



LESSON 9

God is chosen by Israel

JOSHUA 23:1-24:29



God's people are those who make a definite choice to serve Him.



"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" (Josh 24:15).

Supporting Truths

1. We must choose to serve God.
2. Choose to serve God because He is faithful to bless those who trust Him.
3. Choose to serve God because He fights against those who reject Him.
4. Choosing to serve God means rejecting the world.
5. Choosing to serve God means rejecting all idols.

Objectives

1. Restate Joshua's command to choose.
2. Describe all the ways God blessed Israel.
3. Describe what would happen to Israel if they rejected God.
4. Compare how the Canaanites could lead Israel astray with how people or things in your life might lead you astray.
5. Count how many times Joshua forbids idolatry, and explain what idolatry looks like today.

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Lesson Summary

At the end of his life, after leading Israel into Canaan, Joshua gave two speeches to the people. In these speeches, he reminded them of God's faithfulness in the past and God's promise for the future. He urged them to respond by choosing to serve God alone. To do this, they needed to get rid of all their idols. Although that generation worshiped the LORD, the following did not, quickly abandoning the exclusive worship of their God.

Spotlight on the Gospel

As Joshua urged Israel to respond to God's grace by serving Him, so believers are to respond to the grace of Christ by serving Christ. Also, as Joshua urged Israel to reject idols, so believers are to be daily renewed in their commitment to Christ rather than conforming to the idols of this world. Though Christ has freed believers from condemnation, the believer who fails to continually uproot the idols still in his heart will fall short of God's purpose to glorify Christ with his life.

LAST WEEK



God judges Achan's sin

Joshua 7:1–26

THIS WEEK



God is chosen by Israel

Joshua 23:1–24:29

NEXT WEEK



God is rejected by Israel

Judges 1:1–3:6

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

God's people are those who make a definite choice to serve Him.

Joshua was a faithful leader, successfully leading Israel into the land God promised them (Josh 1:1–9; Gen 15:18). Now at the end of his life, Joshua gave two final speeches. He urged Israel to make a clear decision to trust and serve God alone. Only in this way could they finish taking possession of the land and stay in it.

Joshua urged Israel to continue the conquest by faith in God (23:1–16)

Joshua began his first speech by reminding Israel of God's **faithfulness**: *God is so good and so powerful that He can always be trusted to do what He says*. Although there were still people to drive out of Canaan, God had been faithful to fight for Israel until the major threats were eliminated (23:1–5; Exod 23:29–30).

Based on God's past faithfulness, Joshua called Israel to be firm in their ongoing commitment to God and to His word (Josh 23:6). God's goodness, both in the past (23:9) and in the future (23:10), ought to produce a response of faith. God delivers His people

so that they will respond by serving Him (Eph 2:8–10). His past faithfulness motivates His people to keep trusting Him (Ps 27), and God's promise to continue fighting for His people empowers them to work hard to do what is right (Phil 2:12–13).

Joshua specifies one particular sin to avoid: idolatry (Josh 23:7). The gods of the world draw people away from the one true God (Exod 20:3–6). In Canaan, gods were represented by statues, but these idols stood for the same things that are worshiped today: money, health, success, fame, sexuality, power, and violence. At the heart of every sin is idolatry, a greedy desire for something else more than God (Col 3:5; Jas

4:1–3). If Israel wanted to continue conquering the land, they needed to completely turn from idols.

This included staying separate from the Canaanites. They were not to marry them or keep company with them (Josh 23:12), or else their hearts would be stolen away from God to serve idols (23:11; Deut 6:4–6; 1 Kgs 11:3). If they loved the Canaanites instead of God, God would stop driving out the Canaanites and would drive Israel out instead (Josh 1:13). Similarly, while Christians may interact with unbelievers (1 Cor 5:9–13; Matt 28:18–20), they are not to marry them (1 Cor 7:39) or join with them in anything displeasing to God (2 Cor 6:14). They are not to desire the corrupting company of wicked men (Prov 24:1; 1 Cor 15:33), or else they will make themselves enemies of God (Jas 4:4).

So Joshua warned Israel that God's faithfulness works both ways: as God is faithful to fight for those who cling to Him, so He is faithful to fight against those who do not.

Unless Israel kept the LORD's covenant, the LORD would drive them out of the land (Josh 23:14–16).

Joshua reminded Israel of God's blessings of grace (24:1–13)

Joshua's second speech also began by looking back on God's past faithfulness. Israel's history was a constant illustration of God's **grace**, God's **unearned blessing**. Although Abraham was an idolater, God chose him, called him out of idolatry, and promised to make him a great nation (Josh 24:2–3). He defeated Egypt and set Israel free (24:5–6). He provided for all their needs for 40 years in the wilderness, despite their grumbling (24:7). He defeated the nations east of the Jordan (24:8; Num 21:21–35), and He even forced Balaam to bless Israel when Balaam tried to curse them (Josh 24:9–10; Num 22–24). He shattered Jericho's walls and defeated the large alliances of Canaanites, with such power that it was clear that victory came from Him and not



THINK ABOUT IT

God has broken the power of sin over a believer (Rom 6:6), but the believer must continue to wage war against his sin (Rom 8:13).



THINK ABOUT IT

God is both kind and severe (Rom 11:22). Therefore, the only way to stand secure is by faith in Him (Rom 11:20).

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from Israel's own strength or ability (Josh 24:11–12; 6:20; 10:1–11:23). Finally, He gave Israel land, cities, and crops that they did not have to plow, build, or plant (24:13).

This is also the history of every believer. God has been so kind to us. In Christ, the believer experiences grace upon grace (John 1:16). We are saved not by any merit of our own, but purely by God's grace, so that God alone gets the glory (1 Cor 1:29). We also live out our faith not by our might but by His power (2 Cor 4:7, 15). He even cares about our daily needs (Matt 6:11). As He provided for Israel both in scarcity in the wilderness and in abundance in Canaan, so God provides for the believer in every situation (Phil 4:12–13). To Him belongs the glory (Ps 115:1).

Joshua called Israel to choose to serve God alone (24:14–29)

In response to God's grace, Joshua called Israel to obey, fear, and serve God sincerely and faithfully (Josh 24:14). The right response to grace is to surrender oneself to God (Rom 12:1–2), for God's grace binds His people to Him (1 Pet 1:14–19).

Fearing God in sincerity and truth requires getting rid of all other gods. Israel was notorious for worshiping false gods alongside the worship of the LORD, the true God. Even after the golden calf, many Israelites still carried idols with them during the 40 years of wilderness wandering (Ezek 20:7–24; Amos 5:25–26; Acts 7:43). They continued to carry them despite their rededication to God (Josh 5) and the warning of Achan's punishment (Josh 7).

Of course, continuing to worship God along with idols is not worshiping God at all. So Joshua urged a decision: choose

whom you will serve (24:15). It is impossible to serve both God and idols (Matt 6:24).

The people confidently responded to Joshua's challenge, promising that they would not forsake the LORD to serve other gods (24:16–18). So Joshua challenged them a second time so that they would consider the magnitude of their commitment to worship God alone (24:19–20). The LORD is a *jealous* God: He will not allow His people's hearts to be drawn away. Joshua wanted Israel to count the cost (Luke 14:28), for it is deadly to claim the LORD as Lord while being ruled by something else.

The people responded to Joshua's challenge, declaring again that they would serve the LORD (Josh 24:21). So Joshua was very clear: they needed to throw away the idols that were in their midst (24:23). Joshua made a covenant with them, recorded it in the book of the law, and set up a stone as a witness against Israel if they should ever turn from the LORD (24:25–27). They did worship God, so long as Joshua and the older generation were living (24:31). But the very next generation turned right back to idols (Judges 2:11–12).

The people of God of every age are those who make a definite choice to serve Him. As Joshua urged Israel to respond to God's grace by making a decisive commitment to the LORD Yahweh alone, so Christians today are to daily renew their minds according to the image of Christ (Rom 12:1–2). In Christ, believers are no longer under condemnation, but this should result in a bitter war against sin (Rom 8:13). If we allow idols to remain in our hearts, combining the worship of Christ with anything else, we fall short of God's purpose for our lives, which is glorifying Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT

Those who claim the LORD but are not devoted to His will are rejected by Christ (Matt 7:21–23).



THINK ABOUT IT

Either God will rule a person's life, or something else will. But it cannot be both God and idols.

Lesson Outline

God's people are those who make a definite choice to serve Him.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God had been faithful to defeat Israel's enemies (23:1–5; 24:1–13).
2. So Israel needed to trust that God would keep defeating their enemies (23:6–16).
3. And Israel needed to choose to serve God alone (24:14–29).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Joshua encouraged Israel to continue the conquest by faith in God (23:1–16).
 - God had given victory and would continue to defeat the rest of the Canaanites (23:1–5).
 - Be strong, obey, do not worship the Canaanites' gods, and you will win (23:6–10).
 - Love the LORD and not the Canaanites, or they will become a trap (23:11–13).
 - Keep the LORD's covenant or He will drive you out of Canaan (23:14–16).
2. Joshua reminded Israel of God's blessings of grace (24:1–13).
 - Unearned blessing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (24:1–4).
 - Unearned freedom from slavery in Egypt (24:5–7).
 - Unearned victory over enemies (24:8–12).
 - Unearned land, cities, and crops (24:13–14).
3. Joshua called Israel to choose to serve God alone (24:14–29).
 - Fear God in sincerity and truth, getting rid of other gods (24:14).
 - Make a choice: you cannot worship God and other gods at the same time (24:15–24).
 - A stone monument would witness against Israel if they denied God (24:25–28).
 - Israel obeyed until Joshua and the elders died (24:29–33).



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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Did God defeat Israel's enemies?**
Yes.
2. **Did God promise to keep defeating Israel's enemies if Israel would trust and obey Him?**
Yes.
3. **So what should Israel do?**
They should choose to serve God.
4. **Could they serve God and idols at the same time?**
No. They needed to get rid of their idols and choose to serve God alone.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **In Joshua 23:1–5, what reasons did Joshua give for Israel to obey God?**
Joshua reminded them that God had fought for them in the past and would keep fighting for them in the future if they would obey.
2. **What might draw Israel away from God?**
The Canaanites and their idols could draw Israel away from God.
3. **If Israel chose to love the Canaanites instead of God, what would happen?**
Instead of driving the Canaanites out of the land, God would drive Israel out of the land.
4. **What are some ways God proved His grace toward Israel?**
He chose Abraham and made him a great nation, rescued Israel from Egypt, defeated the nations east of the Jordan, blessed them through Balaam, defeated the nations west of the Jordan, and gave them cities, fields, and crops.
5. **How was Israel supposed to respond to God's grace?**
Israel was to be firm in their obedience and love for God.
6. **Why did Israel need to get rid of their idols?**
No one can serve God and something else at the same time.
7. **Did Israel serve God like they said they would?**
They obeyed God, but only until the old generation died.
8. **How can the world or idols draw us away from serving God today?**
If we want to be friends of the world, we will be enemies of God. Anything that we are not willing to let go can be an idol getting between us and God.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

CONQUER-AND-DIVIDE SNACK

Much of the Promised Land had been conquered and divided. After conquering the land, Joshua divided it among the people as their inheritance. Illustrate this with a snack. Instruct the children to carry over the snack and bring it to you. Divide and distribute the snack among the class.

MAGNET CENTER

Bring magnets of various sizes and shapes to class. Also bring various items that are attracted to magnets and various items that are not. Demonstrate that the magnets attract some items and not others. In today's Bible lesson, Joshua told the Israelites to serve the Lord God and to obey Him. They were to stay close to God, just like the magnets and items they attract. Explain that we are to stay close to God too, just as some of the objects wanted to stay close to the magnets.



ILLUSTRATE

WALK THE STRAIGHT PATH

Use a balance beam, wooden board, or wide tape line on the floor to teach the children about walking the straight path. Instruct the children to walk along the line without falling or moving away from it. This was how the Israelites were to live their lives: they were not to turn to the right or left of what God had said. Joshua told the Israelites, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15). God would help His people to obey by being with them wherever they walked the path that He had instructed.

WHAT GOES DOWN...?

Ask the children what they think will happen if you drop a bouncy ball. Drop it. Do it several times, each time asking what will happen. Ask the children how they know. It falls and bounces every time, so we are sure it will fall and bounce the next time. God's care for Israel was like that: over and over God cared for them, showed grace to them, and won victories for them. They should trust that He will keep doing the same, and we should trust Him too.



APPLY

HOUSE DOOR HANGER

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, glitter glue, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-cut door hangers from craft sheet. Have children color and decorate the door hangers. Cut, color, and paste the family and verse from craft page onto the door hanger.

House Door Hanger
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



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AGES 6–8



THE CLING TEST

Bring in a weight that would be difficult, but not impossible, for the children to pick up. Tell the children that they must hold the weight out in front of them for as long as they can. Time each child. Then have the children try again, but this time, they can “cling” to the object by holding it tightly to their bodies. They should be able to hold the object considerably longer than the first time. Ask the class what it means to “cling” to something. In today’s Bible lesson, Joshua told the people to “cling to the Lord.” Only by clinging to God would the Israelites be able to be devoted to Him.

TAKING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

Use this to help children understand Israel’s conquest and division of the land. Divide the classroom into 12 sections of various sizes. Do not number the areas so that the land inheritance will be a surprise. Give each child a numbered index card and call forward each of the 12 tribes of Israel, telling them which part of the Promised Land they inherit. With all the children in the land, read Joshua 21:43–45 to the class.



WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Talk about how God instructed Israel to look different and be different. Today, Christians basically look the same as everyone else. Yet we are called to be different, too. Draw or tape two identical child images to a dry-erase board. How can we tell which one is a Christian? What does a Christian do that others do not? Obey God. Christians do all things because they love God and want to obey Him. Place a red heart sticker on one child to make him different. Talk about ways we can be different from the heart.

OIL AND WATER

Fill a clear glass container with water. Pour some oil into the water and ask the children to observe what happens. Does the oil mix with the water? No. Try mixing the oil and water together with a spoon or mixer. Now observe what happens. Does the oil stay mixed with the water once you’re done mixing? No. Oil and water do not mix together, just like God and idols. Joshua called the people to make a clear choice between God and idols because they cannot be combined together.



JOSHUA’S HOUSE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, craft sticks, pipe cleaner or yarn, glue, glitter glue or markers, and scissors.

Directions: Direct the students to build a house by making a square base and triangle roof from craft sticks. Students should glue the sticks together and set them aside to dry. Give each student a copy of the memory verse, and direct them to cut around the square with scissors. Instruct students to glue the verse onto the back of the house so that the words show through the center. Students can decorate the house with glitter glue or markers. Tie a pipe cleaner or strip of yarn onto the roof to serve as a hanger.



AGES 9–11

**INTRODUCE****REMEMBER WHEN**

Ask the children about past events in their lives. Do they remember their first day of kindergarten? What was their favorite place to visit? Where did they first go on a vacation with their family? Do they remember the day that their little brother or sister was born? This morning we will see Joshua tell the Israelites that it is an important thing to remember what happened in the past. Remembering today's lesson's events should cause us to be obedient to God's instructions and thankful for God's special care for His people.

BEING SEPARATE

Discuss the concept of holy living with your children. Ask the children to name some of the unholy things that they observe throughout their day. What does it mean to be separate from the world? What things would make you "set apart" and different from those around you? What are the areas in your life that you need to work on to be the young man or woman that God desires you to be? This may start with trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior.

**ILLUSTRATE****MONKEY FIST**

Tell "The Monkey's Fist" story. A monkey is trapped by putting nuts or rice into a coconut tied to a tree. The hole in the coconut is big enough for the monkey's open hand to go in, but not big enough for the monkey's closed fist to come out. Even when the trapper comes to get the monkey, the monkey will not let go of the snack he wants, so the monkey gets caught. This is what would happen to Israel if they held on to idols or friendship and marriage with the Canaanites.

MANY FACES OF IDOLATRY

Ask the children to define idolatry in their own words (one example: a greedy desire for something else more than God). Ask the children to describe what an idol looks like. Does it have to be a statue that a person physically bows down to? Explain that idolatry has many forms. It can even include something good (a sport, a hobby, the latest technological gadget, fashionable clothes, etc.) that becomes an idol because it becomes something we value above God. Discuss how the way we use our time and money says a lot about who or what we worship.

**APPLY****REMEMBERING LAST WEEK**

Talk to the children about what they did throughout the week. Ask them what types of choices they made. As they remember the events and decisions that they made throughout the week, ask them whom they were serving; was it God or themselves? It may be helpful to offer several examples from your own week to get the children thinking and talking. Some examples might include: they were tired of obeying their parents, they grumbled while doing their chores, they did not faithfully serve the Lord, or they spent all their leisure time watching television, playing on the computer, or surfing the Internet. In each of these cases, they would be serving themselves and not God. Discuss with the children what things they should have done and what spirit that they should have done them with.