

Introduction: Every day we are faced with a multitude of choices. However, in a consumer culture bent on enticing people to get what they do not need, most of the time what we choose ends up being toxic to our soul. Before I went on vacation I talked about what is Good, Beautiful and True; and, we heard how the Ten Commandments will instruct us how to live this way. However, much of what we are asked to consume is bad for our minds, ugly to our eyes and false to our hearts. *** It takes the grace of God and an effort on our part to search out, find and live in the things that will bring us closer to The Good, Beautiful and True God. But we can succeed by His grace, especially IF we encourage and help one another – and follow godly leaders. *** All of this has been true from soon after the creation of the world. As a result of the original rebellion against The Creator, people are experts at inventing evil and living in it (*Romans 1:28-32*). *** The Covenant God, Yahweh, called the descendants of Israel to be a nation of priests to Him (*Exodus 19:4-6*) and to be holy as He is holy (*Leviticus 11:44-45*). But every other nation on earth worshipped idols and ‘gods’ of their own creation who would give them the twisted desires of their hearts. It was very tempting for the descendants of Israel to go after these false ‘gods’. Every day they had to choose between idols and Yahweh.

We must choose who we will serve

Let’s look at our passages to find out how to choose wisely.

I. After Joshua recounts their history to all Israel, he commands them to fear and serve only Yahweh and he pledges to do so himself. (*Joshua 24:1-15*)

A. Joshua recounts their history to all Israel from Abraham to being brought out of Egypt to being given the fruitful land. (*Verses 1-13*)

1. Joshua speaks of three generations after Terah who dwelt beyond the River. (*Verses 1-4*)

All tribes: He spoke for Yahweh to all the people of all the tribes of Israel.

Stand: They had been gathered by Joshua and they stood with and before God.

Abraham: Yahweh took Terah’s son Abraham, had him walk throughout Canaan and gave him Isaac.

Served other ‘gods’: Abraham and his father did religious rites before other ‘gods’, not Yahweh.

Liturgical worship occurs eight times in this passage: here and three times near the end to false ‘gods’, but four times it is properly directed to Yahweh.

Esau: Yahweh gave Esau’s descendants the impenetrable cliff fortress of Petra to possess. It was located south of the Dead Sea and minimal rain meant no farming. Because they had access to the seas they were traders, exporting salt and copper. They were free to live as they wanted. But in the end they were judged by God and no longer exist as a nation.

Jacob: But Jacob and his descendants went down to Egypt. As time passed they had no possessions and were bondservants to the Egyptians (*Exodus 1:6-14*). Yet they were chosen as Yahweh’s people.

2. Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron and plagued Egypt, afterward He brought your fathers out and Egypt pursued, then they cried to Yahweh and He covered the Egyptians, and they dwelt long in wilderness. (*Verses 5-7*)

Plagues: These were the ten plagues culminating in the death of the firstborn (*Exodus 7-11*).

Yahweh frees: Yahweh frees people to know and to love Him. What many call ‘freedom’ is bondage.

Egypt pursues: Pharaoh rallied all the resources of Egypt to pursue and re-enslave Israel.

Yahweh answers prayer: When they found themselves trapped at the sea, Yahweh parted the waters so they could cross but drowned the Egyptians (*Exodus 12-15*).

Wilderness: They were forty years in the wilderness because of their lack of faith leading to disobedience (*Numbers 14*).

3. Then Yahweh brought them to the land beyond the Jordan, gave it to them, destroying the inhabitants;

then Moab fought them summoning a prophet whom Yahweh made bless them. (*Verses 8-10*)

Yahweh brings to land: Yahweh brought them to the land and destroyed the people (*Numbers 21*).

Possess trans-Jordan: They then possessed the land northeast of Galilee.

Barak-Balaam: Barak was king of Moab, east of the southern Dead Sea. He hired Balaam the prophet to curse Israel (*Numbers 22*).

Deliverance: But Yahweh made him bless Israel and delivered them to cross the Jordan, but not before being seduced by Moabite women (*Numbers 23-25*).

4. They crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho where they were opposed by a confederation of seven peoples, then Yahweh gave them into their hand; then He sent a hornet before them and drove out two kings, not by their sword and not by their bow. (*Verses 11-12*)

West bank: The land was from the western bank of the Jordan to the Mediterranean on the far west.

Opposition: All the people of the land strongly opposed God’s chosen people Israel.

Yahweh drives out: Yahweh drove them all out. Again, there is a poetic metaphor of a hornet, a large and aggressive insect with a painful sting. The weapons of God’s people were not needed to drive out the people of the land given to Israel’s descendants.

5. He gave them land in which they had not labored and cities they had not built, then they lived in them; and, vineyards and olive-yards they did not plant, and they are continuing to eat. (*Verse 13*)

Gracious gift: The land, the cities, the cultivated food are all gracious gifts of Yahweh to His people.

NOT their work: They had not done the hard work farmers must do, they had not built the cities. They did not plant the grapes and olives; but they are now enjoying them as food. This truth applies to the salvation Christians experience in Jesus: He did all the work to save people who receive salvation as a gracious gift from God by faith, not by any work they have done (*Ephesians 2:8-9*).

- B. Then Joshua commands them to fear and serve only The Covenant God and pledges that he will do so. (*Verses 14-15*)
1. Now, fear Yahweh and serve Him in integrity and truth, and put away the 'gods' your fathers served, serve Yahweh. (*Verse 14*)

Fear and serve: There are two commands here: to fear Yahweh and to serve Him.

How: The character needed for obedience is unblemished and whole, as well as faithful and true.

Command: They must put away what is blemished and false in order to choose to serve Yahweh. (*Ephesians 4:20-25*). Also, after we are (re-)created in Jesus Christ ... we are to walk (live) in the good works God prepared beforehand for us to do (*Ephesians 2:10*). Let us choose these.

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2. IF it is wrong to you to serve Yahweh, choose this day whom you will serve: whether the 'gods' your fathers served beyond the River, or the 'gods' of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. (*Verse 15a-b*)

Choice: Joshua puts forth a clear choice: if they reject serving Yahweh, they will serve any number of false 'gods'.

Service: This is a serving with acts of a religious nature before 'gods' or the true Three-in-One God (*Romans 12:1-2*, present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice ... your spiritual service of worship).

3. And I and my 'house', we will serve Yahweh. (*Verse 15c*)

Me: Joshua's declaration echoes his commitment of faithful obedience to Yahweh expressed forty years earlier (*Numbers 14:6-9*). And he also speaks for his whole family, of which he is the head. He made his choice, what is ours?

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II. After the devil tempts Jesus to worship him, Jesus commands him to go because it is written:

The Lord your God you will worship and only serve Him. (*Matthew 4:8-10*)

- A. The devil tempts Jesus to bow to him in worship, saying he will give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. (*Verses 8-9*)

Intense: This passage is in the present tense, making it more intense.

1. Again, the devil is taking Him up to exceedingly high mountain. (*Verse 8a*)

accuser: 'diablos' means a false accuser, one who slanders.

2. And he is showing to Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. (*Verse 8b-c*)

Place: This is not an ordinary mountain because they can see all the world.

Kingdoms: They see all human kingdoms. Even these have some glory.

3. And he said to Him, all these things I will give to You ... (*Verse 9a*)

Offer: John was listening when Jesus told the Twelve about this incident, because he wrote, 'the whole world lies in the power of the evil one' (*1 John 5:19*).

4. ... IF, falling down, You will worship me. (*Verse 9b*)

Temptation: In his pride, the accuser wants to supplant God (*Ezekiel 28:11-19*). That is his purpose with this temptation of Jesus.

- B. Then Jesus commands him to depart because 'it is written': you will worship at the feet of The Lord your God, and you will only serve Him. (*Verse 10*)

1. Then Jesus is saying to him, 'Depart satan'. (*Verse 10a*)

Go away: This time, the devil is called the adversary, who tries to incite people into unfaithfulness to God, which is what worship of him would be. Jesus simply commands him to go away.

2. Because it has been written. (*Verse 10b*)

Scripture: God's Word stands forever in heaven (*Psalms 119:89*). Just as God is forever holy, so is His Word. The phrase 'it is written' (KJV), meaning what was written in the past is still so, occurs eighty times in the King James Version.

3. 'Lord, The God of thee, thou will worship at His feet'. (*Verse 10c*)

Humble worship: This is a humble worship with the worshipper stretching out on the ground with his forehead at the feet of God. Anything less than this devotion to The Lord God is worship of a false 'god' or idol. We have a choice every minute of every day: who will we worship?

God desires people to worship only Him

4. And to Him only will we serve. (*Verse 10d*)

Liturgy: The word used for 'serve' is the basis for our word 'liturgy'. This is worship that is prayerfully planned with both the heart and mind to facilitate all who are gathered to worship God in spirit and in truth (*John 4:21-24*). Some people say this can lead to worship by rote. The answer to this is it depends on the heart of the worshipper. The same words repeated week after week can draw our hearts closer to God IF they are spoken, prayed or sung with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*). Who will we serve?

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Conclusion: After Joshua told all Israel their history, he commanded them to choose to fear and serve only Yahweh; and, he said both he and his family would do so. Later, after the devil tempts Jesus to worship him, Jesus commands him to go away because 'it is written': The Lord your God you will worship and you will only serve Him.

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