

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 19: The Only Sufficient Worship of God

Key Verse: He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.”~Joshua 24.23

The title of this lesson isn't a trick question! Believe it or not, you already know the answer. The only sufficient worship of God is answered by God Himself in Deuteronomy, and by Jesus in Matthew. Joshua instructed God's people to “love the LORD, your God” (Joshua 23.11). This is the only sufficient worship of God (see, you knew that!). Our steadfast, wholehearted devotion to the only God who is **worthy of worship** is the only sufficient worship of God. Living life rejecting **idolatry** and living instead enslaved to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2.19-20), is key to being known, remembered, and honored as a “servant of the LORD” (Joshua 24.29). *I worship you, God Most High, My Savior, My Lord. Reveal my idolatry, my substitutes for You. Empower me to love You as You command, with all my heart, soul, strength...with all of me. Make my devotion to you more than lip-service so that You are pleased and identify me as a servant of the LORD. Amen.*

Joshua 23 A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years,¹ **2** Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, “I am now old and well advanced in years. **3** And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you.

4 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. **5** The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. **6** Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, **7** that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, **8** but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day.

9 For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. **10** One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. **11** Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. **12** For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, **13** know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the LORD your God has given you.

14 “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. **15** But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, **16** if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.”

CH 24 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. **2** And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. **4** And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. **5** And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. **6** “Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. **7** And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time.

8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave

¹Though there is scholarly debate of the timeline referenced here, it is likely that there is a 20-30 year time period between Joshua 22 (the dismissal of the two and a half tribes and Joshua 23-24 (the two final farewell addresses).

them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. **9** Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, **10** but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. **11** And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. **12** And I sent the hornet² before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. **13** I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.'

14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. **15** And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, **17** for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. **18** And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. **20** If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good." **21** And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD." **22** Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." **23** He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." **24** And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at 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 terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. **27** And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. **29** After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old. **30** And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. **31** Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel. **32** As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph. **33** And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Diamonds:

Joshua's final two farewell addresses are captured in Joshua 23-24. In Chapter 23, Joshua addresses the total leadership of the tribes. Chapter 24 is a national address ending with the renewal of their covenant before God.

1. Both of Joshua's final addresses follow a similar format and messaging. Write down the format and basic message of Joshua's addresses in chapters 23 and 24.
2. Find all God had done for His people by highlighting all of God's "I" statements in these two chapters. What is God teaching you about God?

²Not a literal hornet. Likely a metaphor referring to the victory over the Amorites in Joshua 9-10.

In both farewell addresses, Joshua warns of decisions that would cost God's people their ownership rights to their God-given inheritance, and kindle God's anger against them (23.13, 15-16; 24.19-20).

3. From these two chapters, which decisions did God's people make that threatened God's willingness to continue to bless them exponentially? In other words, what are they doing that is transgressing God's covenant and commands, and raising alarms that they are dealing falsely with God?

In a final plea to God's people Joshua reminds them of three God-given "guardrails" from the law that ensure God's favor, blessings, and willingness to fight for His people: refusing marriage with pagan idolaters (23.13); loving God singularly (23.11; 24.14.20, 23); and absolute obedience to God's law (23.6; 24.14, 21-22).

4. Read what Moses, Joshua, and Jesus say from Deuteronomy 6.5, Joshua 23.11, and Matthew, 22.37-38. What does it mean to you that they all say the same thing?

5. Read John 15.5. Why does your heart's devotion, focus, and obedience matter?

Joshua's persistence in questioning their response (Joshua 24.14-24) reveals the insincerity of the people's commitment to God alone. Three times, Joshua addresses the people's active idolatry by maintaining foreign gods and their religious practices. Joshua knew the people of God were offering lip-service to God! (Joshua 24.1, 25-27)

Joshua's responsibility in service to God was both corporate and personal: to assemble the people corporately before the LORD, documenting their devotion through a covenant (24.25-27); and to declare his personal decision as remaining a devoted, whole-hearted servant of God (24.15). Through his letters, Peter does the same by reminding God's people of their corporate responsibility to serve one another in the sacrificial love of Jesus, and to personally know God through the study of His word, living in submission to our Lord.

However, wholehearted devotion to God is an individual choice. Just as Joshua could not force the people to honestly choose to serve God over the pagan gods they were still serving, you cannot force upon anyone else the honest decision to serve God. Through His Son, God has extended the offer to be enslaved to Him or to be enslaved to sin. A relationship with God is just that, a relationship; God doesn't treat us as His marionette or puppet.

Following Joshua's example, spend time personally reviewing God's record, allowing an honest assessment as you decide (daily) to whom you will serve:

6. Identify one of the promises of God that has been most meaningful to you this year. It may help to look back through the list of deities and doctrines, and your Scripture-Soaked Prayers. How has God fulfilled, or how is He fulfilling this promise as you have grown in the knowledge of Him this year?

7. "Everything you already have is proof positive of the Lord's faithfulness and ability; so, we are to keep trusting and obeying." (Jackman, p.181) What do you already have that is proof positive of the Lord's faithfulness and ability? (Write at least three evidences of this, freely using both the tangible and intangible, as Joshua does.)

8. Reviewing what you have written in questions 6 and 7, how are you encouraged to honestly decide to serve Jesus wholeheartedly and faithfully? Prayerfully confess the idols (see definition below) you are holding onto that are ensnaring you or causing you to "deal falsely with God". Finally, write out Romans 8.1-2 in your favorite translation, and keep pressing on to know God and serve Him faithfully!

DOCTRINE: Worthy of Worship³~ offering of homage, honor, and praise to God. Worship is the theme of salvation history, the supreme purpose for which believers were redeemed (John 4.23), and the occupation to which all will be eternally enthralled (Revelation 19.1-6; 22.3-4).

To worship the Lord is to ascribe to Him the honor, glory, adoration, praise, reverence, and devotion that is due Him, both for His greatness and for His goodness (Isaiah 42.8; 48.11; Matthew 4.10; Revelation 14.7). The...worship of angels, saints, or other supposed deities constitutes idolatry, and is strictly prohibited in Scripture (Exodus 20.3-5; Colossians 2.18; Revelation 19.10, 22.9; Westminster Confession, Chapter 21, paragraph 1).

True worship must begin in the heart and the mind of the worshiper...God accepts only that which flows from sincere devotion to Him...For believers, the supreme act of worship is to offer all of themselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Matthew 22.37). Genuine worship engages the mind; it does not bypass it (1 Corinthians 14.15). Worship encompasses much more than the singing portion of a church service; it is a way of thinking and living for God's honor and glory (Romans 12.1-2).

To worship God is to ascribe to Him the worth of which He is worthy (1 Chronicles 16.29). In fact, the word "worship" comes from the Old English word "worthship" which means to proclaim or give worth to something you consider precious and supremely valuable (Psalm 95, 100).

There are five basic biblical commands concerning worship:

1. We are to worship God in ways that edify our local church. (1 Corinthians 14.26; Ephesians 5.18-20);
2. We are to worship God in a proper and orderly manner. (1 Corinthians 14.40);
3. We are to worship God in Spirit and truth. (Psalm 2, 72, 110; John 4.23-24; Revelation 5.9-10);
4. We are to worship God in reverence. (Psalm 22; Hebrews 12.28-29);
5. We are to worship God in awe. (Psalm 24; Hebrews 12.28-29)

9. How does obedient worship of God, who alone is worthy of worship, act as a "guardrail" against idolatry?

³ MacArthur & Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine" pp. 790-792

10. Which of the five basic biblical commands concerning worship delights you most? How does the provided scripture for that command enrich your delight in worshiping God?

Doctrine: Idolatry~An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as a substitute for God (Exodus 20.4; Romans 1.25). It may be an object, a person, an activity, a sport, a role you play, an institution or organization, an idea, a pleasure, a hero, your family, your work, even your work for the Lord — anything that becomes a substitute for God.

It does not have to be a full-sized replacement for God; it may be only a part of your life (Colossians 3.5). Idolatry is not necessarily a denial of God or His existence (1 John 5.1). We can even make an idol out of something that is good in its own right, but as soon as loyalty to anything or anyone leads us to disobey or disregard God, we are in danger of making it an idol (2 Corinthians 6.16).

11. Joshua's famous question of whom God's people will serve aligns with Peter's admission to Jesus in John 6.68. Read John 6.25-69. What were the people seeking from Jesus? What was Peter seeking from Jesus?

12. What are you seeking from Jesus?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits"~Psalm 103.2
Do as the psalmist instructs here:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God is worthy of our wholehearted worship!

- I. Faithful Words (Joshua 23) **T1:** God alone is faithful and thus worthy of our wholehearted worship.
 - a. What has God done for you that testifies to His love for you? How can you work to remember this in the moments when you struggle to obey?
 - b. When God is slow to keep His promises, how does the account of Joshua help your heart to wait in faith?
- II. The Choice (Joshua 24:1-28) **T2:** God is worth wholehearted choosing.
 - a. Whom will you wholeheartedly choose to serve today?
 - b. What other things vie for your heart?
 - c. What will you do to ensure that God has your whole heart?
- III. Testimony of Hope (Joshua 24:29-33) **T3:** God is our hope and therefore worthy of our wholehearted worship.
 - a. What would it mean for you to live as a servant of the Lord?
 - b. How can your death be a testimony of hope? What will you do to ensure that it is so?