

22 December 2013

You choose to do good or to do evil.

Our reading today:–

Josh 24:14–24, and specifically verse 15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Today we will look at choices we have to make in life, and hence I have titled our message “you choose to do good or to do evil”. We will cover two points; (1) a non-Christian chooses to believe God or reject Him, and (2) Christians choose each day to obey God and His commandments or rebel.

Let us add a little more detail to our points:–

1. A non-Christian chooses to believe God or reject Him.

Prov.1: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.

A person chooses to fear the Lord or not, a person chooses to believe God or reject Him. The Lord Jesus Christ desired men to believe Him (see Jn.14: 11), but he never twisted their arm up their back and forced them to believe like some religions do, where they kill those who reject their god.

For those who choose to reject Christ there are consequences (see Jn.3: 36), as there are with all life’s choices. The Bible says that “the wages [consequences] of our sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life”, Rom.6: 23. And for those who choose to reject Christ the consequences will last for all eternity in hell (see Ps. 9: 17 & 2Thes. 1: 8, 9).

The apostle Paul encourages the lost to believe the Good News, the gospel of Christ crucified. Paul besought the lost to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16: 31 & Rom.10: 9), to believe that they have sinned, and that Christ died for their sin and rose from the dead (1Cor.15: 1–4). And when they believe this gospel in their heart, then God does a work in their heart and they become a new creature in Christ (see 2Cor.5: 17).

When preachers stand on the street corner and preach the gospel of Christ crucified, they beseech, they earnestly call upon the lost to choose life in Christ, to choose repentance, to choose Christ’s death on the cross for the cleansing of their sin, rather than relying on their own good works.

But how many people do you know that choose life, that choose to believe God and not reject Him?

How many people in our families and friends choose eternal damnation rather than God’s free gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ?

According to the Scriptures of truth there are few that find the way, there are few that choose life and believe (see Matt.7: 14), and my experience has proved this verse to be true, there are few that choose life.

In a couple of days the world will celebrate “Christmas”, which the traditional churches say is the day when Christ was born into the world. And if that were true then we would join with them in that celebration. But according to the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ could not have been born in December because there were shepherds in the field guarding their flock (see Lk.2: 8), and it would have been too cold that time of year for such activity.

So why does the church, why do Christian countries like New Zealand, Australia and United States celebrate Christmas? Because the 25th of December is the birth date of an ancient pagan god, and Roman Catholics substituted the pagan god for the Son of God. “According to Hislop the Pagan origins of the festival are ‘beyond doubt.’ In Egypt the son of Isis, the Egyptian queen of heaven, was born on the 25th of December. The popular name for that day was Yule-day and in subsequent years the 25th of December was called Yule-day by our Pagan Anglo Saxon ancestors. ‘That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt’ (see Page 93 *ibid*), a festival in honour of the Babylonian Messiah. In addition, Hislop shows the likely

evidence for the RC church adopting Christmas as Christian, where he writes, 'in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it the name of Christ' (see Page 93 *ibid*). Hence Christmas is likened to other RC rituals that were copied from Ancient Babylon, such as the Eucharist, the Rosary, the confessional, and many others. As a point to add, the Roman Catholic Church first celebrated the birth of Christ on the 25th of December with a Mass, and this special Mass became known as the Mass of Christ or Christmas." Hence Christmas has nothing to do with the birth of Christ. However, Christians who want to share their faith with their friends and family can use this time as an opportunity to sow seeds of the gospel, to rejoice at the name of Christ when it is used on the TV, radio and in other media. For at Christmas time the world hears the name of Christ as they give gifts and yet they neglect the birth of Christ. Let us remind the world at this time of 'Christmas', that their celebrations are actually about the birth of the Saviour, God's free gift, in the hope that some who hear may choose to believe the good news of Christ crucified.

Every lost man, whether our school teacher, friend, uncle or local shop owner, all have a choice, they can choose to receive the Lord Jesus Christ or reject Him. And for those who choose to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour their choices do not stop there!

2. Christians choose each day to obey God and His commandments or rebel.

Prov.3: 31 Envy not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.
See also Josh.24:14-24 & Is.56: 4

The oppressor in our verse is our adversary the devil, and our verse continues on to encourage us to choose none of his ways. Then when you read our opening verse from Josh.24: 15 and read it through to 24, you see that Israel was given the opportunity to choose whom they would serve. This group of people were God's chosen nation, yet numerous times in the Old Testament God, would perform an impressive miracle then Israel would choose to sin and disobey the Lord's commandments. God killed all the first born in Egypt, opened the Red Sea and killed all the Egyptian soldiers (see Ex.14: 23-28), and then Israel chose to murmur about having no water (Ex.15: 24). God kept watch over them by day with a cloud and fire by night (see Ex.13: 21, & 22), yet when Moses went up the mountain to pray the people chose to make a golden calf and call the calf their god and worship it as God Almighty (see Ex.32: 4). Then they arrived in the land of Israel and God defeated all their enemies (Josh.10: 10). And after He had defeated all their enemies the Lord asked Israel whom do they choose to serve, the gods of this world, or God Almighty (Josh.24: 15)?

And so it is for us today, and every day, we have a choice, to obey God or rebel. And we know that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (see 1Sam.15: 23).

How do we choose to obey God? By obeying His written revelation, the Holy Scriptures, by reading and seeking what God says is right and wrong, good and evil according to His Scriptures of truth, and choosing to do that which is right.

If your heart desires to steal, would you turn to the Scriptures and choose to obey the commandments of God to not steal (see Ex.20: 15)?

If you are with a group of friends and they encourage you to drink blood, would you consult the Scriptures and establish that drinking blood is a sin (see Acts 15: 20), and that it is not good to seek counsel from the ungodly (see Ps.1: 1), or do you choose to follow the ways of the world?

If your heart desires to lie to your teacher or bear false witness about a friend, would you choose to obey the commandments of God and not bear false witness (Ex.20: 16)?

If you want a job but the Lord closes the door, do you pursue another in the hope of doing what you want, or do you subject your will and choose to submit to God?

Every day we have choices to make, to choose to watch TV programs or movies that have devils, witches and vampires, or not to watch.

Every day we get to choose to associate with friends we like, that perhaps take us away from the things of God, or we can choose to move away from such friends.

Every day we choose either to honour our parents, or rebel.

Every day we have essentially two choices to make, to do that which is good and pleasing in the sight of God or do that which the world loves (see 1Jn.2: 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world").

This Christmas we can choose to get involved in the pagan celebration or use it as an opportunity to speak to those whom we meet, about the birth of Christ, and His sinless life, His death, burial and resurrection.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (see Josh.24: 15), we choose to obey God and his way, and not the ways of the world.

Whom will you choose to serve this day?

There are examples in the Bible of people choosing obedience and others choosing disobedience to God. Each has consequences, as we see with the example of Israel.

Israel are an example of a nation who were given the choice, to choose good or evil and they consistently chose evil.

Deut. 30: 19 "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live".

Is.65: 12 "Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not."

As a consequence to their rebellion God expelled Israel from the land that He gave them as a free gift.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our example of choosing perfect obedience to His Father.

Is.7: 15 "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good".

Phil.2: 8 says of Christ, that he "being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That's right, Christ was obedient to the Father even unto death!

As a consequence to Christ's obedience He was raised from the dead by the Father, and sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven, and will judge the quick and the dead (see Acts 10: 42).

Just as Israel was offered blessings for choosing obedience, and cursings for disobedience, so are we in the church age.

If you have a problem with lying and choose to allow the devil to attack you and continue lying, or stealing, or blaspheming and you continue to accept these as thorns in the flesh without taking them to the Lord in prayer, and asking for help, then God will discipline you for your disobedience. Because when we choose to do nothing about our sin we choose to rebel against God.

As Job said, in Job 34: 4 "Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good".

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (see Josh.24: 15). Whom will you choose to serve this day and every other day until the Lord returns?

Let us remember to pray for each other, encouraging the young in the faith, and pray for our families that each day we and they would choose to serve God and not succumb to the devices of the devil and his pleasures of this world, but let us choose to serve God.

Having said what we have said in this study of choosing good or evil, let us say it again. We have covered two points; (1) a non-Christian chooses to believe God or reject Him, and (2) Christians choose each day to obey God and His commandments or rebel.

