

## Joshua Lesson 11 Article

Meditating on the goodness of God is a strong motivation for obedience. James connects the goodness of God with our resisting of temptation (James 1:13–17), and Nathan took the same approach when he confronted King David with his sins (2 Sam. 12:1–15). It was not his own badness but his father’s goodness that brought the prodigal son to repentance and then back home (Luke 15:17). “The goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4, NKJV). The danger is that the material blessings from the Lord can so possess our hearts that we focus on the gifts and forget the Giver, and this leads to sin (Deut. 8).<sup>1</sup>

In the April 15, 1978 issue of *Saturday Review*, the late author and editor Norman Cousins called history “a vast early warning system”; and philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” A knowledge of their roots is very important to the Jews because they are God’s chosen people with a destiny to fulfill in this world.

Shechem was the ideal location for this moving farewell address by Israel’s great leader. It was at Shechem that God promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land (Gen. 12:6–7), and there Jacob built an altar (33:20). Shechem was located between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, where the people of Israel had reaffirmed their commitment to the Lord (Josh. 8:30–35). Shechem was indeed “holy ground” to the Israelites.<sup>2</sup>

Abraham and his family were idolaters when God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to Canaan (Gen. 11:27–12:9). “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham,” declared Stephen in his own farewell speech (Acts 7:2), reminding the Jews that their national identity was *an act of God’s grace*. Abraham didn’t seek after God and discover Him; it was God who came to Abraham! There was nothing special about the Jews that God should choose them (Deut. 7:1–11; 26:1–11; 32:10); and this fact should have kept them humble and obedient.

“You did not choose Me,” Jesus told His disciples, “but I chose you and appointed you” (John 15:16, NKJV). Believers were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) and are called “God’s elect” (Rom. 8:33; Titus 1:1). One of my professors in seminary used to say, “Try to explain election and you may lose your mind, but explain it away and you may lose your soul.” No matter what “school” of theology we belong to, all of us must admit that *God takes the first step in our salvation*.

Abraham’s firstborn son was Ishmael (Gen. 16), but God rejected him and gave His covenant to Isaac, the child of Abraham and Sarah’s old age (17–18, 21). Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau; and God chose Jacob. Paul called these choices God’s purpose “according to election” (Rom. 9:11). Esau became the ancestor of the Edomites in Mount Seir, and Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Eventually, the Children of Israel went to Egypt, where God made them into a great nation.

One of the repeated titles for God in the Book of Joshua is “the Lord God of Israel,” used fifteen times (7:13, 19–20; 8:30; 9:18–19; 10:40, 42; 13:14, 33; 14:14; 22:16, 24; 24:2, 23). The Jews were indeed an elect and a special people; for the Lord of heaven chose to associate His great name with them and be their God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1 2 3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong*. “Be” Commentary Series (148–149). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.