

Joshua's Final Message

Key Verse: *"The people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."*
—Joshua 24:24

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 24:19-28

Joshua had been with Moses for forty years. First, he served as leader of a group of Israelites who fought against Amalek and his army. Later, when God gave the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai, Joshua went with him up to the mount. (Exod. 17:9-14; 24:12,13) Joshua was also one of the twelve men whom

Moses had selected to spy out the promised land for forty days and then give a report. (Num. 13:1-20) He, along with Caleb, were the only spies to bring back a good report. This resulted in their being the only two adult males, who had been part of the nation of Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage, that were permitted to enter the promised land; in addition to the tribe of Levi.—Num. 26:64,65

Prior to Israel entering the land that God had promised to them, the Lord instructed Moses prior to his death that Joshua was to become Israel's leader. (Num. 27:18-23) Later the Lord told Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."—Josh. 1:1-9

When Moses died, Joshua was 83 years old, and he became Israel's leader for the next 27 years. He led the

nation across the Jordan River into the land of promise, oversaw the dividing of the land amongst the tribes of Israel, and governed the people. Throughout this time Joshua faithfully obeyed God's laws, providing a helpful example and influence for the people.

When Joshua approached the end of his life, he gathered all the leaders of the tribes of Israel at Shechem. There he recounted, starting from the time of Abraham down to their day, all that the God of Israel had done for them.—Josh. 24:1-13

Joshua next admonished them, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: ... choose you this day whom ye will serve." He then added this noteworthy statement, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (vss. 14,15) Here Joshua asked the people of Israel to decide whether they would be faithful to Jehovah. Even today, all who are sincerely seeking after the Lord should make a full, positive, and personal decision respecting what their course in life should be, whether they will continue to serve themselves, or whether they will give their all to serve the Heavenly Father.

The Israelites promised that they would serve the Lord and obey him. Joshua "made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem." He wrote the words that they promised to follow in the "book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak." The oak tree is known for its incredibly long lifespan. Therefore, placing the great stone under the oak meant it would be a lasting reminder of their promise to serve and obey God. Joshua explained that this stone would be a witness to them, lest they deny God.—vss. 24-27; Deut. 31:26

Like the Israelites, we too should daily have at the forefront of our heart and mind our covenant with God and the promise we made to give him our all. Thus, may we strive daily to faithfully serve him with all our heart, soul, and mind.—Matt. 22:37-40 ■