

JUDGES

Lesson 2 w/Answers

Othniel and Ehud

We continue our study of Judges by completing our review of Chapter 3. As I indicated at the end of the last lesson, we will now begin to look at events in Israel's history that almost defy understanding. However, from these stories, God has great truths to reveal to us about ourselves, our salvation, and about God himself.

In this lesson, we will look at two "deliverers" that God sends for Israel: Othniel and Ehud; and we will examine the roles that they played in delivering Israel from their fallen ways. Through the stories about these judges, the Lord will also reveal himself to us in ways that we may not have previously considered, as we look at our own motivations and desires as they relate to the world around us.

Read Judges 3:5-31; then answer the following:

1. Re-read Judges 3:5-7. In the context of today's world, what would it mean to follow after, or to "serve", other gods? Cite some specific examples of what this might mean.
 - a. ANSWER: Abandoning our faith, relying on other sources of "truth," and accepting false doctrine are all ways in which we can fall away. In today's world, it is so easy to be lured away from following God by the pleasures of this world and the pursuit of "happiness." Today, we see around us a society that does not value the institution of marriage and family the way we have been taught to do in God's world. Society readily accepts couples living together and even having children without marriage. Promiscuity, the use of drugs, and the abuse of alcohol are also examples of behavior that is readily accepted in today's society—all of which run counter to God's teaching. Worse is the reaction of the world to hearing God's instruction. Rejecting both the message and the messenger, the world flees from God's truth and runs to serve the gods of this world: pride, money, greed, success unbridled, and, in some cases, unnatural pleasures; these are all gods of this world. Even more troubling is that much of this is occurring in "Christian" nations. Such was also the case during the time of the Judges; God's "chosen people" were choosing to serve other gods.
2. What is Judges 3:6 referring to? How would we describe this today? Is this happening today?
 - a. ANSWER: Judges 3:6 in today's world refers to intermarriage of Christians and non-believers. It also refers to Christians straying from the one true God and their Savior Jesus Christ, and compromising their faith for worldly gain or pleasures. Rather than being "in the world but not of the world," these "believers" have become fully immersed in this world, leaving behind their love for the Gospel and the Savior, thereby abandoning their faith. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 reads, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth."
3. Why do we stray from God, and even depart entirely from Him at times?
 - a. ANSWER: The Bible tells us three main reasons that man strays from God, as articulated in 1 John 2:15-16: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." James 1:14-15 tells us, "...but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."
4. Read Judges 3:8-11 and answer the following questions:
 - a. How long did God allow Israel to be oppressed?
 - i. Eight years
 - b. What did the Lord do after Israel cried out to Him?
 - i. God raised them up a deliverer
 - c. Whom did he send?
 - i. Othniel son of Kenaz
 - d. Who was Caleb?
 - i. Caleb and Joshua were the two spies who wanted to go into the Promised Land when Moses sent out the 12 spies, but the other 10 convinced the people to stay in the desert, so God punished them. Joshua and Caleb were the only two men not to die during the wilderness wanderings; they would eventually lead the army across the Jordan to take possession of the land.
 - e. How long did the land have peace under Othniel?
 - i. ANSWER: Forty years

5. Read Judges 3:12-30 and answer the following questions:
- a. How long did God allow Israel to be oppressed?
 - i. ANSWER: Eighteen years
 - b. What did the Lord do after Israel cried out to Him?
 - i. ANSWER: He gave them a deliverer
 - c. Whom did he send?
 - i. ANSWER: Ehud, a left-handed king
 - d. How long did the land have peace under Ehud?
 - i. ANSWER: Eighty years
 - e. What is the significance of Ehud being left-handed?
 - i. ANSWER: God used the fact that Ehud was left-handed to surprise Eglon the Moabite king so that Ehud could kill him with a long dagger (normally held in the right hand). By using his left hand, he surprised the king.
 - f. Who were the Moabites? (see Gen 19:33-37)
 - i. ANSWER: The Moabites were descendants from one of Lot's two sons who born through his daughters with whom he had sex following the destruction of Sodom. The other son would become the father of the Ammonites. Today, the city of Amman, Jordan is located in what was Ammonite territory.
6. Consider for a moment both stories that we have just read and some of the potential applications of these stories to our lives today:
- a. What common elements do you see in both stories?
 - i. ANSWER: The common elements are easily seen: (1) a cycle of falling away from God, (2) God using that period to bring judgment on them, (3) followed by a period of repentance and crying out for the Lord's help. God would hear their cry and send a deliverer— a Judge— and peace would be restored to the land, followed by another period of falling away from God.
 - b. What can we learn about the people of Israel that might tell us a little about ourselves today?
 - i. ANSWER: We, too, are quick to run to God in times of struggle, but then we can be quick to forget God during times of peace and prosperity as we follow our own evil desires. Nevertheless, we also see that God is faithful in hearing our cries for help and in restoring our relationship with Him.
 - c. What can we learn about God from these two stories?
 - i. ANSWER: God never takes his eye off of his people, those he loves; and in spite of our shortcomings, He sends a deliverer. Today it is Jesus, the Messiah.
 - d. What can we learn about our enemies from these stories?
 - i. ANSWER: Our enemies can easily think that they have defeated us and robbed us of our eternal home, but nothing could be further from the truth.
 - e. What can we observe about the relationship of peace and sin?
 - i. ANSWER: There is no peace when sin is present, period. You cannot have both. Sin brings death, chaos, and destruction; while God's peace is everlasting and brings stability, security, salvation, and protection from Satan and his followers.
 - f. What is revealed to us about God and his relationship to us?
 - i. ANSWER: God is a God who will judge all of us; and he is a righteous God who has great mercy and love for those He has saved and is today saving. No one will be able to take them out of His hand. John 17:15-19: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."
 - g. In each case when did Israel fall away from God, and what does that tell us about ourselves and the world around us?
 - i. ANSWER: In each case, they fell away after those that knew of God's great works had all passed away. There were no longer any living witnesses about what God had done in the past. This shows us why it is so important for the Gospel of Christ and the testimony about his great sacrifice on our behalf must be told to every generation, so that no one forgets or is without excuse.

Clearly we see in the study of Judges a picture of a people whose hearts are easily bent toward sin and a people who quickly turn their backs on God. However, we also see that God's love is so great for them (and us) that his desire was (and is) to redeem his people. By allowing them to be given over to the hands of their oppressors, God revealed to them their error, and then blessed them by sending a deliverer. He demonstrated His sovereign rule over all the earth through his actions during the time of the Judges, and He also shows us today that all authority is under His control and power, and not man's.

We can see how easy it is to be enticed away from God by our own lusts and desires. We also see the consequences of those actions, because peace and sin cannot abide together.

If our lives are not what they ought to be today, we need to make sure that sin, compromise, other idols or gods, lusts, and selfish desires have not crept into our lives. These things create barriers to peace in our lives and block out the God of love, who sent his only Son to bring us that peace which passes all understanding.

Examine your heart today: look at each action you take, consider every motivation of your heart, and make sure that God is first in your life in all things. If not, cry out to Him as Israel did, and he will be faithful to deliver you from the bondage and stain of sin.

May God richly bless you this week as you study His Holy Word.

In Christ,

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