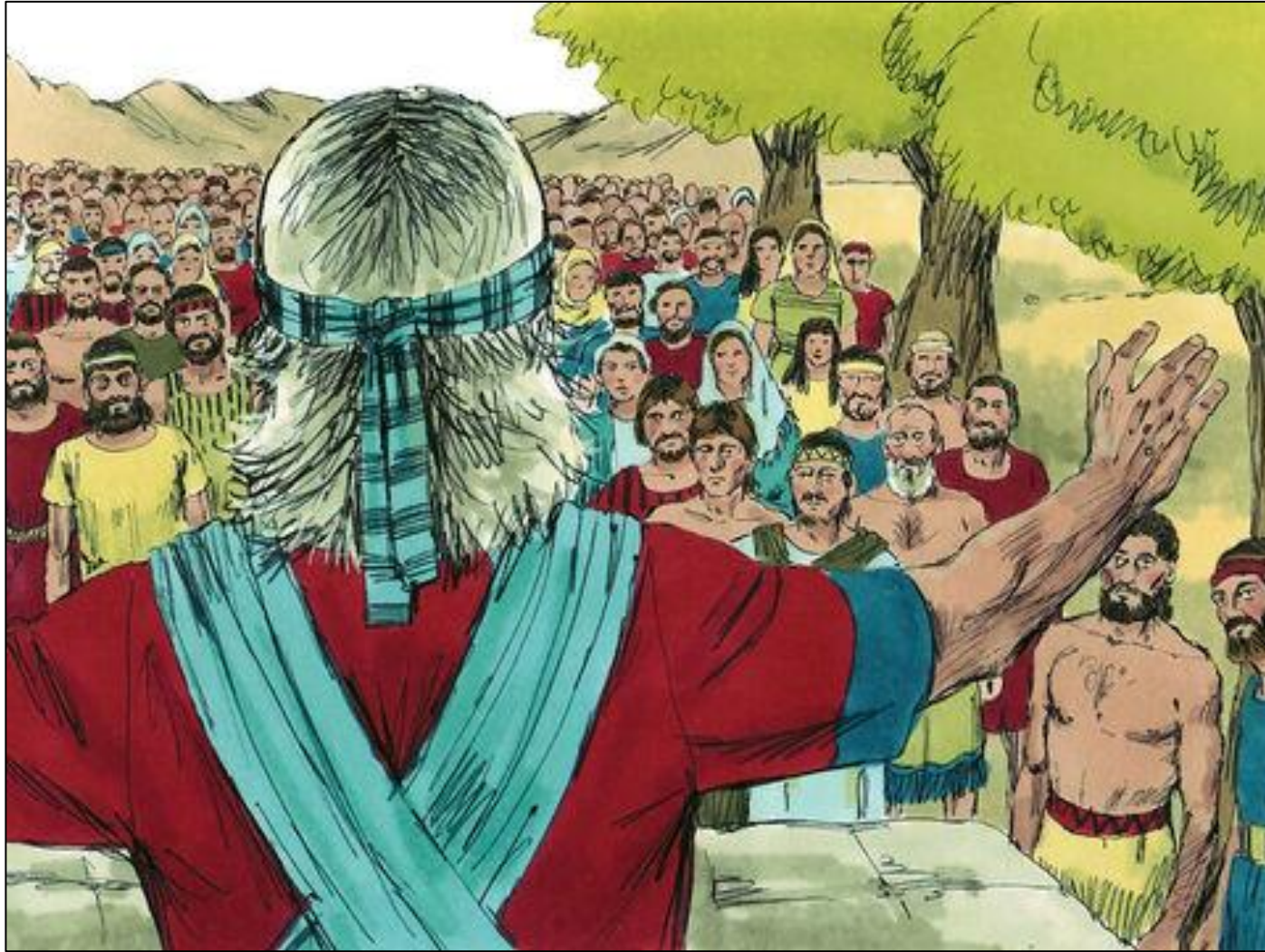


Joshua's last message Part 2



Joshua 24:14-28

This shows the narrow pass where ancient Shechem is located at the modern city of Nablus. Mt. Gerizim is on the left and Mt. Ebal on the right.



Mt Gerizim, Mt Ebal and Shechem form a natural amphitheatre.
This is where Joshua had called for the people to assemble

Shechem – a reconstruction of Joshua's time



It is a place of God's promises and also of man's broken promises

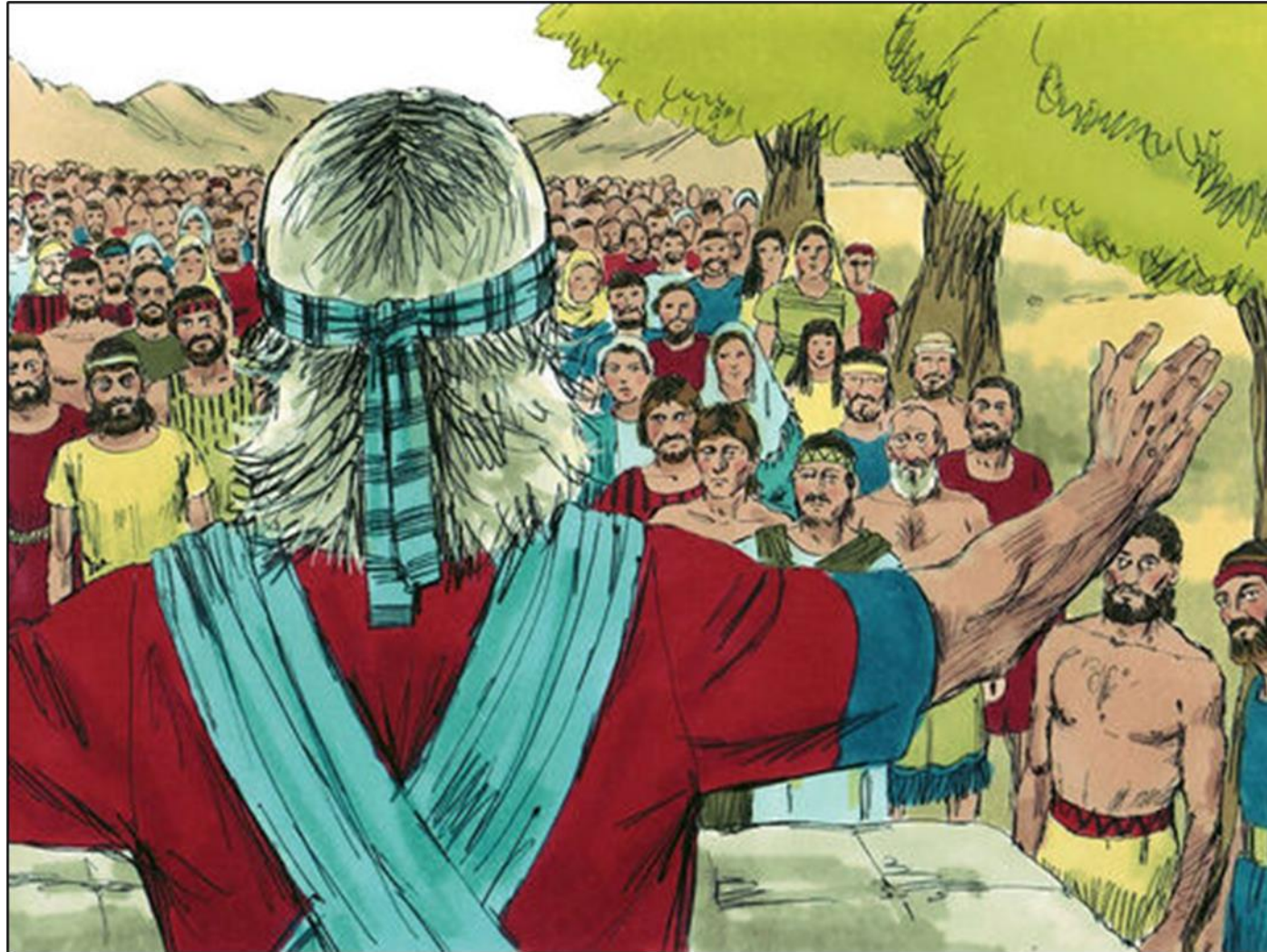
Cf. Jacob and his sons and the subsequent history of Abimelech in judges
In the divided kingdom it became a centre of idolatry

A special place in New Testament times.



This is Jacob's well as it appeared in the 1870s. In the background is Mt. Gerizim where the ruins of the Samaritan temple were located

It is in this special place that Joshua gathers his people for his final time.



Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.

This is the concluding point

'Fear' means to wholly submit one's will to the Lord.

'Serve' means action by worship and deeds

This is the Bible message:-

Faith followed by good works

'LORD' is God's covenant name. The God who has saved us and promises to help us as we trust Him

Separation is necessary

Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

God will not accept dual worship and service

Had they not quite got rid of them?

Were there idols lingering in their minds, hearts and in the corners of their tents?

There were many different gods – all useless

Joshua's word is the same as John's to us
"Do not love the world" (1John 2:15)

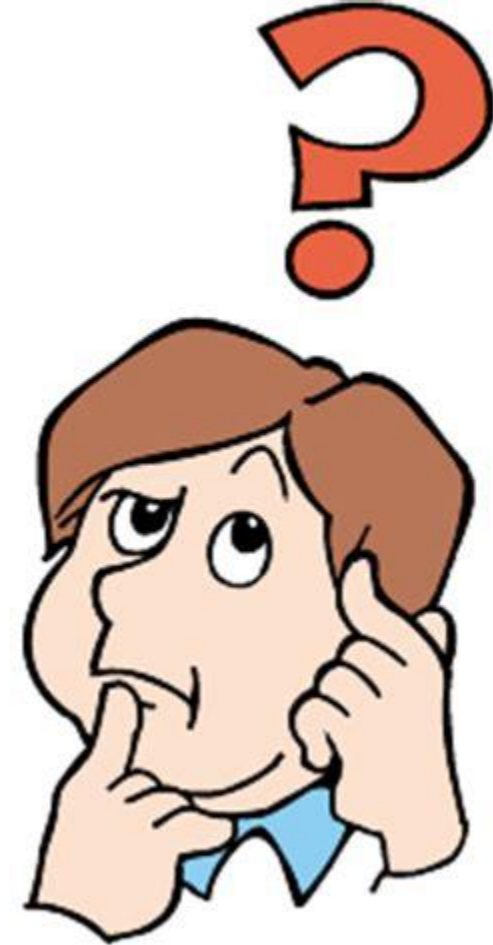


Giving them a choice

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you,

He is trying to get them to make a decision for themselves

Why should serving the Lord seem undesirable?



But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you,
then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,

Even today there are lots of alternatives available but a
real commitment to the Lord is what is needed



NOW CHOOSE

3 alternatives – but only 2 choices

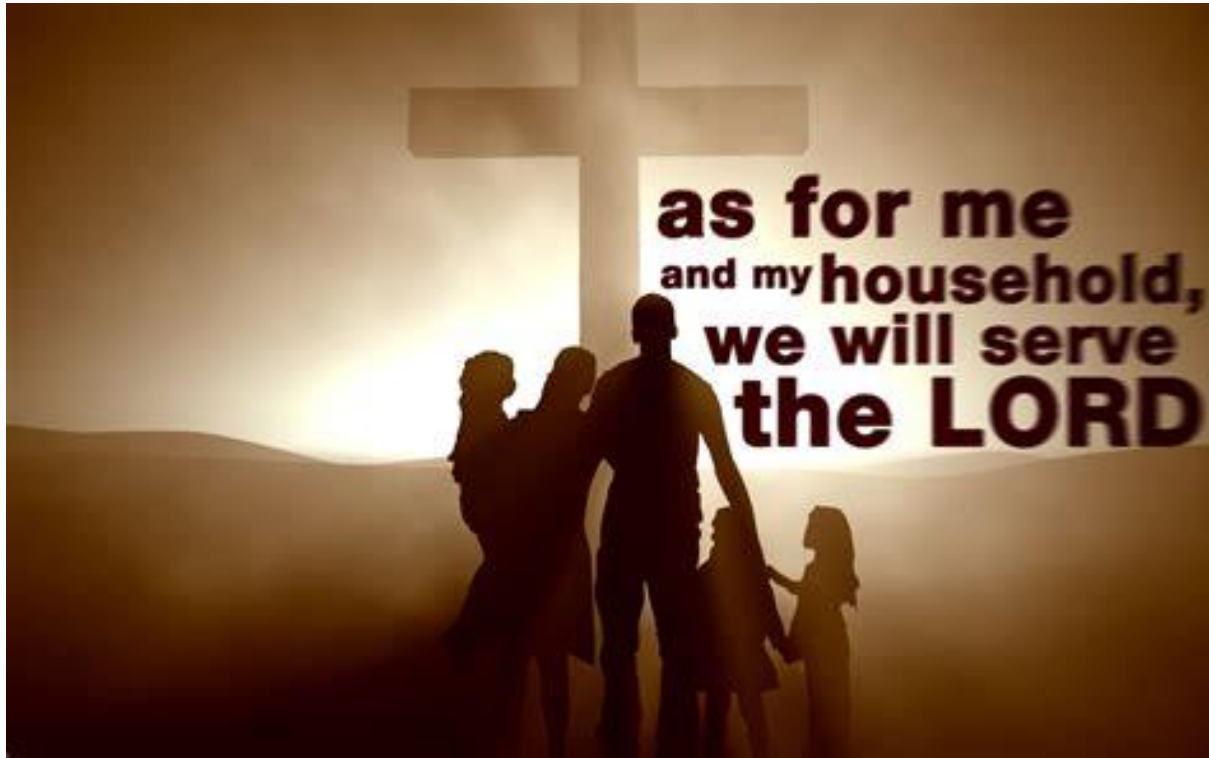
then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living.

The LORD



The old time gods
The local collection here.

Joshua's personal resolve and example



WE

He is speaking as the Head of his home – giving spiritual leadership

Service (worship) is meant to be together not just an isolated activity

The people's response is good

Then the people answered,
"Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!"



NO!

We won't "forsake" Him... we belong to him

He got us out

It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes.



They acknowledge the history lesson that Joshua had just given them

He kept us going

He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled.



He got us here

And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land.



Their Commitment

We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.



Ongoing commitment flows from accepting him as our God

It won't work

Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD.
He is a holy God; he is a jealous God.
He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins."

What kind of God do you think he is - a soft option?
Do you think you will be able to do it in your own strength?



He takes commitment seriously and so breaches are equally serious

It won't work unless ...

you stay faithful to Him and depend upon His enabling



Jesus said, "Without me you can do NOTHING" (John 15:5)

There will be consequences

If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.

We need to be aware of what we are committing ourself to.

Consequences...



Persistent commitment?

But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

Cf. Jesus' call to discipleship

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."



Do you still want to? In your own ability?

A Legal Transaction

Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

A verbal commitment with witnesses!



"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

It's a heart matter

Who will it be?

Foreign gods or the God of Israel?

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.



We will

And the people said to Joshua,
"We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

A green pencil is shown drawing the word "Yes!" in a bold, dark grey font on a white surface. The pencil is positioned at the end of the word, with its tip touching the final exclamation point. A thick green line extends from the pencil's tip, curving downwards and to the left, underlining the word.

Committed!

A Permanent Record

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people,
and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws.
And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God.



It is legally binding

X marks the spot

Then he took a large stone and set it up there



This is the last of 7 memorial stones set up in Israel during Joshua's leadership

Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

The oak takes us back to Abraham and Jacob's time and God's promise at this special (holy) place

Genesis 12:6 Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem.



Genesis 35:4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

A Visible Reminder

"See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."



Can a stone hear and talk?

Luke 19:40 "I tell you," *Jesus* replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Going home – different to when they came?

Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.



Choose this day? Was there a day when you gave your life to the Lord?