

Mystery of The Ages

PART 8 - THE JUDGES

I. BACKGROUND

The Hebrew Nation, after the death of Joshua, had no strong central government. They were a confederacy of twelve independent tribes with no unifying force except their god. The form of government in the days of the Judges is spoken of as the "Theocracy", that is, God himself was supposed to be the direct ruler of the nation. But the people did not take their God very seriously and were continually falling away into idolatry. Being in a state of anarchy, (more or less), harassed at times by civil war among themselves and surrounded by enemies who made attempt after attempt to exterminate them, the Hebrew Nation was very slow in its national development. It did not become a great nation till it was organized into a kingdom in the days of Samuel and David.

II. 40 YEARS

Othniel, Deborah and Barak, and Gideon are each said to have judged Israel 40 years; and Ehud, twice 40. Later, Eli judged 40 years. Saul, David and Solomon each reigned 40 years. "Forty years" seems to have been a round number denoting a generation. Note how often 40 is used throughout the Bible: at the Flood it rained 40 days; Moses fled at 40; was in Midian 40 years; was on the mount 40 days. Israel wandered 40 years. The spies were 40 days in Canaan. Elijah fasted 40 days. Forty days' respite was given to Nineveh. Jesus fasted 40 days, and sojourned 40 days after the resurrection.

III. THE COMMAND

(Deut. 7:2-4) "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."

This was the original command with which the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. Although the Book of Judges records some victories for the Lord, it also accurately depicts the disheartening and disappointing failures of God's people. The Israelites conquest was only partial (Jud. 1:9,21,27,28,29-35; 3:1-4).

IV. THE COMPROMISE

As the hardy, wilderness-bred generation who, under the powerful leadership of Joshua, had conquered the land died off, the new generation settled in a land of plenty and soon lapsed into the easy going ways of their idolatrous neighbors. We might visualize this phenomena as a wonderful illustrative example of what we sometimes call the "2nd generation Christian."

(Jud. 21:25) "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

This verse may be the sum and total of all that we find in Judges. The confusion, seeming lack of organization and leadership, and the hideous crimes and incidents recorded in the book again show us that man left to himself will destroy himself.

The compromise of the Israelites went as follows:

- [1]. The original command of God
- [2]. Incomplete mastery
- [3]. Military leagues
- [4]. Intermarriages
- [5]. Idolatry
- [6]. Complete Apostasy
- [7]. Captivity

V. THE CAPTIVITIES

Apostasy

3:5-8

3:12-14

4:1-3

6:1-10

10:6-18

13:1

Servitude

To Kings of Mesopotamia, 8 yrs.

To King of Moab, 18 years

To King of Canaan, 20 years

To Midianites, 7 years

To Philistines, etc., 18 years

To Philistines, 40 years

*(*from J. Sidlow Baxter's "Explore the Book.")*

Deliverer

Othniel (3:9-11)

Ehud (3:15-30) (also Shamgar, 31)

Deborah (4:4-31) (and Barak)

Gideon (6:1, 8:35)

Jephthah (11:1, 7:7)

Samson (13:2; 16:31)

VI. THE JUDGES

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Othniel (3:9-11) | 8. Jair (10:3-5) |
| 2. Ehud (3:15-30) | 9. Jephthah (11:1-12-7)* |
| 3. Shamgar (3:31) | 10. Ibzan (12:8-10) |
| 4. Deborah & Barak (4:4; 5:31)* | 11. Elon (12:11,12) |
| 5. Gideon (6:11; 8:32) | 12. Abdon (12:13-15) |
| 6. Abimelech (9:1-57)* | 13. Samson (13:24; 16:31)* |
| 7. Tola (10:1,2) | <i>(*mentioned Hebrews 11:32)</i> |

VII. SIN SUFFERING, SUPPLICATION, SALVATION

The children of Israel followed an old familiar pattern of life, something we might term the normal Christian life. If we were to draw it out on graph paper, charting our spiritual victories and defeats it would look like a roller coaster.

For example: The Sin (3:7), The Suffering (3:8), The Supplication (3:9), The Salvation (3:11). And again: The Sin (3:12), The Suffering (3:12), The Supplication (3:15), The Salvation (3:15).

VIII. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FROM THE JUDGES

- A. Initially it is easier to tolerate and coexist with sin than root it out and eliminate it completely. (Jud. 2:2)
- B. Many of the hardships we encounter in the Christian life are given to us to bring us to a point of supplication. (Jud. 6:13)
- C. The Lord will do everything he can do to fulfill his promises and covenants, yet he is holy, righteous and jealous. He will not tolerate idolatry in any form.
- D. God is determined to bring to pass all of his kingdom promises. (Jud. 2:16-19)
- E. Even political issues have a spiritual root. (Jud. 11:24)
- F. The Devil will make his best effort to thwart the fulfillment of the kingdom through religion. (Jud. 17:7-13)