

The Book of Joshua

Lesson 13: Joshua's Farewell and Covenant Renewal -- Joshua 23:1-24:33

An old man stands before the people he has led for a generation. His hands, once strong enough to grip a sword from sunrise to sunset, now tremble a little. His voice, which once shouted commands that toppled the walls of Jericho, is quieter now. Joshua is old and stricken in years, and he knows his time is short. So he calls Israel together one last time. There is no battle to fight today, no river to cross, no city to take. Today there are only words, the most important words an old leader can leave behind: remember the Lord who brought you here, and do not let go of Him now.

Picture the long arc of a life that is closing. As a young man Joshua had stood at the edge of the Red Sea and watched the water pile up like walls. He had carried Moses' burden and buried Moses on the mountain. He had walked dry-shod across the Jordan, marched around Jericho, divided the land tribe by tribe with his own hands. And now, looking back over all of it, he reaches for one phrase to sum up everything he has seen: not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake. Every promise. Kept. He wants Israel to carve those words on their hearts before he dies.

Then, at Shechem, where Abraham first built an altar and where Jacob buried the strange gods of his household, Joshua gathers the tribes for one final, solemn assembly. He tells the whole story again, from Terah on the far side of the river to this very day, and every line of it is the story of what God did. And when the rehearsing is done, he sets a choice before them as plainly as it has ever been set before anyone: choose you this day whom ye will serve. Then he plants his own stake in the ground for all of them to see: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

This is the last lesson of our study, and it is the right place to stand. We have walked with Israel from the banks of the Jordan to the rest God gave them in the land. We have seen His faithfulness in flood and battle and inheritance. Now the question turns to us. Joshua's farewell is not only Israel's moment of decision; it is ours. The God who kept every promise to them has kept the greater promise to us in Christ, and into His present rest He calls us still. So do not read this chapter as the end of someone else's story. Read it as the day the choice is set before you. Whom will you serve?

Group Discussion: Joshua summed up his whole life by declaring that not one thing had failed of all the good things the Lord had promised (Joshua 23:14). If you had to name the ways God has kept His word to you over your lifetime, what would make your list, and why do we so easily forget what should be unforgettable?

Personal Reflection: Joshua said, 'but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15). What would it actually mean for you to plant that stake for your own household this week, and what is currently competing for the loyalty that belongs to God alone?

Read Joshua 23:1–24:33

Study Questions

1. In his first farewell address, Joshua tells Israel, 'ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you' (Joshua 23:14). Look carefully at how he frames God's faithfulness in verses 9 through 14. What had the Lord done, and what does Joshua want Israel to conclude about the character of God before he dies? How does this confession of a God who keeps every promise point forward to the greater rest we have in Christ (Hebrews 4:8–10)?
2. Joshua could look back over a long life and say with certainty that God had kept every single word. Where in your own life have you watched God keep a promise you once doubted He would keep, and how does remembering those moments strengthen you to trust Him with what is still unresolved?
3. Having celebrated God's faithfulness, Joshua immediately turns to a sober warning: if Israel forsakes the Lord and clings to the remnant of these nations and serves their gods, 'know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations' but they will become snares and traps until Israel perishes from the good land (Joshua 23:12–13, 15–16). Why does Joshua place this warning right beside the promise of God's faithfulness, and what does it teach us about the two-sided nature of covenant relationship with God?
4. Joshua warned that the very things Israel tolerated would become 'snares and traps' and 'scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes' (Joshua 23:13). What is one thing in your own life that you have been tolerating rather than driving out, something that seems small now but could grow into a snare for your soul?

5. At Shechem, Joshua rehearses the whole history of God's grace, beginning, 'Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah... and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham' (Joshua 24:2-3). Trace the pattern of God's actions through verses 2 through 13, noting how often the Lord says 'I' did this. Why does Joshua ground the call to serve God in a long rehearsal of grace rather than simply issuing a command?
6. Joshua's history lesson is really a memory exercise: he forces Israel to see that everything they have was given, not earned (Joshua 24:13). When you are tempted to feel that your life or your faithfulness is your own achievement, what helps you remember that 'every good gift' comes from God's hand, and why does gratitude matter so much to genuine devotion?
7. Joshua sets the choice before Israel with unforgettable plainness: 'choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served... or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15). Why does Joshua present serving God as a deliberate, daily choice rather than something automatic or inherited, and what does this reveal about the real and personal nature of devotion to the Lord?
8. Joshua did not say merely 'I will serve the Lord' but 'I and my house.' How does the leader of a home, or anyone with influence over others, carry a responsibility for the spiritual direction of those under their care, and where is God calling you to lead the people in your life toward Him rather than away from Him?
9. When the people eagerly pledge, 'we also will serve the Lord; for he is our God,' Joshua answers with a startling warning: 'Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God... If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good' (Joshua 24:18-20). Why does Joshua press so hard

against their easy enthusiasm, and what does this passage teach about the seriousness of covenant faithfulness, the real danger of falling away after one has known God's goodness, and the call to wholehearted, exclusive devotion to the Lord (compare Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:26-31)?

10. We have come to the end of the book of Joshua and the end of our study. The choice Joshua set before Israel, 'choose you this day whom ye will serve,' now stands before you, made personal in Christ. Looking back over all the Lord has shown you in this study, what does it mean for you to choose Him fully, today, holding nothing back? Name the specific area of your life where you most need to say with Joshua, 'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,' and follow Christ wholeheartedly from this day forward.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 3:12-14, the warning against an evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God, and the call to hold our confidence steadfast unto the end; Hebrews 10:26-31, the sober reminder that those who turn away after knowing the truth face a fearful judgment, showing the real danger of falling away; Hebrews 4:8-10, Joshua did not give the people the final rest, for there remains a rest in Christ for the people of God; Genesis 12:1-3, the call of Abraham that Joshua rehearses, the foundation of God's saving purpose for all nations; Galatians 3:16, 26-29, the promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ, in whom all who are His become heirs of the promise.

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