



Why and When You Cannot Joshua 24:18-27

“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.” (Joshua 24:20—ESV).

The context of this study shows that after all the LORD God had done for the Israelites, they were still worshiping some of the gods of Egypt, and even some of the idols of their neighbors the Amorites. The Hebrews were delivered from Egypt and established as God’s covenant people by His grace and according to His promise to Abraham. When we read about their misbehavior for decades, we certainly know why they needed and received God’s mercy. They were chosen to become the nation through whom Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, would come and the LORD fulfilled His loving purpose.

When we sometimes think about how much the Almighty God has done for us, especially through the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save us from sin, we know too that God has saved us by His grace and mercy. We have done nothing to earn God’s blessings or make us worthy of becoming children of God. Yet here we are studying the Book of Joshua, which demonstrates God’s grace and mercy to us! By God’s grace, as the Holy Spirit helps us, we have an interest in learning the truth from the written Word of God.

Throughout the wilderness years, Moses called the Hebrews to worship the LORD alone, and Joshua continued that call after they entered the Promised Land. But they kept thinking they could worship the LORD and false gods at the same time. Not all of them thought that, because some turned from worshiping idols to worshiping the true God alone, but enough of them did for Joshua to tell the people, “You cannot serve the LORD.” Joshua insisted that they could not serve both the LORD and false gods. If they sincerely intended to serve the LORD, Joshua told them in Joshua 24:23, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

Repeatedly, increasing numbers divided their allegiance between the LORD and false gods, until idolatry became widespread, so the LORD sent prophets to warn them and finally He punished them. Thus, the LORD led some to repentance.

Finally, the LORD sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, through His covenant people as He promised. Though Jesus obeyed the LORD without sin, some of the religious leaders rejected Jesus and handed Him over to the Roman authorities to be crucified. Jesus died for our sins, and after three days Jesus rose from the dead. He saves all who receive Him and believe in His name. In John 1:11-12, we read, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Today, as in the days of Joshua, many worship false gods with a variety of names. Others love money supremely because they

believe it will provide security, power, status, or pleasure. Money itself is not evil, but when people trust it, love it, and dedicate their lives to get it, money becomes an idol. If people love money supremely, they become slaves to money and to the worldly pleasures it can buy.

Some think they can love money and follow Jesus at the same time, but this is impossible. Joshua's words speak to us. Moreover, Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." If we try to serve money and Jesus at the same time, we must repent and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord. Otherwise, our Father in heaven will discipline us, and He may finally judge us as one without true faith.

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