

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures—Christ and Him crucified. Every other truth is invested with influence and power corresponding to its relation to this theme. It is only in the light of the cross that we can discern the exalted character of the law of God. The soul palsied by sin can be endowed with life only through the work wrought out upon the cross by the Author of our salvation.” {1888 Materials, p. 806}

WEEK 2 - THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

I. The Stone of Witness

1. Why do we need to learn the history of the Hebrew host, and carefully think about God’s dealings with them?

2. What is the difference between the law given at Sinai and the principles Jesus taught when He was on earth?

3. Why was the Song of Moses given?

4. This song is also a prophecy for us. As you read the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1–43, what do you learn from it?

5. There are many things which are a blessing when enjoyed in moderation. What happens when they are carried to excess? What's an example of this?

II. The Angel's Reproof

1. Why was Joshua not permitted to lead Israel in completely driving out all the inhabitants of Canaan?

- 2. The Israelites were directed to finish driving out the Canaanites. Why didn't they do that? What was the result?

- 3. Jesus Himself stood before the congregation at Shiloh and rebuked Israel for breaking their covenant. What was their response? What is true repentance?

- 4. At times when a young person hears a warning or reproof, they repent and confess—even with tears. What else do they need to do to succeed?

- 5. Is there any danger in inviting ungodly friends or relatives to our homes?

The Stone of Witness**May 26, 1881**

Joshua's farewell address to Israel produced a deep impression upon them. They knew that they were listening to his dying testimony, and that no feeling of pride, ambition, or self-interest could influence him. By long experience, the aged leader had learned how to most effectually reach the hearts of the people. He realized the importance of the present opportunity, and improved it to the utmost. ^[1.1]

His earnest appeals called forth the response: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land; therefore will we also serve the Lord, for he is our God." ^[1.2]

Still Joshua warned the people to make no rash promises which they would be unwilling to fulfill, but to carefully consider the matter, and decide upon their future course. "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." Thus faithfully he sought to arouse them to a higher sense of God's claims upon them, and a deeper conviction that their only safety was in obedience to his law. ^[1.3]

The congregation answered with one accord, "We will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away (said he) the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." ^[1.4]

This solemn covenant was recorded in the book of the law, to be sacredly preserved. Joshua then set up a great stone under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." Here Joshua plainly declares that his instructions and warnings to the people were not his own words, but the words of God. This great stone would stand to testify to succeeding generations of the event which it was set up to commemorate, and would be a witness against the people, should they ever again degenerate into idolatry. ^[1.5]

Israel was the Lord's peculiar treasure. The high estimation in which he held them is shown by the mighty miracles wrought in their behalf. As a father would deal with a beloved son, so had the Lord succored, disciplined, and chastened Israel. He sought to inspire in their hearts that love for his character and requirements which would lead to willing obedience. ^[1.6]

Through his people Israel, God designed to give to the world a knowledge of his will. His promises and threatenings, his instructions and reproofs, the wonderful manifestations of his power among them, in blessings for obedience, and judgment for transgression and apostasy—all were designed for the education

and development of religious principle among the people of God until the close of time. Therefore it is important that we acquaint ourselves with the history of the Hebrew host, and ponder with care the dealings of God with them. {1.7}

The words which God spoke to Israel by his Son were spoken for us also in these last days. The same Jesus who, upon the mount, taught his disciples the far-reaching principles of the law of God, instructed ancient Israel from the cloudy pillar and from the tabernacle, by the mouth of Moses and Joshua. The lessons were the same—that love for God would lead to purity of heart, and would be manifested in good works. {1.8}

Those who place in contrast the teachings of Christ when he was upon the earth, and the principles of true religion as taught in the days of Moses, know not what they assert. Christ cannot be arrayed against himself. When he was upon earth, our Saviour made sinners feel that they could not trample upon the law of God with impunity. The same lesson was taught to ancient Israel. In the days of Moses sin could be pardoned only through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. Jesus taught the same when he walked as a man among the children of men. {1.9}

Religion in the days of Moses and Joshua was the same as religion today. When Christ dwells in the heart, his spirit will be manifested in the life. It will be calm, patient, noble, and unselfish. The marked contrast which exists between the lives of those who serve God and those who serve him not is a constant rebuke to the sinner. The world rejected Christ because his life was in such marked contrast to their own. In every generation, those who are seeking to follow his example will be distinct from the world. {1.10}

By various means the Lord has sought to preserve the knowledge of his dealings with the children of men. Moses, just prior to his death, not only rehearsed to Israel the important events in their history, but at the command of God he embodied them in sacred verse. Thus the glorious and thrilling scenes of Israel's triumph, the sublime and awful manifestations of infinite majesty and power, the divine requirements, promises, and threatenings, clothed with all the beauty of poetic genius, were to be present for all the generations to come. Thus the record of God's requirements and his dealings with Israel would not appear uninteresting or repulsive, but attractive and entertaining. {1.11}

The people of Israel were required to commit to memory this poetic history, and to teach it to their children and their children's children. It was to be chanted by the congregation when assembled for worship, and to be repeated by the people as they went in and out about their daily duties. This song was not only historical, but prophetic. It recounted the wonderful dealings of God with his people in the past, and also foreshadowed the great events of the future, the final victory of the faithful when Christ shall appear the second time in power and glory. {1.12}

It was the imperative duty of parents to so impress these words upon the susceptible minds of their children, that they might never be forgotten. "Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto

their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.” {1.13}

In after generations, this prophetic song would explain the dealings of God with his people, and reveal the cause of their dispersed and scattered condition. Thus would it vindicate the justice of God, and establish the divine inspiration of Moses. It would condemn the wickedness of Israel, and would ever be a convicting power to call them back to their allegiance to God as the only hope of deliverance. {1.14}

The great stone set up by Joshua was to stand as a constant reminder to Israel of the covenant which they had made with God, and a silent witness of their faithfulness or apostasy. So also the song of Moses was to testify against them, should they depart from God. Many of the Israelites were unacquainted with the books of Moses. But it was the purpose of God that this inspired song should awaken in thoughtful minds a desire to learn more of God’s wonderful dealings with his people, and lead to the study of his revealed word. Thus would they be led to realize the goodness of God toward them, and their duty to love, and obey, and worship him. {1.15}

If it was necessary for God’s ancient people to often call to mind his dealings with them in mercy and judgment, in counsel and reproof, it is equally important that we contemplate the truths delivered to us in his word—truth which, if heeded, will lead us to humility and submission, and obedience to God. We are to be sanctified through the truth. The word of God presents special truths for every age. The dealings of God with his people in the past should receive our careful attention. We should learn the lessons which they are designed to teach us. But we are not to rest content with them. God is leading out his people step by step. Truth is progressive. The earnest seeker will be constantly receiving light from Heaven. What is truth? should ever be our inquiry. {1.16}

The prophetic word shows clearly that we are living near the close of this world’s history, and that we may soon expect the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of Heaven. As the Israelites journeyed toward the earthly Canaan, so are we pressing onward to reach the heavenly Canaan. The history of their backslidings is repeated among the people of God today. Faith and piety are waning. Many who once loved the appearing of Christ, are setting their affections upon this world, and are conforming to its habits and customs. The fear of God is not kept before the mind, and the natural desires and inclinations gain control. {1.17}

The apostle presents before us the history of the children of Israel, and states that these things are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. He exhorts us not to lust after evil things as they lusted. The very same enemy that tempted the people of God in ancient times, will tempt his people in these last days. We should be earnest, active, and vigilant, in mak-

ing ready for the appearing of our Lord. Every device will be employed to lead men away from God. Infidelity is exerting itself to the utmost. The present age is characterized by intense earnestness and activity in worldly pursuits; but zeal and energy in the service of God are sadly deficient. {1.18}

In the days before the flood, the people were so engrossed in worldly things, and so corrupted by iniquity, that the Spirit of God ceased to strive with men. When God's word loses its power upon the people, a Satanic infatuation leads them in direct opposition to his revealed will. Christians are absorbed in the questions, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? When the energies are employed in buying and selling, planting and building, to the neglect of eternal interests; when the truth of God addressed to the ear ceases to impress the mind or affect the heart, the preaching is in vain; the hearing is in vain. Then indeed will the condition of the world become as it was in the days of Noah. {1.19}

Many of the things of this life which are a blessing when temperately enjoyed, become a curse when their use is carried to excess. The dressing mania is a device of Satan. Love of dress is an idolatrous shrine at which the women of this age are worshiping. They are so fully occupied with outward display, that they have no time to pray, no time to become acquainted with the Scriptures, no time to improve the talents which God has given them. They have no time to cleanse the soul-temple from its idolatrous shrines; and at last the Spirit ceases to strive with many, and they go down to the grave unprepared. The temptation to idolatry is even greater today than in the days of Israel. {1.20}

Concerning the last days, our Saviour asks the significant question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The Scriptures declare that as it was in the days of Noah, before the judgments of God fell upon the corrupt inhabitants, so shall it be in the last days, just prior to the pouring out of God's unmingled wrath upon the earth. Men will be living a godless life, professing to be Christians, but by their acts contradicting their profession. They will be heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Is not this idolatry? and is not the guilt of God's professed people as much greater than was that of ancient Israel, as the light which we enjoy is greater than theirs? {1.21}

God would have his ministers in this dispensation keep before the people, not only the mercy and love of Christ, but the doctrines of the Bible. These should be presented in simple language, adapted to the comprehension of children. Let the young be faithfully instructed in the truths of God's word. The history of the past, the present, and the future, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures, should be taught in a pleasing, yet serious manner. Let the dealings of God with his people be rehearsed again and again, until the youth become familiar with the record. {1.22}

The lives and teachings of Christian parents should be in marked contrast with those of unbelievers. Worldlings teach their children to love display, and to bow to the idol of fashion. They sacrifice themselves and their children upon this altar of Moloch. But Christians who profess to be seeking the heavenly Canaan, should obey the instructions of the Bible. We urge modern Israel to lay aside

their ornaments, their jewels of silver and gold and precious stones, to put off their costly-apparel, and to seek for the inward adorning, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Let children be educated, not to become devotees of fashion, but to be servants of God. {1.23}

If it was important for Israel to teach their children of the wonderful works of God, his character and requirements, it is important that we put forth at least equal efforts to teach our children the same truths. {1.24}

The Angel's Reproof

June 2, 1881

Although the last admonitions of Joshua, and the solemn covenant which Israel had made with God, seemed to make a deep impression upon them, yet time soon proved that the influence was not permanent. After the death of their leader and of the elders who were associated with him, the people began gradually to relapse into idolatry. {2.1}

Joshua had not been permitted to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. A remnant of the heathen nations was spared for a time, that the Lord might through them test the faith and obedience of his people, and that those whose hearts were cherishing idolatry might be revealed and punished. {2.2}

The generation that succeeded Joshua were directed to carry forward the work which he had left unfinished; but they did not obey the divine command to utterly destroy the heathen. Some of the tribes made war on the Canaanites, but failing to receive the help which they should have had from their brethren, they became weary of the conflict, and spared their most dangerous enemies. Frequent intercourse soon removed all fear of danger; and now the Israelites took another step in transgression, by connecting themselves in marriage with the heathen. When this was done, the difficulties of the situation were greatly increased. It was no easy matter to make war with relatives, and to extirpate or banish their own kindred. {2.3}

By their disregard of God's command, the Israelites had woven for themselves a net in which their feet were soon entangled. Ere long, many of the Hebrews were induced to attend heathen festivals. Lascivious songs and licentious indulgence, formed a prominent part in the idolatrous worship. Exposed to these contaminating influences, the Israel of God steadily became corrupted. In imitation of the gods of the heathen, images were made to represent Jehovah, and thus idolatry spread like a plague throughout the land. {2.4}

The evil made little headway until the generation was extinct which had made the covenant with God; but the parents had prepared the way for the apostasy of their children. God's commandments had been disregarded, his safeguards removed, his barriers broken down. {2.5}

The correct and simple habits of the Hebrews had preserved them in physical health; but association with the heathen had led to the indulgence of appetite and sensual passions; and this had lessened physical strength, and enfeebled the mental and moral powers. God removed his protecting care and support, and the Israelites were no longer able to contend with their enemies. Soon they were

brought into subjection to the very nations whom through God they might have subdued. {2.6}

The Lord did not permit the sins of his people to pass without rebuke. There were still faithful worshipers in Israel; and many others, from habit and early association, attended the worship of God at the tabernacle. A large company were assembled upon the occasion of a religious feast, when an angel of God, having first appeared at Gilgal, revealed himself to the congregation at Shiloh. He addressed them in words of solemn reproof: {2.7}

“I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice. Why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.” {2.8}

This angel, the same that appeared to Joshua at the taking of Jericho—was no less a personage than the Son of God. It was he who had brought Israel out of Egypt, and established them in the land of Canaan. He showed them that he had not broken his promises to them, but they themselves had violated their solemn covenant. {2.9}

“And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept.” “And they sacrificed there unto the Lord” But their repentance produced no lasting results. The people mourned because their sins had brought suffering upon themselves; but did not sorrow that God was displeased, and his name dishonored. True repentance includes more than sorrow for sin. It demands a resolute turning away from evil. We may profess to feel deep sorrow for our sins, we may weep over our wrong course; but if we make no change in that course, our sorrow will avail nothing. {2.10}

Before they entered the promised land, the Israelites had been faithfully taught their duty toward the heathen. They were to make no league with the inhabitants, but to utterly destroy their idols, and to cast down their altars. Now the Angel solemnly declares, “Ye have not obeyed my voice.” And in sadness he asks, “Why have ye done this?” {2.11}

The people could now see the sinfulness and ingratitude of their course. This was the golden opportunity for them to return to their allegiance to God, and to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Had they manifested a willingness to act when duty was made known; had they entered at once upon the performance of the work that had been neglected, then the curse of God might have been turned away from Israel. But they returned to their evil ways, and the Lord left them to suffer the consequence of their own neglect. {2.12}

The experience of the Israelites is that of many at the present day. Warnings and reproofs from God are continually given to his people. Godly sorrow, which produces repentance unto salvation, would lead them to make an immediate and decided change. But here many fail. Confessions are made, sorrow is expressed, tears are shed; but there is no permanent change of life. Unless the heart is

renewed by divine grace, and earnest effort is made to resist temptation, we shall be overcome again and again. {2.13}

Among God's preferred people, there are men in responsible positions who are content to remain in a state of coldness and backsliding. Their piety vanishes at the approach of temptation. To gain the friendship of worldlings, they will risk the consequences of losing the favor of God. The Lord is trying his people as silver is tried. Closer and still closer will come the searching test, until the heart is wholly submitted to God, or hardened in disobedience and rebellion. God distinguishes between those who walk in the path of self-denial and obedience, which he has marked out, and that class who choose to follow their own ways. Too late we may see, as did the children of Israel, the folly of neglecting and disregarding God's commands. {2.14}

As the Hebrews were warned not to assimilate to the heathen around them, so are we warned against conforming to the spirit and customs of the ungodly. Christ speaks to us in language that need not be misinterpreted: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Christ himself is the true pattern. His life of self-denial we are to imitate. His earnest labor for the salvation of souls we must copy. His purity and holiness must be reflected in us, or we shall never be permitted to sit with him in his throne. {2.15}

It is not safe for Christians to choose the society of those who have no connection with God, and whose course is displeasing to him. Yet how many professed Christians venture upon the forbidden ground. Many invite to their homes relatives who are vain, trifling, and ungodly; and often the example and influence of these irreligious visitors produce lasting impressions upon the minds of the children in the household. The influence thus exerted is similar to that which resulted from the association of the Hebrews with the godless Canaanites. {2.16}

God holds the parents accountable for disregarding his command to separate themselves and their families from these unholy influences. While we must live in the world, we are not to be of the world. We are forbidden to conform to its practices and fashions. The friendship of the ungodly is more dangerous than their enmity. It misleads and destroys thousands who might, by a proper and holy example, be led to become children of God. The minds of the young are thus made familiar with irreligion, vanity, ungodliness, pride, and immorality, and the heart not shielded by divine grace, gradually becomes corrupted. Almost imperceptibly, the youth learn to love the tainted atmosphere surrounding the ungodly. Evil angels gather about them, and they lose their relish for that which is pure, refined, and ennobling. {2.17}

Professed Christian parents will pay the greatest deference to their worldly and irreligious guests, while these very persons are leading the children of those who pay them so much polite attention, away from sobriety and from religion. The youth may be trying to lead a religious life, but the parents have invited the tempter into their household, and he weaves his net about the children. Old

and young become absorbed in questionable enjoyments, and the excitement of worldly pleasure. {2.18}

Many feel that they must make some concessions to please their irreligious relatives and friends. As it is not always easy to draw the line, one concession prepares the way for another, until those who were once true followers of Christ, are in life and character conformed to the customs of the world. The connection with God is broken. They are Christians in name only. When the test hour comes, then their hope is seen to be without foundation. They have sold themselves and their children to the enemy. They have dishonored God, and in the revelation of his righteous judgments, they will reap what they have sown. Christ will say to them, as he said to ancient Israel, "Ye have not obeyed my voice. Why have ye done this?" {2.19}

How are parents neglecting their precious opportunities? It is their privilege to serve and honor God in their household. They should reject every form of idolatry and corruption. They should keep the atmosphere of the home pure and healthful, thus attracting holy angels to be their guests. They should educate and discipline their children to be Bible readers and Bible Christians. {2.20}

Abraham's course in controlling his children and his household, and instructing them to fear and obey God, was approved of Heaven. Because he had been faithful to the trust already given, God committed to him greater responsibilities, making him the depository of divine truth for all the generations to come. He had honored God in his household, and God honored him before the world. It was declared that through his posterity, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. {2.21}

God would do great things for his people at the present day, if they would but imitate Abraham's example of faithfulness and obedience. The Lord is waiting and longing to reveal to us the right arm of his power. He will work mightily for us, if we will but faithfully improve the opportunities and blessings already given. {2.22}

"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," was the admonition of Christ to his disciples. We, too, have need of watchfulness and earnest prayer. We are surrounded by the perils of the last days. It is a time of special danger to the young. We should feel the most intense interest to secure the salvation of the children whom God has given us. When so much is at stake, how can we set up idols in our hearts? How can we be indolent and trifling, vain, proud, and careless? We have foes to fight within; we have victories to gain over our own sinful propensities. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are seeking continually to weaken our spirituality. We must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. {2.23}

Let us not yield to sloth, unbelief, and idolatry, as did the children of Israel. If the enemies of our souls are not driven out, they will increase in power, and will hold us in the slavery of sin. We can have no fellowship with the Lord's enemies, within or around us, without endangering our own souls, and the souls of those whom God has committed to our care. {2.24}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.7, 1.8 | 2) 1.8, 1.9 | 3) 1.11–1.12, 1.14–1.15 | 4) 1.20 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.2 | 2) 2.3, 2.4, 2.6 | 3) 2.10 | 4) 2.13 | 5) 2.16–2.19 |

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