



Lesson 4 Q1 2016 Conflict and Crisis: The Judges

SABBATH

What was the origin of the “great controversy”? This question **must** be answered correctly in order to understand all of Scripture, Nature, & our experiences. Continue to ask yourself this question as we study this lesson and the remainder of the quarterly.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. I Cor 10: 3-5.

From the teacher’s quarterly:

“The story of Israel during the time of the judges is remarkable for its clear cycle of (1) apostasy, (2) oppression, (3) cry for help, and (4) divine intervention. Judges were individuals chosen by God as instruments to deliver Israel from its predicament at the hands of foreign powers. Deliverance took the form of actual military conflict. The great controversy was manifested in literal military terms. It is this theme of the great controversy that provides a lens through which to view the brutal, violent encounters that make modern sensibilities uneasy in the act of imagining how a loving God could sanction the killing of individuals or of populations.”

How does the “lens” of the great controversy help us understand the “brutal, violent encounters” of the children of Israel in the decades after Joshua’s death?

What “lens” does the lesson seem to be looking through?

What was God’s criteria for choosing one of His Judges?

***Why were the “military conflicts” necessary at the time of the Judges? ***

What was God’s original intent? See Ex 23:28, Deut. 7:20, Joshua 24:12 for context.

From the teacher’s quarterly:

“Unlike most manifestations of the great controversy, which are spiritual in nature, we see actual military battles in the book of Judges. In this context, such hymns as “Onward Christian Soldiers” (The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 612) take on a new meaning. Help your



students to understand what it means to be a soldier for Christ, enlisted in His army to advance His kingdom and combat the forces of oppression and darkness.”

How are the “military battles in the book of Judges” manifestations of the great controversy? How are they misunderstood?

SUNDAY

Deborah

דְּבִרָּה [pronounced neb-ee-yaw] feminine. a prophetess or inspired woman: by implication – a poetess; by association – a prophet’s wife. From Strong’s Concordance.

Why would God choose a female for the task of leading the deliverance of Naphtali, and Zebulun?

How spineless was Barak? “Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

Anyone else see a theme here?

“The heroine of the story is Heber’s wife, Jael, who is not afraid to identify with God’s people and who played a crucial role in the defeat of God’s enemies. Judging her actions from our perspective today isn’t easy. The last thing we should do, though, is use her deeds to justify deception and violence in order to achieve our ends, no matter how right those ends might be.”

How is it considered heroic to drive a nail through someone’s temple? Hadn’t God, Himself, just aided in the destruction of the entire “army”? Do we think God was proud of Jael for nailing Sisera’s head to the ground? Did Jael live with the psycho-emotional scars of taking a human life or was she unaffected? Which law lens are we viewing through?

MONDAY

Gideon

When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.” Judges 6: 7-10.



This is a loaded passage. God reviews some history [see Ex 20: 2], reminds them of what would happen to them if they forgot Him [2 Cor 10: 5], and explains why they're in subjugation to the Midianites.

From the lesson: "Despite Gideon's complaint, which was unwarranted (they were disobedient; that's why they were oppressed)..."

Was Gideon's complaint unwarranted? Note that the Angel of the Lord says to Gideon "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." Gideon replies, "... but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"

Were they oppressed because they were disobedient, or something else? Which law lens?

Gideon requested three miracles, the first of which was outlined by Michael. Imagine preparing scarce food only to have it consumed by fire.

Was his faith strong or weak? Were the miracles evidence of God's guidance in Gideon's endeavors? What about Gideon's efforts after the defeat of the Midianites?

But Gideon was betrayed into another error, which brought disaster upon his house and upon all Israel. The season of inactivity that succeeds a great struggle is often fraught with greater danger than is the period of conflict. To this danger Gideon was now exposed. A spirit of unrest was upon him. Instead of waiting for divine guidance, he began to plan for himself. – {From Eternity Past (EP) 400.2}

Because he had been commanded to offer sacrifice upon the rock where the Angel appeared to him, Gideon concluded that he had been appointed as a priest. Without waiting for divine sanction he determined to institute a system of worship similar to that carried on at the tabernacle. – {EP 400.3}

With the strong popular feeling in his favor, he found no difficulty in carrying out his plan. At his request all the earrings of gold taken from the Midianites were given him as his share of the spoil. The people also collected other costly materials, together with the richly adorned garments of the princes of Midian. From the material thus furnished, Gideon constructed an ephod and a breastplate, in imitation of those worn by the high priest. His course proved a snare to himself and his family, as well as to Israel. The unauthorized worship led many of the people finally to forsake the Lord to serve idols. After Gideon's death, great numbers, among whom were his own family, joined in apostasy. The people were led away from God by the very man who once overthrew their idolatry. – {EP 400.4}



TUESDAY

Samson

The study of Samson should be required for ALL males ages 10-95. There are lot's of consistent, testable life lessons to be learned here.

From the 1st paragraph: “God, indeed, had special plans for Samson; unfortunately, things didn’t work out as well as they could have.” This statement could be said of EVERYONE from Adam on down to present day.

Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.” Then his father and mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. Judges 14: 1-4.

How do we understand the idea that “... it was of the Lord – that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines.”?

Did God lead Samson to the Philistine woman? Did God *know* that Samson’s weaknesses would lead him in this direction & over rule circumstances without interfering with freewill? What’s going on here?

Note the complaining/whining/flattery/coercive language in the wife-to-be when trying to get the answer to Samson’s riddle. Moreover, note Samson’s inability to say NO to the complaining/whining/flattery/coercive language – all males ages 10-95 need to study, etc.

Do we think that God was pleased with Samson’s taking the lives of so many Philistines, not to mention 300 foxes? How do we understand this within the context of Him “seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines”?

Physically, Samson was the strongest man upon the earth, but in self-control, integrity, and firmness, he was one of the weakest. He who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. Real greatness is measured by the power of the feelings that a man controls, not by those that control him. – {EP 410.3 emphasis added}.

Those who in the way of duty are brought into trial may be sure that God will preserve them; but if men willfully place themselves under the power of temptation, they will fall, sooner or later. Satan attacks us at our weak points, working through defects in the character to gain



control of the whole man. He knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. – {EP 410.4}

We've discussed this before. God gave Samson his strength, but didn't dictate how Samson used it. He gave Solomon his wisdom & wealth, but didn't coerce Solomon to use it for good. We often misinterpret God's servants behavior as being sanctioned or worse controlled by God, however, reality operates differently.

WEDNESDAY

Ruth

We see a consistent theme of humanity blaming God for the actions of Satan throughout Scriptural history [Ruth 1: 20, 21]. Here is insight in to the real controversy.

Evidently marriage had some similar pitfalls then, as today, and was considered a "duty." [see Ruth 3: 10, 13.]

From the last paragraph: "Talk about a living-happily-ever-after story. Unfortunately, there aren't too many of those in the Bible. Of course, there are not too many outside of the Bible either. Here, too, though, we can see how, despite the ebb and flow of life, God's will shall prevail in the end; and that's good news for all who love and trust Him."

I'm not sure how the lesson knows this is a "happily-ever-after" story, but ...

THURSDAY

Samuel

The lesson asks us to discern the subtlety of the "attack of evil" in the following passage, where there were no armies massed on borders, etc. I don't think this attack is subtle in the least. This is the core of the controversy – **THE MISREPRESENTATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER.**

12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord. 13 And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if



not, I will take it by force.” 17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. 18 But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. 19 Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord.” Then they would go to their own home. 21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the Lord. 22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord’s people transgress. 25 If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?” Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them.
I Sam 2: 12-25

Did the Lord really desire to kill Eli’s sons?

“But although he [Eli] had been appointed to govern the people, he did not rule his own household. Eli was an indulgent father. Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 575.

Do we see any parallels, today, with parents unwilling to “correct the evil habits and passions” of their children. Admittedly, I’m speaking from a position of ignorance, not having any children myself. However, I am a keen observer of human nature, and see this everywhere.

Samuel dealt with the same problems that Eli did, and perhaps modeled some of the same indulgences.