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ISRAEL RENEWING THE COVENANT
- JOSHUA 24:14-25. - NOVEMBER 10. -

Golden Text: – "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." – Joshua 24:24.

ISRAEL became God's people by solemn covenant (See Exod. 19:5-8), and on several occasions that covenant was renewed that succeeding generations might not forget the obligations thereby resting upon them. The instance before us was one of these occasions, and a very appropriate one – after their settlement in the land of promise and when Joshua their leader, being very old, must of necessity soon be taken [R4080 : page 318] from them by death. Joshua, therefore, remembering the command of Moses to thus remind the people of their covenant obligations (Deut. 27), made this the occasion for solemn exhortation, warning and counsel, as well as for leading the people to a renewal of their vows and a purging of themselves from every semblance of idolatry, which his address shows still lingered in some degree among them.

The counsel of Joshua was reverently received, the covenant was renewed, and the nation purged itself from idolatry, and in consequence was prospered and blessed. But why, we may reasonably inquire, should we be interested now in seemingly trivial matters of history of a date so remote? Why so minutely consider the experience and doings of that nation more than others of the ancient peoples? Or why are they so minutely given by the sacred writers?

Their importance to us lies in the fact that in the experiences of that consecrated people were foreshadowed those of God's consecrated people of this Gospel Age; and in God's dealings

with them we can read his judgment of us under similar circumstances, we, the Gospel Church, being the antitypes of fleshly Israel, the Spiritual Israel of God – nominally, as in the type, including all the professed members of the Church, but actually only those who are truly the Lord's – "Israelites indeed," Christians indeed.

In the nation of Israel (nominal Israel) we observe a constant tendency to idolatry, while a faithful few ("Israelites indeed") always resisted this tendency, and, with fixed purpose of heart, worshiped the Lord in the beauty of holiness and endeavored to influence others to similar faithfulness. But their forefathers prior to Abraham were idolaters; the nations all about them were idolaters; and idolatrous worship, unlike the worship of the true God, imposed no restraints upon the downward tendencies of the fallen nature, but, on the contrary, cultivated and pandered to its depravity. Nor did it require faith in the unseen, but presented to the senses tangible objects of worship with rites and ceremonies suited to the carnal nature. Hence the continual gravitation of the nation toward idolatry, notwithstanding the wonderful power and goodness of God manifested on their behalf. Joshua, after calling attention to the marvels of divine providence which their wonderful history furnished, urged upon the people a prompt and firm decision, saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," etc.

Joshua also gave them distinctly to understand that in choosing to serve the Lord it must be whole-hearted and sincere service, a full and complete turning to the Lord, and the putting away of all rivals. This exhortation was coupled with warnings of the Lord's indignation and wrath if they should wickedly ignore or violate their covenant and turn to idolatry. "And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

Happy indeed was it for Israel that such was their decision; and happy would it be for all God's consecrated people, if, with fixedness of purpose they would pay their vows unto the Most High. In his dealings with typical Israel we see that our God is a jealous God and that he desires whole-hearted devotion to himself. If we permit any rival to occupy the mind and heart that were solemnly consecrated to him alone, then we are unfaithful to him and wickedly despising our covenant. Let the language of every heart be, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt and consume you, after that he hath done you good." The fact that the Lord has richly blessed us in the past while we were in the way with him is no guarantee that he will continue his favor with us after we have forsaken him. On the contrary his positive declaration is that he will withdraw his favor from all such. In addition to the above the Prophet Ezekiel says, "When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die." And Paul adds, ["because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"], "God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." – Ezek. 3:20; 2 Thess. 2:11,12. See also Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31.

We should observe specially in Heb. 10:29 the reference to a *sorer* punishment to be visited upon the covenant-despisers of this age than that visited upon the same class in the Jewish Age, because of the higher privileges and advantages received here and despised. The death penalty there was a hasty visitation of the original Adamic penalty, but the death penalty here upon the

wilful covenant-despisers is the Second Death, from which there is no escape.
