

Choose You this Day

Baptism Service November 2022

Text: Josh. 24:14-15

Introduction:

1. The Occasion (Vs. 1) – Joshua is “old and stricken in age” (23:1). Sensing his time on earth is drawing to a close, he gives his final charges to Israel beginning with the leaders in chapter 23 and then the nation in chapter 24. Some have called this “Joshua’s valedictory speech”.
2. The Location (Vs. 1) – Joshua selects Shechem for his final address to the nation. This was not by happenstance. Shechem was a significant location in the history of the nation. Some important events had taken place at Shechem in the past.
 - It was in Shechem that Abraham built his first altar of worship to God upon entering the land of Canaan for the first time (Gen. 12:6-7).
 - It was in Shechem that Jacob charged his household to put away the strange gods that were among them (Gen. 35:2, 4). *“And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”* (Vs. 4)
3. The Theme – Joshua exhorts the nation to be faithful servants of the Lord God. The word ‘serve’ occurs 16 times in the passage with 6 of them occurring in Vs. 14-15.
4. Joshua issues a call for a definite decision in the nation, a call to choose the One True God over false idols. In this message I would like to also bring this matter of the need to make a decision before you. You have a choice to make that has eternal consequences.
5. Let’s consider four truths about this choice. **It is...**

I. A DEFINITE CHOICE

The choice you must make is not ambiguous. It is not a choice between many options but between two. There is no middle ground. It is a clear-cut, definite choice you have to make in this life. You have a choice between:

A. Two Masters – “choose you this day **whom** you will serve”. Jesus said, **“No man can serve two masters:** for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt. 6:24)

1. Joshua called the people to reject the false gods of the pre-flood world and the false idols of the Canaanites and to turn to God. We know that behind idol worship stands the devil so the choice really

comes down to “the true God” (1 John 5:20) and the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4).

2. Interestingly the first two of the 10 commandments deal with this very matter.
 - a. Exodus 20:3-5 “Thou shalt have no other gods **before** me. (4) **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image**, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: (5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; (6) And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”
 - b. Idolatry exists in many places with the worship of physical idols (e.g., Hinduism, veneration of statues in Catholicism, Buddhism etc.). However, idolatry is also a matter of the heart and the mind. You may not bow before a physical statue but you can have “idols in your heart” (Ez. 14:3, 4 & 7). Your idol is whatever takes the rightful place of God. It is whatever or whoever takes first place in your life. Your idol could be:
 - i. Career.
 - ii. Materialism.
 - iii. Money.
 - iv. Sport.
 - v. Pleasure.
 - vi. Lust.
 - vii. Stars (music, movies, media).
 3. Repentance involves a turning from and a turning to; a turning from sin and idolatry and turning to God. Acts 20:21 “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**”
 4. This is what Joshua was calling for on that day and it is what God commands.
 - a. Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but **now commandeth all men every where to repent:**”
 - b. Mark 1:15 “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye, and believe the gospel.**”
 5. This is what the Thessalonians did in response to the Gospel message. 1 Thess. 1:9 “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God;”
- B. Two Roads (destinies)** – “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the

way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14)

1. The Wide Gate and the Broad Way

- a. The entrance is wide – “wide is the gate”. That is because every human being enters that gate at birth on account of their sin nature. The whole human race since Adam’s sin enters that gate and starts on the road to destruction in their natural state (Rom. 5:12). We are not born as children of God but as children of disobedience and therefore children of wrath (Eph. 2:2-3).
- b. The path is broad – “broad is the way”. It is the broad way in that it encompasses all the worlds philosophies, false religions and ideas.
 - i. It is your own way – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one **to his own way**; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Is. 53:6) The broad way is wide enough for everyone to go their own way but they all have one thing in common – their destination is the same.
 - ii. It is the sinful way. The broad road caters to the depraved, sinful desires of man. It is the path of lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4). If there was a banner over the broad way it would be “Do what thou wilt”.
 - iii. It is the popular way – “**many** there be which go in thereat”. Everyone starts on the broad way and sadly most choose to stay on it. It is the way of the majority. The broad way encompasses everything except the truth! On this road you find the prostitute, drunk and drug addict but you also find the religious man with his man-made way to heaven. It is the way of bloodless, works based religion. You find the university lecturer with his false philosophies of Darwinism, scepticism and humanism. They may appear to be traveling different paths but in reality, they are hurtling down the same road to destruction with the rest of unsaved humanity. Remember, truth is not determined by majority opinion. It is determined by God Almighty! Choose Christ and the truth over all the popular ideas and philosophies of man.
 - iv. It is the damnable way – “broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction”. The broad road ends in eternal separation from God in a place the Bible calls hell. If you stay on this path, your final step will be when you die and you will step into the fires of hell for all eternity. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Illustration: The

wrong information can send you down the wrong road with devastating results. The devil has an abundance of lies to keep you headed down the broad way. Lies such as:

- Just follow your heart.
- All paths lead to God.
- Let conscience be your guide. This is dangerous as the conscience can be seared (1 Tim. 4:2).

2. The Strait Gate and the Narrow Way – “Enter ye at the strait gate...Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

a. It is the only way

- i. The entrance is narrow – “Enter ye at the strait gate...strait is the gate”. It is narrow in that to enter; you must leave your baggage of sin and self-righteousness and good works behind. “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling”. It is narrow in that you can only enter by Christ who is the door. Jesus said, “**I am the door**: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9) This is the opposite to the wide gate that allows everyone to come through on their own terms!
- ii. The road is narrow – “narrow is the way”. It is narrow in that, unlike the broad way, it does not cater to the sinful desires of man’s fallen nature. It is the way of self-denial and growing in holiness by the power of God. It is narrow in that it is Jesus Christ alone as the way of salvation, not good works or any religion (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9).

b. It is the eternal life way – “narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto **life**”. The broad road ends in eternal destruction. The narrow way leads to eternal life and it is therefore the blessed way.

c. It is the neglected way – “and few there be that find it.” Most reject the way of life and choose the way of death. What will your choice be?

3. Summary: The choice is clear. It is heaven or hell. Eternal life or eternal death. There is no in between and you will have to choose!

II. AN URGENT CHOICE

Joshua called upon the people to “choose you **this day** whom ye will serve”. There was to be no delay in making their decision. The call was for them to make a choice immediately. The choice for you is no less urgent because:

- A. God says it is urgent** – “(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: **behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**)” (2. Cor. 6:2)
1. Indecision is dangerous as the invitation could be your last. God in His mercy often gives us more than one chance to receive His offer of salvation but this is not guaranteed and He is under no obligation to do so. Jesus Christ is Lord and you come to Him on His terms, not your own.
 2. Someone once wisely said that “time decides for the man who will not decide for himself.” Illustration: You book a ticket to London but are undecided as to whether you really want to go but the plane will leave at the scheduled time. You delay and dither as to whether you will board the plane or not and eventually the plane departs. Because you would not decide, the decision was made for you and the opportunity was lost.
 3. Prolonged indecision becomes a “no” answer. Illustration: Engagement proposal.
- B. Life is short** – “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? **It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.**” (James 4:14) This life is but a tiny drop in the ocean of eternity. **Where will you spend eternity?**
- C. Death could happen at any moment** – “And as it is **appointed unto men once to die**, but after this the judgment:” (Heb. 9:27) **Are you ready to die? Are you ready to meet God?**
- D. Tomorrow is not Guaranteed** – “**Boast not thyself of to morrow**; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” (Prov. 27:1) In fact, we are not guaranteed our next breath. Our very breath is in the hand of God (Dan. 5:23).

III. A PERSONAL CHOICE

Joshua said “choose you this day whom ye will serve”.

A. You have a Real Choice to Make

1. The Gospel invitation is for “whosoever will”. This is a comforting truth as it means that everyone has the opportunity to receive God’s free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:2-9). It is also a sobering truth because it means you have the ability to reject that gift.
2. Rev. 22:17 says, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely.”

B. You have a Personal Choice to Make

1. No one else can decide for you! Your parents can’t choose for you (e.g., by having you baptised as a baby). Your parents may even be

saved, born again believers but that does not make you a Christian. God has no grandchildren! Your church cannot choose for you. Your Christian friend cannot choose for you. You yourself must choose to believe on Christ and to receive Him as your own Personal Saviour from sin.

2. Joshua made the right decision – “but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” **What will your decision be?**

IV. A SIMPLE CHOICE

Salvation is not complicated. It involves a simple choice! Here’s five simple steps you can follow to receive Christ as your Saviour.

- ADMIT that you are a sinner** – “For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). We have all broken God’s laws and are great sinners in His sight.
- REALIZE your religion and good works can’t save you** – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves**: *it is* the gift of God: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)
- REPENT of your sin** – “**Repent** ye therefore, and **be converted**, that your sins may be blotted out...” (Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of mind and attitude toward God and sin. It means being genuinely sorry for your sins committed against a Holy God and requires a willingness to turn to God from sin that He might forgive and change you.
- BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ** – believe the Gospel “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).
- RECEIVE Jesus Christ into your life** as your personal Saviour from sin and to be the Lord of your life – “For **whosoever** shall call upon the Name of the Lord **shall be saved.**” (Romans 10:13). “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

Conclusion: What decision will you make today?

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live:” (Deut. 30:19)

“...Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you **the way of life**, and **the way of death.**” (Jer. 21:8)