

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“Those who humbly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, to know and to do God’s will, will not be in doubt of their obligations to God. For ‘if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.’” {Christian Education, p. 117}

WEEK 3 - IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL

I. Idolatry Punished

1. God wanted to drive out the nations from Canaan in order to bless Israel. What prevented Him from being able to manifest His power for them? How do many in our church do the same thing today?

2. Today we live in a prosperous country. We are surrounded with comfort and blessings and privileges. How do these things affect our duty to God?

3. How much influence does one godly family have on the world? What is Satan’s plan because of this?

4. What is our modern equivalent to the idols worshipped by the Israelites?

5. How does our life here on Earth compare with eternal life?

II. Defeat of Sisera

1. How did the strength of Israel's army compare with Sisera's? Was this a problem for the Lord? What happened?

III. Gideon Called

1. For forty years Israel prospered and had peace. Why did God withdraw His protection? Why couldn't He help them when they wanted deliverance?

2. How did Israel respond when they were rebuked by God's prophet and shown what they needed to do?

3. Gideon had a problem—the commandment of God to honor his father. But Gideon's father was a Baal worshipper. What was he to do?

4. What kind of people does God choose to do His work on Earth?

5. What impresses you the most in the last two paragraphs of this section—about our attitudes and how we should work for God?

Idolatry Punished**June 9, 1881**

Of the generation that arose after the death of Joshua, the Sacred Record states that "they knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger." ^[1.1]

Notwithstanding their apostasy and great wickedness, the Lord did not utterly forsake his people. From time to time he raised up faithful and valiant men to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies. But the hearts of the people had become so corrupted by an evil course that it was not an easy task to restore purity of faith or of worship. When the deliverer was dead, and the people were released from his authority, they would return to their idolatry. ^[1.2]

"They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died." ^[1.3]

The Lord sought to bring his people into a position where he could manifest his power in their behalf; but their hearts were set to depart from God, and they would not submit to his requirements. What blindness! what inexplicable folly! and equally incomprehensible is the course of those whom God has endowed with intellectual gifts and surrounded with temporal blessings, yet who will prefer worldly gain, and even the indulgence of debasing passions, to the favor of God and his infinite love. ^[1.4]

Although the Israelites, as a nation, departed from God, yet there was ever a remnant who resolutely withstood the evil influences surrounding them, and maintained their allegiance to Jehovah. These were constantly growing in courage and true godliness. They clung to the Lord more firmly as they saw the apostasy of their brethren. Their faith grew stronger, with every conflict. ^[1.5]

It is through the infinite mercy of God that his people at the present day are granted the high honor of being sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. But unless we give ourselves unreservedly to his service, and walk in obedience to his commandments, we can bring no proof that we are members of the royal family. Would that we could ever realize the love which God has manifested toward us fallen sinners, in giving his only Son for our salvation! We should never lose sight of the fact that those whom Christ redeems at such an infinite price are to be purified, that they may be unto him a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We should feel that Christ has placed upon us special honors in thus distinguishing us from the world, when he might have left us to perish in our sins. ^[1.6]

God would have his people present a marked contrast, in character and conduct, to the unbelieving world. We are to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." Only by constant watch-

fulness and earnest prayer, mingled with faith, can we preserve our peculiar, holy character as sons and daughters of God. {1.7}

It is far more easy to profess and resolve than to perform. Like ancient Israel, many covenant to cleave unto the Lord, and serve him, and then soon forget their vows, and join with the ungodly in the pursuits of worldly gain or pleasure. We should be jealous of ourselves, lest we depart from God. "For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven?" The blessings and privileges which we enjoy place us under the most solemn obligation to improve these gifts to the glory of our Creator. They should inspire in our hearts love to God, and an earnest determination to obey his requirements. Let us not become self-confident or presumptuous, but rather fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. {1.8}

The cause of Israel's weakness lay in their departure from God by disobedience to his commandments. The reason of the weakness and backsliding of modern Israel is their neglect to obey the divine law. God requires from all mankind obedience to his commandments. The whole world will be judged by the moral law according to their opportunity of becoming acquainted with it, whether by reason, or tradition, or the written word. {1.9}

God's law is spiritual. It takes cognizance of our most secret thoughts, purposes, and motives. The judgment, the will, and the affections must be controlled by its precepts. Its principles require love to God and to man; without this love, external compliance will not be accepted. This law is the standard of Christian character. Like a faithful mirror, it reveals to the children of men the defects in their moral character. It makes them watchful against temptation. It teaches them to be exact in judgment, and correct in spiritual discernment. The law of God is holy, just, and good. When our lives conform to this standard we are happy. {1.10}

The Lord was constantly seeking to impress upon ancient Israel their duty to obey his law; and those words of warning and reproof apply with as much greater force to this generation as our light and privileges are greater than were those of Israel. We have seen how the disregard of God's requirements brought trouble upon his ancient people, and finally resulted in their entire separation from him. Their sad history should be a lesson to us that nothing should be permitted to rival God in our affections. He alone can give rest, and peace, and happiness to the soul. God alone is entitled to our supreme love, to our entire confidence. He should be the object of our gratitude and adoration, our reverence and unquestioning submission. If we fail to love him with all the heart, we rob him of the service which is his due. {1.11}

Through his pride and ambition, Satan became the enemy of God and man. Though he forfeited his position in Heaven, he has succeeded in his presumptuous efforts to become the god of this world. Satan used the Canaanites as his instruments to allure Israel from God, and lead them to give honor to himself. It was to secure their own safety and happiness that the Lord commanded his people to extirpate those wicked nations. {1.12}

In their prosperity, Israel forgot God, as they had been warned that they would do. But reverses came. The Hebrews were subdued by the king of Mesopotamia, and held in severe bondage for eight years. In their distress, they found that their idolatrous connections could not help them. Then they remembered the wonderful works of God, and began to cry unto him, and the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, Othniel, Caleb's younger brother. The spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war, and the Lord delivered the king of Mesopotamia into his hand. {1.13}

When Othniel was designated as the man whom God had chosen to lead and deliver Israel, he did not refuse to take the responsibility. In the strength of God he at once commenced to repress idolatry as the Lord had commanded, to administer justice, and to elevate the standard of morality and religion. As Israel repented of their sins, the Lord manifested his great mercy toward them, and wrought for their deliverance. {1.14}

For forty years Othniel ruled in Israel. During this time the people remained faithful to the divine law, and consequently enjoyed peace and prosperity. But when his judicious and salutary control ceased with his death, the Israelites again relapsed into idolatry. And thus the story of backsliding and chastisement, of confession and deliverance, was repeated again and again. {1.15}

Had Israel been true to God, their example of faithfulness would have been followed by their children; but the sins of after generations testified to the indolence, and slothfulness, and neglect of the parents. A solemn responsibility still rests upon parents in the education of their children, to mould their characters after the pattern which God has approved, and not after the pattern of the world. Christian parents should teach their children the solemn and momentous truths of God's word, especially those truths which particularly relate to the present time. Faithful, earnest, and frequent prayer should be offered that these children may be fitted for any position of trust to which God shall call them, in society or in the church. They should be taught to love righteousness and to hate evil. {1.16}

One family educated according to the Bible rule may exert an influence directly upon thousands, and through them upon others, until multitudes shall be brought to fear and honor God, and a glorious company of white-robed ones shall stand round about the throne—a precious harvest from the seed sown by those faithful parents. But Satan is determined that this mighty influence for God and Heaven shall not be exerted in the home circle. He will deceive the parents if possible. He will make them careless, inattentive, indolent, in the service of God. He will make them negligent in training their children according to the Bible standard, negligent in conforming their own lives to the life of Christ; for Satan knows that in most cases he can thus secure the parents and children also, and through them can ruin many souls. {1.17}

As the Israelites were prone to idolatry, so are the people of the present age. The same adversary that succeeded in leading them astray, is now at work with ten-fold power to entice God's professed people from their simplicity, their sincerity, their earnestness and piety. His devices are all too successful. Worldly

things are allowed to attract the attention and absorb the interest. Professed Christians unite with the ungodly, and Christ ceases to be a welcome guest. {1.18}

The only safety for God's people is to put away the impious ambition to make a league with the world, to imitate her customs and practices. They must seek a closer connection with God, and give diligent heed to his word in counsels, reproofs, and promises. {1.19}

By their family government, parents are laying the very foundation of the child's character. God has committed to parents a solemn and responsible work. The mother of Moses trained her child for God. So patiently and perseveringly did she plant religious principles in his soul, that although afterward surrounded with great temptations, he was not corrupted. A prospective crown could not entice him from his allegiance to God. What our children may become we cannot tell; the future we cannot read; but God has appointed our work, and bidden us perform it with both worlds in view, that our children may be a blessing to the church and to the world here, and may shine forever in the courts of the Lord hereafter. {1.20}

Our earthly life, however long, honored, or useful it may be, is but childhood, frail, imperfect, and undeveloped. Manhood, with its full, perfect, glorious development, will come, when, freed from the taint of sin, we stand among the redeemed throng. Then we shall enjoy a life which measures with the life of God, and through everlasting ages we shall go on increasing in wisdom and knowledge. {1.21}

Defeat of Sisera

June 16, 1881

In the northern part of the land of Canaan, near Lake Merom, lay the possessions of Jabin, king of Hazor, and one of the most powerful and formidable of the enemies of Israel. In the days of Joshua, this monarch united with other kings against Israel, but was utterly defeated and his city was burned. {2.1}

After some years, however, the Canaanites recovered from their defeat, and rebuilt the city. A new king, Jabin, reigning like his predecessor in Hazor, rose into great power. The commander of his armies, Sisera, was an able and successful general. His forces were well equipped and powerful, including nine hundred chariots of iron. {2.2}

The Israelites, having again separated themselves from God by idolatry, were grievously oppressed by these enemies. The property and even the lives of the people were in constant danger. Hence the villages and lonely dwellings were deserted, and the people congregated in the walled cities. The high-roads were unoccupied, and the people went from place to place by unfrequented by-ways. At the places for drawing water, many were robbed and even murdered, and to add to their distress, the Israelites were unarmed. Among forty thousand men, not a sword or a spear could be found. {2.3}

For twenty years, the Israelites groaned under the yoke of the oppressor; then they turned from their idolatry, and with humiliation and repentance cried unto the Lord for deliverance. They did not cry in vain. There was dwelling in Israel, a woman illustrious for her piety, and through her the Lord chose to deliver his people. Her name was Deborah. She was known as a prophetess, and in the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice. {2.4}

The Lord communicated to Deborah his purpose to destroy the enemies of Israel, and bade her send for a man named Barak, of the tribe of Naphtali, and make known to him the instructions which she had received. She accordingly sent for Barak, and directed him to assemble ten thousand men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and make war upon the armies of King Jabin. {2.5}

Barak knew the scattered, disheartened, and unarmed condition of the Hebrews, and the strength and skill of their enemies. Although he had been designated by the Lord himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel, and had received the assurance that God would go with him and subdue their enemies, yet he was timid and distrustful. He accepted the message from Deborah as the word of God, but he had little confidence in Israel, and feared that they would not obey his call. He refused to engage in such a doubtful undertaking unless Deborah would accompany him, and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel. Deborah consented, but assured him that because of his lack of faith, the victory gained should not bring honor to him; for Sisera would be betrayed into the hands of a woman. {2.6}

Barak now marshaled an army of ten thousand men, and marched to Mount Tabor, as the Lord had directed. Sisera immediately assembled an immense and well-equipped force, expecting to surround the Hebrews and make them an easy prey. The Israelites were but poorly prepared for an encounter, and looked with terror upon the vast armies spread out in the plain beneath them, equipped with all the implements of warfare, and provided with the dreaded chariots of iron. These were so constructed as to be terribly destructive. Large, scythe-like knives were fastened to the axles, so that the chariots, being driven through the ranks of the enemy, would cut them down like wheat before the sickle. {2.7}

The Israelites had established themselves in a strong position in the mountains, to await a favorable opportunity for an attack. Encouraged by Deborah's assurance that the very day had come for signal victory, Barak led his army down into the open plain, and boldly made a charge upon the enemy. The God of battle fought for Israel, and neither skill in warfare, nor superiority of numbers and equipment, could withstand them. The hosts of Sisera were panic-stricken; in their terror they sought only how they might escape. Vast numbers were slain, and the strength of the invading army was utterly destroyed. The Israelites acted with courage and promptness; but God alone could have discomfited the enemy, and the victory could be ascribed to him alone. {2.8}

When Sisera saw that his army was defeated, he left his chariot, and endeavored to make his escape on foot, as a common soldier. Approaching the tent of Heber, one of the descendants of Jethro, the fugitive was invited to find shelter there. In the absence of Heber, Jael, his wife, courteously offered Sisera a refreshing draught, and opportunity for repose, and the weary general soon fell asleep. {2.9}

Jael was at first ignorant of the character of her guest, and she resolved to conceal him; but when she afterward learned that he was Sisera, the enemy of God and of his people, her purpose changed. As he lay before her asleep, she overcame her natural reluctance to such an act, and slew him by driving a nail through his

temples, pinning him to the earth. As Barak, in pursuit of his enemy, passed that way, he was called in by Jael to behold the vain-glorious captain dead at his feet—slain by the hand of a woman. {2.10}

Deborah celebrated the triumph of Israel in a most sublime and impassioned song. She ascribed to God all the glory of their deliverance, and bade the people praise him for his wonderful works. She called upon the kings and princes of surrounding nations to hear what God had wrought for Israel, and to take warning not to do them harm. She showed that honor and power belong to God, and not to men, or to their idols. She portrayed the awful exhibitions of divine power and majesty displayed at Sinai. She set before Israel their helpless and distressed condition, under the oppression of their enemies, and related in glowing language the history of their deliverance. {2.11}

The destruction of Sisera and his forces, effectually subdued the Canaanites. After this, the land had peace forty years. But prosperity did not bring Israel nearer to God. {2.12}

Gideon Called

June 23, 1881

Alas, that in the history of God's chosen people the sorrowful story of apostasy and its punishment must be so oft repeated! Forty years of peace elapsed after the destruction of Sisera and his host, and again "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Heretofore the hand of the oppressor had fallen but lightly on the tribes dwelling east of the Jordan, but in the present calamities they were the chief sufferers. {3.1}

The Midianites and Amalekites, who dwelt on the eastern borders of the land and in the deserts beyond, were still the bitter and unrelenting enemies of Israel. These nations had been well-nigh destroyed by the Israelites in the days of Moses, but they had since increased greatly, and had now become a numerous and powerful people. They had thirsted for revenge, and now the opportunity had come. {3.2}

Because of their sins, the protecting hand of God was withdrawn from Israel, and they were left to the mercies of their enemies. The wild, fierce inhabitants of the desert, "as grasshoppers for a multitude," came swarming into the land, with their flocks and herds, and pitched their tents in plain and valley. They came as soon as the harvests began to ripen, and remained until the last fruits of the earth had been gathered. They stripped the fields of their increase, and robbed and maltreated the inhabitants, and then returned to the deserts. Thus the Israelites had been forced to abandon the open country, and to congregate in the walled towns; and many had even found shelter in caves among the mountains. {3.3}

For seven years this oppression continued, and then in their distress the people remembered Him who had so often delivered them; and they cried unto the Lord for help. But while they were very desirous to be relieved from their oppressors, they did not exercise true repentance for their sins. {3.4}

God could not help them in their state of impiety. But through his prophet he addressed them in words of warning and reproof, and the message was publicly proclaimed from city to city throughout the land. "Thus saith the Lord God of

Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But ye have not obeyed my voice.”^{3.5}

We might expect the Israelites to harden their hearts against the reproofs of the prophet. We listen to hear them respond, “We do not wish to be continually reminded of our sins. Speak to us words of peace, encouragement, and hope, but do not keep ever before us the dismal relation of our backslidings.” How often do the professed people of God at the present day turn away from instruction, and neglect oft-repeated warnings. They dislike to be reminded of their defects of character. They are unwilling to be reproofed for their pride and idolatry in turning from the requirements of God to seek the gains, friendship, or pleasures of the world.^{3.6}

Such was the manner in which some of the Israelites received the message of reproof. Had the people been enjoying prosperity, this feeling of rebellion would, no doubt, have been general; but in their distress from the oppression of their enemies, with want and even starvation staring them in the face, they felt their need of help from God. They knew that unless he whom they had so dishonored should manifest his power for their deliverance, they must perish. In deep humility they accepted the message of reproof, confessed their sins, and implored the mercy of the Most High.^{3.7}

Their prayers were heard, and again the Lord sent forth the man of his choice to act as deliverer for Israel. The one thus selected was Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh. The Midianites had swept like a devouring plague over the land. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Hebrews could secrete sufficient food to save them from actual starvation. Gideon had, however, retained possession of a small quantity of wheat, and fearing to beat it out in the threshing floor, he had taken it to the vineyard, near the wine-press. The time of ripe grapes being far off, the attention of the Midianites would not be directed to that place.^{3.8}

As he thus labored in secrecy and silence, he sadly meditated upon the condition of Israel. He thought of her glorious triumphs in the past, of her present abject condition, and of the still darker prospect for the future, and his spirit was stirred within him. With deep earnestness he considered how the oppressor's yoke might be broken from off his people. To all appearance this was impossible. The Israelites were disheartened and discouraged. They had dishonored God by their idolatry, and they felt little confidence that he would work for them.^{3.9}

Gideon almost despaired of inspiring the people with faith or courage, but he knew that the Lord would work mightily for Israel as he had done in the past. His whole soul cried out after God. He felt that although he might stand alone, yet if he had the assurance that God was with him, he would not fear to strike a blow against the oppressors.^{3.10}

While Gideon's mind was absorbed in meditations like these, suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him and addressed him with the words, “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.”^{3.11}

The melancholy nature of Gideon's thoughts is revealed by his answer, "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." {3.12}

The messenger of Heaven replied, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?" {3.13}

With a sense of his own unfitnes for so important a work, Gideon exclaimed, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." {3.14}

Then the angel gave him the gracious assurance, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." {3.15}

Gideon desired some token that the one now addressing him was the same that spoke to Moses in the burning bush. The angel had veiled the divine glory of his presence, but it was no other than Christ, the Son of God. When a prophet or an angel delivered a divine message, his words were, "The Lord saith, I will do this," but it is stated of the Person who talked with Gideon, "The Lord said unto him, I will be with thee." {3.16}

Desiring to show special honor to his illustrious visitor, and having obtained the assurance that the Angel would tarry, Gideon hastened to his tent, and out of his scanty store prepared a kid and unleavened cakes, which he brought forth to set before him. Gideon was poor, yet he was ready to use hospitality without grudging. {3.17}

As the gift was presented, the Angel said, "Take the flesh and unleavened cakes, and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." Gideon did so, and then the Lord gave him the sign which he desired. With the staff in his hand, the Angel touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and a fire rose up out of the rock and consumed the whole as a sacrifice, and not as a hospitable meal; for he was God, and not man. After this token of his divine character, the Angel disappeared. {3.18}

When convinced that he had looked upon the Son of God, Gideon was filled with fear, and exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." {3.19}

Then the Lord graciously appeared to Gideon a second time and said, "Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." These gracious words were spoken by the same compassionate Saviour who said to the tempted disciples upon the stormy sea, "It is I; be not afraid,"—he who appeared to those sorrowing ones in the upper chamber, and spoke the selfsame words addressed to Gideon, "Peace be unto you." The very same Jesus who walked in humiliation as a man among the children of men, came to his ancient people, to council and direct, to command, to encourage, and reprove them. {3.20}

The family to which Gideon belonged was grievously infected with idolatry. His father erected at Ophrah, where he dwelt, a large altar to Baal, at which the people of the towns worshiped. Gideon was commanded to destroy this altar, to cut down the groves that surrounded it, and in its stead to erect an altar to Jehovah, over the rock on which the offering had been consumed, and then to offer a sacrifice unto

the Lord. Gideon faithfully carried out these directions, performing the work by night, lest he should be compelled to desist if he attempted it by day. {3.21}

The deliverer of Israel must declare war upon idolatry before he went to battle with the enemies of his people. He must esteem the honor of God above the credit of his father, and regard the divine commands as more obligatory than parental authority. {3.22}

The offering of sacrifice unto the Lord had been committed to the priests and Levites, and had been restricted to the altar at Shiloh; but He who had established the Jewish economy, and to whom all its services pointed, had power to change its requirements. In this instance he saw fit to depart from the ritual appointment. It was of great importance that the deliverance of Israel should be preceded by a solemn protest against the worship of Baal, and an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the only true and living God. {3.23}

When the men of the city, early in the morning, came to pay their devotions to Baal, they were greatly surprised and enraged at what had taken place. Soon it was known that Gideon had done this, and then nothing but his blood could satisfy those deluded idolaters. They at once began to put forth efforts to take his life. {3.24}

Gideon had told his father, Joash, of the Angel's visit, and the promise that Israel should be delivered. He also related to him the divine command to destroy the altar of Baal. The Spirit of God moved upon the heart of Joash. He saw that the gods whom he had worshiped had no power even to save themselves from utter destruction and hence they could not protect their worshipers. When the idolatrous multitude clamored for the death of Gideon, Joash fearlessly stood in his defense, and endeavored to show the people how powerless and unworthy of trust or adoration were their gods: "Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning; if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar." {3.25}

He reminded them that the penalty of death would justly rest upon themselves instead of Gideon, for they had broken the law of God against idolatry. {3.26}

The whole transaction, with the stirring appeals of Gideon, produced a powerful effect upon the people of Ophrah. All thoughts of violence were dismissed; and when, moved by the Spirit of the Lord, Gideon sounded the trumpet of war, they were among the first to gather to him. He then sent messengers throughout his own tribe of Manasseh, and also to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and all cheerfully obeyed the call. {3.27}

Gideon deeply felt his own insufficiency for the great work before him. He dared not place himself at the head of the army without positive evidence that God had called him to this work, and that he would be with him. He prayed, "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou has said." {3.28}

The Lord granted the prayer of his servant. In the morning the fleece was wet, while the ground was dry. But now unbelief suggested that wool naturally absorbs

moisture when there is any in the air, and that the test was not decisive. Hence, he asked a renewal of the sign, humbly pleading that unbelief might not move the Lord to anger. His request was granted. {3.29}

The Lord does not always choose for his work men of the greatest talents, but he selects those whom he can best use. Individuals who might do good service for God, may for a time be left in obscurity, apparently unnoticed and unemployed by their Master. But if they faithfully perform the duties of their humble position, cherishing a willingness to labor and to sacrifice for him, he will in his own time intrust them with greater responsibilities. {3.30}

Before honor is humility. The Lord can use most effectually those who are most sensible of their own unworthiness and inefficiency. He will teach them to exercise the courage of faith. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to his might, wise by connecting their ignorance with his wisdom. {3.31}

God will accept the services of all who will work in obedience to his will, who will not for any consideration bring a stain upon the conscience, who will not permit any influence to lead them from the path of duty. If we choose, we may make the record of our lives such as we shall not be ashamed to own when the secrets of all hearts shall stand revealed, and every man's work shall be weighed in the balances of truth. The Lord employs men as his co-laborers, but let none imagine that they are essential to the work of God, that they cannot be dispensed with. {3.32}

The teachable and trusting ones, having a right purpose and a pure heart, need not wait for great occasions or for extraordinary abilities before they employ their powers. They should not stand irresolute, questioning, and fearing what the world will say or think of them. We are not to weary ourselves with anxious care, but to go on, quietly performing with faithfulness the work which God assigns us, and leaving the result wholly with him. {3.33}

If they but preserve their sincerity, their meekness, and humility, the poorest, weakest, and humblest of Christ's followers, working in love, may start waves of blessing that shall go on widening and deepening, to refresh and bless the world. In order that they may do this, Christ must shine forth in their character. Let the daily life be a reflection of the life of Christ, and the testimony thus borne to the world will have a powerful influence. Heaven alone will reveal the fruits of an unselfish, holy life. The great contest of truth against error must be carried forward by men who kindle their taper at the divine altar. Evil may seem for a time to prevail, but in the end righteousness will gain the victory. Every righteous act will be recorded in the book of life, and will be remembered and rewarded of God. {3.34}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.4 | 2) 1.8 | 3) 1.17 | 4) 1.18–1.19 | 5) 1.21 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.3, 2.7–2.8 |

Section 3: | 1) 2.12, 3.1, 3.3–3.5 | 2) 3.6–3.7 | 3) 3.22 | 4) 3.30–3.32 | 5) 3.33–3.34 |

This lesson is from a 13-week (1-quarter) set of Sabbath School lessons for youth and young adults called *Prophets & Judges*, based on a series of articles by Ellen G. White in *The Signs of the Times*, 1881–1882.

Other youth/young adult lessons are available:

- Early Writings (2 quarters)
A look at the messages God gave especially to the SDA church. (Each class member will need a copy of Early Writings.)
- Tidal Waves (1 quarter)
A powerful series on the coming tidal waves of fanaticism. Learn how to recognize fanaticism and avoid becoming part of it.
- Redemption (4 quarters)
Taken from the series of six booklets by Ellen White on the life of Christ which include many insights not in The Desire of Ages.
- Deeper (1 quarter)
Based on the book Deeper by Eugene Prewitt, these Bible studies cover many important topics that must be understood today.

You may order printed copies of the complete set of lessons and teacher answer keys from Young Disciple Ministries.

509-722-4300
www.YoungDisciple.com

Copyright © 2013. All rights reserved.