

Notes

Happy New Year!!

Joshua 8:30-35

³⁰Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, ³¹as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. ³²And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. ³³Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. ³⁴And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

Looking back at where we have been for the last couple of studies, we have seen a defeat and a victory at Ai, we have seen willful sin and the consequences of it and we have seen repentance and healing. Now that Ai has been conquered, what is the next logical step?

Joshua renews the covenant.

To understand the context, we have to look back at Deuteronomy chapters 27 – 30. Here we see the location and instructions laid out by Moses for what they are supposed to do. The why becomes very clear in a little bit. Obviously, I am not going to read four chapters of Deuteronomy right now but here is part of the instruction:

They read the whole law on that day!

Deuteronomy 27:1-10 ¹***Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: “Keep all the commandments which I command you today.*** ²***And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime.*** ³***You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you.*** ⁴***Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime.*** ⁵***And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them.*** ⁶***You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God.*** ⁷***You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God.*** ⁸***And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.”*** ⁹***Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, “Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have***

become the people of the LORD your God. ¹⁰Therefore you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

Deuteronomy 28 – 30 explain in detail how the Israelites are to divide up by tribes, half on Mount Ebal and half on Mount Gerizim, and the Levites and priests will be in the middle of the two mountains with the Ark. The Levites and priests will pronounce the curses and the blessings and as each one is pronounced the corresponding group respond with an Amen, or a “so be it”.

It is amazing that the valley between these two mountains creates a natural amphitheater, to this day, and every word would have been clearly heard!

Mt. Ebal was the Mt. of curses: I find this interesting. Wouldn't they have built the altar on Mt. Gerizim, the Mt. of blessings? They offered peace offerings, they offered burnt offerings, this was a beautiful admission that they understood the sin and consequences of it prior to the disaster at Ai. It is a sweet, head-down, scuff your foot in the sand apology, and a gratitude for God's goodness and mercy. It is a repentance and a resolution. *This* is how we are going to live, in a way that is pleasing to our God. By the way, I had an awesome conversation with David Guzik on Sunday confirming that this is exactly why they built the altar on Ebal and not Gerizim. Altar = Cross.

It is another beautiful evidence of God that if we look back at Deuteronomy 27:4 & 5, it is clear that the Lord knew that the Israelites would need to build the altar on Ebal and not Gerizim, God is never caught off guard!

Note: you and I are no longer enslaved to the law, but when we look back at Deuteronomy 27, it is clear that we are called as Christians to live the *heart of the commandments*. When we look and see that we shall not worship a carved image, it is clear that our hearts are not to love anything more than God. When we see that we shall not take our neighbors wife (or husband) it is a heart issue, the Lord tells us not to lust. It isn't that we are simply set free from obedience to the law, we actually have a greater calling to it.

We are also indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who empowers us to obey and to be holy because He is holy!

Galatians 5:13-18 ¹³***For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*** ¹⁴***For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*** ¹⁵***But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*** ¹⁶***I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*** ¹⁷***For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*** ¹⁸***But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.***

That is the condition. We must be filled with and led by the Spirit to not be subject to the law and we cannot be filled with the Spirit unless we have been forgiven of our sins by Jesus Christ, we must be Christians.

There is a very important distinction here that I have to clarify before we move on. Anyone can say that they are Spirit led, **but if our lives don't reflect the fruit of the**

Spirit than we are NOT living a Spirit led life. Verse 18 of Galatians 5 isn't a get out of jail free card, there is a greater responsibility, a greater accountability for a Spirit led believer in Jesus Christ!

Here is the why of our Scripture in Joshua: Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim presented a very clear picture to the Israelites, if you obey, you won't believe the goodness of the blessings God will heap upon you, if you disobey, you will reap a depth of suffering you cannot imagine. Crystal clear.

God had given the Law through Moses *at Mt. Sinai* (Ex. 19–20), and the people had accepted it and promised to obey. Moses then repeated and explained the Law *on the Plains of Moab* at the border of Canaan. He applied that Law to their lives in the Promised Land and admonished them to obey it. “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God” (Deut. 11:26–28, NIV; note vv. 29–32). Be Strong, Warren Wiersbe

This speaks to my soul because I can wrap my head around it. If you do this, then this happens, cause and effect. I love black and white, I don't do gray well.

Deuteronomy 30:19–20 ¹⁹***I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*** ²⁰***that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land***

which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

Black & white. Got it. I want to choose life and blessing.

Now back in the end of our Scripture:

Joshua 8:34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

ALL the words of the law, there was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read, NOT. A. WORD.

How important was the law? It was the difference between life and death, blessing and cursing.

It is the New Year ladies, maybe it is time for you and me to renew our covenant. Yes, we are under the New Covenant, we are no longer under the law, but are we clinging to Him? Is He our life, the length of our days? Do others know it? At the dry cleaner, the market, the gas station? In our homes, with our spouses or parents, do they know that He is our life?

What about if no one else was around to see or hear you, would you live a life that shows the Lord that He is your life, the length of your days? What is your thought life like? Who are you when no one knows you?

Question: Looking back at 2018 would you have done anything differently to be prepared for all that we went through? Would you have spent more time on your knees in prayer? Would you have spent more time in the Word, fueling up for what God had in store? Honestly, looking back, I can see both, places where I was tanked up and not rocked by circumstances and places where I was depleted, not filled up and shaken by circumstances.

2019 will be packed with so many things, some hard, some absolutely delightful, don't forget, the countdown to Christ's return is in motion. Forget New Year Resolutions, let's start 2019 by renewing our covenant, and filling up our tank minute-by-minute, day-by-day, and show the world who our King is and what He has done for them!