

Monday - Week Fifteen

Lesson Forty-two: "The Lord gave them rest"

Read: Joshua 22-24

Summary: Joshua was a faithful leader even at the very end of his life. He encouraged and warned the Israelites before he died.

Background and Comments

- The men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh returned to their families on the other side of the Jordan after they had helped the other tribes conquer Canaan. They build an altar to commemorate the fact that they were connected to the rest of the Israelites in Canaan (these three tribes had decided to live on the other side of the Jordan river). The other nine tribes thought that they had build the altar as a rival worship site to the one God told them to set up in Shiloh; the nine tribes even prepared to go to war with them! Obviously it's better to get the correct information before we get upset about a situation.

Lessons for Today

- Joshua was a living history book for the Israelites. He had lived through the years of persecution in Egypt, the 10 plagues, the miraculous exodus from Egypt, the golden calf incident, the 40 years of wandering in the desert and the conquest of Canaan. When he died so did the last eyewitness account of many of these events. Do you spend time with the older members of your congregation? Not only are these mature Christians quite wise, they are treasure troves of history for your congregation. What an opportunity for exciting "research"!
- Joshua's two farewell addresses reminded the Israelites that it was God who had fought for them and it would be God who would bless them in Canaan. Therefore obedience toward God was of the utmost importance. How can you apply that in your own life?
- Joshua 24:15 states: *But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.* A Christian family can be a strong witness for the Lord. Do other people point to your family and say, "That household serves the Lord"?

Read: Psalm 71; 1 Corinthians 12.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, make the families in our congregation shining examples of Your love in action. Remind the older people in our congregation that they are valuable members of our church family. Help us to respect and learn from them. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Fifteen

Lesson Forty-three: The Era of the Judges

Read: Judges 1-3

Summary: The period of the judges shows us just how sinful people are and just how forgiving God is. The same cycles happened again and again today.

Background and Comments

- This cycle was repeated again and again in this period of time:
 1. Rebellion
 2. Repression (God sent a warring nation to wake the Israelites up)
 3. Repentance (The Israelites saw their sin)
 4. Rescue (God provided a judge to lead them against their enemies)
- The term “judge” as it is used in this lesson is a bit different than our modern day use of the word. These judges were champions God raised up to deliver His people from their enemies. They usually became leaders of one or more of the tribes.
- The first mistake the Israelites made was to quit the war against the Canaanites. God had clearly told them to put all of the Canaanites out of the land. Yet the Israelites did not obey. These remaining Canaanites became one of the reasons the Israelites began worshiping false gods.
- Ehud rescued Israel by killing the king of Moab. Was this cold blooded murder? No, there was a state of war existing between the two countries.

Lessons for Today

- Can you see the cycle of rebellion, repression, repentance and rescue in your life?
- The Israelites got in trouble because they did not finish the job of expelling the Canaanites. Are their spiritual matters that you haven’t “finished”?
- Moab collapsed when their leader died. Leaders are very important. Have you encouraged your pastor and the other leaders of your congregation lately?

Read: Psalm 72; 1 Corinthians 13.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, when I begin to stray from Your will for my life please “wake me up” with whatever means are necessary. Send people into my life who can help steer me in the right direction. I thank You for Your dedicated love for me. In Jesus’ name I pray; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Fifteen

Catechism Review

Read Questions 99-107

1. Sometimes we think that our possessions have nothing to do with our spiritual life. Why is that all wrong?

2. How would you respond: "I can spend my money however I want. I'm the one who earned it so I'm the one who can decide how to spend it."

3. Is gambling sinful? (Questions 103 and 104)

4. God tells us to give regular, planned gifts to Him. Why is it important to plan (for example - to plan to give a certain percentage of our income to the Lord) our gifts to the Lord? Why is it important to give regularly?

5. How can you help your employer?

Read: Psalm 73; 1 Corinthians 14.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You have given me an incredible number of spiritual blessings. If that were the extent of Your blessings You would be generous. You are more than generous though - You have given me physical blessings ... so many that by this world's standards I am rich. Thank You, Lord. Never let these blessings hurt my relationship with You. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Thursday - Week Fifteen

Lesson forty-four: Gideon - Valiant warrior

Read: Judges 6-8

Summary: God used Gideon to free His people from the bondage of the Midianites. God's power and love take center stage in this account.

Background and Comments

- When the angel appeared to Gideon he called him a "mighty warrior". As we study these chapters we see that by himself Gideon was anything but a mighty warrior. That is the way God operates; He sees what He will be able to make of people instead of what they are by themselves.
- The Israelites had nearly fallen into complete unbelief. They wanted to kill Gideon because he had destroyed an idol! Are there signs that America has nearly fallen into complete unbelief?
- The Israelites began falling away as soon as Gideon died. Obviously they were concentrating too much on God's leader and not enough on God!

Lessons for Today

- Gideon was a humble believer whose faith needed to be strengthened. Each time Gideon asked for signs God graciously granted his request. We might ask, "Why don't we receive signs today?" While it's true that God does not usually burn things up before our eyes it's not exactly true that God does not give us any signs of His love. The fact that we have enough food and clothing, a roof over our head and a free country are certainly examples and proofs of God's love for us.
- Can you imagine what "nervous" Gideon must have thought when God told him that he had too many men in his army? Gideon ended up with 300 men to attack the huge army of the Midianites! Have you and God ever gone into a battle horribly "outnumbered"?
- Gideon made an ephod (a holy garment used by priests) with some of the gold they took from the Midianites. This ephod became a snare to Gideon and his family. Even faithful Gideon contributed to idolatry! Christian leaders are very important ... but we dare never follow them without making sure that they are making Godly decisions!

Read: Psalm 74; 1 Corinthians 15.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, give our congregation us good leaders. Remind our leaders that they represent You. Let everything they do and say reflect that truth. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Friday - Week Fifteen

Life Questions

Topic/Question: Should I (or my kids) listen to rock music? What does God say about our choice of music?

Bible References and Considerations

- St. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things.* Paul knew that if we think about ungodly things they will take root in our hearts and affect our lives. If the lyrics of songs (whether that music is country music, "Christian" music or rock music) contains thoughts that conflict with God's Word we need to ask ourselves why we are listening to them. God wants us to think about things that are pure, excellent, praiseworthy, etc.
- Parents who complain about rock music (often for good reason) need to examine their own lives. Are the movies and TV shows that they watch any better than some rock music songs? If we don't want our children to listen to music that promotes premarital sex and violence we need to stay away from TV shows that promote the same ungodly activities. We need to remember that we teach by example.

Practically Speaking

- Some people argue that rock music is sinful simply because of the style of the music. Yet that has probably been said of every development in music. The big band era music was no doubt shocking to people who didn't grow up with it. We need to be careful that we don't label music without examining it carefully.
- Too often parents are not involved enough in their children's lives. They need to listen to their music, watch their TV shows and play their computer games (hopefully along with their young person). When that happens parents can teach their children how to hold on to the good and throw out the bad.

Read: Psalm 75; 1 Corinthians 16.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, guide all of us to make good decisions about the music we listen to, the TV shows we watch and the other entertainment we experience. We ask this in Jesus' name; Amen.