



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 7

Ultimate Loyalty: Worship in a War Zone

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

What do you think of the title? Does it have any application to all of humanity, to you and me today? Is not the entire world in a war zone, a spiritual war between good and evil?

One of my favorite verses:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

We live in a war zone battling for hearts and minds and Satan seeks to destroy the hearts, minds, souls of people not merely their bodies. Remember what Jesus said,

- Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Matthew 10:28 NIV84

While no one wants to suffer physically, or die physically, should our ultimate concern be over mortal life?

And while we want to do everything to oppose evil, abuse, destruction, physical wars and killing—we at the same time don't want to fall into the trap that the ends justify the means, that we prioritize this world over loyalty to God, that we prioritize temporary mortal life over eternal life.

The apostolic church did not go down the path that the religious Jews did, that of perpetually going to physical war with Rome. They instead went to spiritual war and fought against lies fear, selfishness, with truth, love, and freedom. And they fought focused on the eternal, built upon trust established in truth, with lives that were reborn

by the indwelling Holy Spirit, they lived with integrity, praying for and forgiving their persecutors, dying as martyrs in the arenas of Rome and they were effective in cutting through the fear and selfishness reaching the captives of Satan and through their witness people were freed from fear and selfishness and reborn into the kingdom of heaven.

What is our role as Christians today to fight evil? What methods do we employ? When do we use physical force if ever? When do we surrender and pray for our persecutors?

Physical force to restrain and discipline, to put people in time out, to provide opportunity for people to sit, detox their brains, reflect—it would be beneficial to also provide people with spiritual food, which prison ministries do, to give them opportunity to heal, mature, be reborn.

But might and power cannot instill love, trust, loyalty, friendship, devotion and using might and power to punish people who do not love or trust you will only solidify that person in rebellion against you. It is one of Satan's most cruel lies that Christianity has been duped into teaching, that God wants out love but if we don't love Him then He will use His infinite divine power to torture us and kill us.

SUNDAY

Read Joshua 5:1-7:

- Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites. At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth. Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt. All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not. The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua

circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. Joshua 5:1-7 NIV84.

Remember these stories record not only real historical people who did real historical things, but they also serve as an object lesson for us.

- The Hebrew slaves in Egypt who left in the Exodus were born into slavery, and they represent human beings who since Adam's fall have been born slaves to sin on this earth (Psalm 51:5).
- Pharaoh who does not know God represents Satan the cruel slave master
- Moses represents Jesus who went into enemy territory, confronts the slave master, destroys his power, and frees the slaves.
- The pillar of fire and cloud represents God who leads the people, and is representative of the Holy Spirit with the two streams of fire empowering and leading the church
- Going through the Red Sea represents baptism, dying to the old life of fear and selfishness, being washed by the Holy Spirit and reborn with a spirit of love and trust.
- Pharaoh and his army being destroyed in the sea, when God let's go and stops using power to hold back the waters, represents the final end of Satan and his forces when God no longer restrains or holds back His power, when He stops veiling His life-giving glory and lets it wash over the earth again. Pharaoh and his army put themselves in the position where the waters drowned them. Satan and his army put themselves in the position where they reap natural consequences of sin when God no longer uses His power to shield them from it. As Paul wrote in Galatians, "Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction" Galatians 6:8.
- As the Hebrews cross the Jordan to conquer the promised land, they circumcise the uncircumcised members before they can be successful—why? What does this represent? What is the object lesson?
- A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Romans 2:28-29 NIV84.

What is circumcision of the heart and is it important in our current day warfare? Must we, our generation, experience this before we can succeed in this final end time warfare with Satanic forces on our way to our promised land?

Circumcision of the heart is the cutting away from our hearts, our affections, anything that is foundationally, functionally, operationally existing and interfering with our connection to God.

God is the source of life—anything that gets between us and God disrupts that connection and interferes with God’s presence in our lives, interferes with His love, interferes with our ability to hear His voice, interferes with our ability to live in harmony with His designs for life.

As a metaphor, consider the fuel line on your car, anything that plugs up or gets in that line reduces the flow of fuel and eventually will cause the car to stop functioning. Or consider a fetus and the umbilical cord, anything that interferes with the umbilical cord, kinking it, reducing its connection and the flow of blood will undermine the health, growth, vitality of the fetus, ultimately if obstructed sufficiently enough causing death of the fetus.

We are all created beings who do not have life original, unborrowed, underived, we are not immortal beings who can live independently from God. We are creatures whose life originates in God and is sustained by God. Anything that interferes with that connection reduces God’s presence in our lives, causes us to get sicker, weaker, decaying, and eventually when cut completely we will die, not just physically, but eternally.

Because of Adam’s sin, we are born with our spirits, the animating life energy, the breath of life breathed into Adam, contaminated with fear and selfishness. We come into the world seeking to find things to comfort ourselves, to get for self, to make self feel better. We come into the world afraid and distrusting and we form all kinds of attachments, coping skills, belief systems, to make ourselves feel safe, secure, good—and every single one of those things that stands between our souls and God, everything that we prioritized above God, must be cut away and put in its proper place so our life is founded on God and God alone. We are to first love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and then love others as ourselves.

If we don’t do this, then when what we value above God—not cognitively, we would never say we value something above God, but functionally—is threatened we are vulnerable to be overcome by fear and justify the methods of Satan to protect ourselves or others.

Ultimately, this circumcision of heart is only possible when we are reborn with a new life, a new Spirit, the life/Spirit of Jesus.

Read third paragraph,

- Our covenant with God should always be an answer of gratitude for what He has already accomplished for us, never an act of trying to obtain some benefit by legalistic conformity to His requirements. (This same concept, no doubt, was crucial to Paul's struggles with those who insisted that Gentile male converts be circumcised, as seen most clearly in his letter to the Galatians.) *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 57.

Do you agree? This so well said, and we of course agree, but can gratitude be instilled through imposed law and law enforcement? Not at all, only by design law is this achieved. When a child has parental rules imposed and discipline applied, the gratitude comes when they grow up enough to look back and recognize that the parents and their rules were never against them, the parental rules were not the basis of reality, they were artificial guardrails added in love to protect the ignorant and immature child from injuring themselves when breaking the design laws reality is built upon. But if the child never learns this and leaves the home thinking there is no reason for the rules, only authority to force compliance, typically gratitude is not generated, instead rebellion is.

And that is what penal legal theologies do, they teach that the ultimate problem with sin is not design law natural consequences that cause death, and God, in love, added artificial rules/laws to protect us until we grow up, but instead the penal legal system of theology teaches the lie that sin doesn't harm the sinner, God harms the sinner for breaking His rules, that God must use His power to torture and kill lest there is no justice, and this lie leads to rebellion against God, either in outright denial and rejection of God, or in rebelling against His character, methods, and government through surrender, conformity, and mindless following which destroys the image of God in people.

Is gratitude the same as love? No, but I think the legal model does have a way that could instill gratitude but still obstruct love.

For instance, if we were in legal trouble and God is required by law to use His power to kill us, but instead Jesus came and took our legal guilt upon Himself and God executed Him in our place and God, now offers us legal pardon because our penalty was legally

paid by Jesus, and if we accept it God won't torture and kill us, but if we refuse to accept Jesus's legal payment, then God will still be legally bound to torture and kill us in order to uphold his law, government, and justice—if this were true, would you be grateful that God provided Jesus to pay your penalty?

It would be like the child of an abusive parent who had a sibling who sibling that would step in and take the beating for them, they would have gratitude to the sibling taking the beating, but certainly wouldn't love and trust the parent.

So for some, the legal model may indeed inspire gratitude, but it really does not lead to genuine love and trust of the Father, that is why those who cling to it teach theologies that function to hide them and protect them from the Father, and many continue to live in fear—fear of a sin not being confessed, fear of the judgment, fear of being in God's presence without an intercessor, fear of committing a sin and getting hit by a truck and dying before one had time to confess and get it legally pardoned; and some create theologies to protect them from this fear, such as once saved always saved, the root to this teaching is fear of the Father while trusting in the legal payment made by Jesus.

So the legal model can lead to gratitude, and there is a place in our development for this thinking. Children, need rules, with external enforcement from parents, but only until they grow up, and when they grow up they don't need rules to brush their teeth or not play in the street, because they understand reality, design law, and choose to live in harmony with God's design laws. But in my experience, if people don't leave the legal way of thinking behind and mature to worship God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then instead of growing in love, they grow in fear and doubt, and become more hard-hearted, controlling of others, become intolerant—just like the legalistic Pharisees who crucified Christ.

What leads to genuine love is truth, the truth of who God is, the truth of how much God sacrificed and accomplished for us, the truth of why God had to do this, why Christ's death was necessary, the truth of the freedom we have in God's kingdom, the truth that God is the source of life and not the source of death, the truth that sin severs our connection with God and causes death. The truth that we are all born terminal and Jesus came and voluntarily took this terminal condition upon Himself and suffered the agony, torture, of heart and mind that sin causes, beyond any we could experience, that this suffering was not naturally His own but He took this position for the purpose of eliminating sin, of purging the infection of fear and selfishness, of destroying the carnal nature, of eradicating from humanity the spirit of fear and selfishness and replacing it

with His sinless holy spirit, the spirit of perfect love and trust. And thus we, when we are won to trust by the truth, open our hearts and become partakers of the divine nature, it is no longer our old fear-based self-centered spirit animating us, but the spirit of Christ living in us and we live to love God and others. We are reborn with a new life, a new breath of life, the life of Christ that He gives us freely and it is only possible because Jesus joined His divinity with our humanity and became a real human being descended from Adam.

Jesus took upon Himself the very life that was given to Adam and passed down to all of us, the life that Adam corrupted with fear and selfishness, but Jesus' humanity was also animated, brought to life, by the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary and impregnated her with Jesus. And Jesus then lived a sinless life and at Gethsemane and the Cross destroyed, purged, killed, the life inherited from Adam and rose again in a humanity animated only by His Holy Spirit of perfect love and trust. And He offers that life to us, we can receive that life through faith. This is not a legal adjustment in books, it is a reality, a real-world, internal power that indwells you through the quantum links that God built into all reality. We live new lives, the life of Christ.

This is love, this is gratitude on an entire different level. This is transformation, this is freedom from fear, guilt, shame. This is the gospel, the true message to go to the world. This is righteousness by faith, we become the righteousness of God.

The lesson calls our attention to Matthew 6:33, the context is Jesus telling people not to worry about what they will eat, drink, wear for the Father knows you need this, and then in verses 33 and 34 says:

- But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:33-34 NIV84.

What does this text mean to you?

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first?

Is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness the same thing as:

- claiming the blood of Jesus as your legal payment for your sins?

- joining the right denomination?
- doing various forms of church ministry?

What is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

What do you think of this historical quote, does it provide any insights applicable to our seeking God's kingdom first?

- Christ calls upon the members of His church to cherish the true, genuine hope of the gospel. He points them upward, distinctly assuring them that the riches that endure are above, not below. Their hope is in heaven, not on the earth. **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,”** He says; “and all these things”—**all that is essential for your good**—“shall be added unto you.” *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 218, emphasis mine.

With many, **the things of this world obscure the glorious view** of the eternal weight of glory that awaits the saints of the Most High. They **cannot distinguish the true, the real, the enduring substance, from the false, the counterfeit, the passing shadow**. Christ urges them to remove from before their eyes that which is obscuring their view of eternal realities. He insists upon the removal of that which is causing them to **mistake phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms**. God entreats His people to give the strength of body, mind, and soul to the service that He expects them to perform. **He calls upon them to be able to say for themselves** that the gains and advantages of this life are not worthy to be compared with the riches that are reserved for the diligent, rational seeker for eternal life. *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 218, emphasis mine.

What is being described? Is this accurate or missing the point of Jesus' message?

What does it mean that Jesus calls upon people to be able to say for themselves that the gains of this life are not worthy to compare to heaven?

This is the principle of freedom, of liberty, that God's government operates upon and Paul wrote about in Romans 14:5:

- One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. Romans 14:5 NKJV.

This is how we are saved, healed, transformed. God has the power to reach into any person's heart and mind and make changes—but if He did that without that person's agreement, choice, consent, God would erase that person, destroy their mind, turn them into a robot, or replace them with another individuality. God cannot save you or me without each one of us being persuaded in our own mind to agree, to say yes, to trust, and then point by point, choose what we will cling to, hold to, cherish, value, esteem, prefer, in our own hearts and minds.

The Holy Spirit brings truth to our hearts and minds in ways we can comprehend with conviction and then leaves us free to choose what we will do, what we prefer, not merely what we cognitively agree with, but what we will choose to apply to our lives. And when we, in heart say yes, choose to apply it to our lives, then the Holy Spirit provides power to succeed and we are transformed.

And this is often painful, this is why we rejoice in our trials because those trials bring us to decision points where we identify and choose the things of God and let go the comforts, securities, values, attachments of this world. But often this is painful, but with each and every choice for God we are transformed and mature.

What of Jesus words not to worry about the future—how do we apply that? Do we find that the devil tempts people to live in fear of the future?

What do you think about the commentary saying:

- He [Jesus] insists upon the removal of that which is causing them to **mistake phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms.**

What does Christ insisting mean? Is it a rule and if you don't you get into legal trouble for not doing what God insists? Or is it like a doctor who insists that if you are to get healthy you must stop smoking?

What are phantoms? Any examples in society today of people mistaking phantoms for reality and realities for phantoms?

- No male or female
- Climate change is going to end the world

- More laws passed by government will fix societies problems (for instance passing more gun control laws will resolve violence in society)—is the problem of violence because of guns, or because of lack of Christ in hearts and minds?
- In the church, the fantasy God's law and government function like human law and government and that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death

How might Satan trick people into believing that imposed law and law enforcement is the way to justice, to righteousness?

By using those on his team who are not converted to undermine the guardrails of society, the imposed laws and their proper restraining enforcement, which will result in greater anarchy, chaos, abuse, crime, higher prices, injustice, fear, distress, ultimately leading to a backlash of greater imposed law and law enforcement which does results in reduced crime, safer streets, less violence in communities, and this leads people to conclude that law and law enforcement is the way to justice.

But God's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Safety in heaven is not established by a heavenly police force, angels with flaming swords on every corner and the best surveillance system in existence. No, heaven will be safe not because of imposed law and law enforcement but because God's design law of love, truth, freedom and trust is written upon the hearts of every person and every being there is completely trustworthy.

This is the reality of the gospel, the good news about God. That He is not the kind of being Satan alleges. God is Creator and His laws are the design laws reality is built upon and harmony with Him and His design laws are the basis of life, health, and happiness. Satan is a creature, he cannot build reality so he must govern by made up rules enforced through punishment.

When we teach God governs by made up rules enforced through punishment we are replacing the truth about God with Satan's lie and leading people away from love and trust and into a system of fear and insecurity, which will fuel the rise of the beastly system of Revelation—seeking law, order, and justice.

This is why the final message that prepares people for the second coming is a call to return to worshiping God as Creator, and that requires we recognize His laws are design laws.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Joshua 8:30–35 plays a significant role in shaping the whole theological message of the book. By linking one of the most gruesome, violent stories (war) to something totally different—a scene of covenant reaffirmation (worship)—Joshua takes us back to one of the most important theological themes launched in the book at the outset: Joshua has the mandate of leading Israel to a life of covenantal obedience (Josh. 1:7). This is also the picture of Joshua at the end of the book (Joshua 24). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 59.

What is covenantal obedience?

Read the third paragraph,

- Notwithstanding the importance of warfare and the conquest, there is something even more vital: **loyalty to the requirements of God's law**. The conquest is only one step in the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel and the restoration of all humanity. **Faithfulness to the precepts of the Torah constitutes the ultimate question in the destiny of humanity**. Joshua writes the copy of the law on large, whitewashed stones, different from the stones of the altar (compare with Deut. 27:2–8). Thus, the stones, which probably contained the Ten Commandments, formed a separate monument in the vicinity of the altar, constantly reminding the Israelites of the privileges and duties implied in the covenant. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 59.

What do you hear as the message in this paragraph?

Does how one understands God's law functions impact how one understands God's requirements, what faithfulness to God's law is?

The lesson references Joshua 1:7 which reads,

- Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Joshua 1:7.

Consider, if we could stand at the foot of the cross, and talk to Caiaphas and the other Jewish religious leaders who crucified Christ, what do you think their answers would be to these questions:

- Is it important to have covenantal obedience to God?
- Is it important that we obey God's law?
- Would it be important to obey the law God's servant Moses gave us?

And if we asked them, "Why are you crucifying this fellow?" Wouldn't they answer, "Well you just said it yourself, we must be obedient to the covenant, we must obey God's law, we must obey the laws God gave us through Moses and this fellow keeps breaking them. Moses said to stone the adulterer, but this man forgave her. Moses said we could divorce our wives, but this man said we should not. Moses taught us not to work on the Sabbath, but this man heals on the Sabbath, His disciples pick grain on the Sabbath. Moses taught us to wash in a certain way before eating, but this man doesn't direct His disciples to do so. Moses taught us that laws must be enforced and that the evil must be purged from the community and that is what we are doing because we are children of both Abraham and God and we are faithful and obedient to the covenant."

Is the lesson suggesting that covenantal obedience is legal obedience, rule keeping, rule enforcement? Isn't that the type of obedience the Jewish leadership was giving 2000 years ago and it made them an enemy of God?

Paul takes up this entire misdirected legal focus to obedience in Romans and contrasts the obedience that comes from law with the obedience that comes from faith or trust and starts out the book in Romans 1:7 with:

- Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.
Romans 1:7 NIV84

Paul then tells us in Romans 1:20 that God's divine nature is seen from what He has made so that men are without excuse. Paul is telling us that God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality, built upon design laws that govern the operations of nature, the nature that the Creator built, and not upon made up legal rules. He goes on to say,

- All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. [Here he is referencing the written law, the Torah, the law of Moses. And he goes on to describe that righteousness is not from this type of imposed law keeping.] For it is not those who hear the

law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves**, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the **requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) Romans 2:12-15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is he saying? That the design laws of God are built into the operations of reality, and if no one ever teaches you about them in school, if you never read about them in a book, but you recognize them in nature and live in harmony with them because you value them and choose them, then the design laws of God become part of your being, your mind, your heart, and that is the new covenant experience, returning God's design law for life into the operations of our hearts and minds. And this cannot be done through external legal means.

Notice what Paul writes next,

- Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Romans 2:17-24 NIV84.

This is analogous to saying to doctors: you who call yourself healthcare leaders and rely on the knowledge in your medical textbooks and brag that you are more educated and know about medicine and health because you went to med school and got educated in medicine; if you are convinced in your own mind that you are a guide to the sick, a teacher to the infirmed, because you have the medical text book, why don't you teach yourselves how do live healthy? Why don't you stop smoking? Why don't you stop drinking? Why don't you get 8 hours of sleep per night? You who abhor sickness in others, who brag about your medical expertise, why do you dishonor God by breaking

his laws of health in how you live? As it is written God is misrepresented among people because of you.”

After Paul chastises them for having a legal rule oriented approach to religion while they live in violation of God’s design laws. He then writes:

- In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God’s law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God’s law but don’t obey it. Romans 2:27 NLT.

Paul is saying, in fact those who have never been to medical school but who live in harmony with God’s laws of health will condemn you doctors who have the medical text but break the laws of health.

Then Paul goes on to write how circumcision is not legal, behavioral, external, but circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, which is reality, cutting away the spirit of fear and selfishness and establishing our identity upon God’s Holy Spirit and life of Christ of love and trust. Being restored into harmony with God’s design laws.

Paul continues to make his case that imposed law, legal religion, external performance has no saving power, it is the reality of Jesus restoring His living law of love into humanity that matters. We read in chapter 3:

- But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God’s character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also

be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 REM.

And we will skip all the way down to Romans 14, where Paul writes:

- “Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84.

And this is the issue, has the heart been transformed from distrust, fear, and selfishness to truth, love, and selflessness? This is the question and this cannot be accomplished by imposed law and law enforcement, only truth, love, and freedom to win us to trust and then recreate us in righteousness.

So real obedience is the obedience that springs from love and trust in God and stems from a heart that has been reborn and is motivated by the Spirit of Christ.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Mount Ebal is mentioned only in Deuteronomy (Deut. 11:29; Deut. 27:4, 13) and in the book of Joshua (Josh. 8:30, 33). Along with Gerizim, it was the site where the blessings and curses of the covenant were to be recited. More specifically, according to Deuteronomy 11:29 and Deuteronomy 27:4, 13, it had to be the site of the curses. Here the Israelites were to stand on either side of the ark in the presence of the priests (Josh. 8:33). One group stood in front of Mount Ebal, the other in front of Mount Gerizim. Here they symbolically enacted the two possible ways of relating to the covenant. The sacrifices that were brought there pointed to Jesus, who took upon Himself all the curses of the covenant so that all who believe in Him might enjoy its blessings (Gal. 3:13, 2 Cor. 5:21). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 60.

The lesson points us to an interesting object lesson enacted by the Jews, instructed by Moses and carried out by Joshua when they entered the promised land. And I was not familiar with this particular series of events and found it fascinating to dig into.

- When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are to possess, you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Deuteronomy 11:29 NET.

Mount Gerizim is the mountain where Abraham camped and built his first altar in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). Jacob settled at Shechem, nearby, and dug a well from which Jesus later requested a drink from the Samaritan woman (Genesis 33:18-20; John 4:5-7).

Mount Gerizim was fertile and Ebal was more barren; and Gerizim represented life, harmony with God, whereas Ebal death, disconnection from God.

As they enter the land the 12 tribes split, six descended from Rachel and Leah assembled before Gerizim and the four tribes descended from the handmaidens plus Leah's youngest Zebulun and Reuben who betrayed Jacob by sleeping with his handmaiden, assembled in front of Ebal.

The priests with the ark of the covenant stood between the two mountains. Joshua erected an altar on Ebal and made sacrifices along with the monument that posted the law along with the blessings and cursings.

What does all of this represent?

Blessings, life, health, come from living in harmony with God's design laws for life. We cannot experience health while violating the laws of health. Conversely, we cannot avoid healthy results from harmonizing with them. God's laws are the laws the Creator has built reality and life to operate upon. Break them and we injure ourselves and experience the curse of sickness, disease, decay, and death. This is the curse all humanity is suffering under because of Adam's sin, because Adam broke God's design law for life and corrupted himself with fear and selfishness.

Every human being since Adam, is born infected with sin, with a spirit of fear and selfishness and is dead in trespass and sin (Psalm 51:5). We are born with a terminal sin condition that we did not choose and which we are not guilty for, but that condition, without remedy will still cause us suffering and death. This is just like a child born HIV infected the child did nothing wrong, but still has a condition that without remedy will cause symptoms and death.

We of ourselves cannot cure, heal, cleanse ourselves; we cannot do any work that will provide us with a new life, a new sinless spirit of love and trust. We cannot save ourselves; we can only be saved from the curse of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus, who took this humanity upon Himself, merged with His sinless life and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a cleansed and purified humanity to become the second Adam, the new head of humanity. Jesus became a real human, partaking of the life descended from Adam, and was really tempted in all ways like us, and really chose with human abilities to say no to every temptation, and really destroyed and purged the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a sinless humanity that He took into heaven and now reigns over God's creation.

Jesus becoming human and giving His life as a voluntary sacrifice in order to save humanity from sin, destroy death and the one who holds its power—that is the devil, and secure the universe unfallen in their loyalty was all symbolized by the altar and sacrifices made by Joshua on Mount Ebal (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 1:20).

Because of Jesus, every human is offered with a free to us (not free to God) remedy. Jesus offers us a new life, a new spirit, we can become partakers of the divine nature and exchange our natural fear-driven terminal life of sin for His sinless life of love and trust and be reborn via the indwelling Holy Spirit. And then, like Paul, we can say it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

We can leave the dead life behind and join Jesus and the living saints, by partaking of Jesus through faith. We can move from our natural terminal sin-sick state to a faith-filled abundant life state of being, which is symbolized by moving from Ebal to Gerizim. And the only way to get from Ebal to Gerizim is by the ark of the covenant, the gospel covenant must be experienced, the sinners must be atoned, must become at-one with God again. And this is only possible by partaking of Christ and being reborn, which united us with Him. And this was all symbolized by the ark of the covenant.

Remember that three objects were placed inside the ark: manna, the Ten Commandments, and Aaron's rod that budded—in that order. And this is symbolic of the covenant and how we participate.

The manna represents the bread that came down from heaven, the living Word of God. Jesus is the Word made flesh, who told us that we must eat His flesh and drink His

blood if we are to be saved (John 6:53). Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. In order from us to leave the barren wasteland of Ebal—this world of sin, we must first partake of the truth embodied, revealed, and fulfilled in Jesus. This truth destroys the lies and wins us to trust.

Then, as we choose to trust and open our hearts to God, the Holy Spirit comes and we receive a new life, the life of Christ, which is the fulfillment of God's living law, symbolized by the placing of the Ten Commandments into the ark. We receive this new life through faith and as the New Covenant tells us God's law is written upon our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). This represents the new sinless life we receive via the indwelling Holy Spirit who enables us to live in harmony with God and His living law of love. This is also symbolically taught in the communion service as partaking of the wine, the bread in the communion service symbolically represents the truth, just as the manna does, and the wine represents the blood of Christ, which represents His sinless life. As Leviticus states, the life is in the blood (vs. 17:11). This is how we move from death (Ebal) to life (Gerizim) by actual, in reality, in fact, receiving the life of Christ via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And then, we who were dead in trespass and sin come to life and bring about the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And this is symbolized by Aaron's dead rod that came to life and budded and produced fruit.

The events recorded in Joshua as the children of Israel entered Canaan, are theater, object lesson, acted out drama depicted the reality of what God has done through Jesus to redeem humanity from sin and instructs us on how we can participate through faith in the free gift of salvation.

God is calling each of us to internalize the truth, open our hearts in trust, receive through faith the indwelling Holy Spirit and be reborn with the life of Christ, as Paul wrote:

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

- The establishment of the sanctuary, “My Tabernacle,” represents the fulfillment of God’s promise to live among His people (Exod. 25:8; Lev. 26:11, 12) and reveals the central theme of the book: God’s presence in the middle of Israel has made possible the possession of the land and is going to be a continual source of blessing for Israel and, through it, to all the earth (Gen. 12:3). The worship of God takes center stage and preeminence, even over conquest and allotment of the land! The presence of the sanctuary, and later the temple, should have always helped the people realize the presence of God among them and their obligations to follow the covenant. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 61.

This sentence is not quite precise in my understanding, “The establishment of the sanctuary, ‘My Tabernacle,’ represents **the fulfillment of God’s promise** to live among His people...”

No, the fulfillment of God’s promise is Jesus who became incarnate and tabernacled among us in the temple of a human body, and said to the leaders that they would destroy His temple but He would raise it back in three days.

The establishment of the sanctuary was not the fulfillment of God’s promise but was an object lesson affirming the promise and teaching of its ultimate fulfillment.

What do you think? Am I misunderstanding, was the sanctuary built by Moses the fulfillment of God’s promise to live among His people, or an object lesson demonstrating the yet to come fulfillment?

Any questions about the object lessons of the sanctuary and their importance to us today?

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Also, through the symbol of the sacrificial lamb, the Feast of Passover pointed back to the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. But it also pointed forward to its antitypical fulfillment in the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36;

1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19), who ransomed us from the bondage of sin. At the Lord's Supper, before offering Himself as the Ultimate Sacrifice, Jesus transformed Passover into a memorial of His death (Matt. 26:26–29, 1 Cor. 11:23–26). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 58.

I like how the lesson said, “ransomed us from the bondage of sin.” Yes, sin holds us in bondage and Jesus ransomed us from it. The ransom is the price necessary to free one from bondage, and the lesson rightly points out that it is sin that we need to be freed from.

All too often, the metaphor of ransom is misplaced, people teach Jesus paid a legal price not to ransom us from sin, but from God, from God's legal justice, to pay the legal penalty to ransom us from God's law. But the lesson got this right, He paid the price to ransom us from sin. As John the Baptist said, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not who takes away the punishment of God for sin.

And what are the root elements of sin that hold us in bondage that Jesus died to free us from? The lies that we believe about God that keep us from trusting Him. Jesus lived, revealed, and provided the truth to destroy the lies and set us free restoring us to trust in God. And this truth is symbolized in the flesh of the Passover Lamb that they ate, and was replaced by Jesus with the bread.

Jesus is the Word made flesh and as we ingest the truth of Jesus we are ingesting the flesh of Jesus, and the truth nurtures our minds and souls and destroys lies ultimately winning us to trust.

But we need something else provided by Jesus to ransom us from sin besides the truth, something else holds us in bondage beyond the lies that undermine trust and that is our own fallen carnal nature, the animating spirit of fear and selfishness that we inherited from Adam and Eve.

Jesus came, partook of that life, but purged the spirit of fear and selfishness and replaced in His humanity His Holy Spirit of love and trust. And when we partake the flesh/bread, the truth, and are won to trust and open the heart then we receive the Holy Spirit who takes the life of Christ and reproduces it in us. It is not longer I that lives but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20). Thus we become partakers of the divine nature. And as Leviticus 17:11 says the life is in the blood, we receive a new life, a new animating energy, spirit, the life of Christ and that is symbolically taught by drinking the wine.

So the Passover is the festival that teaches that when Adam and Eve sinned God passed over their sin. He did not allow them to reap what separation from Him causes, but in Genesis Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. The Seed of the woman is promised to come and crush the serpent but will be bruised in the process. And as we partake of the sacrificial Lamb, partake of the truth, the flesh, the bread we are won to trust and open the heart to receive the life, the blood, of Christ we are reborn and saved from sin.

This is a requirement to salvation. The people participated in the symbolic Passover before going into Canaan and we must participate in the true Passover, be reborn and partake of the life of Christ in order to go into heaven.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Forming a New Come and Reason Distribution Hub in England: If you are interested in connecting with our team in England you can contact Michael Dragoyvich and his wife Billie Jordan at UK@comeandreason.com