

# A CALL UNTO SALVATION OR SERVICE?

## Understanding Deut. 30:15-18 and Joshua 24:15

### I. Deuteronomy 30:15-20

**Background:** Moses is 120 years old and is nearing his death. Read Deut. 31:2;14.

**Context of the passage:** Mt Ebal & Mt Gerizim (Curses & Blessings). Obedience corresponds to life, blessing and prosperity; Disobedience corresponds to curses and death.

*<sup>15</sup> “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, <sup>16</sup> in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.*

*<sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. <sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you*

*and your descendants may live;<sup>20</sup> that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”*

## 2. Joshua 24:15

**Background:** Joshua is 110 years old and is nearing his death. Read Josh 23:1. He dies in 24:9.

**Context of the passage:** In Chapters 23 & 24 we find Joshua's Farewell Speech, addressing the nation to hold back from serving other gods.

<sup>14</sup> *“Now therefore, fear the LORD, **serve Him** in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your **fathers served** on the other side of<sup>[d]</sup> the River and in Egypt. **Serve the LORD!**<sup>15</sup> **And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of<sup>[e]</sup> 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.”***

<sup>16</sup> *So the people answered and said: “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to **serve** other gods;<sup>17</sup> for*

*the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”*

<sup>19</sup> *But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.”*

<sup>21</sup> *And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD!”*

<sup>22</sup> *So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.”*

*And they said, “We are witnesses!”*

<sup>23</sup> *“Now therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.”*

<sup>24</sup> *And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!”*

*<sup>25</sup> So Joshua made<sup>fj</sup> a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.*

Repeatedly both of these texts are erroneously used for salvation appeals. But, when when we take a closer look, we discover they are not about summons for sinners to receive eternal life, but rather about safeguarding physical life.

Israel had already become God's people by deliverance from Egyptian slavery. At this point in time, they were a redeemed people for almost 40 years. Their old life was long past. And when they had come to Mt. Sinai they had fully consented to being placed under God's law, vowing to abide by it. They are a covenanted people.

Deut.29:1, discloses Israel's instruction about the Palestine Covenant (and addendum to the Mosaic Law), which actually has a more direct connection to the Abrahamic Covenant because of the God's unconditional terms in them. As we read on in the chapter, we see how Israel, a covenanted people, is warned to turn away from false gods, otherwise they risk physical death.

A reiteration of the consequences they faced should they violate the conditions of the law is what the two texts in question are all about. Under law— it is obey and be blessed or disobey and be judged. Salvation and justification, by turning to God in faith

is not in view here. Choose whom you will serve this day, is the essence of the message. It is a call unto service.

God's redeemed people are firmly exhorted to obediently serve their God alone. There are no directives to the people to *become* believers in these scriptures. They are instructed *as* believers.

Throughout the volume of sacred scripture, no one is ever commanded to choose God for salvation. It is an impossibility for man to elect God.

God chooses man unto salvation (2Thess. 2:13).