

**Studies in Joshua**  
**“Blessings and Curses”**  
**Joshua 8:30-35**

- **The passage before us in today's study presents one of those rather unusual events in the history of O.T. Israel in which God packaged important truth for His people in all generations to follow.**

**Three reasons why the event  
itself was significant:  
[Waiting, Obeying, and Teaching]**

**I. Waiting:**

- **After the victories at Jericho and Ai, the conventional wisdom of military strategy would have been to immediately proceed west and south to defeat the five remaining Amorite kings. However, instead of doing this, Joshua led Israel 25 miles north to the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.**

# Mount Ebal



Daily Bible Study

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Israel was learning that their success did not depend upon human cleverness and strategy, but upon whether the Lord was with them when they went up against the enemy.

- **Josh. 8:18-19** - *“Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Hold out toward Ai the Javelin that is in your hand, for into your hand I will deliver the city.’ So Joshua held out his javelin toward Ai. As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.”*
- **Josh. 8:26** - *“ Joshua did not draw back the hand that held his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.”*

## II. Obeying

- **Israel's obedience to God's Word, was manifested in a number of ways:**
  - **Israel was present in the land of Canaan because of God's promise to Abraham.**
  - ***“Israel had marched into Canaan led by the written Law of God (Josh. 3:11-17)...”* - A.W. Pink**

– ***“The same Law had been borne around the walls of Jericho (6:4)”***

**Pink**

– ***“... that same Law had now been written on the stones of the altar on Ebal (8:32)”*** **Pink**

– **Joshua read the written Law to all of Israel at this solemn assembly (Josh. 8:34-35).**

**The very convocation in which Israel  
was now involved was a carrying  
out of what the Word of God had  
commanded through Moses**



- **Deut. 27:2-8** - *“When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I commanded you today, and coat them with plaster.”*

- ***Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them. Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God. And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up.”***

**Joshua 8:30-32 is the fulfillment of this command:**

*“Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses - an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings. There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written.”*

Israel's obedience to the Word of God clearly manifested the stark contrast between the God of Israel and the gods of the Canaanites; and the difference between God's people and the Canaanites:

- **A.W. Pink says: “Was not this God's very object in allowing Israel to conquer Canaan: that He should have not only a people in obedience to Him, but a country in which the blessedness of their obedience should be exhibited before the surrounding nations? Beyond question, for Moses declared, ‘I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.”**

**Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people' Deut. 4:5,6; and cf. I Kings 10:8,9. As Jehovah reminded their descendants centuries later, 'Ye are my witnesses' Isaiah 43:10; and cf. Mal.3:12"**

## Note the parallel with this in the New Testament

- Eph. 4:17-20 - *“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts, Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.”*

- **Phil. 2:14b-16a - Paul calls upon Christians to “... *become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life ...*”**

## III. Teaching

- **This convocation at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim is significant because it represents [i.e. “spiritually,” in “types” and “shadows”] some important foundational truths for all times!**
- **An important principle is taught here:**
  - **The foundational basis for salvation is grace, but grace reigns through righteousness!**
    - **Romans 5:17**
    - **Romans 5:21**
    - **Jude 4**
    - **Titus 2:11-14**



## Note how this is taught in our text in Joshua chapter 8

- Josh. 8:34 - ***“Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law - the blessings and the curses - just as it is written in the book of the law.”***

- **Dr. James Boice said:** *“It is agreed among most students of the Old Testament that the heart of the Old Testament law is Deuteronomy and that the heart of Deuteronomy is the list of blessings and curses found in Deuteronomy 27-30. Deuteronomy presupposes the unconditional covenant of God with Abraham by which the Jews were chosen to be God’s people. But it moves on from this fixed point to show that the blessing of lack of blessing depends upon obedience.”*

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- **Curses:** Deut. 27:12-16 ff.
  - **Blessings:** Deut. 28: 1-14



## “A Lasting principle”

- Dr. James Boice says the repetition of this passage about the blessings and curses by Moses and then by Joshua, “...suggests that the principle of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience was a lasting principle grounded in the very character of God, to be seen always in his relationships to his people.”

- **“The law being written on the stones denotes the duration of it, which continued not only during the times of the O.T. dispensation, and to the times of John, and had its fulfillment in Christ, but still continues ... Nor is it made void by any doctrine of the Gospel, ... nothing more strongly enforces obedience to it than the Gospel . the moral law is immutable, invariable, and eternal in its nature.” - John Gill**

- **“We only deceive ourselves if we suppose that our praise unto God is sincere for the gift of His Son, unless we also delight in His Law and serve the same (Romans 7:22, 25). God will not be bribed by the worship of rebels (see I Samuel 15:22; Psalm 106:12, 13).” - A.W. Pink**

## IV. Other important truths taught in this passage

- James Boice also notes three important truths suggested by the building of an altar on Mt. Ebal as a part of this convocation.
  - “... the altar was ... constructed as a solution to the problem of those who should hear the law but who had not kept it. That is to say, it was God’s solution to the sin problem.”



- The altar was constructed by Joshua, not on Mt Gerizim, but upon Mt. Ebal! Ebal was the Mountain from which the curses were read! Deut. 27:12-13 cf. Gal. 3:13
- “...the altar constructed on Mount Ebal was to be constructed of natural stones with no human workmanship added to them.”

# **“Rock of Ages”**

***“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
Naked come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.  
Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.”***

