

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

Leaders in Israel

2019, Quarter 4, Lesson 13

Sabbath (December 21): Leaders in Israel

In this final lesson of a quarter that has focused on Ezra and Nehemiah, we will focus on the Bible's lessons about leadership. What is true Biblical leadership, and what makes up the world's counterfeit forms of leadership? How can we make our own lives available to God for the purpose of leadership, whether on a grand, or small, scale? Let's dive in to this important topic!

The Hebrew word translated as "leader" appears 44 times in the Old Testament. This word, *nagiyd*, also is translated as "ruler," "prince," "captain," "governor," "nobles," and, once, as "excellent things." This last usage is found in Proverbs 8:6, which says, "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things [*nagiyd*]; and the opening of my lips shall be right things." The parallelism is interesting, as it suggests that "excellent things," or perhaps "leadership," is, in God's eyes, closely related to doing "right things."

Discussion Questions:

- Read Isaiah 55:3,4. Whom does God refer to in this passage that speaks of God's everlasting covenant? (King David.) Verse 4 calls David and "leader and commander" of the people. What other term does God use to describe David? (He is a "witness to the people.") Why do you think the Bible calls David a witness to the people, and how might this be related to his role as a leader? (Answers will vary. The NLT translation puts this verse this way: "See how I used him to display my power among the peoples. I made him a leader among the nations.")
- In what ways can true spiritual leaders allow God's power to be displayed through them? (Answers will vary.) In what ways did David's early life of doing "right things" make it possible for God's power to be displayed through him? In what ways was this witness destroyed later in his life after his great sins? (Answers will vary.)

Sunday (December 22): The Influence of Leaders

In today's lesson we will look at several leaders in the Bible—good and bad—and reflect on the purpose or goal of leadership that many of them demonstrated.

Discussion Questions:

- Read the following passages and summarize the view or goal of leadership held by the person in that passage:

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- Rehoboam: 1 Kings 12:1-16. (The purpose of leadership is authoritarian power wielded for personal benefit.)
- Peter: Acts 15:7-11. (The purpose of leadership is to gently lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ that purifies one's heart through faith.)
- Josiah: 2 Kings 23:1-10. (The purpose of leadership is to provide a positive role model of obedience to God, and to tear down negative spiritual influences.)
- Deborah: Judges 4:1-16. (The purpose of leadership is to motivate people to have faith in God and do challenging things for Him.)
- Ahab: 1 Kings 21:1-16. (The purpose of leadership is to amass personal power, wealth, and influence.)
- Does a position of leadership change a person into something better or worse than they were before, or does it simply provide an opportunity to reveal what the character already is? What examples can you think of to support your answer? (Answers will vary.)

Monday (December 23): Evil in the Sight of the Lord

Today's lesson looks at three leaders, or groups of leaders, in the Bible that wielded a decidedly negative influence on other people. In our study, we will focus on an additional negative leader—Judas, the disciple-turned-betrayer of Christ. The tragic lessons of his doomed life should not be overlooked.

Discussion Questions:

- Read John 11:26-30. What position of leadership did Judas have among the disciples? (He was treasurer of the ministry.) What kind of influence might this position have given him? (Answers will vary.)
- Read John 6:56-64. By the end of Christ's ministry, at least, what was Judas' spiritual condition like? (He didn't accept Jesus as the Son of God.)
- Read the following passage and discuss how Judas's unbelief impacted his influence among the disciples, and what lessons we can learn from his life:

Christ's discourse in the synagogue concerning the bread of life was the turning point in the history of Judas. He heard the words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." John 6:53. He saw that Christ was offering spiritual rather than worldly good. He regarded himself as farsighted, and thought he could see that Jesus would have no honor, and that He could bestow no high position upon His followers. He determined not to unite himself so closely to Christ but that he could draw away. He would watch. And he did watch. {DA 719.1}

From that time he expressed doubts that confused the disciples. He introduced controversies and misleading sentiments, repeating the arguments urged by the scribes and Pharisees against the claims of Christ. All the little and large troubles and crosses, the difficulties and the apparent hindrances to the advancement of the gospel, Judas interpreted as evidences against its truthfulness. He would introduce texts of Scripture that had no connection with the truths Christ was presenting. These texts, separated from their connection, perplexed the disciples, and increased the discouragement that was constantly pressing upon them. Yet all this was done by Judas in such a way as to make it appear that he was conscientious. And while the disciples were searching for evidence to confirm the words of the Great Teacher, Judas would lead them almost imperceptibly on another track. Thus in a very religious, and apparently wise, way he was presenting matters in a different light from that in which Jesus had given them, and attaching to His words a meaning that He had not conveyed. His

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suggestions were constantly exciting an ambitious desire for temporal preferment, and thus turning the disciples from the important things they should have considered. The dissension as to which of them should be greatest was generally excited by Judas. {DA 719.2}

Tuesday (December 24): Courage and Empowerment

In the last four days of this week's lesson, we will compare the leadership characteristics demonstrated by Ezra and Nehemiah with characteristics of Revelation's remnant church. Today, we look at courage and empowerment.

Discussion Questions:

- Read 1 Corinthians 14:3. What are three manifestations of the prophetic gift? (Edification, exhortation, and comfort.) What does it mean to edify and exhort others? (Exhortation means to teach and encourage, even reprove when necessary, and edification means to build up. The NLT translates this verse this way: "But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them.")
- Read Revelation 12:17 and 19:10. These two verses in Revelation show the importance that prophecy, and the prophetic gift, will have for God's people at the end of time. In what ways, and for what reasons, do we living at the end of time especially need the prophetic gifts of edification, exhortation, and comfort? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the following passages below and discuss the importance of receiving God's courage today:

The opposition and discouragement that the builders in Nehemiah's day met from open enemies and pretended friends is typical of the experience that those today will have who work for God. Christians are tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of avowed friends and helpers. Derision and reproach are hurled at them. And the same enemy that leads to contempt, at a favorable opportunity uses more cruel and violent measures. {PK 644.3}

Satan takes advantage of every unconsecrated element for the accomplishment of his purposes. Among those who profess to be the supporters of God's cause there are those who unite with His enemies and thus lay His cause open to the attacks of His bitterest foes. Even some who desire the work of God to prosper will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of His adversaries. Satan works with marvelous success through his agents, and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. But, like Nehemiah, God's people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand. {PK 645.1}

Wednesday (December 25): Purpose and Passion

Nehemiah and Ezra both understood their purpose in life, and maintained a passion for carrying out that purpose. This was essential for them, and it remains especially so for God's people today. In many previous lessons we have discussed the purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Advent Movement. In today's lesson, we will look at how we can best maintain a holy passion for fulfilling the mission given to us.

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Discussion Questions:

- Read 2 Corinthians 9:2. What quality did the church in Corinth have that Paul commended? (They had zeal for God and His truth.) What is zeal? (Zeal, in its good sense, is “ardour in embracing, pursuing, [and] defending anything.”) What has God given to us today that needs to be embraced? Pursued? Defended? (Answers will vary. Certainly the law of God, the Sabbath truth, the sanctuary message, the promise of Christ’s second coming, and God’s promise of victory over sin need to be embraced, pursued, and defended today.)
- Read Revelation 3:14-16. According to this passage, what is the spiritual condition of the church today? (We are lukewarm and lack passion and zeal for God.) Is this an accurate description of your church, your family, and you yourself? (Hopefully not!)
- Read Revelation 3:17. What contributes to the lack of spiritual passion among God’s people today? (This verse suggests that self-sufficiency, apathy, and spiritual blindness bring about this deadly condition.)
- Read Revelation 3:18,19. After revealing the remedies for spiritual apathy in verse 18, what does Jesus encourage us to do in verse 19? (Be zealous and repent.) What does it mean to be zealous in repentance? (Answers will vary.)
- Read the statements below and discuss what practical things we can do in our lives to experience this kind of revival and reformation:

The gold of faith and love, the white raiment of a spotless character, and the eyesalve, or the power of clear discernment between good and evil—all these we must obtain before we can hope to enter the kingdom of God. But these precious treasures will not drop upon us without some exertion on our part. We must buy—we must “be zealous and repent” of our lukewarm state. We must be awake to see our wrongs, to search for our sins, and to put them away from us.... {OHC 351.3}

In one way we are thrown upon our own energies; we are to strive earnestly to be zealous and to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts from every defilement; we are to reach the highest standard, believing that God will help us in our efforts. We must seek if we would find, and seek in faith; we must knock, that the door may be opened unto us. The Bible teaches that everything regarding our salvation depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility will rest wholly upon ourselves. If provision has been made, and if we accept God’s terms, we may lay hold on eternal life. We must come to Christ in faith, we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure. {NL 35.3}

Thursday (December 26): Humility and Perseverance

Humility and perseverance were two additional outstanding characteristics of Ezra and Nehemiah that empowered them to fulfill their mission. However, these positive qualities were most clearly demonstrated by Jesus Christ during His final hours of suffering. In today’s lesson, we will compare Christ’s demonstration of humility and perseverance with that of the saints at the end of time.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Luke 22:67-71. For what was Jesus condemned at His final trial before the Jews? (His testimony regarding His relationship to God the Father.)
- Read Revelation 12:17. For what are God’s people persecuted at the end of time? (The commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.) What connections do you see between Christ’s testimony at the end of His life, and the testimony of Jesus held and given by the saints at the end of time? (Answers will vary. Both are condemned for testimony they

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bear, for their faith in and obedience to God, and for the awareness of a living connection with God the Father.)

- Read Hebrews 5:7-9. In what ways did Christ show perseverance during His sufferings? (He continued to remain faithful and obedient to God, and to demonstrate divine patience with, and forgiveness of, those who were persecuting Him.)
- Read Revelation 12:14. In what ways is the “patience of the saints” the same as the perseverance of Christ? In what ways might it be different? (Answers will vary.)

The powers of darkness will open their batteries upon us; and all who are indifferent and careless, who have set their affections on their earthly treasure, and who have not cared to understand God’s dealings with His people, will be ready victims. No power but a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, will ever make us steadfast; but with this, one may chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. {Mar 217.7}

Friday (December 27): Leaders at the End of Time

God has always needed leaders on earth, and Revelation reveals that at the end of time He will have a people on earth that, through His power, are true spiritual leaders. It is the privilege and calling of each of us to be part of God’s end-time “leadership team.” It’s an offer you don’t want to refuse!

Discussion Questions:

- Read Revelation 7:1-3. Upon whom does God place His seal at the end of time? (His servants.) What does it mean to be a servant of God? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Matthew 24:43-47. This passage explains what it means to be a servant of God at the end of time. What kind of servant does Jesus make a “ruler over his household”? (Faithful and wise servants.) What is a faithful servant? What is a wise servant? (Faithful and wise servants give the people under their care “meat in due season.”) What does this mean? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 12:1-3. What does this verse reveal about being a wise servant of God at the end of time? What will they be doing? (Those who are wise will be working with Christ to turn other people away from sin toward righteousness.)
- Read the passages below and discuss what they reveal about how we should be living today:

As never before, resistance must be made against sin—against the powers of darkness. The time demands energetic and determined activity on the part of those who believe present truth. If the time seems long to wait for our Deliverer to come; if, bowed by affliction and worn with toil, we feel impatient to receive an honorable release from the warfare, let us remember—and let the remembrance check every murmur—that we are left on earth to encounter storms and conflicts, to perfect Christian character, to become better acquainted with God our Father, and Christ our elder Brother, and to do work for the Master in winning many souls to Christ. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:3