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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Joshua 24.

(2015)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Joshua 24.

Topics.

- Joshua gathers all Israel and they present themselves before God.
- The LORD brought Israel to the land of the Amorites.
- The LORD gave Israel the seven nations of Israel.
- God gave Israel cities, vineyards and olive orchards that they did not plant.
- Serve God and put away the gods beyond the river and in Egypt.
- Choose who you will serve? Whether God or the gods of the Amorites.
- Israel proclaims, "We will serve the LORD, for he is our God."
- Joshua died, being one hundred and ten years old and is buried.
- Eleazar the son of Aaron dies and is buried.
- The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9).

At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

Section One

Joshua Gathers all Israel and they Present themselves Before God.

Joshua 24:1-2 ----- ¹Joshua 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. ²And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, (the other side of the flood in old time in KJV) the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

This and the previous chapter contain the last addresses of Joshua. These addresses were among the closing acts of Joshua's life, but given on different occasions, and are of different character and scope. In the previous chapter Joshua briefly reminds the heads of the tribes, the elders, the judges and officers of the recent benefits of God toward them and their people. He declares that God had fulfilled all His promises, and exhorts the nation to faithfulness toward God so His mercies and blessings would not be withdrawn.

In this chapter Joshua takes a much wider range, he recounts the gracious dealings of God with the nation from its very origin, and uses these dealings of God as grounds for the LORD to claim their sincere and entire service. But he does not force it upon them, but gives them the choice of withdrawing from the covenant or choosing to agree to abide by it. The entire nation from their free will chose to renew the covenant. Joshua's reproofs and warnings are in substance identical with those with which Moses closed his career in (Deuteronomy 31).

Thus saith the Lord: this expression means Joshua is speaking in God's name, and as from Him in the language of a prophet, because of the words, "Thus saith the LORD," some say that all that follows is spoken by the inspiration of God's Spirit this maybe true in that Joshua spoke with the passion and zeal of God to exhort the people to remain faithful to the LORD, but it would not be true as being revealed revelation and knowledge since all that Joshua speaks would have been common knowledge to him. In this context the words, "Thus saith the LORD," is more about authority it is like saying, "Listen people, open your ears, what I am about to say is absolute truth, it is guaranteed to happen because it is supported by God's eternal authority, it will come to pass so take notice.

Joshua's speech briefly recounts the principal proofs of God's goodness to Israel from the call of Abraham to their joyful establishment in the Promised Land and shows them that their national existence as well as their unique privileges and blessings could not be credited to any merits of their own, but solely to the free grace of God.

The flood: the King James Bible says, "On the other side of the flood in old time." The word flood comes from the Hebrew word (*nahar*) and means, a stream (including the sea and especially the Nile and the Euphrates rivers, etc.), but since it refers to Ur being on the other side it is better translated, "On the other side of the river (i.e. the Euphrates). It is most likely referred to as a flood in ancient time because of its enormously vast size which made it appear as if it was always in flood (especially compared to other river beds) and because of its prominence fame and renown,

Terah: was the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor (Gen. 11:27). Though Terah had three sons only Nahor and Abraham are mentioned. This is because the Israelites sprung from Terah in the line of Abraham on the father's side and from Abraham in the line of Nachor on the mother's side, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel, being of Nachor's family:

They served other gods: Joshua reminds Israel that their fathers who lived on the other side of the Euphrates River served other gods. It is not stated that Abraham himself was an idolater, though his fathers were. Jewish tradition asserts that while Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldee's he was persecuted for his abhorrence of idolatry, and because of this was called away by God from his native land. Joshua most likely mentions this to show Israel that they were chosen of God to be a unique people to Him. (For further information concerning Israel being a unique people see the notes under the title, "Israel a unique nation," following (v4) (below).

Other gods: does not mean that there are many gods it refers to gods that are created by the imagination of the mind by a strong belief in them. The human nervous system does not have a mind of its own and therefore automatically responds to whatever is pictured on the imagination whether it is real or false.

The stronger the belief the greater effect the mental image on the imagination of the mind will have on the human nervous system. This is why deception is so deceptive. It matters not if the god people believe in is real or not the nervous system responds accordingly. If the god a person believes in is a wrathful, vengeful and judgmental god they will feel emotions of guilt and fear in contrast to this if the god a person believes in is a god of love and compassion they will feel emotions of love and comfort.

The imaginary, but real images of the mind creates a real entity that affects the emotions and feelings through the human nervous system. These feelings convince those that believe in idols that there are evil gods and spirits, but in reality they do not actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the person believing in idols and false gods they are very real entities.

This is why faith should be based upon the Scriptures of the Bible and never upon emotions. This does not mean emotions should be denied, God gave them to us to enjoy (especially in worship and praise) it just means that they should not be the foundation of our faith and what we believe. It is through reading the Bible that we learn who the one and only immortal, invisible, eternal God is and His eternal will, plans and purposes for the world, the earth and for eternity.

Clearly not one of these gods of the imagination have any power to create the earth, the mountains the seas there is only one God who has such awesome power and He is the Holy Almighty God of all creation and the source of all life the great I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For further information concerning gods of the imaginations see: -

- Demons in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The LORD Led Abraham and Gave Him Isaac Jacob and Esau.

Joshua 24:3 -----³Then I (the LORD) took your father Abraham from beyond the River (the other side of the flood in KJV) and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac.

NOTICE: Joshua is still speaking from himself, but as though he is the voice of God (see the notes under the title, "Thus saith the Lord," following (v1-2) above.

Beyond the river: (v3) (the other side of the flood in KJV) referring to the River Euphrates (see the notes following the title, "The flood," following (v1-2) (above).

Led him throughout all the land of Canaan: God by His Spirit and grace called Abraham out of an idolatrous country and from an idolatrous people and from his relatives and even though Abraham did not know where he was going he by faith obeyed the call and left his country as a stranger and pilgrim to go to a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob. He went out believing he was called to go out to a land of promise to receive as an inheritance a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Heb. 11:8-10).

God led Abraham throughout all the land of Canaan that he might have a view of the land and by treading on it and walking through it he takes a kind of possession of the land of promise his offspring was to inherit.

God multiplied Abraham's seed in the following way: -

1. By Hagar, who gave birth to Ishmael who gave birth to twelve Princes.
2. By Keturah from whose sons several nations sprung (Gen 17:20)
3. By Sarah, who gave birth to Isaac in who his seed was called; and from who, in the line of Jacob, came the twelve tribes of Israel.
4. By the Messiah the Christ in who all who belong to him by faith are the children of Abraham.

In this way God has multiplied Abraham's seed and is still multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. (Gen. 22:17) (Gen. 26:4) (Exod. 32:13) (Heb. 11:12) and it is by his seed that all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3) (Gen. 21:2). God by His grace not only called Abraham and kept him safe in his travels through all the land of Canaan, but also brought him: -

- To a spiritual knowledge of Himself and converted him.
- Promised that the Messiah the Christ would spring from his seed.
- Revealed to him the covenant of grace, and of the blessings of it.

God gave Abraham the highest honour and made him the father of faith of all who belong to Christ's Kingdom.

To Isaac God Gave Jacob and Esau, but Jacob went Down to Egypt.

Joshua 24:4-7 -----⁴And 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. ⁵And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. ⁶Then 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. ⁷And 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.

The LORD gave to Esau the hill country of Seir in order that Esau would not be an obstacle to Jacob and his offspring since they were to be the exclusive heirs of Canaan. Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. The LORD sent Moses and Aaron and by the power of God Moses sent plagues amongst Egypt and afterward the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt to the Red Sea while the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen to the sea. God by His mighty and awesome power parted the Red Sea and saved the Hebrew people and destroyed their enemies and the nation of Israel was born.

Israel a unique nation: the following verses show that the United Kingdom of Israel has always been God's special and unique nation unlike any other nation.

God said: -

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation: -

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power. (Exodus 20:1-17).
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules. (Rom. 9:4)
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises. (Rom. 3:4)
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Rom. 3:5)
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted. (Rom. 3:2)
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith. (Rom. 9:7)
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world. (Rom. 9:5)

Added to these God said: -

- Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine (Exod. 19:5).
- The LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments (Deut. 26:18).

The Psalmist wrote: -

- God declared his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 147:19-20).

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges. These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God.

The thermometer of God's prophecy: it is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures that are dangerous for the good health of the skin and our well-being.

Likewise Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God. For further information concerning this new nation God is building in Christ see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel," at the end of this chapter.

Israel lived in the wilderness a long time: literally forty-years, because they rebelled against the word of the LORD and would not enter the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, that God had promised to give them for an inheritance. (Exod. 3:8) (Lev. 20:24) Num. 14:8) (Deut. 11:9).

The LORD Brought Israel to the Land of the Amorites.

Joshua 24:8 ----- ⁸Then 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 them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you.

The land of the Amorites was on the eastern side of the River Jordan, here God not only gave the two powerful kings, Sihon and Og and their fierce armies into the hands of Israel, but also gave the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh their land as their possession and inheritance.

The LORD would Not Allow Balaam to Curse, but Only to Bless Israel.

Joshua 24:9-9-10 ----- ⁹Then 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, ¹⁰but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.

Balak was the King of the Moabites three times he offered Balaam silver gold and the king's great honour to curse Israel. Balaam enticed by the silver gold and the king's great honour went to curse Israel for money. Balaam attempted to prophecy a curse on Israel, but every time God turned Balaam's prophecies into a blessing. Balaam knew, if he could turn Israel from God and bring about their fall, king Balak would give him the reward he had promised. Balaam for greed of money advised the Moabite king to use the Moabite woman to seduce the men of Israel.

- Moses said to them (the men of Israel), "Have you let all the women (of Midian) live? ¹⁶Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD." (Num. 31:15-16).

The Israelites were seduced by the woman into idolatry and 24,000 Israelites perished, until they repented of their idolatry. Thus the reason Balaam is held up in the New Testament as an example of self-serving and greedy prophets and religious teachers and the destructive influence of hypocritical teachers who attempt to lead God's people astray for worldly riches, importance and fame because of their own selfish greed for gain.

The apostle Peter in his letter wrote: -

- Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing ¹⁶but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:15-16).

No Bible character is more severely used, as an example of a man's offensiveness to God. The madness of Balaam was that he not only considered cursing God's people for gain, but that he also went with the servants of Balak fully believing he could. This is the insanity of a mind and heart that only cares about self and is fully driven by ego, pride and greed.

The full story can be found in: -

- (Num. chapter 22 and 23) (Deut. 23:3-6) (Joshua 24:9-10).

The blessings can be found in: -

- (Num. 23:7-10) (Num. 23:18-24) (Num. 24:3-9) (Num. 24:15-24).

Balaam was rebuked by a donkey: the LORD'S anger was kindle against Balaam because he went to curse Israel so God sent the Angel of the LORD to act as an adversary against him, but Balaam's donkey saw the Angel and fled. Nevertheless Balaam was determined to go so he struck his donkey and continued his journey on the road.

The LORD enabled the donkey to speak and tell Balaam that there was an Angel with his sword drawn set against him. The LORD then opened the eyes of Balaam and he also saw the Angel of the LORD. The Angel told Balaam that what he was doing was perverse before God. Balaam said to the angel, "He would turn back." The angel told Balaam to go, but only speak the word that God gives him, so Balaam went (Num. 22:22-35).

God knew Balaam's heart: God clearly knew that He would only give words of blessing to Balaam to speak upon Israel, but Balaam heart was so wickedly obsessed with silver, gold and the king's great honour he thought he would still be able to curse Israel.

We know Balaam's heart was grossly wicked, because when he failed to curse Israel he counselled the king to have the Moabite women seduce the men of Israel and all this for money and a pagan kings honour, such is the craving of the flesh (self, ego, pride and greed) in those who are so narcissistic, vain, egotistical and self-absorbed that to them the only person of any value to serve is self.

The LORD Gave Israel the Seven Nations of Israel.

Joshua 24:11-12 ----- ¹¹And 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. ¹²And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow.

The seven tribes of Canaan were: -

1. Amorites
2. Perizzites
3. Canaanites
4. Hittites
5. Girgashites
6. Hivites

7. Jebusites

These are the seven nations Israel was called to drive out of the land of Canaan or they would become thorns in their flesh. In the plains of Moab by the Jordan River at Jericho, the LORD told Moses to tell the people of Israel: -

- When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵²then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. (Num. 33:51-52).
- If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. (Num. 33:55).

God had promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan as an inheritance to his offspring forever. Israel's mission was to occupy the land and cleanse it from all that was an abomination before God and all that was corrupt wicked and evil and cleanse it from all traces of idols and pagan gods and their temples and all traces of occultism and their places of worship. Following are the two reasons for this: -

1. All of these things are an abomination before God and have no place in His Kingdom.
2. To remove all opportunity for the inhabitants of Canaan (especially the woman) to entice the people of Israel into adopting their ways of religion and their evil practises.

This is why Israel was to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. As one travels through the Scriptures it becomes very clear that the inhabitants of Canaan that the people of Israel did leave remaining in the land not only became thorns to the people of Israel and caused them great trouble, but also caused them to turn away from God. The men of Israel not only married pagan women who turned their hearts from the LORD their God, but also entered into gross wickedness and sacrificed to pagan gods and their idols.

I sent the hornet before you: (v12) the word hornet comes from the Hebrew word (*tsir'ah*) and embraces a particular species of wasp which swarms in warm countries and sometimes assumes the scourging character of a plague. Figuratively it means to a scourge and carries the idea of uncontrollable terror because hornets inflict great hurt and harm upon their victims. With this in mind the word hornet when used figuratively would embrace all the infliction God has inflicted upon the enemies of Israel such as the plaques of Egypt, the walls of Jericho falling down flat, God throwing down great hailstones from heaven upon Israel's enemies and causing the sun and moon to stand still (so that Joshua would have more time to drive their enemies out of the land) and such like things.

It was not by your sword or by your bow: (v12) God promised to give Israel the land of Canaan, but that did not mean that they could sit in their camp and simply pray and believe God's promise with the expectation that God would miraculously destroy all their enemies without any effort on their part.

They had to rise up and go to battle against their enemies. Israel's armies had the true God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the invisible, immortal Holy Almighty God the God of all creation and source of all life favour them. In contrast to this their enemies only had false gods who were no gods and idols that could not see, hear or move. Their gods were gods of superstition created in their mind by their strong belief in them. Like Israel of Old Christians have the only true God, the God of all creation that has the power to raise the dead from the darkness of the grave to eternal life and everlasting happiness, no other god people believe in has such power.

God gave Israel Cities, Vineyards and Olive Orchards that they did Not Plant.

Joshua 24:13 ----- ¹³I gave you a land on which you had not laboured 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.'

The LORD had given Israel a land for which they did not labour means that He gave them: -

- Farmlands they had never cultivated, fertilised, ploughed or sowed seed.
- Cities they had not built and vineyards and olive trees they had not planted.
- Houses with fortified walls around them that they had not constructed.
- Cattle, sheep and livestock of all kinds that they had not raised.
- Gold, silver, jewels and iron that they had never dug for or mined.

Now they possess all these blessings and dwell safely in the land which had been promised them as Moses spoke in the following verses: -

- When the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, ¹²then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deut. 6:10-12).

Section Two

So far an account has been given of the many mercies, wonders and miracles God had favoured Israel with and Joshua has been speaking as the voice of God. This section is focused upon how Israel should walk before the LORD to honour Him and upon faith and heart attitudes that are acceptable and those that are not. (Joshua is now 110 years old) (Joshua 24:28).

Serve God and put away the gods Beyond the River and in Egypt.

Joshua 24:14 ----- 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.

Joshua's service for God on earth is nearly over and here and in the following verses he calls his household and all the people of God to follow Him with the same courage and faithfulness as he has all the days of his life. It is interesting to notice that no descendant of Joshua the great captain of the LORD'S army and His people and no member of his household is named in the Bible and in the genealogies of Ephraim in (1 Chron. 7) Joshua's name is the last in his own line.

This silence of Scripture concerning Joshua is profoundly significant as another support for the idea that Joshua of the Old Testament who led God's people into the land of Canaan is a foreshadow of Joshua of the New Testament who through the bloodstained cross of Calvary and the Gospel of grace leads God people into the heavenly Canaan if they hold fast their confidence and their hope in Christ firm unto the end (Heb. 3:6).

After having recounted so many grounds for national gratitude, Joshua invites all the people of Israel to declare in public with an earnest and sincere heart whether they will be faithful and obedient to the God of Israel and to put away all the strange gods that were among them.

The foolish of Idols: when speaking of idols the Living Bible says, "O foolish man you chop down a tree and use some of the wood to build your homes, some to cook your food, some to warm your hands and some you carve into an idol and bow down before it to worship it, can't you see it's just a block of wood. The service of idols is so absurd and illogical that it is enormously difficult for a person with a sane mind to understand how anyone in their right mind chooses the service of idols before the service of God.

It is common for cultic religions to be heavily laden with ritualism. This is because a heavy focus and adherence to outward ritual and ceremony gives the worshipper a sense of reverence and a close connection and adoration to their god. These rituals may involve candles, occultist symbols, mystical rites, drinking the blood of bull, chicken-beheading, prayers, songs and such like things, but the most seductive is sexual ritual that involves all sorts of sexual immorality since this type of ritual appeals to the lowest level of the flesh (i.e., the lower nature of mankind).

One of the reasons people do choose a false faith is because idols and false gods do not put demands upon their outward lifestyle, as long as the believer adheres to their ceremonial rituals and outward religious practises they are accepted by their god and free to live as they please.

Choose who You will Serve? Whether God or the gods of the Amorites

Joshua 24:15 ----- ¹⁵And 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."

The question, "If it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD," carries the idea, "If it seems unjust, unreasonable, inconvenient, and troublesome or a burden and weariness and not a pleasure and delight then choose who you will serve? Joshua would have known that there are people in God's Kingdom that have not willingly chosen from their heart to be in it, but are in it because: -

- They are a person that has been born into years of religious tradition and their family demands that they follow the tradition.
- They love the advantages they have in God's Kingdom such as worldly riches and the fame and the position of importance they have amongst God's people.
- They would lose family members or friends if they were not in it.
- They have simply gone along with it, because their family does.

Everyone must at some stage humble themselves before God and make their own personal decision to accept God's plan of salvation and accept the Messiah the Christ as their King and Saviour. No one can be saved by others, or by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or by keeping religious customs and traditions, this is why Joshua invites all to choose who they will serve.

The gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River: refers to the gods Abraham's father Terah and his family and the people they lived amongst served in Ur beyond the River Euphrates

The Amorites in whose land you dwell: it is most likely that only the Amorites are mentioned, because they were a principal nation and some of them dwelt on the east side of the Jordan River and some on the west side as well as dwelling in the several parts of the land of Canaan.

As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD: service of God can only result from a free and willing heart. This attitude of Joshua was clearly manifested when Moses sent him and others to spy out the land of Canaan, only Joshua and Caleb came back with a positive report and strongly attempted to exhort the people to obey the word of the LORD and go into the land and take possession of it.

In contrast to this all the other spies instilled such fear and doubt into the people that they rebelled against the LORD'S word and refused to enter the land. This invitation of Joshua to the people of Israel is what Moses had done before him: -

- I (Moses) have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (Deut. 30:15-20).

Israel Proclaims, "We will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

Joshua 24:16-18 ----- ¹⁶Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ¹⁷for 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. ¹⁸And 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."

This response from the people of Israel would not only have been a great thrill for Joshua to hear and brought overwhelming joy to his heart as it would to any faithful and honest shepherd of the LORD, but would have also brought joy to God's heart and great rejoicing in heaven.

The bible says: -

- The LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. (Jer. 10:10).
- They report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. (1 Thess. 1:9).
- There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5).

This raises the question if there is only one true God, who are all these other gods? In the book of Psalms it is written: -

- The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. ¹⁶They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; ¹⁷they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. ¹⁸Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them! (Psalm 135:15-18).

These verse show that idols have no real power they are a creation of human hands. Both pagans and Jews at various times believed in idols and false gods, this is because belief creates a false, but real image of the god people believe is behind the idol in the imagination of the mind, but these spiritual gods only exist in the mind of those who believe in them. They are an entity of the mind created by imagination through a false, but strong belief in them. The stronger the belief the stronger the power the imaginary god will have over the person.

The false image in the mind will affect a person's emotions and feelings accordingly, if they believe the god to be on their side they will have good emotions, but if they believe the god is against them they will feel emotions of fear, because the human nervous system cannot tell the difference between a real image of the mind and a false one.

The imaginary, but real images of the mind creates a real entity that affects the emotions and feelings through the human nervous system. These feelings convince those that believe in idols that there are evil gods and spirits, but in reality they do not actually exist, they are an entity created by a false belief of the mind, but to the person believing in idols and false gods they are very real entities.

There is only one real God and creator of all that exists and His Name is I AM the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob every other god is an illusion of the mind created by a strong believe in them.

Psalms also state: -

- Those who make them become like them (are like unto them in KJV) so do all who trust in them. (Psalm 115:8).

The words, "Those who make idols are like them," means they are as ignorant and stupid, and void of all sense and reason, as the lifeless images they make in that they do not make proper use of the eyes, ears and mind and the ability to reason that God has given them.

Nor can they see the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation. They do not hear the voice of His providence and grace or that of the day and the night, which, in every speech and language, declares his glory: -

- The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
²Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. (Psalm 19:1-3).

Not only do they have no understanding that a lifeless and dead image which their own hands have made, must be weaker and every way inferior to themselves, but also are so spiritually blind that they cannot even see that it has no power to offer them the any type of help in the time of their need. They are as much without sense as are blocks of wood and lifeless stones. For further information see the notes under the title: "Other gods," following (v1-2 (above)).

If Israel Forsakes the LORD and Serve Foreign gods, He will Forsake Them.

Joshua 24:19-20 ----- ¹⁹But 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. ²⁰If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

You are not able to serve the LORD: (v19) obviously does not mean it is an absolute impossibility (for then his exhortation to serve God would been in vain,) it carries the idea of a moral impossibility. The idea is that they could not serve God perfectly without any flaws in their service (for there is no-one that does good and sins not) and to make them aware that when they have done all they can, they must not depend upon it for their justification before God; or consider it as making them righteousness and worthy of salvation and eternal life. This is a very real danger for those who spend much time serving the LORD. Joshua is obviously not saying this to discourage Israel from serving the LORD, his reasons are twofold: -

1. To make them conscious of their own inability and insufficiency so that they would be fully aware that they cannot trust in the religious services they perform to make them worthy of righteousness that leads to salvation.
2. To encourage them to trust in the grace and strength God and not to trust in their own strength.

God is a holy God: (v19) perfectly Holy, so that even the best and most faithful of mankind and their godly and good services and duties are impure and unholy before His Holiness and as such can in no way be trusted in for salvation and righteousness that leads to eternal life. Regardless of whether it is Abraham, Moses, Joshua or any other faithful servant of the LORD all require God's grace on a daily bases that they may be acceptable to God the Father through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

For he is jealous: (v19) God will not consent to be served as one God among many. There are times throughout Israel's history when they maintained the worship of God as the national and supreme God, but at the same time also recognised and partook of partial worship of the gods of other nations. God will not endure or accept such worship; you cannot serve Him and idols together.

He is jealous of his honour and glory and of his worship, in which He will accept no rival or any idols to be worshipped with Him, nor will He suffer the idol of our own righteousness to be set up in opposition to the righteousness of God in Christ or any services and works no matter how good, since they cannot be perfect before His Holiness. The expression, "He is a jealous God," also mean's God desires our whole heart for His own, and loves us so much, and is so desirous to pour His love into us, that He will have no rivals in our love? The measure of His love is the measure of His jealousy, and He loves us no less than He did Israel.

God will not forgive your transgressions or your sins: (v19) if Israel makes an oath to serve and follow the LORD and then wilfully transgress his laws by idolatry or other gross sins or the sin of seeking justification by self-effort and their own religious services and works, God will not let them go unpunished as he does the

other nations. This is why Joshua so strongly warns the nation of the penalties of disobedience and to earnestly consider the advantages and disadvantages together, before making such an oath and clearly highlights the following two things: -

1. If they remain sincere and faithful in God's service they would have many blessings and benefits.
2. If they acted falsely against God and turned from Him who they have vowed to follow, He will deal more severely with them than with any other people and nation in the world.

The People Say to Joshua, "We will Serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:21-22 ----- ²¹And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD." ²²Then 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."

Shechem: in verse one we are told that Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem to present themselves before God. Some might wonder why Shechem and not Shiloh where the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant was resting. Perhaps some of the following events may give us some insight into one of the reasons Joshua chose Shechem.

- The entire nation of Israel had previously gathered on the slopes of Ebal and Gerizim and listened to Joshua reading all that Moses commanded. (Josh. 8:30) (Josh. 8:35).
- The coffin of Joseph that Jacob had bought five hundred years ago and had been reverently carried all through the desert and the war, was laid in the ground of Shechem
- At Shechem Abram as a stranger in the land of Canaan had his first resting place and the LORD first appeared to him and here he received the first promise of God, "unto thy seed will I give this land," and in Shechem he built his first altar beneath the oak of Moreh to the LORD who appeared to him (Gen. 12:6-7).
- Gideon's little band of three hundred attacked the Midianites and Amalekites whose armies were like locusts in abundance, and as the sand that is on the seashore at the foot of Moreh in the land of Shechem. (Judges. 7:1).
- Jacob in preparation for his journey to Bethel gathered all the idols of his household and buried them under the oak which was by Shechem (Gen. 35:1-5) and Jacob's very words (Gen. 35:2) are now quoted by Joshua in his command to the people of Israel (Josh. 24:23).

Israel's history of Shiloh and God's dealings with the nation does not reach back as far as that of Shechem so for this reason it would be fitting for Joshua to summons the people to the pleasant valley in the heart of the land at Shechem for the scene of this national oath of obedience. It seems that the open space hallowed by so many remembrances and by God's appearance to Abram was regarded by Joshua as the perfect sanctuary for such a monumental moment in Israel's history.

After having recounted so many grounds for national gratitude, Joshua invites the people of Israel to declare in public with a sincere and honest heart, whether they will be faithful and obedient to the God of Israel and they responded, "We will serve the LORD." Such a confession embraces far more than simple words it embraces the voluntary act of changing all wrongful actions and behaviour that is contrary to the laws of God and willingly embracing and doing the following: -

- Destroying idols and everything that is made in the image of a foreign god
- Serving God in sincerity and in truth with integrity and honesty of heart.
- Completely surrendering the inward-self (i.e., the mind and heart) to God.

- Living a lifestyle that brings honour to God and a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

These are all true to-day as they were in the days of Joshua. The vows of some believers to follow and serve the LORD are made with very little consideration of what such a vow actually means. In pagan faiths a vow to serve a god is a mere matter of outward acts of so-called worship (i.e. adhering to ceremonial rites, rituals, keeping holy days and such like things).

There is no connection between faith, belief and morality in such religious systems. The notion that to serve a god applies to all life beyond outward ceremonial practises is a foreign concept to paganism in all its forms. Service to God in sincerity and truth can only result from a free and willing faithfulness flowing out of the heart.

This is the type of service that Joshua is inviting Israel to embrace as Moses had done before him in the following verse: -

- I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. (Deut. 30:15).

Israel said, "We will Serve the LORD our God and His Voice we will Obey."

Joshua 24:23-27 ----- ²³He (Joshua) said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." ²⁵So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. ²⁶And 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 (under the Oak in KJV) that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. ²⁷And 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."

Shechem: see Shechem following (v21-22) (above).

Terebinth: (under the Oak in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word ('allah) and means oak. It can refer to an oak or some other strong tree. Figuratively it carries the idea of strength and can therefore refer to anything that is strong (i.e. a chief or mighty man, a ram (from his strength) and a pillar (as a strong support)).

Joshua wrote these words: not only refers to the words that he had spoken, but also to the words that the people had spoken. Joshua put these words in in the book of the law of God which was first written by Moses and put in the side of the ark (Deut. 31:26) which at this present time is with Israel so the book could easily be taken out and Joshua's words inserted into it. The first name among the sacred writers of the Old Testament was Moses: -

- Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. (Deut. 31:26).

The second name after Moses is that of Joshua.

- 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. (Josh. 24:26).

The third name after Joshua's is that of Samuel.

- Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. (1 Sam. 10:25).

Since this book that Samuel wrote in is also laid up before the LORD as the Book of the Law of God was it is safe to suppose that this book though not named is also the Book of the Law of God. Should this be so it gives us some insight into the authorship of the Old Testament, and to the mindset of the writers who succeeded Moses in that it appears that they did not look upon themselves as writers of separate books, but as authorised to add their part that was assigned to them in

the book that was already written, "The Book of the Law of God." In this way the unity of the Holy Scripture is seen to have been an essential feature of the Bible from the beginning.

Joshua took a large stone and set it up under the oak tree: (v26) it seems that after Joshua wrote the words in the Book of the Law of God and returned it to the Ark of the Covenant he took a very large stone and placed it under an oak tree, by the Tabernacle of the LORD to act as witness against the people, because it had heard all the words the LORD spoke to them and the words they spoke.

It probably took a number of men to roll this stone into its place and possible that the words of Joshua may also have been written on it as this was also a common practise. The following verses show that setting up a stone in such a manner was an ancient custom of Israel in those times.

- So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. (Gen. 28:18).
- Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. (Gen. 31:45).
- Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. (Genesis 35:14).
- On the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster. (Deut. 27:2).
- Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight. (Josh. 4:3).
- There, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written. (Josh. 8:32).

Based upon the following verse: -

- You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah (grove tree in KJV) beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. (Deut. 16:21).

Some feel that it was wrong for Joshua to set up the stone in the vicinity of the Sanctuary, but the word Asherah (grove tree in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word ('asherah) (or Astarte), literally it means happy and refers to a Phoenician goddess of love and to her an image. When the Bible uses the word grove it is almost always in the context of pagan religions and occultist worship as the following verses show: -

- The LORD said to Gideon, throw down the altar of Baal that thy father has, and cut down the grove that is by it: ²⁶And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock. (Judges 6:25-26)
- When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it. (Judges 6:28).
- Maachah the queen made an idol in a grove and Asa burnt it. (1 Kings 15:13).
- Ahab made a grove; and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger. (1 Kings 16:33).
- Jeroboam, made Israel sin, and there remained the grove also in Samaria. (2 Kings 13:6).
- Israel left all the commandments of the LORD and made molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and served Baal. (2 Kings 17:16).
- Manasseh reared up altars for Baal and made a grove and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. (2 Kings 21:3).

With these verses in mind it is clear to see that the command, "You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah (grove tree in KJV) beside (or near) the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make," (Deut. 16:21) refers to pagan altars and groves and not to ones that are established in the LORD'S name.

Joshua set the stone under an oak, by the sanctuary: (v26) though they are in Shechem it is possible they either brought the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant to Shechem for the renewing of the Covenant and the celebration of such a monumental day in Israel's history or perhaps they moved the Ark only to Shechem so that their confession was spoken before the LORD.

Joshua Died, Being One Hundred Years Old.

Joshua 24:28-30 ----- ²⁸So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. ²⁹After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old. ³⁰And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash.

Joshua at one-hundred and ten years old sends the people away to their inheritance and dies and enters into rest from his labours until that glorious day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to raise the faithful to himself. The people no doubt with great mourning bury him in the land of his own his own inheritance. It is easy to read over these verses without comprehending the wonder of the moment. Hundreds of years ago God promised Abraham that He would give his offspring the land of Canaan and at this historic period of time the Covenant has been renewed, the warriors of Israel are now shepherds and farmers, the land is mostly subdued and the people of Israel are living in their home without fear of their enemies.

Israel Served the LORD all the Days of Joshua.

Joshua 24:31 ----- ³¹Israel 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.

The statement, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua," shines a brilliant spotlight upon the importance of having a leader whose heart is fully surrendered to God and is loyal, faithful and honest not only toward God, but also toward the people he leads. When Israel had such a king they mostly followed the LORD in faithfulness and obedience, in contrast to this when they had a corrupt king they also became corrupt themselves and many times rebelled against the word of the God and turned from Him.

Joseph's Bones that came Out of Egypt are Buried in Shechem.

Joshua 24:32 ----- ³²As 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.

Joseph died in Egypt, but gave the commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise.

- Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." ²⁶So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen. 50:24-25).
- Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here." (Exod. 13:19).

To preserve Joseph's bones for so many years and through so many troubles and wars not only highlights the value Israel put on their word and their promises, but also highlights how greatly Israel respected Joseph. The land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor refers to the following: -

- From the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel. (Gen. 33:19-20).

This verse and the many others like them highlight how Israel meticulously kept their genealogies and their persevered their history.

Eleazar the son of Aaron Dies and is Buried.

Joshua 24:33 ----- ³³And 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.

When Joshua was given as a shepherd to Israel, in answer to the prayer of Moses, Eleazar the priest was also given to Joshua for a counsellor. Eleazar the priest and Joshua were the Moses and Aaron of this period. It is fitting that the Book of Joshua should close with both the death of Joshua and Eleazar.

- The LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. ²⁰You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. ²¹And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation." (Numbers 27:18-21).

Devoted and faithful men after having served their generation, according to the will of God one after another fall asleep and see corruption, in contrast to this Jesus having spent and ended his life on earth rose from the dead and saw no corruption and because of this the redeemed will inherit the Kingdom God has prepared for them from the foundation of the world. They with hearts filled with gratitude will say of Jesus, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Following are five spiritual lessons to be learned from this chapter: -

1. It is essential that the service of God's people be performed with a willing mind, for love is the only genuine principle by which all acceptable service of God can spring from and it is only those who serve from love that the Father seeks to worship Him.
2. Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream.
3. To attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life all confidence in one's own self-sufficiency must be shaken off.
4. The hard conditions of discipleship, is self-denial and surrender to the will and word of God.
5. God will have no one enter His Kingdom under false pretences, all should know the full difficulties and trials which they must meet; and if, knowing these and are still willing to take Christ's yoke upon themselves they will receive a most exuberant and warm welcome.

There is a real danger that in sharing the Gospel of grace there is an over emphasis on love and grace without any mention of fully surrendering one's life to the will and word of God. This mostly stems from a fear of turning away those seeking God, but no true seeker will shy away from the Gospel simply because an equal emphasis is put upon the difficulties and cost of running the Christian race as is put upon the grace and love of God in Christ. In fact it is certain if the Gospel was proclaimed in this way there would be fewer backsliders and far less spiritually dead professors.

The Commonwealth of Israel.

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ.

This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said: -

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

The Glory of the Spiritual Temple God is Building in Christ.

Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity.

When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building, (taken from the beautiful writings of a faithful, but unknown brother in Christ).

Peter wrote: -

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when: -

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

End.