

The Bible for Home and School

JOSHUA *and the* JUDGES

Volume 3



JOHN PATERSON SMYTH

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by

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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 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)

- 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 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.

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 especially concerns teachers. Your pupils, now or later, can hardly avoid coming in contact with the flip-pant 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 the 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 finds them seriously disputed, or perhaps false. A shallow, unthinking man, finding part of this 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 differ-

ent 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 worthwhile 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 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. Endeavour 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 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," &c., 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 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 weekday 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"?—

“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.

“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 Bashan, and the princes of the wandering Midianites had all 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—i.e., 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, &c., 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, 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 land is said to vomit them forth (Lev. xviii. 25). But secular history throws a new light on them—rather startling at first sight. We have heard of Cadmus, the Phoenician, the inventor of the alphabet; of the Phoenician ships that traded for tin with early Britain; of the Phoenician 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 Phoenician race—the great merchant princes of the world. Is it not startling to discover that the polished Phoenician and the accursed Canaanite are one and the same! The Septuagint translators of the Old Testament actually use the word “Phoenician” in translating the Hebrew term “Canaanite” (Ex. xvi. 35; Josh. v. 1). St. Augustine, in his Commentary on 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.

Apart from the interest of the fact that we can identify the Canaanite with the famous Phoenician, there is an instructive lesson here for our senior classes. It is quite true that at this period the Phoenician 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 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 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 those 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. 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 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 Lev. 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 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 Matt. 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