

## 2. Man in the dock: Which God do you worship?

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you turn with me, if you would, to the passage that we read in Joshua chapter 24, page 198. And my text this morning really is just one verse, as I said, verse 15.

We're taking a departure, I suppose, for a while from our normal practice of studying right the way through a book of the Bible. And we're taking a topical series at the moment on the questions that God, through his word, asks to men and women.

Last week we began and we said that usually we tend to think it's the other way around, don't we? Usually, I suppose, people tend to think that they are the questioners.

We are the ones who are firing the questions at God. That is, if God is there at all. People today, aren't they, they ask questions about God.

And they want God to defend himself. God to give an account of himself for us. People in our culture today tend to think of God as being in the dock.

[ 1 : 10 ] We are firing the questions at him. But we saw that the reality, in fact, is completely the other way around. The reality is that God is not in the dock.

But rather it's God who's asking the questions to us. He is in control. He's the one who, in his word, is putting us on the spot. He's like Lord Carmen, if you like.

The fiercest and the most dreaded advocate in the land. Well, the Lord God of heaven is, in fact, the most searching advocate in the whole universe.

If we will only listen to his voice. So, you see, we ask ourselves, well, God, where are you? But the reality is that God is asking us, well, where are you, oh man?

And what have you done? It's a question that we looked at last week. All the way through the Bible. But there it was, first of all, in Genesis chapter 3. And today we're looking at another question that God puts to us, in just the same demanding way.

[ 2 : 18 ] It's there in verse 15. It's implied by what's said in that verse. Which God are you serving? Which God do you worship?

Now, again, you see, we tend to think that we're asking that question, don't we? We ask, or we give an answer in the various surveys that you sometimes see in the newspapers or on the internet or whatever.

And the question comes, do you believe in God at all? Do you worship God at all? But no, God says, actually, that's the wrong question to ask. That's completely wrong.

The reality is that you are, of course, worshipping some God or other. And the question is, which God? Which God is it that you yourself worship?

Is it the true and living God? The one God of heaven and earth? The one who alone is worthy of praise and worship? The one who alone has power to save you? Or is it actually some false God?

[ 3 : 19 ] A God who is, in fact, impotent to help you. But very probably a God who is actually powerful to enslave you. You see, we all are serving or worshipping somebody or something.

That's the truth. Well, it's a truth that's been recognised by many of the great thinkers and the writers, even our contemporary ones. As many of you know, the famous quote attributed to G.K. Chesterton, when men stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing.

They believe in anything. Actually, I discovered as I looked that up, that in fact, that quote doesn't seem to appear anywhere in the writings of G.K. Chesterton. He never seems to have actually said it at all, although it seems to have been attributed to him.

But no doubt it's something that he very likely would have said. And there are some very similar things in his writing. Here's somebody else. Listen to this.

Another literary giant of our contemporary world. He says this. You may be an ambassador to England or France. You may be like to gamble or you might like to dance.

[ 4 : 27 ] You may be the heavyweight champion of the world. You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls, but you're going to have to serve somebody. Yes, indeed. You're going to have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody.

Recognize it? You might be a rock and roll addict prancing on the stage. You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage. You may be a businessman or a high degree thief.

They may call you doctor or they may call you chief, but you're going to have to serve somebody. Yes, you're going to have to serve somebody. Maybe the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody.

I'm sure all the aging rockers among you recognize the words of the great Bob Dylan there, that literary giant, that lyrical masterpiece. But you see, it doesn't matter whether it's G.K. Chesterton or Bob Dylan or whoever it is, all of us, when we really think about it, recognize that truth, that something or someone has control over our life.

And that means that that something or someone is our God. So you see, the real question is not at all, do you worship God? But the real question is, which God do you serve?

[ 5 : 44 ] And that's the question that God is putting to his people Israel here right at the end of the book of Joshua through his servant Joshua. After 40 years in the wilderness, they're on the brink of the promised land.

In that regard, I guess, it's a good question for us to think about, isn't it? As we're on the brink of a new stage in our life together as a congregation. It's a challenge that God threw down to his people then in verse 15.

Choose this day whom you will serve. Which God? Because you see, it recognizes, doesn't it, that they are going to be serving some God or other.

And it forces them to recognize that and to make a conscious choice. And ever since, right up to the present day, God has still been asking that same question of men and women.

Which God will it be for you? Not, not will you serve the God of the Bible, made known in Jesus Christ, or no God, and be free of all other gods.

[ 6 : 47 ] No, you will be serving one God or another. But the question is, which God? Is that all right, you might say? That's, that's probably all right for those far off days of primitive religion and primitive culture.

Perhaps, perhaps everybody then was religious. I guess they were. And so they did believe in gods and spirits and things like that. And they were serving some God or other. But that's not any, that's not so any longer.

I reject all of that mumbo-jumbo. I'm a, I'm a modern secular person. That might be true in some parts of the world, but I've rejected it. It's all mumbo-jumbo. Not in our, not in our post-modern secularized Scotland.

That's just nonsense. It's just tosh. Well, I want to suggest to you that if you really think about it, you're wrong. By the way, also I think you need to recognize that if that is your attitude, it's really rather patronizing.

It's really rather arrogant. Because you see, you can't just dismiss all religions of, of all different kinds as being mumbo-jumbo and primitive. Unless you claim to have omniscient knowledge that it is wrong and that you yourself can have an absolute and certain knowledge of the truth.

[ 8 : 07 ] Isn't that right? If you dismiss all religions as being relative and equal, that means that you're making a claim that you know must be absolutely true.

And that's really something that by definition if you, if you're a relativist, you can't really say, can you? So be careful. We dismiss all religion and all the possibility of there being a true God as nonsense.

We're really claiming omniscience for ourself. We want to be a bit more humble than that, don't we? But anyway, you see, it just simply isn't true, is it, that education and culture must necessarily leave religion behind?

Of course not. I mean, think of, think of the heights of educated society. Think of the pinnacle, for example, of Greek culture and education. Think of the Athenian Areopagus in the first century AD. It was full of philosophy, full of culture, full of highbrow learning. That was the culture, wasn't it, that gave us the Greek myths, the Greek tragedies. The culture that gave us Socrates and Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, the very thinkers that underpin the very modern world that we've built and that

we live in.

[ 9 : 21 ] These are the ones that gave us the very foundations of our western civilization. We can't call that primitive mumbo-jumbo, can we?

And yet, if you look in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17, you'll find that when Paul the Apostle visited Athens, a place where the Athenian philosophers spent all their time thinking about ideas and philosophy and wisdom and logic and intelligence, well, we read that he found a city full of objects of worship.

He even included an altar, didn't it, to the unknown god. So, you see, even these highbrow Athenian professors were actually very, very religious. And just as many people today are in our culture, even in our so-called secular culture, whether they know it or not.

Now, it may be that today we're better to think of the word spirituality rather than religion, but it's just as true, isn't it? We're all worshipping someone or something.

Because Bob Dylan's right, you've got to serve somebody. It can be primitive, it can be religious idolatry. You will find places in the world today where people bow down to statues and poles and their ancestors and so on in many, many cultures.

[ 10 : 39 ] It is that still. But it can be just as easily a very educated and intellectual idolatry, very cultured. And even in our Western culture, even with all its intellectual roots in Greece and so on, you'll still find, won't you, the same old pagan superstitions abounding all over the place.

I read just recently a survey of university students and a huge percentage of them showed that they were extraordinarily superstitious. Looking at horoscopes, taking lucky charms into their exams and so on, otherwise they'd be panicking.

Students at top universities look at footballers and their special boots that they have to wear or a special lucky strip or all sorts of rituals that they have to perform. You find it even amongst the most extraordinary people, the most educated people.

I mentioned last week Martin Bell, the TV reporter who turned a politician. You remember Martin Bell in his book talks about why he wears that white suit of his all the time.

An educated man, an intelligent man but must wear that white suit of his because he felt it protected him from the bullets flying when he was a war reporter. Martin Luther, the great reformer, said this, whatever your heart clings to and relies on, that is your God.

[ 12 : 04 ] In other words, whatever you trust in and rely on for your satisfaction in life, for your salvation, for your identity, that is your Savior.

Whatever you love, whatever you serve, whatever you give your life to and give your life for, that is your Lord. That is who owns you or what owns you.

So you see, the question is a true one. Which God do you worship? Which God do you serve? You know, that worship can look very religious or it can actually look very secular, very irreligious.

I don't think really much has changed in the 4,000 years since Joshua spoke these words to the people of Israel. That's because human beings and the human heart hasn't changed very much. Just look again at verse 15.

Look carefully and see what it says. Joshua, you see, gives two alternatives, doesn't he? To the worship of the one true God of the Bible, the God of Israel. And both of those alternatives are false gods.

[ 13 : 13 ] They're idolatry. It's important to see that, isn't it? He's not saying, serve God or you'll be serving nothing. But he is saying, serve the true God or you will inevitably be serving one or other of these false gods.

What are they? Look at verse 15. Either the gods your father served way back in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites, the Canaanites whose land they were going to enter into.

In other words, what he's saying is unless you are serving the one true God, you will be serving either the God of your old abandoned culture or you'll be serving the God of your new adopted culture.

either you'll be serving, if I can put it this way, old age, old fashioned religion or you'll be serving new age, new fashionable spiritualities.

But the true way, the worship of the real God of the Bible is neither of these things and that's very important. Now I want to ask you, isn't that exactly the same today, four thousand years later?

[ 14 : 21 ] I think that's the choice that the Bible tells us is the reality, isn't it? People are either following Jesus Christ, the one true God, the real Saviour and Lord with power to save or they're

enslaved.

They're serving either the old gods, the gods of popular folk religion and traditions of our forefathers, traditional religions or they're serving the new gods of trendy spiritualities, the gods of our contemporary fluid culture, the contemporary spiritualities of today.

One of those two things. Just think about what those look like in our own culture today. First of all, think about the old gods, the traditional religion, the old gods of the culture of our fathers that we've left behind in our day and generation.

Now in this country I would describe that as folk Christianity. It's what you get when a country has been Christianized like our country was.

We talk about being brought up, don't we, in a Christian society. Of course that's not true in any way that the Bible would really recognize it. It's never been a Christian society but it has been a society with Christianized cultural expectations because once we were built upon a Christian ethos.

[ 15 : 43 ] And that is the traditional religion of our fathers here in Scotland, in Britain, isn't it, in recent centuries. So think of the modern world. It's disappearing fast now in the West.

Much faster in Europe than in North America. In North America of course the society is still much more Christianized than our society here is in Britain. We see that, don't we, in the political sphere. In America you can't really be elected as president if you declare that you're an atheist. You really have to make some sort of profession of religious faith. But of course over here it's very different. We don't do God in number 10 Downing Street. Have you noticed that with our new prime minister, Mr. Brown, he's often called the son of the manse. And it's always in a rather disparaging way. It's always to sort of poo-poo that religious background. I always find it interesting that he's a son of the manse. He seems to have learned very different things being brought up in his manse than I learned in the manse that I was brought up in.

[ 16 : 41 ] But that's an interesting thing. But you see, we're less and less, aren't we, a Christianized society. But there are people, and if you're of an older generation, you may very well still be serving that God, the God of our fathers, the God of our past, for Christianity.

Somebody like that is probably somebody who greatly values reason, somebody who greatly values morals. You think highly, perhaps, of duty and of service.

You're impatient with talk about freedom and rights. I guess in terms of politics, somebody like that is much more likely to be a staunch supporter of the right or the left, because you're a very principled person.

You probably read the Daily Mail on the one hand, or it might be the socialist worker on the other. Or you might be like our session clerk who told me he's reduced to reading the Daily Telegraph because he can't find a properly conservative paper anymore.

But you may be very religious. You may be very, very involved in religion and the church even. Could be, and it very possibly is, that guilt is something that figures quite highly in your thinking.

[ 17 : 54 ] That would be true especially if you come from a own Catholic background, but also some very strict Protestant homes. So there's a strong desire in your heart to be seen to be a good person by others, to be seen to be a good person by God and to strive therefore for his acceptance.

But actually, and here's the shock, you might think all of these things but actually be serving a false god, serving an idol, just the god of old traditional folk Christianity that's rife in our country.

Because that's not the god of the Bible, not at all. It's actually a god of your human creation. It's a god that you have made, a savior that you've made for yourself. And you do this, and you live like this, and you give to this, and you think that, well, this god will accept you.

He'll reward you. He'll justify you. That kind of god, you see, may be an example to you for the way to live. He may be a guide to your life and to your work.

But ultimately, actually, if that is your view of god, what you are clinging to, is really a savior who is yourself. You're relying on your own performance. You're relying on you living in the right way, coming up to expectations, doing the right thing.

[ 19 : 16 ] Living by moralistic duty really means that your real god is your own performance, your self-righteousness. And many, many people in churches across the western world, in this country, are actually living like that.

they're serving the old gods of the culture of the past, of churchianity. If you're somebody like that, if your personality tends towards the depressive, then you will very probably know that most of the time you're not attaining the level of goodness and the right kind of life.

You very likely find yourself often very discouraged and in despair about your faith. If you're the opposite kind of person who really thinks rather well of yourself, then you're probably rather a pompous hypocrite.

And other people probably find you so, because you think you're doing rather well. If you're a very anxious sort of person, you'll probably find that if you're religious like that, you're very, very driven, you're very fearful, you're consumed by doubt.

Because, of course, your salvation really ultimately depends upon your performance, doesn't it? As does your acceptance with God and with other people. You see, if that's you, you're trusting in a very, very fragile Savior.

[ 20 : 39 ] But you're being owned and you're being ruled very probably by a very, very unforgiving Lord. Isn't that right? You can be as religious as you'd like. You can be as moral as you can.

But if that is the God you're serving, you cannot find a real Savior. That's the gods of traditional folk Christianity in this country.

And no wonder he's been rejected. No wonder our present generation has turned away from all of that and left it in the past. Because as a nation, we long ago rejected the true and living God of Scripture.

We made a caricature of a moralistic, Christianized veneer. But maybe that's not you. Maybe you're somebody very different. Maybe you actually are worshipping the new gods of contemporary spirituality, of our more post-modern world, secular world.

If that's you, then you've rejected all the old traditions of the past. You probably have no interest at all in moralistic duty. You're probably somebody who's much more focused on thinking about freedom, self-expression.

[ 21 : 50 ] You're not interested in duty, but you want to think about pleasure and fulfillment because that's what life's all about. You're very probably not at all traditional and conservative.

You're probably very liberal. You may be much more open and relativist. You very probably think yourself very irreligious. You probably think you've rejected all the phony and restrictive stuff about God and the church and so on.

But of course, what you have actually rejected is the empty and crippling folk religion of the past, the old gods, not the god of the Bible. But you know, the fact is, if that is you, then you're also still worshipping.

You're just worshipping a different kind of idol. You've just swapped the old gods for the new gods. You may have consciously rejected the values of the old world, things like duty and service to pursue self-fulfillment and freedom, you may have no interest at all in the sort of things that once gave status and approval in society.

You know, the kind of respectable professions that parents always wanted for their children. Well, to be teachers or doctors or lawyers or things like that. Why all the hassle? Why would you want to do that?

[ 23 : 07 ] You know, interest in the sort of things that gave drive and meaning to people's lives in the past, political ideologies, political parties, membership of organizations, that sort of thing?

People don't bother about that now, do they? Who cares about ideology? Just do the pragmatic thing. That's much more the way people think now, isn't it?

But actually, you see, it seems that people who think like that are just as driven. Just as driven to seek recognition and to seek approval and to seek acceptance.

It's just that it's by other means. Maybe it's by material wealth and success. Who cares how you get it? That's not important. It's what you get and what it can get for you.

Or it's image that you strive after. Flash cars. Flash lifestyle. Flash body. Look at the proliferation in gyms and places of body worship in our society today.

[ 24 : 07 ] Maybe it's independence, being freed from constraints, from obligations and so on. So now, you see, we have a great emancipated society, don't we? We're free of the burden of the religious nonsense and the old gods of the past.

But are we free? It seems we're not so free. It seems that we've been liberated for stress, doesn't it? Stress and burnout. That's the watchwords of our word.

We're on a treadmill of harassed and hectic hedonism. Have these new freedoms really liberated us? Of course, they haven't.

You can't escape the lordship of some god or other. Just think of the great illusion that is the so-called feminist emancipation.

It's just one example. Of course, there are many. But it's just one, isn't it? See, women in a previous generation were serving the old gods. To have value and worth in the eyes of society, in their own eyes, in the world's eyes, well, it all depended, didn't it, upon having relationships of dependence, having a marriage, having family, having children and so on.

[ 25 : 25 ] And so they lived in desperate anxiety to have these things, a great misery if they didn't. They were really slaves to that god. They were justified, if you like, by marriage and by family.

So along came the feminist movement and rejected all of that, threw out all of those old gods and said, let us be liberated and free. But what has happened? Well, by and large, all of that's been rejected.

To obtain value and worth is no longer about family or marriage or dependent relationships or all the things that perhaps were seen as the right thing in the past, but now it's a career.

It's relationships not of dependence, but independence. And self-sufficiency. And freedom. And so women have become desperate for these things and very miserable if they haven't got them.

And justification by family is a thing of the past, but now it's justification by career. It's very interesting, isn't it, that even some of the arch-feminists of the 60s, like Germaine Greer, can see that.

[ 26 : 33 ] In the 60s, she was writing in her book *The Female Eunuch*, a rallying cry to women to overthrow the past, to despise these false gods that women were being made to bow down and worship.

But just a few years ago, she's writing in other books, lamenting the fact that far from bringing salvation, far from bringing real liberation, it's done nothing of the kind.

It's just substituted new masters and new tyrannies. Equality, she says, is a very poor substitute for liberation. And she herself personally writes about mourning for her unborn babies, like many who threw away the so-called oppression of family life, for the apparent liberation of a career.

The immense rewardingness, she says, of children is the best kept secret in the Western world.

Isn't that a turnaround for somebody like her? Now, don't misunderstand me.

I'm not arguing at all that everything in the feminist movement has been wrong, nor am I arguing that the old gods that were the things that alone gave women value in society should be reinstated, that these things shouldn't have been laid open to scrutiny.

[ 27 : 48 ] Of course not. Quite the reverse. One of the very reasons there was such a revolt was that these indeed were false gods. It's precisely because they were false and powerless idols that they did oppress and subjugate.

Because idols can never satisfy us. But the point is, if old gods can't satisfy us, neither can new gods. And to think that by ditching one set of gods for another, by pursuing one set of ways to be accepted for another, we can suddenly liberate ourselves into sheer fantasy.

That's just what Germaine Greer and many others have recognized about the feminist movement.

That's just one example where one set of oppressive masters have been replaced by another.

We've done it time and again in all sorts of ways as we sought freedom. But you see, you've got to serve somebody. And if your life is not under the gracious and liberating lordship of the one God of heaven and earth, the God who made you, the God who owns you, the God who alone can understand you, the God who alone can give you your true identity, then you will be serving some other God.

You'll be serving a powerless idol who can never help you or liberate you or satisfy you, but who can and who will always enslave you. That's the only real power that idols and false gods have.

[ 29 : 16 ] No power to save, but immense power to enslave. To cause you to serve them, to subjugate you under the burden of what they make you strive for.

Whether it's an ideology that consumes and drives you, or whether it's an anxiety that cripples you, or some kind of guilt that oppresses you, or some kind of sexual identity that you feel you must buy down to.

You've got to serve somebody. Listen to Bob Dylan again. Might like to wear cotton, might like to wear silk, might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk.

You might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread, you might be sleeping on the floor, sleeping in a king-sized bed. But you're going to have to serve somebody. Yes, you're going to have to serve

somebody.

And he's right about that, at least. It's a perennial question, you see. Which God do you personally serve? If you're serving the old gods of folk Christianity, of churchianity, of respectable religion, you need to know that that's actually a false god you're serving.

[ 30 : 32 ] It's a false god because whatever you're really doing, you're doing for yourself. You're really relying and trusting on yourself for the goodness that you know you need.

And friends, that is the way of total disaster. You only have to sit and think about it for a minute to know that's true. It's a disaster because you cannot perform. And you know that, if you're honest. It's a disaster because you cannot save yourself. And there's a lot of people who have been to church all their lives, who have been in church services all their lives, who have held office in churches all their lives.

And yet, that at heart is what they're trying to do. And also, there are a lot of truly genuine evangelical Christian people who believe in salvation by grace alone through faith, who nevertheless slip constantly into that way of living and thinking.

Because it's the natural way of our human hearts. We're living, serving a false god, slaving and becoming enslaved. Because we've turned from the true and living God to serve an idol, a God of our own creation.

[ 31 : 45 ] But you see, only one God can really save you. And that is the true God of the Bible, the God who is himself our Savior. A God who can forgive you. A God who can give you the blameless record that you need and that you keep on needing in your life.

He can give it to you because he, by his grace alone, takes away your guilt. Takes away your underperformance and takes away your inadequacy. He takes away your sin.

He gives you his righteousness and his purity and his perfection. He gives you the record that you know you need. But so often you're striving, really, if you're honest, to provide for yourself.

You need to rediscover the true God of Scripture, the God of grace, the God who gives. But on the other hand, you might not be nearly so worried about being good and righteous.

You just want to be free. You serve the new gods, the God of apparent freedom and fulfillment and pleasure. Well, friend, you also need to know that you too are serving a false god, a powerless god.

[ 32 : 55 ] A god maybe full of false promises, but a god who will always disappoint you. He'll have you chasing fleeting pleasures that will keep you enslaved with promises that simply will not last.

Because only one god can really free you. Only one god can really fulfill you forever so that you can truly love him and serve him without fear and without disappointment.

And that's the true god of the Bible. Not the god of vague folk religion and morality. Not the shifting spiritualities of today's post-secular world.

But a real god. God with a name. See verse 15? Sure you notice that. This god isn't just any old god. He has a name, doesn't he?

He's Jehovah, Yahweh. He's the Lord in capital letters, as our Bible puts it. He has a name that he's revealed so that he can be known personally.

[ 34 : 00 ] And he has a history so that we can know what this god has done. So we can know who he is and what he's like. This god has a track record that you can trust. If you look back a couple of pages to Joshua chapter 21, there's a couple of verses at the end of that chapter that really are the climax of this book.

They tell the story of everything that's happened. Just listen to them. Joshua says, Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers.

And they took possession of it and they settled there. And the Lord gave them the rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies has withstood them. For the Lord has given all their enemies into their hands.

Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord has made to the house of Israel has failed. All came to pass. It sums up the history of this god with his people.

You see, that's the god that Joshua is talking about here. If you read the whole of chapter 24 in his speech, you'll see that he's just repeating at length what these couple of verses have said to us.

[ 35 : 08 ] That he's the god of promise who will never fail. He's the god of faithfulness whose works never fail. He's the god of salvation who truly liberates his people forever.

He's the god of great reward who gives and gives and gives abundantly beyond all the imaginings of his people. And Joshua says, As for me and my house, we will serve this god.

You're bound to ask really, aren't you, why would you serve any other god when there's such evidence of who and what this god is really like? Why would they?

Friends, I can tell you that we here today have far, far more, don't we, of the great history of this god? To know who he is and what he's like. This is the god with a name who we can know personally because for us he came down at last, didn't he?

Into our world in person, in the flesh of his only son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to be the saviour that you need. He came to be the liberating Lord that you can really trust.

[ 36 : 18 ] And he's done everything that the endless and relentless service of all the old gods could never do for you. He's done it for you. He's presented his perfect life to God for you, a perfect sacrifice for sin.

And he's given it to you freely. There's no performance required. There's no performance possible, is there? Full forgiveness. Full acceptance. Yesterday and today and forever.

And again and again and again. That's a saviour worth having, isn't it? And he offers everything also that all the new gods can promise but can never deliver.

Freedom and fulfilment and life as it really was meant to be, forever. Because to know him is life. To know him as Lord is to know what it means to have perfect freedom.

That's a Lord, isn't it, that you can trust your life to. He's the one who says, come to me for my yoke is easy, my burden is light. Which God do you serve?

[ 37 : 23 ] That's the question that the Bible asks of us. It's your choice. And every one of us does make a choice whether we realise it or not because you've got to serve somebody.

So which is it going to be? Is it going to be the powerless, sterile old gods? Or is it going to be the equally sterile and powerless new gods? Or is it going to be the Lord with power to liberate and to lead you in the path of true and lasting peace?

It's up to you, says Joshua. But don't think, don't ever think that God doesn't care which way you choose. It's never just dispassionate. The Christian gospel is never, ever, well, it's your choice, heaven or hell, take it or leave it, see if I care.

That's never the voice of the one true God of heaven and earth. Never, ever. The Bible urges us, God Himself urges us, choose life, He says.

Choose the Lord. Bow the knee to Jesus Christ. For I came into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world, said Jesus. This God cares.

[ 38 : 33 ] He commands us to serve Him. Yes, He does. He's the Lord of all the earth. But He longs for us to serve Him. He desires that you should serve Him.

He calls and He invites all to serve Him. And He sent His only Son, His beloved Son, to seek and to save the lost so that they might serve Him in gladness and in joy and do so forever.

You've got to serve somebody. So which God do you serve? Well, I hope that you'll take Joshua's words in verse 14 to heart today as we close.

Let me read them to you. 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.

You've got to serve somebody. Which God do you serve? Let's pray together. Lord, our God, we thank You that in the midst of the false and powerless gods of this age, You have revealed to us Your name and that in Your Son You have exalted the name of Jesus above every other name.

[ 39 : 57 ] One day in all heaven and all earth every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord of all. So we pray, O God, in Your grace that You would grant every one of us here to bow the knee to Him alone today and forever.

And that forsaking all other, we and all of our households may serve You for Your great glory and for our eternal blessing also. We ask it in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Well, we're going to end by...