TALKING POINTS

Lessons of Faith from Joshua

Quarter 4, Lesson 13
"Choose This Day"

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MEMORY VERSE: "'And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'" Joshua 24:15, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week's lesson examines Joshua's final words, their impact on Israel, and their implication for those of us living in these last days.

1. God's promises mean me (Sun)

- For his final speech, Joshua gathered all the tribes together at Shechem (Josh. 24:1).
    - This was where, upon arriving in Canaan, Abraham built his first altar, and the Lord promised the land to him and his descendants (Gen. 12:6, 7).
- Joshua's message is *God's appeal* to His people Israel (see v. 2).
    - Despite the fact that the current generation were not present during many of the experiences recounted, God includes them as though they were (see Heb. 7:9, 10).
        - "The fathers and this generation at Shechem are treated as one.... [T]he lessons of the past must be appropriated by each new generation. The God who worked for the ancestors in the past is ready to act on behalf of the present generation." Qtly, Sun, last par

In His promises and warnings, Jesus means me. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that I by believing in Him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. The experiences related in God's word are to be my experiences. Prayer and promise, precept and warning, are mine.... As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character. DA 390.5

2. When God gives us a choice, it becomes possible (Mon-Wed)

- After communicating the words of the Lord, Joshua appeals to his hearers to "serve the Lord in *sincerity* and in *truth*" (v. 14).
    - The lesson presents these as attributes of God, yet in the context, it describes what is required by the people.
        - "Joshua is now asking Israel to demonstrate the same loyalty to God that God has displayed toward His people.... It is not merely outward compliance to His requirements but what springs from an undivided inner consistency of the heart." Qtly, Mon, last par

- This was beyond the people's power to do (see v. 19). When God gives us a choice, he makes it possible for us to respond.
    - While Israel's response was "categorically positive," Joshua wanted them to fully realize what the former generation had not – that God alone could empower faithful obedience.

Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God…. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God's law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God. PP 524.1

- This is why the preaching of the gospel starts with a call to repentance (Mt. 3:7; 4:2; Mk. 1:15).

- Joshua continued by urging the people to forsake the idolatry that had crept into their lives (vs. 20-24).
    - "The threat of idolatry is not a theoretical one…. The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God's voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God's will." Qtly, Wed, par 1

[Joshua] earnestly desired to see a thorough reformation among the Hebrew host. He knew that unless the people took a decided stand to serve the Lord with all their hearts, they would continue to separate themselves farther and farther from Him…. While a portion of the Hebrew host were spiritual worshipers, many were mere formalists; no zeal or earnestness characterized their service. Some were idolators at heart, who would be ashamed to acknowledge themselves as such. ST May 19, 1881 (Qtly, Fri, par 1)

3. God knows what He's doing (Thu)

- The story of Joshua brings a conclusion to the people's wanderings, and witnesses the fulfillment of God's promises to them as a nation (v. 28).
    - "The nation buries its leaders in the territory of their own inheritance, thus having a sense of permanence." Qtly, Thu, par 1

- The legacy of Joshua, however, is one that serves as a model for every leader in the cause of God –
    - "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel" (Josh. 24:31).

CONCLUSION

The noblest testimony to his character as a public leader is the history of the generation that had enjoyed his labors: "Israel served the Lord... " PP 524.4