

Revelation 13:1–10

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 August 2008

Preacher: Arthur Jackson

- [0 : 0 0] I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea.
- And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them.
- And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan.
- They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand. And you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. Then Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel.
- And he sent and invited Balak, the son of Beor, to curse you. But I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.
- [1 : 0 3] And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
- And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which strove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites.
- It was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them.
- You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant. Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness.
- Put away the gods that your father served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods of your father served in the region beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.
- [2 : 1 7] But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Then the people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods.
- For it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and did those great things in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed.
- And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites, who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God. But Joshua said to the people, You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.
- He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you after having done you good.
- And the people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve the Lord. Then Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves, that you have chosen the Lord to serve him.

[3 : 33] And they said, We are witnesses. He said, Then put the foreign gods that are among you, put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.

And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us.

Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God. So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. After these things, Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old.

And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-shara, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 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.

[5 : 00] As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the place of the 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. And Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas, his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Tyler.

Good afternoon to you. We've come to the end of the book of Joshua. It's been a good journey. The place that we end, even on today, is a good one.

Like the beginning of the book, the book ends on somewhat of a similar note. Beginning of the book, Death of Moses, Joshua chapter 1, verse 2.

[6 : 12] Moses, my servant, is dead. Moses had led God's people for 40 years. He was dead, but God's plan continued.

God's program for his people was very much in play. The assignment to take the people into the land was the major life work of God's servant, Joshua.

There's roughly a 30-year spread from the beginning of the book to the end of the book where we find ourselves today. And if you would note in chapter 24, verses 29 and 30, we find these words.

After these things, Joshua the son of Nun, notice, the servant of the Lord died, being 110 years old.

And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash.

[7 : 22] At the end of the book, we find Joshua the servant of the Lord as Moses in the beginning of the book dead and buried, but buried in the land of promise, but not before leading the people of God into the covenant renewal ceremony that we see in Joshua chapter 24 before us today.

Here, Joshua led God's people in a sacred covenant renewal in which God's gracious works were rehearsed and the people of God were challenged to serve the God of the covenant.

I don't know about you, but I have been to and officiated at marriage or marriage renewal ceremonies where two people recommit themselves to what they had committed to on their wedding day.

What you have here is somewhat similar to that, different in that, in marriage renewal, you have people who are on an equal plane. Here, we have a ruler who is coming together with his subjects.

Let me preview where I want to take us on this afternoon. This may help you to follow me a little better. First of all, I want you to see in verse 1 the setting that we come to for this covenant renewal ceremony.

[8 : 55] I want to make a few brief comments about the structure that we see that surrounds or encases chapter 24. Then we want to look at the substance of the passage.

We'll look at a summary and then we'll ask a few so-what questions as far as what do we need to take away from this particular passage for us on this afternoon.

Let me pray and then we'll move forward further. Lord, we love you and we thank you for this opportunity. Your word is a lamp and to our feet and a light and to our pathway and we come to it that you might illumine us and help us to see it and then to embrace it.

We commit ourselves to those ends and we pray in Christ's name. Amen. What was the setting for this covenant ceremony? It was at Shechem and before God.

At Shechem and before God. Like Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 29, Joshua had gathered the tribes and their leaders before him for this special occasion.

[10 : 10] Again, Moses had engaged in similar kinds of an exercise and initiative before he passed away and here we do, here we have Joshua doing the same thing.

We often have seen in the book of Joshua that the pathway that Joshua takes in very many ways it paralleled what Moses did in Deuteronomy.

They gather at Shechem and this, I found this very intriguing and very interesting as far as what it was that really surrounded this whole area, this piece of geography.

Geographically speaking, there at Shechem, you see it in verse 1, see it in verse 25, also see it in verse 32. In the hill country of Ephraim, for good reasons, Shechem was chosen for this particular covenant renewal ceremony.

Significant events had transpired at Shechem before in the history of God's people and though it was not mentioned by name, it was in Shechem.

[11 : 16] Joshua chapter 8, where they had the covenant renewal ceremony between Mount Ebo and Mount Gerizim. The significance of Shechem went back to the patriarchal years.

500 years earlier, Jacob, upon his return to the land of Canaan, had erected an altar to the Lord there in Genesis chapter 33, verses 18 through 20.

in Shechem. Jacob had called upon his household, listen to this because this is very critical, to put away the gods, the foreign gods that were among them and to purify themselves and to change their garments.

Genesis chapter 35, it was at Shechem. There was that they surrendered their gods to Jacob and buried them under the terebinth tree near Shechem.

Chapter 35, verse 4. And here, right here, in this chapter that is before us, Joshua chapter 24, Joshua similarly caused the people of God to put away the foreign gods that were among them.

[12 : 28] And perhaps even more significantly than what we've mentioned already, that Shechem was the place where the Lord promised Abraham to give him the land of Canaan.

Listen to this, Genesis chapter 12, verses 6 and 7. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem to the Oak of Morah and at the time the Canaanites were in the land.

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, to your offspring, I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him there at Shechem.

So, it was not by accident or nor was it incidental that it was at Shechem where this covenant renewal ceremony took place.

As a matter of fact, it seemed to be quite intentional. It was a very strategic move on behalf of a leader at that particular time.

[13 : 32] Huh? A strategic move not unlike then Senator Barack Obama who on February the 10th, 2007, in the shadow of the old state capitol in Springfield, Illinois, announced his candidacy for president of the United States.

This is what he said. And that is why in the shadow of the old state capitol where Lincoln once called a divided house to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still live, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for the president of the United States of America.

For symbolic reasons, many have chosen the mall between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument to gain momentum for their particular events.

It's why African Americans have chosen Selma or Birmingham to launch or to celebrate certain initiatives because of the import of the place, the significance of the place.

The setting for this covenant renewal ceremony was at Shechem. But it was also before the Lord. We see that there. You see that at the last part of verse 1.

[14 : 45] And presented themselves before God. It was at Shechem that they presented themselves before God. Some believe that the tabernacle had been moved from Shiloh to Shechem.

But that's not necessarily the case here. What is in view is comparable to what we see in Exodus chapter 19 verse 17. This was before the tabernacle was constructed.

The people presented themselves before God to hear the covenant, to agree with it, and to ratify it through a covenant ceremony. The Lord, through Joshua, had called a meeting for his people to come before him at Shechem.

And they had responded to the call. What about the structure of the passage that we have before us? Well, it's in the form of what's known as a suzerainty treaty, an ancient suzerainty treaty.

And this was a particular form that had several dimensions or aspects to it. And we see these here in the passage before us. These three kinds of treaties, they had a preamble.

[15 : 57] You see that in verse 2, the first part of verse 2. It had a prehistorical prologue where the kindnesses of the ruler were laid out before his subjects.

We see that in verses 2 through 13. We see the stipulations of the covenant in verses 14 and following where there were the responsibilities of those, the vassals, who were under the rule of the suzerain or the king or the ruler.

We see curses and blessings in verse 19. Witnesses in verses 22 and 27. And then the writing and the deposit of the covenant that follows in verses 25 through 28.

It was the structure. And again, all of these treaties did not have the same number of elements necessarily, but we see clearly that this was the form of what was before, of what we had before us in Joshua 24.

Setting, substance, I mean the structure. What about the substance of the covenant renewal? Look with me there and you can actually see it in verses 2 and following.

[17 : 07] Had you been in the crowd that day at Shechem, you would have heard basically two things that came from Joshua, the leader of God's people.

In verses 2 through 13, you would have heard what the Lord had done for Israel. In verses 14 and following, you would have heard what the Lord demanded from Israel.

What the Lord had done for Israel, but then there was what the Lord demanded from Israel in the verses that following. The Lord's deeds are seen first.

The Lord's sovereign activity is in view in these verses. And he comes forward as it were as his own witness. And notice the predominance of the first person singular pronoun, I.

It abounds and then it is followed by some very powerful words and they read sort of like bullet points. Just look up there with me as far as what the Lord says that he had done.

[18 : 11] I took your father, verse 3, Abraham from beyond the river and led him through all the land of Canaan. Verse 4, I gave Jacob and I gave Esau, I sent Moses, so forth and so on.

The Lord had led their forefathers out of an idolatrous culture, verse 2, made a covenant with a childless man, gave him a son in his old age and subsequently made a nation of him.

Verse 3, he had determined the habitations for Abraham's grandsons in verse 4, sent them to Egypt, rescued them from Egypt, brought them through the wilderness and the promised land and then gave them a land with its substance and its structure.

God did all of that in a very sovereign, intentional way, not on the basis of their goodness, but on the basis of his sovereign will and his purpose.

What you see here is grace on top of grace given by God to his people. The Lord had chosen them for his favor and that clearly comes into view in the verses that we see before us in verses 2 through 13.

[19 : 28] Israel had been recipients of God's sovereign grace. Huh? What the Lord had done for Israel, verses 2 through 13, what the Lord demanded from Israel in verses, in the verses that follow.

The Lord's deeds, but also the Lord's demands. So what were the demands of the gracious God of the covenant for his people?

What were their responsibilities in light of what the Lord had done for them? We can notice several things. Huh? The demands of serving the Lord include, and look at verse 14, serving the Lord exclusively.

That's what comes into view. Now therefore, the Lord, fear the Lord and serve him. How? In sincerity and in faithfulness.

Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord. Huh? In view of his benevolence, in view of his kindness, there was to be exclusive, wholehearted, worshipful living that was to be reserved for God and for God alone.

[20 : 46] Huh? God and God alone. Our worship, similarly, must be exclusively reserved for God. We hear that in the Old Testament.

We hear that in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 22, Mark chapter 12. What's the foremost commandment? Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.

Total devotion, singular devotion to one God. Huh? Notice, this particular segment abounds with the use of the word serve or serve.

Dominant words in the chapter. Sixteen times you see it here. What does it mean? What did it mean to serve the Lord? Huh?

Same root is found in the word serve, but it suggests that to serve the Lord is to worship fully and to willingly to serve Him, to be long to Him, to be His servant and His servant alone.

[21 : 53] And so Joshua calls the people of God there. And similarly, there is that perennial call to the people of God to a lifestyle of worship that includes our attitudes and actions in a way that demonstrates exclusive loyalty and respect and reverence for God.

Serving the Lord involves giving ourselves over to Him in total obedience. We belong to Him, friends, and not to another.

Oh, I praise God for the week that is before us. And I'll talk a little bit about that more later. but the week that is before us is a very strategic week on the Christian calendar.

And may we not let it sort of slip by in even somewhat of a business-as-usual kind of way. But may we allow this text and other texts as we read through Jesus' steps in the Holy Week calendar, may we allow it to grip us again and to help us to see and understand God's gracious work through His Son.

So, serving, but it also, and I really, this is significant, putting away, it also involves, serving God involves putting away any kind of rival God.

[23 : 15] And this is a complementary action to what we saw in the first part of verse 14. Joshua exhorted the children of Ezra to put away both the past and the present gods of the people that were around them.

There seemed to have been a lingering idolatry, and we just don't get it here from this passage. Amos chapter 5 speaks about, was it me that you served in the wilderness?

No, but it seemed like there were some other kinds of idolatrous influences that sort of hung or lingered on in the nation. Huh? The influences of the gods of the land.

Huh? We know something about that, don't we? The various gods of the land, the idolatrous kind of beliefs and practices that sometimes invade your life and mine.

Huh? If they had trafficked in some way among them and impacted the people of God, Joshua zeroes in on idolatry in this particular chapter, put it away, verse 14.

[24 : 25] The gods of their fathers and of the Amorites were mentioned in verse 15. The consequences of serving foreign gods are mentioned in verse 20. And again in verse 23.

He exhorted them to put away the foreign gods. He calls the people of God here to do what Jacob had called his household to do at Shechem hundreds of years before.

Give up. Give up your gods. The people of God of the ages have had a way of elevating various things to God-like status and give to them the time and the attention and the energy that God and God alone deserves.

Oh, and these things can be quite subtle. Our possessions or our positions or our professions can occupy space in our lives that should be reserved for God and God alone.

But whatever it is that distracts us from the life of ultimate devotion to God and God alone must be viewed as idolatrous and discarded.

[25 : 36] Oh, and friends, these things are so subtle. And things that we wrestle with as far as how to give ourselves to God in an effective and in a redemptive kind of way in a missional kind of way.

You wrestle with those things and I do too. May God help us and give us clear thinking as to what that needs to look like even in our day.

Strange and for all gods, huh? It's the larger God you should fear, Moses wrote in Deuteronomy. Him you shall serve and by his name shall you swear.

You shall not go after the other gods. The gods, listen to this, of the peoples around you. For the larger God in your midst is a jealous God.

Lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you and he destroy you from off the land. Huh? Joshua was challenged continued even in verse 19.

- [26 : 36] Look at there. Huh? I mean, these are some interesting kind of challenges. But Joshua said to the people, you are not able to serve the Lord for he is a holy God.
- He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. What would have been your response to this kind of challenge if one of your pastors said something like that?
- I mean, it seems like they were quick to rush to sign the document and Joshua really wanted them to think through and to process and really perhaps his challenge should have generated questions.
- Well, why would Joshua say something like that? He's holy. He's jealous. He will not forgive your transgression. What's in view here are that there are consequences for their actions.
- The one who had done them so much good, verses 2 through 13, if rejected and dishonored would turn to do them harm and consume them, verse 20, after doing them good.
- [27 : 52] And guess what, friends? Though it did not happen in the Joshua generation, the apostasy was just one generation away. These exhortations should have humbled them.
- And in reality, brothers and sisters, this is something that you and I cannot do of ourselves. And perhaps this sort of could push us to make us aware of our ultimate need of God's help.
- And humbling ourselves before him and asking for the very strength of Christ, just as we were not able to save ourselves, neither can we keep ourselves. You and I need the Lord's help.
- Lord, help us to know how to respond to this. Are you constrained by God's grace?
- If you're not, you and I should be. Robert Robertson said, well, the beloved hymn, Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.
- [29 : 00] Might he have had this chapter in mind or a similar one when he penned the famous hymn? Was it in recognition of his inability that caused him to prayerfully appeal to the Almighty?
- We know that eventually he did fall away. But listen, come Thou Fount of Every Blessing, and that's what God presents himself to be in verses 2 through 13.
- Tune my heart to sing Thy Grace. Oh, Lord, I want to recognize it.
- I want to see it clearly. If there's anything in my heart that is blocking me from recognizing the greatness of Your sovereign grace, Lord, read to me.
- You know where I am in. Discard, there's discard and disarray in my life. streams of mercies never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise.
- [30 : 09] And not only do they call for songs, they call for living that demonstrates true worship to Him. And then he says, I love that last verse, don't you?
- Oh, to grace how great a debtor. Daily I'm constrained to be.
- Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wondering heart to Thee. Prone to wander. You ever feel that?
- Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for your courts above. Seal it for your work below.
- My heart belongs to you. But here's the response of the people of God. Like a repeated refrain in the midst of warning, we hear rising from this particular text a refrain.
- [31 : 13] Led by Joshua himself. Hey, you can choose these gods that are around you, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And then we hear them in verse 18.

We'll also serve the Lord. He's our God. No, verse 21, but we will serve the Lord. The Lord, our God, we will serve his voice. Will we obey?

Oh, friends, but may we recognize our inability base and may we recognize God's holy and awesome character, but may we also recognize our inability to do these things on our own.

Israel would find that out. In a sense, it seems like they were rushing to sign a document. They didn't necessarily fully understand.

Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go was the sound in the gospel. Jesus said, wait a minute. Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

[32 : 21] Though all deny you, Lord, I'll not deny you, Peter. The other disciples, they signed the dotted line. Oh, but when the shepherd was smitten, what happened?

The sheep scattered. What about the summary? How does this book end? How does this chapter end? God's promises to give his people the land have been kept.

His plans for his people were clearly in play. You see that? Verse 28, Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. After these things, Joshua the servant of the Lord died, being at this ideal age.

This was considered an ideal lifespan in ancient Egypt. Joseph, Genesis chapter 50, died at the same age. God's people have become a great nation.

They are in God's place in the land. They are experiencing God's blessing. Every man to his own inheritance. Verse 28, Joshua buried in his own inheritance.

[33 : 35] And then, like Moses, Joshua was designated as servant of the Lord. So what?

What are the implications as it relates to this death of the Lord's servant? As Moses, the servant of the Lord, fulfilled God's purposes for him, so Joshua fulfilled God's purposes for him.

While Joshua was designated as the Lord's servant, who led his household the people of God and serving God's scripture speaks of one who the profile of another of God's servant who accomplishes his will.

The legacy of God's servant Joshua, he led God's people to God's place and fulfillment of God's promise. But the one who was designated as the servant of the Lord, the Lord, none other than the Lord, Jesus Christ himself.

Huh? Matthew speaks of this. This was to fulfill Matthew chapter 12 verse 17 what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah behold my servant whom I have chosen my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased I will put my spirit upon him and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles he will not quarrel or cry loud nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets a bruised reed he will not break a smoldering wick us to victory what Matthew was saying is Jesus fulfilled this prophecy of Isaiah chapter 42 the servant of the Lord language begins in earnest Isaiah chapter 42 which Matthew quotes here but it continues on into passages like Isaiah 52 and 53 they're also understood as relating to the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ listen to just two verses from those chapters behold my servant will act wisely

[35 : 43] Isaiah 52 13 he will be high and lifted up and shall be exalted and then from that great Isaiah 53 verse 11 out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied by his knowledge shall the righteous one my servant make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities the legacy of Joshua God's servant he led God's people to the promise God's place and fulfillment of God's promise the legacy of Jesus God's servant through him you and I have forgiveness of sins through his death and we possess an inheritance that is incorruptible undefiled reserved in heaven for us and then friends there's some there's some implications from this passage related to the week that is before us even as the people of God returned to

Shechem for covenant renewal! Shechem was a sacred place of consecration and dedication there's no more sacred place for you and me than at Calvary and so in this week in special ways we have the opportunity to revisit Calvary and the events thereof and so let's not let the week pass without giving consideration to these various things may we through reading publicly and privately and worship and reflection come face to face once again with God's sovereign grace that has been extended through his son God's son God's servant our Lord Jesus Christ and may we respond accordingly!

On Good Friday service will include communion and the opportunity to again survey the wondrous cross upon which the Prince of Glory died is this not the ceremony initiated by our Lord on Holy Week that through which you and I can affirm our allegiance to him and are reminded of God's gracious deeds on our behalf and our responsibilities that go along with that look what God has given us through these great and marvelous and wonderful things you and I have the opportunity for renewal and may the Lord use this week to help us affirm even as it's going to be expressed by this last song that we are going to sing we are on the Lord's side in the midst of a culture with its appeal and with its draw and with its attraction for us to be something else oh but it's like

Goliath's armor friends it doesn't fit we belong to God and serve him and him alone we're on the Lord's side we truly belong to our Savior may we be strengthened in those very things the week that's before us bow your heads with me in prayer you and as we prepare to sing together dear Lord we do give thanks to you this afternoon Lord as we come to the end of a book Joshua is dead Joshua is buried and we think even Lord Jesus of that faithful Friday where you died and you were buried oh but there's no place found for you on this earth and may we

Lord as we come to this week be renewed as we look again as Israel went to Shechem may we go to Calvary may we be renewed in your strength there is our prayer in Christ's name amen let us stand