



Handout for week of 8/20/18 John 6: 60-69 & Jos. 24: 1-2a, 15-17, 18b

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Joshua 24: 1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods. 3 And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. 15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but

as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.' 16 And the people answered and said: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God, He it is that brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and that did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the peoples through the midst of whom we passed; 18 and the LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites that dwelt in the land; therefore we also will serve the LORD; for He is our God.'

#### COMMENTARY:

The passage from Joshua this week is taken from the end of the Book of Joshua. Joshua has led the Israelites into the land, run a campaign north and south, and claimed the whole. Now, he invites all to renew the covenant made earlier with Moses. This is a new generation, but it is more. Archaeologists have shown there was a disenfranchised group of people, growing in size, that lived among the nations at that time. They were known as the "habiru." This word is very similar to "Hebrew." And when we realize that the name the People of God had for themselves was "Israelites," but they were known to outsiders as Hebrews, and identified themselves to others as such, we begin to see a distinct relationship. The theory is that a group of habiru escaped Egypt and found a place in the land of Canaan, where they found a similar subclass living a second-class life alongside the dominant groups. Recognizing a kinship, they joined the conquest. Now, in the final chapter, they are invited into the covenant as well.

Fr. Beck goes on to say: What we see is that many of the disciples found his teaching difficult and began murmuring (like Israel in the desert). As a result, many left "and returned to their former way of life." Jesus asks the Twelve if they will also leave. Peter's response remains memorable: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God." A thematic link that ties the Joshua text to the story from John: In both, the time has come to reaffirm allegiance and take matters to the next level. Fr. Robert Beck.

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