

## **Dr. David Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 21, Joshua 23-24 Joshua's Two Farewells**

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This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 21, Joshua 23-24, Joshua's Two Farewells.

Greetings again, in this section, we will deal now with the final chapters of Joshua, chapters 23 and 24.

And these contain Joshua's final two farewell speeches, this time to the entire nation. Chapter 22 we have Joshua addressing the Transjordan tribes and commending them for their faithfulness and then the story of the misunderstanding about the altar. But now in 23 Joshua is addressing a group of people and in many ways, the two chapters have a lot of similarities.

There seems to be some overlap in what's going on. Some scholars, because of this, some scholars have postulated that maybe they represent two different versions of only one actual event when Joshua only spoke one speech rather than two. But I think there are enough significant differences that we can see them as two separate occasions.

For one thing, the first one is much more informal and pastoral, chapter 23. It's not as easily organized into an outline. It's just kind of Joshua almost doing a stream-of-consciousness speaking.

Whereas the second chapter, chapter 24, is very well structured, and in the core of that is a covenant ceremony, a covenant renewal ceremony, covenant affirmation ceremony. Secondly, it appears that the first one is addressed to the leaders of the people. Look at verse 2, Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders, its heads, its judges, its officers, and said to them, and then it goes on.

So, it appears to be more to the leaders of the people. Whereas the second one, chapter 24, appears to be to the entire nation. So, 24, 1, and 2, Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, commanded the elders, etc.

But then in verse 2, he said to all the people of Israel, and it goes on. So, it appears to be a larger group in chapter 24. A third thing we can say is that the first one, chapter 23, apparently was delivered at Shiloh.

Chapter 18, verse 1, talks about them gathering at Shiloh and they send out the map makers there. And there's no indication that since then they have moved anywhere. So 18 through 23 appear to all be unfolding in and around Shiloh.

Whereas in 24, it says they gathered together at Shechem. So two different places. And so, we're going to treat them that way.

Joshua's speech here in chapter 23, as I've said, it feels more pastoral, it's more informal. In some ways, it's more personal. In some ways, it's reminiscent of the final words of Jacob.

For example, in Genesis 49, when he's speaking to his sons, gives farewells there. The final words of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy, chapters 32-33, he is exhorting the people as their long-time pastoral leader, in a sense. And even David, at the end of his life, in 2 Samuel 23, has similar kind of final words to say.

Here, in this chapter, Joshua is kind of summing up all the major themes in the book. And passionately urging them to be steadfast in loving the Lord, obeying the law, and keeping themselves uncontaminated by the religious practices of their neighbors. And he promised that God would be with them in the unfinished tasks of driving out the enemies, just as he had done up to date.

And he talks about his promises. So, there are warm exhortations, but there are also sober warnings. And if they did not drive out the nations, they would be thorns in the flesh, so to speak.

Particularly verse 13, for example, it mentions there are going to be whips in your sides and thorns in your flesh, a snare and a trap, and so on. So, again, that should have been the incentive to follow the Lord. And if they really didn't follow, they stood in danger of actually losing the land.

Verses 15 and 16. And, of course, we see that ultimately coming to bear, coming to pass, hundreds of years later, when they were taken away captive to Babylon. In verse 9, Joshua affirms that no one had remained who was able to withstand the Israelites.

And that's of a piece with other things that we've seen. Even goes so far as to say in verse 10, one man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it's the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised. So, that idea of God being Israel's warrior is read over and over again.

And yet, elsewhere, there are little hints that there are still Canaanites around. And verse 4, and verse 7, for example, God's given an inheritance to the tribes for the nations that remain. So, at this point, it appears like they're still there.

Verse 5, the Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. So, it appears that the task is not yet complete. So, that's an interesting little perspective.

We've talked about the little ticking time bombs that the tribes weren't able to drive them out. And, of course, in the Book of Judges, we see that coming to bear. God's ownership of the land is mentioned, emphasizing this speech.

Ultimately, of course, the land belonged to God, not Israel or the Canaanites or anyone else. Most of Joshua's words here echo directly or indirectly the things that we've found earlier in the book and also in the Book of Deuteronomy. So, the words that Moses said were carried on by Joshua and it repeats ideas, piling them up over and over again in this chapter.

So, we begin in the chapter by looking at verses 1 and 2 as the introduction. The time frame is not real clear. It appears to be quite a while after the original events.

It says, at that time, Joshua summoned the Reubenites and Gadites and said to them, but remember we had this reference to Joshua's advancing age in chapter 13. They made war a long time, so it appears that this is at the end of Joshua's life and there had been quite a bit of time elapsed by this time. And then the exhortations begin in verse 3. And we might make a division in the outline from verses 3 to 8, the first exhortations.

And again, he is asking them, urging them to be faithful. The Lord has given rest to you, verse 4, just as he promised. So, much of the language here, be careful to observe the commandment in the law that Moses served the Lord commanded you, verse 5, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, keep his commandments, to cling to him, to serve him with all your heart.

All of those things are things that Moses has said and they're very important. I'm going to pause here and we could open the book of Deuteronomy to almost any page in the first 11 chapters and find language like this. But I would like to maybe help you get a sense of that, at least in one place, and that will be in Deuteronomy chapter 10.

So, take your Bibles and open to that. Remember, Deuteronomy is at the end of Moses' life, looking back, speaking to the second generation that had not come out of Egypt or was underage before that. And so, Moses is reviewing the law in the past and looking ahead, urging them.

And Moses, the tone in Deuteronomy 1 to 11 is very pastoral. Moses is speaking as a beloved pastor, in a sense, of the last 40 years and today. If you have a pastor retiring after such a long time, they usually will review the past and look ahead.

My own pastor, a few years ago, in the church that I belong to today, retired after almost 35 years and he spent the last six months kind of reviewing what the Lord had done and his hopes for the future of the congregation. And that's what we see in Moses' words in chapters 1 to 11. So, they're very pastoral, very passionate.

And one of the things I've mentioned along the way here and there is the whole idea of these, what I would call, false dichotomies between the God of the Old Testament, God of the New Testament. And we see those breaking down in this passage as well. So, when I taught Old Testament survey, on the first day of class, I spent almost an hour on this passage in Deuteronomy chapter 10, starting in verse 12 and going on.

And I ask the students to read this passage carefully, and I actually read it with them. And I say, pay attention to what picture, what kind of picture of God is Moses painting in this passage? Is it the angry Old Testament God demanding sacrifice and works and ready to punish and so on? Or is it a different kind of God? And I think we can say that it's clearly a different God. So, we're not going to go through all that here, but we'll just kind of look at some passages here that kind of prefigure the passage in Joshua 23.

So, God says through Moses, Moses is saying here in Deuteronomy 10 verse 12, now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? To fear the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to love Him, to serve Him with all your heart, all your soul. That's almost word for word what we find in Joshua 23. To keep the commandments and statutes as I'm commanding you today.

The end of verse 13, for your good. It's interesting because sometimes from our New Testament perspective, looking back, the law seems to be kind of a negative thing. But here, and as I've mentioned previously in a Psalm like Psalm 119, the law is seen as a very good thing, and it's for their good, not for, not a negative thing.

And then verse 14 talks about the Lord, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all that is in it. So, all things belong to Him. That again prefigures things we see in the book of Joshua.

And yet, so that's the transcendent God. And verse 15, yet the Lord set His heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them. Notice it is not just that God demands people to love Him, verse 12, but He set His heart in love upon them.

So, the Old Testament God is a loving God, and He loved His people. And it was not only Abraham's descendants but as we've said, in other contexts, it's the foreigner as well. And that's mentioned here in this passage as well.

Notice in verse 16, it says, circumcised therefore the foreskin of your heart. Sometimes the dichotomies are made that there's external circumcision in the Old Testament, and there's only faith required of the new. But this clearly says, no, we circumcised the heart.

I don't think there was open-heart surgery in those days. It's clearly figurative to talk about internal heart attitudes. And that's part of the... And then it goes on to talk about God's transcendence again, in verse 12, the Lord, your God, is God of God, Lord of Lords, the Great, the Mighty, the Awesome God, who is not partial, takes no bribes.

We've mentioned earlier in context about the many gods of the nations and the gods of the Canaanites. And the biblical God says, nope, I am the God of all them. And I am the Lord of all them.

I have sovereignty over them. They are like nothing. And we saw that in the context of Rahab's words, the Lord, your God, is God of the heavens above, the earth beneath.

Essentially, there is no other God. He executes justice, verse 18, for the fatherless. The widow loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.

The sojourner is the ger, G-E-R, that we've talked about, the foreigner who has embraced the faith of Israel, the God of Israel. This is an inclusive vision here. Verse 20, you shall fear the Lord, your God, you shall serve him and hold fast to him, cling to him.

That's the wording also found in Joshua 23. And I'd just like to illustrate that by a little story. When I was growing up in Columbia, I graduated from eighth grade, and I happened to be the valedictorian of the eighth-grade class.

And I like to tell people that. I haven't put that on my resume yet, but I tell people that. But then, you know, I have to be honest and say, well, I was, there were only five people in the class, so it's not as big as it sounds.

But anyway, as the valedictorian, I got a very nice Parker pen at the time, way back when, in the 60s. And I valued that pen. But I had some friends that had a monkey as a pet in Columbia, in their backyard.

He was tied around his waist to a wire that was maybe 15, or 20 feet long. And he could run up and down the clothesline where it was attached, and he could run up in the tree, and he had, you know, some freedom. So I would go back there and pet him and play with him sometimes.

And one time I was there, and he reached down into my pocket and grabbed my pen. And he ran up into the top of the tree and wouldn't come down. And he was chewing my pen and playing with it.

And so, I, you know, pulled him back down and finally got him near me. And I tried to get the pen out of his hand, and he would not let go. And it took me almost a minute to get this pen out of his hand, finally.

And when he did, it was all scratched up, and my beautiful valedictorian pen was ruined, it seemed like. But the point there, I think of that story whenever I think of the words here to cling or to hold fast to the Lord. That word is used, that's the word used in, the word is *dabaq*, D-A-B-A-Q.

And it's related to the noun *debeq*, which is the word for glue. And glue binds things together, the clinging. So it's the word used in Genesis 2 when God says, for this reason, a man and a woman, a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, *dabaq*, same thing.

So, the marital union is that idea. And over and over again it's used in a spiritual sense to cling to the Lord, your God. And that's the word here.

Remember that, the monkey and the pen, the way to remember that. So, all of those things are backdrops to the kind of things that Josh was saying in his final address here, next to his final address here, chapter 23. So, I will go back now to chapter 23 and say a few more things.

Look at verse 11, chapter 23, be very careful therefore to love the Lord your God. If you turn back and cling to the remnant of the nations remaining and make marriages with them, the Lord your God, verse 13, will no longer drive out the inhabitants before you. So, the ideal is to cling to the Lord, but if you cling to these gods and women of the other nations, intermarrying with them and so on, God will not drive them out.

They'll still be a snare and a trap. So notice there, what's implied there is that there are still nations remaining to be driven out. So even by the end of the book, the task is not yet completely accomplished.

But verse 14, Joshua says, I'm 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. That echoes, of course, chapter 21, verse 25, verse 45. All things have come to pass for you, not one of them has failed.

That word there is, again, nothing has fallen. So that's a very personal address on Joshua's behalf, very passionate. It echoes the kinds of things that Moses said in the same tone and spirit, I would say.

And we'll end that by looking at the final verse. And it talks about the warnings. If you're turning away, then God will be angry and kindled against you.

You'll perish quickly from the good land that he has given you. So there's the warning and the admonition of that. It's interesting in the way that the Hebrew Bible is constructed.

We've mentioned in another segment that we have the law, the Torah, the Pentateuch, and the first five books of Moses. And then we have the prophets in the and the 12. And the first four books, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are called the former prophets.

And it's interesting that in the first book, Joshua, Israel is landing in the land, settling down there. In the final book, 2 Kings, in the last chapters of 2 Kings, Israel is being taken away from that very land. So, in that stretch, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, we have the record of Israel's life in the land.

It's not just a historical record for the sake of history. It's an interpretive history showing how God is working through his people, sometimes in spite of his people. And sadly, of course, the trajectory is mostly downward, morally and spiritually.

But that's what's going on. So here we have the settling in the land and the warning that if you do not remain faithful, you may be taken away from the land. That's the end of Joshua's first speech.

So now we turn to chapter 24, which is the second speech. And it appears to be in a new place, in Shechem, not Shiloh, verse 1. He summons the elders and all the people and begins talking to them. And the first 13 verses, there's kind of a review of the past.

Here's what has happened and here's what God has done. So it begins with Terah, the father of Abraham, verse 2, and says that they served other gods, end of verse 2. So, hundreds of years earlier, when God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to bring him to Canaan, it appears that his family was still serving other gods. They did not know the true God in the way that they eventually came to know him.

So I took your father Abraham from beyond the river, brought him to the land of Canaan, made his offspring many, gave him Isaac, Jacob, and so on. Verse 6 and the following talks about bringing them out of Egypt through the Red Sea, and all the

things that he did. And verse 8 talks about, I brought you to the land of the Amorites, namely the Canaanites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan that you fought.

And then Balak arose. We read the story there in Numbers, chapters 22 to 24. In the wilderness, the king of Moab arose and fought against them.

So, this is a kind of and then mentions Jericho. Verse 12, it mentions the hornet. I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, two kings of the Amorites.

This is Sihon and Og. They're still in the wilderness, book of Numbers. Interpretations as to who or what the hornet was, it's no big deal, I guess, but some have suggested maybe there really was, were hordes of hornets, literally. Others have suggested, no, it's probably metaphorical of just, you want a victory of the type that would be if you had a band of hornets fighting on your behalf.

And then verse 13, I gave you a land in which you had not labored, cities that you had not built, and you dwelled in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards you did not plant, and so on. I just want to remind you of the passage we looked at earlier in Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 10 and 11, that are the prefigurement of that.

God says, I'm going to give you houses you did not build, cisterns you did not dig, vineyards you did not plant, and so on. And that was God's gift to them. They had to drive out the Canaanites, but they were going to receive the land essentially intact, and this is a reiteration of that, saying, here's I did for you.

So, in verses 14 to 24, we have a section we might call the covenant affirmations, and they begin with Joshua exhorting them, saying, Therefore fear the Lord, serve him in sincerity and faithfulness, put away the gods your father served, and so on. Many scholars have looked at this chapter, in particular this part of the chapter, as following a certain pattern. Common in the ancient Near East, there were certain patterns of making treaties between nations and agreements, and they were called covenant treaties, and they sort of follow certain patterns, and that chapter seems to follow that to some degree.

Some scholars have gone so far as to say this chapter is the text of a covenant treaty form. My view is that no, there's a covenant being made that's in the background to this chapter, but this chapter is a narrative chapter, telling that story and incorporating it into a larger story. So it's not the official legal text of a covenant, it's more a storytelling about that.

But look what it says in verse 15. It's really a remarkable thing. Verse two, remember, it says that Abraham and the others had served other gods, and verse 14 says, put away the gods that your father served beyond the river.

In other words, in Mesopotamia, we have here Israel, over here is the land of Assyria, Babylon, and the river, the Great River was the River Euphrates, and that's where Abraham and his family came from, and apparently they were serving other gods beyond the river. So, Joshua's now saying, put away the gods your ancestors, Abraham and so on, have served beyond the river, number one. And number two, and in Egypt, so apparently in later years when they were in exile in Egypt, they also served Egyptian gods.

So that's a rather remarkable statement. For two things, one, we see that the confirmation that Abraham and his family came out of a milieu, came out of a context in which they were worshiping other gods until they learned about the true god. But then secondly, we really have no direct references to this earlier, but apparently Israel, while they were in Egypt, also were embracing some of the Egyptian gods and goddesses, and that doesn't show them in a very good light.

But the shocking thing is that it seems to be that they're still doing that. Why would Joshua say, put away the gods that your ancestors served, number one, beyond the river, number two, in Egypt? Why would he say that unless they were actually doing that? So, in this book where there's this theme of faithfulness, and all the promises of God taking place, and everything working out and falling into place for all the Israelites, you have this note of discord where it appears that, hmm, there's still work to be done, not only in conquering the land but in rooting out, basically, pagan worship.

So that's a rather shocking statement in a book that is so heavily emphasizing faith and all the positive things happening. So, verse 15, Joshua gives them a challenge, saying, well, if you don't like that, if it's evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether it's the gods that your fathers served in the region beyond the river, in other words, again, the gods of Abraham and earlier, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. So now there's a third set of gods, the gods in the Canaanites themselves, the gods of beyond the river in Mesopotamia, the gods in Egypt, the gods in the Canaanites.

You can serve anybody you want, but verse 15, end of verse 15, but as for me in my house, we will serve the Lord. Somebody ought to make a plaque with those words on it. It would probably sell a lot.

Most of you know that that is a very popular sentiment and statement, and you find it in homes and dining rooms or living rooms, and that's a wonderful thing. But I think most people who have those sayings around their houses today don't

understand or realize the context here, and the context is a challenge. Joshua's laying before them the two ways, follow these other gods and goddesses of Mesopotamia or Egypt or Canaan, if you want them, here's my choice, and I'm going to choose to follow the Lord.

Now, to their credit, the people responded by saying, no, we're not going to do that. We're going to follow the Lord. So far, verse 16, far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord and serve other gods.

For it's our Lord, our God, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt and so on and so forth. So, in verses 16 to 18, they are affirming all the right things, and they are agreeing with Joshua in spite of what appears to be the case in verses 14 and 15 that they were not doing that. So, there's a little bit of discord between the description of what's happening, verses 14 and 15, and what they're saying.

So, Joshua's response is kind of a wake-up call, it seems to me. In verse 19, he says something rather shocking. He says, you will not be able to serve the Lord because he is a holy God, he is a jealous God, and he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

So here the people, apparently, at least some of them have maintained secret, private worship of the other gods and goddesses. They are publicly affirming they're going to follow the Lord, but Joshua says, nope, you're not going to be able to do that, and God is not going to forgive your transgressions. That sounds like a very harsh statement, and one commentator has called this the most shocking statement in the entire Old Testament.

So, what do we do with that? Well, on its own, if we cherry-pick the verse out and say, read that, we would conclude this is a rather harsh God, he's not going to forgive, and that's it, in the face of people saying that they want to, and they want to follow the Lord in the face of affirmation of wanting to embrace him. But I think it's a wake-up call because they clearly have not abandoned those gods and goddesses yet, but in the context, verse 20 also goes together with verse 21. I'm sorry, 19 goes together with verse 20 because it goes on to say, if you forsake the Lord and serve other gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you in having done no good.

So, the flip side seems to be, that if you don't forsake him, he will not turn from you, he will deliver, and he will save. So, it appears that this is not such an absolute statement that they can never, they have never the ability to follow the Lord, it's more Joshua's giving a wake-up call saying, you better be careful, and you should get rid of those gods and turn to God, and then if you don't, he's not going to forgive, but if you do, the subtext is clearly that he will, he will forgive. So they protest again in verse 21, no, we're going to serve the Lord, and so Joshua says, okay, you are

witnesses, you've chosen the Lord to serve him, and they said, we are witnesses, verse 23.

So, there's a softening of that harsh statement in verse 19. So, he goes on again to say, then put away those foreign gods that are among you, incline your heart to the Lord, and they said, yes, we will do this, and we will obey his voice. So that's kind of the heart of this commitment and covenant.

And then verses 25 to 27 are kind of the putting the seal on this, kind of confirming, wrapping up, tying it all up the sentence, because now in verse 25, it says, Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. He wrote these words in the book of the law of God. Just a reminder, in another segment, we talked about the instructions for the ideal king that Israel was to have, Deuteronomy 17, and the key to success for the king was that he was to be rooted in God's word.

And it says in Deuteronomy 17, verse 19, it says that the king is to write for himself a copy of the book of the law and keep it on his heart and so on. Here, remember, we mentioned another context, Joshua 1, the words in God's charge to Joshua are very similar to the words in Deuteronomy 17. Joshua is not a king, certainly, but the principles of godly leadership are certainly there throughout this book.

And here, we have Joshua following another one of the injunctions that we see in Deuteronomy 17 about the king. Namely, he's writing down the words in the book of the law of God. So, he is functioning in the role of a godly leader.

Takes a large stone, and sets it up there under the terebinth that's by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to the people, look, 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 will be a witness against us, lest you do falsely with the Lord your God.

So, he sent the people away and everybody to their inheritance. There's that word again. And that's kind of the tie-up of the final section of the book.

So, it's, again, it's a tie-up that feels right, feels like, again, everybody's, everything's clicking, everything's working right. But there are these discordant notes about these foreign gods and the inability of Israel to keep, and follow through in their promises unless they confess those things, unless they put those gods away. So that, even that is kind of a shocking revelation at the end of the book because they had experienced the defeat at Ai because of the sin of Achan and not, you know, taking things that he shouldn't have taken.

Here, it appears the people are still maintaining some of the, at least, the gods of the nations that they shouldn't be worshipping. Finally, the book ends with what we might call three death notices. And the first one is with Joshua.

So, after these things, verse 29, after these things, Joshua, the son of Nun, servant, the servant of the Lord, died. It's the first time that Joshua's called servant of the Lord. He's 110 years old.

They buried him in his own town, inheritance at Timah-serah in the hill country of Ephraim.

Interesting little addition in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It's not here in Hebrew, it's not in our English Bibles, but, and we don't know if it's really originally part of the inspired text of Scripture, but it's an interesting curiosity. The Greek translation adds at this point in verse 29 that Joshua, well, let me back up, turn back to the end of chapters 20, and 21. And after verse 42, Joshua 21, verse 42, there's a little notice there, another notice that's added in the Greek translation that's not in the Hebrew or the English, that it says something to the effect that Joshua took the two flint knives that he had used to circumcise the people back in chapter five and took them with him to his hometown, Timah-serah. That's found here in Joshua 21, verse 42 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Now at the end of the book, we also have a second addition after verse 29, after verse 30, where it says, notice in verse 30 mentions Timah-serah, his own hometown. And it says that Joshua was buried with those two flint knives that he had saved. So, there's an interesting kind of a very small theme through the book of, you know, Joshua circumcised the people with flint knives.

He made the knives for himself and then circumcised people back in chapter five. Then he takes them to his hometown, at least in the Greek translation, keeps them, and then he's buried with them. Whether that actually is true or not, we don't know, but it's an interesting little sub-theme in the Greek translation.

Flint was a very sharp stone, and you can get cut very easily with it, so it would have been a good thing for circumcising people. And I mentioned in the discussion of chapter five that that kind of echoes the story about Moses and Zipporah and their son back in Exodus chapter four, where the Lord sought to kill Moses. Zipporah was quick on her feet, circumcised their son, took a piece of flint, and did that, and then God spared Moses.

The point there seems to be that Moses himself, the soon-to-be great leader of the nation, had not followed through on the one basic requirement of a relationship with God, namely circumcision. He had not circumcised his son, and the point there seems to be that not even the great leader was exempt from following God's commands

and God's words. The irony, it seems to me when you get to the book of Joshua, we have a whole generation of people who are not circumcised in the wilderness, and Joshua has to do it, chapter five.

But why didn't Moses ensure that they did? There would have been plenty of time in the wilderness to stop and be healed now and then. Moses had a near-death experience early in his life with his failure to circumcise people, and yet that was something that he did not follow through on. But anyway, that's a small point here at the end of the book of Joshua.

He himself is buried with the flint knives, at least according to the Greek translation. Next, we can look at verse 31, and the final thing it says about Joshua is that 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. So, on one level, that's a really good statement.

We're now at the end. There's this question. Joshua's challenging the people to serve the Lord, and verse 29, and verse 31, say that they did that.

They served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders. What's not stated, it does not say until this day. There are many places in the book of Joshua that talk about this being happened to this day.

It feels like that's many years later, sometimes down even almost to the time of David or Saul or Samuel. And so, maybe it's unstated, maybe it's an argument from silence, but it seems to me there's also a hint there that there's a problem with Joshua in that he did not lead the people in a way that ensured this in perpetuity or much longer. There's no provision for Joshua, for the successor to Joshua throughout the Pentateuch.

We have over and over again Joshua being prepared and groomed to be the successor to Moses, and then Joshua 1 begins by saying after the death of Moses, he served the Lord, and the Lord spoke to Joshua. If you flip the page just for a minute, it begins in exactly the same way in the Hebrew construction, after the death of Joshua, but it does not say who's the next leader. And so, it may be also not the right way of saying Joshua's leadership had some flaws because there was no grouping of the next leader, and we see the results of that in the book of Judges.

There's no centralized leader and things kind of go haywire, everybody doing right in their own eyes. So, maybe a subtle point, but it seems to me that there's, the text is intentionally telling us this lasted for a while, but not as long as it could have or should have. The second burial notice is not really a burial notice because Joseph has been dead for many years, but they brought the bones of Joseph up from Egypt and they had buried them at Shechem.

This goes back to Genesis chapter 50, and we'll just turn to that just to kind of give you a sense of what's happening here. Remember, Joseph is the great hero, in the final part of Genesis, and in verse 25 of Genesis, the next to the last verse, Joseph, as he's ready to go the way of all flesh, exacts a promise from his brothers and the sons, Genesis 50, verse 25. Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here.

So, I don't want to be buried in Egypt. I want to be buried back in the land of Canaan. And there's a very interesting passage in Exodus 13, when Israel is leaving Egypt now, hundreds of years after Joseph, under Moses.

In verse 19, when they are leaving, it says, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, but Joseph obeyed the sons of Israel, solemnly swear, saying, God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones with you from here. So, Exodus 13, verse 19, kind of continues that thread from Genesis 50. And now, in the writing of the book of Joshua, at the end of Joshua's life, we see people being faithful in that small respect, but it is continuing and it shows the importance of the land, it shows the importance of promise-keeping, it shows the importance of obedience, and that's an interesting theme we find through those three different books.

The bones of Joseph are buried in his own homeland, a place that had been bought hundreds of years earlier. And then finally, in verse 33, it says, Eliezer, son of Aaron, died. Aaron being the first high priest, and brother of Moses, they buried him in his ancestral territory, and Phinehas's son, that his son had been given to him.

So, we come to the conclusion of the book of Joshua, we see God's faithfulness, we see God's promises being fulfilled, we see Israel finally settled in the land, and fulfillment of all the movement of the Pentateuch here. We see warnings looking ahead, we see ominous signs that things are not all as good as we hope, but at this point, we see God's faithfulness, and we see a godly leader, for the most part, doing what is right. We see foreigners being embraced in the person of Rahab, in the people of the Gibeonites.

We see some harsh things against the Canaanites, but we see reasons for that. And so, many lessons we can draw from the book of Joshua and I hope that you will return to study it again and again in years to come.

This is Dr. David Howard in his teaching on the books of Joshua through Ruth. This is session 21, Joshua 23-24, Joshua's Two Farewells.