

Judges Chapter 3

Last week was basically a rehearsal once again into a summary of the book of Judges, we learned in ch 1 that when Israel inherited the Promised Land that they weren't obedient in what the Lord had commanded them which was to utterly destroy and drive out the inhabitants of the Land. And so in ch 2 the Angel of the Lord, again that being a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ and we spoke of that last week, but He came to the children of Israel and rebuked them saying, "*you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?*" And so many times we know what the Lord would have us do or maybe not do in a certain situation and yet we persist in our own way right on into sin only to have the Holy Spirit come to us and say, "you have not obeyed My voice, why have you done this?" And it's a heart wrenching thing, and there are always ramifications to the decisions that we make, whether they be decisions in the Spirit, or in the flesh, and it applies on every area level of life. Basic everyday decisions, business decisions, ministry decisions or whatever, and if we sow in the Spirit we will of the Spirit reap eternal life, but when we sow to the flesh it brings about corruption, pain, heartache, and separation from God. And with the children of Israel because they were unwilling to drive out the people, the Lord said fine, they'll stay, and they'll be thorns in your side and their gods will be a snare to you. And all the people began to weep, but unfortunately they didn't repent, they were grieved over the consequences of their actions but not, convicted over the wickedness of their sin. And so when Joshua died, another generation arose who didn't know the Lord, didn't know what He'd done for them and so they began to do evil and wickedness in the sight of the Lord, began serving other gods and forsook the 1 true Living God. And so God delivered them into the hands of their enemies, they weren't able to obtain victory with out the Lord doing the work and as a result they became enslaved, and therein lies a lesson for all of us. There is no victory apart from the Lord and with out the Lord fighting for us we will become enslaved and ensnared by sin, but God raised up judges or deliverers for them, but after they were delivered and the oppression was relieved they'd go right back into their old ways. Again, how many times do we see that happen, as long as people are struggling they cling hard to the cross are crying out to God and dependant upon Him. But as soon as they begin to experience deliverance then they quit looking to God, start standing on their own, only to return right back to their old ways as a dog returns to its vomit and a sow having washing to its wallowing in the mire. Only many times when they return they're in a worse condition than they were in the 1st place, there's a progressive intensity to their life of sin, and such was the case with the children of Israel. Notice vs 19 of ch 2 (read)

Now why would a people want to serve idols and follow after pagan traditions, well if you think about it for a little bit, it's really not all that difficult to come up with a few reasons when you consider the drive of the flesh. Because if you worship God the benefit is long range, but if you worship Idols it's short-range benefits. Worship God sometimes gratification is postponed, but if you worship idols then you can have immediate self-gratification, sort of like marriage, you can either wait for God's best or marry the 1st person that comes into your life and get immediate gratification, be it emotionally or physically or whatever.

You see there would be some real self centered-flesh related benefits in serving the “other gods”, in the worship of God morality is required, but in idol worship sensuality is approved. Same way with ethical standards, when you worship God high ethical standards apply, idolatry accepts low ethical standards.

Again if you worship the 1 true living God, you worship an invisible God, but if you’re into idolatry, “man look at that Ferrari” “look at that new set of golf clubs or that office on the top floor that says C.E.O. on the front of it.” The worship of God expects unselfishness, but in idolatry you can be selfish, in the worship of God, when you give your heart to Christ, your life is expected to change, but in idolatry hey, just pick a god that conforms to your image and don’t change a thing and the list goes on and on.

Now, stand back and take a look at our nation, you see what’s really going on, everyone doing what’s right in their own eyes, not in God’s eyes, but in their own eyes, and the fruit of idolatry, the placing of any other thing as priority over God in our lives abounds in the United States. Have things really changed? Now God always has His remnant, but by and large we’re sinking fast and it can all begin with simple curiosity or befriending the world. But you have to be careful, Israel began to intermingle their cultures and it destroyed them, now we’re not speaking of racial differences because the human race is the only race that there is. But we’re not to be unequally yoked, what fellowship has light with darkness, and the believer with the non-believer. “Well, it’s just the company soft-ball team, and there are a few guys that drink and all but I’m seeking to be a witness”, be careful, you’re not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. That’s what the bible says, but rather you’re to expose them. Another thing that can subtly suck us in is an unhealthy curiosity, “well, I just want to know what they’re doing so I can be a better witness.” One man said, “Curiosity is often the 1st step toward conformity.” (Wiersbe) and Such was the case with Israel, they intermingled with the pagan nations and as a result the conformed to their lifestyles because it was so compelling and appealing to the flesh, now lets read beginning with vs 20 of ch 2 and read on through Vs 4 of ch 3 and I’ll show you something else.

Vs 20- Ch3 vs 4

There are 3 reasons why God didn’t cast the enemies of Israel out before them. And we see them scattered there throughout those vs and #1 in vs 20-21 to punish or chastise Israel’s apostasy. #2 in vs 22, to test Israel’s loyalty and #3 is found in vs 2 of ch 3 and that was to train or teach the new generations of Israel to know war, to keep them equipped for warfare. If you’re not equipped for the warfare, then when the enemy comes upon you then you’re going to be defeated, but if you’re always equipped to fight then you’ll be an overcomer. And so God would even use the rebellion of Israel to His glory, in chastising them to bring them back, testing them to prove their loyalty and training them and teaching them to know war. Now ch 3 brings into our awareness the 1st 3 judges of Israel, but just prior to that we see again the pattern that can so easily ensnare us if we’re not careful.

Vs5-6

The 1st thing that we seen in vs 5 is that they began dwelling with the people of the world, the pagans, that word “dwelt” means to, “settle down with or to establish themselves with”, so they began residing with the people who were in the world, next they began relating to them. Notice in vs 6 how they took their daughters for their sons and gave their daughters for their sons, and finally they began to worship with the world and serve their gods. And it can happen that easy, 1st we reside with them, or fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, only to establish relationships with the world, and ultimately we’re worshipping with the world or in other words we’ve forsaken the Lord to follow after the gods of the world. The greener pasture, the bigger better, no money is enough money and we have to be careful with these types of attitudes guys because no one can serve to masters.

You’ll either love one and hate the other (ultimately) or you’ll serve one and despise the other. That’s what the bible teaches, and again how many times have you seen people try to juggle 2 gods, 1 foot in the world and one foot in the Lord and you can’t do it, it never works. Because it’s impossible to walk in the flesh and in the Spirit simultaneously and as a result they begin to long more and more after the things of the world and despise the things of God, and so they serve the world and the lust of the flesh, begin to love the world and hate the things of God. That’s why Joshua said choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we’re going to serve the Lord.

Vs7-8

Interesting, you know what Cushan-Rishathaim means? It means double darkness or double wickedness, because the children of Israel joined in and established themselves with the things of this world, they became enslaved to the “wicked one”, they were sold under harsh bondage to “the prince of darkness.” Cushan-Rishathaim- double darkness, or double wickedness, they thought that they could have the best of both worlds only to become ensnared by the king of wickedness or the king of darkness. Boy, his dad must have thought highly of him huh? Here’s my boy, double wickedness, or maybe this is how he became known to the people but he must’ve been one evil and foul ruler. But again God will never allow His children to sin successfully; it will either destroy them, or bring about the chastening hand of God so as to seek to lead them to repentance. And we see in this another classic illustration of Prov 14:34 *“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.”*

Vs 9

Gee, why does this sound familiar, it’s the Exodus experience all over again Ex 2:23-25 *“the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.”* And you know the story He raised up Moses to deliver them, well Moses is dead, the children of Israel find themselves once again in a desperate situation, they cry out to God and God, who is faithful raises up a deliverer.

And we've only run across this guy a couple of times and really his only claim to fame (for lack of a better term) is the fact that he was Caleb's younger brother or possibly his nephew the text allows for either understanding. But outside of Caleb (who was 1 of the only 2 faithful spies out of the 12 who followed God with his whole heart) Othniel isn't even really heard of or mentioned outside of a couple of genealogies. What's my point? That for all intents and purposes Othniel appears to be just an ordinary guy, no real special talents or abilities that set him apart from anyone else. But when the Lord called him, he was available, and that my friends is a big key to being used by God, simply being available should the Lord call on you. And so whatever it is that you're doing, are you available to be used by God, to let go and let God do a work in your life? Because I'm personally convinced that to the point that you avail yourself to God, He will use your life, God uses ordinary people, now, there's a lot wrapped up in that little word "avail" because if you're living in compromise you've only availed yourself to the flesh and not to the Lord. So you see it goes beyond, verbal availability and extends into spiritual availability through the position of the heart and holiness unto God, not through legalism, but by the work of the Spirit in my life. Notice vs 10

Vs10-11

A full generation had rest, and what was the secret of his strength, the same secret that every believer possesses as the source of their strength Zech 4:6 *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, ' Says the LORD of hosts."*

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, mark that little word "upon" this the empowering of the believer for the work of service, that God might accomplish through an individual vessel a specific task. Never underestimate what God can accomplish through one life who is filled with the Spirit of God and available to the hand of God calling him or her to service. Not only did Othniel deliver Israel, but under his guidance they experienced 40 years of rest. Over and over throughout scripture we see God taking one person and doing incredible works to his glory and God hasn't changed, He still wants to use lives to His glory and if you're truly available He'll use yours and the same goes for me. But notice what happened after Othniel died.

Vs12-14

Snared again, Sin *always* brings bondage; but don't be deceived, it comes to us deceptively. How many fish ever contemplate the bondage of the hook when they go after the bait? Satan snares us by making the bait attractive, and he hides the hook so that by the time you realize what's happened it's too late, the damage is done, the hook is set, and there's no such thing as a painless bondage, but when you're on the hook what are you going to do about it? And notice that it's getting to be longer servitude, 1st 8 years, now it's 18 years. Now the word "Eglon" means "a little calf" and we'll see that in this case he was a little "fatted" calf. His name was fitting because he was shaped like an egg.

Vs15

It's interesting that Benjamin means, "son of my right hand" and Ehud was a left-handed man, I'm not sure why that's intriguing to me, but it seems as though there's something to that, if you were to dig into it just a little more, but maybe not.

Vs16

So he made himself a 2-edged sword that was about 18" in length and he fastens it under his clothes on his right side because when they would pull their swords, as you know they would pull their sword from one side across their body with the opposite hand. Now, the fact that he was left handed would have been considered a curse in Israel, but it's interesting how that because he was in mans eyes disqualified that through that God qualified him. All of the judges seemed to have their own little glitch that in mans eyes would have been some sort of fault, but God loves to use disqualified people in the sight of man so that He alone receives the glory. And the fact that he was left-handed will favor him because when you would enter the palace when they would search you, many times they would be rather apathetic in their search and so more times than not they would just check your left side for a sword. And such apparently was case with Ehud because we'll see him get right in to the king with out reservation or suspicion.

Vs17-19

So as their preparing to leave Ehud says, "hey, I have a secret for you" and so the king says, "Shhh don't say anything, everyone out!"

Vs20

He's not going to like the message; it's one of judgment

Vs21-22

God doesn't make mistakes, Ehud was probably wondering on and off throughout his whole life up to this point as to why he was left handed, and because of that a cast off basically from his people. And yet as God was delivering Israel, by utilizing his "weakness" or his "insufficiency" he was realizing that what he presumed to be a curse was in fact a great blessing that placed him in a position to used of God in a mighty way.

Ps 139: 15-16 says, *"My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."* In other words even from the womb God was fashioning you and putting you together so that you would be exactly the way you are because He wants to utilize your life for His glory. Your personality, the way you look, your strengths and weaknesses are all by divine design so as to fit perfectly in the plan of God.

Vs23-26

As David Guzik says, Ehud was basically the "James Bond" of the judges, he moved in stealth like an undercover agent on a divine secret operation.

Vs27-30

So God will raise up leaders, but they can't do it all, we're all in this thing together and need to work together in the accomplishing of God's purposes and plan. And notice that Ehud says that they can follow him, but he points their trust and faith on to the Lord and encourages them to trust in the Lord for the victory. That's a great leader, one who has the integrity to let the people watch him and follow his lead by example, but simultaneously pointing them on to place their trust and their faith in the Lord. And again in the words of Guzik, "Ehud's cunning and courage, coupled with Israel's faithful following of a leader, brings in Israel's longest period of freedom under the period of the Judges (80 years)"

Vs31

Now this is all that we have concerning Shamgar, and not much is said about him later either, and we'll comment on him a little next week Lord willing before we head into ch 4, but God we see seems to choose unlikely soldiers with unusual weapons to get unpredictable results and as long as you're submitted to Him working in your life, He'll bring victory to you and through you.