

Loyalty to God: Worship in a War Zone



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 5:1–7; Joshua 5:10; Joshua 8:30, 31; Joshua 8:32–35; Joshua 18:1, 2.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But put [make] God’s kingdom first [#1 in your life]. Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you’ ” (Matthew 6:33, NIV).



Joshua built an altar and worshiped the Lord while Israel was in a time of war (Joshua 8:30–35).

THIS WEEK, we will look at some stories about Israel in the Promised Land. In each of these stories, Israel promised to serve God again. Many of these stories happened when Israel was in danger. In one story, Joshua commanded all Israelite men to do a special religious act before they went to war. This act was a symbol of Israel’s loyalty to God. The Israelites did this religious act when they were in the land of the enemy (Joshua 5:1–9). In another story, the Israelites celebrated the Passover at a time when they were in danger (Joshua 5:10–12). The Passover was a celebration of the time when God helped Israel escape slavery in Egypt. Joshua also built an altar and worshiped the Lord while Israel was in a time of war (Joshua 8:30–35). Later, Joshua divided the land and gave it to the seven family groups in Israel who had no land (Joshua 18:1, 2). But Joshua set up the Lord’s holy tent first.

As we can see, Joshua made time for the Lord when he was busy or even in times of danger. Today, we often don’t make time for the Lord in our busy lives. We don’t remember to thank Him for everything He does for us. We forget to worship Him with our families each day. But deep in our hearts, we know that the time we spend with God and our loved ones is the best use of our limited time on earth.

MAKE GOD #1 (Joshua 5:1–7)

Read the story in Joshua 5:1–7. Why did the Lord command Joshua to circumcise the Israelites at this time? To circumcise means to cut off the skin from the tip of the male sex part.

The spies explored the land and gave Joshua an encouraging report. So, we'd expect the Israelites to fight right away. But Israel's promise with God is more important than their winning the land.

Before the Israelites can fight for the land, they must make new again their relationship with the Owner of the land. The Owner is the Lord. Also, the Israelites are thankful to God for helping them cross the Jordan River. Our relationship with God should always come from our thankfulness for everything He does for us. We shouldn't try to earn His blessing with our good behavior.

Israel was about to fight an important battle. So, we would expect the whole camp to be busy getting ready for war. And they were getting ready. But not in the way we would expect. They weren't sharpening their swords or getting their horses ready. The men got circumcised. Most of the army was weak for at least three days while they healed.

The Israelites got circumcised because they wanted to celebrate their relationship with God. The people understood that the Lord was in charge of the war. God helped them win. He gave them success. That's why Jesus said, " 'But put [make] God's kingdom first [#1 in your life]. Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you' " (Matthew 6:33, NIV). Most of the time, everyday life fills our days with so many important things. So, it's easy for us to forget about Jesus. The most important thing we can do to remember Him is to make our relationship with Him new every day.

Think about the times you didn't spend time with God because you were so busy. Why is it so easy to do that? How can we fight against it?



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PASSOVER (Joshua 5:10)

The Passover was a celebration of the time when God saved Israel from the destroying angel in Egypt. Why did Joshua decide to celebrate the Passover before He went to war? Read Joshua 5:10; Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16; and Deuteronomy 16:4, 6 for the answer.

The Passover happens in the evening on the 14th day of the month. Joshua follows everything God says to do to get ready to celebrate it. The things that happen in the book of Joshua match those things that happened when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. Passover helps the Israelites remember the night of the 10th punishment (Exodus 12). During that punishment, the angel of the Lord killed all males in Egypt who were born first. But God didn't kill the Israelites who put the lamb's blood on the top and sides of their doors. Then the Lord helped His people escape from Egypt. Israel crossed the Red Sea and journeyed in the desert.

Compare the Israelites in the book of Exodus with the Israelites in the book of Joshua. In Joshua, the Israelites start in the desert. They cross the Jordan River. The Israelite males are circumcised. As we already saw, circumcised means to cut off the skin from the tip of the male sex parts. Then the Israelites celebrate the Passover. After the Passover, the Lord works a miracle. He beats the Canaanites, the same as He beat the Egyptians at the Red Sea. So, the Passover celebration in the book of Joshua is the beginning of a new time in Israel's history.

The Passover lamb was a symbol. The lamb showed that God saved Israel from slavery. The lamb also was a symbol for the Lamb of God, Jesus (John 1:29, 36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19). Jesus saved us from being slaves to sin. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus made the Passover meal a celebration of His death (Matthew 26:26–29; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Both Passover and the Lord's Supper celebrate another Bible truth: in the future, God will save His people and lead them to heaven. John talks about the special group of 144,000 saved people. The 144,000 walk on the sea of glass in front of God's throne (Revelation 4:6; Revelation 7:9, 10). In the same way, the Israelites walked on dry land across the Red Sea and the Jordan River. In heaven, we will celebrate the Lord's Supper during the marriage feast of the Lamb (Matthew 26:29; Revelation 19:9).



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**ALTARS: SYMBOLS OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP
(Joshua 8:30, 31)**

What was Joshua's reason for building an altar to the Lord? Read Joshua 8:30, 31; compare with Deuteronomy 11:26–30; and Deuteronomy 27:2–10.

God told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to build altars in the land He promised them. The altars showed that the land belonged to them. Now, the Israelites built an altar to show that God kept His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God gave their future children the land of Canaan. The Israelites built the altar, just as Moses told them to do (Deuteronomy 11:26–30; Deuteronomy 27:2–10).

Joshua 8:30–35 connects the story about war with worship. In these verses, the Israelites make their relationship with God new again. This idea is one of the most important topics in the book of Joshua. Obedience was part of the things the Israelites did to make their relationship with God new again. God commanded Joshua to lead Israel to live in obedience (Joshua 1:7). The Israelites' obedience was also part of their promise with God. We see this idea at the end of the book (Joshua 24).

Israel's wars to win the Promised Land are part of God's plan for Israel. But the people's loyalty to God's law is even more important than the wars they must fight. God's plan for Israel includes the whole human family. God's plan is to save everyone who will accept Him. Will we obey God's law? Everyone must answer this question. Our everlasting life depends on our answer.

Joshua writes a copy of the law on big stones that are painted white. These stones are different from the stones for the altar (compare with Deuteronomy 27:2–8). Many Bible thinkers believe Joshua wrote the Ten Commandments on the big white stones. These stones helped the Israelites remember their agreement with God and to obey and serve Him.

Joshua is a symbol of Jesus. Jesus came to lead people back to God. To do this work, Jesus fought for us against evil powers and won. Jesus kept God's promise. "God has made a great many promises. They are all 'Yes' because of what Christ [Jesus] has done. So through [because of] Christ we say 'Amen.' We want God to receive glory" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV).

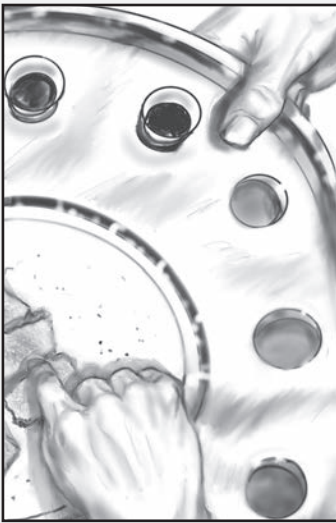
What are things that we can do, right now, to make our relationship with God new again?



Joshua writes a copy of the law on big stones that are painted white.

WRITTEN ON STONES (Joshua 8:32–35)

Read Joshua 8:32–35. What is happening in these verses? What does it mean for us today?



The Lord's Supper is a time to make new again our relationship with the Lord.

The Bible talks about the mountain of Ebal only in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 11:29; Deuteronomy 27:4, 13) and in the book of Joshua (Joshua 8:30, 33). The Israelites said the blessings and curses on the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. The mountain of Ebal was the mountain where the Israelites said the curses (Deuteronomy 11:29; Deuteronomy 27:4, 13). The Israelites stood on either side of the ark in front of the priests or spiritual leaders (Joshua 8:33). One group of Israelites stood in front of Ebal. The other group stood in front of Gerizim. The Israelites brought offerings that showed Jesus' future work. Jesus accepted all the curses in God's promise. Because Jesus did that, everyone who believes in Him can enjoy its blessings (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why did Joshua need to write a copy of God's promise on a monument that everyone could see? Read Deuteronomy 4:31; Deuteronomy 6:12; Deuteronomy 8:11, 14; 2 Kings 17:38; and Psalm 78:7 for the answer.

We humans often forget things. The Lord's Supper gives us a special time to remember everything the Lord does for us. Also, the Lord's Supper is a time to make new again our relationship with the Lord. As a church, we can use this time to make our relationship with the Lord strong.

How often do you forget about the Lord and try to do things in your own strength and power? Why is trying to do things in our own strength so easy to do?

WANTING TO BE WITH JESUS (Joshua 18:1, 2)

Read the story in Joshua 18:1, 2. Joshua started to give land to the Israelites. In the middle of his work, Joshua stopped to do something else. What did he stop to do?

In Joshua 18, the Israelites come together at Shiloh. Joshua divides the Promised Land and gives it to the family groups of Israel who don't have land.

In the middle of this work, Joshua stops to set up God's holy tent. The worship of God is even more important than dividing the land!

The holy tent was proof of God's promise to live with His people (Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 26:11, 12). The book of Joshua teaches the idea that Israel won the land because God lived with His people. They had success because God lived with them. God will continue to live among His people and bless them. God will use Israel to bless everyone on earth (Genesis 12:3). The holy tent, and later God's temple, were meant to help the people remember God and obey Him.

Read Hebrews 6:19, 20; Hebrews 9:11, 12; and Hebrews 10:19–23. We don't have God living in His holy tent with us today. But what can we, as Christians, learn from Joshua's wish to make God #1 in his life and in Israel's?

The ark of God's promise helps us remember the Most Holy Place in heaven. The ark was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Room of the holy tent. The ark was also part of Israel's crossing. The ark was there when Israel won the Promised Land too. Joshua sets up God's holy tent in the land so that Israelites will know that to worship God is the most important part of their lives. The holy tent was God's headquarters on earth.

Today, as Christians, we live in the time when God will judge all people. We must keep our eyes on Jesus and His work for us in the Most Holy Room in heaven. As we continue to fight against the problems of our modern life, the Lord will give us strength to win. So, we must depend on Jesus and His work for us at the Cross. We must trust in the work He does now for us in heaven. Then we can hope in the time when God will live with His people again. Then He will live with us forever. (Compare with Revelation 21:3.)



The holy tent, and later God's temple, were meant to help the people remember God and obey Him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Blessings and the Curses,” pages 499–503, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Moses gave the command for the Israelites to build a monument of big stones on the mountain of Ebal. The stones were covered with white paint. Then the law was written on the stones. This law included the Ten Commandments and the laws God gave to Moses that he wrote in a book. Next to this monument, the Israelites built an altar of stone. The stones weren’t cut or shaped with tools. The Israelites offered gifts to the Lord on this altar. The altar was built on the mountain of Ebal. Ebal was the mountain where the Israelites said the curses that Moses wrote in a book. Israel sinned against God’s law. Because of their sin, God was fair when He became angry with them. God should have destroyed Israel right away for their sin. But Jesus became their offering to help God accept them. The offering on the altar was a symbol for Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 500, adapted.



“Moses gave the command for the Israelites to build a monument of big stones on the mountain of Ebal.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What does it mean to you to make God’s kingdom #1 in your life? How does this important rule change your daily life?
- ❷ Look at your answer to Wednesday’s final question. How easily do you forget the Lord in everyday life? In class, talk about why we forget God and why we have trouble remembering Him. What are some ways to help us remember?
- ❸ As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that Jesus is working for us in heaven in these end times. How can this belief give us hope and strength? Jesus is up there asking God to help us right now (Hebrew 7:25)! How should this amazing Bible truth help us understand why His work in heaven is really good news for us?

GIVING GOD BACK HIS THINGS—PART 2

The store sent a delivery truck to Frank's house. The truck came to collect the things that Frank Mukube bought with a loan from the store. Frank already paid back the loan. But he wanted to give the stuff back to the store anyway. Frank signed a paper saying that he didn't want any of his money back. Now Frank rode in the truck to the house he rented in Namibia.

As the truck backed up to the house, Frank's property manager, who lived nearby, ran over. She asked, "Why are you moving out without telling me first?"

Frank said, "I'm not moving. I'm giving back my stuff to the store. These things aren't really mine, even if I fully paid for them. I want to give tithe and offerings again." Tithe is 10% of all the money we get.

The property manager asked, "What are you saying about tithe and offerings?"

Frank explained. The Bible teaches that people should give tithe and offerings. Frank told the manager that he didn't give any tithe for two years. He used his tithe and offerings each month to pay for everything he bought on loan from the store.

The property manager laughed at Frank.

Then the delivery truck and Frank went back to the store. The store manager watched as the bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and kitchen pots were unloaded. The store manager asked, "Why are you really doing this?"

Frank said, "These things stood between me and my God because I bought them with my tithes and offerings. Now I feel so much better."

Frank did feel better. He knew that without a bed, he would sleep on the floor. Without a stove, he would need to find firewood and pots to cook supper with over a fire. But Frank was happy. Before, he felt cursed because he robbed God (Malachi 3:8, 9). But with everything back in the store, he felt peace.

That night, Frank didn't need to sleep on the floor or look for firewood or pots for supper. A friend's heart was touched when he heard about Frank's decision. The friend brought over a bed and an old stove with two pots.

Frank said, "God gave me a bed. God gave me a stove." God promises to bless us if we give Him tithe and offerings: " 'Now you must bring the whole tithe that belongs to me. Store it in my temple, so that there will be food in my house. Obey me and then see what I will do. . . . You will see how much I will bless you! You will not have enough room to store all the good things that I will give to you. I will pour blessings out of the sky like [as] rain' " (Malachi 3:10, EASY). Since that day, Frank always gives God his tithe and offerings.

INSIDE *Story*



The store manager watched as the bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and kitchen pots were unloaded.



Frank Mukube