

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JANUARY062024

an undelivered gift

Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 32.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), Introduction.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The Scripture portion for this week may at first seem tough to teach, but after a closer inspection you will find that it is a very appropriate discussion to have with this age group. As well, it is very easy to personalize and have each student really understand the meaning.

The lesson takes us to the end of Moses' life and his final words to the Israelites. It is almost depressing in its nature, seeing that God is so disappointed in His people. However, the declaration that Moses gives to Joshua in verse 47 is a powerful admonishment for all of us to take to heart. Young people will certainly understand the direct tone the author uses for his student who is about to take the reins of leadership.

The stage is set with a God who is angry at His chosen people. The reading in *Prophets and Kings* shows us that God is not just upset that they are worshiping idols; He is also angry that they have chosen not to become a blessing to the surrounding nations by showing His character on this earth. He is sorely upset that they have shirked the calling He has charged them with and the opportunity He has given them to join Him in blessing the world.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand why God was upset at the Israelites. *(Know)*
- Feel that they can use the words as a warning to themselves as well. *(Feel)*
- Seek to do what God is calling them to do in response to His charge of being a blessing to the world. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17

"God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. . . . (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to share what they think the greatest gift they could get for a major milestone birthday might be. Make a list on the board so they can see their answers. Chances are there are many that will be the same. At the end, ask them what they think the value is of a relationship with Christ. You can obviously put no monetary value on this. However, you can impress on them that the great-

est gift they can give anyone is an understanding of the grace and assurance of salvation that comes from living in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There is a story told about a very selfish, greedy man. He only cared about his money—how he could earn more and where he could cut to save. Comfort, friends, family, and community didn't matter. One night he had several dreams. One was about what his life could have been had he not become so greedy. The next was what his greed was costing him in his daily life. And the final dream was where he was headed if he did not change and become a blessing to others.

Isn't this what God was saying to the Israelites, "You must be a blessing"? This is your purpose—to be a blessing to those around you!

Because we believe in God we know that the charge is much more sincere and carries with it much more weight. We must show the grace of Christ to the world because we have experienced it and our lives have become a reaction to the grace God gives to us each day we are blessed to live in this world.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes the most difficult thing to do is to be a blessing when you have the opportunity. Sometimes it is inconvenient to be the blessing. Sometimes it is awkward to change a tough situation into something glorious, but that is what God called the Israelites to do, and that is what He continually calls us to do as well. What a wonderful opportunity we have to show the world what God is like!

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- *Underline* everything God mentions that they are doing wrong.
- Does God seem personally offended? Explain.
- *Circle* Moses' command to Joshua.
- *Create* a list of things we can do to be the blessing God wants us to be.

Use the following as another teachable passage that relates to today's story: 2 Samuel 22:50.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

These texts take place at the end of the life of Moses. He has done all that he will be allowed to do, and apparently he wants to leave the children of Israel with just a few words of rebuke and encouragement in order for them to continue in, or even go back to, the ways of God. His rebuke is because the children of Israel were having trouble with idolatry as they were making their way through the nations of that region. Moses desperately wanted them to understand that God's way was certainly better than what they were searching.

His charge to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:47 is so powerful it needs to be mentioned. The concept that we must take these words seriously because they are truly the words that give us life is very important. It is another indication of the grace God continually gives us in order to be able to live out our lives much better here on earth.

The question of how many people actually left Egypt to go to the Promised Land is an interesting one. There have been estimates of as little as 3,000 to as many as 3 million people. How can this be? It has to do with the translation of a particular word in the Hebrew language. What sort of impact does this have on the story? Well, if you think about it, the handling of 3 million people vastly differs from the handling of 3,000. It would make the difference between a group that could move quickly and a group that would literally take days to move. It also raises the question of how they could easily integrate into the other cultures they were running into. With a smaller group it would be easier to be insular; with a large group it would be much more difficult to keep to themselves, as assimilation of those around would take place much easier and growth or loss of people would be more difficult to see and manage.

Regardless of their numbers, it is plain to

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Improvisation

Students do better when they can see or hear what they are learning. Do some impromptu plays that the students write to show some real practical ways they can become blessings to this world. The plays can be short or long, depending on the scripts the students come up with. There doesn't even have to be a script, and the students can "wing it" just to mix it up a bit. You can even pick the students, give them a situation, and then have them act out what being a blessing would look and sound like in that situation. This could be quite fun and entertaining.

see that they were continually doubting God and His sovereignty over their lives. This might seem strange in conjunction with the fact that there were miracles daily for these people. However, it proves that faith is not built on miracles, but on relationships. Regardless of what they were seeing God doing, they were still following idols. God sought to be in relationship with them so that He might be able to bless them!

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students write a list of four to six ways they were blessed by people in the last week or two. Have them be specific. Let them share these blessings with one another in a corporate setting. It will be good for them to hear the great ways God is blessing them all through the people in their lives. As well, it may give them ideas about how they can become better blessings in the lives of those around them.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Israel had simply forgotten their calling from God. They thought He was there for them, not the other way around. They became selfish and unwilling to partner with God for the blessing of the nations around them. God was understandably upset with this and told them in no uncertain terms. That makes up the major portion of the Scripture this week. It's OK to understand that God desires something from us. He desires our partnership with Him in order to let the world know what God is like. We must be His hands and His feet on this earth (play the song "Hands and Feet" by Audio Adrenaline if

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

you have the time). As we understand God's call on our lives we begin to understand that we have a job, a blessing really, given to us by the Creator of the world. How can we possibly bless the nations? Well, maybe we need to start by understanding the blessings that we can bring to one another in a very small way each day.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), Introduction.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 32.
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keytext

"For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance."

(Deuteronomy 32:9, NIV)

flashlight

"Through the chosen nation, God had purposed to bring blessing to all mankind.

". . . They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. . . .

"Christ was their instructor. . . . In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy Shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 17, 18).

what do you think?

What would be the best thing you could think of as a gift for your 18th birthday?

____ A computer
____ Clothes
____ A cell phone
____ Something else _____

did you know?

There has always been a difference of opinion about how many Israelites came out of Egypt. The confusion comes from the way you translate one of the Hebrew letters! Why is this important? The children of Israel had been told to take possession of the Promised Land. The only problem with this was that they were not the only people living there! So the question of how many people came out of Egypt becomes important since they had to fight their way through the Promised Land that was already occupied by others. They could have been as few as 3,000 to 5,000 people or perhaps as many as a million or so. Regardless of how many people there were supposed to be, they were expected to be the Lord's gift to the nations.

How could they have done that in the midst of trying to conquer a territory? They could have accomplished it by continually following the Word of God, much the same as we are called to do.

INTO THE STORY

"The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him.

"He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields.

"He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag. . . .

"The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters.

" 'I will hide my face from them,' he said, 'and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

" 'They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols.

" 'I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.' . . .

"Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'

"On that same day the LORD told Moses, 'Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.' "

(Deuteronomy 32:12, 13, 19–21, 44–52, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is God's attitude toward His "chosen" people at this point?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why was Moses not allowed into the Promised Land?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you think it was fair of God to keep Moses out? Explain.

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does it mean when God says that He is a "jealous" God?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What reason did God have to be angry with the Israelites?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why do you think Moses said, "They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (verse 47)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign LORD, brought our ancestors out of Egypt" **(1 Kings 8:53, NIV).**

"Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name" **(2 Samuel 22:50, NIV).**

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you" **(2 Chronicles 20:6, NIV).**

"In that day you will say: 'Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted' " **(Isaiah 12:4, NIV).**

"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" **(Psalm 2:8, NIV).**

"And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD" **(Ezekiel 16:14, NIV).**

further insight

"Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling his promise."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164

Sabbath

Read 1 Kings 8:53.

After having completed the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section at the beginning of this lesson, you must have some thoughts about gifts. In our biblical passage for this week we realize that God meant for Israel to be the salvation of the nations. But they thought only of themselves as receiving the gift of a homeland from God. They did not understand the gift they were to be to the rest of the world. They were to exemplify God's character on the earth for the world to see. Unfortunately, they were continually trying to be like the world rather than an example to it. Have you ever made that mistake? How can you better reflect God's character to those around you?

Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 32:46, 47.

Most of Deuteronomy 32 is a type of song or poem for the children of Israel to understand what God is thinking about them at that particular time.

However, Moses placed great importance on verses 46 and 47 for Joshua and the children of Israel. If someone gave you those same words, how could you apply them to your life? How would you be different than the children of Israel? What would cause you to take to heart the words in this text as if they were meant for you?

Monday

Read Deuteronomy 32:9.

What do you think the verse for today and this week's *Key Text* means? Could it mean that God blesses the world through His people? Could it mean that the only way the world will really get to know God is through the inheritance (or legacy) God gives to those who choose to follow Him? If that is the case, what does that mean for you? Are you God's inheritance? Are you the one who is supposed to bless the world for God? How might you go about doing that?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 2:8.

In the *Flashlight* section we see that Israel had a responsibility to be the character of God for the nations surrounding Israel. Could God say the same thing to you? Would you be comfortable with that responsibility? Could you be the face that has to show the world who Jesus Christ is? Do you look different or the same as the world around you? Does anyone know you are a Christian? How would they know? What does being a blessing to those around you really mean?

Wednesday

Read 2 Samuel 22:50.

In the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson we see many different texts all alluding to the same thing, that Israel was to be a blessing to the nations. The text that best sums up this concept is found in today's Bible reading. This is the theme of all the Scriptures quoted. It seems that this is spoken of a great deal in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament we call this "evangelism." Write down all the things you think of when you hear the word "evangelism."

How can you see yourself "evangelizing"?

Thursday

Read Ezekiel 16:14.

Being a blessing to those around you takes a serious bit of intent and intentionality. What are you doing today and every day that brings you closer to being that blessing to those in your life?

Make a list of five things that you can do to be a blessing to those in your sphere of influence:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 32.

Much of Deuteronomy is a serious rebuke of the Israelites by the God they were to love. Read this passage as if it was written directly to you. Replacing pronouns directed to the audience with your name. How meaningful is the text when you look at it as if it is a note written directly to you? Pretty powerful stuff! If you were going to write a response to the person (or God) who wrote this note to you, what would you say? Write that note out and keep it in your Bible as a bookmark in Deuteronomy 32.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), Introduction.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.