

**JOSHUA AND
THE JUDGES**

*The Bible for
School and Home*

by J. Paterson Smyth

The Book of Genesis

Moses and the Exodus

Joshua and the Judges

The Prophets and Kings

*When the Christ Came:
The Highlands of Galilee*

*When the Christ Came:
The Road to Jerusalem*

St. Matthew

St. Mark

The Bible for School and Home

**JOSHUA AND
THE JUDGES**

by

J. Paterson Smyth

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

ITHACA, NEW YORK

Cover and arrangement © 2017 Yesterday's Classics, LLC.

This edition, first published in 2017 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an unabridged republication of the text originally published by Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd. For the complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, please visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of the Baldwin Online Children's Literature Project which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.mainlesson.com.

ISBN: 978-1-63334-019-0

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 339
Ithaca, NY 14851

CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....1

PART I: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER13

I. THE SECRET OF COURAGE.....24

II. GOD'S POWER.....30

III. JERICHO.....35

IV. ACHAN—THE DECEITFULNESS
OF SIN43

V. GIBEON50

VI. THE BATTLE OF BETH-HORON.....55

VII. CALEB—SOLDIERS OF GOD65

VIII. THE PLACE OF REFUGE71

IX. THE STORY OF A
MISUNDERSTANDING.....77

X. AN OLD MAN'S ADVICE85

PART II: THE STORY OF THE JUDGES

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER 90

I. SINNING AND PUNISHMENT, AND
REPENTING AND DELIVERANCE.96

II. FOUR DELIVERANCES102

III. DEBORAH'S SONG OF PRAISE110

IV. GIDEON—CALLED OF GOD117

V. GIDEON—THE SWORD OF THE
LORD124

VI. JEPHTHAH—IGNORANCE OF GOD . . .131

VII. SAMSON—RESPONSIBILITY137

VIII. SAMSON—FAILURE144

IX. SAMUEL—LENT UNTO THE LORD . . .151

X. THE CALL OF SAMUEL158

XI. THE GLORY DEPARTED162

XII. THE HAND OF GOD168

XIII. THE REFORMATION173

XIV. SELF-WILL AND GOD'S WILL178

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I

This series of books is intended for two classes of teachers:

1. *For Teachers in Week Day and Sunday Schools.* For these each book is divided into complete lessons. The lesson will demand preparation. Where feasible there should be diligent use of commentaries and of any books indicated in the notes. *As a general rule* I think the teacher should not bring the book at all to his class if he is capable of doing without it. He should make copious notes of the subject. The lesson should be thoroughly studied and digested beforehand, with all the additional aids at his disposal, and it should come forth at the class warm and fresh from his own heart and brain. But I would lay down no rigid rule about the use of the Lesson Book. To some it may be a burden to keep the details of a long lesson in the memory; and, provided the subject has been very carefully studied, the Lesson Book, with its salient points carefully marked in coloured pencil, may be a considerable help. Let each do what seems best in his particular case, only taking care to satisfy his conscience that it is not done through

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

laziness, and that he can really do best for his class by the plan which he adopts.

2. *For Parents* who would use it in teaching their children at home. They need only small portions, brief little lessons of about ten minutes each night. For these each chapter is divided into short sections. I should advise that on the first night only the Scripture indicated should be read, with some passing remarks and questions to give a grip of the story. That is enough. Then night after night go on with the teaching, taking as much or as little as one sees fit.

I have not written out the teaching in full as a series of readings which could be read over to the child without effort or thought. With this book in hand a very little preparation and adaptation will enable one to make the lesson more interesting and more personal and to hold the child's attention by questioning. Try to get his interest. Try to make him talk. Make the lesson conversational. Don't preach.

II

HINTS FOR TEACHING

An ancient Roman orator once laid down for his pupils the three-fold aim of a teacher:

1. *Placere* (to interest).
2. *Docere* (to teach).
3. *Movere* (to move).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. To interest the audience (in order to teach them).
2. To teach them (in order to move them).
3. To move them to action.

On these three words of his I hang a few suggestions on the teaching of this set of Lessons.

1. Placere (to interest)

I want especially to insist on attention to this rule. Some teachers seem to think that to interest the pupils is a minor matter. It is not a minor matter and the pupils will very soon let you know it. Believe me, it is no waste of time to spend hours during the week in planning to excite their interest to the utmost. Most of the complaints of inattention would cease at once if the teacher would give more study to rousing their interest. After all, there is little use in knowing the facts of your subject, and being anxious about the souls of the pupils, if all the time that you are teaching, these pupils are yawning and taking no interest in what you say. I know some have more aptitude for teaching than others. Yet, after considerable experience of teachers whose lesson was a weariness to the flesh, and of teachers who never lost attention for a moment, I am convinced, on the whole, that the power to interest largely depends on the previous preparation.

Therefore do not content yourself with merely studying the teaching of this series. Read widely and freely. Read not only commentaries, but books that will

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

give local interest and colour—books that will throw valuable sidelights on your sketch.

But more than reading is necessary. You know the meaning of the expression, "*Put yourself in his place.*" Practise that in every Bible story, using your imagination, living in the scene, experiencing, as far as you can, every feeling of the actors. To some this is no effort at all. They feel their cheeks flushing and their eyes growing moist as they project themselves involuntarily into the scene before them. But though it be easier to some than to others, it is in some degree possible to all, and the interest of the lesson largely depends on it. I have done my best in these books to help the teacher in this respect. But no man can help another much. Success will depend entirely on the effort to "put yourself in his place."

In reading the Bible chapter corresponding to each lesson, I suggest that the teacher should read part of the chapter, rather than let the pupils tire themselves by "reading round." My experience is that this "reading round" is a fruitful source of listlessness. When his verse is read, the pupil can let his mind wander till his turn comes again, and so he loses all interest. I have tried, with success, varying the monotony. I would let them read the first round of verses in order; then I would make them read out of the regular order, as I called their names; and sometimes, if the lesson were long, I would again and again interrupt by reading a group of verses myself, making remarks as I went on. To lose their interest is fatal.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I have indicated also in the lessons that you should not unnecessarily give information yourself. Try to question it *into* them. If you tell them facts which they have just read, they grow weary. If you ask a question, and then answer it yourself when they miss it, you cannot keep their attention. Send your questions around in every sort of order, or want of order. Try to puzzle them—try to surprise them. Vary the form of the question, if not answered, and always feel it to be a defeat if you ultimately fail in getting the answer you want.

2. *Docere (to teach)*

You interest the pupil in order that you may *teach*. Therefore teach definitely the Lesson that is set you. Do not be content with interesting him. Do not be content either with drawing spiritual teaching. Teach the facts before you. Be sure that God has inspired the narration of them for some good purpose.

When you are dealing with Old Testament characters, do not try to shirk or to condone evil in them. They were not faultless saints. They were men like ourselves, whom God was helping and bearing with, as He helps and bears with us, and the interest of the story largely depends on the pupil realizing this.

In the Old Testament books of this series you will find very full chapters written on the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the election of Jacob, the Sun standing still, the slaughter of Canaanites, and other such subjects. In connection with these I want to say something that

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

especially concerns teachers. Your pupils, now or later, can hardly avoid coming in contact with the flippant scepticism so common nowadays, which makes jests at the story of the sun standing still, and talks of the folly of believing that all humanity was condemned because Eve ate an apple thousands of years ago. This flippant tone is "in the air." They will meet with it in their companions, in the novels of the day, in popular magazine articles on their tables at home. You have, many of you, met with it yourselves; you know how disturbing it is; and you probably know, too, that much of its influence on people arises from the narrow and unwise teaching of the Bible in their youth. Now you have no right to ignore this in your teaching of the Bible. You need not talk of Bible difficulties and their answers. You need not refer to them at all. But teach the truth that will take the sting out of these difficulties when presented in after-life.

To do this requires trouble and thought. We have learned much in the last fifty years that has thrown new light for us on the meaning of some parts of the Bible; which has, at any rate, made doubtful some of our old interpretations of it. We must not ignore this. There are certain traditional theories which some of us still insist on teaching as God's infallible truth, whereas they are really only human opinions about it, which may possibly be mistaken. As long as they are taught as human opinions, even if we are wrong, the mistake will do no harm. But if things are taught as God's infallible truth, to be believed on peril of doubting God's Word, it may do grave mischief, if in after-life the pupil find

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

them seriously disputed, or perhaps false. A shallow, unthinking man, finding part of his teaching false, which has been associated in his mind with the most solemn sanctions of religion, is in danger of letting the whole go. Thus many of our young people drift into hazy doubt about the Bible. Then we get troubled about their beliefs, and give them books of Christian evidences to win them back by explaining that what was taught them in childhood was not *quite* correct, and needs now to be modified by a broader and slightly different view. But we go on as before with the younger generation, and expose them in their turn to the same difficulties.

Does it not strike you that, instead of this continual planning to win men back from unbelief, it might be worth while to try the other method of not exposing them to unbelief? Give them the more careful and intelligent teaching at first, and so prepare them to meet the difficulties by-and-by.

I have no wish to advocate any so-called "advanced" teaching. Much of such teaching I gravely object to. But there are truths of which there is no question amongst thoughtful people, which somehow are very seldom taught to the young, though ignorance about them in after-life leads to grave doubt and misunderstanding. Take, for example, the gradual, progressive nature of God's teaching in Scripture, which makes the Old Testament teaching as a whole lower than that of the New. This is certainly no doubtful question, and the knowledge of it is necessary for an intelligent study of

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

Scripture. I have dealt with it where necessary in some of the books of this series.

I think, too, our teaching on what may seem to us doubtful questions should be more fearless and candid. If there are two different views each held by able and devout men, do not teach your own as the infallibly true one, and ignore or condemn the other. For example, do not insist that the order of creation must be accurately given in the first chapter of Genesis. You may think so; but many great scholars, with as deep a reverence for the Bible as you have, think that inspired writers were circumscribed by the science of their time. Do not be too positive that the story of the Fall *must be* an exactly literal narrative of facts. If you believe that it is I suppose you must tell your pupil so. But do not be afraid to tell him also that there are good and holy and scholarly men who think of it as a great old-world allegory, like the parable of the Prodigal Son, to teach in easy popular form profound lessons about sin. Endeavor in your Bible teaching “to be thoroughly truthful: to assert nothing as certain which is not certain, nothing as probable which is not probable, and nothing as more probable than it is.” Let the pupil see that there are some things that we cannot be quite sure about, and let him gather insensibly from your teaching the conviction that truth, above all things, is to be loved and sought, and that religion has never anything to fear from discovering the truth. If we could but get this healthy, manly, common-sense attitude adopted now in teaching the Bible to young people, we should, with

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

God's blessing, have in the new generation a stronger and more intelligent faith.

3. *Movere (to move)*

All your teaching is useless unless it have this object: to move the heart, to rouse the affections toward the love of God, and the will toward the effort after the blessed life. You interest in order to teach. You teach in order to move. *That* is the supreme object. Here the teacher must be left largely to his own resources. One suggestion I offer: don't preach. At any rate, don't preach much lest you lose grip of your pupils. You have their attention all right while their minds are occupied by a carefully prepared lesson; but wait till you close your Bible, and, assuming a long face, begin, "And now, boys," etc. and straightway they know what is coming, and you have lost them in a moment.

Do not change your tone at the application of your lesson. Try to keep the teaching still conversational. Try still in this more spiritual part of your teaching to question into them what you want them to learn. Appeal to the judgment and to the conscience. I can scarce give a better example than that of our Lord in teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan. He first interested His pupil by putting His lesson in an attractive form, and then He did not append to it a long, tedious moral. He simply asked the man before Him, "Which of these three *thinkest thou?*"—i.e., "What do you think about it?" The interest was still kept up. The man, pleased at the appeal to his judgment, replied promptly, "He that

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

showed mercy on him;” and on the instant came the quick rejoinder, “Go, and do thou likewise.” Thus the lesson ends. Try to work on that model.

Now, while forbidding preaching to your pupils, may I be permitted a little preaching myself? This series of lessons is intended for Sunday schools as well as week-day schools. It is of Sunday-school teachers I am thinking in what I am now about to say. I cannot escape the solemn feeling of the responsibility of every teacher for the children in his care. Some of these children have little or no religious influence exerted on them for the whole week except in this one hour with you. Do not make light of this work. Do not get to think, with good-natured optimism, that all the nice, pleasant children in your class are pretty sure to be Christ’s soldiers and servants by-and-by. Alas! for the crowds of these nice, pleasant children, who, in later life, wander away from Christ into the ranks of evil. Do not take this danger lightly. Be anxious; be prayerful; be terribly in earnest, that the one hour in the week given you to use be wisely and faithfully used.

But, on the other hand, be very hopeful too, because of the love of God. He will not judge you hardly. Remember that He will bless very feeble work, if it be your best. Remember that He cares infinitely more for the children’s welfare than you do, and, therefore, by His grace, much of the teaching about which you are despondent may bring forth good fruit in the days to come. Do you know the lines about “The Noisy Seven”?—

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“I wonder if he remembers—

Our sainted teacher in heaven—
The class in the old grey schoolhouse,
Known as the ‘Noisy Seven’?

“I wonder if he remembers

How restless we used to be.
Or thinks we forget the lesson
Of Christ and Gethsemane?

“I wish I could tell the story

As he used to tell it then;
I’m sure that, with Heaven’s blessing,
It would reach the hearts of men.

“I often wish I could tell him,

Though we caused him so much pain
By our thoughtless, boyish frolic,
His lessons were not in vain.

“I’d like to tell him how Willie,

The merriest of us all,
From the field of Balaclava
Went home at the Master’s call.

“I’d like to tell him how Ronald,

So brimming with mirth and fun,
Now tells the heathen of India
The tale of the Crucified One.

“I’d like to tell him how Robert,

And Jamie, and George, and ‘Ray,’
Are honoured in the Church of God—
The foremost men of their day.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

“I’d like, yes, I’d like to tell him
 What his lesson did for me;
And how I am trying to follow
 The Christ of Gethsemane.

“Perhaps he knows it already,
 For Willie has told him, maybe,
That we are all coming, coming
 Through Christ of Gethsemane.

“How many besides I know not
 Will gather at last in heaven,
The fruit of that faithful sowing,
 But the sheaves are already seven.”

PART I

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

Lecture to the Teacher

In beginning the study of this Book for the purpose of teaching there are some points which it is important to be clear about.

I

First, that the Book naturally divides itself into two parts:—

The Story of the Conquest, chs. i.-xii.

The Chronicle of the Allotment, chs. xii.-xxiii.

With the Chronicle of the Allotment, or, as it has been called, The Domesday Book of Palestine, our lessons have but little to do. On the Story of the Conquest it may be necessary to make some remarks. Keep clearly in mind that by the Conquest is meant only the conquest of west Palestine. The closing years of Moses were mainly occupied with the subjugation of the fierce tribes on the *eastern* bank of the Jordan. Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, the King of

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

Bashan, and the princes of the wandering Midianites, had fallen before the victorious arms of Israel when our story opens with Joshua and his warriors drawn up on the banks of the Jordan. It is entirely with the conquest of West Palestine—ie., Palestine beyond the Jordan—Palestine between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea—that we are concerned in this Book. Show this to the class by means of the map. Be careful, too, to avoid the common misapprehension that Joshua's conquest was a complete one—a misapprehension which causes a good deal of puzzling about the condition of things at the opening of the Book of Judges. From ch. xv. 63, xvi. 10, xvii. 12, 13, etc., it is clear that portions of the subjugated tribes remained, pretty much like the ancient Britons in England long ago, holding the fastnesses, and sometimes permitted to dwell with the conquerors and pay tribute, and that these were a serious danger and temptation to the Israelites. We shall find in the Book of Judges that the Israelites were themselves to blame for this; but the matter does not further concern us in this Book.

II

Let us next try to form an opinion about those Canaanite tribes which were driven out by the children of Israel. They are named in different parts of the Bible the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, Gergashites; but they seem to have had the same language, and manners, and religious customs,

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER

and are frequently spoken of under the general name of Canaanites or Hittites.

The Bible tells us very little of their history, and very little of their manners, beyond the terrible statements as to their cruelty and impurity, and the unutterable abominations connected with their heathen worship. The very earth itself beneath their feet is represented as unable to bear their filthy and licentious lives. Their sand is said to vomit them forth (Leviticus xviii. 25). But secular history throws a new light on them rather startling at first sight. We have heard of Cadmus, the Phœnician, the inventor of the alphabet; of the Phœnician ships that traded for tin with early Britain; of the Phœnician race the pioneers of commerce—who colonized the Mediterranean shores. We know something of that most interesting period in Roman history which tells of the power and civilization of Carthage, and the wars of its Punic or Phœnician race—the great merchant princes of the world. Is it not startling to discover that the polished Phœnician and the accursed Canaanite are one and the same! The Septuagint translators of the Old Testament actually use the word “Phœnician” in translating the Hebrew term “Canaanite” (Exodus xvi. 35; Joshua v. 1). St Augustine, in his Commentary of the Epistle to the Romans, says that the country folk around Carthage called themselves Canaani. And many teachers will remember the Carthaginian names—Hannibal, Asdrubal, Maherbal, with the title Baal at the end, recalling the dark idol of the Israelite days, and the names Eshbaal and Merib-baal, even among the children of Saul.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

Apart from the interest of the fact that we can identify the Canaanite with the famous Phœnician, there is an instructive lesson here for our senior classes. It is quite true that at this period the Phœnician race had passed its zenith of greatness, and was probably advancing toward demoralization and decay. We know they had not always been so wicked and depraved. There was a time when their "iniquity was not yet full." Yet, even so, there is a lesson in the difference of attitude of the sacred and secular historians, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Power, civilization, knowledge, beauty, win the admiration of the careless world even when covering a mass of moral corruption. With God the chief thing is the *man himself*—the moral nature within. According as that is turned to the true and noble, or the base and sensual, so are men and nations judged by God. Probably much of the graceful and beautiful in our notions of ancient Greek life would similarly vanish at the Ithuriel touch of an inspired historian, and appear, it may be, in the lurid colours of St. Paul's first chapter in his Epistle to the Romans.

III

The miracles in this Book of Joshua have often raised doubts and disturbance in men's minds. That the waters of Jordan should part for their crossing—that the walls of the city of Jericho should fall to the ground—are events that would *in ordinary circumstances* seem so improbable that a man feels half justified in hesitating

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER

to believe them. But be it remembered *that these were not ordinary circumstances*. What was at stake was not, as sceptics sneeringly assert, the fate of a few thousand Jews, or the “mastership of a little province about the size of Wales”—no, but the fate of the Torch-bearers who were to bear the light of the truth for the whole human race. The issue of the conquest of Palestine belongs to all time. The Jews were a people miraculously used for the sake of humanity. Their history must be read, as the historian wrote it, with an awful sense of God’s immediate presence pervading it right through. We feel no difficulty about miracles in the days of the Apostles. We feel that they are extraordinary, but that they are for an extraordinary time. Let the same thought have place in reading about this period.

This does not mean that we must accept each statement unquestioningly as an exact literal explanation of what actually happened. Something wonderful *did* happen at the Jordan and at Jericho which made a tremendous impression. Here is no questioning of miracles, of what God *could* have done. But some accounts may strike us as improbable as to what God *would* have done. It is not wrong to think of other possible explanations. The stories of these miracles are not as regards evidence on the level of those recorded in our Lord’s day. They belong to far remote antiquity. They came down for generations in the legends of the people. We must allow for the possibility of exaggeration and poetical expression. But there is no escaping the conviction that the whole period was felt by the actors in it to be a time of the extraordinary and supernatural.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

God was very near to them. We find the statement that the natives were terrified at the invaders as men helped supernaturally, so that all “hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of them.” We find the simple, artless historian before us fearlessly appealing to the monuments existing, he says, “even to this day” in which he wrote. He never seems to have troubled himself about proving or persuading—he seems to have never a thought of anyone questioning his story. Simply and straightforwardly he tells his tale, utterly unconscious of what seem difficulties to us. And, what is a much more important fact, we find the whole subsequent history and prophecies and psalms of the nation deeply stamped with the memory of this miraculous time. The existence of the miraculous is the only explanation. It will be noticed that I have not here included the mention of the sun standing still. What I have just said about the miracles of the Book does not equally apply to this, so I leave it for separate treatment in its appointed place in the Lessons.

IV

There is no room in this brief note to do more than touch the main difficulty of the Book—the slaughter of the Canaanites.

First of all, get rid of the thought of FAVOURITISM, which underlies much of the difficulty. The Israelites were not pets and favourites chosen arbitrarily for their own sakes to a favoured life. They were a race elected to great responsibilities and terribly severe training, *not*

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER

for their own sakes, but for the sake of humanity. The Israelites were the trustees of religion and morality for the whole world. If they had lost their sacred deposit in the abominations of Canaan, the whole human race might have sunk to the level of Sodom. They were used to punish terribly the unutterable abominations of Canaan; but they were punished as terribly themselves when they committed the same abominations. Nothing could impress the horror and hatefulness of sin so strongly on the Israelites as the solemn experiences of this early period in their history. They were taught to look on themselves as God's executioners performing a judicial act in His name. It was that which saved them from the brutalizing effect that their destruction of the Canaanites must otherwise have produced. If we are to understand their history we must never think of them as mere marauding tribes going forth to win land and booty for themselves. They were God's crusaders consecrated to an awful mission. Other nations have gone out to fight for their own glory or for increase of territory. "There is one nation which is taught from the first that it is not to go out to win any prizes for itself, to bring home the silver or gold, the sheep or the oxen; that it is simply the instrument of the righteous Lord against those who were polluting His earth and making it unfit for human habitation." The awful catalogue of abominations, too horrible to read in Leviticus xviii. to xx. are distinctly said to have been those committed by the men of the land so that the land was defiled therewith and that God abhorred it.

All this does not make it necessary for you to justify

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

to yourself the whole attitude of the Israelites to the people of Canaan, or to think that it would be the fitting attitude for Christian men in the same circumstances now. You must remember God's *gradual progressive education* of humanity. Think of the world as God's great school, with its gradual training, and these Israelites as His early scholars in the lower classes of that school. The religion of the Old Testament days, noble though it was, was far lower than the religion taught to us by Christ. He clearly lays down the difference Himself. (see Matthew v. 17, 21, 27, 33, 38, 43.) These Israelites were in the lower stages of the Divine teaching. They had learned to hate sin with a great hatred; but they had not learned to distinguish between sin and the sinner. Even in the Psalms, with their lofty moral teachings and aspirations after God and holiness, we are frequently startled by the fierce prayers for punishment on the wicked. They are the prayers of stern, faithful servants of God, claiming that He should vindicate His justice. But they belong to an age when moral indignation against evil showed itself in invoking vengeance on the evil-doer as the enemy of God. That was the important element in Israel's religion—a very important element, indeed, in all men's religion—fierce indignation against moral evil—against oppression, and impurity, and idolatry, and wrong of every kind. It was a grand religion for a lower, rougher, fiercer age than ours. The Gospel added to it the duty of distinguishing between the sin and the sinner. But be it remembered that that Gospel teaching was of later date. Keep that fact in mind. Try to put yourself in the place of the stern Israelite leaders, feeling

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER

themselves as the agent of Jehovah to sweep oppression and impurity from the earth. Try to keep in mind the Bible accounts of the awful abominations of Canaan. Not many years ago, England was sending out soldiers to Benin, to punish and, if necessary, destroy, an utterly abominable race; and the English newspapers were loudly praising the object of the expedition. Many good people had the same feeling with regard to the Turks, as the accounts came in of the Armenian massacres. During the Indian Mutiny it is recorded that an officer wrote home: "The Book of Joshua is now being read in the Church Lessons. It expresses exactly what we are feeling. I never before understood the force of that part of the Bible."

Let such things help us to understand the position of faithful men in ancient Israel, with God's inspiration of righteousness stirring in their souls. Let us remember that the fuller teaching of Christ was not theirs; "Many prophets and righteous men have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Above all, impress on yourself and on your class the conviction which you have learned from the whole Bible, and especially from the New Testament, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. Therefore, even if there be no record to convince you of it in the present history, be sure that there is no unfairness with God. If there was unfairness or cruelty in the half savage Israelites, it need not surprise us if we realize their low moral stage at the time. Nor even that they should believe such to be the will of God. Then believe in God's patience.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

Four hundred years God had waited, “for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” (Genesis xv. 16). He had waited to see if they would do better. He had helped them to do so. We find one great Canaanite teacher at least, Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, and we know not how many successors he may have had, and who were sent in God’s good Providence to help the people. Perhaps, in later days, too, God had given them teachers, as to other heathen nations, like Jethro or Balaam or like Jonah in Nineveh or like Gautama Buddha in India. He had certainly helped them by His “law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness.” (Romans ii. 15). In all nations we find the stirrings of conscience and the dim yearning for better things. And the Bible (e.g., John i. 9, Acts xvii. 23, 26, 27) fully confirms the beautiful creed of Longfellow:—

“That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
For the good they comprehend not;
And the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.”

—*Hiawatha*.

We know little about the Canaanites and their “fair chance” in this life. But we may rest in the firm belief that God condemns no man without his “fair chance.” When you shrink from the thought of these Canaanites with their little and their great sins, being cut off suddenly, men and women and even little children, do not assume hastily that that must inevitably mean for all of them eternal damnation. Remember that, after

LECTURE TO THE TEACHER

death, as before death, men are still in the hands of the same just loving God who “willeth all men to be saved.” Remember that the Canaanites are waiting still in the great Hades life for the final judgment at the coming of the Son of Man. They are not yet judged, not yet finally condemned. And as you think of the indication given us (1 Peter iii. 19, 20; iv. 6) of that Son of Man appearing in the Hades life to preach the “good news” to them that were dead of the antediluvian world, why should you not hope the same thing for the Canaanites if they had no fair chance on earth of knowing God? True we can only guess at the mysteries of the Unseen Life. But we can know with positive certainty that “the Judge of all the earth will do right.”

Be sure then that neither the heathen of Canaan in olden days, nor the heathen of India and China to-day, have any unfair treatment meted out to them by God. The real cure for Old Testament difficulties, as for all the difficulties of life, is this:—HAVE FAITH IN GOD. Faith in God means faith in a Person, faith in a character, faith in an infinite love and nobleness, generosity and unselfishness—faith in One to whom it would be absolutely impossible that He should be unfair, or ungenerous, or unkind to any man. Learn that faith yourself. Resolve, God helping you, to teach that faith to your class, and, if you do nothing more, your work in that class will be well worth the doing.

LESSON I

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

Joshua I.

§ 1. Introduction

Have you ever read the story, *From Log Cabin to White House*? It tells how a little peasant lad became President of the United States. Or the story of *The Slave Boy Who Became a Bishop*? (Bishop Crowther, of the Niger Mission, in Africa.)

Our story to-day tells of a slave boy (in Africa also) who became a great commander. Who? When slave boy, and where? Yes. At the time when Moses began to take slaves' part, when he killed the Egyptian oppressor, and fled for his life, Joshua was but a little baby—the child of slaves. Grew up a slave. Probably often flogged by overseers, or saw his parents flogged at the brick kiln. But don't you think a man may be a splendid fellow even if a slave? I think Joshua was. I want you really to know him, and get interested in him, for he well deserves it, as we shall see in these lessons. For when Moses led out Israel, Joshua was with him as his lieutenant. He was so

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

thoroughly faithful to God and to duty—so true, brave, candid, unselfish. No wonder Moses grew so attached to him, made him his friend. As he grew older he liked to have the young man about him—sent him on great expeditions. What? To fight with Amalek (Exodus xvii. 9); to spy out the Promised Land. Remember the anger of people with Joshua that day. How grandly he spoke to them to rouse their courage (Numbers xiv.). He was a great help to Moses. He knew most of the old leader's thoughts, and cares, and troubles. Had gone up with him for the Tables of the Law. Had seen him break them in anger at the peoples' sin. Had seen how those people worried and fretted him, rebelled against him, almost stoned him (Exodus xvii. 4), and at last how they irritated him so much that he lost all patience, and sinned—how? Sad punishment inflicted by God. What? He must never enter the Land, must die in the wilderness. Up the lonely mountain he passed from the view of the people, and there he died—alone—with God.

Now we turn to to-day's lesson. Great camp of Israel on plains of Moab.

§ 2. *God Always Remains*

Now the days of sorrow and wailing in the camp upon the plains of Moab. Why? Moses is dead. Their father, and friend, and leader. The captain who had fought for them. The prophet who had prayed for them. Don't you think they would be sorry now for the past? Why? Frightened about the future? Why? The most

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

dangerous part of their journey yet to be done. How frightened and hopeless! The great hero gone—the only hero they had ever known. Surely no one could supply his place. Was it a natural feeling? Was it right? Why not? What were they forgetting? Though Moses was gone, who always remained?

People often frightened thus when great men died, in the nation—in the Church (give examples). What should they remember? God always there. God “buries His workers, but carries on His work.” (See Lessons on Genesis, last chapter.) Is this only true in Bible history? Is it in American history? *E.g.*, The Church—Missionary work, Suppression of slave trade, etc. Difference between American history and Bible history? Is God behind both—managing both? The chief difference is that the Jewish historians were inspired, and could recognize God in all; the English historian sometimes cannot see Him. But He is there all the same.

Had God forgotten to have new leader ready? Whom? Look back and see preparation. People call these things chance till they see whole view. Little boy born while Moses fretted in Midian. Grew up an earnest, religious man. Was it all chance? Tell me more of his preparation. Became dear to Moses, was taught and trusted by him in difficult affairs. Was it chance? Sent to lead the troops—to spy out the Land—just the right training for a leader. Was this chance? At any rate the result of all these “chances” was that when the old leader was struck down with the most critical part of his work left undone, a man was waiting, ready, trained, to whom the solemn charge of God could come:—“Moses,

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people.” Ah! these things are not chance in Joshua’s days or in ours. God’s plan. So John Baptist, St. Paul, Luther, etc. So, too, with much less important people, God has a plan for us all.

§ 3. *The Secret of Courage*

Now tell me God’s command to Joshua (v. 2). Do you think Joshua would take it up with light heart without fear or unwillingness? Were they easy, pleasant people to lead? He knew their rebellion and grumbling, how they had nearly broken Moses’ heart. He knew the awful task before him. Was it easier than Moses’? Harder? Why? Not only lead, but lead in constant battle against powerful enemies—against trained soldiers—great cities—Israelites not able for them, rebellious, weak, often cowardly—slave blood in them, etc. (*Expand and emphasize these difficulties.*) Might it not well frighten any leader?

Was Joshua frightened? No (vv. 10, 11). How did he dare to undertake it? BY FAITH! Faith in God—and Right—and Duty. What was God’s promise? (v. 5). Yes. He felt God would be with him—the work was laid on him by God. God was responsible for him, and would see him through with it. Suppose I ordered this class to start for Central Africa to-morrow, to pass through black warriors, and give message to black king, could you do it? Why? No money, no knowledge of country, no protection, etc., no chance of seeing black king. But suppose the President sent you? What a difference it

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

would make. He would be responsible for you, supply your wants, protect you. What matter the danger and difficulty with the power of your nation at your back?

That was Joshua's feeling. What if Canaanites were giants! What if the people rebelled! What if he should be fretted and disappointed? What if he should be killed before Jericho! What matter? It was God's affair. God was responsible for him in life and in death. What was God's command? (*vv.* 6, 7). What is it in all the struggles of life that makes men strong and courageous? Faith in God and in Duty, which comes from God. What will make your life and mine strong, peaceful, brave? To know that God is with you—standing on your side. When can you be sure of that? When, like Joshua, you are in the path of duty, wanting and trying to do His will. Then your spirit can hear the words that Joshua heard:—"Be strong and of good courage," etc. (repeat *v.* 9). You are even better off than Joshua; you have a grander revelation of God. Joshua did not know all the love of God and His care for men as the Lord Jesus has taught them to us.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON I

Show on map west Palestine where this story belongs.

Who was to lead Israel after Moses' death?

What training had he had? Find some instances.

"God buries His workers but carries on His work."
Explain and give instance.

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

Repeat God's encouragement to Joshua, "Be strong," etc.

What promise of God would make him strong and courageous? (v. 5).

How are we in this matter even better off than Joshua?

LESSON II

GOD'S POWER

Joshua III.

Recapitulate. What was Joshua's chief characteristic? Courage. What will do most to make our lives courageous? Remember illustration last lesson of your being sent to Africa. Repeat it. That was Joshua's faith.

Now comes a test of this faith in God. What? They knew that the river Jordan in high flood (v. 15) had to be crossed. No bridge. Dangerous, impossible to attempt marching through a deep river with an enemy watching to swoop down on them at the crossing. Did Joshua give up? Not he! He had been commanded to march on. But the people surely were puzzled and afraid. "How can we? We shall surely be stopped when we come to the river."

People are often like that still when they see a duty before them and it seems impossible to do it. What should they do? If it be clearly a duty which they feel God wants done better go straight ahead and try it at

GOD'S POWER

any rate and leave result with God. People are often frightened unnecessarily at difficulties which vanish when they come up to them. *E.g.*, the women going to tomb of Jesus on Easter morning. Who shall roll us away the stone? Women could not attempt to move the great rock at door of tomb. What happened? When they came they found the stone had been rolled away. So they had been worrying unnecessarily. Just like that here.

Joshua knew that God would make it possible for them. What did he command? (*v.* 5). Sanctify yourselves. Why? How? Clothes washed and pure. God taught them like children by object-lessons. Must be clean and pure drawing near to God's presence. Sanctify their hearts too in preparation—examine themselves about the past, repent of all wrong, resolve henceforth to serve God better. Just like people before Holy Communion.

So they came to the banks of the Jordan all frightened, excited. Then with astonishment and awe and gratitude in their hearts they saw—what? The river went dry before their eyes. Somewhere far back the river stopped flowing and the lower waters flowed away to the sea, leaving a dry river bed for the people to cross! How could the river stop flowing? By a miracle from God. Perhaps God did it by what would seem to us a natural occurrence. It has been suggested that somewhere far back was a narrow gorge of the river and that a great landslide fell in there and stopped the river for hours. It is interesting here to notice that there is a record by an Arabic chronicler telling of the sudden

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

damming of the Jordan by a landslide in A.D. 1267. (See Hasting's *Dictionary of Bible*, article Joshua.) Maybe something like that happened here. If so would it be less a miracle of God? Why? Because a landslide happening just at the critical moment is as miraculous as any other miracle. For example, in 1588, when the great Spanish Armada was about to crush England, and the people in their dread were calling upon God—just in the crisis of their danger a great storm came that blew the Spanish fleet irresistibly northward and ruined their whole expedition. A storm was quite a natural thing, but the English people looked on it as an answer to their prayers and lifted up their hearts to God in thanksgiving for a great deliverance.

We do not at all know that there was a landslide at the Jordan. We are only guessing. We only know the belief of the people as told us in the book that the waters far above were stopped and the waters below flowed on to the sea. And that Joshua and his people bowed with wonder and gratitude before God and set up a memorial (*ch. iv.*), a caisson of great stones from the Jordan piled up at the crossing place where God had done this mighty deed for Israel, and that the Canaanites heard that the Lord had dried up Jordan before the feet of the children of Israel and their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel (*ch. v. 1*).

Now what do we learn from this story? Let the class guess the answers, and then emphasize for them these two:—

GOD'S POWER

(1) That God is what Joshua called Him, “the living God,” “the Lord of all the earth,” master of all the powers of nature, ruler of all the nations of the earth. That He is looking down still on all peoples, the Friend of all righteousness, the enemy of all evil. That in the recent Great War He was looking down and caring and listening to prayers as in the days of Israel and the Canaanites. He is still the living ruling God.

(2) That no matter what obstacles are in the path of a duty, if we are sure it is God's will then that makes it God's command and we must go straight ahead like Joshua and trust Him and leave results to Him. Deal especially with the duties and difficulties likely to come to your pupils. Then close with the thought that God's presence is as sure to us as it was to Joshua. He can lead us through all struggles—through all human opposition and at the end of the life battle lead us across the Jordan of death into the Promised Land beyond.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON II

What was the first test of faith of Joshua and his host?

What religious direction did he give the people before coming to Jordan?

What did they find when they came to the river?

Tell of instance in secular history somewhat like this.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

If it happened through a landslide would it be less a miracle? Why?

What lesson here about God?

What lesson about duty?