

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“The true higher education is gained by studying and obeying the word of God. But when God’s word is laid aside for books that do not lead to God and the kingdom of heaven, the education acquired is a perversion of the name.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 107)

WEEK 19 - WALK IN THE LIGHT

I. Walk in the Light—Part 2

1. Why did God guard the ark of the covenant with such jealous care?

2. What are the conditions of salvation, and how acceptable is it for us to select which portions of God’s Law we will obey?

3. What use should we make of the intellect and reason God has given us?

4. As we discern the will of God, what things should we not allow to keep us from the path of strict obedience to His will?
-
-
-
5. Some say, "You are too particular. In order to have influence with the world, you must do as the world does." How should we look at such ideas? Can anything change our obligation to obey the Law of God?
-
-
-

II. Prompt and Cheerful Obedience

1. What kind of obedience does God require?
-
-
-
2. What was circumcision a sign of, and what would have happened if Israel had faithfully kept its covenant?
-
-
-
3. What happens to us when we disobey? What is the result of delaying to obey?
-
-
-
4. What is happening to our precious probationary time?
-
-
-
5. How can we overcome sin and walk in obedience?
-
-
-

Walk in the Light—Part 2**July 24, 1884**

Says the psalmist, “The law of the Lord is perfect.” It is also changeless, the standard of righteousness, or right-doing, through all the ages. It is “the perfect law of liberty;” hence the happiness of man as well as the glory of God demand that it be respected and obeyed. {1.1}

God has highly honored his holy law. The ark of the testament, containing the law engraven on tables of stone, was the symbol of his presence with his people. This sacred ark was interwoven with the national history of the Israelites as well as with their religious faith. It was with them in their wanderings in the wilderness; and when the people passed over Jordan to take possession of the promised land, by the command of God the ark was borne by the priests into the midst of the river, and there remained until all Israel had passed over in the path that through the favor of God had been opened for them. It was often borne by the armies of Israel as a token that God was with his people, and made their cause his own. When this was the case, their enemies were terrified; for they knew that nothing could stand before the mighty God of Israel. But if they transgressed that law, they forfeited the divine protection, and were delivered into the hands of their enemies. {1.2}

In consequence of the wickedness of the people, and because they rashly carried the emblem of his presence into the camp when the Lord was not with them, God gave the children of Israel into the hands of their enemies, the Philistines, and the ark was taken. But the heathen were not permitted to regard the sacred ark of God as a common thing. Dagon, their god, was humbled before it; and in every city where the ark was taken, the people were sorely afflicted. And the Philistines said, “The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us; for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.” {1.3}

“The Philistines called for the priests and diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.” These men counseled the people not to send the ark away empty, but to return a trespass offering with it. Said they: “Ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart.” And the Philistines did so; and they put the ark in the new cart, with the jewels of gold for a trespass offering in a coffer beside it. {1.4}

The kine came with a straight course to Bethshemesh on the borders of Israel, and the men of Bethshemesh offered them as an offering unto the Lord. But when the Israelites, from motives of idle curiosity, looked familiarly into the ark, fifty thousand of them were slain for their rashness. The ark was then taken to Kirjath-jearim, and remained many years in the house of Abinadab. {1.5}

Then came King David, with thirty thousand chosen men of Israel, to bring it to his own city, with music and rejoicing, with great display and with signal honors. The ark was carried in a new cart; and when they came to a rough place in the road, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. God had commanded that no hand but that of a consecrated priest should touch the sacred repository of his law, and special ceremonies of purification and preparation were enjoined; but Uzzah touched it with sinful, unhallowed hand, and was slain before the Lord. "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" And he left the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household because of the ark. {1.6}

Thus God guarded with jealous care the ark that contained his holy law, that all might be deeply impressed with the sacred character of that law. It is no wonder that as the people witnessed the judgments inflicted upon those who despised the law of God or treated it with disrespect, they exclaimed, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" The law was ordained unto life, and is an expression of the love of God to man. To despise it is to despise its Author; for it partakes of the perfection of the divine character. To the transgressor it becomes, not a savor of life unto life, but of death unto death. Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable, by dying to satisfy its claims. He gave his life an offering for transgressions, that through his righteousness imputed to them, men might be reconciled to God, and escape the punishment due to disobedience. {1.7}

And yet the law of God is almost universally despised and trampled upon, while human laws are exalted. There is a power that is called in the Scriptures the man of sin, that has thought to change this great standard of righteousness. He has torn the fourth commandment from the bosom of the decalogue, and in place of God's holy Sabbath has substituted one of his own invention. Those who accept this spurious Sabbath do great dishonor to the God of Heaven, and their offense is greatly exaggerated when they not only break the law themselves, but endeavor to lead others to disregard it also. {1.8}

The Lord has specified that the seventh day is his Sabbath. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." But a human institution has been made to take the place of the divine; another day has supplanted God's holy, sanctified rest-day. The Christian church accept this day in place of the one God has chosen, and present it to the world to be observed and revered. They thus show that they do not love the law of God, nor prize its righteous, restraining influence. {1.9}

God has laid down the conditions of salvation. He requires that men keep his commandments as obedient children. The Holy Scriptures are full of lessons showing that God is satisfied with no partial obedience. He does not leave men to rely on their human judgment, and select that portion of his law which they choose to obey. They are required to have correct views of duty. They are not at liberty to accept what ignorant, sinful, feeble man may suggest, believe, or urge upon them; but they must take God's word, and walk in accordance with his revealed will. {1.10}

God has given men reason, and the noblest use to which the intellectual faculties can be put is the study of his word. And when through diligent and prayerful application the will of God has been discerned, nothing should be allowed to come in between God and the soul to swerve it from the path of strict obedience. No suggestions of propriety, no motives of expediency, no selfish desire for gain, no fear of loss, dishonor, or reproach, should be considered for a moment. God commands, and that is enough. The light shines, and it is our duty to walk in it. If men substitute human customs and traditions for the precepts of God's law, and proclaim to the world that that law, or any part of that law, is no longer in force, however honest they may be, they are under the condemnation of the law, and will perish as transgressors. {1.11}

If you accept unpoplar truth, ministers may say, "You are too particular. In order to have influence with the world, you must do as the world does." But such men are acting as mouth-piece for Satan. They are preaching a doctrine that pleases him well. No authority of church or State, no decrees of kings or emperors, no commands of bishops or priests, can absolve you from obedience to the law of God, or justify the least departure from his requirements. Finite reasoning must not take the place of simple trust; self-will must not lead us in a course of disobedience. {1.12}

Do not let the words of men who profess to be wise in the Scriptures deter you from searching them for yourself, or keep you back from obeying the precepts of Jehovah. Do not harbor the thought that some of the things taught in the Bible are nonessential. "To the law and to the testimony" for proof. The problems of duty and destiny become clear only when studied in the light of God's revealed will. Amid the devices of Satan to which we are exposed, and the varied temptations that surround us, we have the sure promise of divine guidance. "Thy word," says David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." {1.13}

Prompt and Cheerful Obedience

July 22, 1886

"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." {2.1}

God, as the supreme ruler of the universe has ever required prompt and unquestioning obedience. Even Christ, in the days of his flesh, was obedient to the law of the Father. Through the inspired psalmist he declares: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;" "burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." But men are lulled to sleep by the deceptions of Satan, who suggests excuses and conquers their scruples, saying, as he said to Eve in the garden, "Ye shall not surely die." They forget that the word of the Lord is steadfast, and that every transgression will receive a "just recompense of reward." {2.2}

The Lord made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, and gave them the right [rite] of circumcision as a token that he had separated them from all nations as his peculiar treasure. Had the descendants of Abraham faithfully kept this covenant, they would have escaped a great temptation to indulge in the sinful practices of other nations, and would not have been seduced into idolatry. By mingling with idolaters, they lost, to a great extent, their peculiar, holy character. To punish them, the Lord brought a famine upon their land, which compelled them to go down into Egypt to preserve their lives. The Lord suffered them to be oppressed by the Egyptians; but because of his covenant with Abraham, he did not forsake his people. He gave them an opportunity to turn to him in their distress, choose his righteous and merciful government, and obey his requirements.

{2.3}

The Lord heard the cries of his people in the land of their captivity, and delivered them, that they might be free to serve him. After they had left Egypt, and the waters of the Red Sea had been divided before them, he proved them, to see if they would trust in Him who by signs and wonders had delivered them from the house of bondage. But they failed to endure the trial. They murmured against God because of the difficulties in the way, and wished to return again to Egypt. Because of their dissatisfied, impatient, and rebellious spirit, they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. But the Lord was not chargeable with this delay in possessing Canaan. He was more grieved than they because he could not bring them into immediate possession of the promised land, and thus display before all nations his mighty power in the deliverance of his people. With their distrust of God, with their pride and unbelief, they were not prepared to enter Canaan. They would in no way represent that people whose God is the Lord; for they did not bear his character of purity, goodness, and benevolence. {2.4}

The children of Israel forfeited the divine favor by their disobedience. Had they submitted to the authority of God, as a nation being governed by his judgments, and as individuals walking in his ordinances, they would have been a prosperous, holy, happy people. By their own perversity of spirit, the Israelites made it impossible for God to manifest his power in protecting them from the nations that opposed their passage to Canaan. When those who had been chosen of God as his peculiar people, who had witnessed so many displays of his greatness and the majesty of his power, imitated the iniquities of the heathen, their guilt was as much greater than that of the idolatrous nations as were their privileges. Not one of the good things that God had promised to his people would have failed, had they complied with the conditions upon which these blessings were to be bestowed; but God could not sanction sin, nor protect iniquity. {2.5}

The history of the children of Israel is written for our admonition. We are probationers, as they were. God has given us his commandments, as he gave them to his people anciently. We may become strong in the strength of Israel's God, if we will believe and obey his word. But if we are disobedient, doubting, and rebellious, as were the multitudes who fell in the wilderness, we shall be found unworthy to possess those mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for his people. {2.6}

Through Samuel, God commanded Saul to go and smite the Amalekites, and utterly destroy all their possessions. But Saul only partially obeyed the command; he destroyed the inferior cattle, but reserved the best, and spared the wicked king. The next day he met the prophet Samuel, and greeted him with flattering self-congratulations. Said he, Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But the prophet immediately responded, "What meaneth then the bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" {2.7}

Saul was confused, and sought to shirk responsibility by answering, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the *people* spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Samuel reproved the king, reminding him of the explicit command of God directing him to destroy all things belonging to Amalek. He pointed out Saul's transgression, and declared that he had disobeyed the Lord. But Saul refused to acknowledge that he had done wrong, and again excused his sin by pleading that he had reserved the best of the cattle to sacrifice unto the Lord. {2.8}

The king's persistency in refusing to see and confess his sin grieved Samuel to the heart. He sorrowfully asked, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." And for his transgression, the kingdom of Israel was rent from the hands of Saul, and given to a neighbor that was better than he, even David, the son of Jesse. {2.9}

God is no less particular now than he was in ancient times. His eye is upon all his people, and over all the work of their hands. He will accept of no partial obedience; he will sanction no compromise with self. Nor will he suffer those who disobey his word to go unpunished. Though he may bear long with the transgressor, retribution will surely come at last. {2.10}

God spoke to the children of Israel by the mouths of prophets and apostles; but there never was a time when men were more fully informed than they now are concerning his will and the course he would have them pursue. But will they profit by his teachings? Will they receive his reproofs and heed the warnings? {2.11}

Disobedience hardens the heart and deadens the conscience of the guilty, and it also tends to corrupt the faith of others. That which at first looks very wrong to them, gradually loses this appearance, till finally they question whether it is really sin, and unconsciously fall into the same error. When a duty presents itself, we should not delay to meet its demands. Delay gives time for doubts to arise, unbelief creeps in, the judgment is perverted, the understanding darkened; and at length the reproofs of God's Spirit do not reach the heart of the deluded one, who has become so blinded as to feel that they cannot possibly be intended for him or apply to his case. {2.12}

Precious probationary time is passing, and few realize its worth. The golden hours are squandered in worldly pursuits, in pleasure, in absolute sin, while a

preparation for eternity, the great object for which they were given, is entirely overlooked. The law of God is slighted and forgotten; yet its precepts are none the less binding, and every transgression will receive its merited punishment. For purpose of worldly gain men desecrate the Sabbath; yet the claims of that holy day are not abrogated or lessened. God's command is clear and unquestionable on this point. He has peremptorily forbidden us to labor on the Sabbath; he has set it apart as a day sanctified to himself. [2.13]

Those who would walk in the path of obedience to God's commandments will encounter many hindrances. There are strong and subtle influences that bind them to the ways of the world; but the power of the Lord can break these chains. He will remove these obstacles from before the feet of his faithful, humble children, or give them strength and courage to conquer every difficulty, if they earnestly beseech his help. All hindrances will vanish before an earnest desire and persistent effort to do the will of God. Light from Heaven will illuminate the pathway of those who, no matter what trials and perplexities they may encounter, go forward in the way of obedience, looking to Jesus for help and guidance. [2.14]

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.7, 1.1 | 2) 1.10 | 3) 1.11 | 4) 1.11 | 5) 1.12, 1.13 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.2, 2.10 | 2) 2.3 | 3) 2.12 | 4) 2.13 | 5) 2.14 |

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.