

STUDIES IN JOSHUA AND JUDGES

LESSON NUMBER 1

JOSHUA ENCOURAGED

Josh. 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION

1. The Author of the Book of Joshua. While it is not possible for us to say positively who wrote the book of Joshua, the contention of the critics that it was not written until in the time of the later kings of Israel is to be rejected. In Josh. 24:26 we are told that Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God. It is true that this statement refers only to a covenant which was made with the people at that time, but there is proof in this that Joshua did leave writings behind him. In Josh. 5:1 we are told that Jehovah dried up the waters of the Jordan *"until we were passed over."* This indicates that the writer of this book was among those who passed over the river Jordan with Joshua. One writer sums up the matter in this fashion. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that Joshua wrote memoirs of his time. These with the description of the land given in the book (Chap. 18:4-9) served as the basis of the work which was probably composed by Eleazar or Phinehas. According to the Talmud, the book of Joshua was written by Joshua himself. To this work Eleazar, the son of Aaron, gave the conclusion and Phinehas afterwards added the last verse.

2. The Contents of the Book. The events recorded in the book of Joshua are said to have transpired within a period of seventeen to thirty years. It is said to be both a continuation and a completion of the Pentateuch written by Moses. The book tells how the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and how they conquered the land and divided it among the Israelites. It describes the various military campaigns which were necessary to subdue the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The book concludes with an account of the assembling of the people to hear the last address of their leader Joshua. The last chapter is devoted to an account of his death and burial. This chapter was obviously written by someone else after the death of Joshua.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed: for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go." (Josh. 1:9)

1. The Persons Giving the Command. From Josh. 1:1 we learn that Jehovah spoke the words which serve as our text. And the words, *"have not I commanded you,"* prove that Jehovah was the speaker who issued the command referred to in our text. What does this mean to Joshua? It will be necessary for us to look back into the activities of the past forty years to see what Joshua would know about the speaker issuing the command of this text. (a) Probably Joshua got his first clear impressions of Jehovah from Moses when he came into the land of Egypt with the request that Pharaoh allow his people to leave. It was on that occasion that Moses performed his miracle to convince the elders of Israel that he was sent from God and to convince Pharaoh that the people should be allowed to leave.

Then in quick succession ten plagues followed, advertising the power of God, the superiority of Jehovah over the gods of Egypt. Jehovah now speaking to Joshua was the God who overthrew the Egyptians and demonstrated His superiority over the gods of the Egyptians in many ways. (b) Next, Joshua saw the waters of the Red Sea divide and the people of God go through on dry land, which the Egyptians attempted to do and were overthrown and destroyed. Thus again Jehovah demonstrated His superior power over the Egyptians. (c) Not many weeks after their deliverance Joshua saw the cloud which shielded Jehovah from the eyes of the people as He descended upon Mount Sinai. He saw the fire and the cloud and the smoke, he felt the trembling of the ground beneath him around the mountain, and he heard the voice of Jehovah and was among the people who asked that Jehovah not speak to them again but speak to Moses and allow Moses to convey the message to them. (d) For forty years Joshua had seen the power of Jehovah demonstrated night and day in His care for the people and in His punishment of the rebellious. He had seen the forces of nature turn from their usual course to serve the purposes of Jehovah, and he had seen the enemies of Israel scattered before the demonstration of the power of Jehovah. It was this God that was speaking to Joshua.

2. The Things Commanded by Jehovah. (a) The book of the law of God was to be Joshua's constant companion and guide. Moses had done his work of writing the law. God had written the ten commandments on two tables of stone. These writings were to be in Joshua's possession and he was not to depart from them, either to the right hand or to the left. No better advice could be given to people today, both young and old, than this which was given to Joshua. We should make the Bible, God's word, our constant companion and our sole and alone sufficient rule of faith and practice. We should also remember that the same God who commanded this of Joshua now demands it of us. And our Savior, when tempted by Satan, left us an example of how we ought to recognize the scripture as our rule of faith and practice and how we ought to be submissive to it even in times of temptation. (b) Joshua was commanded to be strong. We are told that the Hebrew word here suggests a man of action. Joshua was to be alert and energetic. He was not to be one of these weak, timid, undecided souls, but he was to be a man who could make up his mind and take swift energetic action on the issues before him. With their promised land in the hands of enemies strongly entrenched in their mountain strongholds, Israel needed a leader who was energetic and who would give them that brand of leadership which is suggested by this word. And the great need of the church today to overcome its enemies entrenched in their strongholds of infidelity and materialism is a leadership whose constant companion is the law of God, and who is able to make decisions and carry them out with energy and decision. (c) Joshua was commanded to be courageous. He was told to be not afraid, neither be dismayed. There was much to frighten Joshua. There was little to encourage him. He had an army untrained and not well equipped. He was facing enemies who knew their territory, who were entrenched in mountain strongholds and who had superior weapons. If Joshua had looked at his problem from the viewpoint of a scientific military man, he would have seen little to encourage him. He would have seen much to frighten and dismay him.

3. Encouragement to Joshua to Obey. About the only encouraging thing in the whole situation was in the language of our text, "*Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.*" Joshua had learned during forty years of wilderness wanderings what this statement meant. If God was with them, they would succeed. If God was not with them, they would fail. Now that he has God's word to the effect that He will be with Israel, Joshua had sufficient ground for encouragement. One man and God are a majority. But millions of men without God are a minority in any situation. One man and God can overcome Satan. One man and God can overcome all the forces of evil in a community and establish a church there. So there is no need for anyone to be discouraged in any situation so long as he has the

promise of the presence of God to help him. Let us take courage from this experience of Joshua and remember that as long as we conduct ourselves in such manner that God is pleased to be with us, we can accomplish in our lives everything that God intends for us to accomplish for him.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 1:1-11

1. Joshua Commanded to Enter Canaan (Josh. 1:1-4)

It came to pass after the death of Moses. The writer of the book of Joshua intentionally connects with the last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. There we have the account of the death of Moses and his burial in the valley of Moab over against Beth-peor. In Num. 7:15-23 we have the account of the appointment of Joshua to be the successor of Moses. Our first introduction to Joshua is in connection with the battle against the Amalekites in Rephidim. Joshua was in command of the army, and Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses as he prayed to God for the victory. (Ex. 17:8-15.)

Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister. This is the way Joshua is introduced to us in this book. During all the time of the wilderness wandering, Joshua served as the minister of Moses. In Ex. 24:13 he is referred to as the minister of Moses and as accompanying Moses into the mount of God. In Ex. 33:11 Joshua is referred to not only as the minister of Moses but as a young man. Hence, Moses chose a young man to be his minister to lead his army, one who would eventually be fit to serve as his successor to lead the people into Canaan and the possession of their land.

Therefore arise, go over this Jordan. The Jordan River runs through a deep, narrow gorge which divides the land of Palestine. This river rises from springs some ten miles north of the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. These springs are slightly above sea level, but the river soon goes below sea level; and, when it passes through the Sea of Galilee, it is several hundred feet below sea level. It continues until it reaches the Dead Sea where it is 1,300 feet below sea level. The gorge through which the river runs is from four to fourteen miles wide, hemmed in on either side by mountains from 1,500 to 3,000 feet high.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon. This is God's promise to Joshua and the people. He would give them every foot of land upon which they should walk. He then describes the boundaries "*from the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, and all the land of the Hittites, and unto the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border.*" From this we learn that their northern boundary was the Lebanon mountains and their eastern boundary was the Euphrates River. Their western boundary was to be the Mediterranean Sea.

All the land of the Hittites. Mention of the Hittites was for a long time used by critics as proof that the Bible was not inspired. Historians knew nothing about the Hittites. The Bible is the only book that made any mention of them. Hence, the critics said the Bible is wrong, but archaeologists have given abundant evidence that the Hittites were a great and powerful nation.

2. Sources of Joshua's Encouragement (Josh. 1: 5-9)

There shall not any man be able to stand before you. The only thing that could keep Joshua from taking courage from this statement is a lack of faith. If he had any faith at all in God to fulfil His promises, he would certainly be encouraged by this promise that no man should be able to stand before

him all the days of his life. By this is meant that he would be victorious in his battles, that he would be able to accomplish all that he started out to accomplish.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. Since Joshua had been intimately associated with Moses for forty years as his minister, he had every reason to know to what extent God had been with Moses. And now the only thing that could keep him from believing that God would give him the victory was a lack of faith in God to keep His promise. God is here promising to be with Joshua in the same way and to the same extent that He was with Moses.

I will not fail you, nor forsake you. This seems to be an explanation of the promise that He would be with Joshua. First He would not fail him. When Joshua needed a friend, the Lord would not fail to be there. When Joshua needed strength, God would lend it; when Joshua needed courage, God would give it. When Joshua needed wisdom, God would supply it. Next, God would not forsake him. In times of trial He would not support him for a while and then leave him by himself. So we today may take courage from the fact that we worship and serve the same God that was so faithful to Joshua. If we, like Joshua, will be faithful to Him we may be assured that He will be as faithful to us. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

You shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them. This refers to the promise that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with reference to giving the land of Canaan to their seed. (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18.) There are those today who say that this land promise was never fulfilled and that consequently the Jews will have to be raised from the dead and return to Canaan in order for the promise to be fulfilled. But in his last days Joshua said that Jehovah delivered all of their enemies into their hands and there failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. (Josh. 21:44,45.) And Solomon referring to the same thing said that Jehovah gave rest unto His people Israel according to all that He promised. *"There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by Moses His servant."* (1 Kings 8:56.)

Observe to do according to all the law. This was the part of the covenant which Joshua and the people were to perform. God would be with them and never forsake them, but it was their duty to observe to do according to all the law which Moses had commanded them. They were not to turn from it, to the right hand nor to the left. *"That you may have good success wherever you go."* Hence, we see that God's promise that no man would be able to stand before Joshua all the days of his life was really conditioned upon Joshua's obedience to the law which was given by Moses, for, if he would observe all that law, he would have good success wherever he went. This is in harmony with all we know of God's dealings with man through all the centuries. God has always been willing to bless provided man will be willing to obey.

You shall meditate thereon day and night. This is the way Joshua was to keep from turning from the law either to the right hand or to the left. People who meditate upon the law of the Lord day and night do not turn from the law. But when we forget the law and fail to meditate upon its requirements, then we stray from the demands of the Lord. David said it was the righteous man who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. (Psalm 1.) He does not meditate upon the law because he is righteous, but he is righteous because he meditates on the law day and night.

3. Joshua Encouraged to Act (Josh. 1:10,11)

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people. In the mind of Joshua the promises of God were not idle talk. He believed God. His faith moved him to act. So he commanded the officers of the people to pass through the midst of the camp and tell the people to make preparations, for within three days they were to pass over Jordan.

Go in to possess the land. This is the language of confidence. It is the language of faith. They were going in not to attempt to take the land, not merely in the hope that they might be able to possess the land, but they were going in with the full persuasion that the land was theirs, for Jehovah had given it to them. If we could have such faith in the promises of God today, we no doubt could accomplish more of the things which it is His will for us to do.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. When God needs a leader for His people, He chooses one who has proven himself to be dependable. Through forty years of trials Joshua had been faithful as the minister of Moses. In this faithfulness he had demonstrated his dependability in the face of every kind of hardship. If we wish to occupy positions of power and influence, we must be willing to do the little duties of life in spite of the discouragements and of the hardships we must suffer along the way.
2. God's promises are always conditional. When God promises, to bless us, though a condition may not in the immediate connection be stated, they are generally conditioned upon our obedient and submissive response. As in our text, God promised that He would be with Joshua, so that no man would be able to stand before him all his life. But later on we learn that he was to keep the book of the law with him and was to meditate thereon day and night and to do the things that were written therein that he might have good success.
3. The book of the law of God had a primary place in the life of Joshua and of Jesus. You remember in the temptations of Jesus He quoted scripture. And when people came to Him to know His answer, He frequently asked them what is written in the law. So we today must make the book of God our constant companion and our guide in all matters of faith if we expect to be pleasing to God.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 1

JOSHUA ENCOURAGED

1. According to Bible critics, when was the book of Joshua written? _____

2. What proof do we have that the writer of the book lived in the days of Joshua? _____

3. How long is the period of time covered by the book of Joshua? _____

4. What information is to be gleaned from the book? _____

5. Where did Joshua get his first impressions of Jehovah? _____

6. What miracles did Joshua see Moses perform? _____

7. What conceptions did Joshua get of Jehovah at Mount Sinai? _____

8. What command did Joshua have concerning the book of the law? _____

9. Discuss the meaning of the word "strong" in our text as it referred to Joshua. _____

10. What is suggested in our lesson as a great need of the church today? _____

11. What encouragement did Jehovah give to Joshua? _____

12. What is our first introduction to Joshua? _____

13. What position did Joshua hold during the wilderness wanderings? _____

14. What do you know of the river Jordan and the terrain through which it runs? _____

15. What do you know of the boundaries of the of the land of Canaan? _____

16. What do you know of the Hittites? _____

17. With what words did Jehovah encourage Joshua? _____

18. What could keep Joshua from being encouraged by these words? _____

19. Did God make any difference in His dealings with Moses and Joshua? _____

20. What encouragement may we derive from these promises to Joshua? _____

21. What proof do we have that Jehovah gave Israel all the land He promised them? _____

22. Upon what condition were these promises made to Joshua? _____

23. How was Joshua to keep from turning away from the law? _____

24. What great principle enabled Joshua to receive and obey Jehovah's commandments? _____

25. What indication do we have that they believed they could take the land? _____

LESSON NUMBER 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN

Josh. 3:5-17

INTRODUCTION

In Josh. 1:11 we learn that the people were given three days notice before they were expected to cross the Jordan. It was during these three days that Joshua reminded the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh of the promise that Moses made to them that they would be allowed to settle on the east side of the Jordan River. But Joshua reminds them that it was their duty to cross over with the rest of the people of Israel to take the land for their possession and, when the land had been possessed by the other tribes, these two and a half tribes might come back to the east side of the Jordan to live. The people of these two and a half tribes were perfectly willing to bear their part of the burden of capturing the land and promised to do their part and asked a blessing upon Joshua, saying, *"Only Jehovah your God be with you, as He was with Moses."*

In the second chapter of Joshua we have an account of the sending of the spies to spy out the city of Jericho. It was on this occasion that they were trapped in the city and were saved by Rahab. It was from this woman that they learned that the people of Jericho had heard how Israel had taken the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and had utterly destroyed them. This had caused the peoples' hearts to melt within them and to take from them any spirit to resist the people of Israel. Having aided the men in their escape, she exacted a promise from them that she and her family would be saved when the city was taken. The promise was given her provided she would be inside her house and that she would put a scarlet line in the window as an indication of the house where she and her family would be.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." (Isa. 43:2)

1. Sorrow and Suffering Come to All. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit Isaiah looked forward to the time when Israel would suffer punishment on account of sin. He pictured how God would pour upon Israel the fierceness of His anger and the strength of battle because the people of Israel refused to walk in His ways and to be obedient unto His law. (Isa. 42:23-25.) Following this prediction of the wrath of God upon the disobedient, Isaiah pictures the tender mercies of Jehovah upon Israel in returning them to their own land. Our text is found between those statements concerning His wrath upon them for disobedience and the promise of His loving-kindness toward them in returning them to their own land. (a) The first thing suggested by Isaiah is that all of us must suffer for our wrongdoing. Isaiah represents God as saying, *"when you pass through the waters."* This expression of passing through the waters is meant to convey the idea of suffering. The question is not raised as to whether the people will pass through the waters, it is taken for granted that they will do so, but God gives them the assurance that, when they do pass through the waters or endure their suffering, He will be with them. New Testament passages assure us that we today may expect some sufferings along the way. The

apostle Paul says that *"all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (2 Tim. 3:12.) Job's friends thought that he had committed some great sin because his suffering was great, but Job maintained his innocence. There are those today who think that suffering is a sure proof of sin. But, according to Paul's statement, it is those who would live godly in Christ Jesus who shall suffer persecution. It is still true that people suffer on account of their sins, but it is also true that all suffering is not on account of wrongdoing. (b) Suffering may be beneficial. James said, *"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."* (James 1: 2-4.) From this we learn that suffering trials will work patience or steadfastness in us. Since Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, it will be necessary for us to know something of sorrow in order that we may grow into the likeness of our Lord. Peter says, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also you may rejoice with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you."* (1 Pet. 4:12-14.) Here again we are told to rejoice in sufferings because they identify us with Christ and His cause, and furthermore they entitle us to expect to be rewarded in the next life. Suffering is also an indication of the presence of the Spirit of God resting upon us.

2. God's Presence Promised In Our Suffering. Isaiah told the people that when they passed through the waters, or endured their sufferings, they had the assurance that God would be with them. In the passage just quoted above from Peter, we are assured that, if we are reproached for the name of Christ, we are blessed or happy and we have a right to be happy, *"because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you."* And Peter ends this exhortation with this encouraging statement: *"Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator."* (1 Pet. 4:19.) Peter's thought here is that God created us for His glory and for our happiness, and that we may commit our souls to Him as unto a faithful creator. His lesson is that, if we commit our souls in well-doing, God will be faithful to His original design for us and will bring about our happiness and His glorification through our salvation, but this is conditioned upon our committing ourselves to Him in well-doing. Another promise of the presence of God with us through all our sufferings is found in Heb. 13:5,6. *"For himself has said, I will in no wise fail you, neither will I in any wise forsake you. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?"* If one needs examples of God's presence with people through their periods of suffering, he need not look further than Job in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament. But if more are needed he may read Heb. 11:32-40, where a general statement is made with reference to those who suffered in manifold ways the persecutions of the world being preserved by the Lord, who had some better things for them that they might enjoy in the next life.

3. God's Protection Through Suffering. In our text Isaiah says that, when we pass through the waters and through the rivers, *"they shall not overflow you."* Since the words "waters" and "rivers" are used to represent suffering, we conclude from the fact that these shall not overflow those who are mentioned that Isaiah was teaching that God would not allow these sorrows and sufferings to overwhelm or destroy those who suffered them courageously. This is in harmony with New Testament teaching, for the apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:13, *"There has no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."* A further proof of the fact that these sorrows and sufferings are not for our destruction is seen in that God uses

these for our good and not for our destruction. In Heb. 12:4-10 the writer teaches us that the purpose of God in sorrows and sufferings is correction and purification, not the destruction of His people. Also in 1 Pet. 1:6,7 we are taught that the manifold trials through which we pass are proof of our faith and for the purpose of purifying us as gold is purified by the refiner's fire. Hence, we should face our sorrows and our sufferings with humility, knowing that God will not allow experiences to come our way with which we are not able to cope, and realizing that He will cause us to be stronger and purer and better for having gone through these experiences. It is on this basis and this alone that we may be asked, with any degree of reasonableness, to rejoice in our suffering.

III. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 3:5-17

1. Preparation for Crossing Jordan (Josh. 3:5,6)

Sanctify yourselves. We are not told what the ceremony of sanctification was, but on an occasion similar to this, forty years previous, we find them sanctifying themselves by washing their garments and keeping themselves from all activities which would hinder them in their most faithful obedience to God's commands. (Ex. 19:7-15.)

Jehovah will do wonders among you. Jehovah was among them at all times, and His provident care was extended toward them at all times, but on this occasion He was to do something out of the ordinary, and they were to go through special services of sanctification that they might be properly prepared for the exhibition of His power and glory.

Joshua spoke to the priests. On this occasion the priests were to carry the ark of the covenant. From Num. 4:15 we learn that it was the duty of the Levites to carry the ark. The sons of Kohath were the ones to bear it, and they were one division of the Levites. Only on extraordinary occasions did the priests carry the ark of the covenant. Adam Clarke outlines the occasions on which the priests carried the ark of the covenant as follows: First, in this present case. Second, when they encompassed the city of Jericho. (Josh. 6:6.) Third, when it was carried to war against the Philistines by the priests, the sons of Eli. (2 Sam. 15:25.) Fourth, when David sent it back to Jerusalem at the time he was obliged to fly from it through the rebellion of his son Absalom. (2 Sam. 15:25.) And fifth, at the time it was taken out of the tabernacle to be deposited in the temple. (1 Kings 8:6-11.) Hence, we see that it was on extraordinary and solemn occasions that the priests were asked to bear the ark of the covenant instead of the sons of Kohath.

2. Instruction and Encouragement (Josh. 3:7-13)

This day will I begin to magnify you. This is God's statement to Joshua. It was necessary that the people be taught to accept and respect Joshua in the same way and to the same extent that they respected Moses. When God delivered the people into the care and instruction of Moses, He led them through the Red Sea. This was a demonstration of the fact that God was with Moses, and none could doubt that God was with him. So it was necessary that a similar proof of His presence with Joshua should be given. Hence, God led the people through the swollen waters of the Jordan River on dry ground, thus proving that He was with Joshua in the same way and to the same extent that He was with Moses.

Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you. This is the language of Joshua. It seems that

he was not so much concerned with their realizing that God was with him as he was that they would realize that God was among the people. He not only wished that they would know that God was among them, but that God would drive out from before them the people of Canaan. The seven nations of Canaan are named in our text and assurance is given that all of them would be driven out before the Israelites.

The ark of the covenant... passes over before you. The priests were to bear the ark of the covenant to the middle of the stream, and there they were to stand until all the people had passed over. In Josh. 3:4 we learn that the people were to keep a distance of "about two thousand cubits" from the ark. This distance was to be kept first out of reverence for the ark as an indication of the presence of Jehovah, and second that the ark could be seen by the people.

Take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel. The purpose for which these twelve men, one out of each tribe, were selected is not here mentioned. But in Josh. 4:2-9 we learn that these twelve men were to carry twelve stones out of the bed of the river and to build a monument on the western bank of the river.

3. Crossing the River Jordan (Josh. 3:14-17)

The Jordan overflows all its banks. The Jordan rises in a mountainous region and is fed in the spring by melting snow. Hence, there is a time of overflow. Brother McGarvey says the river bottom near Jericho was more than one-half mile wide. This does not mean that the regular channel of the river was that wide. But the river bottom, that which would take care of the overflow, was that width.

Waters which came down from above flood. The water south of the priests went on down to its destination, the Dead Sea, called in our text the Salt Sea. But the waters north of the priests stood in a heap the text says. Some think that the flow of the water was changed so that the waters north of the priests flowed back toward the Sea of Galilee. But our text indicates that it accumulated, getting deeper and deeper. This seems to be expressed in the words, "rose up in one heap, a great way off."

At Adam, . . . beside Zarethan. Neither of these cities can be located with any degree of certainty. Some have thought to locate Zarethan near Jezreel, but that is too far north for this crossing, since it is said that the people crossed over right against Jericho.

All Israel passed over on dry ground. The crossing is said to have been right against Jericho. Since there were at least two million to two and a half million people crossing and since the crossing was made in one day, we would conclude that the people spread out over several miles of territory. Whether the priests stood opposite the city of Jericho or the center of the crossing was opposite Jericho cannot be determined, neither is it of much importance. But, since the camp was made just east of Jericho, it is possible that the center of the crossing was at that place. Though the water was divided, the crossing of the river was no easy thing. McGarvey gives the following description of the crossing. "It was no easy task even then to get down the steep slope; to struggle through the wet brush and the mud and climb down into the channel of the river. Perhaps they had to use some of their axes, shovels and spades; and then they must climb up the ascent on the other side before sunset that evening. But, hard as the labor was, before the sun had gone down, in the simple style of our book, 'all the people had passed clean over the Jordan.' The priests were standing in the middle of the channel all this time, and when they came up, the mighty river resumed its course."

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. With God on our side, we can accomplish the unexpected. The Canaanites did not expect the Israelites to cross the Jordan at this time. Since the river was overflowing its banks, the Canaanites thought they would have plenty of time to finish their harvest before the people could possibly cross the river. They supposed the crossing impossible at that time, but they did not take into account the fact that Jehovah was with the people.

2. God does not leave His people without evidence of His presence among them. On the occasion of our lesson this evidence was of a miraculous nature. The miraculous work of God is not necessarily stronger proof of the presence of God than are the ordinary works of providence. Paul says, *"He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness."* (Acts 14:17.)

3. God does not wait for better times or conditions to do His work. The people might have felt that they came to the Jordan at an unfortunate time since it was overflowing its banks. But God took advantage of seemingly discouraging circumstances and turned it to the good and to the success of His people. So we today need to remember that time and circumstances have little to do with whether or not we will succeed in doing what God commands us to do. Churches are sometimes discouraged by a spell of rainy weather at the time they hold their revival meetings. And, if failure follows, it is not because of unfavorable weather as much as it is because of the discouraged attitude of the people. We need to learn the lesson that it is ours to do the best we can do under whatever circumstances and conditions the Lord sees fit for us to work.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN

1. How much notice were the people given to prepare to cross Jordan? _____

2. Which tribes were especially reminded of their duty at this time? _____

3. Give an account of the work of the spies in Jericho. _____

4. What did the spies learn about the courage of the people of Jericho? _____

5. Give the setting of our text. _____

6. What does Isaiah suggest in our text with reference to suffering? _____

7. What did Job's friends think about his suffering? _____

8. What benefit may be derived from suffering? _____

9. What encouragement does Isaiah give to help people bear their sufferings? _____

10. How does Peter encourage those who suffer? _____

11. In what portions of the Scriptures may sufferers find great encouragement? _____

12. In what words does our text assure us of God's protection during suffering? _____

13. In what words does Paul offer the same encouragement? _____

14. What do you know of their manner of sanctifying themselves? _____

-
15. For what purpose were they to sanctify themselves? _____
-
16. Who were usually responsible for carrying the ark? _____
-
17. On what occasions were the priests asked to bear the ark? _____
-
18. To what extent was it necessary for the people to respect Joshua? _____
-
19. How were the people to know that God was with Joshua as He was with Moses? _____
-
20. Can you name the seven nations in Canaan at this time? _____
-
21. What position did the ark occupy during the crossing? _____
-
22. How did the people show their reverence for Jehovah in the ark? _____
-
23. For what purpose were twelve men selected from the tribes? _____
-
24. What was the condition of the river at this time? _____
-
25. Give your conception of the dividing of the waters of the Jordan. _____
-
26. At what point did Israel cross the Jordan? _____
-
27. About how many people crossed the river? _____
-
28. About how much time was consumed in crossing? _____
-

LESSON NUMBER 3

THE FALL OF JERICHO

INTRODUCTION

There are some matters of interest between our last lesson and the material for this lesson. The first is the memorial that was built by the children of Israel by taking twelve stones out of the bed of the Jordan River and building them into a monument east of Jericho. This was done that in generations to come the people might tell their children that Jehovah dried up the waters of the Jordan until the Israelites were all passed over the river, and thus be a memorial of God's goodness to them in their day of extremity. The next matter of interest is the influence which the crossing of the Jordan, while it was overflowing its banks, had on the people of Canaan. Our record tells us in Josh. 5:1 that when the Amorites and the kings of the Canaanites heard that Israel had crossed the river in flood time, and had done so because Jehovah had divided the waters, their hearts melted in them, neither was there spirit in them any more to try to defend themselves. A third thing of interest is the circumcising of all the males who had been born during the wilderness wandering. On account of the difficulties of the journey during the forty years of wanderings, none of the children had been circumcised. All the men who were twenty years old and upward when they left Egypt had died during the forty years, and now all of those who were forty years and under needed to be circumcised. So the Lord told them to make them knives of flint and circumcise all of those who had gone uncircumcised during the period of wilderness wanderings. On account of this, the place where they camped was called Gilgal. The word Gilgal means rolling, and it was given that name because Jehovah said, *"This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you."* The fourth thing of interest that happened here at Gilgal was the ceasing of the manna. They had been eating manna for forty years, and now the manna ceases to fall, and they began eating the produce of the land. A fifth thing of interest is the appearance of Jehovah to Joshua in the form of a man. The student should read Josh. 5:13 to 6:7. The record tells us that Joshua saw a man standing over against him with a drawn sword in his hand, and Joshua learned that this man was *"prince of the host of Jehovah,"* and Joshua fell on his face on the earth and did worship the person. From there on it is said that Jehovah spoke unto Joshua. So we learn that this is Jehovah in the form of a man, such as appeared and wrestled with Jacob on the night of his return from Padan-aram. The second person of the Godhead made numerous appearances to people during Old Testament times in a similar manner.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days." (Heb. 11:30)

1. Israel Accepted God's Word. (a) Israel accepted God's word through his servant Joshua. So far as we know, Israel had no means of knowing that God had commanded them to take the city of Jericho except through the word of Joshua. We learn from the context that Jehovah visited Joshua and gave him the directions for taking the city of Jericho. In the sixth verse of the sixth chapter, we read that Joshua called the priests and told them what to do, and they told the people. Then in the eighth verse we are told that Joshua spoke unto all the people. Whether this means that he spoke to them through the priests, as is suggested in the seventh verse, or whether he had something to say to the

people in addition to what he said to them through the priests is difficult to determine, but certainly the people based their faith upon what God had spoken through Joshua and the priests. (b) Israel accepted God's word when there was no visible relation between what they were told to do and the results which they desired to obtain. This is always an effective means of testing the faith of people. The prophet of God tested the faith of Naaman by telling him to dip in Jordan seven times in order that he might be cleansed from his leprosy. Again there was no relation between what Naaman was told to do and the results he desired to accomplish. There are people today who object to being baptized for the remission of sins because they say they cannot see any relationship between baptism and the results which they desire to obtain; no relation between baptism and the remission of sins. But there is as much relation between baptism and the remission of sins as there is between dipping in the Jordan seven times and being cleansed of leprosy, and as much relation between baptism and the remission of sins as there is between marching around the city thirteen times in order to tear its walls down and capturing the city. These people of Israel immortalized their faith on the pages of inspiration because they accepted God's word when there was no visible relation between what they were told to do and the results they wished to obtain. So people today who expect to be saved by faith must accept God's word whether they see any relationship between what they are told to do and what they expect as a result of their faith or not. (c) Israel was encouraged in accepting God's word by the memory of what God had done for them in the past. Some of them could remember the crossing of the Red Sea. Many of them could remember God's goodness to them through their years of wandering in the wilderness. All of them were acquainted with the fact that God had preserved their lives through the wilderness wanderings by giving them manna each day from heaven. The crossing of the Jordan was fresh in their memory. All of these things encouraged them to believe that God would fulfil the promise to give them the city. God does not tell us to do anything without giving us sufficient encouragement to move us to do the thing which it is our duty to do.

2. Israel Obeyed God's Word. The statement of our text that the walls of Jericho were compassed about for seven days indicates that the people of Israel obeyed the word of God which they had accepted. (a) It should be noticed that Israel obeyed the word of God when there were no physical signs to encourage them in doing so. As suggested above, they had much to encourage them in accepting God's word, but it is emphasized here that there were no physical signs of encouragement. They were given the task of capturing a great walled city. They had no engines of war. They had no battering rams with which to tear down the wall. Had they been walking by sight instead of faith, they would have cried for battering rams and other equipment necessary for tearing down the thick walls surrounding the city of Jericho. Furthermore, when they had gone around the city one time there was no sign of the weakening of the walls. And when they had gone about the city the second time and the third time, there was no crumbling of the walls to encourage them to continue marching around the city. And when they appeared before the city on the seventh day, the walls looked as strong and as impregnable as they looked on the first day they started marching around the city. This constituted quite a test of their faith. (b) There were no suggestions of better ways to accomplish the destruction of the city than that which God had given them. Nor were there any suggestions of ways and means which were just as good as that which God had commanded. This, too, is an evidence of the fact that they accepted God's word and that they were willing to obey God's word as it was given. There are many people today who invent things to do which they think will be just as acceptable as that which God has commanded. For instance God has taught us that we should be buried with Christ in baptism and be raised to walk in the newness of life. Somebody thinks that sprinkling is just as good as burial, so he has water sprinkled on him instead of doing what God says do. If these people had decided that five times around the walls would be just as good as thirteen, it could not have been said of them that

they did the thing by faith. If they had decided that they would divide their forces by seven and a different force would march around the walls each day, it could not be said that they acted by faith. But be it said to the credit of Joshua and his people that they were willing to accept God's word for what should be done. And they were willing to do just what God said for them to do without making any suggestion as to what would be just as good or better than that which the Lord said do.

3. Israel Was Blessed after Their Obedience. Notice that our text says, "*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days.*" The blessing came after the obedience. That is God's order always. God never gave a blessing before the conditions were met. God's order is first the promise, second the faith, and third obedience, and fourth a blessing promised. In Heb. 6:12 we are told to be imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Inheriting the promises comes after patience has been exercised on account of our faith. In Heb. 6:15 we read "*And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*" Here again is the promise of God, then the patient endurance doing what God says to do, and then, third, the obtaining of the thing promised. Again in Heb. 10:36 we read, "*For you have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise.*" We are promised salvation through faith, but it is a faith that works by love. The salvation does not come before faith has acted, but, when faith has prompted us to obey the commandments of God, we may expect to receive the salvation which God has promised.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 6:8-20

1. Directions for Attack (Josh. 6: 8-11)

The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets . . . passed on. Joshua gave the order of march on this occasion that the people might be prepared to march as the Lord expected them to do. The order of march seems to be suggested in the eighth and ninth verses. The armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets. We are told that those who carried the ark of the covenant of Jehovah followed the priests and then, following the priests, came the people.

You shall not shout. This is a part of Joshua's instruction to the people. They were to follow the armed men and the priests and others bearing the ark of the covenant, and they were to follow quietly. They were not to shout nor speak even a word until the time that Joshua commanded them to shout. This was to be a solemn religious procession. It was not a picnic, and the people were to be impressed with the idea that they were doing the bidding of God and that they were to be quiet and reverent in the doing of His bidding.

2. The People Obey Orders (Josh. 6:12-16)

Joshua rose early in the morning. Almost invariably great men of God rose early in the morning to do things which were commanded to be done on a certain day. When God set the day on which Abraham was to offer Isaac in sacrifice, we are told that Abraham rose up early on the day appointed and left for the place where he was to offer Isaac in sacrifice. (Gen. 22:3.) And now we are finding Joshua, another man of God, on the day appointed to take the city of Jericho. We are told that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Jehovah went on blowing their trumpets. The armed men were before them and the rearward, or the great company of people, came after the ark of Jehovah. In all this Joshua and his people were obeying the directions which God

had previously given them. Theirs is an example of obedience in the very smallest of details. If they had been as anxious to obey the Lord all through their forty years of wilderness wanderings as they were on this occasion, more of them would have been privileged to enter the land of Canaan.

The second day they compassed the city once, and returned. They were ordered to circle the city once each day for six days, then on the seventh day they were to go around the city seven times. We are prone to look at this military maneuver from the viewpoint of the Israelites alone. Let us view it from the viewpoint of the people of Jericho. An army took the lead in the march. Then came a handful of priests, and behind them the people. With the army in front and the people in the rear, they were left exposed to the action of the enemy. Why would a sensible military man leave his people unguarded while an army was on one side of the city? The men of Jericho could attack the body of people and destroy many of them on the other side of the city. This must have impressed the people of Jericho with the idea that Joshua was not depending on his army for the destruction of the city, but was simply waiting the pleasure of God, who would destroy the city for it. With reports of the miraculous intervention of Jehovah to aid His people in victory over their enemies ringing in their ears, the men of Jericho simply waited to hear what calamity was in store for them.

Shout; for Jehovah has given you the city. This is the instruction of Joshua to the people on the seventh day after they had compassed the city about seven times. Thus they had come to the end of God's commandment and were now ready for the promise of God to be fulfilled to them that the city should be given into their possession.

3. Special Directions (Josh. 6: 17-19)

And the city shall be devoted. This simply meant that everything in the city was devoted to God. The people were to be destroyed, and the valuables of the city were to be used for the glory of God.

Only Rahab the harlot shall live. This was according to a promise which the spies had given Rahab in exchange for her kindness to them in hiding them from the men of the city, that they should not be destroyed. (Josh. 2:15-21.)

Only keep yourselves from the devoted thing. That which was devoted to God could not be used for individual purposes. Hence, individuals were forbidden to take any silver or gold or any other valuables for their personal use. All had to be taken to the treasury of Jehovah and there deposited to be used for the benefit of all the people alike.

So would you make the camp of Israel accursed. By this it is meant that if any men should take of the devoted things such as silver and gold or other valuables, the entire camp would suffer for it, and this we learn happened in the case of Achan who took a Babylonish mantle and some silver and gold and hid them in his tent. The army of Israel was not able to take the city of Ai because of his sin. Hence, the whole camp was accursed and troubled by his sin in taking the devoted thing.

4. The Fall of the City (Josh. 6:20,21)

So the people shouted, and the priests blew the trumpets. This was poor military scientific strategy, but it was in obedience to the command of God, and hence brought the blessing which God had promised.

And the wall fell down flat. It is said that the wall gave way, fell down, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him. The wall was not broken at one point to permit the people to file through at that place, but every man from around the entire length of the city wall was able to walk into the city from the place where he was standing when the shout was given. A recent work on archeology has this to say. "It is clear that Jericho could have been reduced to submission by prolonged siege, but the divine plan called for a miraculous deliverance, and the consequent devotement both of the city and its spoil as an expression of Jehovah's judgment against the heinous iniquity of the rejected Canaanites. Startling indeed have been the results of excavations at Jericho in their confirmation of the Biblical narratives regarding the fall of the city. Evidences indicate the following items in particular: First, the apparently impregnable walls of the city fell, as stated in the Joshua account, under its own weight. Remains of this wall are now exposed in the midst of complete desolation. Second, in the light of pottery remains, the approximate date of the city's destruction can be fixed at 1400 B.C., the exact period in which the Israelite invasion occurred. And, finally, according to the curse pronounced against the rebuilding of Jericho, excavations disclose that the mound remained deserted until the era of Ahab when Hiel the Bethelite began to rebuild the city on its old foundations." (Ancient Records and the Bible by J M Adams, P.268)

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Foolish and absurd are the efforts of infidels to explain this incident. We must either accept the story of the unusual procedure of conquering a city or we must reject the whole thing as a fable concocted by the historian. If we reject this story, we may as well reject every other story in the Old Testament. Critics have about decided to reject all which cannot be demonstrated scientifically, and thus they refuse to walk by faith in the Bible as the word of God.
2. We find Israel keeping their promises. The spies promised Rahab that she and all whom she gathered in her house would be saved, provided she gave them a sign by which they might know her house. We find in the record that they kept their promise. It is refreshing nowadays to find a man who will give you his word and live by it whether it is in writing or not.
3. This incident is another illustration of what may be called "*the foolishness of faith.*" God has asked His people on numerous occasions to do things which looked foolish to them and now look foolish to the worldly wise. To set out to capture a city with a great wall built around it in such fashion as this must have seemed extremely foolish. But yet it is a test of faith, and God rewards the faithful when they have stood their test. By demonstrating their faith in God they proved themselves worthy of the blessing He was to give, and we today should learn the lesson that we are entitled to His blessings only when we have proved our faith.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 3

THE FALL OF JERICHO

1. What memorial was erected after the crossing? _____

2. What influence did this crossing have on the people of Canaan? _____

3. What is the meaning of the word Gilgal and what incident gave it this name? _____

4. What change was made in the feeding of the people? _____

5. Tell of the appearance of Jehovah to Joshua at Gilgal. _____

6. Give the order of march around Jericho. What indicates the solemnity of this procession? _____

7. On what did the people of Israel base their faith that they would capture Jericho? _____

8. In what way was the faith of the people tested? _____

9. What other Old Testament character had his faith tested in a similar way? _____

10. In what New Testament command is our faith similarly tested? _____

11. From what experiences could Israel draw encouragement to accept Joshua's command? _____

12. What military equipment did Israel have? Did the walls show signs of weakening daily? _____

13. Were there differences of opinion among the people as how to take the city? _____

14. Give examples of how people's opinion differ from God's ways today. _____

15. What is God's order of promise and blessings? _____

16. What New Testament passages are cited to prove this order? _____

17. At what time of day did Joshua begin obedience? _____

18. What other great man rose early to do God's will? _____

19. How many times did the people march around the city? _____

20. Did Joshua use good military tactics in capturing the city? _____

21. What impression must have been made on the people of Jericho during this procession? _____

22. What was the last condition for the people to meet to gain the city? _____

23. What was done with the valuables of the city? _____

24. What instruction was given with reference to Rahab? _____

25. What warning was given with reference to devoted things? _____

26. What would be the consequence of violating this commandment? _____

27. Who violated this command? _____

28. What part did the people and the priest have in taking the city? _____

29. What suggests the complete destruction of the walls? _____

30. What lessons do we learn about Jericho from archeology? _____

LESSON NUMBER 4

ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI

INTRODUCTION

By way of introduction it will be worth while to notice two things. First is the fact that the people of Israel kept their promise, made through the spies, to Rahab and her family. Joshua told the spies who had given Rahab the promise to go into the doomed city and find Rahab and her people and bring them out safely. This they did, according to their promise, and allowed her to dwell in the midst of Israel. And according to Matt. 1:5 we learn that she married a man by the name of Salmon, and they had a son named Boaz, who was the husband of Ruth, and their son was Jesse, who was the father of King David. Her name is preserved in the Bible hall of fame in these words. *"By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace."* (Heb. 11:31.) Next, we notice that Joshua placed a curse upon any man who would rise up and attempt to build the city of Jericho. The curse was that he would lose his first born when he laid the foundation and he would lose his youngest son when he set up the gates of the city. In 1 Kings 16:34 we learn that Hiel, the Bethelite, built Jericho and that he lost his two sons in his attempt to do so. By way of preparation to take the little city of Ai, Joshua sent spies to spy out the land. These spies returned to Joshua and said that the city was small and there was no need to take all the great army to take that small city. They recommended that about three thousand men be taken to do the work. Ai is located almost due north of Jerusalem, and it is about the same distance north-west from Jericho. When the men of Israel approached Ai, the army of Ai attacked, and the men of Israel turned and fled from before them. About thirty-six men of Israel lost their lives in this encounter. When the news was brought to Joshua, he fell upon the earth on his face before the ark of Jehovah and lay there until the evening. And the elders of Israel put dust upon their head. Joshua then laid the matter before the Lord, and our key scripture begins with Jehovah's address to Joshua.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure sin will find you out." (Num. 32:23)

1. The Setting of the Key Scripture. Our text has its setting back in the days of Moses while the children of Israel were still on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Representatives of the tribes of Reuben and Gad went to Moses with the request that they be allowed to settle on the eastern side of the river in the land of Jazar and the land of Gilead. (Num. 32:1-5.) The half tribe of Manasseh is not mentioned in this connection until we reach the thirty-third verse of that chapter. If they had representatives among those who made the request of Moses, no mention is made of it, and how and why they were included in the number that stayed on the east side of Jordan, we have no way of knowing. The land which they wished to occupy had formerly belonged to two tribes of the Amorites. One of these tribes was under King Sihon and the other was under King Og. (Num. 21:21-35.) Their possession finally came to include more than that of the two Amorite kingdoms and included that of the Amorites and some of Moab. They desired this land because they saw that it was a good place for cattle. When the request was first made known, Moses thought they intended to shirk their duty of helping their brethren take the land west of the Jordan from the enemies. So they removed this fear

by offering to cross the Jordan with the balance of the people and fight until the land was conquered. Then they would expect to go back and join their families on the east side of the Jordan. A question has been raised as to whether all the soldiers of these two and a half tribes crossed over the Jordan. From Num. 26 we learn that there were over one hundred thousand soldiers in these two and a half tribes, but from Josh. 4:13 we learn that there were forty thousand of these two and a half tribes that passed over the Jordan armed before the children of Israel to help take the land of Canaan. Hence, we conclude that there were enough of their soldiers left on the east side of Jordan to protect and care for their women and children. When they agreed to send an armed force to represent them in the conquest of Canaan, Moses granted their request, but gave this verse which serves as our text as a warning to them that they should not turn back before they had accomplished their mission. But if they did, they might be sure that their sin would find them out.

2. Sin Involves Our Relation to God. When Moses granted their request to be allowed to settle on the east side of Jordan, he reminded them that, if they did not go across and help to conquer the land of Canaan, they had sinned against Jehovah. This is the idea which we wish to stress at this time. If they failed to bear their responsibilities, which they had accepted; if they failed to help their brethren in taking the land of Canaan for their possession, it would be counted as a sin against Jehovah. If all of us could realize that when we sin against our brethren we are sinning against Jehovah, surely we would be more careful about how we treat our fellow men. In Matt. 25:31-46 we have a picture of the judgment scene. In that picture Jesus represents the nations of the world as being gathered before him at the time of his coming and their being divided the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and to them upon the right hand he gives a blessing because he says that they fed Him when He was hungry, they clothed Him when He was naked, and they visited Him when He was sick and in prison. But they respond that they did not know they had thus served Him. Then He informs them that inasmuch as they did it unto one of the least of these His brethren, they had done it unto Him. This is a principle which we must remember: not only when we do good to people are we thus treating the Lord; but, when we treat people unkindly and harshly, we are treating the Lord after this fashion. When brethren start calling one another ugly names, either face to face or through our religious papers, if they could remember that they are treating the Lord in that fashion, in the person of their brother, they would surely deal more kindly with the brethren.

3. Sin Will Find You Out. It is a difficult thing to hide our sins from our fellow men, if we continue the practice of sin very long, we will likely be detected in our sin. But if we manage to escape detection, there is another way in which sin will be found out. Those who come to realize their sin, and are stricken in their conscience on account of their sin, are driven to confess their sin in order that they may have an easy conscience. Hence, another way of sin coming to light. Sometimes people go to great lengths to cover their sin to keep them from being made known. David is a good example of this. You remember that, when he sinned with Bathsheba, he was tempted to hide his sin. He called Uriah from the battlefield to return home, thinking that this would remove any suspicion from himself. But when Uriah refused to go home, it became necessary for David to resort to sterner methods. He first made him drunk, thinking that he would go home, but Uriah refused to go even when drunk. Then in desperation David sent a note to Joab to put Uriah in the front line of battle where he would surely be killed, and when word was sent to David that Uriah was dead, David took Bathsheba for his wife, thinking this would cover his sin of adultery with her. David lied to Uriah and finally had him murdered to try to keep his sin covered. But in spite of that Nathan, the prophet, uncovered his sin and brought him under conviction.

But even if people could cover their sins in this life, their sins will come out in the judgment for, "*God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*" (Eccl. 12:14.) Again, "*For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10.) Jesus said that even the idle words which we speak must be accounted for in the day of judgment. (Matt. 12:36.) Hence, we see the importance of avoiding sin, because our sins will find us out, usually in this life, but certainly in the judgment.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 7:10-26

1. Cause of Defeat Discovered (Josh. 7:10-15)

Israel has sinned. Joshua was very much concerned about the defeat of his army at Ai, not only for the loss of the men, but for what would be done for the name of Jehovah. The Canaanites would surely learn of this defeat and would be encouraged by it to stiffen their resistance. This was Jehovah's explanation for the defeat of the army of Israel at Ai. In verse eleven we have an enumeration of the sins which had been committed. (1) They had transgressed His covenant. That is, they had broken a solemn vow which they had taken to put the valuables of the city in the proper place instead of taking them for themselves. (2) They had stolen; that is, they had taken some of the things devoted to the Lord to use in their private life. This was taking that which did not belong to them but which belonged to the Lord and using it for themselves. (3) They had dissembled. This means they had practiced deceit. They were trying to hide their sin. (4) They had even put it among their own stuff. By this it is meant that they had appropriated to themselves that which belonged to God. This the Lord considered a very serious crime.

I will not be with you anymore. This was the Lord's attitude toward Israel as long as there was sin among them. He would not be with them in their battles, He would not prosper them in their efforts to capture the land of Canaan if they permitted this sin to remain unpunished among them. This ought to be a good lesson to the elders of churches today. It is their duty to keep the churches pure of worldliness, ungodliness, and immorality. If they allow these sins to continue in the church without rebuke, without discipline, they should not expect the Lord to be with them and to bless the labors of the church.

Up, sanctify the people. From a former lesson we have learned that in sanctifying themselves the people were required to go through certain washings. The purpose of this was to emphasize the uncleanness of sin and the necessity of being free from this uncleanness to come into the presence of Jehovah. That is a lesson which all of us should learn, that we are to keep ourselves free from sin; but, if we become involved in sin, we should cleanse ourselves from this sin before attempting to come into His presence for worship or service.

You cannot stand before your enemies. Only one man of all the great army of Israel had sinned. Yet, this one sin makes it impossible for the army to stand before their enemies in battle. If one sin thus enfeebled and weakened the army of Israel before its enemies, how much more would sin in the life of an individual today enfeeble that individual and render his efforts useless in serving God. Sin in one's life not only robs that one of his courage but also compromises his influence with all who knew of his sin.

He that is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt with fire. This shows God's estimate of the seriousness of sin. This one who had stolen that which was devoted to the Lord must pay with his life. Two reasons are given for this severe justice. (1) The man had transgressed the covenant of Jehovah. (2) He had wrought folly in Israel. When we become Christians, we take a vow to wear the name Jehovah without soiling it. When we sin, we violate this covenant which we have made. Sin is a serious thing, and we should avoid it as we would a poisonous reptile. When people sin today, they also work folly in spiritual Israel, the church. The sin of an individual brings reproach upon the church of our Lord. That individual who can sin lightly and so put to shame the church of the Lord in the community really works folly in Israel more so than this man did in the long ago.

2. The Sinner Discovered (Josh. 7:16-21)

Joshua . . . brought Israel near by their tribes. This is in harmony with the instructions which Jehovah gave. (Verse 14.) They were to be taken first by their tribes, and the Lord would indicate the tribe in which the sin was. We learn that the tribe of Judah was taken, so indicating that the sinner was in the tribe of Judah. And then he brought forth the family in which the sin existed. When God had indicated the family in which the sin existed, he then brought forth the households of this family. And the person in that household that had sinned was pointed out. Achan, the son of Carmi, was the one indicated as the sinner.

My son, give . . . glory to Jehovah, . . . make confession unto Him. We should notice the tenderness of Joshua in dealing with this unfortunate sinner. A man had fallen victim to his lusts and had taken that which was devoted to the Lord. It was such a serious sin that it must be punished, and yet Joshua had compassion for the man and addressed him as his son. This reminds us that we ought to deal kindly, yet firmly, with those who have sinned. (Gal. 6:1.)

Of a truth I have sinned against Jehovah. Achan made a full and free confession. He did not stutter, nor did he say, if I have sinned. He simply said, "*I have sinned against Jehovah.*" Then he detailed his sin. He said, "*I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight.*" Then he said he coveted them and took them and hid them in his tent. Notice the things that this man says he did. (1) "*I saw.*" He looked upon that which was devoted to God, and he looked with favor. He allowed himself to think favorably of taking that which belonged to God. When we allow ourselves to contemplate sin, our battle is half lost. (2) "*I coveted them.*" The coveting naturally follows looking or contemplating with favor the doing of a thing that is wrong. (3) He took. That is the natural consequence of looking and desiring. (4) He said he hid them in his tent. That is the natural thing to do; to try to cover sin, and so today many after following their desire to sin, try to hide their sin.

3. Punishment of the Sinner (Josh. 7:22-26)

They took them from the midst of the tent. Achan had tried to hide his sin, but sins will find people out. And Achan's sin was no exception to the rule. His sin has now been made public, both by his confession and by producing the things which he had stolen.

Why have you troubled us? The sin of Achan had brought trouble upon Israel. Thirty-six men had died in battle. They left a number of women behind to know the sorrow and suffering that only widows could know in that day. They left a number of children fatherless, to go through life without the care

and instruction of a father. This sin had given the enemies of Israel encouragement and would make their battles harder in the future. So, when people today sin, they bring trouble into the camp of Israel.

All Israel stoned him with stones. Bible scholars argue whether Achan's family was stoned with him. The first part of the statement is that Israel stoned him. Then we are told they burned *them* with fire and stoned *them* with stones. Some argue that his family would not have been stoned and burned unless they knew of the sin and helped him to hide the sin. Of that we have no proof. Neither the Septuagint nor the Syriac version mentions the stoning of Achan's family. These simply say that "*all Israel stoned him with stones and burned what pertained to him with fire.*" But whether the family were stoned or not, the punishment was sufficiently severe to warn Israel that God knows our sins, that he will not be with us when we are in sin, and that our sins will bring dire punishment upon us and suffering upon those with whom we are associated.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Trying to hide our sins is utter folly. Very few of us are able to hide our sins from our friends and neighbors. Someone said, "You can fool some of the people all the time and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." It may very well be added that you cannot fool God any of the time.

2. Paul tells us that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Tim. 6:10.) The love of material wealth is the thing that caused Achan to sin. It brought sin to his own life, defeat to Israel, death to several soldiers and suffering, maybe destruction, to his own family. Certainly the love of money brought evil into the life of Achan and all Israel.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 4

ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI

1. Tell how Israel kept their promise to Rahab. _____

2. What mention is made of Rahab in the New Testament? _____

3. What did Joshua say would happen to the man who attempted to rebuild Jericho? _____

4. Tell of Israel's defeat at Ai. _____

5. Give the setting of our key scripture. _____

6. To whom had the land east of Jordan formerly belonged? _____

7. What did Moses think when the request was first made? _____

8. Did all the soldiers of the two and one-half tribes take part in the conquest of Canaan? _____

9. How serious would be their failure to do as they promised? _____

10. What did Jesus teach about our treatment of Himself through our treatment of his brethren? _____

11. Name some ways in which sins are brought to light? _____

12. To what will people resort to cover their sins? _____

13. Illustrate this principle by the use of David. _____

14. What is taught with reference to our sins in the day of judgment? _____

15. Name and discuss four ways in which Israel had sinned. _____

16. What did this sin cause Jehovah to do? _____

17. What lesson may elders of churches today learn with reference to the discipline of congregations? _____

18. What purpose did God have in sanctifying the people? _____

19. What effect did this sin have on all Israel? _____

20. What was to be done with the guilty party? _____

21. Discuss two reasons given for this severe punishment. _____

22. By what method was the sinner discovered? _____

23. What shows the compassion of Joshua for Achan? _____

24. Does this suggest that we should hate sin but have compassion on the sinner? _____

25. Was there any reservation in the confession of Achan? _____

26. What four elements of sin are seen in his confession? _____

27. How did Achan attempt to hide his sin? _____

28. In what way had Achan's sin troubled Israel? _____

29. What was Achan's punishment for his sin? _____

30. Do you think his family suffered with him? _____

31. What effect does sin usually have upon those closely related to the sinner? _____

LESSON NUMBER 5

THE LAW RECORDED AND READ

Deut. 1-7; Josh. 8:30-35

INTRODUCTION

After the sin of Achan had been punished, God gave Joshua encouragement, saying, "*Fear not, neither be dismayed: take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.*" This was a serious experience through which the people had gone. Sin had caused God to leave the camp and refuse to be with them in their battles. If that continued, the destruction of Israel was certain and imminent. Hence, they needed encouragement, and God does not leave His people without encouragement, especially when they are willing to rid themselves of sin as they did in this case. Next, we notice the strategy used in taking the city of Ai. Some thirty thousand men of valor were sent forth by night to lie in ambush against the city on the far side. Then Joshua and his army were to approach the city as they had done before, and, when the men of Ai came out to join them in battle, this force before the city turned and fled as they had done previously. Then the men of Ai, with the help of those of Bethel, followed after Israel, expecting to slay some of them as they had done before. But at the proper time Joshua gave his signal and the men lying in ambush behind the city arose and went into the city unopposed. They set fire to the city, and, when the men of Ai saw their city in flames, they realized that they had been ambushed from the rear and knew that their defeat was imminent. The city and its inhabitants were destroyed, the king was hanged on a tree, and the spoils of the city were given over to the people of Israel for their own use and enjoyment. These two battles with the city of Ai should teach us that we can do anything God expects us to do so long as we live right and have God as our helper, but that we will go down in utter defeat, when we, by our ungodliness, make it impossible for God to be with us.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed." (Deut. 30:19)

1. Great Witnesses. The words of our text are the language of Moses in his last discourse before the people of Israel shortly before his death. He was trying to impress the people with the importance of obeying the law that he had given to them. The more important a matter is, the greater the witnesses called upon to witness the transaction. It would be impossible to select greater witnesses than heaven and earth. Hence, the greatest possible importance should be attached to the law and their obedience to it. Calling heaven as a witness of the transactions of that day suggests two things. (1) The material heavens are peopled with the stars and planets and they were looked upon as witnesses to this transaction. David speaks of them as the servants of God continuing in all the ordinances of God relative to them. (Psalm 119:91) Since all the heavenly bodies obey implicitly the will of their Creator and Preserver, they are represented as looking with disfavor upon mankind as the only creature of God who is self-willed and rebellious against his Creator. (2) The angels of heaven may be included in this. They are said to be interested in the affairs of man. Peter represents the angels as being interested in

the sayings of the prophets, and that they desire to look into these things. (1 Pet. 1:12) And Jesus represents the angels as being interested in our affairs and rejoicing when even one sinner repents. (Luke 15:10.) To call upon them as a witness against our transactions suggests that they would look with disfavor upon our transgression of the law. In the second place Moses called earth to witness against Israel suggesting that the earth is interested in and, affected by the righteousness of people or by the transgression of people. And Paul speaks of the physical creation being subjected to vanity, not of its own will but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into which it was brought by the sin of man, on account of which he says the whole creation "*groans and travails in pain together until now.*" (Rom. 8:19-22.)

2. Great Destinies. Moses continues our text by saying that he had set before Israel life and death, the blessing and the curse. The blessing would lead to life. The curse would lead to death. These are the great destinies of our text and the great avenues which lead to these great destinies. This thought is enlarged upon in a preceding verse in these words, "*See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I commanded you this day to love Jehovah your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, that you may live and multiply, and that Jehovah your God may bless you in the land when you go in to possess it. But if your heart turn away, and you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land, when you pass over the Jordan to go in to possess it.*" Theirs was a temporal destiny conditioned upon obedience to carnal commandments and ordinances. If they obeyed the commandments of the Lord, they would be allowed to enjoy that great destiny. But if they disobeyed the commandments of the Lord, they would be driven out of their land and subjected to another destiny. This is intended as an object lesson for us. And New Testament writers use these experiences of Israel to teach us lessons for our good. Our destiny is eternal and conditioned upon obedience to a Spiritual law. But the same principle of respect for the lawgiver and obedience to the law being necessary for our enjoyment of the blessings is important for each one of us to learn. There are still two possible destinies for each one of us. If we obey the Lord, we can enjoy heaven forevermore; but, if we live in disregard and disobedience to His law, we will endure the tortures of hell forevermore.

3. A Great Choice. Moses concludes our text by saying, "*Therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed.*" Moses called upon them to make one great choice. In fact, if we make that one great choice and decision, all the lesser decisions and choices of life will be easy to make. The man who chooses and decides deep in his heart to accept and to serve God all the days of his life will find the daily decisions and choices easy to make; but the one who is divided in his love and his loyalty will find that day by day he is having difficulty in making his decisions. So, if our daily decisions are difficult for us to make, we should examine our hearts and see whether or not the one great choice to love and serve God faithfully and loyally has been made. In the next place, to choose God is to choose life. And in choosing life in this way we have the assurance that we shall live. Moses said, "*Choose life, that you may live.*" Our enjoyment of eternal life depends upon whether we choose, in this life, life or death. So it is in this life and by our choice that we decide our eternal destiny. We should notice further that Moses suggested that our choice would have something to do with our children. Moses encouraged these people to choose life, not only that they might live, but that their seed also might live. Hence, the choice that we make will have something to do with the choice which our children and their children after them will make. In this we see the importance of making the right choice and living by it. Life is indeed a solemn and serious affair, and we should accept the responsibilities and the duties of this life soberly and in view of eternity.

II. A COMMENTARY ON DEUTERONOMY 27:1-7 AND JOSHUA 8:30-35

1. Moses Gives Instructions (Deut. 27:1-7)

Keep all the commandment which I command you this day. Moses was deeply concerned about the future of the people whom he led. So over and over he admonishes and exhorts them to keep in mind the commandments of the Lord and to obey them. Moses had every reason to fear that the people would not keep the commandments. Later he said, "*For I know your rebellion, and your stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, you have been rebellious against Jehovah; and how much more after my death? . . . For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you.*" (Deut. 31:27-29.)

You shall set up great stones. This was to be done after they had crossed the river Jordan into the land of Canaan. These stones were to be plastered with plaster. How many stones were used we are not told. Some suggest twelve because of the twelve tribes of Israel. But that is mere fancy. The object was to gather stones of such shape as to give them a surface on which to write, and plaster was to be put over them to make a smooth surface for writing. Some inscriptions have been found where the surface of the stone was chiseled away, leaving the letters in relief. Others have been found where the letters were chiseled into the surface of the stone. Since the stone was covered with plaster, it is probable that the writing was done upon this plaster. Travelers in the Holy Land testify that they have seen specimens of writing on such plaster as much as two thousand years old, and that the writing is still distinct.

Write upon the stones all the words of this law. It is impossible for us to determine positively what was written on these stones. The second section of our lesson says, "*He wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses.*" But since that term, the law of Moses, is used to represent the five books which Moses wrote, as well as portions of the law, we are left to wonder how much of the law was written. Certainly not the whole five books which Moses wrote. Some say that a condensation of the law of Moses was written on these stones. Others say that the curses and blessings which are mentioned in the context of our lesson were written, while others say that the ten commandments were written on the stones. Since the term, the law, is often used in scripture to refer the ten commandments, but is not used anywhere to refer to these blessings and curses, pronounced on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, this writer prefers to say that on this occasion the term refers to the ten commandments, and that the ten commandments were written on the plaster on these stones.

There shall you build an altar unto Jehovah your God. This altar, as well as the stones on which the law was written, was to be erected on Mount Ebal. This altar was to be built of rough unhewn stones, and upon it were to be offered both burnt offerings and peace offerings. So from the instructions which Moses gave, people were to be acquainted with the law and to learn respect for the authority of God as expressed through this law, and they were to be taught to worship God in connection with the reading of the law.

2. Joshua Follows Instructions (Josh. 8:30-35)

Then Joshua built an altar unto Jehovah. This brings us back to the time after the battle of Ai. The armies of Israel had gained a foothold. They had established a spearhead in the land of Canaan. They were firmly entrenched in this eastern portion of the land, and they now could take time to worship

God. They could now give God thanks that He had brought them into the land which He had promised them and that He had given them victory over their enemies, which was a pledge of the success of the entire campaign to take the land. Jericho and Ai might be looked upon as the first fruits of the land of Canaan. Since God had given them these victories, they could well depend upon Him to give them victories over all the other enemies.

As it is written in the book of the law of Moses. Critics of the Bible have attempted to prove that the book of Deuteronomy was written hundreds of years later than Moses perhaps in the days of Ezra. But here Joshua tells us that it was written in the book of the law of Moses that an altar should be built upon Mount Ebal, so this verse is positive proof that the book of Joshua was written after the book of Deuteronomy. We must, therefore, accept the fact that the book of Deuteronomy was written before the events of the blessings and the curses, or we must deny the inspiration of the book of Joshua.

Half of them in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of Mount Ebal. This refers to the arrangement of the people to pronounce the blessings and the curses. Half of them stood on Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessings, and the other half stood on Mount Ebal to pronounce the curse. The ark of the covenant was surrounded by the priests, Levites and the elders of the people and was stationed between the two groups on the mountainside. It is difficult to determine whether they actually stood upon these mountains or whether they stood facing these mountains when they pronounced the blessings or the curses. Deut. 27:11-14 says they stood upon the mountain, while this thirty-third verse of our text seems to suggest that they stood facing the mountains when they pronounced the blessings and the curses.

Afterward he read all the words of the law. Critics have said that it would have been impossible for Joshua to read the law so as to be heard by the vast assemblage of people on that occasion. Brother McGarvey went to this very spot and conducted a test to see whether or not the voice of a man could be carried far enough to be heard by people on the two mountains. A summary of his report of this test was: "It is interesting to know that the spot chosen by God for this reading is a vast natural amphitheater, in which the human voice can be heard to a surprising distance. About halfway between Shechem and the mouth of the valley in which it stands there is a deep semi-circular recess in the face of Mount Ebal and a corresponding one precisely opposite to it in Mount Gerizim. No man with his eyes open could ride along the valley without being struck with this singular formation. As soon as I saw it, I recognized it as the place of Joshua's reading. It has been asserted repeatedly by travelers that, although two men stationed on the opposite slope of these two mountains are a mile apart, they can read so as to be heard by each other. We preferred to try the experiment in stricter accordance with Joshua's example. So I took a position, Bible in hand, in the middle of the valley while two of my associates stood on either mountain. When I had read the blessing or the curse they pronounced an amen afterwards. One of my associates heard me distinctly, and I could hear his response. But the other, though he could hear my voice, could not distinguish the words. This, Brother McGarvey says, was owing to the fact that some mountain walls prevented him from ascending high enough that the trees between Brother McGarvey and his associate interrupted the passage of the sound, but since the man could hear his voice, and Brother McGarvey's voice was weak, he concluded that Joshua, with a strong voice, could have been heard by his associate." (Lands of the Bible, page 507.)

Before all the assembly of Israel. This was a vast assemblage of some two million people gathered in this recess between the mountains. Their sacrifices upon the altar, the writing of the law on the

stones, their repeating of the curses and the blessings in the hearing of all Israel must have made a great impression upon the people. It, no doubt, helped to account for the fact that the people were faithful as long as Joshua lived and as long as the elders who were associated with Joshua lived. (Judges 2:6,7.)

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. We should learn from this incident the part which the law of the Lord plays in the life of a nation. Here a nation of people assembled to hear the law of the Lord read and emphasized in their presence. It was to mean much to them. Upon their attitude toward this law depended their national security. If the rulers of the people of the world today could learn this lesson, we might have peace.

2. From this incident we should learn the place that worship has in the life of people and of nations. Here the people of Israel assembled to worship God by offering sacrifices upon their altar. They heard the law read and were impressed with the authority of Him from whom the law came, and now in gratitude for their successes in battle and for the gift of the land of Canaan they humbly worshiped before their Creator and their Preserver. If the nations of the world today could learn to respect the law of the Lord and to pay due homage and adoration to Him in worship as He directs, we could live together in peace.

3. But religion is not a national affair today. We do not accept God by nations nor do we worship God in national units, but religion is a personal affair. Each one must make his own choice regardless of the direction the nation travels, or the community about us; we can make our choice for God and live for Him all the days of our lives. If the majority of people do not choose to live for God, our pathway will be more difficult and our burdens heavier, but we are promised the help of the Lord, and with that help we can do all that He expects and demands of us. So let each one of us make his own choice and abide by it.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 5

THE LAW RECORDED AND READ

1. What encouragement did God give Joshua after the death of Achan? _____

2. Tell the story of the capture of Ai. _____

3. What lesson should we learn from Israel's experience with Ai? _____

4. With what was Moses trying to impress the people in his last discourse? _____

5. What two things are suggested by calling heaven as a witness to their transactions? _____

6. What is the significance to their calling the earth a witness? _____

7. What does Paul say the earth has suffered on account of sin? _____

8. What are the two great destinies of our text? _____

9. What are the two avenues which lead to these destinies? _____

10. How do New Testament writers use these experiences of Israel? _____

11. What great choice did Moses call upon them to make? _____

12. How does this great choice affect our daily life? _____

13. How does this choice affect succeeding generations? _____

14. Did Moses believe Israel would be faithful after his death? _____

15. On what were the people to write the words of the law? _____

16. How much of the law of Moses do you think was written on these stones? _____

17. Where were the people commanded to build an altar? _____

18. What two things were the people to learn from the altar and from the law written on plastered stones? _____

19. What two cities may be called the first fruits of the conquest of Canaan? _____

20. What do Bible critics say of the date of the writing of Deuteronomy? _____

21. What proof do we have that it was written before the days of Joshua? _____

22. On what mountains were the blessings and cursings pronounced? _____

23. What use have Bible critics made of this experience? _____

24. Give a summary of Brother McGarvey's experiment. _____

25. What effect was this experience calculated to have upon Israel? _____

26. What would you conclude from this lesson? _____

LESSON NUMBER 6

JOSHUA AND CALEB

Josh. 14:6-15

INTRODUCTION

The events of this lesson transpire some seven years after the events of our last lesson. During this time a number of interesting things had happened. Among them the Gibeonites had deceived Joshua and his people and had made a treaty with the Israelites, allowing them to be servants and thus avoiding destruction along with the rest of the tribes of Canaan. This incident is found in the ninth chapter of Joshua. When the treaty with the Gibeonites became known to the other tribes of Canaan, they were called together by the king of Jerusalem who organized a military campaign against Gibeon. The men of Gibeon called on Joshua for help. It was in this battle to assist the Gibeonites that Joshua needed more time than the day allowed so he called upon the sun to stand still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Aijalon so that, *"there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of man: for Jehovah fought for Israel."* (Josh. 10:14.) Their campaign against the various nations of Canaan continued until *"Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Jehovah spoke unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes."* (Josh. 11:23.) In chapters thirteen to twenty-two of the book of Joshua, we have the record of the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. It is in the midst of this account that we find our lesson text.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite unto this day, because that he wholly followed Jehovah, the God of Israel." (Josh. 14:14)

1. Caleb Blessed for His Obedience. Our text suggests that Caleb was given an inheritance in the land of Canaan because of his loyalty and faithfulness to God. It is a little difficult to identify and locate this man Caleb as definitely as we would wish. Our text says that he was the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. The Kenizzites are mentioned as a tribe of people in Canaan at the time that Abraham came into the land. (Gen. 15:19.) And yet we are told in Num. 13:6 that Caleb was of the tribe of Judah. Some have supposed that his ancestors attached themselves to Abraham as servants and sojourned with him in Egypt and were delivered from bondage, and that Caleb went through the wilderness wanderings attached to the tribe of Judah. Regardless of whether he was an actual descendant of Abraham or became a proselyte and attached himself to the tribe of Judah, by his loyalty and obedience to the Lord he gained and deserves a place in the hall of fame for the faithful among the people. The first mention we have of Caleb is in Num. 13, where he was selected to represent the tribe of Judah in the spying out of the land, one man being selected from each tribe to go into the land of Canaan to see the conditions with which they would have to deal. And be it said to his honor that he was one of the two of that number who made a favorable report. After the ten spies had made their unfavorable report, it was Caleb who stilled the people and said, *"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."* (Num. 13:30.) Later on he joined with Joshua in saying, *"If Jehovah delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it unto us; a land which flows with milk and honey."*

Only rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is removed from over them, and Jehovah is with us: fear them not." (Num. 14:8,9.) And only the appearance of the glory of Jehovah in the tent of meeting saved Joshua and Caleb from being stoned by the people. God pardoned the people for their rebellion on this occasion, but He condemned them to die in the wilderness on account of their rebellion. But He made an exception of Joshua and Caleb. And of Caleb in this connection the Lord said, *"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."* (Num. 14:24.) So on account of his faith in God to give them the land and because of his obedience based upon that faith, he was blessed. This should teach us that, if we too will be faithful to the Lord and loyal to His word, clean in our lives, we will be blessed by the Lord.

2. Caleb Wholly Followed Jehovah. This is a wonderful statement to be made in reference to anyone. When it can be said a man wholly followed Jehovah, that man has earned the highest praise it is possible for an individual to earn in this life. (1) That one who wholly follows Jehovah is following without any reservations whatsoever. A full and unreserved consecration of one's self to God is necessary and yet it is a very difficult thing for one to do. In Luke 9, we have examples of people who would follow Jesus, but there were certain things they wished to do before they started following Him. In each case Jesus tells them to remove that hindrance and come on and follow Him. He even demanded that the dead be allowed to bury the dead. If we would follow Jesus, we must put Him even before father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter. (2) Following Jehovah wholly not only means following Him without reservation, but it means following Him in all the various relations of life. There is a realm of activity known as our business life. With some it is difficult to be absolutely upright and honest and honorable in their business dealings. They would like to be known as followers of the Lord in their religious life, but it costs too much to be a follower of the Lord in their business life, so they will follow the Lord on Sunday, but will be of the world and like the world through the week. Then we have social activities and relationships. In these social relationships we are sometimes inclined to take liberties that are not in harmony with the will of the Lord. We sometimes justify ourselves in saying that we are regular in our church attendance and that we are honest and upright in our business dealings, and so we feel that we have liberties in the field of our social relationships. There are others whose actions in the business and social world are above reproach, but who in their home relationships are not Christian. The husband and father who deals harshly with his wife and children at home is not wholly following Jehovah. If we would wholly follow Jehovah, we must take Jesus along as our example and our counselor in all the various activities of all the realms of life and conform to His will, His teaching, and His example. (3) Another thought suggested in wholly following Jehovah is that one's relationship to Jehovah is what it ought to be. This could not be said of Caleb if he had refused to identify himself with the people of God, to share their fortunes and misfortunes, suffer when they suffered, as well as rejoicing with them when they rejoiced. He had to identify himself with God's people in order that he might wholly follow God. So today that person who refuses to identify himself with the people of God in their work and worship, in their joys and in their sufferings, is not in that relationship that would allow him to say that he is wholly following the Lord.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 14:6-15

1. Caleb Remembers a Promise (Josh. 14: 6-9)

The children of Judah drew nigh unto Joshua. Here again we have evidence of the fact that Caleb was either a member of the tribe of Judah or had associated himself with that tribe so as to inherit land with

them.

Jehovah spoke unto Moses ... concerning me and . . . you. This refers to the record of events that happened at Kadesh-barnea when the twelve spies had returned from the land of Canaan. Joshua and Caleb were the only two of the twelve who thought the Jews would be able to take the land. They encouraged the people to be faithful to God and to enter into the land in spite of the danger of being stoned for so encouraging the people. Kadesh-barnea is the point south of Canaan where the Israelites first touched the border of the promised land. It was from this point that the spies were sent out and it was from this point the Israelites could have entered the land from the south. But on account of their unfaithfulness and rebellion against God, they were turned back into the wilderness to wander another thirty-eight years. They had been out of Egypt two years, having spent about one year at Sinai. (Num. 14:26-35.)

I brought him word again as it was in my heart. This statement indicates the integrity and the courage of Caleb. He made his report according to what was in his heart. He was not concerned about what other people thought or what other people were going to say. He made his report concerning the conditions of the land and gave his recommendations as to their action in the matter without regard to what others thought or felt. His courage is manifest in that he made a minority report. It is difficult for some people to stand in a minority. It is easy to stand with the majority and even make a public plea for that for which the majority contends, but for one to stand with the minority or alone and express his convictions is an evidence of courage. We need men in civic, state, and national offices today who have the right thing in their heart and who can speak according to what is in their heart. The time-serving, flattering, men pleasers, who say the things that they think their constituents want to hear, will never accomplish any good in office. The church also needs men of conviction who are willing and able to stand alone if need be and express those convictions. And those convictions need to be formed by a knowledge of the word of God. If convictions are formed in harmony with the wisdom of men, the courage to express our convictions and stand by them is of little value. But if those convictions are based upon a knowledge of the word of God, the expression of them and a courageous stand for them will do good.

My brethren . . . made the heart of the people melt. Caleb is here speaking of the ten spies who brought back an unfavorable and discouraging report. They admitted that the land was a fertile land and one to be desired, but it was in the possession of giants and it would be impossible for them to take the land from the giants. People who do not enjoy working and suffering for the Lord are glad when they are told they cannot do anything. Preachers and elders who are continually exhorting the people to do more and urging them to make greater sacrifices are not very popular. If a preacher or an elder wishes to be popular, let him encourage the people to fold their hands and do nothing. The people listened to the ten faithless spies, and their hearts melted within them. That is, their courage and determination melted away.

Surely the land whereon your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you. This is the promise that Moses made Caleb, and this is the promise that Caleb remembered through the years of wandering, and he is now reminding Joshua that Moses made this promise. When God condemned the people to wander in the wilderness and be destroyed, he made an exception of these two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, and said that all the rest of the people who were of age when they left Egypt would fall in the wilderness, but that their little ones, whom they said would be a prey to their enemies, should live to enter into and enjoy the land with Caleb and Joshua.

2. Caleb Claims the Promise (Josh. 14:10-12)

Jehovah has kept me alive these forty and five years. According to Caleb, it had been forty-five years since the time the spies went into the land of Canaan until the time that the land was being divided and Caleb was claiming his inheritance. Thirty-eight of these years were spent in wandering in the wilderness, and seven years had been consumed in the campaign to conquer the land and divide the land among the tribes.

As my strength was then, even so is my strength now. Caleb was eighty-five years of age, and yet his physical condition was remarkable. Of Moses, at the time of his death, it is said, "*His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.*" (Deut. 34:7.) This is what Caleb meant when he said his strength, at eighty-five, was what it was at forty. He was able to go to war the same as he was forty-five years before, could do as much work as he was able to do at the time he went in to spy out the land. It is not necessary for us to conclude that any miracle was performed in the preservation of their physical strength, but certainly the providence of God was with them in the preservation of their physical and mental energies.

Give me this hill-country. Here Caleb claims the promise made to him forty-five years before by Moses, the servant of God.

You heard in that day how the Anakin were there. Caleb called upon Joshua to remember the incidents connected with the promise, and Caleb goes on to say that, in spite of the great fortified cities in that section of Palestine, he believed that Jehovah would be with him and he would be able to drive the people out. The years of wandering in the wilderness and of fighting their enemies in Canaan had not robbed Caleb of his faith in the ability of Jehovah to do what was in His plans to do. Caleb believed that if he would be faithful to the Lord, the Lord could accomplish anything that He had promised to do.

3. Joshua Grants the Promise (Josh. 14:13-15)

And Joshua blessed him; and he gave Hebron unto Caleb. Joshua recognized Caleb's right to the territory he claimed because his claim was based upon the promise that God made through Moses forty-five years previous. Time does not render a promise invalid. God keeps His promises regardless of the time intervening.

Because that he wholly followed Jehovah. Three times in this text Caleb is said to have wholly followed Jehovah. Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and thousands of others failed to enter the land of promise because they did not wholly follow Jehovah.

The name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba. The meaning of this word cannot certainly be known. The first part of it means city. Some say the latter part, "arba," means four, making the whole word mean the city of four. Others say that "arba" is the name of a man, and so it was the city of Arba, and the translators of our text seem to agree with that and say that this Arba was the greatest man among the Anakin. The Anakin were a race of giants, who inhabited this portion of Canaan; but when driven out by Joshua, they disappeared.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. We should learn from this lesson the value of standing for the right though we have to stand alone. Caleb had only one associate when he stood for that which was right. But he was not discouraged by the fact that he had only one associate. He knew that he was standing with the Lord, and he and the Lord were a majority. So we today, when we stand with the Lord, for a proposition, are in the majority regardless of how many are against us.

2. God always rewards faithful service, though it may be postponed by circumstances over which we have no control. God promised Caleb the land on which he had walked because Caleb felt sure the people could take the land with the help of God. The unfaithfulness and rebellion of the people were circumstances over which Caleb had no control, and these circumstances made it necessary for Caleb to go forty-five years without realizing the promise which God made him, but God did not forget the promise, and in His providence He preserved Caleb for the enjoyment of that promise.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 6

JOSHUA AND CALEB

1. How many years transpired between our last lesson and this one? _____

2. Tell the story of the Gibeonite deception. _____

3. Tell of the campaign of the king of Jerusalem against Gibeon. _____

4. On whom did the Gibeonites call for assistance? _____

5. What do you know of Caleb's ancestors? _____

6. Where is Caleb first mentioned? _____

7. What do you know of his faith and his loyalty to God? _____

8. What reward was promised Caleb on account of his faithfulness? _____

9. To what degree did Caleb follow Jehovah? _____

10. Discuss three thoughts suggested in wholly following Jehovah. _____

11. Where was the promise made which Caleb remembered? _____

12. For what is Kadesh-barnea remembered in the experiences of Israel? _____

13. What evidence do we have of Caleb's integrity and courage? _____

14. What did Caleb say of his fellow spies? _____

15. What is usually the popular course for church leaders to follow? _____

16. Can you give the language in which the promise was made to Caleb? _____

17. How long from the giving of the promise until Caleb claimed it? _____

18. What was Caleb's age when he claimed the promise? _____

19. What do you know of his physical condition? _____

20. For what portion of the land did Caleb ask? _____

21. Was Joshua willing to give Caleb that which he requested? _____

22. In what way is the fact emphasized that Caleb wholly followed Jehovah? _____

23. How does Caleb compare with Moses and others in the way of faithfulness? _____

24. What was the former name of Hebron? _____

25. What do you know of the meaning of this word? _____

26. What peculiar race of people formerly lived there? _____

27. What would you conclude from this lesson? _____

LESSON NUMBER 7

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Josh. 20:1-9

INTRODUCTION

As a connecting link between this and our last lesson, we have the dividing of the land of Canaan among the people of Israel. Two and one-half tribes had settled east of the Jordan. The Levites got no inheritance, so there were nine and a half divisions left to be made among the other tribes. The tribe of Judah and the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh received their allotment of territory. Then there seems to have been a lull in the matter of dividing and possessing the land. Joshua reproved them for their slackness in going to possess their land. (Josh. 18:3-5.) He instructed them to appoint three men from each of the seven remaining tribes to receive an inheritance on the west side of the Jordan, and send them out to survey the land and make the proper division. These twenty-one men went throughout the land and made the division according to the number of people to inherit it and according to the richness of the land. When the divisions were made, they cast lots to see which tribe would inherit which division. When the division was thus made, the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh that settled west of the Jordan were dissatisfied with their inheritance. They complained to Joshua about it, but Joshua stood firm, telling them that they must accept that which fell to them by the lot of Jehovah. (Josh. 17:14-18.) The unselfishness of Joshua is manifested by the fact that he did not take an inheritance along with the balance of the people, but waited until all the others had received their inheritance. Then he asked for a place in the hill country called Tinnath-serah. (Josh. 19:49,50.) It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to locate the site of Joshua's inheritance today. Two places have been pointed out as probable locations. It is also said that Joshua's request was granted by the people according to a commandment of Jehovah. Some have thought that it was necessary for Jehovah to command the people to grant Joshua's request. If this is true, it shows a sinful lack of appreciation on the part of the people for the service which Joshua rendered.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psa. 46:1)

1. God Is Our Refuge. We are not told who is the author of this psalm, but most scholars agree that it was written after the days of David. Evidently it was written in a time of national trouble, when danger was threatening. The threatened destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Sennacherib furnishes such an occasion as would call forth a psalm of this type and may well have been the incident which occasioned the writing of this particular psalm. To say that God is our refuge is simply to say that He is our protection from trouble and sorrow. And this indicates that the writer or perhaps the nation for whom he spoke was going through a period of trouble when the psalm was written. To take refuge in God would simply be to believe in Him, to trust Him, and to go to Him in prayer with our troubles. The book of Psalms abounds in such statements, one of which is as follows: *"He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my high tower: I shall not be moved. With God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us."* (Psalm 62:6-8.) There are certain attributes of God which

are suggested and implied in the fact that He is our refuge and strength. (1) This implies the omnipotence of God. If God is a refuge from all troubles, He must be stronger than all enemies. In order to be stronger than all enemies, He must be omnipotent. If He is any less than omnipotent, it is possible that there is some enemy stronger than He. Hence, the omnipotence of God is required when He is spoken of as our refuge from all trials and troubles. (2) The goodness of God is implied in this statement. It is taken for granted that God will be a refuge for all those who are in trouble, and this implies His goodness. For many who wish to take refuge in God have been enemies of God heretofore. If they turn from their wicked ways and come to Him in time of trouble, He will be their refuge. This requires goodness. Those who will protect and care for those who have in the past been their enemies must have a forgiving spirit, must be good at heart. God is infinitely good because He is infinitely willing to care for all who put their trust in Him regardless of what their attitude has formerly been. (3) Our text implies the unchangeable character of God. In Mal. 3:6 we read, *"For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."* If Jehovah were changeable, man would not know whether to put his trust in Him in times of trouble. If God were changeable, the fact that He helped others in times past when they were in trouble would be no indication that He would help us in our times of trouble. But since we read that God changes not, we may be assured that He will be our refuge in time of trouble the same as He has always been a refuge to those who were in trouble.

2. God Is Our Strength. Man has never been able to exercise or develop enough strength to care for himself with reference to the ways of life. Man has never been able to direct his own steps. (Jer. 10:23) He has never been able to devise a way of salvation to save him from his sins. (Prov. 16:25) He has never been able to avoid indefinitely, ill-health, old age, and death. Man has never been able to avoid storms, floods and pestilence. So these things should teach us that we should not trust in our own strength, but trust in Jehovah who is our strength. In this connection the student should read Psalm 52. In this psalm the wicked man is described as making a failure, and the righteous are spoken of as saying, *"Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."* The wise man said, *"He that puts his trust in Jehovah shall be made fat. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."* (Prov. 28:25,26.) The weeping prophet speaks for Jehovah in these words: *"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows Me, that I am Jehovah who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah."* (Jer. 9:23,24.)

3. An Accessible Help. Our text says that Jehovah is a very present help. The words very present simply mean an accessible help, a help near at hand, easily accessible. David says, *"Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saves such as are of a contrite spirit."* (Psalm 34:18.) Moses said, *"For what great nation is there, that has a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon Him?"* (Deut. 4:7.) The accessibility of Jehovah does not depend upon any physical conditions. We can approach Him in the darkness as well as in the light. He is accessible to us in the mountains and on the plains. No trouble is so great that He makes it difficult for us to find Him. No one becomes so stained and polluted with sin that God is not accessible to him if he but turn from his sin and put his trust in God. The student should read the second chapter of Jonah to see that God is accessible to us regardless of where we are. When Jonah was in the bottom of the sea in the belly of the whale, God was accessible to him, heard his prayer, and answered that prayer.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 20:1-9

1. Purpose of Cities of Refuge (Josh. 20:1-6)

Assign you the cities of refuge. Jehovah reminded Joshua that He had spoken to Moses about these cities of refuge. We find the record of this in Num. 35. In this chapter Moses was told to set aside forty-eight cities for the Levites. They were to have no inheritance as the other tribes had but were to be allowed to live in forty-eight cities scattered throughout the land of promise. Six of these cities were to be cities of refuge where the man slayer might flee and reside until he could have a fair trial.

That kills any person unwittingly. Anyone who killed another person might flee to a city of refuge, but these cities were not to harbor anyone who committed murder with malice aforethought. In Num. 35:12 it is said that the person may go to the city of refuge, "*until he stand before the congregation for judgment.*" So these cities were not set aside to harbor intentional criminals. They were intended for the protection of innocent people until their innocence could be established. If one went there who was guilty of first-degree murder, he was protected only until he could have a fair trial. When found guilty of murder, he was delivered to the avenger of blood for his punishment.

A refuge from the avenger of blood. This avenger of blood was the nearest male relative to the one slain. It was not only his privilege to slay the one who killed his relative, but it was his duty to do so. If the avenger of blood overtook the man slayer before he reached the city, the avenger could slay the man killer even though the slaying was accidental and unintentional. For this reason it is always said that the one guilty of killing another should flee into the city.

Declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city. It was the right of everyone to have a free trial before the elders of that city nearest which the killing occurred. It was also the duty of the elders of the city to give the one who had killed his fellow man a place to live among them until such time as trial could be held. Though it is not specifically mentioned here, it would take time to summon witnesses and have them appear to testify either in behalf of or against the one accused of murder. So the elders of the city were to furnish a man a place to live among them until such time as fair trial could be had.

Until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days. If a man was found to be guilty of intentional murder, he was delivered to the avenger of blood, who put him to death. But if the man was found to be innocent of first-degree murder, guilty of only accidentally killing someone, he was protected from the avenger of blood. He was allowed to live in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest then in office. At the time of the death of this high priest, the man could return to his own city, and, if the avenger of blood took his life, he was dealt with as a murderer. The writer of Hebrews seems to refer to this when he speaks of our having fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. (Heb. 7:18,19.) We may view the Lord as our city of refuge and in the language of our key scripture, we learn that God is our refuge and our strength and a very present help in time of trouble. As in the case of the city of refuge, so with Christ this place of refuge must be entered by us if we expect to be blessed. Those who refused or neglected to go to the city of refuge suffered for it. So those who fail to go to Christ will fail to find their blessings. Again, good intentions of a man to go to the city of refuge did him no good unless he put those intentions to work. So good intentions to go to the Lord as our refuge are of no avail unless we put them into effect. There is, however this significant difference between the city of refuge and our refuge in the Lord. The city of refuge was for

the innocent only. But the Lord is a refuge for those who are guilty of sins; not that He will protect them in their sins, but when they turn from their sins and flee to Him for refuge, He accepts them and forgives them. The city of refuge was a place where men could find justice. But in Christ we go not for justice but for mercy.

2. Location of the Cities of Refuge (Josh. 20:7-9)

They set apart Kedesh in Galilee. These cities were located as conveniently as possible. Three of them were on the west side of the Jordan and three were on the east side of the Jordan. West of Jordan was Kedesh in Galilee for the northern section of the country. Then there was Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim in the central portion of the country. Then there was Kiriath-arba, which is also called Hebron. This was in the southern section of the west half of the land of Canaan.

And beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward. The first city of refuge on the east side of the Jordan named is the city of Bezer, which was in the wilderness in the tribe of Reuben, which was in the extreme southern portion of the territory of Reuben. Reuben was in the southern portion of the eastern half of the land of Canaan. The second city mentioned is Ramoth in Gilead. This was the territory of Gad and was in the central portion of the eastern half of the country. The third mentioned is Golan and was in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. This was in the northern section of the country east of the Jordan. However, the city of Golan was not nearly so far north as the city of Kedesh was on the west side of the Jordan.

For all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourned among them. These cities of refuge were for the strangers as well as for the children of Israel. Those who deal largely with the types of the Old Testament and find their anti-types in the New, see in this a type of Christ being a refuge not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. It is possible that God took this opportunity to teach the Jews that He was the God of the strangers as well as the God of the Israelites, and that He cared for them to a greater extent than the Jews were willing to admit.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. God's mercy is shown in His provision for the safety of those who had unwittingly committed a crime. So, God's mercy is shown to us today in His provision for our safety. He provides not for the innocent but He in his mercy provides for the guilty. And if we turn from our sins, flee to Him, we have rest.

2. Men who in that day delayed to flee to the city of refuge to escape the avenger of blood were foolish. So, we today often act foolishly because we delay to go to a place of refuge. Many good moral men realize that their morality is not enough to save them, and they intend someday to obey the gospel, but they delay going to the place of refuge. If they would value their eternal life as highly as men value their physical, temporal life, they certainly would flee for refuge.

3. Those who fled to the cities of refuge were safe, if they were innocent, until the death of the high priest. We are safe in our place of refuge because our high priest never dies. He ever lives to make intercession for, and to care for, those who are under His protective care.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 7

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

1. What portion of Israel settled on the east side of Jordan? _____

2. Which tribes were first to receive their allotment on the west side? _____

3. What arrangement was made to give the other seven tribes their allotment? _____

4. Which tribes were dissatisfied with their allotment? _____

5. How was the unselfishness of Joshua manifested? _____

6. For what portion of the land did Joshua ask? _____

7. Is David the author of the psalm in which our text is found? _____

8. What is suggested as to the time that this psalm was written? _____

9. Name and discuss three characteristics of Jehovah which are suggested by our text. _____

10. Through what experiences do all men pass which should teach us not to rely on our own strength? _____

11. What is said of the man who trusts in his own strength? _____

12. In what does Jeremiah advise us to glory? _____

13. What is said of the accessibility of Jehovah? _____

14. What do we learn from Jonah about the accessibility of Jehovah? _____

15. What portion of the land did the Levites receive for their inheritance? _____

16. How many cities were they given? _____

17. How many of these were cities of refuge and where were they located? _____

18. What kept these cities from being harbors for criminals? _____

19. Who was the avenger of blood? _____

20. What was the duty of the elders of the city in behalf of the manslayer? _____

21. What was done with the man found guilty of intentional murder? _____

22. How long must the innocent manslayer remain in the city of refuge? _____

23. In what ways were the cities of refuge like Christ? _____

24. What significant difference in the cities of refuge and our refuge in Christ? _____

25. Name and locate the three cities on the west side of the Jordan. _____

26. Name and locate the three cities on the east side of the Jordan. _____

27. Were strangers extended the privileges of these cities? _____

28. What lesson should the Jews have learned from this privilege of strangers? _____

29. What conclusion would you draw from this lesson? _____

LESSON NUMBER 8

JOSHUA'S LAST DAYS

Josh. 24:14-29

INTRODUCTION

As a connecting link between this and our last lesson, two things should be mentioned. First, the transjordanic tribes. The tribe of Gad, Reuben, and half tribe of Manasseh returned after the land of Canaan was conquered. As they approached the Jordan, the thought came to them that they should erect a memorial monument. When the tribes west of the Jordan heard that this monumental altar was being erected, they gathered themselves together at Shiloh to do battle against the two and a half tribes. But before doing battle with them they decided to send Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and with him one representative of each of the tribes for a conference with the two and a half tribes. When they met these representatives of these tribes west of the Jordan, they accused their brethren of rebellion against Jehovah and of erecting an altar for worship, which was contrary to the provisions of the law of Moses. But the children of the two and a half tribes replied they had a good and sufficient reason for erecting this altar. Then they explained that it had occurred to them that in time to come the children of the people west of the Jordan might say to the children of the people east of the Jordan that they had no part in Israel and in the worship of Jehovah carried on west of the Jordan. So they wished to build this altar as a monument to their services in capturing the land and as proof of the fact that they were a part of the people and entitled to the rights and privileges of the worship that would be carried on west of the Jordan. When full explanation of their motive had been made, the people west of the Jordan were satisfied, gave them their blessing, and departed back to their homes in peace. From this incident we should learn, (1) not to make accusations before we have all the facts. If this were done, there would be a lot less wrangling among brethren in our religious papers these days. (2) The motive we have in mind may determine whether a thing is right or wrong. If these people had been building this altar for the purpose of worshipping thereon, it would have been wrong. But since they were not building it for the purpose of worshipping thereon, but simply as a memorial, the building of the altar was right.

Another thing of interest in connecting these lessons is the fact that Joshua said that Jehovah had given Israel all the land which He swore He would give unto their father. And he said, "*There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*" (Josh. 21:45.) Again, Joshua said, "*And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which Jehovah your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing has failed thereof.*" (Josh. 23:14.) People who contend that God never did give the Jews all the land He promised them, and that, therefore, the Jews must be returned to Palestine before these promises are fulfilled should read and reread these passages. They might also find a similar statement in 1 Kings 8:56

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land

you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.” (Josh. 24:15)

1. A Challenge to comparison. From this text we learn that the forefathers of the Israelites had been idolaters. The reference to worship of gods beyond the river indicates that Abraham and his fathers worshiped idols when they lived beyond the Euphrates River. There is a reference to images in Gen. 31:34, which Rachael had when Jacob returned to Canaan with his family from Padan-aram. The Chaldeans worshiped fire and light and the sun, but they had images to represent these various gods. The gods of the Amorites were Astarte, better known as Venus, and Baal in various forms. The challenge which Joshua puts before the people at this time is between Jehovah and these various gods of the heathens. It was necessary for them to meditate upon the value of each of these gods, make comparison, and choose the one whom they preferred. They could never think of anything definite or particular that the gods of the Amorites or the gods of the Chaldeans had done that was of any value to them, but when they turned to meditate upon the goodness of God toward them, they had much of recent times to remember. A little more than forty years before this, Jehovah had delivered them from Egyptian bondage. He had worked such miracles as demonstrated His power over the gods of the Egyptians. He had not only delivered them, but He had preserved them through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. He had given them victory over their enemies. He had given them bread from heaven daily. He had given them meat by bringing quails in abundance into the camp and around about. He had given them water to drink from the flinty rock. He had led them by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night. Then at the end of forty years of wandering He had led them through the Jordan River when it was overflowing its banks. He had delivered the various tribes of Canaan into their hands and had given them victories over all of them. By the time Joshua gave them this challenge, Jehovah had settled them in the land of Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey. They had homes in which to live that they had not built. They were enjoying vineyards that they had not planted. All of these things were demonstrations of the power and the love and the goodness and the mercy of Jehovah. The choice which they were called upon to make should not have been a difficult one, nor is it difficult for us today if we but give some time to think upon the goodness and mercy and love of God.

2. The Choice Is Inevitable and Should Be Immediate. Man is so constituted that he will worship something. Man is a worshiping animal, someone has said. Man is the only animal that worships, and he is so constituted that he must worship. Hence, the choice with them was inevitable. We also have to make our choice. Since we are worshiping beings, we will either worship Jehovah or some creature of His. There were many reasons why this people should choose to serve Jehovah. (1) Conscience required it. Paul indicates in Rom. 1:18-20 that even the heathen is inexcusable for his idolatry since God has manifested Himself to them through the invisible things since the creation of the world. For God can be perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity so that they are without excuse. But since these people had enjoyed the deliverance and preservation which God had blessed them with, their conscience demanded that they serve Jehovah. "Serving God, every law will be kept, every duty done, every claim met, every wrong avoided. Conscience points like a compass needle to the throne of God, and its every suggestion is in one form or another a suggestion to do His bidding." (2) Gratitude demanded it. Gratitude for their deliverance, preservation, and settlement in the land of Canaan demanded that they choose Jehovah in preference to the gods of the heathen. (3) Wisdom impelled this decision. After experiencing the goodness and mercy of God, as that people had done, it would have been worse than folly for them to turn away from Him who blessed them so richly and serve the gods of the heathen who had no power to bless or protect. These same three reasons serve to impel us to make the choice for Jehovah today. The conscience of every

one of us requires that we serve God, and our sense of gratitude demands that we render to Him the service that is so justly due Him in return for the blessings which He has so richly poured out upon us. And every one of us knows that this is the wise course, that this is the sane, safe course. Only our lack of gratitude can cause us to do otherwise.

3. Joshua Sets a Good Example. Joshua said to the people, you may do as you please, you may serve the gods that your fathers served beyond the river, you may serve the gods of the Egyptians, or you may serve the gods of the Amorites in the land in which you dwell, but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah. Thus, he set the example of turning his back upon the gods of the heathen and serving Jehovah who had delivered, preserved, and given them a home in which to dwell. In this decision and example we see a number of good things. (1) We see a manly resolution, one that had been carefully thought out, one based upon study and comparison of the objects of worship involved. We see an example of one who had come to a sane and sensible conclusion, and was willing to stand by that decision which he had made. (2) We see the example of one who has the strength to dare to stand alone if need be. He said you may serve the gods of the heathen if you wish, but I will serve Jehovah. It takes courage to stand alone on any proposition, and especially one as important as this one. (3) There is also an example of family piety and devotion in this statement of Joshua. He said as for me and my house. Joshua was able to control and direct his family. He not only would stand on this resolution himself but he would lead his family to do so. Every man should resolve not only to stand for God but to lead his family to stand with him for God.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 24:14-29

1. Joshua's Example and the People's Response (Josh. 24:14-18)

Serve Him in sincerity and in truth. The first verses of the chapter in which our text occurs tell that Joshua gathered all the people together at Shechem and gave them a farewell address. He reminded them of the fact that Jehovah had selected their fathers from beyond the river Euphrates, that He had brought them into the land of Canaan, had multiplied their seed, had given them the patriarchs, and a land in which to dwell. He reminded them of their bondage in Egypt and their deliverance therefrom, and of the victories which God had given them over their enemies in their journey through the promised land. He also reminded them of the fact that He had driven out the kings of the Amorites and the seven nations of Canaan, and had given them their land and cities which they had not built, and vineyards and olive yards which they had not planted. With this as a basis, he now demands that they fear Jehovah and serve Him with sincerity in harmony with revealed truth. To serve God sincerely means to serve Him with the whole heart and to serve Him in truth was to serve Him according to the teaching of Jehovah in the law which had been written by Moses.

Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River. This is not to be interpreted to mean that all the people were worshipping other gods, but certainly there were some among the people at this time who were worshipping other gods. Otherwise, Joshua would not have called upon them to put away those gods. This is also proof that Abraham came out of a people who served and worshiped other gods. In Joshua 24:2 we are told that they did serve other gods. Many people are inclined to wish for some physical aid to help them in their conception of God. Some depend upon images, others use pictures, but God has said that we shall not make a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or is in the water under the earth. This would forbid both the use of images and of pictures to aid us in our worship of God.

Far be it from us that we should forsake Jehovah. This is the response of the people to Joshua's challenge. When he said choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods of your fathers, or Jehovah, and they gave as their reason for choosing to serve Jehovah that Jehovah had brought them out of Egyptian bondage, that He had preserved them in the way wherein they went, and that He had driven out the nations of Canaan, and had given them a place in which to live. They concluded by saying, "*We also will serve Jehovah; for He is our God.*" This was a noble response and resolution, and, if the people had always stuck to it, they would have averted much sorrow and suffering; but because of their failure to keep faithfully that promise, much suffering was brought upon the Jewish nation.

2. Covenant to Serve Jehovah (Josh. 24:19-25)

You cannot serve Jehovah; for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. This is considered a difficult statement. Some think that Joshua had such a high conception of the law and its demands that he realized that this recently enslaved people would not be able to measure up to the high standards demanded by the law, and so he simply stated to them a truth that they could not keep the law which God had given them. Another explanation of it is that Joshua simply meant to convey the idea that you cannot serve Jehovah and hold on to the gods which are among you, which your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt; that you must put these away, for your God, Jehovah, is a jealous God and will not be served by those who put their trust in other gods.

He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins. If we take Joshua's statement that the people could not serve Jehovah to mean that they were not able to do so, then we should take this statement that He will not forgive their transgression in the same positive way. But this, of course, would involve us in false teaching, for God would forgive their transgressions and their sins. But we may interpret this in the same way we interpret the statement that they could not serve Jehovah and say that if they held on to these gods which their fathers worshiped beyond the river and in Egypt, God would not forgive their transgressions and their sins. With this condition, with reference to serving other gods, both these statements are clear. You cannot serve Jehovah while you retain these gods among you. God will not forgive your transgressions as long as you retain and serve these gods of the heathen.

Put away . . . the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah. The people insisted that they could and would serve Jehovah and Joshua said, "*You are witnesses against yourselves that you had chosen you Jehovah, to serve Him.*" and they said, "*We are witnesses.*" When they agreed thus to serve Jehovah, Joshua said, "*Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah.*" They could not serve Jehovah as long as they maintained these gods, nor would Jehovah forgive them their sins as long as they retained them. Hence, the necessity of putting them away and inclining their hearts to Jehovah. So we today must put away everything that stands between us and God; whether it be wealth or fame or family.

3. Last Acts and Death of Joshua (Josh. 24:26-29)

Joshua made a covenant with the people. We are told that the word *made* might literally be translated cut, so Jehovah cut a covenant. This refers to the act of cutting an animal for sacrifice which was offered in the making of a covenant. Hence, an act of public worship here and sacrifice solemnizing their covenant with Jehovah to serve Him instead of the heathen gods.

Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God. That which Joshua wrote on this occasion was the covenant which the people had made to serve Jehovah. These he wrote in the book of the law of God. Then he took a great stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of Jehovah and said to them, "*This stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of Jehovah which He spoke unto us: it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest you deny your God.*" Joshua spoke in a poetical figure of the stone as having ears to hear and a mind to retain the things it had heard on this occasion. So it was to act as an enduring witness of the covenant they had made.

Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah, died. It is said that Joshua was an hundred and ten years old when he died. Two things may be said of Joshua. (1) He served Jehovah faithfully all the days of his life. He was one of the two who served Jehovah so faithfully that he was allowed to enter the land of Canaan, while Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and other great characters failed to enter because of their lack of faithfulness. (2) Of the influence of Joshua, it is said that Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had known of the work of Jehovah. So great was the influence of Joshua that he kept the people fairly faithful to Jehovah during his life and he trained his assistants so faithfully and efficiently that they were able to continue his influence upon the people during their lifetime so that Israel remained faithful to God during the life of Joshua and the life of his assistants. But when they died, then Israel fell into unfaithfulness.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. God expects us to serve Him and He gives us sufficient motives to cause us to serve Him. The motives which impelled the Israelites were abundant, but no more abundant than the motives God furnishes us to serve and worship Him.
2. There are always faithful men to serve as examples to lead us in our service and worship to God. Joshua was an outstanding man, faithful always to God. He served as a wonderful example of faithfulness and loyalty to Jehovah and thus was a great and safe leader for the people of Israel. There are great men among us to whom we may look for examples.
3. There are witnesses against us both in nature and in scripture. As this stone served as a witness against the people of Israel, so there are witnesses in nature today. Those stars and planets about us are faithful to their creator and sing His praises as they serve as witnesses against us in our unfaithfulness to God.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 8

JOSHUA'S LAST DAYS

1. Did the tribes east of the Jordan keep their promise to help in the conquest of Canaan? _____

2. What did they propose to do upon their return when they reached the Jordan? _____

3. What did the tribes west of the Jordan think of their action? _____

4. How was the difficulty settled? _____

5. What lesson should we learn from this incident? _____

6. Was the land promise made to Abraham fulfilled in the days of Joshua? _____

7. What do we learn from our text about the religion of Abraham's family? _____

8. Who were the gods of the Amorites? _____

9. What comparison could they make between the gods of the Amorites and Jehovah? _____

10. Do we have a choice as to whether we will be worshipers? _____

11. Give and discuss three reasons why Israel should have served Jehovah. _____

12. Can you apply these same three reasons to us? _____

13. What is it that most usually keeps people from serving Jehovah? _____

14. What good example did Joshua set the people? _____

15. Name and discuss three good things in this example of Joshua. _____

16. At what place did Joshua give his final discourse? _____

17. Name several things of which Joshua reminded the people? _____

18. In what manner did he exhort them to serve Jehovah? _____

19. What did he tell them to put away from them? _____

20. Is it right to use pictures of God or of Christ to aid us in our worship? _____

21. How did the people respond to Joshua's exhortation? _____

22. Why did Joshua say the people could not serve Jehovah? _____

23. Why did Joshua say that Jehovah would not forgive their transgressions? _____

24. What did Joshua tell them to do that they might keep their promise? _____

25. What lesson should we learn from this experience? _____

26. What did Joshua do to impress the people of the solemnity of their choice? _____

27. What was used as a witness against the people? _____

28. How old was Joshua when he died? _____

29. What is said of the service which Joshua rendered Jehovah? _____

30. What is said of the influence of Joshua on his generation? _____

31. What is said of the faithfulness of his assistants? _____

LESSON NUMBER 9

JEHOVAH APPOINTS JUDGES

Judges 2:6-18

INTRODUCTION

The book of Judges is properly divided into three divisions. (1) The introductory from 1:1 to 2:5. In this introductory portion we have a brief summary of some things which went before concerning the conquest of western Palestine and the failure of the Israelites to expel completely the Canaanites from the land, which is looked upon as a violation of their covenant with Jehovah. Included in this is an account of the death of Joshua, which, according to the writer, had already taken place. (2) The central and main portion of the book consists of narratives of twelve judges and one usurper who ruled over the people. This period begins with the sixth verse of the second chapter and goes through the sixteenth chapter of the book. This portion of the book consists of a "series of narratives of twelve judges, each of whom in turn, by his devotion and prowess, was enabled to deliver Israel from bondage and oppression, and for a longer or shorter term ruled over the people whom he had thus saved from their enemies. Successive repentance on the part of the people, however, and their deliverance are followed, on the death of the judge, by renewed apostasy, which entailed upon them renewed misery and servitude, from which they are again rescued when in response to their prayer the Lord raises up for them another judge and deliverer. Thus the entire history is set, as it were, in a recurrent framework of moral and religious teaching and warning; and the lesson is enforced that it is the sin of the people, their abandonment of Jehovah and persistent idolatry, which entails upon them calamity, from which the divine longsuffering and forbearance alone makes for them a way of escape." In this portion of the book we have the record of six principal invasions of the land and six victories of the people over their enemies. The invaders were the Mesopotamians, the Moabites, the Canaanites, the Midianites, the Ammorites, and the Philistines. The six leading judges of the time were, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. (3) The third division of the book is an appendix covering chapters seventeen through twenty-one. Chapters seventeen and eighteen contain the story of a party of Danites establishing themselves by force in the northern part of the country and taking with them a young Levite and his equipment to be their priest. Chapters nineteen to twenty-one contain the story of the outrage of the Benjamites against the concubine of a Levite and the vengeance exacted upon the tribe of Benjamin, destroying all but six hundred men. In order to save the tribe from extinction, these six hundred men were allowed to marry by force daughters of the other tribe.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"And Jehovah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those that despoiled them."
(Judges 2:16)

1. The Character of the People and Their Rulers. The time known as the period of the judges was a very critical time in the life of the Jewish nation. It should be remembered that these people were recently brought out of bondage. They had spent forty years in the wilderness and a few more years in conquering the land of Canaan. During their time of wilderness wandering, they had an inspired leader. They had the cloud and pillar of fire to guide them day and night. They had the manna fresh

from heaven every day and meat miraculously provided when they needed it as well as water miraculously supplied. There was about them continually superhuman evidences of the presence of God and His guidance of them. When they entered the land of Canaan, these miraculous evidences of the presence of Jehovah were withdrawn or suspended. However, Joshua and his assistants were still with them. They were men who had seen the miracles worked by Jehovah and who had experienced this divine overruling providence, and hence served as a link between the miraculous age and the age in which miracles were at a minimum. But the time known as the period of the judges is a time after the death of Joshua and after the death of the men who assisted Joshua. Hence, it covers a period of time when they were completely divorced, as much as people ever were in Old Testament times, from these continuous outward manifestations of the presence and guidance of Jehovah. We might illustrate this by saying it is like a parent ceasing to hold the hand of a child who is learning to walk. The people of Israel were now on their own and they must learn to get along without the continuous miraculous guidance of Jehovah manifested in visible and physical ways. But as the parent occasionally gives direct aid to the child who has fallen in his efforts to learn to walk, so Jehovah occasionally interposed miraculously in helping the children of Israel to free themselves from their oppressors and to form their own governments. When the neighboring heathen tribes possessed a part or all of Israel God miraculously appointed a judge and qualified that judge to lead them to victory. The word judge here is not to be taken in its usual signification, that is, one who determines controversies and denounces the judgment of the law in criminal cases, but one who rules or directs a state or nation with sovereign power, administers justice, makes peace or war, and leads the armies of the people over whom he presides. The office of judge was not hereditary, nor were the judges chosen by the people. They were the representatives or lieutenants of God. They were chosen by Him usually in a supernatural way and directed by the Lord to do the work they were supposed to do. They did not have any power either to make or change the law. They were simply to execute the laws under the direction of God. In this way God was the King of Israel. The government was a theocracy, and the judges were simply His deputies. God preferred to rule His people in this way and looked upon Himself as being rejected by them when they demanded a king. (1 Sam. 8:7.)

2. The Length of the Period of the Judges. It is impossible to determine exactly the length of the period of the judges. The sum of the number of years that the judges ruled, according to the book of Judges, is about three hundred years. In 1 Kings 6:1, we are told that it was four hundred eighty years from the time of the Exodus to the building of the temple in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon. This period of four hundred eighty years includes the forty years of wandering in the wilderness and the time occupied in the conquest and settlement of the land of Canaan, as well as the undetermined period after the death of Joshua, before the first judge began his rule. Then there is a period of forty years under Eli and the unknown length of the judgeship of Samuel, then the years of the reign of Saul and of David and four years of Solomon; all of which must be subtracted from four hundred eighty, which would give us somewhere near three hundred years. Dean's Outline of Bible History gives the period of judges from the death of Joshua to the anointing of Saul as three hundred five years; however, other authorities differ as much as one hundred years. Arch-bishop Usher gives the period from the death of Joshua to the death of Eli, the beginning of the government of Samuel, as covering three hundred eighteen years. Some have tried to solve the chronological difficulties by saying that the reigns of some of these judges were simultaneous. By this they mean that while one man was judge over the northern portion of the country, another man was judge over the southern portion. It is known that the land of Canaan was divided in three sections. That on the west side of the Jordan, divided between the north and the south, and all on the east side of the Jordan constituted a third district. However, more conservative scholars reject this theory on the ground that the writer of the

book of Judges evidently conceived of each judge as ruling over Israel. "His words must therefore be interpreted in their natural sense, that in his own belief the rulers whose deeds he related exercised control in the order named over the entire nation."

II. A COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 2:6-18

1. Influence of Joshua and his Associates (Judges 2:6-10)

The people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua. This is a tribute to the personal influence of Joshua as a leader of the people. Many fine things may be said about Joshua. He was the faithful minister of Moses as well as a servant of God. He was a bold and faithful spy, one who was willing to describe the land just as he saw it, and express his belief in their ability to take the land when the other spies, with the exception of Caleb, were fearful and persuaded the people not to enter Canaan. He distinguished himself as a military leader in the conquest of the land of Canaan. But none of these things make him stand out conspicuously as a great man any more than the personal influences which he exercised over the people. It was through his influence that, for more than half a century, the fickle and unsteadfast people were rather faithful in their service and worship to God. It was his influence that caused them to put away the idols from among them and to resolve firmly that they would serve Jehovah all the days of their life.

All the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. This is a continuation of the influence of Joshua. He not only kept the people straight during his lifetime but such was his influence that the people whom he trained to assist him in leading the people were so well grounded in the faith that they influenced the people to be faithful through their lifetime. So through two generations the personal influence of Joshua was felt in keeping the people from idolatry.

Who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that He had wrought for Israel. The fact that these people had seen the miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage, their entrance into Canaan, and the miraculous presence of the Lord with them in their great military victories made it possible for Joshua to exercise his influence. We must not think of Joshua being able to exercise this influence unaided by the Lord. It was primarily the work of the Lord that caused these people to be faithful but secondarily Joshua's faithfulness to the Lord and his calling the attention of the people to the works of the Lord, reminding them continually of these things that caused them to be faithful.

They buried him in the borders of his inheritance. Joshua was one hundred ten years old when he died. He died in that portion of land that fell to him at the time of the division of Canaan. It was in the hill country of Ephraim on the north of the mountain of Ga-ash. This mountain has not been located with any degree of certainty. Very few men, if any, have ever been as indispensable to the welfare of a nation as was Joshua. Sometimes towering figures in churches, communities, and nations are looked upon as indispensable, and when they die people wonder how they can possibly get along, but God is not dependent upon any one man in any situation. Even in Israel when conditions required it, God raised up men who were capable of leading Israel to victory.

There arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah. The assistants of Joshua seem not to have done their work as faithfully as Joshua did his. Joshua trained men to take his place after his departure, but it seems that these assistants whom Joshua trained failed to train others so that the generation following them is said to have been one that knew not Jehovah. A generation that fails to

teach and to train the coming generation must hear its part of judgment for the failure of the succeeding generation. Churches should remember that it is their duty today to train the young people to take the place of the older people and to be qualified when the time comes for them to take their place.

2. Israel Goes Into Idolatry (Judges 2:11-15)

The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim. The word Baalim is simply the plural form of Baal. The word means lord or ruler, and each community had its own Baal or lord. And there was a lord of the flies, a lord of heat, a lord of the sun. Then there was lord of grain. lord of the mountains, and so on. Hence, we find the compound names of Baal meaning the lord of this or that or the other as the second syllable of the word might imply. In our text it is explained that the people forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and followed other gods, the gods of the people that were around about them. These gods of the peoples about them were the Baalim.

And served Baal and the Ashtaroth. The word Ashtaroth is the plural form of Ashtareth, who was the goddess of the Sidonians. Ashtareth is said to be the female counterpart of Baal. Hence, there would be a number of these Ashtaroth, the same as there were a number of Baalim. It is believed that Ashtareth of the Canaanites came from the Istar of Babylonia and Assyria. There she was known as the goddess of love and war. But in Canaan she was simply known as the principal goddess of any part of nature or any territory or any mountain or any other single thing which might be consecrated to her.

The anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel. Because of their forsaking Jehovah and going after these Canaanitish gods and goddesses, Jehovah took from them His providential care and allowed their enemies to come upon them and make slaves of them. It is said He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

The hand of Jehovah was against them for evil, as Jehovah had spoken. In Deut. 28, Moses foretold the departure of Israel from Jehovah and Joshua implied their departure in several of his statements. Hence, the people were without excuse for their departure, and here it is said the hand of Jehovah was against them according as He had sworn to them. These statements of Moses and Joshua are here referred to as Jehovah's sworn statement that He would be against them when they did evil.

3. Jehovah Delivers Israel (Judges 2:16-18)

And Jehovah raised up judges. In no period of man's history, perhaps, can we find a better demonstration of the love, the mercy, the longsuffering, and the forbearance of Jehovah with a wayward people than in this instance. Over and over the people forsook God and went into idolatry. But as many times as they forsook Him, God turned and raised up a deliverer to save them from their enemies.

For they played the harlot after other gods. This statement may be taken in two senses. (1) When people leave God to go after strange gods, they are looked upon as being guilty of spiritual adultery. They break their vow, their covenant, to be faithful to God, in order that they may consort with another and enjoy the pleasures of another god. This is spiritual adultery. (2) On account of the nature of the worship of some of these gods, this statement may be taken in its literal and physical sense, that

they literally played the harlot in the performance of the rights and ceremonies of worship to these heathen gods.

It repented Jehovah because of their groaning. The word repent must not be taken to imply that God did not know beforehand what these people would do. To say that God did not know beforehand is to deny the omniscience of God. When used with reference to Jehovah, the word simply means that He changed His course of action or His purpose with reference to them. Their groaning under the oppression of their enemies caused God to change His purpose to destroy them, He then raised up a deliverer and delivered them from their oppression to give them another opportunity.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. We should be careful for our influence. The influence of Joshua lasted not only during his time but during the generation that followed; and since we have a record of his life, his influence lives on and on and so our influence is felt. All of us have an influence. It is for good or for evil. We should be careful that our influence is always on the side of right.

2. When Israel forsook Jehovah to serve the Baalim, God forsook His people and allowed their enemies to oppress them. God will not force Himself upon us. We must desire Him, we must seek after Him, we must diligently follow after Him.

3. The longsuffering of God is evident in this Lesson. Regardless of the unfaithfulness and sinfulness of Israel, God was longsuffering. However, there is a point beyond which the longsuffering of God will not go. Man must not presume upon the longsuffering and forbearance of God that he may enjoy sin.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 9

JEHOVAH APPOINTS JUDGES

1. Into how many divisions is the book of Judges divided? _____

2. State briefly what is to be found in the first division. _____

3. How many chapters in the second division of the book? _____

4. Name six enemies of Israel during this period. _____

5. Name six leading judges of the period. _____

6. How many chapters in the third division? Tell something of the contents. _____

7. What period in the history of the Jewish nation are we studying? _____

8. What difficulties did the Jews have during the period of the judges which they did not have in the time of Moses? _____

9. Did God give any miraculous assistance during the period of judges? _____

10. What is the meaning of the word judge as used in this lesson? _____

11. What were their duties and relation to the people? _____

12. What was the form of government during the period of judges? _____

13. About how long was the period of judges? _____

14. What event stands at the beginning and what at the end of judges? _____

15. Mention several ways in which Joshua distinguished himself. _____

16. What personal characteristic recommends him more highly than any of his military accomplishments? _____

17. Through how many generations did his influence continue? _____

18. Where was Joshua buried? _____

19. How did the influence of Joshua's assistants compare with that of Joshua? _____

20. What seems to have been the cause of their failure? _____

21. What is the meaning of the word Baalim? _____

22. What is the meaning of the word Ashtaroth? _____

23. What is the relation of Ashtaroth to Baal? _____

24. What was the result of the idolatry of Israel? _____

25. Who had foretold these departures? _____

26. What characteristics of Jehovah were abundantly manifested during this period? _____

27. In what two ways may Israel be thought of as playing the harlot after other gods? _____

28. Does the fact that Jehovah repented imply He did not know Israel would go into idolatry? _____

29. What does the word repent mean when used with reference to Jehovah? _____

30. What act on His part manifested repentance on the part of Israel? _____

LESSON NUMBER 10

THE ARMY OF GIDEON

Judges 7:2-8, 19-22

INTRODUCTION

As a connecting link between this and our last lesson the student should read in Chapter 3 of the nations which Jehovah left in Canaan, that He might prove Israel by them to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which He commanded their fathers by Moses. (Judges 3:1-6.) Soon there was intermarriage between the people of Israel and the Canaanites, and this led to the worship of heathen gods. Then Jehovah's anger was kindled against Israel, and He sold His people into the hand of the king of Mesopotamia. Othniel was raised up in God's own time to deliver the children of Israel from the Mesopotamians. Following that the king of Moab enslaved the people and Ehud was raised up to free them from this bondage. After him Shamgar delivered the people from the Philistines, who had enslaved Israel. Then the king of Canaan, Jabin, oppressed Israel, and Deborah, a prophetess, with the help of Barak, delivered the children of Israel from this oppression. When the land had rest from its enemies for forty years, and the people had done evil in the sight of Jehovah again, the Midianites were allowed to oppress Israel. From this oppression of the Midianites, God chose Gideon as the deliverer. The angel of Jehovah appeared unto Gideon and told him that Jehovah was with him, indicating that he was to lead the people to victory. After the angel had caused fire to come out of the rock and consume the meat and the unleavened cakes upon it, Gideon still required another sign. He said that he would put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor and if dew appeared on the fleece only and the ground around it was dry, he would know that God was leading him. In the morning it was as he had required. But Gideon required of the Lord a second sign. Asking that the Lord's anger be not kindled against him, he said let now the fleece be dry but the ground all around it wet with dew, and God listened to his plea and gave him the sign he desired. The student should read the entire sixth chapter of Judges in preparation for this lesson.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“And the three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the touches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, the sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.” (Judges 7:20)

1. God's Ways Are Not Our Ways. If Gideon had been left to himself to determine how he was to bring about the defeat of the enemy that was oppressing Israel, he surely would not have acted as the Lord directed him to act. He would not have sent one single soldier home who was at all willing to fight or who could be pressed into the service of his people. Nor would he have used the tactics which God directed him to use in order to take the enemy. God wished Israel to know that they had not gained the victory by their own wisdom or their own strength. He intended that His name should be honored and glorified. Hence, He chose such means and directed them to act in such fashion that the victory would be evidently of God and not of man. Many years later the prophet Isaiah, speaking for the Lord, said, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and*

My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8,9.) God has repeatedly required man to do things for which there was no good reason to be seen. He required the people of Israel to march around the walls of Jericho thirteen times, blow the rams' horns, and give a great shout in order that they might tear down the walls and capture the city. From a military point of view that was foolish. Yet it was the means which God chose through which He could cause the people to believe in Him and magnify His name rather than to depend upon their own strength. Many years later God required a Syrian soldier to dip seven times in the Jordan River that he might be cleansed of his leprosy. There was no sensible connection between dipping in the Jordan and being cured of leprosy, but that was God's way of curing this one man. Jesus made clay of spittle and anointed the blind man's eyes and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam in order that he might receive his sight. From a medical point of view this was sheer folly, but yet it was the way God chose to demonstrate His power and to lead men to believe in Him. God requires us to be baptized for remission of our sins. He also requires us to partake of the loaf and the fruit of the vine in worship to Him. From a purely human and physical standpoint, there cannot possibly be any blessing connected with the doing of either of these things. And yet since God says for us to do it, and promises certain blessings on condition that we do these things, it is worse than folly for us to refuse to do what God says if we desire to receive the blessings mentioned.

2. Gideon a Man of Faith. Gideon was facing a hostile army composed of one hundred thirty-five thousand men. He had gathered thirty-two thousand men with which to meet this great army. By one simple test twenty-two thousand of these men were sent home, and then by another and a more unreasonable test nine thousand seven hundred of them were allowed to return home. This left Gideon with only three hundred men. Gideon believed he was being led by the Lord, and he was willing to accept the Lord's word even though it caused him to act contrary to common sense. Gideon was careful to ascertain the truth of God's word. He saw one who had the appearance of an angel. He saw the fire which consumed the sacrifice at the touch of the angel's staff. He saw the angel vanish from his presence and he saw his reappearance. He saw the fleece of wool dry while the ground around was wet. And he saw the ground dry while the fleece was wet enough to wring water from it, and all these he accepted as genuine proof that God was directing him. Having these as the basis of his faith, he knew he was following God's directions and not his own dreams and fancies. "In trying to take Gideon's faith as a model of our own, we must first imitate his care in ascertaining what the word of God really does require of us. The sad mistakes that have been made by misguided men in all ages, confounding the passions of their own heart, or the hallucinations of their own brain, with the requirements of the written word of God, and even in their heated fanaticism imagining that special revelations were made to them by the Holy Spirit, confirms the lesson, given us by Gideon, of not accepting anything as the word of God upon light or insufficient evidence. To accept as the word of God without sufficient evidence any impression, or impulse, or vision, or dream, or interpretation of scripture, is not a proof of a strong faith, but an evidence of a weak, and rash and credulous mind." But having determined that a thing is the will of God, we ought then to express our faith by our obedience as did Gideon. He set the word of God and the promise of God on one side and all the fearful risks and dangers of the enemy on the other side, and these last were in his eyes as nothing in comparison with the former.

3. Gideon Put God First. Notice the words of our text, "*The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.*" Had Gideon been as proud and as self-willed as Saul, the first king of Israel, this statement likely would read, "The sword of Gideon and of Jehovah." We preachers sometimes report, through our religious papers, what we have done for God. But the apostles of old reported to their home church what God had done with them. (Acts 14:27.) So Gideon shows his humility as well as his faith in his battle cry,

"The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon."

II. A COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 7:2-8, 19-22

1. God's Selection of Gideon's Army (Judges 7:2-8)

The people that are with thee are too many for Me. From verse three of our text we learn that Gideon had thirty-two thousand men. From Judges 8:10 we learn that the Midianite army consisted of one hundred thirty-five thousand men. So the Jews were outnumbered about four to one. Yet God said that was too many. The greater the number of men in their army, the more likely were they to feel that they had won the victory by their own wisdom and strength. God has often used unscientific, and to man unreasonable means and methods of accomplishing His purposes. But He uses these means and methods in order that our faith may rest in Him and not in our own strength or in the wisdom of man. This reminds us of Paul's statement to the church at Corinth that while he was with them, he was in weakness and fear and in much trembling and his speech and preaching were not in persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power so that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:4,5.)

Lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me. The Lord gives a specific reason why He thought thirty-two thousand men were too many. He said if they should get the victory by the use of this many men, Israel would vaunt themselves against Him, and would say that their own hand had freed them.

Whosoever is fearful and trembling. This was the first test which sent two-thirds of the army home. There was no place in this operation for men who were fearful and trembling. God has no place in His army today for the fearful. We are told that the fearful, along with other sinners, will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Rev. 21: 8.) There are those who are fearful of responsibilities. Others are so afraid they will make a mistake that they never do anything. Others are afraid of criticism and consequently refuse to try. But regardless of why we are afraid, it still remains a fact that there is no place in the Lord's army for the fearful. He wants those who are of good courage, and are willing to bear the criticisms and the burdens of whatever responsibilities come their way.

The people are yet too many. When the first test was finished there remained but ten thousand men. Yet God said this is still too many. Numbers are of no consequence with God. He can win the victory with one man as well as with ten thousand. So He wishes to bring the number down so that there will not be any reason for Israel to think they have won the victory by their own strength.

Bring them down unto the water. Gideon took his ten thousand men down to the water's edge for the second test. And Jehovah said. "Every one that laps of the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, him shall you set by himself; likewise every one that bows down upon his knees to drink." Only three hundred men lapped of the water like a dog. All the balance bowed down upon their knees to drink the water.

Let all the people go every man to his place. These nine thousand seven hundred men were not cowards. They were not unfit as soldiers. Yet they were told to go home. It took considerable faith in Gideon to send these men home. It also required faith on their part to accept such orders from Gideon and leave only three hundred men there to face an army of one hundred thirty-five thousand

men. But it required a great deal more faith and courage in the three hundred men to stay there and face that army. Whether these men had seen the tests by which Gideon's faith was supported we have no way of knowing, but we do know that they manifested a lot of faith and courage to see their comrades go home to safety, while they remained to face such a great army. "But yet what marvelous heroism was there in those three hundred men! What strength of purpose, what iron firmness of nerve, to see above thirty thousand of their comrades leave them in the face of the myriads of their foes; to remain quietly at their posts, and, when the time came, to leave their camp and pour down into the plain. Their self-possession and self-restraint and absence of self-indulgence in the matter of the water was a true index of the unequalled qualities which they displayed in the sequel."

2. God's Victory Through the Army (Judges 7:19-22)

So Gideon . . . came unto the outermost part of the camp. The student should read the intervening verses of this chapter. There he will find that Jehovah sent Gideon and some of his men into the camp of the Midianites that their faith might be strengthened. While in the camp they heard one Midianite telling his dream to another and the other interpreting the dream to mean that God had delivered the Midianites into the hand of Gideon and his army. In these intervening verses will also be found the strategy which Gideon used in making the attack. He divided his three hundred men into three companies and put into the hands of all of them trumpets and empty pitchers with torches within the pitchers.

In the beginning of the middle watch. The attack of Gideon and his three hundred men was set to begin in the first part of the middle watch. The ancient Israelites divided the night into three watches, four hours each. The first watch was from six to ten p.m. The second was from ten p.m. to two a.m. and the third, or morning watch, was from two to six a.m. According to this, the attack was made shortly after ten p.m. It is said that the watch had just been set, which puts the attack between ten and eleven p.m.

The three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the torches. The three hundred men were divided into three companies of one hundred each and were placed on three sides of the camp of the enemy. One company of soldiers usually had only one trumpet. Hence, three hundred trumpets sounding would indicate to the Midianites that there were three hundred companies of soldiers surrounding them.

Jehovah set every man's sword against his fellow. This simply indicates that, in their confusion, the Midianites mistook one another for the enemy and that they consumed each other instead of fighting against the enemy. When the enemy was put to flight, word was sent to the neighboring communities around about, and quite a sizable army was gathered to pursue the Midianites to destroy them. In verse ten of the eighth chapter we read, "*For there fell one hundred twenty thousand men that drew sword.*" So God won a great victory with a small army. God has been winning great victories with small armies ever since. The world was evangelized in the days of the apostles from a very small beginning. In countless numbers of communities since that time, the forces of evil have been routed by a few of the Lord's faithful. Such a victory can be won by any group regardless of how small it may be if they have the faith and the courage which characterized Gideon and his three hundred men.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Gideon wished to be sure of God's will. He was apologetic in asking for further assurance that God had selected him and was going to use him for the deliverance of His people. But when once he determined that God was speaking to him, his faith was such that he never doubted any more.

2. Gideon's faith in Jehovah gave him the courage to use Jehovah's methods. The methods suggested were unorthodox. They were unscientific. It required a lot of faith on Gideon's part to expose himself and his three hundred men to that great army of the Midianites. Only a man of faith could use such methods as Jehovah used on this occasion.

3. Gideon made no preparation in case of failure. This emphasizes his faith in God's ways. A man of less faith than Gideon would have told the thirty-one thousand seven hundred men to stand by, not very far distant, in case these three hundred could not handle the situation.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 10

THE ARMY OF GIDEON

1. Why were some of the Canaanite nations left in the land? _____

2. What practice led to the worship of heathen gods? _____

3. Who was Israel's first oppressor? What judge delivered them? _____

4. Name other oppressors and deliverers. _____

5. Tell the story of Gideon and the fleece. _____

6. With what judge does our text deal? _____

7. Why did God have Gideon to use the military tactics he used? _____

8. Give other examples of God's requiring men to do things for which there seems to be no good reason.

9. How did Gideon's army compare in number with the enemy? _____

10. How many of Gideon's soldiers did the Lord send home? _____

11. On what was Gideon's faith based? _____

12. What means did Gideon use to ascertain the truth of God's word? _____

13. In what way did Gideon put Jehovah first? _____

14. Why did God think Gideon's army too large? _____

15. What was God's first test? How many were sent home by it? _____

16. Of what are many in the Lord's army fearful today? _____

17. What was Jehovah's second test? How many men were rejected by it? _____

18. What religious principle did Gideon's men manifest in the face of so great an enemy? _____

19. How did Jehovah strengthen the faith of Gideon's men? _____

20. How did the ancient Israelites divide the night? _____

21. What did the sounding of three hundred trumpets mean to the Midianites? _____

22. How many Midianites were destroyed? _____

23. Were all of these destroyed by Gideon and his men? _____

24. How may similar victories be won in our own communities? _____

LESSON NUMBER 11

JEPHTHAH'S VOW

Judges 11:29-40

INTRODUCTION

The student should read the intervening chapters where it will be found that Gideon acted wisely when he refused to become the king of the people and would not allow his sons to be his successors. But we see him acting foolishly when he made an image of gold, which became a snare both to himself and to the people, and led them into idolatry. Following Gideon, one of his sons, Abimelech, aspired to rule over the people of Israel. Getting the support of his mother's brethren, he was able to have himself elected and installed in Shechem as the ruler, where he continued for some three years. But a rebellion led by one Gaal ousted him and brought about his death. Following that, we have a brief mention of Tola, who judged Israel twenty-three years, and following him there arose Jair of Gilead who judged Israel twenty and two years. After the death of Jair, the people went into sin again, serving the Baalim, and then the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Ammonites. And when they were oppressed, they called on the Lord to save them again. But this time the Lord said, *"You have forsaken Me, and served other gods: wherefore I will save you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress."* (Judges 10:12-14.) This brings us to the selection of Jephthah as the next leader and judge. Jephthah was the son of a man named Gilead. His mother was a harlot. Gilead's legitimate sons compelled Jephthah to leave home. He went to dwell in the land of Tob, and there he was associated with a group of "vain fellows." He became the leader of a band of lawless ruffians and led the life of a raider. He gained such a reputation for himself as a leader of this band of men that, when the people of Israel were oppressed by the Ammonites, they called him to be their leader. However, Jephthah refused to listen to them unless they would guarantee that he could continue to rule over them after he had delivered them from the Ammonites. They readily made this promise.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back." (Judges 11:35)

1. The Law Concerning Vows. In Num. 30:2 Moses said *"When a man vows a vow unto Jehovah, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."* Moses made no exception here for rash vows. Neither did he make any exception for illegal or immoral vows. Again, in Deut. 23:21-23 we read, *"When you shall vow a vow unto Jehovah your God, you shall not be slack to pay it: for Jehovah your God will surely require it of you; and it would be sin. But if you shall forbear to vow, it shall be no sin. That which is gone out of thy lips you shall observe and do according as you have vowed unto Jehovah your God, a freewill-offering, which you have promised with your mouth."* When animals were devoted to God by vow, if they were fit for sacrifice, they could not be redeemed at any price. But an animal unfit for sacrifice might be redeemed with the addition of a fifth part of the value and the money thus paid in redemption became the property of the priests. In case persons were devoted by vow, if no redemption was made, the devoted person became a slave of the sanctuary. The point of emphasis here is that the

law of Moses required people to keep their vows. It has been suggested that vows are older than the law, and that the law of Moses did not create the practice of making vows, but simply regulated the keeping of vows.

2. Examples to Show the Sacredness of Vows. (1) The first vow mentioned in the scripture is that of Jacob when he said, *"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto You."* (Gen 28:20-22.) In Gen. 35:1-7 we see Jacob going back to Bethel to worship God. And mention is made of his being there before and the vow which he made at that time. Undoubtedly Jacob remembered the vow that he made to give Jehovah one-tenth of all with which he was blessed, and Jacob regarded that vow as sacred and binding upon him, and no doubt lived up to the terms of that vow. (2) The second example for our consideration is that of Hannah vowing to give back the child which Jehovah would give to her. And in the latter part of that chapter, we have the record of Hannah fulfilling her vow when she took Samuel to the sanctuary and left him there in the care of Eli. She said, *"And Jehovah has given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he lives he is granted to Jehovah."* (3) The third example we cite is that of a wicked man, Herod. Herod made a vow when pleased by his dancing step-daughter that he would give her anything she might ask, even to half his kingdom. When she asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter, Herod was embarrassed. But for the sake of his oath in the presence of his company, he would not break his word but fulfilled it by giving her John's head on the platter. From these examples we see that vows were considered very sacred, whether they were made by righteous people or by unrighteous people. One of the sins of the Gentile world, as listed by the apostle Paul, was that they were covenant breakers. (Rom. 1:31.) The wise man said, *"When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you vow."* (Eccles. 5:4.) From this we learn that a man who refused to pay his vow unto God was considered as a fool, for it is said God has no pleasures in fools. He continues by saying, *"Better is it that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay. Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin; neither say before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?"*

3. Value of Men's Word Today. There was a time in the memory of some of us when a man's word was generally considered as good as his bond. The spoken word of a man was worth just as much as his written word attested by a notary public. But the almost universal practice of putting every agreement or covenant into writing today and having it notarized is a solemn indictment of men concerning their veracity. We can have a good reputation for being honest and honorable but one time. If we are careless or rash enough to violate our covenants and destroy our good reputation, it will likely be impossible for us to live in such manner as to rebuild it. Men do not soon forget that we have considered our word lightly and have failed to keep our trust, and the news of such dishonorable doing will spread rapidly so that our reputation for honesty and for integrity will be lost and all but impossible to rebuild.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 11:29-40

I. Jephthah's Vow and Victory (Judges 11:29-33)

The Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah. The Spirit came upon him to qualify him for the work that he was to do, that of delivering the children from the oppression of the Ammonites. It must not be concluded that, since the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, all he said and did was right. Several times we read that the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Samson, yet we know that Samson's moral standards were very low. (Judges 13:25; 14:19; 15:14.) If the presence of the Spirit with Jephthah guaranteed his proper actions, he would not have made the rash vow that he made immediately following.

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto Jehovah. Jephthah's vow was to offer as a burnt offering whatever should meet him when he returned from the battle, provided the Lord would give him victory. There are two interpretations of this rash vow, and it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to determine which is correct. Therefore, a simple statement of the two positions is given and the reader should make his own decision. The Pulpit Commentary takes the position that Jephthah intended to offer a human sacrifice and the argument runs as follows: "Many attempts have been made to show that Jephthah only contemplated the offering of an animal in sacrifice; but the natural and indeed necessary interpretation of the words shows that he had a human victim in mind. He could not expect any but a human being to come forth from the doors of his house, nor could any but a human being come forth to meet him, a common phrase always spoken of men. Obviously, in the greatness of his danger and the extreme hazard of his undertaking, he thought to propitiate God's favor by a terrible and extraordinary vow. But if we ask how Jephthah came to have such erroneous notions of the character of God, the answer is not far to seek. Jephthah was the son of a strange woman, probably, as we have seen a Syrian, and had passed many years of his life as an exile in Syria. Now it is well known that human sacrifices were frequently practiced in Syria, as they were also by the Ammonites, who made their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, and it cannot surprise us that a man brought up as Jephthah was, and leading the life of a raider at the head of a band of Syrian out-laws, should have the common Syrian notion of the efficacy of human sacrifices in great emergency." It should be said that this is the universal interpretation of the vow for the first thirteen centuries of the Christian era, that both Jews and Christians so understood it. The strongest exponent of the other interpretation is Adam Clarke. He begins by giving a different translation to what we have in our text. It reads as follows: "I will consecrate it to the Lord, or I will offer it for a burnt offering." His explanation follows: "If it be a thing fit for a burnt offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to him. That conditions of this kind must have been implied in the vow, is evident enough; to have been made without them, it must have been the vow of a heathen, or a madman. If a dog had met him, this could not have been made a burnt offering; or if his neighbor or friend's wife, son, or daughter, had been returning from a visit to his family, his vow gave him no right over them. Besides, human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord; and this was one of the grand reasons why God drove out the Canaanites, because they offered their sons and daughters to Moloch in the fire, that is, made burnt offerings of them, as is generally supposed. That Jephthah was a deeply pious man appears in the whole of his conduct; and that he was well acquainted with the law of Moses, which prohibited all other sacrifices, and stated what was to be offered in sacrifice, is evident enough from his expostulation with the king and people of Ammon. (Judges 11:14-27). Therefore, it must be granted that he never made that rash vow which several suppose he did; nor was he capable, if he had, of executing it in that most shocking manner which some Christian writers have contended for. He could not commit a crime which he himself had just now been an executor of God's justice to punish in

others."

And Jehovah delivered them into his hand. This is the record of Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites. The writer goes on to say that he smote them from Aroer until he came to Minnith, taking even twenty cities, and adds that he did so with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. Once again God hearkened unto the cries of his disobedient children and in mercy gave them a victory over their enemies and rest from the oppression.

2. Jephthah Keeps His Vow (Judges 11:34-40)

Behold, his daughter came out to meet him. Emphasis is laid on the fact that this daughter was his only child. Emphasis is made in this way: "*And she was his only child, besides her he had neither son nor daughter.*"

Thou hast brought me very low. This is the language of Jephthah when he saw that his daughter was the first to come forth from the doors of his house to meet him. It should be remembered that in his vow Jephthah said, whatever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me will be offered. This could hardly be expected to include an animal, for animals were not likely to come forth from the doors of a man's house.

Do unto me according to that which has proceeded out of your mouth. Like Isaac, she was a willing sacrifice, but unlike Isaac, she was the victim of a foolish father. The willingness of Jephthah's daughter to suffer the consequences of this foolish vow is the only beautiful and refreshing thing about this whole sordid story. And it was fitting that the daughters of Israel should go annually to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah.

Let me alone two months, that I may ... bewail my virginity. She asked for two months in which to wail her virginity. If she were going to be confined to a life of virginity, she would have all her life in which to bewail it; why ask for two months on the mountains to do so? This seems to indicate that she realized that she had but two months to live and she wished to use that time in bewailing her virginity. She would bewail her virginity for two reasons. (1) Being an only child, her father's family would be extinct at her death. (2) Since she was a virgin, her death would put to an end her own line. Hebrew women considered it a great misfortune to go through life childless. Hence, she would bewail her virginity.

Who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed. The sacredness of vows was such that Jephthah felt that he could not go back on his vow. It matters not whether Jephthah burned his daughter in sacrifice or doomed her to a life of virginity, his actions do not measure up to Christian standards. So we are to understand that the Lord simply records this rash vow and its fulfillment but does not endorse it. The Lord recorded David's sin with Bathsheba and the fact that he murdered her husband to cover up his sin, but the fact that the Lord recorded these things does not mean that he endorsed them. And Jephthah's sin, even if he burned his daughter in sacrifice, is no more inexcusable than David's sin of adultery and then murdering the woman's husband to cover his sin. These are simply ugly spots in the lives of otherwise good men, and reminders to us all, if any of us are saved, we will be saved by the mercy and grace of God, in spite of what we are and not because of what we are.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1 No lesson stands out more prominently in this connection than this, that we should be careful in making promises, resolutions or vows. We are taught to make our plans in harmony with the will of God. (James 4:13-17.) Consequently, if we should plan to do something which we later learn to be wrong and out of harmony with the will of God, we would be released from that resolution if, indeed, we made the resolution with the will of the Lord in mind.

2. Keeping our word when it is pledged to another is suggested by this lesson. And that indeed is a very important thing. When once we have pledged ourselves to do a thing that is right, we should do that thing regardless of the cost of suffering it may bring upon us. We should regard our word as very sacred.

3. The obedience and submission of children to their parents is very beautifully suggested in this lesson. This daughter of Jephthah was unwilling for the reputation of her father to suffer, regardless of the suffering it brought upon her. Children ought to be concerned for the reputation of their parents and be willing to go along with them and be subject to their parents for the sake of the reputation of their parents.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 11

JEPHTHAH'S VOW

1. In what did Gideon act wisely? _____

2. Of what foolish act was he guilty? _____

3. Which one of Gideon's sons had ambition to rule? _____

4. What do you know of Jephthah's parents? _____

5. What do you know of his life before he became judge? _____

6. What was the law of Moses concerning vows? _____

7. Did Moses make any exception for rash vows? _____

8. What provision was made for vows concerning clean and unclean animals? _____

9. What was the law concerning persons devoted by vow? _____

10. What is the first vow mentioned in scripture? _____

11. Tell of the vow made by Hannah. _____

12. Tell of Herod's vow and the trouble it caused. _____

13. How did God regard vows made by man? _____

14. What can be said for the value of men's word today? _____

15. What of the difficulty in rebuilding our reputation for honesty and integrity? _____

16. What is mean by the Spirit of Jehovah coming upon Jephthah? _____

17. Did the coming of the Spirit on Jephthah keep him from making mistakes? _____

18. What was Jephthah's vow? _____

19. Give the position of those who believe that Jephthah offerred human sacrifice. _____

20. State the position of those who believe that he did not offer human sacrifice. _____

21. What do you know of Jephthah's family? _____

22. What was the attitude of Jephthah's daughter toward the vow? _____

23. For what did his daughter ask? _____

24. For what reasons would she bewail her virginity? _____

25. Does bewailing her virginity throw any light on the question concerning Jephthah's vow? _____

26. Does the fact that God recorded such sins mean that he endorsed them? _____

LESSON NUMBER 12

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON

Judges 13:2-7, 21-25

INTRODUCTION

As a connecting link between our present lesson and the one of last week, we have the story of Ephraim's complaint against Jephthah because he did not give them a prominent place in the war against the Ammonites. This was not the first time the tribe of Ephraim had done such. When Gideon had won his victory over the Midianites, the men of Ephraim made a complaint that they had not been called to the battle, and given the prominence they thought they deserved. Gideon handled them very diplomatically. He said that the little job he had to do was so small in comparison with some of the big things they had been doing that he just did not feel like calling on them to help him. Feeding their ego in this manner, he satisfied them and sent them away feeling good. But Jephthah was not of the flattering kind. When they came with their complaint to him, he told them plainly that he had called on them to help him to save the land, and that they did not respond. (Judges 12:2-4.) Jephthah called his army together and fought with Ephraim. Jephthah and his men took the fords of the Jordan River and held them against the Ephraimites. When an Ephraimite came to any one of the fords held by Jephthah's men, the Ephraimite was required to pronounce the word Shibboleth. Now it so happened that there was sufficient difference between the dialects of the tribes that the men of Ephraim could not pronounce this word correctly. The Ephraimite could not put the letter "h" in the word. So the best he could do was to say Sibboleth. When a man betrayed his identity as an Ephraimite, by mispronouncing this word, he was immediately slain. This continued until forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites were slain. This should have taught them not to demand preferment above their brethren in the affairs of the nation.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and Jehovah blessed him.” (Judges 13:24)

1. The Woman Bare a Son. In the first part of our text we learn that this woman was the wife of Manoah. We also learn that she was barren. It is interesting to note the number of barren women in Bible times who were enabled by Jehovah to bear children, some of them in their old age. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was barren for many years after the promise was made to him that through his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. In her efforts to assist in the fulfillment of the promise made by Jehovah she gave Abraham her handmaid, Hagar, for wife, that Abraham might have seed by her. But in Jehovah's own good time, he gave Sarah strength to conceive and bear the child of promise. Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob, was barren also. While Leah, the one loved less, bore Jacob a number of sons. So important was the bearing of children, in the estimation of Hebrews, that Rachel envied her sister to the extent that Jacob's anger was kindled against her. The fact that the scripture says God remembered Rachel and hearkened to her implies that Rachel made this matter a subject of her prayers. So it is said that she conceived and bare a son and called his name Joseph. In First Samuel we have the story of another barren woman, whose name was Hannah. She was the wife

of Elkanah. Like Rachel, Hannah had a rival who bore children to her husband. Hannah was grieved and was bitter in soul. She prayed and wept sore before Jehovah. God heard her prayer and her promise, and gave her a son, whom she promised to return to the Lord as soon as he was weaned. Coming into the New Testament we have another barren woman, Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias, and the mother of John the Baptist. She, too, felt the reproach of being barren, and with her husband prayed to God that she might receive strength to bear a child. Like Sarah she was "well stricken in years," past that age in life when women would naturally conceive and bear children. From these examples we can see what childbearing meant to the average Hebrew family, and especially in those families where the woman was barren. (1) To such families, the fact that God gave the wife power to conceive and bear a child was evidence that God had taken particular notice of them. (2) It was evidence that God was pleased with them and pleased to use them for some particular purpose. (3) It made possible the continuance of their name and their family through other generations to come. (4) There was always the possibility that their child might be the promised Messiah or that he at least might be in the line of the promised Messiah.

2. They Called His Name Samson. The meaning of the word Samson is difficult to determine from scholars. Some say that it means "sun" or "little sun." Adam Clarke suggests that it may mean little servant. Gesenius, an outstanding Hebrew scholar, says the root from which the word Samson comes signifies awe and astonishment. Josephus says that the word Samson means "a strong one." But the majority of scholars think that the word means sun. Usually the names of men signified something with reference to a man's work or character. When first we meet with the father of the Hebrew race, his name is Abram, which means exalted father, but later it is changed to Abraham, which means father of a multitude. The second son of Isaac was named Jacob, which means supplanter. Of him in later life, his brother Esau said, *"Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing."* (Gen. 27:36) So significant were names that sometimes the Lord gave men the name they should wear. Both John the Baptist and Jesus are examples of this.

3. Jehovah Blessed Him. How the Lord blessed Samson and to what extent we are not informed, and it would be useless to surmise. But since every child is blessed by the ordinary providence of God, it would be useless for the scripture to say that Jehovah blessed Samson unless he was blessed in some way that ordinary children were not blessed. But since in manhood Samson was blessed with much more than ordinary human strength, we may be safe in concluding that the Lord blessed Samson with more than ordinary strength as a child.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 13:2-7, 21-25

1. The Angel Promises a Son (Judges 13:2-7)

There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites. The town of Zorah was due west of Jerusalem, about halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea. In Josh. 15: 33 it is listed as a town in the territory of Judah, but in our lesson it is said to be in the territory of Dan. The explanation of this difficulty is found in Josh. 19:41, where we are told that the border of Dan's inheritance was Zorah and a number of other towns. From this we learn that Zorah was on the borderline between Judah and Dan, and so sometimes was spoken of as belonging to Judah and sometimes as belonging to Dan. No doubt a part of the city was in each of these territories, since it was on the borderline.

Whose name was Manoah. We know but little of Manoah and his wife, whose name is not given, but what little we know of them is good. When Samson wished to marry a Philistine girl, he told his father and mother and asked them to get her for him. His father and mother replied, "*Is there never a woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?*" (Judges 14:3.) Samson's parents preferred that their son should marry one of his own nation. Thus they must have held something of the same views of the sacredness of marriage as was common to the better type of Hebrews.

The angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman. The identity of this angel is reserved for the latter portion of this lesson. Here we notice the message of the angel. First, he gave her assurance that she would conceive and bear a son. Next the angel gave the woman directions for her conduct until the time of the birth of the son. First she was to drink no wine nor strong drink. It is significant here that wine was not counted a strong drink. The Jews, like many in France today, drank a light wine that was hardly considered to be intoxicating. It was more like tea which many people drink in America. In the next place, she was not to eat anything unclean from the time of her conception to the time of the birth of the child.

The child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb. The word Nazirite means one separated or consecrated. In the sixth chapter of Numbers we learn the law of the Nazirite. In the first place, he was not to drink the juice of grapes, nor eat fresh or dried grapes. He had specific directions to refrain from anything that came from the grapevine. Next, no razor should come upon his head during the days of his vow. If the vow was for a certain period of time, no razor was to be on his head. If his Nazirite vow was for life, then no razor was to come upon his head for life. In the third place, he was not to come near a dead body, not even his own father or mother. We know of only three men who were Nazirites for life. They were Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

He shall begin to save Israel. This is certainly the correct way to state the work of Samson. He did not deliver the people from the Philistines. He only began the deliverance, which was carried on by his more worthy successor, Samuel, and was completed in the days of David.

A man of God came unto me. This is the statement of Samson's mother to Manoah, her husband. The angel took the form of a man and the message which he delivered indicated that he was from God. So the woman simply spoke of him as the man of God. His countenance also impressed her with the idea that he was from God, for she said that his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible. The word terrible is not to be taken in the sense of frightening or terrifying, rather that it was impressive and awe-inspiring.

I asked him not whence he was. The woman was so overjoyed with the promise that she was to have a son that she did not ask the man his name nor where he came from. This is an indication of the interest she had and the desire she entertained with reference to a child. She then related to her husband what the angel had said to her with reference to the child. And again, we find mention of the character of the son that was to have no strong drink nor to drink any wine, nor eat any unclean thing, since he was to be a Nazirite unto God all the days of his life.

2. The Intervening Verses (Judges 13:8-20)

We do not usually make comments on the verses between those paragraphs which comprise our text, but this time the material is of such interest it is thought best to say a few words about it. We should notice the confidence which Manoah had in his wife when she told him of the conversation the man of God had with her. "Nor is Manoah's trust in his wife less conspicuous than her trust in him. Not a shadow of a doubt as to the truth or her statement crossed his mind, nor a shade of jealousy that the message came to her rather than to him. . . . The conduct of Manoah's wife after her first interview with the angel is a beautiful exemplification of this spirit in the wife: then the woman came and told her husband. Many things might have moved her to secrecy. The fear of exciting her husband's suspicions, the risk of being disbelieved, the possibility that the stranger had deceived her with false hopes; or, on the other hand, a feeling of pride and self-sufficiency at the marvelous apparition and revelation made to herself, not to her husband, and a spirit of independence engendered by such a distinction - such feelings as these, had they existed, or had they ruled her conduct, might have led her to conceal the mysterious interview." From these considerations we infer that Manoah and his wife loved each other deeply and that they had perfect confidence in each other. They prayed God for a return of the visitor and a repetition of the promise, and God granted their prayer. On this second visit, they asked the name of the angel, and they watched while the angel did wondrously before them, and saw him as he went up to heaven from off the altar in the flame that ascended therefrom.

3. The Angel Identified and the Promised Fulfilled (Judges 13:21-25)

Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Jehovah. This expression, "*the angel of Jehovah,*" is used many times in the Old Testament to refer to Jehovah Himself as was manifested in the second person of the godhead. It was this angel that talked with Jacob at Bethel, and Jacob called Him Jehovah. (Gen. 28:13-17.) In Gen. 48:15,16 Jacob calls him the angel. This is the angel Jacob wrestled at Penuel, whom he called God, saying that he had seen God face to face. Hosea says of this incident that he had power over the angel and prevailed, and continued by saying that Jacob also found him in Bethel. (Hos. 12:3-5.) These passages leave no doubt in our mind whatever that the angel of Jehovah was Jehovah in a form which could be seen and handled by man. We shall surely die, because we have seen God. This is the statement of Manoah to his wife after this angel had left them. This also identifies the angel as God. Manoah realized that he was the angel of Jehovah, which was none other than Jehovah manifested in a form which man could see and handle. So Manoah was afraid that he would die because he had looked upon Jehovah with his eyes.

But his wife said unto him. Sometimes women manifest more courage, especially with reference to spiritual affairs, than men. Manoah's wife had clearer understanding and better reasoning than her husband on this occasion. She said that if Jehovah were pleased to kill them, he would not have received the burnt offering and the meat offering which they had offered. In verses nineteen and twenty of this chapter we have the record of the offering that they offered Jehovah, and since He had condescended to receive that offering, he certainly would not put them to death.

The Spirit of Jehovah began to move him. In due time the child was born and was given the name of Samson. And, as shown in our key scripture, the child grew under the blessing of Jehovah. Then the Spirit of God began to move him or direct him in his work of beginning to deliver the people from the Philistines. Here again there is no indication of inspiration or moral guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was simply moving him to do that work which God had called him to do, and for which God

had eminently qualified him.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. From this lesson we learn something of God's interest in the use of individuals in carrying out His great purposes. Some men become too great and too busy to find time to deal with individuals, but God is never too busy to deal with individuals that He may accomplish His purposes. And none of us are so insignificant that we may not be used by Him for the accomplishment of His purposes.

2. We Learn from this lesson something of the blessings and joys of unity of interest in a home. Both Manaoh and his wife were concerned about her barrenness and inability to bear a child. No doubt they were interested to the extent that they prayed about it, and when the woman was old that she should have a son, her first thought was to convey the glad news to her husband.

3. There is also this lesson concerning the joy of giving God a servant. It is not possible for a woman to render a greater service to God nor to humanity than that of rearing children who will serve God and humanity. This is the place that God has given her, and she will do her greatest work in that sphere in which the Lord has placed her.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 12

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON

1. What tribe made a complaint against Gideon? How did he handle them? _____

2. What complaint did this same tribe make against Jephthah? How did he handle them?

3. How many Ephraimites were slain at this time? _____

4. Cite a number of instances of barren women being enabled to bear children. _____

5. Discuss four things suggested in our lesson that childbearing meant to the average Hebrew family. _____

6. What is the meaning of the name Samson? _____

7. What significance does Bible names usually have? _____

8. What evidence do we have that Samson was especially blessed of Jehovah? _____

9. In what town did Samson's family live? _____

10. What is peculiar about the location of this city? _____

11. Who was Samson's father? _____

12. What is suggested in our lesson with reference to their views on marriage? _____

13. What information did the angel bring Manoah's wife? _____

14. What instruction was she given? _____

15. What does the word Nazirite mean? _____

16. What three Bible characters are known as Nazirites? _____

17. Did Samson deliver Israel from the Philistines? _____

18. What form did the angel take when appearing to Samson's mother? _____

19. What indicates the woman's interest in the message of the angel? _____

20. What is said of the confidence which Manoah had in his wife? _____

21. Tell of the second visit of the angel. _____

22. What do you know of this angel who visited them? _____

23. Why did Manoah think they should surely die? _____

24. In what way did Manoah's wife manifest better reasoning and understanding than her husband? _____

25. Under what impulse did Samson begin to do his work of deliverance? _____

LESSON NUMBER 13

SAMSON'S DEATH

Judges 16:21-31

INTRODUCTION

Between the last lesson regarding the birth of Samson and this lesson regarding his death, we have a number of interesting incidences in the life of Samson, wherein God moved him to begin the deliverance of his people from the Philistines. His strength was first manifested by his tearing a lion with his bare hands as he would have torn a young goat. Next, when he failed to get the girl he wished for his wife, he caught three hundred foxes and turned them tail to tail, tied firebrands between them, and turned them loose in the fields of standing grain burning the grain of the Philistines. In the next place we see him slaying one thousand men with the jawbone of an ass. Again, his enemies found him in the city of Gaza and laid in wait at the gate of the city to take him prisoner as he would leave in the morning. But Samson arose at midnight and pulled the gateposts up and carried them on his shoulders to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron. The incident for which he is best known is that in which he made love to Delilah. She was a woman who lived in the valley of Sorek. Of the location of this place nothing is known certainly. Some suppose it to be situated near Gaza, since this is the city to which Samson was taken when he was captured in the home of Delilah in the valley of Sorek. Delilah was offered the handsome bribe of eleven hundred pieces of silver to betray Samson into the hands of the Philistines. A piece of silver was worth from about fifty to sixty cents, so she got around \$600 to betray Samson into their hands. Samson told her various things to do which would render him helpless, but each time he defended himself and disappointed Delilah. But finally, as happens to all who tamper with temptation, he told her that if his hair should be shaven from his head he would be as weak as other men. Delilah knew that he had told her all that was in his heart, so she sent for the Philistine lords and told them to bring their money with them. She then made him sleep upon her knees and shaved off the locks of hair from his head. She began to afflict him, and the record says his strength went from him. Then she called for the lords of the Philistines to come, and Samson arose and shook himself as he had done before, expecting to protect himself. But the record says, "*He knew not that Jehovah was departed from him.*"

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"O God, You are terrible out of Your holy places: the God of Israel, He gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God." (Psa. 68:35)

1. Reasons Why Jehovah Is Terrible. The word terrible in our text is to be taken in the sense of awe-inspiring. In our common use of the term it means that which excites terror or dread, that which is frightful or horrible, but neither of these meanings can be given the word here because in this verse it applies to God, and God can in no sense of the term be called frightful or horrible. But God does often excite us to reverential awe and respect. By using the two preceding verses of this Psalm, we see several reasons why God is said to be terrible. (1) His supreme and sovereign dominion over the universe is awe-inspiring. In verse thirty-three He is described as the one that rides upon the heaven of heavens. Psalm 18 should be read by the student to see how God exercises His sovereignty over

the earth and the heavens for the help and the blessing of those who love and serve Him. (2) The voice of Jehovah is awe-inspiring. David said, *"The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters: the God of glory thunders, even Jehovah upon many waters. The voice of Jehovah is powerful; the voice of Jehovah is full of majesty. The voice of Jehovah breaks the cedars; yea, Jehovah breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon."* (Psa. 29:3-5.) When Jehovah appeared on Sinai, there were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mountain and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that when the people saw and heard, they trembled and they said unto Moses, *"Speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."* (Ex. 20:19.) (3) The Mighty power of God is awe-inspiring. In the preceding verse to our key scripture, we read, *"Ascribe strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the skies."* The power of God is so evidently manifest in creation and preservation that none of us who think can fail to be impressed. In the springtime when life begins to come upward in the grass and in the trees, we are reminded of the power of God. But that is such a natural thing that we do not always recognize it as evidence of the power of God. The rising of the sun in the morning is also an evidence of the power of God, which we are likely to forget. But when we see the storms, the tornadoes, we see the lightning flash across the sky and hear the thunder roll, we are impressed with the power of Him who creates and governs such terrible powers. Those of us who have felt the earth tremble beneath us and have seen great buildings rock and fall because their foundation was destroyed, and those who have weathered storms on the ocean and felt the great ships quiver beneath them like a leaf in the wind, are made to appreciate more than ever the power in Him who creates and governs and sustains all these things. (4) God's wise and gracious dealings with His people in times past are awe-inspiring. God's great power and majesty as shown in the creation and preservation of nature and all its forces are awe-inspiring from one consideration, yet His patience, His longsuffering, and His wisdom and His mercy in dealing with a forgetful and sometimes rebellious people are equally awe-inspiring. None less than an all-wise, patient, and merciful heavenly Father could guide the destinies of humanity to the praise and the glory of His great and holy name. (5) As great and awe-inspiring as these things are, they can never compare with that manifestation of His goodness and mercy when He laid aside His glory and took upon Himself the nature of man. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:5-8.) Angels in glory catch new glimpses of the power and majesty, the mercy and love of God as He rebuilds broken lives, and makes them fit for dwelling in the skies. Surely these things are sufficient proof that our God is terrible out of His sanctuary and that God, the God of Israel, gives strength and power unto His people.

2. Our Response to These Awe-In-spiring Manifestations of God. The Psalmist stood with reverential awe, able only to say, *"Blessed be God."* This is a psalm of praise and one in which one reason after another is given why we should praise God. Statements selected at random through the Psalms will illustrate this. *"Sing unto God, sing praises to His name . . . exult before Him . . . blessed be the Lord who daily bears our burden . . . bless God in the congregations . . . sing unto God you kingdoms of the earth; oh sing praises unto the Lord."* In this connection, a number of the Psalms of praise, such as Psalms 146 through 150, should be read to give the student an idea of the multiplicity of things for which we are obligated to praise the Lord. If there is one who has difficulty in finding things for which to praise the Lord, or if he finds it difficult to summon the proper words in which to express his praise, he will be benefited immeasurably by the reading of the Psalms of praise written by David.

II. A COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 16:21-31

I. Samson's Punishment (Judges 16:21,22)

The Philistines . . . put out his eyes. This was a common punishment of the times. When Korah and his fellow rebels were called to come before Moses, he asked why he had been called for and asked if his eyes were to be put out. (Num. 16:14.) And when Zedekiah, the last king of the southern kingdom of Judah, was taken prisoner by the king of Babylon, his eyes were put out, and he was bound in fetters. (2 Kings 25:7.) Many times a red-hot iron was used to put out the eyes of men.

They brought him down to Gaza. Gaza seems to have been the principal city of the Philistines at that time. It was the most southwestern point on the road between Palestine and Egypt. For this reason it had a continuous existence from the very earliest times even unto the time of our Lord and the apostles.

Bound him with fetters of brass. These Philistines who had seen him pick up the gates of the city and carry them to the top of the hill, and who had seen him snap new ropes as if they had been threads, were not taking any chances that his strength might return, so they bound him with fetters of brass.

He did grind in the prison-house. This was the work of slaves to grind feed for the Philistines. They made Samson a slave and put him to doing the most degrading of tasks.

Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again. Adam Clarke supposes that Samson, being ashamed of his folly and his sin, renewed his Nazirite vow when he became sensible of the fact that his power was returning with the growing of his hair. However, verse twenty-eight of our text seems to suggest that his strength came to him in answer to prayer at the time he needed it.

2. Samson's Humiliation (Judges 16:23-27)

The lords of the Philistines gathered them together. This gathering was for the purpose of making a sacrifice unto Dagon their god and to rejoice over the fact that they had captured their enemy Samson. Dagon was their national god. The word Dagon means fish, and their god had the body of a fish, but the head, breast, and hands of a human being. Coins are still in existence with this emblem stamped upon them.

Our god has delivered Samson into our hand. This undoubtedly added to the humiliation of Samson. He realized that he, by his folly and sin, had given an opportunity to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme His worthy name and to exalt their heathen god above Jehovah.

When the people saw him, they praised their god. When the people passed by Samson at the mill-grinding, they made such remarks as here expressed. And every time he heard them say that their god Dagon had delivered Samson into their hands in spite of all the efforts of Jehovah to prevent his capture, he realized that he had given his enemies an opportunity to blaspheme his God.

Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. This was on the day when the people gathered for their sacrifice unto Dagon. They called for him out of the prison-house and had him to entertain them.

Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house rests. This is Samson's request of the lad

who held him. This lad held him by the hand to guide him to a place of rest after his exertions. Knowing something of the foundation or the building under which he was resting, he asked the lad to allow him to feel the pillars upon which the house rested, so that he might lean upon them. The lad, of course, granted the request, thinking that Samson wished to rest by leaning against the pillars.

Now the house was full of men and women. Among these were all the lords of the Philistines. And it is said that there were three thousand men and women upon the roof. How many men and women were in other portions of the building, of course, cannot be estimated. But there must have been quite a number, since it is said that Samson slew more people in his death than he did during his lifetime.

3. Samson's Death (Judges 16:28-31)

And Samson called unto Jehovah. This is Samson's prayer for strength, and he said, "*Remember me, I pray, and strengthen me, I pray, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.*" It was commendable in Samson to pray to God, but we could wish that his prayer had been different from what it was. In the first place, it is a somewhat selfish prayer. He prayed to be avenged of his two eyes. It seems that he was more interested in getting vengeance for himself than he was in his sin of bringing God's name into ill repute. He had given his enemies opportunity to blaspheme the worthy name of Jehovah, but he is more interested in afflicting his enemies because they had afflicted him than he is in restoring the good name of Jehovah among them.

Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. Saying this, he bowed himself with all his might and pulled the pillars from under the building, which caused the house to fall upon the lords and upon all that were within the house. Samson tried to make correction in his dying hour for the mistakes of a lifetime. While he accomplished more of his mission in delivering Israel from the Philistines in that hour than he had during his lifetime, yet the correction which he made in that hour was not sufficient to atone for the mistakes and follies of his lifetime. While the stories of the unusual strength of Samson, and the sometimes ludicrous ways he used it, is of interest to young people, yet the thought should ever be held before them that Samson was not a good character, and that he is not to be admired for his standard of morals. God used him as best he could for the accomplishment of His purposes, yet God does not endorse his standard of morals or the spiritual plane on which he lived.

His brethren . . . took him, . . . and buried him. There is no mention of other children of Samson's parents. So, the word brethren here may simply mean his kinsmen. Though there was enmity between Israel and the Philistines, we may suppose that the Philistines were so busy burying their dead and lamenting over them that they made no objection to these people of Israel taking and burying Samson.

He judged Israel twenty years. From what we learn of the habits of Samson, it is difficult to conceive of him holding the office and doing the work of the judge over a nation of people. It is difficult to see that Samson did any more than execute the judgment of God on the enemies of Israel. It is perhaps in this sense that the word judge is used with reference to him.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Those who are called of God and qualified, to serve him should feel the responsibility of living like God. In the person of Jesus, God has shown us how to live. Those of us who are called to serve Him should strive to live like Him.

2. Great endowments, whether physical or mental, bring great responsibilities with them. Samson had a great physical endowment. He should have used it constantly and wisely for the accomplishment of God's purposes. As it was, he used it for his personal gratification.

3. In Samson we learn again that we reap what we sow. Samson sowed to the lusts of the flesh and his reaping was in kind. He suffered in the flesh. We cannot indulge in the lusts of the flesh without bringing sorrow and suffering. In this connection the student should read Eccles. 11:9,10.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 13

SAMSON'S DEATH

1. How was Samson's strength first manifested? _____

2. What did Samson do when he failed to get the wife he wanted? _____

3. How did he slay a thousand men on one occasion? _____

4. What did he do with the gates of a city? _____

5. How much was Delilah offered to betray Samson? _____

6. Tell how Delilah got the truth from Samson? _____

7. What did Jehovah do when Samson's hair was cut? _____

8. What does the word "terrible" mean in our text? _____

9. What is said of the sovereign dominion of Jehovah over the universe? _____

10. What is said of the voice of Jehovah? _____

11. What is said of the strength and power of Jehovah? _____

12. Can you show how God's wise and gracious dealings are awe-inspiring? _____

13. What is the greatest awe-inspiring manifestation of God? _____

14. What should be our response to these awe-inspiring manifestations of God? _____

15. What was the first punishment given Samson? _____

16. What other Bible characters suffered the same punishment? _____

17. To what city did they take Samson? _____

18. How did they make certain Samson would stay with them? _____

19. What work was Samson given to do? _____

20. What is your opinion of the cause of the return of his strength? _____

21. For what did the lords of the Philistines gather? _____

22. What was the name of the Philistines' god? _____

23. What made Samson realize that he had dishonored Jehovah? _____

24. Why did the people call for Samson? _____

25. What request did Samson make of his keepers? _____

26. What is said of the number of Philistines gathered at this time? _____

27. For what did Samson pray? _____

28. Why did he wish to regain his strength? _____

29. Wherein is the selfishness of Samson's prayer? _____

30. What is said of Samson's accomplishments in death as compared to those of his life? _____

31. Is Samson a good character to hold up before young people as their example? _____

32. Who buried Samson? _____

33. How long did Samson judge Israel? _____
