

# PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

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“The priests and Pharisees thought they were doing great things as teachers by putting their own interpretation upon the word of God, but Christ said of them, ‘Ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God.’ Mark 12:24. He charged them with the guilt of ‘teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ Mark 7:7. Though they were the teachers of the oracles of God, though they were supposed to understand His word, they were not doers of the word. Satan had blinded their eyes that they should not see its true import.” {Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 110}

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## WEEK 25 - IN PHILISTIA

### I. David Spares Saul

1. Saul said to David, “I have sinned; return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm.” What was the problem with his confession?

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2. What do envy and jealousy do to those who cherish them?

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## II. David Becomes Weary in Well-Doing

1. Describe the conflict in David's mind between faith and sight. What was the result when he began to walk by sight?

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2. What should we learn about faith versus sight from David's experience?

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3. Why was it such a bad idea to go to the Philistines?

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4. What lesson can we learn from this?

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### III. David's Experience in Philistia

1. How did David lie to King Achish? In addition to being a lie, why else was this wrong?

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2. Even in his weak faith, what did David determine?

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3. In what way could we fall for a temptation like the one David faced to go to war with King Achish?

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4. What is your danger after fighting hard and even winning for God?

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**David Spares Saul****November 2, 1888**

After the death of Samuel, David was left in peace for a few months. Saul did not pursue or trouble him, and the son of Jesse returned to the solitude of the Ziphites, thinking they would not now molest him since the king had desisted from following him. But the people knew too well the character of Saul to credit him with sincerity, repenting of seeking David's life. These enemies of the son of Jesse hoped to be favored by informing the king of David's hiding-place. They told Saul that David was within their reach, and that they would do their utmost to put him into his power. {1.1}

This intelligence aroused the demon of passion that had been slumbering in Saul's breast. He thought an opportunity was offered which should not be left unimproved. He summoned his men to arms, and once more led them out in pursuit of David. After the solemn covenant that Saul had made with David, the son of Jesse was not inclined to believe that the king would still seek his life. In company with a few of his men, he started out to see if indeed Saul was pursuing him again. David and his companions beheld the tents of the king and his attendants. They were unobserved; for the camp was quiet in slumber. David called upon his friends to go with him into the very midst of the foe. In answer to his question, "Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp?" Abishai promptly responded, "I will go down with thee." {1.2}

David and his attendant hastened into the shadows of the hills, and entered the encampment of the enemy. As they sought to ascertain the exact number of their foes, they came upon Saul sleeping, his spear stuck in the ground and a cruse of water at his bolster, while Abner and the people were slumbering on every side. Abishai raised his spear, and said to David, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day; now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." The servant waited for the word of permission; but there fell upon his ear the whispered words: "Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? . . . As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed; but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awakened; for they were all asleep; because a dead sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them." {1.3}

How easily the Lord can weaken the strongest, remove prudence from the wisest, and baffle the skill of the most watchful. Then David went over to the other side, and when he was at a safe distance from the camp, he stood on the top of a hill, and cried with a loud voice to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Art thou not a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy Lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the

Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord; for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." [1.4]

David assured Saul that he would be glad to serve him as a servant; but without cause he was pursued as a rebel, and compelled to fly from him whom he would follow. He was cut off from the service of God, separated from the holy land, and driven away from his own people to live with strangers and idolaters. He presents the course of Saul in pursuing him as that of the king taking the flower of his army to seek a flea, or to hunt a partridge of the wilderness. [1.5]

David urged that the real reasons of the king's enmity be searched out, and the controversy come to an end. He knew that it was jealousy that prompted Saul to hunt him from place to place, until there was no security for him, not even in the rocky home of the goats. He declared that if the Lord had stirred Saul up against him to punish him for his sins, God would accept an offering from him. He would make peace with God. If it was wicked counselors that advised the king to take such cruel measures against an innocent man, let them be excluded from his presence as men accursed of God. [1.6]

David pleaded for his life before the relentless Saul. Again the acknowledgment fell from the lips of the king, "I have sinned; return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day; behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it." Although Saul had made the promise, "I will no more do thee harm," David did not place himself in his power. This second instance of David's respect for his life, made a still deeper impression upon the mind of Saul, and brought from his lips a more humble acknowledgment of his fault. He was subdued and astonished at the manifestation of David's mercy and kindness toward him. The son of Jesse might have deprived him of his life, but his soul had been precious in the eyes of him to whom he had thought he must be odious and abhorrent. [1.7]

Saul had meant all that he had said, yet his relenting and confession came not from genuine repentance and conversion of heart. How many have acted in a similar manner. They have been enlightened by the Spirit of God in regard to the truth, but envy and jealousy and unholy ambition have been welcomed to the soul, and the light of truth has been permitted to grow dim. Men whom God has blessed, who have had new light, new purposes, and new hearts, who have meant to be sincere, have been placed in temptation, and by failing to resist the

suggestions of Satan, they have allowed self-esteem, and desire for the highest place, to color all the thoughts and actions of their life. Light and darkness, good and evil, strive for the victory. Oh, that these souls might place themselves in right relation to God, and come into harmony with his law! Jealousy has found an entrance into their hearts, and has woven itself into their characters. Envy and jealousy are like two sisters who blend together in their workings. Envy will lead a man to desire some good which another possesses, and will urge him to use every means in his power to bring down and injure the character and reputation of one in whose place he desires to be. Falsehood, hearsays, and slanderous reports are circulated, and everything that can be made use of will be employed to place the envied man in an unfavorable light before the people. Jealousy leads a man to suspect another of seeking to deprive him of advantages and position. Saul had both envy and jealousy. {1.8}

### David Becomes Weary in Well-Doing

November 9, 1888

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel; so shall I escape out of his hand. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maoch, king of Gath.” {2.1}

David's conclusion that Saul would certainly accomplish his murderous purpose, was formed without the counsel of God. He had at last become weary of waiting upon the Lord, and in a moment of discouragement placed himself in an unfavorable light before the people of God by his course of unbelief. It was not the Lord who had sent him for protection to the Philistines, the most bitter foes of Israel. This very nation would be nothing less than his worst enemies to the very last; and yet he had sought to them for help in his time of need. Yet having lost all confidence in Saul and in those who served him, he threw himself upon the mercy of the enemies of his people, to escape the treachery of the very men whom he afterward would be called upon to rule when God's appointed time should come. {2.2}

The Lord had recently worked in David's behalf by aiding him to obtain a decided victory over Saul. The Lord's hand was in all this, and, if David had looked upon the dealings of God with him, he would not have taken this step of seeking unto the Philistines. The Lord had so arranged matters in the past, that the true spirit of David was made manifest before all Israel, and the false accusations brought against him by Saul were proven to be without foundation. Saul had represented David as a traitor and a conspirator, lying in wait to take the life of the king, that he might possess the kingdom himself. The king had represented the matter to the people in such a light that it seemed necessary to deprive David of his life, that the prosperity of Israel might be preserved. {2.3}

But in working against David, he was working equally against himself in the course that he was pursuing. Through the curse of envy and jealousy, he had weakened his own kingdom by expelling David from his service; for, in so doing,



he had driven him into the enemies' ranks. But even while Saul was plotting and seeking to accomplish his destruction, the Lord was working to secure to David the kingdom. And after he had seen that God was caring for him, and had preserved his life again and again, he should have been courageous, and should have left his case in God's hands. {2.4}

David looked on appearances and not at the promises of God. He doubted that he should ever come to the throne. But had not God sent Samuel to anoint him king of Israel? and would not the Lord perform his word? Although he could not rely on Saul's assurances, he might have safely trusted in the promises of God. The particular care that God had exercised over him in preserving him from all danger, so that he had not been harmed, should have given him confidence and comfort. But cruel unbelief had taken possession of David's heart. {2.5}

God works out his plans though they are veiled in mystery to human eyes. Men cannot read the ways of God; and, looking at outward appearances, they interpret the trials and tests and provings that God permits to come upon them as things that are against them, and that will only work their ruin. {2.6}

David took counsel with his own heart. Long trials had tried his faith and exhausted his patience. But these very trials were designed to work him blessing, to strengthen his faith in the belief that angels were encamped round about him, and that he was under the guardianship of Heaven. God was dishonored by his course of unbelief. {2.7}

David was a brave general, and had proved himself a wise and successful warrior; but he was working directly against his own interests when he went to the Philistines. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah, and it was want of faith and confidence that led him to forsake his post of duty without a command from the Lord. How could he expect that the God of Israel would give him protection, when he had placed himself with the bitterest foes of his people? Could he expect safety with the Philistines, when only shortly before he had barely escaped with his life by feigning himself to be a mad man? Could he reasonably hope to save himself by seeking an asylum with a people whom God had appointed to extinction? When he should come to the throne, he would be employed as the agent to carry out this purpose of destroying the Philistines. {2.8}

In fleeing to the enemies of Israel, David encouraged the Philistines to take further measures to oppress his people, and the impression was received by his brethren that he had gone to the heathen to serve their gods. By this act he gave occasion for misconstruing his motives, and many were led to hold prejudice against him. This demonstrates the fact that great and good men, men with whom God has worked, will make grievous mistakes when they cease to watch and pray, and to fully trust in God. {2.9}

There is a precious experience, an experience more precious than fine gold, to be gained by everyone who will walk by faith. He who will walk in the way of unwavering trust in God will have a connection with Heaven. The child of God is to do his work, looking to God alone for strength and guidance. He must toil

on without despondency and full of hope, even though he is placed in most trying and aggravating circumstances. [2.10]

David's experiences are recorded for the instruction of the people of God in these last days. In his warfare against Satan, this servant of God had received light and direction from Heaven, but, because the conflict was long continued, and because the question of his receiving the throne was unsettled, he became weary and discouraged. He was provoked that he was hunted from place to place as though he were a wild beast. The very thing that Satan desired to have him do, he was led to do; for, in seeking refuge among the Philistines, David caused great joy and triumph and exultation to the enemies of God and his people. David did not renounce his worship of God nor cease his devotion to his cause; but he sacrificed his trust in him for his personal safety, and thus tarnished the upright and faithful character that God requires his servants to possess. [2.11]



**David's Experience in Philistia****November 16, 1888**

David was cordially received at Gath by the king of the Philistines. The warmth of his reception was partly due to the fact that the king admired him, and partly to the fact that it was flattering to his vanity to have a Hebrew leave his own nation to seek his protection. Achish hoped to be successful not only in gaining David as an ally, but in gaining others also, for he felt assured that many would be influenced through David's example to rally under his standard. David felt secure from betrayal in the dominions of Achish. He brought his family, his household, and his possessions, as did also his men, and to all appearances he had come to locate permanently in the land of Philistia. All this was very gratifying to Achish, who solemnly promised to protect the fugitive Israelites. {3.1}

At David's request for a residence in the country removed from the royal city, the king graciously granted Ziklag as a possession, and it was afterward annexed to Israel's dominions. For a year and six months, David made his home in the country of the Philistines. He had tasted the bitterness of envy at Saul's court, and he feared that he might have a similar experience in the court at Gath. But it was for far weightier reasons that he desired to leave the royal city. He realized that it would be dangerous for himself and [his] men to be under the influence of those who were connected with idolatry and transgression. In a town wholly separated for their use, they might worship God with more freedom than they could if they remained in Gath, where the senseless, heathen rites could but prove a source of evil and annoyance. {3.2}

While dwelling in this isolated town, David made war upon the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites, and he left neither man nor woman alive to bring tidings to Gath. When he returned from battle, Achish inquired as to where he had been, and David gave him to understand that he had been warring against those of his own nation, the men of Judah. But by this very dissembling, he was the means of strengthening the hand of the Philistines, for the king said, "He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever." By placing himself under the protection of the Philistines, he had discovered to them the weakness of his people; for the Philistines had feared David more than they had feared Saul and his armies. Although David knew that it was the will of God that the Philistines should be destroyed, and although he knew that he was appointed to do this work, yet he was not walking in the counsel of God when he practiced deception. Moreover, he had been anointed to stand in defense of the people of God; and the Lord would not have his servants give encouragement to the wicked by disclosing the weakness of his people, or by an appearance of indifference to their welfare. {3.3}

David's faith in God had been strong, but it had failed him when he placed himself under the protection of the Philistines. He had taken this step without seeking the counsel of the Lord; but when he had sought and obtained the favor of the Philistines, it was poor policy to repay their kindness by deception. In the favor they had shown him they had been actuated by selfishness. They had reason to remember the son of Jesse, for his valor had cost them their champion, Goliath, and had turned the tide of the battle against them. The Philistines were

glad of an opportunity to separate David's forces from the army under Saul. They hoped that David would avenge his wrongs by joining them in battle against Saul and Israel. {3.4}

"And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men." David had no intention of lifting his hand against his people, but he was not certain as to what course he would pursue until circumstances should indicate the direction of his duty. He answered the king evasively, and said, "Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do." Achish understood these words as a promise to assist him in the approaching war, and the king pledged his word that if he would do this, he would bestow upon him great honor, and give him a high position among his officials. {3.5}

But although David's faith had staggered somewhat at the promises of God, he still remembered that Samuel had anointed him king of Israel. He recalled the victories that God had given him over his enemies in the past. He reviewed the great mercies of God in preserving him from the hand of Saul, and he determined that he would not betray any sacred trust, or imperil his soul's salvation. He would not join his forces with the enemy against Saul, even though the king had sought his life. {3.6}

How many would have yielded to the temptation that Achish presented to David! How many have fallen, and how many will fall, into the snare of Satan for temporary advantages! Ambitious for exaltation, they will unite their influence with the avowed enemies of God's truth if they can only be honored among those who are honored of men. For present advantages, they will sacrifice the eternal good that God has in store for them. They will not endure the proving of God, and show themselves true in every place, and under all circumstances. God has promised that his faithful, obedient servants shall be exalted to be priests and kings. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" {3.7}

Satan succeeds in making many grow restless, even after they have wrestled against difficulty, and have run well for a season. He presents temptation in a new way, and under a different aspect, and places before men human honors and advantages, and they fall, as did Adam and Eve when the serpent said, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Stretching beyond their capacity, they seek a more exalted position; desiring the highest seat they will finally, with shame, have to take the lowest seat. They sell their souls to the enemy, that they may be lifted up, and they will find, at last, that they are slaves to the one who degrades and ruins mankind. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." {3.8}

### Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.8 | 2) 1.8 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.5, 2.7 | 2) 2.6 | 3) 2.8, 2.11 | 4) 2.9–2.10 |

Section 3: | 1) 3.3 | 2) 3.6 | 3) 3.7 | 4) 3.8 |

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