

Joshua 07-12-07b

Let's pick up our study now in the Gospel of Joshua. He is doing some serious preaching here in the latter part of chapter 24. If you have no desire to worship the Lord, choose today whom you will worship.

That's how the new English translation translates it, and I think that's weak. The New American Standard, if you're looking for a good literal translation with word equivalents instead of dynamic equivalents, especially in the Old Testament, the New American Standard is pretty good. And the translation there is, if it is disagreeable in your sight, of course, *ra* means evil.

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourself today whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. You notice immediately that there is no endeavor to deny the reality of these gods.

He doesn't say the false gods or the mythical gods or the made-up gods or the imaginary gods. Why? Why wouldn't Joshua say, well, you know they're not really gods, they're just rocks and they're ancient Egyptian myths, and these poor backward Amorites are just carving stuff out of trees. That does take place in some of the prophets, doesn't it? Prophets talk about how can a guy take a stick or a stone or some silver and gold and make an idol and have it suddenly become sentient and conscious and have power.

But here Joshua doesn't distinguish between the reality of the Lord God of Israel and the reality of these others. Why? Because in the minds of the people who worship them, they are real. In the minds of the people who serve them, they have power.

They make a difference. You think about the world around us. There are people who honestly believe that certain things have the power to calm, the power to quit.

What is that? Nicoderm, nicotine patch or whatever it is. Remember the woman that originally did that commercial was on an episode of Star Trek where she was a holographic woman named Melody or Symphony or Minuet, something like that. So every time I saw that commercial, there's a word I'm missing.

The power to calm, the power to something, the power to quit. And then they changed that commercial because they can't say the power to quit. So then the commercial came back with a different person who said the power to calm, the power to encourage and the power to help you quit.

Because they had legal liability. Somebody said, hey, I didn't quit. Where's the power? But the idea is people look at things and they say, this gives me power.

This gives me ability. This is the answer to my problem. This thing, this, what is the, have you seen the advertisement for The Secret? Well, keep an eye out.

It's the latest, biggest thing. Just look for The Secret. Da Vinci had it.

Michelangelo had it. Lincoln had it. Washington had it.

They knew The Secret. And it's, you know, it's that inside piece of information that makes you successful. I have seen many quality infomercials assuring me that I can be rich in my pajamas.

I never have to leave the house. I don't have to sell anything. I can sit in my home and the money will literally roll in.

What really gets me about those is there is the testimonials where somebody will say, you know, I made \$24,000 last week. And down in the bottom in fine print it says, results not typical. Your mileage may vary.

You know, if this is not typical of your program, why are you showing it to me? Results not typical. Well, anyway, these are the gods of the Amorites today. And we look and it's easy to say, well, I'm not going to do a rich quick scheme.

I'm not going to fall for these things. But we really are enjoying to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith because all of us are susceptible. Human nature is universal in a lot of respects.

And we all like a sure thing. Everybody would love to say, I am going to invest, and a year from now my investment is going to be bountifully and plentifully multiplied. All of us would like to say, I'm going to choose this thing and it's going to pan out great.

I'm going to go to this school and I'm going to have a wonderful career. I'm going to move to this town. I'm going to get this job.

I'm going to marry this person. I'm going to have this child. I'm going to push this child out of the house.

I'm going to buy myself a little two-door red sports car and everything is going to be great. And many times it is true. I have rarely had as much fun as I have had driving my little red car, formerly Joseph's mother-in-law's little red car.

I love that car. I have never sat or driven that car where I was not having a great time. They say happiness does not depend on your outward circumstances, but I don't think whoever said that, sat in a red two-door sports car with the top down, I just don't think you can be unhappy.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe my problems are too small to overwhelm the power of the car.

But we all tend toward these crutches.

We tend to believe in tangible things. We tend to believe in what the world at large believes in. It's human nature.

We are built corrupt. We are built fallen. We are built godless.

We are conceived in iniquity. We are born in sin. And our world view defaults.

Everybody that does software knows what a default is. Our defaults are set to godlessness when it comes to the God of creation, the God of our salvation. We default away from Him.

And we have to go in and reconfigure our thinking through the Word of God. We have to constantly remember, I am in the world, but not of it. I do not worship the gods of the Amorites.

I do not worship the gods of my fathers in Egypt. And it's a hard, hard thing. And we don't see it in ourselves nearly as quickly as we see it in others.

There is few things more entertaining as you're driving around than sharpshooting other people. Look at that bad driving. Look at that sloppy parking.

Look at that insufficient effort. Look at that faulty, I'm coming down here tonight, I was telling somebody at the break, some dangerous individual, heavy traffic on Central Expressway, driving at least 90 miles an hour in the fast lane, weaving in and out of the cars doing 55 and 60 and 65, like they are pylons, over-correcting, over-steering, scaring people half to death. And that behavior is an assumption of invincibility, or somebody is on something, I don't know what it is.

But it's easy to look and say, ah, problem there. I see this to criticize. I see this to find fault with.

And we actually sort of make a god of ourselves. We make a god of our judgment and our standards. And we say, I know what's right, and that's not right.

We've seen this in the Gospel of John, where the blind man gets shooed into the presence of the Pharisees, and they say, we know this man cannot be from God because he broke the Sabbath. Sabbath-breaking is my standard. Anybody that breaks the Sabbath can't be from God.

By the way, I'll define what Sabbath-breaking is for you. It's anything I don't like. If I don't like it, you can't do it, especially not on the Sabbath.

Did Jesus break the Sabbath? Did the man break the Sabbath? No, not even according to the oral additions and accretions to the law. Nobody broke anything. You're allowed to

wash.

Ablutions are appropriate on the Sabbath, just like they are on a feast day. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. All the guy did was go to the pool and wash.

So they're trying to get Jesus on his technicality. Well, he was kneading on the Sabbath. He mixed spit and dirt, and that's the same as kneading bread dough.

He worked on the Sabbath by mixing those things on his fingertips, just like the disciples pulling the heads of grain on the Sabbath. That's reaping on the Sabbath, working. So they define the standard.

But listen, it's easy to see in them. It's much harder to see in us, in ourselves. Stare into the mirror in a healthy way, not a narcissistic way, but stare in and look at ourselves, and notice where we are keeping those gods.

Do you think anybody in Joshua's generation is openly setting up a little Egyptian cat god and bowing down before it or praying to it or offering oblations and sacrifices? No, but they're tucked away. They've got it in the closet. They've got it under the bowling shoes and the tennis rackets and the golf clubs.

It's under there. It's in there. They haven't thrown it away.

And all of us have things we need to throw away. Joshua says, get rid of that stuff. Now, here's the interesting part.

This is what I told you before. It's a new thing for me. You'll probably say, what? I knew this a long time ago.

Well, I didn't, so you can be amazed for my sake. Verse 16. The people answered and said, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.

These are the people whose parents danced around in the shadow of Mount Sinai around the golden calf. These are the people who already have stuff back home, behind the tent flap. They've got little beetles and little scarabs and little frogs and little wolf-faced statuettes like you see in the tombs of the mummies.

It's back there. They've got it. They've lugged it around.

Oh, this belonged to dear old dad. I can't throw that out. And they say, oh, far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.

For the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up. Now, here's my question. First of all, before we even get into this reply, who's speaking here in verse 16? The people.

Now, this is kind of an extended speech. Far be it from us, the Lord our God, He brought us out from the house of bondage, great signs, preserved us through the way, etc. Are all the people chiming in? Did they just spontaneously all say the same thing? So how is it that the people are giving this little speech? Is the Bible wrong? It wasn't the people.

It was just like one or two guys came shuffling up and said, well, you know, how did this happen? The people answered and said. How do the people answer? Well, we go back earlier in the chapter. Who are the representatives? The elders, the officers, the judges, the officials.

So Joshua makes this speech, and it's kind of like the president's radio address. The president gets on the radio. I think it's on Saturday.

Gives his radio address. And then after a while, or he gives the State of the Union, like in January or something. And then, of course, they leak the thing in advance.

Well, don't get me started on that. It annoys me so much when they leak a speech in advance. Why give the speech? Why not just hand it out and say, well, this is the speech I would have given, but since I leaked it to you, there's no point in cutting into the regular programming.

Just read it, and they give the thing in advance. But the Democrats have time to produce a response when you've got a Republican president giving the State of the Union. So for the past six, seven years, President Bush has given this thing, and then they come back.

The Democratic response. They draft a response. It's the Democratic response.

The Democrats say, in response to the president's State of the Union, it's not as rosy and cheery as the president says. He's full of old tennis shoes because we're still at war, and we think he's prevaricating and bending the truth, and worse. So what's going on here? Joshua gives his exhortation.

There is a break. There is a pause. The officers, the judges, the elders retire.

They commune among themselves. They draft a response. Well, what do we have to say about this? Okay, Bildad, you go back and deliver the response on behalf of the people.

Bildad is probably the oldest of the tribal representatives. You've got at least 11 other guys, probably 12 or 13. I don't think Joshua would have represented his own tribe because he is the civil leader.

He has to have some point of contact. He doesn't wear both of those hats. So there is a guy from the tribe of Judah, as there is for Benjamin, and Manasseh, and Gad, and Asher, and all the rest of the tribes.

So these 13 guys get together, draft a response, commune amongst themselves, and

say this is what we want to say in reply. Probably the senior, most gray-bearded elder comes back up. There is one man speaking on behalf of the people.

Now, I belabor this point because something is coming up, I hope, if I can remember where it is. Help me remember. Just help me remember Exodus 23.

This is where I'm going. If I forget, you can tell me. I'm getting drifty in my middle years.

So look at what it says in verse 16. The people answered and said, How many people are talking? One. One representative, but it doesn't say, And behold, Bildad, the chief elder of the tribe of Judah, came forth and said.

It says, The people said. Very, very important. So the people, the spokesman of the people, answered and said, Far be it from us, the Lord our God, verse 17, is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight.

These people were children. Remember, these are the elders, right? What does it mean if you're the elder? You're the oldest. It's been 40 plus years, but these people could have been 10, 15, 20 years of age even at that time.

Remember, 20 years old and under didn't count in the adult population. 18 years old at the time of the Exodus. How old would they be now? Late 60s, early 70s.

They're elders, graybeards. They saw it. I belabor this point because there are many commentaries now that say this is bogus.

That generation that saw those signs all died, and this is an afterthought. Some later editor read this back in and made a mistake and said these people saw it when they didn't. Nonsense.

Caleb saw it, Joshua saw it, and there's a lot of people younger than them who would have been children at the time who saw it in our sight. These are the elders. We saw God do these things.

He preserved us, us old-timers, through all the way in which we went amongst all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.

Now, is this a good speech, medium speech, or a bad speech? I'd say good speech. Said all the right things. They didn't say, Aaron, make us a calf.

This is the God who brought us out of the land of Egypt, right? No, the Lord is our God. He's the one we will serve. He's the one that brought us out.

He's the one who drove us. We acknowledge His work, His deliverance, His salvation, His blessing, His fulfillment of His covenant promise. This is our God.

We will serve Him. So, verse 19, this is the interesting part. Then Joshua said to the people, You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God, He is a jealous God.

He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you. Joshua says, Don't give me that.

You can't serve this God. He's a holy God and you're going to mess up and He will not forgive you. Now, this is not the gentle Jesus leading the children through the field of clover.

You think about modern Christianity. If you could get somebody to say, I'm going to serve the Lord Jesus. I want to live for Him.

And somebody is mentoring them in a discipleship group at the 6 o'clock men's morning mentoring, discipling breakfast prayer meeting. And some guy comes in and he says, I really want to live my life for the Lord. And some guy says, You can't live your life for the Lord.

You're going to mess up and He's not going to forgive you and you're going to blow the whole deal. That's basically what Joshua says. This is not a part of our modern parlance, is it? We don't do this.

Somebody makes a commitment. Can you imagine if you're up there before the altar, the preacher is there. Do you promise to love, honor, obey? I do.

No, you don't. You ne'er do well. Why are you standing up here making this kind of a promise? You can't keep this promise.

This woman is too good for you. Go away. Anybody else want to come? Anybody worthy of this woman? This guy is completely disqualified.

I mean, it's really quite shocking when you look at it. Joshua says, No, you can't. No, you don't.

Don't give me that. You talk a bunch of empty words, is essentially what he implies here. Your pledge is hot air.

You can't serve this God. He's too holy for you. You are too sinful.

You're going to mess up. He will not forgive your transgressions. He's a jealous God.

His standards are too high for you. Go away. Don't give me this nonsense.

This is the patriarch of Israel, telling these people, Forget it. Now, I find this, the more you think about it, the more shocking it is. And yet, this approach, this type of response is not unique to this situation, is it? Can you think of another time where someone got an answer like this? Hang on to that thought.

I'm glad you remembered it. Close. Remember, a few chapters later in Exodus, after the golden calf, God says, Moses, stand back.

I'm going to destroy this people. They've stenchd my nostrils. Stand out of the way.

I'm going to obliterate them. I'll make a new nation out of you. This is the word of God.

Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, What are you doing? He's sovereign. Don't be giving any answers back. What does Moses say? Lord, no, no, no.

Don't do that. Arguing with God. And we realize that God will posture to see if you're serious.

God will affect an attitude and will say things. What did God tell Balaam? Don't go. Then he says, go.

And then when he's going, he says, don't go. He puts the angel in the way. Remember? So you think, well, what kind of a God is this? And this is why a lot of secular humanist critics and ne'er-do-well pagan unbelieving commentators on the Old Testament say, well, this is a bunch of weird myths.

Here's the thing. This still happens today. Have you ever looked at a situation? You've got a relatively large decision to make.

It's a policy decision. It's a strategy decision. It's a biggie.

Where am I going to live? Where am I going to work? Where am I going to go to school? Who am I going to marry? You weigh. You run it through the mill. You try to do everything right.

You want a narrow road, straight gate, in the light. Acknowledge my sins. Oh God, hit me in the head with a board if I'm doing it wrong.

You do all of this. You pick a path. And then, all of a sudden, you just kind of get hit between the eyes.

And you say, Oh, I, but, but, but, I, Lord, what's going on here? I prayed over this. I've considered. I've applied.

And God throws some opposition, seems to throw some negatives, right in the path. Just

like Joshua is doing to the people here. Just like God did to Moses on the mountain.

Why? Well, how committed are you? How sure are you? What is the level of your faith in what you have analyzed and what you have decided and what you have set as a course of action? Joshua has given these elders a challenge. Look, here's the evidence. We started out in Egypt.

God promised He would take us to a land. We're here. Look at everything He's done in the meantime.

So, are you going to serve Him? Or are you going to serve the gods of Egypt? Or are you going to serve the gods of this culture that we're supposed to wipe out? What are you going to do? Choose this day. Make a commitment. They say, well, duh, we're going to serve the Lord.

How hard is that? Joshua says, I don't think so. I don't think you can do it. You cannot measure up to God's standard of holiness.

He's holy and you're not. The distance is too great. He can't forgive the kind of sin that you're going to commit.

Forget it. What does this do? Well, it's kind of a sobering slap in the face, isn't it? It reminds me, I've mentioned this many times, but it's stuck in my mind ever since I was a little boy, when Daniel Boone was courting Rebecca, what's-her-name, that he was going to marry. You know how they used to do? He went over to her cabin.

Her folks are inside and they're sitting out on the porch there. And he's talking about, well, you know, we ought to get married or something. And then he just reaches over with his hunting knife and rips her apron in twain, cuts it in half.

And she's somewhat taken aback, as you might expect. But her reaction is what he was watching for. What kind of woman am I betrothing myself to? And her reaction was calm.

She didn't panic. She didn't scream. She didn't startle.

And that's what he was looking for. He needed a steady woman who wouldn't wilt in the face of the kind of hardships he knew he was going to be facing in the pioneer days in the wilderness. And her reaction to that very strange and unexpected event is what he was measuring.

This is what Joshua is watching for out of the elders. This is what God was looking for in Moses on the mountain. It's not as easy as, will you do this? Oh, yes, I will.

Well, great. See you later. And we part ways.

Are you committed? How serious are you? How carefully have you thought this out?

What if it's challenged? What if you get a big negative? And God does this. He did it to Moses. He did it to Joshua.

Jesus did it with the apostle Peter. And he will do it with us. And we should not be taken aback.

If we have followed our known procedures, and this is the principle, anything else can get lost in the shuffle, but don't lose this point tonight. We, as believers, have to make decisions. We are supposed to be serving God, yes? That's our job.

We are here, just like the apostle Paul, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we do it? Well, when it comes time to make a decision, to commit to a course of action, to perform tasks, to carry out the daily requirements of our life, we remember God's name. We make our promises and our pledges and our statements in the light of His countenance.

We bow before Him, and we serve Him. Right? Now, we want to carefully contemplate what is it I am doing, and how am I doing it, and am I on solid biblical ground? I decide I'm going to do something charitable. Somebody calls me up on the phone.

Got a call today. Hello there, this is Nancy, and I'm with the National Society for the Prevention and Treatment of Breast Cancer, or whatever it is. Something to do with breast cancer.

We're going to do education and research on breast cancer. Can we send you an envelope so that you can send us a pledge? Well, what do I say? I'm not going to tell you what I said. But you have a question there of stewardship, right? You have a certain amount of resources allocated to you.

You have a certain level of knowledge. You have a certain level of experience. You have a certain level of priorities.

Do I have a reason, good, bad, or otherwise, to take special notice of this particular charity, one among hundreds? Where does charity go? Is it responsible? Can I stand before God and say, Well, Lord, I sent 50 bucks off to this lady on the phone. I got a call a week before last from the Texas State Troopers Association asking for money to help the widows and orphans of dead troopers. And I said, Sure, send me the envelope.

And then something nagged at the back of my brain. I said, Wait a minute. But I seem to recall, and I went out and confirmed, that it's a fly-by-night.

They have no blessing. They have no affiliation with the TexDOT or troopers or anybody else. It's a private organization.

And one of the local TV channels had done a study of these guys. And the people who call you, it's a man, and he sounds like a trooper, and he says, We appreciate it, etc. He's

not a trooper.

They have no affiliation. It's a completely private organization. Channel 5 or one of these guys did an expose.

And 97% of the money they raise is absorbed. 3% goes to pay a lobbyist who ostensibly works for legislation that benefits troopers. The money does not go to the widows.

It doesn't go to the orphans. It doesn't go to the troopers. And if you put the sticker in your window, the troopers can look at that and say, You're an idiot if you think I'm not going to give you a ticket because you've got Texas State Troopers sticker.

That just means you're a moron that sent your money away to somebody that doesn't help us at all. So, even when it comes to things that seem to be almost a knee-jerk, well, here's a great charity, let me give. Stewardship.

We have been allocated resources. We are accountable before God for every dollar we spend. Entertainment dollars, grocery dollars, charity dollars, food, clothing, and shelter dollars, whatever they are, that money came from God.

I don't care what job you have or whatever the mechanism is, the money is from God. We are stewards. And it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful.

We must act and live as those who must render an account. How do these Enron guys get caught? Somebody goes in and does an audit and says, Hey, your books don't balance. Our books are going to be audited at the judgment.

Minutes, hours, dollars and cents, efforts, attention span, and so on. This is a holy God. He is a jealous God.

He has an expectation. He has a standard. Joshua says, essentially, by making this statement, you will not be able to serve the Lord.

What's he really saying here? Are you serious? This is sort of a proposition. It's put out on the table. You say you will serve God.

I say you will not serve God. Prove me wrong. Sort of.

If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and do you harm and consume you after he has done good to you. So the people said to Joshua, No, you are wrong. We will serve the Lord.

Joshua says, Okay, you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord to serve him. He made them say it twice. They said it.

He contradicts them. They say it again. No, no, no.

We will serve the Lord. He says, All right, you've said it twice. You are your own witness.

There are two witnesses to your pledge. Your first statement and your second statement. You are your own witnesses.

You are witnesses against yourselves this day. Now, they agree. They say, We are witnesses.

So he says, Now therefore put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel. The people said to Joshua, We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey his voice. So this is a third affirmation.

They say it once. He sort of pushes them back. They come forward again.

No, we will serve. He says, We've got to put away the gods. We will serve.

We'll do so. It's a commitment and it is repeated. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. This is a very famous tree. This tree was standing in Shechem when Abraham came.

This tree was standing there when Jacob came back. Jacob took all of the teraphim and the household idols away from his family and buried them under this tree. If you go back to Genesis, this is the oak or the terebinth of Moreh.

This is the tree outside of the city of Shechem. Very famous location. If you look up the biblical references in the time of Abraham, this is first mentioned in Genesis chapter 12.

Abraham had left Ur, had left with Tera. He lived in Haran. You remember all of that.

Then he journeyed into the land of Canaan and he passed through Shechem. But it isn't called Shechem at that time. But it tells us in Genesis 12.6 that Abraham passed through the land to the place of Shechem and there is this oak or terebinth tree of Moreh and he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

This is Genesis 12.7. This is a very significant spot. The next time we see this spot is in Genesis 34. Abraham's grandson Jacob is there.

It tells us in Genesis 33.18 that Jacob came to the city of Shechem. He pitched his tent before the city and bought the parcel of land where he pitched his tent from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father. This is where it gets its name.

For a hundred pieces of money. And he built an altar there and called it El Elohe Yisrael. God, the God of Israel.

Remember, that's his name. It's not a nation. It's not a people.

It's Jacob himself. That's the name God gave him at the creek. Prince of God.

So he went and spoke to the men of the city there. Hamor comes out to visit Jacob in Genesis 34.6 and they make a covenant after the Dinah incident. And Hamor and Shechem come to the gate of the city and they speak with the men of the city in Genesis 34.

Then Simeon and Levi do their vengeful slicing up of these guys and they kill all the males. That's all in Genesis 34. So then Jacob has to leave.

So he goes to Bethel and he builds an altar there. But before he leaves, Jacob commands his household and all who are with him to put away all of their idols and to purify themselves. So Jacob takes all of that stuff and he buries it.

And in Genesis 35.4, Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which is by Shechem. Where is Joshua standing and making this covenant with the elders and the judges and the officers of Israel? This very same spot. What is he telling them to do? Put away these gods of the Egyptians.

Put away any of these little souvenir gods you've gotten from the Amorites. This is the very same place Jacob, their ancestor, did the very same thing. They're in the shadow of the tree under which those teraphim from Haran and earlier are buried.

And they know this history. They know the book of Genesis. It's been taught to them over and over by Moses and by Joshua.

They know these stories. They know exactly where they are. They know the significance of the place.

Well, in Exodus chapter 23, you remember as Joshua rehearses the history. And he says, God has driven out these Amorites from before you. This was predicted.

This was given to Moses earlier on. And in Exodus 23, you have a very similar charge, beginning in verse 20. God says to the nation of Israel, Behold, I am going to send an angel, a malak, before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

Be on your guard before him and obey his voice. Do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him. But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, Jebusites, and I will completely destroy them. Look at

verse 24. You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces.

But you shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove sickness from your midst. No one miscarrying or barren. I will fulfill the number of your days.

I will send my terror ahead of you, my hornets ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. I will send hornets ahead of you, so that they will drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate, etc.

The part I am interested in focusing on is up here, the echo of which we find in Joshua. Verse 21. Be on your guard before this angel, and obey his voice.

Do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him. Most commentators believe, such as the word, biblical commentary, and so on, that this is a reference to the Theophany, to God himself. God is basically talking about himself, that his presence will go.

Remember, Moses said, if you're not going, we're not going. We don't want to go without you. Don't just send your angel.

We want your presence. Remember that? God said, I will send an angel before you to drive out. Moses said, no, we don't want him.

We want you. That tells me that these commentators are wrong. This angel is separate and distinct from God.

Plus, he has a voice. He speaks. And they are to obey and hearken to his voice.

Now, who speaks to Israel on God's behalf as they go in and drive out the Hivites, Amorites? Who speaks? Joshua. It is interesting that God says, my name is in him. What's Joshua's name in Hebrew? Yeshua.

What's the second person in the Trinity's name? Some 1,400 years later. Yeshua. And there is one of those classic Hebrew smilers there because I think God had a little upturned corner of his mouth when he said, my name is in him because God's name is in him.

This angel is Joshua. And malak is a multipurpose word in Hebrew. It can mean messenger.

It can mean representative. It can mean emissary. But when the malak speaks, that is often the same as God himself speaking.

And the angel of the Lord often speaks in the Old Testament. And he seems to be interchangeable with God. Remember the point I made earlier about the people spoke and answered Joshua and said? And it wasn't actually the people.

It was the emissary. It was the representative, as it were. The angel of the people spoke and said.

Joshua is God's angel. That elder is the people's angel. And these two malaks meet and exchange and enter into this covenant.

And when the malak speaks, it is as though God himself speaks or as though the people themselves speak. And many times it is phrased that way. So do not be confused by the appearance of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament as being Jesus Christ.

If you look in your New King James, these words are capitalized. Do you notice that? Exodus 23. Beware of him, capital H, and obey his voice, capital H. Who do the interpreters in the New King James think the angel is? They think it is a theophany, a Christophany, specifically, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they have capitalized the pronouns. That is an interpretation, and I think it's incorrect. Jesus Christ is not incarnate until the incarnation.

That's why they call it the incarnation. They don't say the return. Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee.

The angel of the Lord is often an angel. The captain of the hosts and so on. The angel of the Lord that appears to Gideon and to Samson's parents.

And one thing to know, these are malachs. They are representatives and messengers. But the main thing to remember is look at what God does.

We can say all of the right things, and we can believe in our hearts that we are making a valid and proper commitment, and we are, but God will test it. God will throw some opposition at us and say, are you serious? And we should not be thrown off by that sort of splash of cold water in our face. Moses did not let it deter him.

Joshua sees these people come back and say, no, we will serve. You're not throwing us off the track here with your denial and with your contradiction. We do commit.

We will serve. And that's what God is looking for. And we don't often expect that God is going to throw cold water on our highfalutin commitment, but sometimes He will.

And it makes us think in realistic terms. And we will follow it with action. We've got to root out those gods and bury them under the tree, get rid of them just as Jacob does.

Well, we'll pick up and conclude our study of the book of Joshua next week, but let's

close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the graphic ways that You illustrate those things that are pertinent and applicable in our individual walk before You.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will lighten our path through these things. May our lives reflect Your glory and the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus. We ask it in His name.

Amen.