

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Adult Sabbath School Lesson
Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

God's Call

2019, Quarter 4, Lesson 3

Sabbath (October 12): God's Call

This week we will be looking at God's specific call to Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. As the lesson points out, their experience raises questions for us: Does God call each person to a specific task? Are there criteria that make someone more qualified than others for a certain task? Are those criteria different in human eyes than in God's? In today's lesson we will look at God's calling of Abraham, and seek to discover some principles from his experience that can apply to us today.

Discussion Questions:

- Read the following passage, and then discuss the questions that follow:
 - “The message of God came to Abraham, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.” In order that God might qualify him for *his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles*, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. *His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world*. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. *Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred.*” {PP 126.1}
 - What was the great work that God called Abraham to? (To be the keeper of the “sacred oracles,” or law of God.) Is this really any different than the calling given to God’s people today? (It is the same.)
 - What qualification must Abraham have in order to fulfill his role as a keeper of the “sacred oracles”? (His character must be different from that of all others in the world.) In what ways have you discovered that answering God’s call in your life always leads to character development? (Answers will vary.)
 - Did other people understand Abraham’s course of action in following God’s call? (No.) What implication does this have for us today as we seek to follow God’s call on our lives? (We should not expect others to understand why we do what we do as we follow God.)
- Read the following passage, and then discuss the questions that follow:

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- “Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but *He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence*. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. *He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them.*” {PP 126.4}
- What two tools does God primarily use to call people today? (The teachings of His word and the events of His providence.)
- What situation will answering God's call often lead people into? (Answering God's call often leads us to a place where we can depend on Him alone for answers or help.) Why does God work this way? (So that He can reveal Himself to us.)

Sunday (October 13): The Calling of Ezra and Nehemiah

God's call to Ezra and Nehemiah illustrates reasons that God continues to call His people today to serve Him. In today's lesson we will look more closely at the character of these two men, and discover ways in which they continue to serve as powerful role models for us.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ezra 7:10. What does this verse tell us about Ezra that helps explain why God called him to the job He did? (Ezra had “set” or “prepared” his heart to seek “the law of the Lord.” The Hebrew word used here, *kuwn*, means to “establish” or “be fixed.” It is the same word used in Joshua 3:17 where the priests “stood firm” on dry ground as Israel passed through the Jordan River, and in 2 Samuel 7:16 where God tells King David that He will “establish” his throne and kingdom for ever.)
- What other quality of Ezra is brought out in this verse? (He determined to do the law of God.) Why is this so important? (As James writes in James 1:22, we should be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”)
- Read the passage below and discuss why it is so important to be a “doer of the word”:

John and Judas are representatives of those who profess to be Christ's followers. Both these disciples had the same opportunities to study and follow the divine Pattern. Both were closely associated with Jesus and were privileged to listen to His teaching. Each possessed serious defects of character; and each had access to the divine grace that transforms character. But while one in humility was learning of Jesus, the other revealed that he was not a doer of the word, but a hearer only. One, daily dying to self and overcoming sin, was sanctified through the truth; the other, resisting the transforming power of grace and indulging selfish desires, was brought into bondage to Satan. {AA 558.1}

- Read Nehemiah 1:4-6,11. Nehemiah seems very passionate about God's reputation and the welfare of His people, and this certainly was an important reason that God called him.

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Read the passage below and discuss Elijah's experience and the reason that God called him as a prophet:

As Elijah saw Israel going deeper and deeper into idolatry, his soul was distressed and his indignation aroused. God had done great things for His people. He had delivered them from bondage and given them "the lands of the heathen, ... that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." Psalm 105:44, 45. But the beneficent designs of Jehovah were now well-nigh forgotten. Unbelief was fast separating the chosen nation from the Source of their strength. Viewing this apostasy from his mountain retreat, Elijah was overwhelmed with sorrow. In anguish of soul he besought God to arrest the once-favored people in their wicked course, to visit them with judgments, if need be, that they might be led to see in its true light their departure from Heaven. He longed to see them brought to repentance before they should go to such lengths in evil-doing as to provoke the Lord to destroy them utterly. {PK 119.2}

Monday (October 14): Prophetic Timing

Galatians 4:4-5 makes it clear that Jesus Christ appeared at the first advent precisely on time, "when the fullness of time was come." As Ellen White writes in the book *The Desire of Ages*, "God's purposes know no haste and no delay. ... [I]n heaven's council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem." In today's lesson we will look at one of the Bible's most important time prophecies, the prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9, which began in the same year (457 BC) that Ezra was called to ministry.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 9:24 and discuss the following questions:
 - What length of time does this prophecy concern? (The prophecy lasts for 70 weeks.)
 - What length of literal time does this point to? (490 years of literal time, counting each day of prophetic time as a year of literal time [see Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:5,6].)
 - What six things were to be accomplished by the end of the 70 weeks? (Finishing of transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and sealing up the vision and prophecy.)
 - Given the list of things that were to be accomplished by the end of this prophetic time period, why is it significant that Ezra was called to work for God's people at the beginning of the 70 weeks? (Ezra had "set" his heart to "seek the law of the Lord" and God called him to begin the work of reform that was to be accomplished during the next 490 years.)
- Read Psalm 40:7,8. Who else had a love for God's law written in His heart? (Jesus Christ!) In what ways did Ezra's work and ministry foreshadow that of the Messiah, the One Who ultimately would fulfill the requirements of Daniel 9:24 at the end of the 70 weeks prophecy? (Answers will vary.)

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Tuesday (October 15): The 70 Weeks and the 2,300 Days

The 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 and the 2,300 days (or years) of Daniel 8 are closely connected—in fact, they represent different segments of the same prophetic time period. In today's lesson we will examine some of the important links between these two prophecies.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 8:1-12. Summarize what Daniel *sees* in vision here. (A ram, a goat, and a little horn successively ruling the earth.)
- Read Daniel 8:13,14. What does Daniel *hear* in vision in these verses? (The prophecy of the 2,300 days.)
- Read Daniel 8:15,19-23. What does the angel reveal to Daniel regarding what he has seen in vision? (The angel explains that the ram represents Medo-Persia, the goat represents Greece, and the little horn represents the next power, Rome.) Does Daniel understand this part of the vision? (Yes, of course.)
- Read Daniel 8:26,27. What part of the vision does Daniel not understand? (The part he had heard about the 2,300 days. Two Hebrew words for “vision” are used in Daniel 8. *Chazown* is consistently used to refer to the vision that Daniel sees in Daniel 8:1-12, while *mareh* is consistently used to refer to the vision that Daniel hears in verses 13 and 14. In Daniel 8:26 Daniel specifically writes that he did understand the *mareh* of the 2,300 days.)
- Read Daniel 9:21. Who comes to visit Daniel as he is praying? (The angel Gabriel comes to visit Daniel, and Daniel says he is the same angel he had seen in the *chazown* [vision] earlier.)
- Read Daniel 9:22,23. For what reason does Gabriel say that he has come to visit Daniel? (To give him understanding of the vision, or *mareh*, of Daniel 8:14. Gabriel does this by giving the 70 weeks prophecy. For this reason, as well as many others mentioned in the lesson, the 2,300 days or years of Daniel 8:14 and the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24 are closely linked and clearly form parts of the same prophetic time period.)

Wednesday (October 16): God's Election

Daniel 9:24 predicts the Messiah's work of redemption and salvation, and this work is one that is available to all people. In today's study we will look at a sometimes-confusing passage in the Bible that speaks of God's calling and election on all people for salvation.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Romans 8:28. According to what purpose does God call people? (His purpose, not necessarily according to our selfish wants or desires.)
- Read Romans 8:29. What is God's purpose? (That every person be “conformed to the image of his Son.”) What does this mean? (It means to be restored to the character of God, as humanity was originally created [see Genesis 1:26,27].)
- Read Matthew 22:14. What did Jesus say about God's election? (Many are called, but few are chosen.) What does this mean? (God calls everyone to be restored to His image through a connection with Jesus Christ, but not everyone will choose to answer that call.)

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- Read Romans 8:30. What does God promise to do in the lives of all those that do answer His call? (He will justify and eventually glorify all those that answer His call.) How was this calling illustrated in the lives of Esau and Jacob? (Esau refused God's call on his life and eventually lost the birthright and great spiritual blessings. Jacob, on the other hand, though he made many mistakes, ultimately accepted God's call on his life and was transformed in character.)

Jacob had received the blessing for which his soul had longed. His sin as a supplanter and deceiver had been pardoned. The crisis in his life was past. Doubt, perplexity, and remorse had embittered his existence, but now all was changed; and sweet was the peace of reconciliation with God. Jacob no longer feared to meet his brother. God, who had forgiven his sin, could move the heart of Esau also to accept his humiliation and repentance. {PP 198.1}

Thursday (October 17): Our Responsibility

The lives of Jacob and Esau, reviewed in yesterday's lesson, illustrate the power and freedom of choice that God grants to each person. While He calls all people to salvation and transformation of character through Jesus Christ, He does not force this experience on anyone. In today's study, we will see that same lesson can be learned by studying the history of Israel.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 9:24. What length of time was "determined," or "cut off," for the Jewish people? (70 prophetic weeks, or 490 literal years.) What were they to accomplish as a nation during this time that they had failed to do before? (Preserve God's law and prepare the world for Christ's first advent.)

Yet God had chosen Israel. He had called them to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. He desired them to be as wells of salvation to the world. What Abraham was in the land of his sojourn, what Joseph was in Egypt, and Daniel in the courts of Babylon, the Hebrew people were to be among the nations. They were to reveal God to men. {DA 27.2}

- Read Matthew 18:21,22. How many times did Jesus say we should forgive others? (Seventy times seven, or 490, times.) What point might Jesus have been making to His disciples in regard to the Jewish nation? (While God will always forgive a sincere prayer of confession and repentance, there was a set limit to the opportunity that Israel as a nation would have to accomplish God's purpose for them. When Jesus said this, that allotted time period of 490 years was rapidly running out.)
- Read the passages below and discuss how we today might be vulnerable to making the same mistakes as God's people did in the past:

While the Jews desired the advent of the Messiah, they had no true conception of His mission. They did not seek redemption from sin, but deliverance from the Romans. They looked for the Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor's power, and exalt Israel to universal dominion. Thus the way was prepared for them to reject the Saviour. {DA 29.4}

Hatred of the Romans, and national and spiritual pride, led the Jews still to adhere rigorously to their forms of worship. The priests tried to maintain a reputation for sanctity by scrupulous attention to the ceremonies of religion. The people, in their darkness and oppression, and the rulers, thirsting for power, longed for the coming of One who would vanquish their enemies and restore the kingdom to Israel. They had studied the prophecies, but without spiritual insight. Thus

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they overlooked those scriptures that point to the humiliation of Christ's first advent, and misapplied those that speak of the glory of His second coming. Pride obscured their vision. They interpreted prophecy in accordance with their selfish desires. {DA 30.2}

Friday (October 18): The Prophetic Pattern

For every major prophetic time period in the Bible, God has called a prophet at the end of the period to confirm it and to accomplish the divine purpose. For example:

- At the end (and beginning) of the 120 years, God called Noah to build an ark.
- At the end of the 400 years, God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- At the end of the 70 years, God called Zerubbabel and King Cyrus to bring the Jews back to Jerusalem.
- At the end of the 69 weeks in Daniel 9, God called John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah.
- At the end of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9, God called the deacon Stephen to testify that Jesus Christ was at God's right hand in heaven.

All these time periods focus on what God is doing, and conclude with God raising up a true prophet to accomplish His work.* Because God never changes, the same pattern must hold true with the 2,300 year time prophecy that ended in the year AD 1844. At this time God must raise up a prophet to accomplish His work.

Interestingly, Ellen White identifies William Miller as a prophet raised up by God to announce the end of the prophetic time period:

As Elisha was called from following his oxen in the field, to receive the mantle of consecration to the prophetic office, so was William Miller called to leave his plow and open to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of God. With trembling he entered upon his work, leading his hearers down, step by step, through the prophetic periods to the second appearing of Christ. With every effort he gained strength and courage as he saw the widespread interest excited by his words. {GC 331.1}

Ellen White, of course, wrote extensively about the 2,300 year prophecy of Daniel 8:14, and yet it was William Miller, not Mrs. White, that was actively teaching people about this prophecy as it was being fulfilled. This, then, leaves us with a question: For what purpose was Ellen White called to the prophetic office? What prophecy was she raised up to announce the end of?

An intriguing possible answer is found in Jude 14-15: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard [speeches] which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Indeed, Ellen White wrote much about the judgment of God (also referred to in Revelation 14:7) and how to stand in the righteousness of Christ in the judgment. Consider these representative statements from the book *The Great Controversy*:

Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the

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living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Revelation 3:3. {GC 490.1}

Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him: "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12:9. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:29, 30. Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them. {GC 489.2}

Finally, while Ellen White was called to a specific prophetic role at the end of time to prepare people for the second coming, the entire advent movement—including every Seventh-day Adventist—is a prophetic movement called to participate in this same work. God's promise to strengthen and enable every person who answers His call today to be part of this great prophetic movement and prepare the world for Christ's second coming:

In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. {9T 19.1}

* It is interesting to note that the 1,260 years pointing to the little horn's period of dominion (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:6; etc.) concludes with the second beast of Revelation 13—which is the same power as the false prophet of Revelation 16—rising up to work deceptive miracles.