

# International Lessons.

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## Aug. 12, 1883. THE LAST DAYS OF JOSHUA. { Josh. 24: 14-29.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."—Josh. 24: 15.

**CENTRAL TRUTH.**—We ought to serve God.

**CONNECTION.**—Twenty-five years after entering Canaan, Joshua, now "old and stricken in age," gathered the tribes at Shechem (afterward "Sychar") to give them his last counsels.

**NOTES.**—Gods: These were idols which men worshipped instead of the true God. These gods were Dagon, Baal, and Ashtaroth. The Egyptians worshipped the bull, the crocodile and other animals. Other heathens make figures of wood and stone and bow down to them. Some worshipped the sun and the stars. Egypt: one of the oldest countries in the world. Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt, and afterwards his father and brothers dwelt there. It is enriched by the Nile, and has some of the grandest ruins, and the grandest history of any country in the world. Flood: the river Euphrates, which was called the "great river." (Gen. 15: 18.) On its banks was the splendid city of Babylon, and in the land through which it flows Abraham lived before he went to Canaan. Seven hundred years after this the children of Israel were captives on its banks.

**I. THE GOOD CHOICE.**—Ver. 14.—Fear the Lord: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Prov. 1: 7.) A deep reverence, and fear to offend; sincere worship. Sincerity and Truth: God sees the heart and cannot be deceived. Mere outward worship or pretended religion he will not accept. Put away the Gods: remains of heathenism long survived among them. Other side of the Flood: of the river Euphrates, from whence Abraham came. (Gen. 11: 31.)

Ver. 15.—Seem evil unto you: if it is too burdensome; if you know some better way than serving God. Choose you this day: so Elijah challenged the people long after. (1 Kings 18: 21.) The most important choice a person ever makes is to serve God. We will serve the Lord: Joshua had decided for himself, and his family had decided. Our example may decide others. Instead of saying to be influenced by others, we have the privilege of influencing them.

Ver. 16.—God forbid that we should forsake the Lord: it seemed easy and pleasant to serve God that day. Joshua had told them of God's great deliverances, and given them his own good example. Such times are good to strengthen the heart against the time of temptation and weakness. "In summer prepare for winter."

**II. GOOD REASONS GIVEN.**—Ver. 17.—Out of the Land of Egypt: to the Israelite God's crowning mercy was always the deliverance from Egypt. So to the Christian, God's great mercy is always the forgiveness of his sins. It is such a great deliverance! All the way in which we went: in the wilderness—preserving them from enemies—from starvation and thirst—and bearing with all their waywardness. Drive out before us all the people: especially they mention the Amorites, the people of the hills, powerful in war; yet God drove them out before Israel. He is our God: they had such overwhelming reasons (but no more than we!) for serving God that they solemnly vowed to choose Him as their own God.

Ver. 19.—Ye cannot serve the Lord: Joshua meant by this caution that it was an important and difficult thing to be godly. To be heartless in our hearts, and to go to

hell, we have only to follow our natural bent. If they decided to serve God they must give their whole souls to it. Will not forgive your transgressions: their sin would be of a very aggravated type—for they knew that idols were vain. Ignorance may lessen sin, but only penitence and atonement can secure its pardon.

Ver. 20.—Turn and do you hurt: when they turned to idols, God always punished them; often by letting their foes oppress them.

**III. THE COVENANT.**—Ver. 21.—Nay, but we will serve the Lord: they deliberately and heartily chose God. It is good to give words to the decisions of our hearts.

Ver. 22.—Ye are witnesses against yourselves: you have chosen God; if you turn away how great will be your sin! And they said: We are witnesses: they were quite ready to take all the responsibility which belonged to their avowed choice. So the Christian; he openly chooses God, and takes everything that goes along with that choice.

Ver. 23.—Put away, said he, the strange Gods: there must have been some hidden idolatry among them, just as among us, secret unbelief, and trusting in something else than Christ.

Ver. 24.—The Lord our God will we serve: they again and again repeated their vow to serve, and worship, and love God. Perhaps there are some in your class who have never said in words that they would obey God and love Christ. Get them to commit themselves!

Ver. 25.—Made a covenant: twice the covenant had been publicly and in a national manner made before—once at Sinai, or "Horeb," and again in the land of Moab. (See both mentioned, Deut. 29: 1.) Now this covenant was solemnly renewed. Statute and an ordinance: Joshua fixed the transactions of this day as a standing law—an article of their "Constitution."

Ver. 26.—Wrote these words: Moses and Joshua are each spoken of as "writing" in a book. An official copy (perhaps the original one) was found by Hilkiah, the High Priest, long after. (1 Kings 22: 8.) And doubtless copies were more or less multiplied even in those early days. A great stone: such memorials are often mentioned—evidences of covenants made or mercies received. So *Babel*, *Galilee*, *Ebeneser*, etc. This stone, called a "pillar," remained long in Shechem. (See Judges 9: 6.)

Ver. 27.—A witness unto us: the advantage of such a witness is that it reminds us of our vow and engagement. So the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. So sickness, deaths, or providences in our path of life. It is for God thus to remind us, and it is for us thus to remember.

Ver. 28.—Every man went unto his inheritance: having in the public assembly pledged ourselves to God, the best thing we can do is to go home and live for God in our private and home life. These people would be very happy that day, as they went home to their villages and fields.

Ver. 29.—Died, being a hundred and ten years old: Joshua died at the age of his ancestor Joseph. He was forty-five years old when he left Egypt, eighty-five years old when he entered Canaan, and had ruled in Israel twenty-five years. A faithful man, whose only ambition was to please God and have the people serve and worship Him.

### PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. We must choose. Professing to be neutral is choosing to remain on the side of Satan and sin.
2. "This day" is the best time we shall ever have for choosing God!
3. There are "gods" other than those of wood and metal; fashion, pride, evil passion, selfishness, bad habits.
4. Remembrances of God's mercies is a good reason for choosing and serving Him. (Ver. 17, 18.)