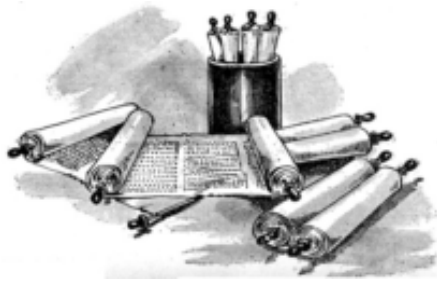


LESSON 7



HONORING THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Scripture Text: Joshua 8:30-35

God's Law must be honored and obeyed by God's people. After the sin committed by Achan was removed from the camp of Israel, they went on to a great victory at Ai.

The chief figures in today's lesson are the Law and the ark. They typify the high position in the church of the Word of God and the presence or Spirit of God. Unless we give these first place, there is no hope for success in the work of the church, nor can we expect God's smile of blessing upon us.

We learn in our study today one of the greatest lessons mankind has needed to learn in every age. That is that the Lord demands and deserves the highest honor and respect in our worship to Him.

MEMORY VERSE: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.* —Ecclesiastes 12:13

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—Deuteronomy 27** Curses to be pronounced.
- Tue.—Deuteronomy 28:1-14** Blessings to be pronounced.
- Wed.—Deuteronomy 17:14-20** Kings to obey God's Word.
- Thu.—2 Kings 23:1-25** Josiah obeys God's Word.
- Fri.—Nehemiah 8** Reading and obeying God's Word.
- Devotional Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-14** Obeying the Word.

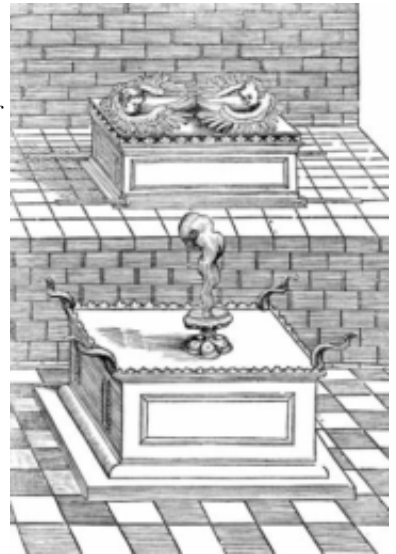
Obeying God's Command to Moses

Joshua 8:30-31 Just after the great victory which God gave at Ai, Joshua turned to fulfill a duty laid upon Israel by Moses, at God's command. To better understand the command, turn to Deuteronomy 27. There we find a part of the farewell address Moses gave recounting God's dealings with and His commands to Israel. This command provided that when Israel should come into Canaan, an altar was to be built in Mount Ebal. It must be of whole stones, no iron tool used to shape them. Being left as God made them, with no human or artificial change, signifies that worship must be real, heartfelt, **in spirit and in truth**, as God has ordered. No human or artificial changes are acceptable to God. Both burnt and peace offerings were to be offered on the altar, the people worshiping, eating, and rejoicing before the Lord.

Writing the Law

Joshua 8:32-33 Joshua wrote the Law of Moses on the stones of the altar, which had been covered with plaster to take the writing or chiseling (Deuteronomy 27:2-8). We are not told precisely what was written, but we know it was of the Law of God. There it was to stand in plain view as a constant reminder to Israel.

All the children of Israel were there, each tribe arranged as Moses said. The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin on Mount Gerizim to bless; the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and



Naphtali on Mount Ebal. to curse. In the valley between, centrally placed, were the priests and the Levites carrying the ark, representing the presence of God. Mount Gerizim is to the south of Samaria, and about five hundred yards to the north is Mount Ebal. A voice from one may be heard on the other. They rise above the city of Shechem or Sychar which lies in the valley between. Many springs rise here and send streams down the slope from the town keeping it green and beautiful. Jacob's well is at the foot of Mount Gerizim.

The Law and the ark were both here as the leading figures. The visible Law written on stones is a type of the spiritual Law written in hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-10). The ark of the covenant is a type of the presence or Spirit of God. These two—the Word and the Spirit—are the two contacts of God with man, the two gifts of God which make a sinner into a saint, the two gifts, the inner possession of which by a person makes him a member of the family of God, the new Israel—spiritual Israel.

Reading the Law

Joshua 8:34-35 Afterward, he read **the law, the blessings and cursings**. The command was: **the Levites shall speak . . . with a loud voice**, the blessings and cursings. After each part, the people should say, Amen, thus binding themselves to it. Perhaps Levites were divided, one side reading blessings, the other curses. The exact order is not told. Listening were the men, women, children, and strangers. Not only listening, but agreeing. ALL must know this Law and the consequences of obedience or disobedience.

Notice the care with which this was carried out—every person present, the writing done in sight of all, the reading in the hearing of all, and the people's response to each item. Why? To lift God's Law before them as the highest authority. EVERYONE must know what God's Word said. They MUST know the choice before them—to obey or disobey, to show respect or disrespect—and the consequence of each—blessing or cursing.

Exalting God's Word

We must exalt God's Word in our homes. To KNOW His Word is the first step toward OBEYING it. If our children grew up knowing it, we would not have the present dark record of delinquency and crime. So many of our children would not be confused by false teachings in the schools. We should read God's Word and worship Him daily as a family.

We must exalt God's Word in the church. It is the one standard of Truth to us. Man-made creeds and opinions should be excluded. The study and spread of the Word should be put before other programs, forms, entertainment, etc. Obedience and respect for it must be taught. We must build our spiritual house after the pattern found there. We must exalt it in our lives to the world.

Fear God and Keep His Commandments

Ecclesiastes 12:13 This command gathers **the whole duty of man** within the confines of fearing God and keeping His commandments. In other words, when God fills one's heart, and His Word governs his living, then he is a child of God, pleasing to Him. This cannot be attained except through an experience of salvation, an experience brought about through the new birth and baptism of the Holy Spirit.

How can we give highest place to God's presence and God's Law? It is not enough to believe there is a God Who is good. It is not enough to own a Bible and believe it is true. It is not enough to attend church services where the Bible is believed and taught. Christ must be our life. His Words must abide in us (Colossians 3:4; John 15:6-7).

JUST A THOUGHT

The kind of behavior that once brought shame and disgrace now brings a movie or television contract.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
It is revised and posted here with written permission from
(c) Bible Paths Publications, PO Box 299, Keithville, LA 71047