

Sabbath School. BIBLE LESSONS. BY REV. J. H. VINCENT, D. D. Third Quarter. July 29. Josh. 24: 20-25.

THE READING OF THE LAW. GOLDEN TEXT. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.—Deut. 30: 19.

Then Joshua—While engaged in the mid career of conquest, the progress of the war is suddenly suspended, and instead of pushing their armies on every side, after master the frontier towns, they commence a peaceful march into the heart of the country to attend upon a religious assembly! But God had ordered it, they cheerfully obeyed. Whatever else stands still, the service of God must go forward. Built an altar. The altar was the symbol of heart, from which prayer arises, and in its prayer presenting itself as a sacrifice. Unto the Lord of Israel. Jehovah is called God of Israel to show that there is no other god who was to be worshipped in Canaan than the God of Israel.

As Moses... commanded. Deut. 27. An altar of stones. According to the law of Exod. 20: 25 a stone altar must not be built of stones, for the touch of an iron upon it was regarded as a pollution. Offered thereon burnt offerings. The burnt offerings were symbols of the solemn dedication of people to the Lord; and the offerings, with which thankings were associated, and a sacred feast, indicated the joy of the congregation on this renewal of the covenant, all the blessings of which would now again have a right to be written there.

He wrote there. The writing to be in very plain letters, (Deut. 10: 1) that all the people might see before pronouncing a curse upon those who should break it, lest they should perform the solemnity as a mere ceremony, careless of its import; and, also, lest through ignorance they should violate the law, and so bring upon themselves curses which they uttered. Upon stones. These stones were not additional to the stones of the altar, the stones of which Moses had seen in the Pentateuch, with which the sacred writer here supposes the altar to be familiar. A copy of the law. The writing of the law upon stones, which were erected on a mountain in the midst of the land, and the solemn proclamation of the law and curses, was a practical acknowledgment of the law of the Lord had given them for an inheritance. Not only on the stones, but on the heart should the law of the Lord be written, Jer. 31: 33-34.

And all Israel. This shows that the whole people had abandoned their idols, and were gathered together. The women and children, along with the men, needed the same impressions which the service adapted to make. Children should be instructed in the law. Elders and officers. The greatest principle not excused; the elders, officers, judges are not above the cognizance of the law. Stood on this side and on that. The breadth of the valley, from the foot of Mount Gerizim, is not less than five hundred yards wide, extending from east to north-west; and here the elders of the people assembled, while the vast masses occupied the adjacent slopes. The priests, the Levites. As well as the people. The descendants, part of the mixed multitude that came with them out of Egypt. Mount Gerizim stands about 800 feet above the city of Shechem, and is known as Nabias. Mount Gerizim stands about 800 feet above the city of Shechem, and is known as Nabias. Mount Gerizim stands about 800 feet above the city of Shechem, and is known as Nabias.

That they should bless. The blessing was to be uttered by the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, who sprang from the two wives of Jacob; and the curse by Reuben, with the two sons of Leah's maid Zilpah, and by Zebulon, with Dan and Naphtali, the sons of Rachael's maid Bilhah. 34. Afterward he read. That is, he commanded the priests or Levites to read, as is evident from Deut. 27: 14. All the words of the law. It would seem that Joshua on the present occasion, must have read, at least, all the legislative portion of the Pentateuch before the people. The terms of this verse cannot be satisfactorily explained as importing only the blessings and curses of Deut. 27 and 28. The blessings and curses. A people standing so low in morality as the Israelites then did needed stern discipline, and not only might be allured by promises, but must be alarmed by threats. 35. All that Moses commanded. To the important inferences deduced from this interesting narrative this may be added: It affords another proof that Joshua had a copy of the law of Moses, and that he was guided by it in his practice. It is an argument for the genuineness of the Pentateuch generally, and of Deuteronomy in particular. Joshua never would have engaged in such an expedition as this, and have done what he is here related to have done, unless he had an express command from God to do what he did. Such a command was given in the law of Moses, and, as far as we know, it was given nowhere else. The little ones. Children would be deeply impressed by the solemnities of the scene.

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