

Joshua 07 12 14a

We're here on Friday night. It is December the 14th, 2007. We continue our study in the book of Joshua, chapter 24.

The great concluding section of this historical book is before us tonight. As we prepare to study it together, let's take a moment as we customarily do to ensure that we are ready for the study of God's Word and answer our phones and take care of whatever other administrative clearing of the mind and preparing of the heart is necessary to concentrate on God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your Word.

We ask your blessing on us through your Holy Spirit that we will understand and perceive in this passage the truths that will enable us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight to meet the challenges and tests that lie ahead and to live in a way that is a blessing to others and a glorification to the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name. Amen.

Joshua, chapter 24, we have seen that the people are assembled in a place they have been before. Where are they? Joshua 24, where did everybody come back to? If you are not sure, you can look at the handout. I only made a few copies, but the handout is available.

For those who are remote, you can look in the FTP folder under Joshua and it's called Ebal Altar. And the center picture is the one I would direct your attention to first because you will see Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim there. And in the center you will see the town of Shechem.

And that is the location. This is where Joshua has called the elders. I'll talk about the other two pictures on that handout here momentarily.

But Shechem is very famous. You remember a lot of famous things have happened there. This is where Abraham first came back.

The terebinth tree or the oak tree of Moreh, if you recall. And the place where Abraham built an altar. This is where Jacob came back and buried the teraphim.

This is where in later days some things are going to happen related to Gideon and Gideon's son. But right now Joshua has assembled the people in the shadow of these two mountains. At least they would be in the shadow in the morning.

The sun coming up in the east. Your center picture there is sort of at a 90 degree angle because the orientation of the mountains to Shechem is north and south respectively. But here they are.

And Joshua has called the elders, the officers, the leaders of the people and has given

them this historic account of what God has done. And this is a call to faith and obedience. He says, I'm old.

I'm going to be checking out. This is his charge, his last words. And what I want to do as we sort of rapidly survey what we've already covered and move into our new material tonight is just point out from a slightly different perspective the words that are spoken in this chapter.

If you look at what God says to Joshua and what he says to the people on God's behalf. This begins at the beginning of the chapter. Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel.

Obviously God gave him this message and he is now transferring it. And just step back a little bit. Don't worry so much about the details.

But what kind of thing is God saying here? Of all of the possible things that God could say, what does he rehearse? What does he bring to their minds? Your fathers dwelt in a far off place. They served other gods. I took them and brought them to this land.

That's basically the first section, right? Then he says, Then I brought your fathers, your immediate fathers, out of Egypt. And that was a place where other gods were served. And I brought them to this land.

So there have been two times that God has brought fathers to this land and specifically to this place. Your fathers saw what I did in Egypt. I brought you into the land of the Amorites.

They fought with you. I gave them into your hand, Balak, Balaam the son of Baor. The men of Jericho fought against you, as well as the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and the Jebusites.

But I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet before you. If you look at this, who is the actor? Who is producing all of this action? Who has initiated all of this? Who has made it happen? It's God.

I brought Abraham. I brought Jacob. I brought you and your fathers out.

I drove out the enemies. I gave you victory. I have granted you.

I have fulfilled my promises, God says. It's all about God's reputation, God's name. In Hebrew, the word is S-H-E-M.

They talk about the Shema, which is the call to worship, given even today in synagogues all over the world. The Lord our God is one Lord. They call it the Shema.

It's God's name. It is the celebration of His name. This is the celebration of God's name.

It's His reputation. It is the record of His mighty deeds. Now, when is the last time that we sat and meditated upon, I'm talking about you and me, driving in the car, sitting in a chair, waking up in the middle of the night, getting ready to go to sleep, waking up first thing in the morning.

When is the last time we sat and consciously made an effort to think about God's mighty deeds? We just take them for granted most of the time, don't we? Oh yes, God created the heavens and the earth. I know Genesis 1. I know about Israel. I know about David.

I know about the prophets. I know about Jesus. I know about the apostles.

I've heard that stuff since I was a tiny child in Sunday school. I heard it at my mother's knee or my father's knee. I know all of that.

But God, and of course these Israelites all know that, don't they? These are the elders and the officers. All of these people know these things. They've sat around campfires talking about God's mighty deeds from time to time.

But God brings it up anyway. God reviews it. God brings it back to their mind.

And there's a reason for this. And there's a reason in this chapter why this specific content is brought to mind. We are in a very busy time in terms of human history, world events.

There is a crescendo. There is a rapidly, exponentially increasing, you know, the Bible talks about man running to and fro and knowledge increasing and the making of many books and all that kind of thing. Well, there's never been an age like now.

There's never been such a hectic pace. There's never been. And, you know, they thought this 100 years ago in the Industrial Revolution.

They thought about it when the age of steam and then the age of electricity and the age of radio and when television first came on. And they said, oh, we're at a breakneck pace. Well, that's small potatoes.

That's cold French fries compared to now with the Internet, with satellites, with the technology. It is just leapfrogging itself. And, you know, a lot of us, even technophiles, tend to just say, you know, I'll kind of pick and choose what I'm going to look at.

But I haven't had my hands on an iPhone, and I haven't messed with a lot of the latest, you know, miniaturization. And every time you look around, something new has come out, some new electronic device that does amazing things. And, you know, your car talks to you and tells you where you are and tells you where to turn, and your phone tells you who's calling, and your radio comes off a satellite.

And, you know, things are just leapfrogging. And in this time of distraction and

information overload, it is important for us to stop and consciously meditate on God's mighty works and not forget His name. I will review until we all remember the four aspects of relationship with God that were detailed earlier in this chapter.

What are the fourfold aspects of relationship with God that Joshua gives to the nation here? Remember His name. That's the first and foremost. What has God done? Not only can we think about biblical events and historical events and the founding of this nation and the wonderful biblical concepts that undergird our Constitution and the greatest generation that won World War II and all of that, but we think in our own lives.

All of us can think back to great deliverances, great provisions, great blessings, well beyond anything we could even hope to deserve in a lot of areas. And it's important to remember those and to remember the source and to remember the grace and the foundation of salvation from Jesus Christ that made all of these things possible. We are beloved because He is beloved and we are blessed because He is blessed.

He took what we deserve and we receive what He deserves. And you can't think about it too much. It is humbling.

It is great for objectivity. It is a great... I was looking at our wonderful stainless steel sink and faucet earlier this week that I installed with my own two precious hands. And I noticed that around the edges, you know, that calcium is starting to build up.

It doesn't look new anymore. And that stainless steel is supposed to look new forever. You can scratch it a little bit, but it doesn't ding.

It doesn't, you know, I got the heavy duty. It doesn't dent. It doesn't even make noise because it's got all that padding and stuff on it.

It's got this wonderful faucet and the patina, the finish of the faucet and the sink all match. But it's got this gunk built up on it. And I thought, well, you know, you've got to get that off of there.

And so I recruited one of my workforce and detailed her to clean that stuff off. But it requires diligence. It doesn't just come off with a wipe of the hand.

You have to concentrate. You have to focus. You have to pay attention to detail.

And if you've ever stood inspection on sinks and faucets, you know where the details are. And you know what's good and what's not good enough. And you have to send people back and say, well, what about this? What about this? And then when they're all done and gone and you say good job, then I go back and finish the job to my own satisfaction because my standard is apparently somewhat higher than my little worker bees was.

But the importance of concentration and remembering there is a standard and it has to, you can't, if you just let things go, if you just ignore, you get an accretion and you get a buildup and things calcify and things corrupt and corrode and it requires attention. You have to go in and if you notice something building up, you have to go in and consciously make an effort. It doesn't just disappear on its own.

I don't walk in on a Saturday morning and, well, looky there. The sink cleaned itself and the faucet has no longer got that little, and I'm not, this is nothing against my cleaners. It's a tiny little white line.

Most of you have looked at our sink and probably didn't even see it. But I am of the level of detail orientation where it was bugging me. But it illustrates my point that if you leave things to themselves, entropy sets in.

Second law of thermodynamics, everything put together falls apart, things decay, things corrode, things erode, and it takes a conscious effort. In our culture, which is a current, a tidal current sweeping us in the direction of secularism, humanism, liberalism, materialism, you can't just sort of assume. You can't just say, well, I'm a Christian and I've studied the word of God a lot so everything's going to be fine.

We have to take strokes. We have got to swim against the current. And one way to do that is to remember God's name.

This fourfold detailing, fourfold breakdown of a relationship with God is really helpful. So number one, remember His name. These are His mighty deeds in Scripture, in history, and in our own lives.

And you do this consciously. It doesn't just sort of seep out of us. It doesn't just happen.

What's the second one? We take oaths in His name when we make our commitments, when we set our policies, when we establish our goals, when we meditate on our values and what we consider to be important, what is going to be our essential, what is going to be our nonessential. You remember that great summary? I think Bob Thieme is the one that said this, and it has been a helpful little, you know, he was the most gifted person I've ever run across in terms of being able to distill things into a pithy and memorable little saying. And his summary of this principle was that we must be inflexible about essentials and flexible about nonessentials.

The corollary to that is you have to know the difference. You cannot be thinking, well, this is essential, and I'm going to be inflexible when it's really a nonessential thing. And you cannot be lax and flexible and say, oh, no problem, not to worry, when it is an essential and it should not be overlooked and it shouldn't be let go.

And, of course, many times there can be disagreements, there can be conflict when people are not of like mind on what is essential and what is nonessential. This is where

our study of God's Word and our meditation on it helps us. But that's number two, taking oaths in His name, making our commitments, when we say a thing, when we commit to a thing, when we establish a direction, even if it's in our own mind, and we say, I am going to increase my time spent with the Lord, I am going to increase my prayer time, I will pray for you.

Oh, I hear you're in a bad way, I'll pray for you. Well, that's a commitment, and that is an oath before the Lord. And if we cultivate that aspect of our relationship with God, we will be faithful and we will be committed believers because we recognize that everything that we assent to and that we affirm and that we say and that we decide is in God's eyes, and it is like an oath.

Third thing is to bow down before. And this is the strongest aspect of that bow down. We think, well, that's worship, that's obeisance and humility, and all of those things are in it.

But primarily, this is where you make requests. People would come in and bow down before the king and say, O king. The only person that didn't have to bow down was Esther when she went into Xerxes because she was the queen.

But normally, when you go before the potentate, the power that is, your obeisance is an acknowledgment that here is the person that has the power to grant my requests. What do we bow down to? Do we bow down to Wikipedia? Every time they have a problem, they go to the World Wide Web and go to an information source and, well, this is my authority, mailclinic.com or whatever else that's got the answers. I'm going to go to support.microsoft.com or I'm going to go to whatever.

I'll go to my, I've got a friend who's a nurse or I've got a friend who's a mechanic or I've got a friend who's a computer guy. I've got a friend, I've got somebody who knows this area. That's who I'm going to go to and whatever they say goes.

And that's good. We avail ourselves of each other's expertise. Somebody knows how to keep African violence alive, that's the person to talk to.

But when it comes to spiritual things, there has been an insidious development, especially in maybe the last 50 or 60 years in Christianity, which is in multitude of counselors there is safety. And believers say, I will take a poll of my friends because they are godly people and I will go by what they say. And that is bowing down to an intermediary.

God didn't say, look, I'll give the Holy Spirit to your pastor or I'll give the Holy Spirit to your spiritually mature elder or friend and when you need an answer, you go to them and you assent, you submit to the authority of their answer. The biggest refutation, the easiest way to refute this idea is to look at where God put His Holy Spirit. Each one of us.

The Bible says, you have no need that any man teach you. And the context means in the

sense of, we all need teaching. But we do not need to bow down to someone to tell us how to live our life.

We have the Spirit and we have the Word. And not even the pastor is the authority in your spiritual life. Pastors do not have authority.

I've heard all my life people talking about the authority of the pastor. It's nonsense. The pastor doesn't have any.

The only authority the pastor has is to maintain order in the meeting where he is teaching the Word of God. If somebody is disrupting, he has the authority to have them removed. Drag that guy out.

Back there, making trouble. Yeah, that guy in the back row, right there. Drag him out.

He's a distraction. That's the authority of the pastor. But people say, well, we've had this thing in our more narrow tradition of the right pastor, well, he's my spiritual authority.

No, he's not. And don't let anybody slip that idea past your spiritual guard. Jesus Christ is our spiritual authority.

And His Word and His authority is directly communicated to the soul of each believer through the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, not through the pastor. I have no authority over anybody except my own household. I am the spiritual head of my house and no other.

And anybody who looks at a pastor like a priest is missing the boat. We are our own priest. Each of us is a priest.

It's a great thing. It's the first time in history that women have been qualified for the priesthood. Every lady who is a believer is her own priest.

Even her husband is not her priest. She is her own priest. And we are directly... And it's a great privilege that women as well as men can walk right into the throne room and represent themselves through the high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to God Himself.

And so even married women, you submit to the authority of your husband in a lot of areas. But when it comes to your spiritual life, you are directly connected to God through Christ. Every believer is.

Don't let anyone insinuate themselves in the middle of that under the guise or the rubric of, well, we're having a woman's Bible study, or I'm going to mentor you, I'm going to disciple you, I'm going to shepherd you, I'm your spiritual shepherd. No. Not even the husband.

Women, you can't lay your spiritual life off on your husband or your father or anybody else. You, as a believer, go to God through Christ. There is no distinction made in the

Scripture.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female.

We are all one in Christ. He is the high priest. All of us are priests.

So, back to our fourfold relationship with God. Remember His name. Take oaths in His name.

Bow down to Him. He is the source. He is the place for answers.

He is the place to look. He has many agencies. Answers can come to us.

Blessings can come to us. Solutions to problems can come to us. Encouragement.

Opportunities. Not just help for negative things, but our positive opportunities. Our chances for ministry.

Our chances to exercise our spiritual gift. Always come to us through fellow believers. Through situations that God will create.

And you can see lots of intermediate agents. But we always recognize that the final and ultimate source of every good and perfect gift is God. It comes down from above, from the Father of Lights.

And we bow down. We do not start putting people on a pedestal. It is the most dangerous thing.

And if you really love a pastor, or if you really love a minister. If you really love someone who is doing a good job in whatever their area of spiritual gift may be. Don't attack them by putting them on a pedestal.

It is an attack. You are doing them injury and harm. If you try to set them in the place of Jesus Christ.

If you put them as an intermediary between yourself and God. Be careful. Do not idolize people.

No matter how beneficial or how grateful you may be for what God does in them or through them. Or in spite of them or whatever. Remember, bow down.

Remember when John gets stood back up on his feet. Hey, don't be bowing down to the wrong person here. You serve God.

You bow down to God. You remember Him. You honor His name.

And then the fourth one, of course, is to serve. Eved. And this means, what is the object of your effort? What is the objective in your day? What do you consider to be a successful day? Most all of us wake up in the morning.

We say, well, you know, today is Friday. Today is Tuesday. Today is Saturday.

This is what I am going to get done today. And we measure the greatness of the day and the success of our efforts by how much of that list we checked off. Oh, I had a great list last Saturday.

Wrote it down on a piece of paper. I have bulletin stock from back when I was at Tahlequah. And the printer shaved it and gummed the top.

And it makes a great pad. The pages fit neatly inside your Bible. Just like I've used it for years for Bible note paper.

But I tore one of those sheets off and I made my list last Saturday. Here's all the things I'm going to get done. Well, as the day unfolded, out of nine things, I got two done.

And I was tempted at the end of the day. I looked at my list and I started to, I almost had, a sinking feeling. I almost thought I did not accomplish my goals this day.

But I remembered our Joshua study and I was thinking, you know what? The measure of a day is have you served God? Are you serving God? And so then you go back and review the day. Not in the light of how many tasks did you check off. But what you did, was it done in acknowledgement, in recognition, in awareness.

That God is creating opportunities. God may change, you know, man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps. You can make a plan but God's going to direct your steps.

And if He directs you in a different way, the last thing you want to do is be, you know, kicking something and saying, oh, my plan didn't go right. And this is serving God. It is a practical daily measure.

We can look back at the end of the day in our evening prayers. Evening, morning, and at noon I will pray and cry aloud. He shall hear my voice.

In our evening prayers as we review the day before God, was it a successful day? Maybe, you know, maybe it was a litany of failures. Maybe the paper was due and it didn't get done. Maybe the task was supposed to be accomplished.

Maybe despite your best efforts everything kind of fell apart and came unglued and unraveled. You look back and you say, oh, it would have been better if I had just stayed home today. But we have to shift our thinking.

Any unbeliever can think that way. To serve God means to look back and say, was God

able to shine his light and reflect it off of me today? Did I maintain a good attitude in the face of, you know, circumstances that weren't so great? Did I sink into despair or did I remember who I am and why I'm here? Did I represent the Lord Jesus Christ? I have an opportunity to reflect the hope that is in me so that somebody who I don't even know, maybe watching and interested, that the angels are watching, God is glorified. That's serving God.

Remember his name. Take oaths in his name. Bow down before him and serve him.

It is so important to remember these four things in the light of this chapter especially. Well, as you look at this rehearsal that God gives to Israel through Joshua, thus says the Lord God of Israel. This is what God said.

This is how God views it. God says, here's what I have done for you. And what is the record of Abraham or Jacob or anybody else's participation in this? Now, we know that Abraham believed God.

It was credited to him for righteousness. We know that Jacob prayed at Bethel and said, if you will preserve me, you will be my God and I will build altars to you and so forth. I will give you a tithe.

But none of that is repeated here. In God's presentation, this is all about God. And this is what God has done in history up to this point for this generation.

As they stand there at Shechem, all of this is history. All of this is what God has done that has brought them to this place. If Abraham had not been brought from Ur, if Jacob had not been brought from Haran, if Israel had not been brought out of Egypt, if God had not driven their enemies out and sustained them and done all of these mighty acts, they wouldn't be standing there.

But they are there and they are in possession of this great land because of what God has done. And God presents it that way. Now, this is the key to understanding Joshua's words later on.

Because he says in verse 14, Now, because God has done this, because God has given you a land for which you did not labor, cities which you did not build, your eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant, that therefore fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods that your fathers served. You have been given an experience, you have been given a set of blessings for which you did not labor, that you did not participate in, that you do not earn and deserve. This is God's initiation in grace.

What is your response? Your response should be to fear Him, to serve Him, and to put away the alternatives. That's what Jacob did at this very spot. He promised God when he was at Bethel, If you will preserve me in my wanderings and bring me back to this land,

you will be my God, I will serve you, I will serve you with my offerings.

That's exactly what he did. When he came back to the land, he buried the teraphim. He said, I'm getting this stuff out of the household.

And they're right there, they're standing in the shadow of the tree under which those idols are buried. So this should be your response. God has been faithful, God has been proactive, God has been aggressive and gracious in doing all of these things.

So, fear Him, serve Him, put away these alternatives. You have got to choose who you're going to serve. Here's God's resume.

See if you can put together a resume for the teraphim. What have the teraphim done for you? What's their track record? Choose. Make a list.

I was trying to decide which seminary to go to. Narrowed it down to two choices. I was either going to go to Dallas Theological, or go out there in Oregon, Portland.

I can't even think of the name of it now. I so completely buried it under the tree. But I made a list.

And I said, well, here's an advantage of this school, here's an advantage of this school. Here's pros and cons on both of them. Well, this is basically what Joshua tells these people to do.

Choose whom you're going to serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Now, we kind of puzzled last week, because the people answer and they say, far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, and so on.

And then Joshua 19 says, you cannot serve the Lord. He's a holy and jealous God. He's not going to forgive your sins.

And we look at that and we say, that's kind of an odd response. It seems like he'd say, well done. Let's write that down so you don't forget it.

Well, look at the people's response. The key is between verse 16 and 18 here. The people answered and said, now, God's record has been what? What is the people's perspective? God brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, did these great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.

The Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites, who dwelt in the land. We will serve the Lord, for he is our God. And if you look at this closely, there is an undertone of, we really did get a good deal.

When I make my list, I got a lot of good things out of this. We were brought. We saw.

We experienced. And you think, well, isn't that why God did it, so that they would remember it? And there is a balance. Yes, we remember what God has done, but do you look at it from the standpoint of, isn't he a great God? Or do you look at it from the standpoint of, boy, that was sure a good deal for me.

And the tone here is, he brought us out of bondage, and we sure didn't like that bondage. He preserved us in the way and among the people, and we are preserved, and we're real happy about that. The Lord drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites, who dwelt in the land, so we will serve the Lord, for he is our God.

Now, think about the scenario here. They are choosing between gods. And they say, well, we will serve the Lord, for he is our God.

Well, this brings up the subject of monotheism. You know what monotheism is, right? Monaural recording is one channel, one track. It's one thing.

Mononucleosis is one nucleosis. But a monorail runs on a single track, right? A single rail. Mono means one.

Monotheism means one God exclusively. One and only one God. All of the people in Egypt are what kind of theists? Polytheists.

Polygrip holds all your teeth in. Poly, many, multiple. If it was called monogrip, it might not sell so well.

But it's polygrip. Now I'm being facetious. But polytheism is many gods.

Now think about it. When Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, we've dug up ancient Ur. And they had a lot of gods.

It was a polytheistic society. Abraham was called out to come to this land. Up in Haran, multiple gods.

Jacob came out from there. And those Teraphim, that's multiple gods, had to shake loose from that. They went down to Egypt.

How many gods are there in Egypt? Osiris and Ra and all of these other gods down there. They are coming back into Canaan and it is polytheistic. There is Baal and there is El.

There is Dagon of the Philistines is going to be later on. There is Ashtoreth and multiple gods. So it is not enough to say, well, this god brought us out of the land of Egypt.

He's a great god. He's done good things for us. Kind of like, well, you know, I sacrificed my son to Molech last year.

And boy, the crops really came in great. So I'm going to serve Molech because it looks to

me like there was a good cause and effect there. Well, what is the need of the moment? Later on, you have the Romans.

And if it's war time, they're going to sacrifice to Mars. If it's love time, they're going to sacrifice to Aphrodite. Or if it's party time, they're going to sacrifice to Bacchus.

And if it's crop time, they're going to sacrifice to somebody else, to the goddess of fertility or whatever. There's a god for every occasion. And so they say, well, when it comes to deliverance, when it comes to getting out of a jam, this is a great god.

Now, they're not saying this in so many words. And I'm not sure it's even in their mind. But this is the danger of their approach.

When they say, well, yes, this is certainly the god who delivered us. This is the god who preserved us. Remember we talked many weeks ago about how gods would be viewed when they first came into the land.

And they said, well, a god might be a god of fortresses. A god might be a god who can give victory in the plains. But can he also give victory in the mountains? There are different gods that have different specialties.

There's no one god that does everything. So they specialize. It's like doctors today.

So, which god do you need for the occasion? And here, Joshua detects a hint. And I don't think it was overt. I don't think it was conscious.

But I think Joshua detects a hint in their reply that they're treating God as the god of deliverances. Well, he's a god of get me out of this jam. And this is our temptation.

Well, everything's going fine. And, oh yeah, I pray and say grace before meals and so on. But I don't really get serious about confessing my sins and making sure I'm paying attention to Bible class and really getting that eight-cylinder spiritual life going until the chips are down.

Medical problem. Financial crisis. Big decision.

Pressure. Chips and stuff are just flying every which way. Now I'm really going to focus on that god because he's the god of my deliverance.

Well, he is a god of deliverance. But that is a very limiting view if that's the only way you see him. And if you only turn to him in times for deliverance, but when it's time for creativity, when it's time for entertainment, when it's time for stimulation, and you really want to have an enjoyable time, most of us do not say, let me grab my notes and go back over, or let me delve into that passage I don't quite understand, and that'll really be a blessing.

We think, hey, isn't there a new movie out? I can get that on pay-per-view. Or, wow, somebody told me about a website that does this, that, and the other. He's not the god of our relaxation and our recreation.

And again, I am a big fan of recreation and entertainment. I take nothing away from all those. I'm just saying that if we only look at God as the god of deliverance, that's what happened here.

The people said, he brought us out from the land of Egypt, out from the house of bondage. He did great signs and wonders, and he preserved us in the way, preserved us amongst the people through whom we passed, and he drove out the threats from before us. He is the problem-solving, get-those-people-out-of-my-way god.

We will serve him. He is our god. And Joshua replies, you cannot serve the Lord, and he doesn't say what you might expect.

He says, he goes back to the character of God. He is a holy god. He is a jealous god.

The holiness of God, you get the idea that there was a limited view of God. Well, that does not focus on his preeminence. What does it mean to be holy? We think holy, it's sanctified, it sort of glows, it is completely apart from sin and that.

But holy, as you will recall, all of the words for sanctify mean to be set apart. And God's holiness is his set-apartness. And Joshua basically says, don't think of the God of Israel, don't think of Yahweh, the God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, as a god.

He is the god. He is completely other and set-apart. He is not one choice among several.

Because the danger is that they'll say, oh yes, we commit to Yahweh, but I'm going to bring in these others, because it's crop time. My wife is pregnant, and I want to have a strong son. It's time for the cows to calve.

It's time for the goats to have goats, and the sheep to have sheep. And it's time for reproduction, and it's time for the crops. I don't want a big storm coming in.

I don't want the Sabaeans coming in and stealing my camels and so on. So, can't hurt to bring, oh yes, absolutely, the Lord God, take nothing away from Him. But, here's these others.

And Joshua says, look, this God we're talking about, forget this other god stuff. He is wholly other. He is completely above and beyond anything that you're tempted to think of.

And He is a jealous God. Now, why would, and that's what it means. It means jealous.

Translated in Hebrew, it means jealous. Why would He describe God as jealous? What is

the nature of God's jealousy? What is God jealous of? He's jealous of those individuals who belong to Him. A man who is a jealous husband, what's the story there? He wants his wife's attention fully and totally, 100% focused on him.

He doesn't want her having any truck with any other guy. No conversation, overly jealous types. And the jealousy is, I want this woman all to myself.

I do not want her affections distributed anywhere but me. And this is the nature of God's jealousy. God wants the affections of His people, the worship, the service, the memory, the obeisance of His people completely directed to Him.

Exclusively. And this is, we don't think about it much, but in the ancient Near East, this is a bizarre concept. No gods of the ancient world expected exclusive worship.

Baal figured, well, you're probably going to go do some Molech stuff and some Ashtar stuff because that's kind of their specialty. Fertility and the blessing of the crops and that. You know what? I'm the storm god.

I'm Baal. I do certain things well. But this is why there were Terathim instead of a Tarath.

Nobody had a household god. They had household gods. And the idea of exclusivity was virtually unique.

You have old Ashkenaten. Was that his name? Akhenaten. Had one too many S's in there.

And he, you remember what a weird thing the Egyptians thought it was when he said we're just going to worship this one god, this sun god. And it was just unheard of. And so when God is described here as holy and jealous, this is in contrast to what the people are implying by what they say.

Don't think of God just in terms of problem solving. And there might be other situations where you would turn to another god. He is the only god.

He is an exclusive god. And he demands your full, all your heart, all your soul, all your strength. This is the idea.

Not keeping part of it back to devote to some other god. Well, making the interpretation application leap for us is a little bit difficult because we don't think in terms of stone idols or pagan temples and other forms of worship. They didn't have the stuff that we have obviously in the ancient world to distract them, to supply their answers and to meet their needs.

But that's what stands in for what we have today. Those idols, those problem solving devices, those solutions, what are they today? Those are the other gods. And it might be techniques.

They teach relaxation techniques. They teach meditation in school. They teach children basically eastern meditation techniques.

Well, you know, focus, breathe, center yourself, you know, iron out your chi and examine your id and all this. And it is an invitation to demonic influence. That's not God's solution.

God says, Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened.

Meditate on his word day and night. He doesn't say empty your mind. Visualize world peace.

Float in the sea of, you know, cosmic nothingness. Emptying your mind is dangerous. Jesus said the demons go away.

House is clean and swept. Eight of them move back in. We don't empty our mind.

We fill our minds. We fill our souls. We concentrate our attention on the holy God, the jealous God who demands all of our worship, all of our service, all of our dedication.

So that's why he says you cannot serve the Lord if this is going to be your attitude. You're just going to serve him part of the time. Well, we'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll see how Joshua's response straightens out the view of the people and enables us to move forward toward the end of the book.