

As for Me...

Joshua 24:15 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁵ But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates 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.**"

Introduction

Bible trivia. 1. How many years did the Israelites wander around in the wilderness after the Exodus? Answer: 40 years. 2. Did Moses enter the Promised Land? Answer: No. 3. Who, then, led the people of Israel into the Promised Land? Answer: Joshua.

After Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land, he gathered them all to present themselves before God. He reminded them, saying, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates River and they served other gods.' ³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. ⁴ To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, ... Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. ⁵ Then I sent Moses and Aaron, ... And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. ⁸ Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; but I handed them over to you, and you took possession of their land when I eliminated them before you.... ¹¹ You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Therefore I handed them over to you... ¹³ And I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.' ¹⁴ "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

¹⁵ But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates 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.**" Now, folks, listen carefully how the people responded to Joshua.

In verse 16, ¹⁶ *The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we would abandon the Lord to serve other gods; ¹⁷ for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves, and did these great signs in our sight and watched over us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. ¹⁸ 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.”***

¹⁹ *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 wrongdoing or your sins. ²⁰ If you abandon the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and destroy you after He has done good to you.” ²¹ And the people said to Joshua, “No, but **we will serve the Lord.**”*

²² *So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” ²³ “Now then, do away with the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” ²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, “**We will serve the Lord our God and obey His voice.**” ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. ²⁶ And 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. ²⁷ Then Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, because it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; so it shall be a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.” ²⁸ Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance. (Joshua 24:1-28).*

Track Record: Well, in the next 500 years, Joshua’s fear came true. Despite their forefathers’ solemn vows three times in a row that they would serve the Lord only, the descendants of Exodus generation quickly abandoned the LORD their God and followed other gods. The Book of Judges is full of such stories. It tells me that it is a good idea for us even in the 21st century to examine our loyalty to the LORD. Would you say to the world that you are a follower of Jesus the Christ? Would you renew today your covenant with the Lord your God in Jesus that you will worship and serve the LORD God only? If so, say Amen. Today, our own conscience will serve as a witness that we may not deny Christ.

This morning, we will think about our covenantal relationship with the LORD our God in Jesus our Lord.

Content

The Bible is the book where the interactions of God and His people through ages are recorded. From the beginning to the end. The history of God's people in the Bible can be summarized in the following sentences: God created Adam and Eve for a relationship with Him. We call it a covenantal relationship (I will explain later what it means to have a covenant with God). Adam's descendants repeatedly broke the covenant with God by doing evil. God renews and establishes a new covenant that culminates in Christ's sacrifice.

FYI: By the way, the Scriptures consist of two parts: the Old Testament (testimony) and the New Testament (testimony). In my humble opinion, they would be better translated as 'the Old Covenant' and 'the New Covenant.' In Greek, the New Testament is (η καινη διαθηκη--literal translation is the New Covenant). The same "New Covenant" originated from Jesus' own words during the Last Supper: "¹⁹ And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."²⁰ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is **the new covenant** in My blood" (Luke 22:19-20).

Here's some biblical examples of our covenantal relationship with God.

History of Covenants: Let's begin with the covenant in **Eden** (it all began with one simple command in Genesis 2:16-17: ¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die"). Thousands of years later, by the time of **Noah**, the wickedness of humanity was so great on the earth that "the Lord was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ Then the Lord said, "I will wipe out mankind whom I have created from the face of the land; mankind, and animals as well, and crawling things, and the birds of the sky. For I am sorry that I have made them."⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5-8).

After the Great Flood, the LORD made a new covenant with **Noah** and His descendants (the covenant of rainbow). The LORD set His rainbow in the cloud, a sign of **a covenant** between Him and the earth, **the everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Genesis 9:13, 16).

Many generations later, the Lord established another covenant with **Abraham** (the covenant of circumcision). The LORD promised Abraham that He will make his descendants as many as stars in heavens and the sand on the seashore. One night, the LORD took

Abraham outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be” (Genesis 15:5). The Lord spoke to him again in Genesis 17:1-7: “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. ²I will make **My covenant between Me and you**, And I will multiply you exceedingly.” ³Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, ⁴“As for Me, behold, My **covenant** is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.... ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish My **covenant** between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting **covenant**, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.”

Abraham’s grandson, **Jacob**, established his own covenant with the LORD in Bethel. Genesis 28:18-22: “¹⁸ So Jacob got up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had placed as a support for his head, and set it up as **a memorial stone**, and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹ Then he named that place Bethel; ... ²⁰ Jacob also made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father’s house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. ²² And this stone, which I have set up as a memorial stone, will be God’s house, and of everything that You give me I will assuredly give a tenth to You.”

The LORD established the covenant of **the Ten Commandments** with His people through **Moses**, so did **Joshua (today’s text)**, so did **David** (Psalm 23), and of course, so did **the Lord Jesus** (Luke 22:19-20: “¹⁹ And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁰ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup, which is poured out for you, is **the new covenant** in My blood”). **The Lord Jesus** established a new covenant with the LORD in our behalf in His own blood.

Nature of Covenant: Covenant in the Bible always involves two parties. Divine and human. The LORD and His people. The protector and the follower. King and subject. Lord and servant. The LORD promises to be the protector, provider, and sustainer of His people. In return, His people pledge their allegiance and loyalty to the LORD. That’s what the relationship with the LORD is all about. As the Creator and Sustainer of His people, God commands them to obey His voice, and to walk in all the way the LORD commands them to do. Don’t forget. When one party breaks the covenant, the other party is no longer obligated to keep the covenant. Typically, it is humans that break the covenant first. When God’s people break their commitment and abandon their God, the covenant is no longer in effect. However, when they repent of their sins and start walking in the ways of the LORD again, the covenant is restored and renewed.

Conclusion

In today's text, the people told Joshua three times that they would serve the LORD only. Then, Joshua urges the people of Israel to "*fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*" Note here, though, he doesn't force them to choose what they don't want. Instead, he says,

*"¹⁵ But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates 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.**"*

Like Joshua, I urge you this morning to "*fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which you served before*" you became a believer. "*¹⁵ But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve:*" whether the gods whom you worshiped and followed before you became a Christian. Or the gods of the world today. *As for me and my house, I solemnly declare that **we will serve the Lord.*** You're my witnesses. I pray that you will choose the same God. Let us bow our heads and pray.