

LESSON 218

CHANGELESS WORD IN A CHANGING WORLD

Related Scripture: Psalm 119:75-89

KEY VERSE: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—I Peter 1:25.

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9;
Isaiah 40:6-8; John 8:12

Introduction:

Many people who do not know or understand the Bible querulously parrot the common canard that the Bible is outdated and irrelevant to modern life. The truth is that the Bible is more relevant than any other book; if its enemies were honest they would have to admit that its very relevance is what makes them uncomfortable.

But the same Book that condemns, disturbs, and antagonizes lost sinners is a constant source of comfort, hope, and encouragement for sinners saved by grace in every time and clime. Only the Bible can show us to ourselves as we appear to our Creator, and so enable us to know our own spiritual needs; only the Bible gives us an infallible revelation of our great God and Savior and of the everlasting salvation He has so freely provided; only the Bible, of all books, gives us safe and dependable instruction and guidance along the way to our eternal home.

Outlining the scripture passages included in the lesson, we note:

1. Word Implanted, Joshua 1:1-9
 - a. Changing leaders, 1, 2
 - b. Changing locations, 3, 4
 - c. Changeless loyalty, 5-7
 - d. Changeless Lord, 8, 9
2. Word Immutable, Isaiah 40:6-8
 - a. Changing world, 6, 7
 - b. Changeless word, 8
3. Word Incarnate, John 8:12

Notes on the Printed Text:

Word Implanted, Joshua 1:1-9.

Before the completion of Biblical revelation, God spoke to His servants by other means such as dreams and visions more often than is now necessary. Just how He spoke to Joshua we are not told.

God's children ought always to seek His personal direction through the inner leading of His Spirit, understanding that God will never contradict Himself. The personal leading of the Spirit must always be in perfect agreement with the general teaching of the written word.

So God's word to us, however given, is to be implanted in our minds and hearts, to enter into the very substance of our being. It is our food, our wealth, our light, our very life.

Changing Leaders, 1, 2.

Failure or death of an individual leader cannot be permitted to interfere with the divine purpose for God's people. We cannot live in the past; the most devout servants of God can serve Him here below for only a few years before leaving to serve in higher and holier ways; we who remain now must bear the responsibility for carrying on the Lord's work.

Men come and go, but God remains the same with His people. "After the death of Moses . . . the Lord spake unto Joshua." Human leaders vary in capability and effectiveness, but God is always able to provide appropriate instruments for His use in every circumstance; when one is laid aside or worn out, He always has another one ready. So His message to Joshua was: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, . . ."

Though human leadership changes, God's work must go on.

Changing Locations, 3, 4.

God was with Abraham in all his wanderings; He was with Moses in Egypt, in Midian, and in the wilderness journeys; likewise He would be with Joshua in the conquest of Canaan. The God Who fills heaven and earth has no difficulty manifesting His presence and power anywhere with His people, whatever may be their location. Let us go or stay where He sends us, and take what He gives us.

Changeless Loyalty, 5-7.

Victory is assured when we are in the directive will of God. He "will not fall thee, nor forsake thee." Because He is faithful and trustworthy, we must be faithful and loyal to Him. When He commands us, "Be thou strong and very courageous," He is able to supply us with the strength and courage He requires. Wherever we must go on our mission, we shall be sure to prosper when we obey His directions.

Changeless Lord, 8, 9.

Let us not suppose that God could change His mind, that His word once given is subject to amendment! No: the book of God's law was "written for our learning." (Ro. 15:4) God is always right the first time; He has no need to revise the word written by his inspiration. God never swerves from His eternal purposes: neither should we, when we have come to agreement with Him. Our meditations cannot improve His word, but may improve our understanding and obedience, and so insure our "good success" in a spiritual and eternal sense.

When we are going God's way at His command, how can we be afraid or dismayed? Let us claim the promise of His presence and power, and so find strength and courage for the task.

Word Immutable, Isaiah 40:6-8.

A man's word is an expression of himself, and of some men it is said that their word is as good as their bond. Much more we can depend upon it that the God of all truth can speak only words of truth; that the immutable God has given to us an immutable word.

Changing World, 6, 7.

Several times in the scripture we find this figure: comparing fleshly life and its glory to common grass and its flower, so emphasizing the rapid alternation of life and death in this world. James uses an even bolder metaphor: earthly life "is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (Jas. 4:14.) In a sense, time is subjective and relative: in consideration of eternity, a natural lifetime is "little time" indeed.

Changeless Word, 8.

The more we consider the changing character of the world, the more we are impressed by the changeless character of God's word. As Jesus put it, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," and "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Mat. 5:18; 24-35.)

Word Incarnate, John 8:12.

As the Bible shines with divine light amidst the darkness of all human literature, so Jesus Christ shines with divine light amidst the darkness of all human flesh. As the written word is the expression and revelation of God in human language, so the incarnate Word is the expression and revelation of God in a human body. It is from the written word that we learn of the incarnate Word. (Jn. 5:39.)

Spiritual light comes to us by means of the written word; but Jesus, the Word incarnate, is its Source. Following "the light of the world" we walk in and enjoy within "the light of life."

Key Verse:

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—I Peter 1:25.

More literally we read: "But the word of the Lord remains for eternity. And this is the word which was gospelized to you."

Current fads, fashions, and fantasies of slithery seminarial seducers will soon be forgotten as useless and fruitless irrelevancies; but the ancient truths of God's word will continue to bring spiritual salvation, spiritual sustenance, spiritual security, to all who believe in their eternal relevance to reality.