

Joshua 07-12-14b

Let's pick up our study now in Joshua chapter 24. I want to move to the material that's on our handout here shortly. I need a little bit of introduction for that, but we have looked at this idea, which is really important in Joshua 24.

This is the culmination of the book. The book is a record of God's faithfulness to Israel and they acknowledge this. The answer that they give is good as far as it goes.

It's not a bad answer. When they say, here's what God has done for us. He has preserved us.

He has driven out our enemies. He has brought us to this land. That's great.

It's a good answer, but it's not a complete answer. Obviously, Joshua finds something missing in this answer because he comes back and says, you cannot serve the Lord for he is a holy God and he is a jealous God. They said, we will serve the Lord.

He says, you can't serve him. He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. Now, we know full well, and so do these people, that God does forgive transgressions and sin.

Over in Exodus 34, he said he forgives it, he extends mercy to thousands. The whole sacrificial system is a system of restoration and forgiveness. So, why does Joshua say he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins? What is the context for this statement? It would be easy to pull this out of the Bible and say, look, Joshua says God doesn't forgive transgressions or sins.

But in the context, what kind of transgression, what kind of sin is in view? What is the subject of this discussion? They used to have this little funny question that people would ask. They would say, well, who's your daddy? You know, they'd say, well, who's your daddy? You know, who's your buddy? Who's your friend? But here, the question is very serious. Who is your God? Who are you going to worship, serve, remember, take oaths in his name? Who is your God? And they say, well, we will serve the God that did all of these things for us.

And that's good as far as it goes, but it is not complete. Joshua says, you cannot serve him. He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

What kind of transgressions and sins? If you do not get rid of these other gods, what did Joshua say? What was the last thing he said up above? Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river. Because if you don't, God will not forgive those sins. God will not forgive transgressions in the area of compromise, in the area of syncretism, in the area of amalgamation, in the area of polytheism.

God will not forgive that. He is a holy God and he is a jealous God. He will not forgive

your transgressions of his holiness and his jealous desire for your full and complete faith and obedience.

God will not tolerate it. God will not forgive it. That specific sin, that specific kind of transgression, that's the subject, that's the context.

Obviously, God forgives all sorts of sins. It has done for 40 years, ever since they left Sinai. There has been a mechanism for cleansing and forgiveness, symbolically exemplified, pictured in the sacrificial system.

But there is genuine forgiveness. There is genuine relief from sin and transgression through the mechanism of ritual. It's expressed and pictured in the ritual.

But there is genuine forgiveness there. It's based on the future prospective work of Christ. And it is counted to them for righteousness.

Their faith and their obedience is counted to them for righteousness, even before the judicial basis for forgiveness is accomplished at the cross. But this transgression and sin is specifically in the area of lack of faithfulness to God. And that's why we have gone very slowly and very carefully through these verses, because this is the point.

It is not good to be in the land. It is not good to be victorious in all of these battles if you cannot hold on to the victory, if you cannot consolidate and dwell and maintain possession in the land. You remember the three phases of the book of Joshua? Conquest, take possession, now dwell.

And if you can't dwell, the conquest and possession are worthless. You know the Richard Corey poem that's been made into a song and so on. And Richard Corey was wealthy and he had fast cars and good looks and influence and power and was an industrial magnate and everything.

But he went home one night and put a bullet through his head. Possession of great things and great wealth, possessions, and accomplishment. There are many, many, many deeply unhappy Hollywood stars.

I read you a quote a few years ago from Brad Pitt and what he had to say about reaching the pinnacle of success. And it is not fulfilling. It is not satisfying.

And Israel in the land possessing the inheritance promised to their fathers is going to be a misery to them if they do not serve God, if they do not fear God, if they do not do these fourfold exemplifications of relationship. So, Joshua says you cannot serve the Lord. The idea is you cannot merely serve the Lord.

He is holy. He is jealous. He will not forgive your sins or your transgressions if you contemplate, if you tolerate, if you compromise in the area of the gods of the land, the

gods of Egypt, the gods of your fathers across the river.

God will not tolerate that. He is holy and He is jealous. He will not forgive that kind of sin.

And of course we know He is the same God today, isn't He? He is the very same God. He has just as high a standard for you and me as He did for Israel. Do you think, given what we know and what we have access to, that God would lower the standard of dedication for us and say, well, you know, I had real high expectation for the people I brought into the land of Canaan, but you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ with your New Testament scriptures and your full canon and your indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit and so on, I won't hold you to that highest standard.

Do you think our standard would be higher or lower than these people standing there in their sandals in the shadow of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim? Who has been given more and from whom will more be required, them or us? And yet you look at the rigor of what Joshua says here. He says, do not, the implication is do not take this obligation lightly because you're dealing with a holy and a jealous God. And if you claim Him and you're going to serve Him, it had better be 100% because He will not tolerate and He will not forgive a division of loyalty and a division of attention and a division of worship and a division of remembrance and oath-taking and bowing and serving.

He will not tolerate that. If you forsake the Lord, notice the context, if you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, that is the specific nature of the sin and transgression here. If you forsake Him and serve foreign gods, He will turn and do you harm and consume you.

God has just rehearsed all of His provision and all of His protection and all of His deliverance, but He is a jealous God. And if He does not receive full worship, He will destroy you, Joshua says, after He has done you good. We tend to think, well, you know, I had that big surge of interest in the Bible and I filled up notebooks and I learned a great vast categorical system of doctrine and that'll carry me, the momentum will slide me through most of the rest of my life.

I can ease back, I can coast, I can, you know, I've got that big push already behind me and now I'm just going to roll on in. And Joshua says, you know, God that did you all that good will turn around and destroy you. I mean, it's really harsh.

There's no other way to say it, it's harsh. God is a demanding God. God demands full attention.

He demands full worship. He demands all your heart, all your soul and all your strength or He will not forgive the division. He will not forgive an 80% dedication.

He will not forgive a 90% dedication. He wants 100%. And we tend to, you know, bask and relax and say, well, it's the age of the Holy Spirit, it's the age of grace.

You know, just, it's not a real rigorous standard anymore. And we have been lulled into a false sense of security. And this is not a bad thing.

It isn't something to awaken dark thoughts in our mind. What it ought to do is motivate us, because we have such great opportunities. So Joshua says to the people, you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves to serve Him.

And the idea is, this is an exclusive service. They said, we are witnesses. Now, therefore, he said, put away the foreign... We keep coming back to this God's issue, don't we? It's in the previous context, it's in the immediately preceding context, it's in the middle of it, it's right after it, and here it is again.

We've got just concentric circles talking about these foreign gods. Abraham's foreign gods, Jacob's foreign gods, foreign gods in Egypt. Put away the foreign gods.

The people of the land have foreign gods. Put these foreign gods away. How many times does he have to say it? And we think we don't have this problem, but this whole chapter is about exclusive dedication to God.

Put away the foreign gods which are among you and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel. Notice, Joshua does not say, stand still while God inclines your heart toward Him. You incline your heart.

The people said to Joshua, the Lord our God, we will serve... Now, notice the addition that was not up above. What did they say up above? We will serve the Lord for He is our God. That's what they said up in verse 18, right? Now what do they say? The Lord our God we will serve and His voice we will obey.

Where does obedience fit in in our fourfold relationship with God scenario? It really encompasses them all, doesn't it? Relationship with God is faith and obedience. Faith and obedience are further defined by remembering His name, taking oaths in His name, bowing down and serving. All four of those require and reflect faith.

All four of those require and reflect obedience. You can't do any of those four things without both faith and obedience. And so now we have them here.

We will serve Him and His voice we will obey. So Joshua cut a covenant with the people that day and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. We began the chapter talking about Shechem.

We come to the close of the chapter talking about Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God. There is a kind of a bracket here because we have been to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim before back in Joshua chapter 8, wasn't it? Flip back to Joshua chapter 8 and remember what took place here in verse 30.

This is after the Ai battle, hung the king up. Now, 830, Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal. As Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool.

And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings. If you look at your handout, archaeologists have gone to Mount Ebal and just recently, this has just been the last 25 years or so, actually back around 1980, as they were kind of walking around on the hill looking at one thing and another, they discovered an unusual arrangement of stones. They weren't real sure what it was and they began to dig.

And for several seasons they went and dug and what you have on your handout is what they found. This is, archaeologically speaking, a relatively new discovery. And what you see there is an altar that has been found up on the top of Mount Ebal.

And there's a real interesting article in Biblical Archaeology Review talking about the comparison of this structure to the descriptions of the altar of the Second Temple and the ramps that priests would use on each side, the orientation of it. If you look at that structure, its corners, the two corners, the alternate corners of it point within one degree of north and south. In other words, they very carefully oriented this thing so that its opposite corners point directly north and south.

And since it's rectangular, nearly square, the other two corners point very nearly east and west. And it is organized specifically so that the corners point to the points of the compass. How is the temple and its altar oriented later on? The sides face the primary points of the compass.

But in each case, the structure itself is with malice aforethought designed for this purpose. You notice the ramp that goes up there and the altar. Remember he said, you shall not descend my altar by steps.

And so Israelite altars are always approached on a ramp like this. They found in the fill... At first, they couldn't figure out what this was. They thought it was a building and they kept digging down, digging down.

And they finally got to bedrock and they said, what is this? This thing seems to have been filled with dirt from the beginning. Why would somebody build a building and fill it with dirt? And they were really... For two seasons, they excavated on this and didn't know what it was. And a guy came and visited and he said, I think you're thinking about this all wrong.

Instead of trying to figure out what it was when it's empty, think about it full. It was designed to be full. And then they realized it was an altar.

And the more they got to looking and the more they uncovered, it's a complex. And you

can see from that little center picture that it is up on Mount Ebal, just as it says here, Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal. What I find fascinating, when you look at that little center, you see down where Shechem is.

Shechem is down in the valley between and that opening that opens out into the plain. When the Bible talks about the oak tree or the terebinth tree of Moreh and the plain of Moreh are almost interchangeable terms. And there is that plain that comes in and comes to a point right there between those two mountains.

That's where Shechem is. It's protected by those two great mountains. And so this, you would say, well, how do you know that this is Joshua's altar? In the fill, when they were digging down through the fill, they found a scarab, an Egyptian-style scarab, a little oval thing with an inscription on it.

It's got a four-petaled flower with a little snake coming out of the middle. The interesting thing, there are only four other examples of that particular scarab in the world that they've ever found. And they were only made in a very specific period of time between Ramses II and Ramses III, which is the end of the 13th century BC toward the beginning of the 12th century BC.

It's the only time that those scarabs were ever made. And so the altar cannot be any earlier than that scarab because, of course, somebody would have had to dig a post hole and drop that scarab way down in later. So it is the earliest time when they could have built this is in the time of Joshua.

It's right around the close of the 13th century BC. And it is in the right place. It has the right orientation.

And there is nothing else on the hill but this. There are lots of other little structures that were built much later. And they can tell by the pottery and by other things that they are all much, much later, even from the Byzantine era.

But this one is very clearly, the pottery, the collar rim jars, and the rest of the things they have found all date this to Joshua's time. And it is very likely that this is, in fact, the altar that he built. And you remember he had a giant workforce there.

They could have built this thing in a couple of days with that many men. And it has a courtyard around it of low stones. It has an approach for the priests to go up.

It has the ramp for the animals to be led up and for the sacrifices to take place on top of this altar. And it matches, and I won't give you all the details, but it matches in many respects the description of the later altar that talks about it being hollow and surrounded by boards. This is hollow, surrounded by stone walls.

And underneath this, when they dug down below it, at the very bottom layer was a circle

of stones. And then it was like that was the earliest and the original place where an altar had been. And then this complex had been built above that.

And that may well be an even earlier altar, perhaps from the time of the patriarchs. It was still there. You know, rocks don't move around much in that part of the world.

But in any case, if you look at the situation there, the sacrifices take place up on that hill, up on Mount Ebal. But the blessings and curses are pronounced with half of Israel on Mount Ebal and half on Mount Gerizim. And that tells me they were not around the altar.

If you look at that center diagram, you see where Shechem is, and you see that if you're going to put half the people on Mount Gerizim, you can't really, they would not be able to hear what you're saying. If you stood up at the altar on the far slope of Mount Ebal, people on Gerizim probably couldn't even see that altar. So there's one ceremony, apparently, that takes place up on Mount Ebal.

It says he built the altar on Mount Ebal. Then when they read the Book of the Law and the blessings and cursings, they had them arranged in that natural amphitheater you see in that center picture. There's also, by the way, a nice little amphitheater dishing of the terrain right around this altar complex.

And a great crowd of people could have been there and observed sacrifices in that place and also been able to hear anything that was said up there. But interestingly to me, they would have moved away from the altar because the altar is a picture of God's earnest, God's future sacrifice, redemption, atonement, propitiation. And then the people evidently moved away from there down to the valley of Ebal and Gerizim and stood on each side and that's up on the mountain.

This is down on the ground, down in the plain when this that happens in Joshua 8 is taking place. So Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, just as Moses commanded, no iron tool involved. All of these, by the way, are natural stones that are piled up in this thing.

There's no tool marks on any of them. There in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written. Then all Israel, with their elders, officers, and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests of the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them, half in front of Mount Gerizim, half in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded before that they should bless the people of Israel.

So there was a procession and the ark went into that crook between those two mountains. But the altar was not between the mountains. The altar is on Mount Ebal.

He read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings according to all that is

written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded, which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them. And if you go back, of course, to Deuteronomy chapter 30, you have the instruction on this count.

If you obey, all of the blessings will come. If you're disobedient, all of the cursings will come. See, I have set before you in Deuteronomy 30.15, life and good, death and evil.

And that's the same choice that Joshua presents them with as he is leaving. He did this back at the beginning, at the inception, before they ever did the southern campaign and the northern campaign, before they ever took possession of the land. This was the agreement.

This was the word of God. And now at the close of his life, he's back in the same place doing the very same thing. And so at the end, Joshua said, You are witnesses.

Put away the foreign gods. Then he wrote the words in the book of the law of God. He took a large stone and set it up under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

And Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us. We're back now in Joshua 24.27. This stone shall be a witness. It has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke to us.

It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance. I've often wondered about whether we ought to have symbols.

You know, we have crosses. We have fish. We have different pictures of Jesus.

We have various things that are used as sort of icons in the old sense of the word. Symbols, representations, reminders. And you think, well, maybe that's not biblical.

Thou shalt not make any graven images, and so forth. But yet in the Old Testament, you often find memorials. The heap of stones that came out of the middle of the Jordan, it's a memorial.

The copy of the law of God that was put in the doorpost as a reminder. The stone that Samuel raises, the Eben Etzer, the stone of help. This stone pillar that is raised as a reminder and as a witness.

When Reuben Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh went over, and they built the altar on the other side of the Jordan, and it was a reminder, it was a witness, it was a testimony. And there are many injunctions in the Old Testament against pillars, against Asherah poles, against trees, and so on, being associated with cultic worship. And yet there is a healthy sense in which poles and trees serve as reminders.

That oak of Morah is a landmark. This stone that Joshua sets up is a landmark. And you remember various things, various places that will say, you know, the heap of stones is there to this day.

And the writer says, it's a reminder, it's a memorial. And so I do think that you can justify the proper use of memorials, of putting a verse on the wall, or putting something that reminds us of God and of our relationship to Him, something that jogs our memory. And it can be almost anything.

I have a little hymnal that belonged to my great, great, great grandfather, who was a circuit-riding Primitive Baptist preacher. And I have it in the glass part of my bookcase. And every time I glance over there and I see that sitting there, I think about someone who dedicates themselves to the teaching of God's Word and what a responsibility that is and what an opportunity it is.

And it's a reminder. Somewhere else I found an old photo of him and I blew it up and I put it in a frame. And when I look at that, and it's a reminder.

We have a great heritage, not only family-wise, but family of God-wise. You think about all of the great heroes of the faith down through Biblical history. And these are given to us as examples.

Hebrews chapter 11 gives us a great list. Paul says, follow my example. And he's not ashamed to point to himself.

He knew he was going to be an example. And that's how he presents himself. He says, look, I'm a reminder.

I'm an exemplar. Live the way I've lived. Make the choice I made.

And these memorials and examples are good when they are properly viewed. And that's what this is. This was not to become an object of worship.

People didn't come later and iconify it and gild it and bow down before it and get chips of it and take home to their family members for good luck. That's what they do in the Holy Land. I've seen people brag and say, oh look, I got this stone out of the Holy Sepulcher.

And I think, man, the Holy Sepulcher is probably five times as big as it used to be because people have been chipping souvenirs off of it for centuries. They finally had to brass plate the church and the nativity because people kept hauling away little bits of it like it had some sort of, you know, this is a bad view of symbols. So there is a memorial raised.

He wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took this stone and set it up under the oak. Remember, they whitewashed the stone and they wrote the law on it

when they were up in this neck of the woods before.

And now there is another large stone set up. And Joshua said to all the people, behold, this stone shall be a witness. It has heard the words.

Now, rocks don't hear. But when people look at that rock, they're going to think this rock was here when Joshua read the words of the law. That rock was here when we made our commitment.

And it's a reminder. You look at things, people walk the Holy Land and you know that song, I walk today where Jesus walked. Or they look out over the Sea of Galilee and they think, wow, this is the body of water where Jesus and the disciples sailed.

People who take Holy Land tours, it's very significant. You say, this is where it happened. And that was the purpose of this stone.

This is where it happened. This is where I made that commitment. Well, we have to do this sort of spiritually, don't we? There is a moment, there is a watershed mark.

I can remember, you know, times in my own life where I can remember kind of turning a corner and saying, okay, I can remember sitting out in the barn thinking about my life ahead when I was a teenager and I was very close to graduating high school and had to make a lot of decisions. And I made a few decisions and a few mental commitments at that time. In my last year or so on active duty, I realized that I needed to go to seminary and study to be able to present the Word of God.

And there was a point at which I decided that that's what I would do and I made that commitment. And these are my memorial stones. Many of you have memorial stones in your soul, in your heart of moments when things became clear and you respond positively and you make a personal commitment.

And we tend to get the willies because people make a lot of emotional, superficial commitments and we say, well, you know, I don't want to be singing kumbaya around the campfire. But anything can be abused. Anything can be taken to an extreme and made of no effect.

But there is a genuine spiritual heritage. There is a genuine spiritual memory that you see detailed in this chapter. Joshua rehearses God's mighty acts and he says, because of this, you should commit.

You should act. You should put away these gods that you have in your midst. And you should commit to service and obedience.

And here is a memorial. And every time you see this stone, it's just like that pile of stones we left back by the Jordan at Gilgal. It's just like the Eben Etzer that Samuel is

going to set up.

This far the Lord hath helped us. And it should be a reminder pointed out to your children. Talk about it when you're in the way, when you go out and when you come in.

Remember the mighty works of God. That's remembering His name. That's what you think of when you take an oath in His name.

That's what you think of when you bow down. That's what you think of when you decide that you will serve. You will dedicate your efforts and your time and your resources to Him.

This stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God. Singular.

So Joshua let the people depart, each to their own inheritance. Now, it came to pass after these things, Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died being 110 years old. What I find interesting about this is if you figure 40 years and then 40 years, kind of like Moses.

Moses had 40 years in Egypt and 40 years wandering in Midian and 40 years leading the people and he died at 120. And here's Joshua at 110. If he had 40 years roughly during the time of wandering and he could have been in his late 20's or early 30's and you count the time of the conquest and so on, you figure that his career across the Jordan might have been something in the vicinity of 30 years, 30 to 33 years before he dies.

They buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Sera, which is in the mountains of Ephraim on the north side of Mount Gaash. Later on one of David's mighty men is going to be from this region. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had known all the works of the Lord which he had done for Israel.

The challenge is once that leadership and once that example departs. It's kind of like the early church. You had the Lord Jesus and then you had those who knew the Lord Jesus and walked with him.

You had the apostles. And once the apostles, once the apostolic age is over, once the canon is complete, your apostles are gone. Now what are you going to do? You can see this in the history of the church.

The same thing as long as they had Joshua and those who served with Joshua and kept Joshua's momentum going, they were fine. But what's going to happen when that leadership is gone? And this is the real challenge of living in the land. And of course in the book of Judges we're going to see that they really kind of go to pieces.

And over and over again, just as Joshua called the people to faith and obedience, God is going to raise up judges who are going to call the people back to faith and obedience. And as long as they have a caller, as long as they have an authority figure rise up and call them, they respond. But in the absence of that, they just can't function.

They can't hold it together. So you have Yeshua passing away and leaving the scene. Also, you have here in verse 32, the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver, which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

These kesita, the word translated pieces of silver, this term only occurs a couple of other places in the Bible. It occurs in the original Genesis account of Jacob purchasing this land. And this is pretty much a quotation from Genesis.

It says he purchased it for 100 kesita, hundred pieces of silver. The other place where this term occurs is in the book of Job. And it seems to be a term for currency in the time of Jacob, which gives us a little bit of insight into the dating of Job because that account uses the same term for money.

You remember at the end when Job is fully restored and his family comes back once the black cloud of blight is gone, why they all come back and they're glad to see him and each of them gives him a piece of money, it says, a piece of silver. It's kesita. It's this same word.

Very interesting side note there. But he had purchased this which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph. What is the most notable thing about Joseph that you think of? He is such a great picture of Jesus Christ.

His being despised by his brethren, being essentially slain by his brethren, his father seeing the blood and observing the death, and then the son coming back to life. His attitude in prison and taking on the form of a servant even though he was a prince among his own people. His rulership in Egypt.

He is the means of deliverance and salvation. Seven years of famine, after the seven years of plenty. And in so many ways, the blood on the coat.

He's such a great picture of Jesus Christ. Joshua is a great picture of Jesus Christ. Joshua in the leadership and going in and taking possession of the inheritance, military victory.

He is never on the defensive. He never loses a battle. He never falls short.

He doesn't have a strike the rock moment. He makes no mistakes. He's a wonderful picture.

I'm sure he made mistakes, but they're purposely left out of Scripture so that he can represent that side of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph represents a completely different set of prefigurements, if you will, for the Lord Jesus. The death and resurrection.

The sacrificial nature. The testing of the brethren before reinstating them. They've messed up.

He helps them understand what they have done and to be restored and to be blessed and to be brought into a land of plenty and so on. He becomes a blessing to those who cursed and despised him. And Joshua's death and Joseph's death are juxtaposed here.

The burial of Joshua and the burial of Joseph are within a couple of verses of each other here. And it's intentional. Why didn't Joshua bury Joseph's bones the first time they came up to Shechem? They're in the land.

Joseph said, when you get to the land, put my bones in the place of my ancestors. The bones of Joseph sat there as a reminder and as an incentive, as a spark of hope for Israel in bondage in Egypt for all of those years. And then, I always remember that scene in the Ten Commandments where they always sing the same song as they're going by with the bones of Joseph in that big coffin.

Well, then they finally got to the land. But how many years has it been? It was seven years just for the two campaigns. It's been more years since then.

And Joshua's now 110 years old. And now they bury the bones. After Joshua's death, they bury the bones of Joseph in Shechem.

Why not sooner? It is as though all of these pictures, all of these shadows co-exist. The bones of Joseph are above ground and in view the whole time Joshua is operating. From the time he fights the Amalekites to the time they do everything leaving the land of Egypt, all the whole time, of wandering all the way in the conquest, bones of Joseph are always with them, sitting there in Gilgal, sitting there when they go all up and down the land.

And when Joshua quits ministering, the bones of Joseph quit ministering. When Joshua disappears off the scene, the testimony of the bones of Joseph disappears at the same time. And it's very significant because all of these are pictures.

They are foreshadowing the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you have this third element, which is Eliezer, the son of Aaron. What do you think of as soon as you hear Eliezer, the son of Aaron? What comes in your mind? What single word that starts with P-R and ends with I-E-S-T? He's a priest.

The son of Aaron is the priest. Not just a Levite. Who are the priests among the Levites? It's the sons of Aaron.

Eliezer, the son of Aaron, he's the priest. And once again, what does the priesthood foreshadow? There is one mediator between God and men. The man, Christ Jesus.

He is the high priest. He is the ultimate and perfect high priest after the order of Melchizedek, which is a higher, greater priesthood than that of the Levites. Those are the sons of Aaron.

Eliezer, the son of Aaron, died. Joshua dies. The bones of Joseph are interred.

And Eliezer dies. And he is buried in the hill belonging to his son, given to him in the mountains of Ephraim. And the book of Joshua closes on that note.

And it sort of reminds us of the end of the book of Genesis. What are the last words of the book of Genesis? You can hardly forget them. In a coffin, in Egypt.

And that is kind of a depressing end to the book. Jacob dies. He gives the blessing and so on.

And then Joseph and his bones are in a coffin in Egypt. And there is a great sense of incompleteness there. Now we have come through Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy and Joshua.

And now, when Joshua's bones are interred, there is a great sense of victory. The mission has been accomplished. Joseph's bones are where they are supposed to be.

Joshua has finished his course and run his race and fought the good fight. And Eliezer the priest retires and is buried. And that is the absolute full stop punctuation mark at the end of the story of God's deliverance and establishing of his people in fulfillment of covenant promise.

It's a beautiful summary of the entire Pentateuch in particular. And then Joshua. They call it the Hexateuch.

It's the six books. Just like the six days of human history followed by the Sabbath. It's supposed to be, the next book ought to have been Shabbat.

And it should have been the wonderful glorious history of Israel resting in the land. Six days you labor and do all your work. And the seventh is a day of rest.

You rest in what God has done. And so the book of Judges ought to be the millennial kingdom as it were. But if you've read the first chapter of Judges, if you know the content of that book, it is anything but.

And this is the failure of the Old Testament scenario. And so we're going to pick up, we will move smartly right on into Judges as a follow on to our study in the book of Joshua. But we're at the end of this book and it's a good place to stop so we'll close here in a

word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the opportunities and the challenges that are revealed through it to us for our lives today. The potential that we have because of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, because of the power and the truth that is communicated in your word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts and he will find us ready and apt students who can rightly divide the word of truth so that we can see our way clearly ahead, that we can set good values and goals and priorities and live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and fully reflects the salvation that is ours through Christ. And we pray these things in his name. Amen.