TALKING POINTS

Lessons of Faith from Joshua

Quarter 4, Lesson 7

"Ultimate Loyalty: Worship in a War Zone"

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MEMORY VERSE: "'But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.'" Matthew 6:33, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week's lesson is about prioritizing our spiritual relationship even in the midst of life's relentless "urgencies."

1. Make God first (Sab-Fri)

- As Israel faces the conquest of Canaan, the Lord leads Joshua to re-establish His covenant relationship with His people.
    - The rite of circumcision is reinstated (Josh. 5:2)
    - The Passover is celebrated (Josh. 5:10)
    - The law, along with its statutes and judgments, is repeated to the people, and a memorial is set up (Josh. 8:30-35)
    - The tabernacle is set up in Shiloh (Josh. 18:1, 2)
- The entirety of the lesson is emphasizing this prioritization of the spiritual over the temporal.
    - "Seek first the kingdom of God…" (Mt. 6:33).
        - "Most of the time, everyday life seems to pressure us with the urgency of so many important things that we forget to give priority to the most important thing in our life: the daily renewal of our commitment to Christ." Qtly, Sun, last par (see also Qtly, Sab, last par)

2. Don't take God's name in vain (Sun, Tue)

- The reinstatement of circumcision illustrated the renewal of God's covenant with His people (Josh. 5:2-5).
    - This was required by the Levitical law before the people were permitted to take part in the Passover (see Ex. 12:48).

> The suspension of the rite of circumcision since the rebellion at Kadesh had been a constant witness to Israel that their covenant with God, of which it was the appointed symbol, had been broken. And the discontinuance of the Passover, the memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, had been an evidence of the Lord's displeasure at their desire to return to the land of bondage. PP 485.2

- Furthermore, it brought an end to the reproach of the nations, particularly Egypt, against the Israelites and their God.

- The "reproach of Egypt" (Josh. 5:9; Num. 14:13-16; Dt. 9:27, 28).

Their enemies had triumphed because Israel had wandered so long in the wilderness, and they had mockingly declared that the God of the Hebrews was not able to bring them into the Promised Land. The Lord had now signally manifested His power and favor in opening the Jordan before His people, and their enemies could no longer reproach them. PP 486.1

- This reproach was more against the God of Israel than the Israelites themselves. When we profess to serve God, yet in our behavior deny Him, we bring reproach upon His name (see Rom. 2:22-25; Col. 2:11, 12).

3. The gospel is the remedy for the curse of the law (Tue, Wed)

- Upon entering the land, Joshua built a memorial and an altar on Mt. Ebal in accordance with the instruction of Moses (Josh. 8:30-35; Dt. 27:1-8).
  - The Lord had consistently urged upon His people the necessity of remembering His law (Dt. 4:9, 10).
    - "Joshua foreshadows the New Testament Jehoshua (Jesus), whose mission was, among other things, to lead humanity back to obedience to God." Qtly, Tue, last par; see also Rom. 8:3, 4
- Mt. Ebal had been the "mount of cursings" (Dt. 27:13).
  - It may seem odd that the Lord would have a memorial to the law established in this particular place, but there is a lesson here of the deepest significance.
    - "[W]hy on the mount of cursing? This was fitting. In that place from which the curses of the law were read against sinners, there must also be an indication of the means of grace and forgiveness. The sacrifices on that altar prefigured Christ." SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 215

The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. GC 467.4

No man can rightly present the law of God without the gospel, or the gospel without the law. The law is the gospel embodied, and the gospel is the law unfolded. COL 128.2

CONCLUSION

The fact that the altar was set up on Mount Ebal, the mountain upon which the curse was put, was significant, denoting that because of their transgressions of God's law, Israel had justly incurred His wrath, and that it would be at once visited, but for the atonement of Christ, represented by the altar of sacrifice. PP 500.2 (Qtly, Fri, par 1)