

# PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

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“If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says. If conviction comes as you search, if you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the truth, do not misinterpret the truth in order to suit your own belief, but accept the light given. Open mind and heart that you may behold wondrous things out of God’s word.” {Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 112}

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## WEEK 14 - SAMUEL THE PROPHET

### I. The Schools of the Prophets

1. The Lord reserved to Himself the education and instruction of Israel. In His plan, where were children to be educated?

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2. What was the purpose of the schools of the prophets?

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3. What kind of subjects did they study?

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4. How were these schools different from our theological seminaries today?

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5. What part did music play in God's plan for these schools? How does this compare with how music is taught and used today?

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6. What principles should guide our use of music in worship services?

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7. What are the serious problems with the schools of today?

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8. How should our schools and home schools be run?

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## II. Israel Desire a King

1. How did Samuel feel when Israel asked for a king? What did he do with those feelings?

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2. God knew that having a king would be a disaster for Israel, and yet He said “yes”. Why?

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3. How should Israel have viewed the fact that they were not like other nations?

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4. What was their response to the warnings against having a king?

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5. In what way could we make the same mistake today?

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6. If we faithfully follow God, and become active and useful in His service, what should we expect from others? How should we deal with that?

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**The Schools of the Prophets****June 22, 1882**

The institutions of human society find their best models in the word of God. For those of instruction in particular, there is no lack of both precept and example. Lessons of great profit, even in this age of educational progress, may be found in the history of God's ancient people. {1.1}

The Lord reserved to himself the education and instruction of Israel. His care was not restricted to their religious interests. Whatever affected their mental or physical well-being, became also an object of divine solicitude, and came within the province of divine law. {1.2}

God commanded the Hebrews to teach their children his requirements, and to make them acquainted with all his dealings with their people. The home and the school were one. In the place of stranger lips the loving hearts of the father and mother were to give instruction to their children. Thoughts of God were associated with all the events of daily life in the home dwelling. The mighty works of God in the deliverance of his people were recounted with eloquence and reverential awe. The great truths of God's providence, and of the future life, were impressed on the young mind. It became acquainted with the true, the good, the beautiful. {1.3}

By the use of figures and symbols, the lessons given were illustrated, and thus more firmly fixed in the memory. Through this animated imagery the child was, almost from infancy, initiated into the mysteries, the wisdom, and the hopes of his fathers, and guided in a way of thinking and feeling and anticipating, that reached beyond things seen and transitory, to the unseen and eternal. {1.4}

From this education many a youth of Israel came forth vigorous in body and in mind, quick to perceive and strong to act, the heart prepared like good ground for the growth of the precious seed, the mind trained to see God in the words of revelation and the scenes of nature. The stars of heaven, the trees and flowers of the field, the lofty mountains, the babbling brooks, all spoke to him, and the voices of the prophets, heard throughout the land, met a response in his heart.

{1.5}

Such was the training of Moses in that lowly cabin home in Goshen; of Samuel, by the faithful Hannah; of David, in the hill-dwelling at Bethlehem; of Daniel, before the scenes of the captivity separated him from the home of his fathers. Such, too, was the early life of Christ, in the humble home at Nazareth; such the training by which the child Timothy learned from the lips of his "mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois," the truths of the Holy Writ. {1.6}

Further provision was made for the instruction of the young, by the establishment of the "school of the prophets." If a youth was eager to obtain a better knowledge of the Scriptures, to search deeper into the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, this school was open to him. {1.7}

These institutions were missionary seminaries, designed to maintain a higher standard of morals and religion at a period when the deplorable condition of degeneracy and corruption called loudly for such reformatory effort. The aged Eli had dishonored the Lord by his neglect to restrain and control his children.

These degenerate sons called license liberty, and under the cover of their holy office practiced the most debasing sins. The character of these men as leaders of the nation, indicates clearly the state of things existing at that time. Had Eli restrained his excessive fondness for his sons, and performed his duty to them as a father and a priest, theirs had been a nobler life and a happier fate. They might have been an honor to their father, the crown of the nation, and the guardians of the sanctuary. But their crimes had polluted the ordinances of the Lord, and corrupted his people. To prevent the moral degeneracy from becoming universal, he resorted to a speedy and powerful remedy. Divine justice destroyed the father and the sons. {1.8}

Then amid the moral darkness there shone forth once more the light of purity and holiness and truth. The chosen leader was a youthful Levite, whose infant years had been guarded by a faithful, praying mother, whose boyhood had been unsullied by the surrounding corruption. Samuel was now invested by the God of Israel with the threefold office of judge, prophet and priest. Placing one hand in the hand of Christ, and with the other taking the helm of the nation, he holds it with such wisdom and firmness as to preserve Israel from destruction.

{1.9}

By Samuel, the schools of the prophets were established, to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, and to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth. These schools proved a great blessing to Israel, promoting that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and furnishing it with men qualified to act, in the fear of God, as leaders and counselors. In the accomplishment of this object, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they communed with God and studied his word and his works, they were imbued with wisdom from above, as well as richly endowed with intellectual treasures. The instructors were men not only well versed in divine truth, but those who had themselves enjoyed communion with God, and had received the special endowment of his spirit. They enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and piety. {1.10}

In Samuel's day there were two of these schools—one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-jearim, where the ark then was. Two more were added in Elijah's time, at Jericho and Bethel, and others were afterward established at Samaria and Gilgal. {1.11}

The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor as husbandmen and mechanics. In Israel this was not considered strange or degrading; indeed it was regarded a crime to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor. In obedience to the command of God, every child was taught some trade, even though he was to be educated for holy office. Many of the religious teachers supported themselves by manual labor. Even so late as the time of Christ, it was not considered anything degradable that Paul and Aquila earned livelihood by their labor as tent-makers. {1.12}

The chief subjects of study in these schools were, the law of God with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. The manner

of instruction was far different from that in the theological schools of the present day, from which many students graduate with less real knowledge of God and religious truth than when they entered. In those schools of olden time, it was the grand object of all study to learn the will of God and the duties of his people. In the records of sacred history, were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. From the events of the past were drawn lessons of instruction for the future. The great truths set forth by the types and shadows were brought to view, and faith grasped the central object of all that system, the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world. {1.13}

The Hebrew language was cultivated as the most sacred tongue in the world. A spirit of devotion was cherished. Not only were students taught the duty of prayer, but they were taught how to pray, how to approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in him, and how to understand and obey the teachings of his Spirit. Sanctified intellects brought forth from the treasure-house of God, things new and old. {1.14}

The Spirit of God was signally manifested in these seminaries, in prophecy and sacred song. Upon one occasion a company of prophets met Saul at the "hill of God," not far from Gibeah, with psaltery and tabret, pipe and harp. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, these men were prophesying and praising God with the music of instruments and the voice of song. The Spirit of the Lord and his converting power came also upon Saul, and he prophesied with them. {1.15}

The art of sacred melody was diligently cultivated in those schools of the prophets. No frivolous waltz was heard, nor flippant song that should extol man and divert the attention from God; but sacred, solemn psalms of praise to the Creator, exalting his name and recounting his wondrous works. Thus music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which was pure and noble and elevating, and to awaken in the soul, devotion and gratitude to God.

{1.16}

How different the objects to which musical talent is often devoted! How many who profess this gift employ it to honor and exalt self, instead of glorifying God! A love for music leads the unwary to unite with world-lovers in pleasure gatherings where God has forbidden his children to go. Thus that which is a great blessing when rightly used, becomes one of Satan's most successful agencies to allure the mind from God and from eternal things. {1.17}

Music forms a part of God's worship in the courts above. We should endeavor in our songs of praise to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. I have often been pained to hear untrained voices, pitched to the highest key, literally shrieking the sacred words of some hymn of praise. How inappropriate those sharp, rasping voices for the solemn, joyous worship of God. I long to stop my ears, or flee from the place, and I rejoice when the painful exercise is ended. {1.18}

Those who make singing a part of divine worship should select hymns with music appropriate to the occasion, not funeral notes, but cheerful yet solemn melodies. The voice can and should be modulated, softened, and subdued. {1.19}

The proper training of the voice should be regarded as an important part of education. The singer should train himself to utter every word distinctly. It should be remembered that singing as a part of religious service is as much an act of worship as is the prayer. The heart must feel the spirit of the words, to give them right expression. Parents should not employ to instruct their children, a teacher of music who has no reverence for sacred things, nor should they allow them to learn and practice dance songs and frivolous music. [1.20]

How wide the difference, between the schools of ancient times, under the supervision of God himself, and our modern institutions of learning. Few schools are to be found that are not governed by the maxims and customs of the world. There are few in which a Christian parent's love for his children will not meet with bitter disappointment. [1.21]

In what consists the superior excellence of our systems of education? Is it the classical literature which is crowded into our sons? Is it in the ornamental accomplishments which our daughters obtain at the sacrifice of health or mental strength? Is it in the fact that modern instruction is so generally separated from the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation? Does the chief excellence of popular education consist in treating the individual branches of study, apart from that deeper investigation which involves the searching of the Scriptures, and a knowledge of God and the future life? Does it consist in imbuing the minds of the young with heathenish conceptions of liberty, morality, and justice? Is it safe to trust our youth to the guidance of those blind teachers who study the sacred oracles with far less interest than they manifest in the classical authors of ancient Greece and Rome? [1.22]

"Education," remarks a writer, "is becoming a system of seduction." The most bitter feelings, the most ungovernable passions, are excited by the course of unwise and ungodly teachers. There is a deplorable lack of proper restraint and judicious discipline. The minds of the young are easily excited, and drink in insubordination like water. [1.23]

The existing ignorance of God's word, among a people professedly Christian, is alarming. The youth in our public schools, have been robbed of the blessings of holy things. Superficial talk, mere sentimentalism, passes for instruction in morals and religion; but it lacks the vital characteristics of real godliness. The justice and mercy of God, the beauty of holiness, and the sure reward of right-doing; the heinous character of sin, and the certainty of punishment—these great truths are not impressed upon the minds of the young. [1.24]

Skepticism and infidelity, under some pleasing disguise, or as a covert insinuation, too often find their way into school books. In some instances, the most pernicious principles have been inculcated by teachers. Evil associates are teaching the youth lessons of crime, dissipation, and licentiousness that are horrible to contemplate. Many of our public schools are hot-beds of vice. [1.25]

How can our youth be shielded from these contaminating influences? There must be schools established upon the principles, and controlled by the precepts, of God's word. Another spirit must be in our schools, to animate and sanctify every branch of education. Divine co-operation must be fervently sought. And

we shall not seek in vain. The promises of God's word are ours. We may expect the presence of the heavenly Teacher. We may see the Spirit of the Lord diffused as in the schools of the prophets, and every object partake of a divine consecration. Science will then be, as she was to Daniel, the handmaid of religion; and every effort, from first to last, will tend to the salvation of man, soul, body, and spirit, and the glory of God through Christ. {1.26}

### Israel Desire a King

July 13, 1882

The first form of government over men was established by God himself, and acknowledged him as the only Sovereign. He made known his will by written commands and revelations, by messages to his chosen servants, by dreams, by signs, and wonders. He would have continued to be their king, had they [been] content with his paternal care. {2.1}

At the beginning, the father was constituted priest and magistrate of his own family. Then came the patriarchal rule, which was like that of the family, but extended over a greater number. When Israel became a distinct people, the twelve tribes, springing from the twelve sons of Jacob, had each a leader. These leaders, or elders, were assembled whenever any matter that pertained to the general interest was to be settled. The high priest was the visible representative of Christ, the Redeemer of his people. When the Hebrews settled in Canaan, judges were appointed, who resembled governors. These rulers were invested with authority to declare war and proclaim peace for the nation; but God was still the recognized king of Israel, and he continued to reveal his will to these chosen leaders, and to manifest through them his power. {2.2}

But increase of population, and intercourse with other nations, brought a change. The Israelites adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors, and thus sacrificed to a great degree, their own peculiar, holy character. Their worship became less earnest and sincere. Gradually they lost their reverence for God, and ceased to prize the high honor of being his chosen people. Dazzled by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity, and desired to be freed from the rule of their Divine Sovereign. As they departed from the Lord, the different tribes became envious and jealous of one another. Strife and dissensions increased, until it was vainly imagined that the installation of a king was the only means by which harmony could be restored. {2.3}

The government of Israel had never been conducted with so great wisdom and success as under Samuel's sole administration. In no previous ruler had the people reposed so implicit confidence. He had labored with untiring and disinterested zeal for the highest good of the nation. In every transaction he had been governed by justice and benevolence. And not only was his course wholly unselfish, but he was often inattentive to his own dues and rights. Hence, the selfishness manifested by his sons appeared more striking in contrast with the course of their faithful father. {2.4}

The arrogance and injustice of these judges caused much dissatisfaction among the people, who were far more troubled by dangers threatening their temporal interests than they had been by the profligacy and sacrilege of Hophni and

Phinehas. Ere long many who considered themselves aggrieved presented their complaints to the elders of Israel. A pretext was thus furnished for urging the change which had long been secretly desired. [2.5]

Had Samuel been informed on the unjust course of his sons, he would at once have removed them, and appointed others, more upright, in their place. When, however, the complaint against his sons was laid before him, followed immediately by the petition for a king, Samuel saw that the real motive was discontent and pride. He perceived that the desire did not spring from a sudden impulse, but was the result of long deliberation and a determined purpose. [2.6]

The petitioners were careful to state that they could find no fault with Samuel's administration; but they urged that he would soon be too old to serve them, and his sons had given evidence that they could not be trusted. Despite these explanations and professions of regard, Samuel was deeply wounded. He looked upon the request as a censure upon himself, and a direct effort to set him aside. But he did not reveal his feelings. He uttered no reproaches because of the ingratitude of the people. Had he done this, one bitter recrimination might have wrought great harm. [2.7]

Samuel carried this new, and to him difficult matter to the Lord in prayer, and sought counsel alone from him. His petitions were heard; "and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee." The prophet was reproved for grieving at the conduct of the people toward himself as an individual. They had not manifested disrespect for him, but for the authority of God, who had appointed the rulers of his people. [2.8]

The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their king—when the laws and the government which he had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations. Moses himself in his last address, appealed to Israel, "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" [2.9]

And yet, notwithstanding the Lord had so often wrought mightily for their deliverance, the Israelites were now disposed to attribute all their disasters to their manner of government. The Lord permitted his people to follow their own course, because they refused to be guided by his counsels. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in his anger. In their pride they desired to be like other nations, not considering that with the pomp of royalty they must endure also its tyranny and exaction. This would be a bitter exchange for the mild and beneficent government of God. [2.10]

It is a hazardous step to place the scepter in the hands of finite man, and crown him monarch. God understands the human heart far better than men understand it themselves. A departure from the Lord's wise arrangement would

pervert authority into tyranny, and subjection into slavery. Even if a ruler were naturally merciful and benevolent, unlimited power over his fellow-men would tend to make him a despot. Such power God alone is able to use with justice and wisdom. {2.11}

The Lord had, through his prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king. But it by no means follows that this form of government was according to his will. Though he foresees all things, he often permits men to take their own course, when they refuse to be guided by the counsels of infinite wisdom. In this instance, he instructed Samuel to grant their request, but to faithfully warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course: "Now therefore hearken unto their voice. Howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." {2.12}

Samuel accordingly assembled the people, and faithfully represented to them the burdens which they would have to bear under a king, and the contrast between such a state of oppression and their present comparatively free and prosperous condition. He reminded them that their king would imitate the pomp and luxury of other monarchs, to support which, grievous exactions upon their persons and property would be necessary. He would take the young men for charioteers and horsemen, and would even employ some to run before and about his chariots. A standing army would require their services; and they would also be required to till *his* fields, to reap *his* harvest, and to manufacture for *his* service instruments of war. {2.13}

The daughters of Israel, who should become the centers of happy homes, would be taken for confectioners and bakers, to minister to the luxury of the royal household. To support his kingly state he would find pretexts to seize upon the best of their lands, bestowed upon the people by Jehovah himself. The most valuable of their servants also, and of their cattle, would he take and "put them to his own work." {2.14}

Besides all this, an oppressive taxation would be instituted. The people already gave to the Lord a tenth of all their income, the profits of their labor, or the products of the soil. The king would require an additional tithe of all. "Ye shall be his servants," concluded the prophet. "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." {2.15}

But the people were bent upon following their own course. The solemn warnings from God, through his aged prophet, had no effect to turn them from their purpose. They returned the answer, "Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." {2.16}

"Like other nations"—the Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated Israel from every other people, to make them his own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen. What blindness! What ingratitude! {2.17}

With deep sadness, Samuel listened to the words of the people, and then he again sought divine guidance. And the Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king." {2.18}

The prophet had done his duty. He had faithfully presented the warning, and it had been rejected. He could say no more. With a heavy heart he dismissed the people, and himself departed to prepare for the great change in the government. {2.19}

Would that this passage in Israel's history had no counterpart in the present experience of God's people! But alas, we see it frequently repeated! A discontented desire for change, a longing to conform to worldly plans and worldly customs, too often controls even professed Christians. As they depart from God, they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Those who stand firm against conformity to the world, discouraging pride, superfluity, and extravagance, and enjoining humility and self-denial, are looked upon as critical, peculiar, and severe. Some argue that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs, Christians might exert a stronger influence in the world. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the source of their strength. Becoming friends of the world, they are the enemies of God. {2.20}

The dissatisfied longing for worldly power and display, is as difficult to cure now as in the days of Samuel. Christians seek to build as worldlings build, to dress as worldlings dress—to imitate the customs and practice of those who worship only the god of this world. The instructions of God's word, the counsels and reproofs of his servants, and even warnings sent directly from his throne, seem powerless to subdue this unworthy ambition. When the heart is estranged from God, almost any pretext is sufficient to justify a disregard of his authority. The promptings of pride and self-love are gratified at whatever expense to the cause of God. {2.21}

The unconsecrated and world-loving are ever ready to criticise and condemn those who have stood fearlessly for God and the right. If a defect is seen in one whom the Lord has intrusted with great responsibilities, then all his former devotion is forgotten, and an effort is made to silence his voice and destroy his influence. But let these self-constituted judges remember that the Lord reads the heart. They cannot hide its secrets from his searching gaze. God declares that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. {2.22}

The most useful men are seldom appreciated. Those who have labored most actively and unselfishly for their fellow-men, and who have been instrumental in achieving the greatest results, are often repaid with ingratitude and neglect. When such men find themselves set aside, their counsels slighted and despised, they may feel that they are suffering great injustice. But let them learn from the example of Samuel not to justify or vindicate themselves, unless the Spirit of God unmistakably prompts to such a course. Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God, not merely show contempt for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, his reproofs and counsel, that are set at naught; his authority that is rejected. {2.23}

When men persist in following their own course, without seeking counsel from the Lord, he often grants their desires, in order to reveal their folly or punish their iniquity. When they lightly esteem the words of his servants, he may permit the voice of counsel and warning to be silenced. But human pride and wisdom will be found a dangerous guide. That which is most desired by the unconsecrated heart will prove the most painful and bitter in the end. {2.24}

Let the servants of God carry their burdens to their compassionate Redeemer. His ear is ever open to their prayers. His eye notes every sacrifice and every sorrow. The neglect and injustice which they endure here will but make their reward greater in the coming day. {2.25}

### Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.3 | 2) 1.7–1.8 | 3) 1.13 | 4) 1.13–1.15, 1.21 | 5) 1.16, 1.17, 1.20 | 6) 1.18–1.20  
| 7) 1.22–1.25 | 8) 1.26 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.7–2.8 | 2) 2.10, 2.12, 2.24 | 3) 2.17 | 4) 2.16 | 5) 2.20–2.21 | 6) 2.23, 2.25 |

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:

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