

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2025: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua*

Lesson 13 “Choose This Day!”

Read for this week’s study

Joshua 24; Genesis 12:7; Deuteronomy 17:19; Deuteronomy 5:6; 1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

Memory Text

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. You Were There!
- III. In Sincerity and Truth
- IV. Free to Serve
- V. The Dangers of Idolatry
- VI. Finishing Well
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The final chapter of Joshua is set in the context of a covenant renewal ceremony, but this time conducted by the aged leader of Israel. Although not a covenant itself but it is rather a report of a covenant renewal ceremony.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Just like Moses did at the end of his life (Deuteronomy 1-33), Joshua at the end of his life renews God’s covenant with Israel (23:1-16; 24:1-28). Why does this covenant look so similar to the vassal treaties that were used in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC, and preserved among the Hittites? Why does it use the same five-part structure: (1) Title 2) Historical Prologue 3) Stipulations 4) Witnesses 5) Curses and Blessings)? Shouldn’t this covenant have a more “heavenly” form?
3. No matter how great leaders may be, they cannot last forever. Like his predecessor Moses, Joshua gave a farewell address, first to his leaders (chap. 23, Lesson #12) and then to the people as a whole (chap. 24). While God chose Joshua as a leader to replace Moses, this time no obvious replacement is on the horizon. Are there any lessons for us as God’s people?
4. What is the significance of choosing Shechem as the place of covenant renewal (8:30-35; 24:32 cf. Genesis 35:1-31; 49:26; 50:25; Exodus: 13:19)? What is the main thrust of Joshua’s message to Israel (24:2–13)? (Sunday’s lesson)
5. What does it mean to serve the Lord “in sincerity and in truth” (24:14, 15)? (Monday’s lesson) As the key response for God’s people, “serve” (whether as a verb or in its noun form

“service, work”) appears 16 times in this chapter 24 out of 40 occurrences in the book of Joshua.

6. Joshua gives Israel a choice and makes his decision public (24:15). (Tuesday’s lesson) What is significant in the people’s response (24:16, 20-24 cf. Genesis 35:2-4)? (Wednesday’s lesson) What are they going to do? That’s the big question that looms as the book of Joshua ends. And the book of Judges is not going to be a highlight of Israel’s history (Judges 2:11-13).
7. What is the connection between Joseph and Joshua (24:29-32)? (Thursday’s lesson) Joshua dies at age 110 and is buried. He is the one who brought the Israelites to the Promised Land. The bones of Joseph, who died at age 110, and which have been carried all the way from Egypt, are buried in the Promised Land too. Three generations are connected. How can we pass on the torch to the next generation today?
8. Joshua’s farewell speech contains one of the best lines about our debt to God. “I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.” (24:13) This is so persuasive that parents still use the same words (except the “olive groves” part) when they are admonishing their teenagers to behave. Did it work with the Israelites? What does it tell us about the level of people God has to work with? How can we motivate people towards good behavior?
9. “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (24:15) Just like Abraham, Joshua is presented as a family man who in that culture, can make decisions for his whole family (cf. Genesis 18:19; 26:5) Yet, just like with Moses, none of his descendants are mentioned as noble examples who followed their father’s footsteps. What lessons can we learn from this?
10. Serving God who runs his universe by respecting the choices of all his created beings is a learning experience (Luke 15:12; Revelation 12:7; Isaiah 49:25)! How easily are we tempted to try to force our good choices onto others just because we mean well (10 commandments, abortion, prohibition, etc.)! How can we avoid undoing by overdoing?
11. At his death, Joshua, just like Moses, receives the special title “the servant of the Lord” (24:29). How do we measure success in today’s world? What have you learned during the last 13 weeks studying the book of Joshua that will make a difference in your life and your sphere of influence so that our world is a better place? Give some examples of things you can change in the near future.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now how much “faith” do we have to have? I mean, must we trust completely, even perfectly? Is that required? Couldn’t we get away with a little cheating? Have you husbands ever said to your wives, “Wife, how much could I cheat and this marriage still survive?” Would that make any sense? If a friend should say to you, “How much could I lie, and fail to tell you the truth—and this friendship still last?” I mean, it makes no sense.

Then for us to suggest that God needs to leave a little room for cheating in this relationship, that a “perfect relationship” is surely asking too much; does it make sense to even raise the question?

When we “cheat”, and cheat we have, God remains our constant friend. But we may be destroying our side of the friendship. You see, when what God wants is seen as friendship, a loving, trusting relationship; then what He wants is obviously not a requirement demanded, but it is an absolutely voluntary experience.

This long debate between faith, works and obedience has troubled saints through the years, but it could be so readily resolved if we looked at the biblical word for obedience. I’ll even pronounce it (because it’s like that other word; faith, is *hupostasis*.) This word obedience is *hupakoē*. The first part “*hup*” means under. And the second part “*akoē*” means hearing. The word means literally, “listening under.” **A humble willingness to listen**, and of course if we love and trust God, we’ll be willing to listen. It wouldn’t make sense for us to **not** listen to one we love, trust and admire.

Now could God’s expectation of our willingness to listen be one hundred percent? Our performance may be weak. We may stumble as we leave our doctor’s office. But a willingness to listen? Is it too much to say, “Don’t cheat there. Let that be one hundred percent!”

If it should seem that God is too demanding in asking for such a relationship, that He expects too much of us, it surely is encouraging to read about the heroes and heroines of faith celebrated in the same chapter of the same book that tells us what faith is. Look at Hebrews 11:31 and following:

By faith the prostitute Rahab escaped the doom of the unbelievers, because she had given the spies a kindly welcome. Need I say more? Time is too short for me to tell the stories of Gideon [who needed a wet fleece, and a dry one], Barak, Samson [look what he did], Jephthah, of David [look what he did] and Samuel and the prophets. . . . These also, one and all are commemorated for their faith. (NEB)

Is God too demanding? He even holds those people with all their weaknesses, with all their faults and sins; He holds them out to us as people, evidently, who were willing to listen, loved and trusted God and were waiting for Him to heal the damage done. And He puts them in Hebrews 11 for our encouragement. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, “All God Asks Is Trust” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

God created us capable of love and trust, or of hating Him and spitting in His face. Will we ever lose that ability? If the restoration of all things means depriving us of that, why did He build it into us in the beginning? My understanding is, God values nothing higher than our freedom and our individuality and our dignity. God has never asked us to do anything that would violate this. He seeks to restore this. My understanding is, a billion years from now we will sense more than ever this God-given ability to think and to do, so that our love, our expression of admiration for God is freely given, or it means nothing to Him.

How would you like it if your wife said she loved you because it was either programmed into her, or she was terrified of you? It would be worthless. It would be an insult to God! What then will hold the universe together? If force could hold it together, why didn’t He use force in the beginning? If terror will hold it together, why didn’t He go ahead and terrorize us early on? He didn’t do it. The fact that

God has only sought to hold His children loyal by the demonstration of His trustworthiness, of His love, and so on, and of the orderliness of the universe, and of the awful consequences of being disorderly, shown by the death of His Son. By showing all of that, we now have evidence, if we wish, freely to choose to trust God and to listen to Him for the rest of eternity.

But now, how could God say sin will not arise again? Wouldn't that be your question? Would you see light in this, pending further reading? One would be simply His foreknowledge: it won't. You'll be free, but you never will rebel again.

There's another possibility. If rebellion should begin again in the mind of an individual and God should leave that individual to reap the natural results of his rebellion and his distrust and his disorderliness, he would die. But would anyone misunderstand and as a result serve God from fear? Much theology is involved in your question. My understanding is that since Gethsemane and Calvary, we know that God has not threatened us with torture and execution, but if I pursue my own rebellious, disorderly way, and He finally gives me up to reap the consequences, weeping over me, I will die. But the universe now would not say, "Look at God terrorizing the rest of us by torturing this poor soul to death." They know that God has not threatened His children with torture and execution. They will not misunderstand and serve Him from fear. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus*, recorded October 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man. {COL 286.1}

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.—LS 196 (1902). {LDE 72.1}

Nothing can happen in any part of the universe without the knowledge of Him who is omnipresent. Not a single event of human life is unknown to our Maker. While Satan is constantly devising evil, the Lord our God overrules all, so that it will not harm His obedient, trusting children. The same power that controls the boisterous waves of the ocean can hold in check all the power of rebellion and of crime. God says to one as to the other, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." {3BC 1141.5}

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. . . . The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence. {GC 512.2}

God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representatives of Himself. {COL 288.2}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in co-partnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. {MB 142.1}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, "Follow Me." But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. {CS 138.1}

God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

God desires the willing service of our hearts. He has endowed us with reasoning faculties, with talents of ability, and with means and influence, to be exercised for the good of mankind, that we may manifest His spirit before the world. {CS 127.2}

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. {SC 61.1}

Promises are estimated by the truth of the one who makes them. Many men make promises only to break them, to mock the heart that trusted in them. Those who lean upon such men lean upon broken reeds. But God is behind the promises He makes. He is ever mindful of His covenant, and His truth endureth to all generations (MS 23, 1899). {7BC 942.12}