

## ***Present Truth in Deuteronomy***

### ***Deuteronomy in the Later Writings***

Lesson #11 for December 11, 2021

Scriptures: 2 Kings 22; Nehemiah 9:6; Jeremiah 7:1-7; 29:13; Psalm 148:4; Micah 6:1-8; Daniel 9:1-19; Deuteronomy 10:15.

1. When we pick up a copy of the Bible in whatever language, we tend to think of it as a single book. However, in actual fact, it is a collection of 66 books composed over 1500 years by many different authors in three different languages. We believe that God, ultimately, was the Author behind each of the prophetic and apostolic messages. This is a challenge for our understanding. If we truly believe that God was the Author, and yet, it was written down by human individuals, how do we explain the words we read on the page?
2. Shouldn't God have used the same ideas that He used in earlier writings if the same problem came up later? How many times have you had to tell your children not to do certain things that they were not supposed to do? In the Scripture, each time some point is covered, the context is different; and thus, the wording might be a bit different.
3. But, as we might expect, later writers would ask people to look back to what the former writers had said in a given situation. It should not be surprising then that creation, the flood, the exodus, and the giving of the Ten Commandments and the other laws from Mount Sinai would be mentioned repeatedly by later prophets and apostles.
4. We might expect that different aspects of the creation story would be mentioned many times in later writings.
5. In our discussion of the book of Deuteronomy, we see that Moses tried to summarize what they should have learned to that point. Then, he concluded by mentioning a number of things that they should do in the future to avoid further problems. Obviously, these points would be emphasized at later times when people fell into those specific problems. A classic example in Scriptures is the story of King Josiah of Judah. He became king at eight years of age and reigned for 31 years (ca. 640 B.C.-609 B.C.).
6. Something quite remarkable happened to him 18 years into his reign.

**2 Kings 22:3-20:** <sup>3</sup> In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the court secretary Shaphan, the son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, to the Temple with the order:...

<sup>8</sup>Shaphan delivered the king's order to Hilkiah, and Hilkiah told him that he had **found the book of the Law in the Temple**. Hilkiah gave him the book, and Shaphan read it. <sup>9</sup>Then he went back to the king and reported: "Your servants have taken the money that was in the Temple and have handed it over to the men in charge of the repairs." <sup>10</sup>And then he said, "I have here a book that Hilkiah gave me." **And he read it aloud to the king.** [Was it 800 years old?]

<sup>11</sup> When the king heard the book being read, he tore his clothes in dismay, <sup>12</sup>and gave the following order to Hilkiah the priest, to Ahikam son of Shaphan, to Achbor son of Micaiah, to Shaphan, the court secretary, and to Asaiah, the king's attendant: <sup>13</sup> "Go and consult the LORD for me and for all the people of Judah about the teachings of this book. **The LORD is angry with us because our ancestors have not done what this book says must be done.**"

<sup>14</sup> Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman

named Huldah, a prophet who lived in the newer part of Jerusalem. (Her husband Shallum, the son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, was in charge of the temple robes.) They described to her what had happened,<sup>15</sup> and she told them to go back to the king and give him<sup>16</sup> the following message from the LORD: “I am going to punish Jerusalem and all its people, as written in the book that the king has read....”

<sup>20</sup> The men returned to King Josiah with this message.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., 2 Kings 22:3-20). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].<sup>††</sup>

7. After having carefully studied the book of Deuteronomy, it should be easy for us to recognize that scholars have often concluded that the scroll that was found in the temple complex in Josiah’s day was the scroll of the book of Deuteronomy.
8. There were some very clear directions given in Deuteronomy about what should happen to kings and other leaders of Judah and Israel in later history. Why weren’t those instructions followed?

**Deuteronomy 17:18-20:**<sup>18</sup> “When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God’s laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests.<sup>19</sup> **He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life**, so that he will learn to honour the LORD and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it.<sup>20</sup> This will keep him from thinking that he is better than his fellow-Israelites and from disobeying the LORD’s commands in any way. Then he will reign for many years, and his descendants will rule Israel for many generations.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup> [Did any king ever do that?]<sup>‡</sup>

9. After hearing the book of Deuteronomy read to him, Josiah determined to follow God’s will for the children of Israel as closely as possible.

**2 Kings 23:3:** He stood by the royal column and made a covenant with the LORD to obey him, to keep his laws and commands with all his heart and soul, and to put into practice the demands attached to the covenant, as written in the book. And all the people promised to keep the covenant.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

10. How successful was Josiah at cleaning up the mess? Compare Exodus 19:8; 24:3,7.

**2 Kings 23:19-20:**<sup>19</sup> In every city of Israel King Josiah tore down all the pagan places of worship which had been built by the kings of Israel, who thereby aroused the LORD’s anger. **He did to all those altars what he had done in Bethel.**<sup>20</sup> He killed all the pagan priests on the altars where they served, and he burnt human bones on every altar. Then he returned to Jerusalem.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

11. Under Josiah, the temple in Jerusalem was repaired and purified. All the pagan idols of the Canaanites and Assyrians were removed. What did the Assyrian rulers over the northern kingdom have to say about that?
12. It is important to remember the history behind this campaign by Josiah. First of all, notice that Josiah was king of Judah, and he was killing all the pagan priests in the former northern kingdom of Israel. Those were the priests that had been set up by Jereboam right after Israel split off from Judah as the united kingdom of Israel divided into two nations. But, the northern

kingdom of Israel had been conquered and destroyed by the Assyrians about 100 years before the days of Josiah. In Josiah's day, Israel was a vassal nation to the Assyrians.

13. How do you think the people in the northern territory that had formerly been the country of Israel felt as Josiah appeared from Judah and traveled through their land, destroying their pagan altars and temples? What kind of authority did Josiah have over that territory? Those were the early Samaritans. How did they respond to Josiah's actions?
14. There is a crucial story connected with this campaign of Josiah which had been predicted.

**1 Kings 13:1-32:** <sup>1</sup> At the LORD's command a prophet from Judah went to Bethel and arrived there as Jeroboam stood at the altar to offer the sacrifice. <sup>2</sup>Following the LORD's command, the prophet denounced the altar: "**O altar, altar, this is what the LORD says: A child, whose name will be Josiah, will be born to the family of David [about 300 years later]. He will slaughter on you the priests serving at the pagan altars who offer sacrifices on you, and he will burn human bones on you.**" <sup>3</sup>And the prophet went on to say, "This altar will fall apart, and the ashes on it will be scattered. Then you will know that the LORD has spoken through me."

<sup>4</sup> When King Jeroboam heard this, he pointed at him and ordered, "Seize that man!" At once the king's arm became paralysed so that he couldn't pull it back. <sup>5</sup>The altar suddenly fell apart and the ashes spilt to the ground, as the prophet had predicted in the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>King Jeroboam said to the prophet, "Please pray for me to the LORD your God, and ask him to heal my arm!"

The prophet prayed to the LORD, and the king's arm was healed. <sup>7</sup>Then the king said to the prophet, "Come home with me and have something to eat. I will reward you for what you have done."

<sup>8</sup> The prophet answered, "Even if you gave me half your wealth, I would not go with you or eat or drink anything with you. <sup>9</sup>The LORD has commanded me not to eat or drink a thing, and not to return home the same way I came." <sup>10</sup>So he did not go back the same way he had come, but by another road.

<sup>11</sup> At that time there was **an old prophet living in Bethel**. His sons came and told him what the prophet from Judah had done in Bethel that day and what he had said to King Jeroboam. <sup>12</sup> "Which way did he go when he left?" the old prophet asked them. They showed him the road <sup>13</sup>and he told them to saddle his donkey for him. They did so, and he rode off <sup>14</sup>down the road after the prophet from Judah and found him sitting under an oak. [Big mistake!] "Are you the prophet from Judah?" he asked.

"I am," the man answered.

<sup>15</sup> "Come home and have a meal with me," he said.

<sup>16</sup> But the prophet from Judah answered, "I can't go home with you or accept your hospitality. And I won't eat or drink anything with you here, <sup>17</sup>because the LORD has commanded me not to eat or drink a thing, and not to return home the same way I came."

<sup>18</sup> Then the old prophet from Bethel said to him, "I, too, am a prophet just like you, and at the LORD's command an angel told me to take you home with me and offer you my hospitality." **But the old prophet was lying.** [What next?]

<sup>19</sup> So the prophet from Judah went home with the old prophet and had a meal with him. <sup>20</sup>As they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet, <sup>21</sup>and he cried out to the prophet from Judah, “The LORD says that you disobeyed him and did not do what he commanded. <sup>22</sup>Instead, you returned and ate a meal in a place he had ordered you not to eat in. Because of this you will be killed, and your body will not be buried in your family grave.”

<sup>23</sup> After they had finished eating, the old prophet saddled the donkey for the prophet from Judah, <sup>24</sup>who rode off. On the way, a lion met him and killed him. His body lay on the road, and the donkey and the lion stood beside it. <sup>25</sup>Some men passed by and saw the body on the road, with the lion standing near by. They went on into Bethel and reported what they had seen.

<sup>26</sup> When the old prophet heard about it, he said, “That is the prophet who disobeyed the LORD’s command! And so the LORD sent the lion to attack and kill him, just as the LORD said he would.” <sup>27</sup>Then he said to his sons, “Saddle my donkey for me.” They did so, <sup>28</sup>and he rode off and found the prophet’s body lying on the road, with the donkey and the lion still standing by it. The lion had not eaten the body or attacked the donkey. <sup>29</sup>The old prophet picked up the body, put it on the donkey, and brought it back to Bethel to mourn over it and bury it. <sup>30</sup>He buried it in his own family grave, and he and his sons mourned over it, saying, “Oh my brother, my brother!” <sup>31</sup>After the burial, the prophet said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in this grave and lay my body next to his. <sup>32</sup>The words that he spoke at the LORD’s command against the altar in Bethel and against all the places of worship in the towns of Samaria will surely come true.”—*Good News Bible*. \*†† [Don’t believe every claim!]<sup>†</sup>

15. What a dangerous deception. Just because someone claims to be bringing truth from God does not mean that we do not need to check it out before believing it; we must always verify new information and compare it with what God has told us in the past, e.g. through the Bible. This story took place about 300 years before the days of Josiah. Jeroboam ruled c. 931–c. 910 B.C., and Josiah lived from 640–609 B.C.
16. Could any of our churches today need that kind of cleansing?
17. Look at how detailed this instruction was as given to the children of Israel under Moses.

**Deuteronomy 10:12-15:** <sup>12</sup> “Now, people of Israel, listen to what the LORD your God demands of you: worship the LORD and do all that he commands. Love him, serve him with all your heart, <sup>13</sup>and obey all his laws. **I am giving them to you today for your benefit.** <sup>14</sup>To the LORD belong even **the highest heavens**; the earth is his also, and everything on it. <sup>15</sup>But the LORD’s love for your ancestors was so strong that he chose you instead of any other people, and you are still his chosen people.”—*Good News Bible*. \*†

18. God’s universe involves everything that has ever been created or exists. No one else could create! We do not know exactly what the prophets had in mind when they said, “Heaven of heavens.” But, it is very clear that it includes at least God’s dwelling place on high.
19. What did Jeremiah have to say about Deuteronomy and the ideas from that book?

**Jeremiah 29:13:** “You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart.”—*Good News Bible*. \* [This idea came from Deuteronomy.]<sup>†</sup>

**Deuteronomy 4:27-30:** <sup>27</sup> “The LORD will scatter you among other nations, where

only a few of you will survive. <sup>28</sup>There you will serve gods made by human hands, gods of wood and stone, gods that cannot see or hear, eat or smell. <sup>29</sup>**There you will look for the LORD your God, and if you search for him with all your heart, you will find him.** <sup>30</sup>When you are in trouble and all those things happen to you, then you will finally turn to the LORD and obey him. <sup>31</sup>He is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you, and he will not forget the covenant that he himself made with your ancestors.”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

20. We need to remember that Jeremiah was a young man who was born and raised about the same time as King Josiah.

**Jeremiah 7:1-7:** <sup>1-3</sup> The LORD sent me to the gate of the Temple where the people of Judah went in to worship. He told me to stand there and announce what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, had to say to them: “Change the way you are living and the things you are doing, and I will let you go on living here. <sup>4</sup>Stop believing those deceitful words, ‘We are safe! This is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple, this is the LORD’s Temple!’ <sup>5</sup> “Change the way you are living and stop doing the things you are doing. Be fair in your treatment of one another. <sup>6</sup>Stop taking advantage of aliens, orphans, and widows. Stop killing innocent people in this land. Stop worshipping other gods, for that will destroy you. <sup>7</sup>**If you change, I will let you go on living here in the land which I gave your ancestors as a permanent possession.**”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

21. Think of how many times we have already noticed in Deuteronomy that God told the children of Israel that they were not just supposed to follow the religious ceremonies that He instructed them to do; but also, they were supposed to be fair to the orphans, the widows, the foreigners among them, and always be fair to all those they dealt with in business. Unfortunately, in Jeremiah’s day, shortly before Nebuchadnezzar arrived and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple completely, the people got the idea that somehow God’s temple would be preserved miraculously. So, they thought that if they stayed close to the temple, they would be protected. God’s temple was never meant to be a good luck charm.
22. Remember how many times in Deuteronomy it says that they were supposed to **care for the fatherless, the widow, and the orphans.**

**Deuteronomy 24:21:** “When you have gathered your grapes once, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Deuteronomy 10:18-19:** <sup>18</sup> “He [God] makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes. <sup>19</sup>So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt.”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

**Deuteronomy 27:19:** “ ‘God’s curse on anyone who deprives foreigners, orphans, and widows of their rights.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

23. How successful would the Adventist Church be in our day if we carefully followed the instructions given in Deuteronomy? Well over 100 years ago, Ellen White said on several occasions that we should have been in the kingdom of heaven before this. Would that be true if we had followed the instructions in the book of Deuteronomy alone?

24. Many of the later prophets understood the need for reform very clearly.

**Micah 6:1-8:** Listen to the LORD's case against Israel.

Arise, O LORD, and present your case; let the mountains and the hills hear what you say.

<sup>2</sup> You mountains, you everlasting foundations of the earth, listen to the LORD's case! The LORD has a case against his people. He is going to bring an accusation against Israel.

<sup>3</sup> The LORD says, "My people, what have I done to you? How have I been a burden to you? Answer me. <sup>4</sup>I brought you out of Egypt; I rescued you from slavery; I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you. <sup>5</sup>My people, remember what King Balak of Moab planned to do to you and how Balaam son of Beor answered him. Remember the things that happened on the way from the camp at Acacia to Gilgal. Remember these things and you will realize what I did in order to save you."

<sup>6</sup> What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? <sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my firstborn child to pay for my sins? <sup>8</sup>**No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

25. In effect, in this passage God was bringing a lawsuit against His people. In effect, He was saying: "We had an agreement; you agreed. What happened?"

26. It is important to notice that Micah borrowed these words almost directly from Deuteronomy.

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13:** <sup>12</sup> "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"—*The New King James Version*.<sup>\*</sup> (1982). (Deuteronomy 10:12–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.<sup>§</sup>

27. Unfortunately, the people had deteriorated into following a kind of "letter of the law" and completely ignoring the spirit of the law.

28. Notice this commentary note on Micah 6:1-8.

"This [Micah 6:1-8] is one of the great passages of the OT. It, like Amos 5:24 and Hos. 6:6, epitomizes the message of the eighth-century prophets. The passage opens with a beautiful example of a covenant lawsuit in which the prophet summons the people to hear the charge Yahweh has against them. The mountains and hills are the jury because they have been around a long time and have witnessed God's dealing with Israel. Rather than directly charging Israel with breaking the covenant, God asks Israel if they have any charges against [Him]. 'What have I done? How have I wearied you?' In the face of injustice some of the poor people may have become 'weary in well doing.' In the face of opportunities to get rich quick some of the land-owners might have grown weary of keeping the covenant laws."—Ralph L. Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 32, *Micah-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Word

Books, 1984), p. 50.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Friday, December 10, including the brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph].<sup>‡§</sup> [Personal profit took preference over following God.]<sup>‡</sup>

29. What happened to that promise from Deuteronomy 4:6?

**Deuteronomy 4:6:** “Obey them faithfully, and this will show the people of other nations how wise you are. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, ‘What wisdom and understanding this great nation has!’”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

30. It was not only the book of Deuteronomy that was quoted by later prophets. Daniel, as prime minister in Babylon and later in Medo-Persia, no doubt, had access to as many of the scrolls as were available. We know from the story found in Daniel 6 that Daniel regularly prayed to God three times a day with his window open toward Jerusalem. We do not know exactly under what circumstances the prayer recorded in Daniel 9:1-19 was prayed. However, notice these very significant words of Daniel:

**Daniel 9:5-19:** <sup>5</sup> “We have sinned, we have been evil, we have done wrong. We have rejected what you commanded us to do and have turned away from what you showed us was right. <sup>6</sup>We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our rulers, our ancestors, and our whole nation. <sup>7</sup>You, Lord, always do what is right, but we have always brought disgrace on ourselves. This is true of all of us who live in Judea and in Jerusalem and of all the Israelites whom you scattered in countries near and far because they were unfaithful to you. <sup>8</sup>Our kings, our rulers, and our ancestors have acted shamefully and sinned against you, Lord. <sup>9</sup>You are merciful and forgiving, although we have rebelled against you. <sup>10</sup>**We did not listen to you, O LORD our God**, when you told us to live according to the laws which you gave us through your servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup>All Israel broke your laws and refused to listen to what you said. **We sinned against you**, and so you brought on us the curses that are written in the Law of Moses, your servant. <sup>12</sup>You did what you said you would do to us and our rulers. You punished Jerusalem more severely than any other city on earth, <sup>13</sup>giving us all the punishment described in the Law of Moses. But even now, O LORD our God, we have not tried to please you by turning from our sins or by following your truth. <sup>14</sup>You, O LORD our God, were prepared to punish us, and you did, because you always do what is right, and we did not listen to you.

<sup>15</sup> “O Lord our God, you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered. We have sinned; we have done wrong. <sup>16</sup>You have defended us in the past, **so do not be angry with Jerusalem any longer**. It is **your city, your sacred hill**. All the people in the neighbouring countries look down on Jerusalem and on **your people** because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did. <sup>17</sup>O God, hear my prayer and pleading. **Restore your Temple**, which has been destroyed; **restore it so that everyone will know that you are God**. <sup>18</sup>Listen to us, O God; look at us, and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of the city that bears your name. We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done right. <sup>19</sup>Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. **Lord, listen to us, and act! In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours.**”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

31. Notice what Daniel was really praying about. He knew that the children of Israel—and he included himself among them—had not been faithful. They had been sinful. They had done virtually everything wrong. It is very significant to notice in Daniel 9:5-19 that repeatedly Daniel essentially said as he was speaking to God: “God, it is Your power that people remember. You defended us in the past. Jerusalem is **Your** city, **Your** sacred hill. Restore **Your** temple. This city bears **Your** name. We are praying to You because You are merciful—not because we have done right. LORD, hear us. LORD, forgive us. LORD, listen to us, and act! **In order that everyone will know that You are God, do not delay! People of surrounding nations are looking down on us, and they are looking down on You, God. They are looking down on Your city. This city and these people are Yours. God, You need to do something for Your own reputation.**”
32. Daniel had, no doubt, poured over the two prophecies in the book of Jeremiah suggesting that God’s people would be in exile for 70 years. He also recognized that the seventy-year period was coming to a close.
33. He also knew that up to that point, Jerusalem lay in complete ruins—nothing but a heap of rubble. Having read the books of Moses, he recognized that it was God’s original plan that Jerusalem should be the capital of His people, and it should have been an example to all nations. But, what an example it had become! The surrounding nations could ask: “What kind of worthless God do they have?”
34. **How often do we pray about God’s reputation?** Daniel was also, no doubt, aware of the blessings and curses pronounced in Deuteronomy 28 and 29. And then, he recognized that many of those curses had been fulfilled because His people had turned away from Him. Compare Deuteronomy 4:27-31.
35. Daniel, no doubt, knew about the siege that had affected Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar camped around that city for almost 3 years! Things became desperate, and those curses that had been prophesied by Moses back in Deuteronomy 28:53-57 were fulfilled. Could those words really have ever happened? Israel had become a reproach, a disgrace—instead of the noble city it was supposed to be.
36. It is interesting that immediately following that noble prayer by Daniel, he was given the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27, spelling out the **future** history of the children of Israel down to the time that Jerusalem would be destroyed again. Daniel had just been praying about Israel’s past and present; and then, he was given a view of Israel’s future.

**Daniel 9:24-27:** <sup>24</sup> “Seven times seventy years is the length of time God has set for freeing your people and your holy city from sin and evil. Sin will be forgiven and eternal justice established, so that the vision and the prophecy will come true, and the holy Temple will be rededicated. <sup>25</sup>Note this and understand it: from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until God’s chosen leader comes, seven times seven years will pass. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defences, and will stand for seven times 62 years, but this will be a time of troubles. <sup>26</sup>And at the end of that time God’s chosen leader will be killed unjustly. The city and the Temple will be destroyed by the invading army of a powerful ruler. The end will come like a flood, bringing the war and destruction which God has prepared. <sup>27</sup>That ruler will have a firm agreement with many people for seven years, and when half this time is past, he will put an end to sacrifices and offerings. The Awful Horror will be placed on the highest point of the Temple and will remain there until the one who put



it there meets the end which God has prepared for him.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

37. Are we as Seventh-day Adventists in some degree in the same position that the ancient Israelites were? Does the world look at us as a light set on the hill and praise God? (Matthew 5:16) Are we spreading the truths of Scripture, especially the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, successfully to the world? When was the last time you heard that?
38. If you were living in the days of Daniel and you read the book of Deuteronomy and you knew all that had happened to the children of Israel and to Jerusalem, how would you feel?
39. As a Seventh-day Adventist living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and reading the prophecies in Scripture, especially Daniel and Revelation, and the writings of Ellen White, how should you feel? How should we respond when we read that we should have been in the kingdom of God before this?

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and **Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward**. But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith.... Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of [696] God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history! [She was talking about adventists in 1844!]

It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in “because of unbelief.” Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.

**For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.**—Manuscript 4, 1883.—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*\* 695.3-696.2.<sup>†</sup>

40. Does this sound at all like some of the words the ancient prophets said to Israel?
41. It should not be surprising to us that the five books of Moses, from Genesis through Deuteronomy, would be read and prayed about by subsequent biblical writers. We would expect them to repeat ideas from the stories of creation, the fall, the flood, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc. We would also expect them to talk about events that happened in connection with the deliverance from Egypt and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.
42. This lesson has focused on several main points that happened in the subsequent years.
  - The reformation of Josiah: Lessons from a faithful leader.

- The prayer of Nehemiah: More deep truths based on revival and reformation.
- The prayer of Daniel: Mourning for loss.
- The religion of Micah: On what true religion really means.

43. Many years later, we come to the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. A very small percentage—perhaps 1% or 2%—of the children of Israel had returned to Judah and Jerusalem and were trying to restore things. They had already rebelled by marrying heathen women from the nations around them; but, Nehemiah was determined to correct that problem. In cooperation with Ezra, they determined that one of the things that needed to happen was for the people to hear, once again, the Word of God.

**Nehemiah 8:4-8:** <sup>4</sup> Ezra was standing on a wooden platform that had been built for the occasion. The following men stood at his right: Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah; and the following stood at his left: Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

<sup>5</sup> As Ezra stood there on the platform high above the people, they all kept their eyes fixed on him. As soon as he opened the book, they all stood up. <sup>6</sup>Ezra said, “Praise the LORD, the great God!”

All the people raised their arms in the air and answered, “Amen! Amen!” They knelt in worship, with their faces to the ground.

<sup>7</sup>Then they rose and stood in their places, and the following Levites explained the Law to them: Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah. <sup>8</sup>**They gave an oral translation [*The Law was written in Hebrew; but, in Babylonia the Jews had adopted Aramaic as the language for daily life. Because of this, a translation was necessary.*] of God’s Law and explained it so that the people could understand it.—Good News Bible.\*†‡**

44. **There was a great reformation that took place because the people heard the Bible explained to them in a language that they could understand. This was the first modern speech or modern language translation of the Scriptures!**
45. Today, many conservative Christians still want to go back more than 400 years to idolize the *King James Version* of the Bible. In fact, few of them could read it if they had it in the original form of English. Shouldn’t we follow the example of Nehemiah and Ezra and have the Word of God translated in as simple, straightforward, and modern language as possible?
46. What have we learned from these stories about Josiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Micah? What would happen if we seriously consulted our modern prophet and tried to live according to the guidance she has given? What would happen if we tried to settle modern disputes within the church organization or even within local congregations by following the examples set forth in this lesson?

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