



decision

TEACHING SUMMARY

Nearly a generation has passed since the great campaigns of conquest. Around twenty to twenty-five years have gone by since the land was subdued under Joshua's leadership. Israel is no longer a people marching through wilderness dust or standing on battlefields with swords drawn. They are settled now. They have homes, fields, families, children, routines, meals to prepare, chores to complete, and the ordinary rhythm of daily life.

That is a blessing. But it can also become a danger.

The days when life felt fragile and urgent are now memories. There was a time when enemies stood directly in front of them, when every battle forced them to depend on the Lord for victory, when the pressure of conflict kept their need for God obvious and immediate. There had been sweat, blood, tension, uncertainty, and desperate prayer. They knew they needed Him then.

Now the battles seem distant. The sharp edges of those memories have dulled beneath the predictability of normal life.

Joshua understands this. He knows human nature, and he knows Israel. He knows that comfort can produce forgetfulness just as easily as suffering can produce dependence. So before he dies, he gathers the leaders of the nation, the elders and those entrusted with influence, because he has final words that must be heard.

He begins by reminding them what God has already done.

The land they inhabit was not secured by their brilliance, their military skill, or their strength. The Lord Himself fought for them. He drove out nations before them. He cleared the way. He fulfilled what He promised and handed them an inheritance they could never have taken on their own.

Joshua wants them to remember that their present blessing rests entirely on divine faithfulness.

Then he reminds them what God has said to them. They are to keep the Word of God carefully. They are not free to drift, improvise, or blend truth with surrounding culture. They must remain sanctified, set apart from the pagan nations still around them. They are not to mix loyalties, adopt foreign worship, or become spiritually entangled. They are to stay dependent on the Lord, clinging to Him as they had done in earlier days.

Victory in the past did not remove the need for obedience in the present.

Then Joshua warns them what could happen to them.

If they turn aside, if they begin joining themselves to the nations around them, if they embrace foreign gods and compromise covenant loyalty, those very influences will become snares. What looks harmless at first will become bondage later.

What seems manageable in one generation can become devastation in the next.

Joshua speaks with prophetic clarity. Idolatry will trap them, weaken them, and eventually bring discipline through foreign powers. History would later prove this true through Assyria and Babylon. This danger comes whenever people stop doing what God has said. Neglect obedience, and compromise rushes in.

Joshua then delivers one of the key statements of the chapter. He tells them that not one promise of God has failed. Every good word the Lord spoke came to pass. God keeps His word completely.

That truth is glorious, but it also carries weight.

If God keeps His promises of blessing, He also keeps His warnings of discipline. His faithfulness is not selective. He is true in mercy and true in correction. He will keep His word whether it is for your good or for your chastening.

That is why covenant life matters. After speaking to the leaders, Joshua then gathers all the tribes together. If the earlier meeting was directed at leadership, this next moment is for the whole nation.

Now Joshua tells the story. He recounts their testimony from the beginning. He reminds them where they came from, how God called Abraham, how He multiplied the family line, how He delivered them from Egypt, led them through the wilderness, protected them, defeated enemies before them, and finally brought them into a land they did not build and vineyards they did not plant.

Joshua wants them to remember something essential.

Everything they now enjoy came from grace. Their blessings did not arise from their own ingenuity.

They did not engineer their salvation. They did not carve out inheritance by their own power. They walked into abundance because the Lord gave it.

Then comes a turning point. Joshua says, "Now therefore."

Whenever Scripture says that, it signals a response is required. In light of everything God has done, what now? If God has proven Himself faithful, if He has shown Himself protector, refuge, defender, healer, Savior, then the only fitting response is wholehearted devotion.

So Joshua calls them to fear the Lord, meaning reverence Him deeply. He calls them to serve Him, not casually but with labor and intentionality. He calls them to sincerity, with a whole and undivided heart. He calls them to faithfulness, with firmness, reliability, and truth. He commands them to put away false gods, to turn aside from divided loyalties completely.

Then Joshua places a decision before them. If serving the Lord seems evil in their eyes, then let them choose another master. Let them choose the gods their fathers served or the gods of the nations around them.

But choose. Because everyone worships.

Every person serves something or someone. Human beings are worshipers by design. If they do not worship the true God, they will still worship money, pleasure, power, approval, ideology, self, or idols of another form.

Neutrality is an illusion.

Then Joshua declares his own position before the entire nation and before all generations who would later read these words.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. This is not a passing emotional statement. The sense is ongoing resolve.

I have chosen, and I will keep choosing. Joshua is saying that whatever others do, his home belongs to the Lord.

There is grit in the statement. There is tenderness and steel at the same time. He is pleading with Israel, yet standing immovable himself.

False gods or the Lord. Choose.

This same crisis appears again later in Israel's history through Elijah on Mount Carmel. Israel had tried to keep one foot with Yahweh and one foot with Baal. Jezebel had aggressively promoted Baal worship through political power, trying to displace the worship of the Lord entirely. Elijah confronted the nation with a piercing question: How long will you limp between two opinions?

If the Lord is God, follow Him. If Baal is god, follow him.

Again, there is no middle ground. Yet the people stood silent. Their silence exposed divided hearts. Indecision was itself a decision.

The same pattern appears in the New Testament.

After Jesus fed the five thousand, crowds followed Him for bread and benefits. But when He taught that He Himself was the bread of life, and spoke of deep union with Him by faith, many were offended. His words were not hard because they were confusing. They were hard because they demanded surrender.

Many walked away. So Jesus asked the twelve if they would leave also.

Peter answered with one of the great confessions of discipleship. Where else would they go? Jesus had the words of eternal life.

Peter likely did not understand everything Jesus had said. But he stood firm on what he did know. Christ was the Holy One of God.

That is often how real faith works. We do not always understand every circumstance, but we know who He is.

This is why the choice must be made today. If you wait until suffering comes, until disappointment comes, until God does something you dislike or does not do what you hoped, that day may be too late to form conviction. Resolve must be built beforehand.

Choose this day whom you will serve.

Joshua then hears the people enthusiastically promise obedience. They declare they will serve the Lord.

But Joshua knows their history. He remembers Sinai, where they pledged loyalty and then quickly turned to the golden calf. He knows verbal enthusiasm can evaporate fast. So he presses them. He warns them that this is no game.

God is holy. God is jealous. God alone is worthy. If they treat covenant lightly and run after other gods, destruction will follow. Spiritual adultery carries consequences.

The people respond again, insisting they will serve the Lord.

So Joshua formalizes the commitment. A covenant is recorded. Witnesses are established. Then he tells them to prove their words immediately by putting away foreign gods still among them. Turn aside from idols now, not later.

They commit themselves to drive out remaining Canaanite influence, to cast away idols, and to follow the Lord alone.

Then Joshua dies. Scripture says Israel served the Lord during Joshua's lifetime and during the days of the elders who outlived him. That is both encouraging and sobering. Leadership matters. Godly examples preserve momentum.

But once that generation passed, the people quickly drifted.

They forgot the Lord. They neglected His Word. They worshiped the gods of the very peoples they had failed to drive out.

The Book of Judges tells the tragic sequel, a repeated cycle of sin, oppression, crying out, rescue, and relapse.

It did not have to be that way. The warning reaches beyond Israel to us.

Our greater Joshua, Jesus Christ, has also finished His race. He is our Deliverer, our Captain, our way-maker, our Savior. He has secured a far greater inheritance for His people.

Now the same question stands before every believer.

Will we choose to serve the Lord in the rich inheritance He has given us, or will we forget Him in seasons of comfort?

Will we continue the conquest, driving out compromise and staking claim on every part of life for His name, or will we allow the enemy to remain in tolerated corners?

Will our story resemble Joshua, marked by faith and possession of promise, or Judges, marked by compromise and cycles of defeat?

The decision remains urgent. Choose this day whom you will serve. And the honest heart can say, even imperfectly, even with stumbles and scraped knees along the road:

I have decided to follow Jesus.
Come what may.
Every day.
No turning back.