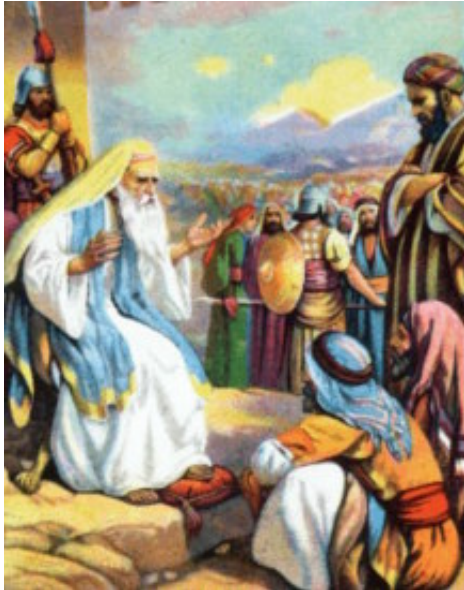


LESSON 13



THE ISRAELITES MAKE A CHOICE

Scripture Text: Joshua 24:1-31

Our lesson today is on making choices. We have come to the end of another quarter, and certainly, as we look back upon the lessons, we are conscious that choice has paid a large part in both the success of the people we studied of and in our success and will have much to do with our future.

Man is distinguished above God's other creatures in that he has the capacity to choose between right and wrong. In the animal world there is no opportunity for moral choice, and therefore, no good or evil. Animals act under the direction of instinct. They can make a few choices, but nothing involving deep moral issues such as constantly confront mankind. Life from the cradle to the grave is a challenging experience that arises out of man's God-given capacity to choose between right and wrong.

MEMORY VERSE: *Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*

—*Joshua 24:15*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Joshua 24:29-33; Genesis 50:22-26; Exodus 13:19 Death of Joshua; Burial of Joseph.

Tue.—Judges 3:1-11 How Israel turned from God.

Wed.—Hebrews 4 We must not fail as Israel did.

Thu.—Romans 11:1-10 The remnant of Israel.

Fri.—Romans 11:11-27 The goodness and severity of God.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 78:1-22 Unfaithfulness of Israel.

A Review of God's Guidance

Joshua 24:1-13 **And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem . . .** Here we see, in a small way, the origin of democracy in the Word of God. Generally, a man standing in Joshua's position would have called the people together to give them orders. Joshua called them together to ask them to make an important choice. Here, at Shechem, Abraham had received God's assurance that Palestine was to belong to his descendants (Genesis 12:1-7). In this passage of Scripture we have a review of the history of Israel in the light of God's guidance. Many years before they left the land of the Chaldees, the Hebrews had worshiped idols. Beginning with Abraham, God, by continuous revelation and fulfillment of His every promise, had increased the family of the patriarch into a mighty nation. He had led them into Egypt where they learned something about civilization, had led them out under the leadership of Moses, had showed His love for them by many mighty miracles, and had brought them into the Promised Land to possess it with successful military victories. How can we look upon the history in past lessons and not observe God's guiding hand?

Abraham established with God a relationship such as no other man had before. Out of that relationship came the legacy that has kept alive the soul of man down through the ages—faith. God alone is our security, but He must be kept at the center of man's thought and action.

Joshua brought to their minds the time God sent hornets before them so they could have the victory. **But not with**

thy sword, nor with thy bow—remember, it was God's victory, not yours. **I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not . . . vineyards . . . which ye planted not do ye eat.** This is a perfect type of the saint's life in Jesus Christ.

A Day of Decision

Joshua 24:14-15 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth. Fear of the Lord will cause one to put away all other gods. Fear is as much a part of our salvation as courage. Fear will be a great asset to our Christian experience when we allow it to strengthen our faith and trust in God. Fear of God does not mean the cringing fear of a slave, but the fear of a child anxious to please his father in every way. Joshua emphasizes **sincerity**. One must first be sincere before he can know what Truth is. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Without being sincere, we cannot know Jesus Christ—the Truth.

In verse 15 Joshua gives the people of Israel a choice. The choice is a very real one. The choice is a free choice which each one can relate to. **And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . or the gods of the Amorites . . .** If they want to worship idols, nobody will stop them. "Do what you want to do," said Joshua. "But if you know what is good for you, you will get rid of every idol and serve the true and living God." **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.** Joshua was quick to let them know what his decision was.

The People's Response

Joshua 24:16-31 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. Their response was that they would also serve the Lord. They assured their great leader that he could die with the assurance that those he had led in good example would follow his example. **For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up . . .** Joshua had done a good job in bringing back to their remembrance from where the Lord had brought them. After Joshua gave the people some last-minute warnings, they said, . . . **we will serve the Lord.** Joshua said they were **witnesses against** themselves—they had not only promised Joshua, but the Lord also. They agreed. Joshua set up a stone as a witness that God had heard their promise, and that would be a reminder to them in the day they denied Him.

Joshua sent the people away; his work was finished. He had kept the faith, he had finished his course. **Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died.**

Many Failures

In the midst of their failures, Israel could sing glad songs of victory. They arose after every defeat and pressed on to victory. If we have had failures in the past, and most of us have, certainly, foolish or evil choice has played a big part in these moves. If we have won victories, we had success at the cost of saying NO to ourselves and YES to the Holy Spirit Who God put into our hearts. The matter of choice is a very important and serious matter to each of us. The message of the Bible is for us to keep close to God. The fashions of the world come and go, but God and His moral principles are eternal. Others may do as they choose—for the right to choose is a foundation right. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

JUST A THOUGHT

It never occurs to a boy of sixteen that someday he will be as ignorant as his father.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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