning away, from sin, and self, and a turning to God, those who are repenting from, as we know, saying yes to the gospel, is saying no, to the world, and saying no to self, so, then the last thing, we read of Joshua doing here, is making a covenant, and, I can't resist sharing, that this is the seventh, of seven stone, monuments, that are found, in the book of Joshua, and, and just for, curiosity's sake,

I shall enumerate them, before you, there are twelve stones, taken from the Jordan River, in Joshua 4, verse 3, and then of course, there are twelve stones, set up in, Jordan River, in verse 9, that's the first two, then there is a man, by the name of Achan, who did a foolish thing, and took spoil, from Jericho, and there is, a pile of stones, upon his grave, to this day, says the writer, that's number three, there is a large heap, of stones, upon the king of Ai, number four, there is an altar, of uncut stone, atop Mount Ebal, which is the Mount of Cursing, there are large stones, over the cave, that contain the kings, of Machedar, and then that's number six, and then number seven, is this stone altar here, or the stone reminder, the seventh, of the seven, so, and I stood back, from that list, and I thought, so these stone reminders, that Joshua has said, throughout the book, they're there, to this day, these are stones, permanent reminders, of what?

They are reminders, of the crossing, reminders of the crossing, into promised land, they are reminders, of the error, of thinking, that you can get rich, from God's enemies, they are reminders, of how God, will deal with your enemies, here's a cave, here's the king, of I, and, they are a reminder, of the mount of cursing, if you do, not obey God, these are the consequences, and then finally, this one, a reminder, that there's a commitment, that's been made, so, a wide, breadth, of reminder, for the people of God, many things, for them to, see as they go, up and down, the land, they will see, these altars, of remembrance, remembrance, so then, let it, I will just, close out the chapter, I don't have much else, to say, you'll probably be, pleased to hear, but I just want to, just

complete the reading, then, so, as it, it came about, after these things, that Joshua, the son of Mew, and the servant, of the Lord, died, being 110 years old, and they buried him, in the territory, of his inheritance, in Timnath,

Sarab, which is in, the hill country, of Ephraim, on, on the north, of Mount Gash, can't tell exactly, where that is, other than, the hill country, of Ephraim, is here on the map, about all I can tell you, Israel, served the Lord, all the days, of Joshua, and all the days, of the elders, who survived Joshua, and had known, every deed of the Lord, which he had done, for Israel, and now they buried, the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel, brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the plot of land, which Jacob, had bought, from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces, of money, and they became, the inheritance, of Joseph's sons, and Eleazar, the son of Aram, died, and they buried him, in Gimea, the town of his son, Phinehas, which was given to him, in the hill country, of Ephraim, and there's loads, that we could say, about that, but this is supposed, to be set in the scene, for Joshua, for judges rather, so I will leave that, for another time, so, closing thoughts then, if I may, really,

I think there's two, that we've seen, in our text, and the first one was, that, the battle, belongs to the Lord, it always belonged, to the Lord, the land, that's been taken, on our map there, was taken, by, the Lord's, enablement, and power, and strength, if anything good, or, praiseworthy, is going to happen, it's going to be done, by God, it's God that does it, if there's going to be, progress, and growth, in our lives, if there's going to be, success, or achievement, of God's people, it's going to be done, by God, and so then, we need to, we need to, keep an active faith, which again, for me, as someone who, seeks to teach the word, on occasion, I need to remember, that this is the work, of the Lord, and keep that in mind, and then the second thing then, is, that, there's a call, in that second section, of our chapter today, there's a call for active, and ongoing faith, active, and ongoing decision, to serve God, you know,

[47 : 01] Bob Dylan, famously sang, that song, that crops up, in many, many sermons, he said, you're going to serve somebody, and so Joshua was saying, hey, if you're not going to serve the Lord, make a choice, you've got plenty of options, you're going to serve somebody, and, you know, I was reminded, how Paul, repeatedly refers to himself, as a doulos, a servant, of God, he just embraces, that as an identity, I am a servant of God, that's what I am, that's who I am, so, we're saved, into God's kingdom, for good works, so what are we doing, Joshua says to the people, you're not able to serve God, and his point, is not too discouraging, his point is, it's not by power, nor by might, but by my spirit, so let's make that our commitment, this week, Father, thank you Lord, for this, this, this chapter, and this, this challenge from Joshua, thank you Lord, for this scene setting, for us, as we go into Judges, and we see, what we're going to see, time and again, is the, the, the challenge, and the danger, of, of, compromise, and sin, and how it leads to, such suffering, for the people of God, and I pray that you would keep us, from thinking, that we can toy, with sin, and it won't do us any harm, or we can embrace it, for a little while,

Lord keep us from that mindset, I pray, and keep us turned, towards you, I pray, in Jesus name, Amen. Thank you.