

JUDGES 2-3

Please turn in your Bibles to Judges chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we open up this chapter and until we get to Judges 2:8 we are dealing with a flashback you might say. Joshua is still alive so this is looking at the events that will lead us to where they are in the book of Judges.

If you remember from our last study as we began our study in the book of Judges, this is a very black period for the nation of Israel. Especially when they have been so blessed by the promises of God coming to pass in their lives as a nation.

But complacency brought them into idolatry and God judged them for it. God hates sin because of what it does to people's lives!

And folks, please understand that sin is not bad because it is forbidden. Sin is forbidden because it is bad!

You see, our Heavenly Father knows what is best for our lives and thus, He tells us. He is not some kind of cosmic killjoy, ruining all our fun.

No, He is protecting us from the danger of sin that if allowed to grow in our lives will hurt us, just as He was trying to do with the children of Israel.

And the problem for Israel and for us is that many times we refuse to listen until we hit rock bottom and then we look up, then we cry out to God.

May we learn the lesson and not go down that path in the first place.

And here's the thing. God loves us so much that He won't give up on us either. And I am thankful for that!

Tonight, as we get into Judges chapters 2 and 3, we will be looking at the religious-spiritual condition of the nation, where they were at, and it is not good!

With that said, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 2, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

JUDGES 2

VERSES 1-3

Some feel that this "Angel of the LORD" is either some kind of angelic being or some prophet.

I don't believe that this "Angel of the LORD" is some angelic being or a prophet, but I believe it is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ.

How can I be so sure?

Because no angelic being or prophet was leading the children of Israel to the Promise Land, but *YAHWEH* did! And as we have seen, this title was used of the Lord, of Jesus before in the Old Testament!

Not only that, but in your Bibles you see that the word "LORD" is in capitals, which speaks of the covenant name of God or – *YAHWEH*! So I think this is very clear on who this is, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus, the Word!

And notice what this pre-incarnate Christ tells the children of Israel. That He made a covenant with them that He will *NEVER* break!

For those who think that God is done with the Jewish people, think again, God will not break His covenant with them and as Paul said in Romans. One day all Israel will be saved!

In a day where many in the church believe that the church has replaced Israel because God is done with Israel, shame on you!

Listen carefully to what Paul wrote in Romans 11:25-27, for just one picture to show you God is not done with the Jewish people. He wrote, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

God is not done with the Jewish people; they will turn to their Messiah and one day Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem!

He then reminds them of the covenant that they made with Him, that they shall destroy the enemy, make no covenants with them, that they are to destroy their places of worship and then remember what they told Joshua, **“And the people said to Joshua, ‘The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!’”** Joshua 24:24.

God was faithful but the children of Israel were not!

And listen again to the question that God asks them in regard to their failure to obey Him. He said, **“Why have you done this?”**

You see, because of your failure to obey, these enemies will be a thorn in your side, their god’s will take you captive, there are consequences to your disobedience. ***“Why in the world would you not obey Me, the One who brought you into this Promise Land?”*** A great question!

And the result of their disobedience is what God warned them in Numbers 33:55, **“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.”**

Now it was coming to pass. You see, it wasn't that they were militarily weak, they were spiritually empty.

As Wolf said, *“The deplorable spiritual condition of the Israelites, not their lack of chariots, lay behind their failure to dispossess the Canaanites.”*

And please understand that this is not the voice of an out-of-control God, some dictator, but the voice of God who is broken over the sin of His people!

I believe this question can be spoken to us at times. **“Why have you done this?”**

You see, our failure to drive out the enemy, our flesh, will be a thorn in our side. It is far better to obey the Lord than to go down that path that leads to destruction!

One more point here before we move on. The Lord came from Gilgal to Bochim. That may not seem like a big deal, but I believe it is.

Gilgal is the place where they first camped after they crossed the Jordan River. It was the place of blessing. It was their base camp. And the Lord traveled from Gilgal, the place of blessing, to Bochim or a place of weeping.

The significance is this. They moved from the place of blessing to the place of weeping because of their disobedience and this is now where God leads them, it is where He sees they are at!

VERSES 4-6

Remember what I said when we opened up our study here in Judges chapter 2. This is a flashback and the events recorded here transpired during the days of Joshua, towards the end of his life.

And I believe it corresponds to the events that took place in Joshua chapter 24.

We are not sure where Bochim is located, and they may have called Shechem this name because of where they were spiritually speaking. And thus, this is a recap of what transpired.

And here God is warning them of what this compromise of allowing the enemy, making a covenant with the enemy will do to them. And as we get into the next few verses you will see the tragic fulfillment of what God was warning the children of Israel during the time of Joshua, at the end of his life!

Now you read this, “**. . . that the people lifted up their voices and wept.**” Judges 2:4. They also sacrificed to the Lord and things are looking hopeful! (Judges 2:5)

Had the words of the Lord impacted their lives so that they will repent and get right with God? Maybe revival will break out among them now! They will obey the Lord.

Not exactly!

As we will see, this initial reaction of weeping, of sorrow did not lead to a change in their lives, at least not a lasting one. Yes, there was a time when they obeyed the Lord, but it was short-lived as we will see.

I think what was going on here is that they did not pass on all that the Lord had done and was doing in their lives to their children and grandchildren and in the end, well, it is not good as we are going to see. And that little compromise here and a little there ended up being a huge compromise!

VERSES 7-10

Joshua's legacy was seen in the godliness of Israel during his leadership. He was truly one of history's great men of God.

But now we see the results of that compromise and it is just as the Lord told them, warned them and I guess as time went by, they just didn't believe it, or they didn't care.

And as you come to Joshua 2:10 you see the tragedy of what happens many times to future generations - they did not know the Lord!

Now that can be the result of two things.

First of all, their parents never instructed them of the Lord, His words were not passed on to them. It was something that the Lord commanded the children of Israel to do - teach their children the ways of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 says "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**"

You see, the Lord was to be the focus of their life, and they were to not only instruct their children of the Lord, but their life should reflect that relationship. They were to show their children the power and faithfulness of God.

The other reason for their disobedience to the Lord could just be unbelief. And I tend to think that is what is going on here. It is more than just ignorance of God, but it was unbelief.

They willfully turned from the Lord as they turned to these foreign gods!

They refused to see the power of God and the faithfulness of God in their lives. And we see that today, people who refuse to believe in God no matter how much they see of His power and faithfulness.

Thus, with their failure to serve the Lord, they serve the gods of the other nations. And we shall see, God brings judgment upon them.

Why?

Because they had the truth of God and they chose to reject it, to change it to fit what they wanted to believe.

After Joshua and that generation that knew God had died off, the new generation had no personal relationship with God, and no personal awareness of His power. God was someone who their parents related to and who did great things for their parent's generation. But to this new generation, there were other gods that tickled their fancy you might say!

That is what we see happening many times today folks. It is not that people don't have the truths of God. We have more Bibles, more commentaries, more CD's about God than ever before but people refuse to believe it and then end up changing it to fit their lifestyle, what they want to do and future generations will be infected with this poison.

It does not negate the future generations' responsibility.

Listen to what Gary Inrig wrote regarding this issue,

Here [2:10] we come to the heart of the second-generation syndrome. It is a lukewarmness, a complacency, an apathy about amazing biblical truths that we have heard from our childhood, or from our teachers. . . . It is a pattern which challenges churches and even nations, and nowhere does it work with more devastating effect than in Bible colleges and theological seminaries where, day after day, we come in contact with God's truth. . . . History tells us that not even the most vivid display of the life transforming power of the Holy Spirit will prevent this problem.

But why? Why did it happen then, and why does it happen to us? . . . We must realize two things about this kind of complacency. The first is something Erich Fromm once pointed out when he said, "Hate is not the opposite of love. Apathy is."

To be complacent in the face of Calvary is the greatest possible rejection of God.

The second is that complacency grows like a cancer. . . . Maybe part of the problem lay with the first [Joshua's] generation.

Interestingly, however, the book of Judges puts none of the blame there. The second generation was held responsible for their failure, and God would not allow them to shift the blame."

- Gary Inrig, *Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, pp. 26-27

Here is the bottom line. Christianity is not transmitted through our genes. It is not transmitted biologically. It is caught by the next generation because they have their own personal relationship with Jesus as they see the works of God working in people's lives.

Yes, this next generation was responsible for their actions, but I disagree with the idea that their parents having done no wrong here. I do believe that with prosperity, when things are going well, we relax and we don't show all that God has done, is doing and will do in our lives to our children and grandchildren.

Today, church is not important. Reading the Bible, when I have time. Prayer, when there is trouble. And our children, grandchildren see our attitude about our relationship with God and if He is not important to us, then He will not be important to them!

May we let them see that our God is real; our faith is strong, not perfect because none of us are, and that we believe God at His Word because compromise is a dangerous road to travel on!

VERSES 11-13

We need to keep in mind that even in the days of Joshua Israel did not fully possess all that land that God had for them in the Promised Land.

Yet in that time they remained faithful to God, and they did not worship the idols of the Canaanites.

But, after the death of Joshua, they fell into the worship of these grotesque idols.

Here's the thing. When you play with fire you will get burned. The influence of that fire will permeate your life.

Think about it. You are just sitting around the campfire, you would not jump in, that is foolish, that would be dangerous, you know better.

But as you sit there the smoke of that fire fills your life so that when you leave the campfire, you still smell like smoke!

That is what we see here with the children of Israel. They allowed the enemy to be around them until that lifestyle, their practices, filled the lives of the children of Israel.

They succumbed to the pressure and went and served the enemies gods!

In other words, they smelled like smoke!

What was the attraction?

Baal was the god over the weather and nature for the Canaanites. Thus, Israel lived in an agricultural society and needed good weather for an abundant crop, which not only took care of their physical needs, but it brought them money or wealth also. Thus, they joined themselves to the god Baal!

The god Ashtoreth, which the Canaanites served, was the goddess of fertility, of love, of sex. And the worship of this god involved having sex with priestesses, who were nothing more than prostitutes!

And here we see Israel join themselves to Ashtoreth, it fed their fleshly desires!

Thus, Israel was not only involved in spiritual adultery, but they also were involved in physical adultery!

Make no mistake about it, our God is a jealous God and He desires our full worship of Him. You can't be joined to other gods, whatever they may be, and think you can also serve the Lord, because you can't!

In fact, God won't allow it!

What "Canaanites" you might say, are you allowing in your life that are leading you into idolatry?

Make no mistake about it, as Israel found out, the result of not driving out these enemies is far worse than you can imagine!

Do you smell like smoke right now because you have been playing, sitting too close to the fire?

Move away; repent before God before you get burned!

VERSES 14-15

This response of God to the unfaithfulness of Israel should not have been a surprise to the children of Israel.

He specifically promised that He would do this in the covenant He made with them.

Remember, in this covenant we saw the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience as we are told in Leviticus chapter 26 and Deuteronomy chapter 28.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, ***“The greatest sin a human being can commit is not murder or rape or other despicable acts of atrocity. It is to turn his back on the living God to serve man-made gods.”*** (Gary Inrig, Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay, p. 37).

Now, is God doing this because He hates them?

Absolutely not!

He loves them and is using these things in their lives to draw them back to Him.

They want a life apart from Him, well; this is what it looks like!

Folks, the Lord chastens us not because He hates us, but because He loves us and like Israel, He is trying to draw us back to Him, but He won't force us!

He will let us do our own thing and see what a life that is distant from Him is like and it is not good!

VERSES 16-19

This is the tragic cycle we see over and over again in the book of Judges.

That as the nation forsook the Lord and served these pagan gods, that God brought judgment upon them. Their enemies placed them in bondage and as they cried out unto the Lord, he raised up a Judge to deliver them.

And during those years the Judge was alive, they had a time of peace and prosperity. But once the Judge died, they went back to their idolatry, and the cycle begins again.

This is kind of an overview of the book of Judges, you might say it is a brief summary of the book.

Interestingly enough, that Hebrew word for “**stubborn**” is *KAWSHEH* and it speaks of being hard, being severe and how true that is. When we are stubborn with the Lord, when we refuse to listen to Him, it is a hard road to travel! May we learn the lesson!

One writer put it like this in regard to these Judges in Israel, just in case we are picturing something different than what they really were. And keep in mind that some were very good, some were okay, and yes, some were not that good.

This is what he wrote,

When we think of judges we envision old men dressed in black robes - holding wooden gavels - and having legal degrees.

The judges of Israel were not like Supreme Court justices.

The Old Testament judges were more like virtuous vigilantes – patriots of purity – righteous Rambo’s.

The Judges were common men and women with no credentials other than the call of God.

They were folks in whom God ignited a fire for freedom - a passion for holiness - a hunger for truth - a zeal for justice.

They rallied the nation, and lead the battle to liberate the Hebrews. The judges were Israel's heroes and patriots.

- Sandy Adams, Judges 2

And this is the picture that will play over and over again. It goes like this,

SIN!

SERVITUDE!

SUPPLICATION!

SALVATION!

SIN!

As I have said, their sin brought them into bondage – ***SERVITUDE!***

As they were in this bondage they cried out to the Lord and thus – ***SUPPLICATION!***

As they return to the Lord, we see peace and prosperity for them, a time of –

SALVATION!

And this peace and prosperity caused them to become complacent with their walk with the Lord and thus, they went back into – ***SIN!***

And, like I have said, this cycle repeats itself over and over again!

VERSES 20-23

Why did God say to Israel, “**This nation**” instead of “*My nation*”?

Because they broke the covenant they made with God, and as God warned them, judgment came upon them. And these nations they refused to drive out, He will let them live among them, which will be a thorn in their side.

Something that they thought would be good will turn out not to be good and that is how sin works.

What seems so right, so good to us at that start is a thorn in our side before long!

As we conclude this chapter, turn to Psalm 106, and we are going to begin reading verse 34.

You see, this Psalm is a poetic paraphrase of this chapter.

We are told, **“They did not destroy the peoples, Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works; They served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, And played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, And those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, And they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times He delivered them; But they rebelled in their counsel, And were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, When He heard their cry; And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.”** Psalm 106:34-45.

The key here is don't turn from the Lord, the One who loves you.

As it has been said, *“To those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it.”*

May we learn the lesson!

JUDGES 3

VERSES 1-4

There are four reasons that God left the enemy in the land.

In Deuteronomy 7:20-24 the reason is so that the land would not become a wilderness if they were driven out too quickly, but that is not the case here.

Secondly, in Judges 2:20-21 we see the reason is to punish Israel for their apostasy, and that does apply here.

The third reason found in Judges 3:4 was to test Israel to see if they would be faithful to Him, and they failed here.

And the fourth reason is found in Judges 3:2 and that is to give this generation an experience in how to fight against the enemy, and again, they are failing here.

Please understand this was not the perfect will of God for them. They were to completely drive out the enemy but because they refused to obey, God allowed these things in their lives.

Folks that is true for us. God has His perfect will for our lives but many times we don't go down that path.

May we not only listen, but also obey the Lord.

Now some wonder how we can find out God's will for our lives, that perfect will.

Paul tells us in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

Give yourself completely to God, be led by His Spirit, renew your mind by being in His Word and in fellowship with Him and He will direct your steps, His perfect will for your life.

It is as we are told by Solomon in Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

VERSES 5-6

As they played with fire, they got burned. Notice what it says in Judges 3:7, **“... They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.”**

When you turn from the Lord, you will serve somebody and that is what we see here!

God left these six nations within the land, and these nations were a snare unto the nation of Israel. We see Israel living among the enemy.

Then they were intermarrying with the enemy.

From there they began to serve these god's that these other nations served. And this is the progression folks; a little compromise goes a long way. And Joshua warned them of this relationship with the enemy, that it would be a disaster for them.

He said “. . . **If indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations - these that remain among you - and make marriages with them, and go into them and they to you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.**” Joshua 23:12-13.

You see, the very thing God told them not to do, they did!

And the problem was that God’s law ran contrary to their fleshly desires. You see, when they sinned, they needed to offer an animal sacrifice. It was a tough walk, a narrow road, when compared to the worship of these pagan gods.

God asked His people for a life of self-denial, but in the worship of these pagan gods they were trying to satisfy self, to feed the flesh.

Thus, Israel chose the temporary pleasures of this world instead of the eternal treasures and paid the consequences for their actions.

It is as Proverbs 4:23 warns us, “**Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.**”

And The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life.**”

May we do that, guard our hearts from the things of this world and fill it with the things of God!

And thus, this cycle begins with – *SIN!*

VERSES 7-8

Here we see the cause and effect of what the children of Israel did.

They did evil before the Lord, they forgot about the Lord, willfully forgot about the Lord, and they served foreign gods.

In other words – ***SIN LED TO SERVITUDE!***

That is the cause, they turned from the Lord and served foreign gods, and the effect is that they went into bondage for eight years because of it. And the enemy that brought them into this bondage was the King of Mesopotamia, Cushan-Rishathaim.

And this is interesting to me. Because they refused to serve the true and living God who wanted to bless them and had blessed them, God gave them over to Cushan-Rishathaim or to ***“double-wickedness,”*** which his name means!

Now we start the period of the Judges, the deliverers!

Now some say that there are only 12 Judges while others say that there are 13, why is that?

First of all, Deborah and Barak are considered one since Deborah was really the deliverer.

The reason some say there are only 12 is they leave out the son of Gideon, Abimelech because he kind of got the position because he was the son of Gideon, and he really wasn't very good.

But I believe he is listed, even though he was not good. And if you really think about it, and as we will see, Samson for that part was not very good.

So let's begin to look at these Judges.

VERSES 9-11

Yes, Mesopotamia was hundreds of miles away from where Othniel and his people lived but that didn't stop the King of Mesopotamia from coming down and oppressing the children of Israel.

And after eight years of bondage the children of Israel cried out to God and God raised up a deliverer.

I don't know what took them so long to repent and get right with God, but that is what sin does many times. It often takes many years of bondage and calamity before man looks away from self and looks unto God.

Now I don't believe they were truly sincere because, as we will see, when Othniel dies, they go back to their wicked ways.

So we see – *SIN, SERVITUDE, SUPPLICATION, SALVATION* come upon their lives through the Judge, Othniel.

Now here is a key for anyone serving the Lord.

We are told that “**The Spirit of the LORD came upon**” Othniel.

In other words, he was empowered by the Spirit of God for the work he was to do.

We too must be empowered by the Spirit of God if we want to be fruitful in the work that God has called us to do.

It is as we are told in Zechariah 4:6, “. . . **This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.**”

And that is what Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8, “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

We need that power in our lives!

As we see here in Judges 3:11, the land had rest for forty years, “**... Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.**”

What happens next is born out of that rest and then the death of Othniel – *SIN!* And the cycle begins again!

VERSES 12-14

We see that after God brought deliverance through the work of Othniel, Israel eventually drifted away from their dependence and obedience towards God.

Their victory did not automatically last forever; it had to be maintained.

And what we see is this downward spiral of the children of Israel.

Because of that we see that God raised up the people of Moab and the people of Ammon to teach the children of Israel lessons they needed to learn.

But here is the difference.

Now the enemies were relatives.

Remember the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by God?

We saw Lot and his daughters escape from the city. And Lot's daughters thought they were the only ones left on the earth. So they each got their father drunk and they had sexual relations with him.

The oldest daughter conceived and bore a son; his name was Moab, the father of the Moabites.

The younger daughter also conceived and bore a son; his name was Ben-Ammi, who was the father of the people of Ammon. (Genesis 19:30-38).

God was now going to use the illegitimate sons of Lot and his daughters, relatives of the children of Israel, to bring judgment upon them.

We also see the Amalekites assist in this oppression.

They were more of a nomadic people and traveled in the area south of Beersheba and were bitter enemies of Israel.

The first time it took them eight years to get right before God, but now it is eighteen years before they turn back to God!

That is sin, it is a snare, it keeps us in bondage, and it is difficult to admit our sin and come back to God many times.

Make no mistake about it, sin always brings bondage, though it comes to us deceptively.

Think about it. The fish never contemplates the bondage of the hook when it goes after the bait; Satan snares us by making the bait attractive and hiding the hook.

You see, what we thought was a way of freedom, our sin, becomes a place of bondage as this story shows us.

We are told,

A news story told of a grease processing plant that opened up a 55-gallon drum of grease that came from a prison. Inside, they found a little bit of grease, but a dead prison inmate. He tried to escape by hiding in the barrel, but his quest for freedom became a means of bondage and death for him. He was deceived like we are deceived by sin, thinking that it can be a path to freedom. Instead, it only brings bondage and death.

- David Guzek

That is sin, bondage, death. Jesus is the One who sets us free!

VERSES 15-16

Ehud is Israel's second Judge.

Now it is interesting because we are told that he is "**a left-handed man.**"

I don't believe that is speaking of him being left-handed as opposed to being right-handed because in the Hebrew it literally means, "***one bound in the right hand***" or "***a man handicapped in the right hand.***"

Because of this handicap, he may have been thought of as less of a threat to the King and used this to his advantage in meeting with the King, as we shall see.

Think about this for a minute. When the world looks at Christians, they see us, in a sense, as handicapped. We don't have what the world might call the tools to do the work.

Then what do we have?

We have the Lord!

When I was a young Christian, one of the Scriptures that always encouraged me and it still does is what the religious leaders said in Acts 4:13, "**Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.**"

I fit that bill! You see, it is not by our might or power or strength, but by His! It is spending time with Jesus! May we not forget that even if we feel and should feel inadequate for the work because He is more than able to work in us and through us for His glory!

It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

And The Amplified Bible puts it even stronger as we read, **“I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency].”**

May we not forget that!

Now here is what is going on.

Ehud brought tribute to the King, that is the taxes that the King placed upon Israel.

Keep in mind that Eglon made Jericho, **“the city of Psalms”** his headquarters. He had taken this land from the children of Israel. And that is where Ehud went to, as he paid tribute to this King. But instead of a tribute, as we will see, it will be a surprise for the King!

And Ehud makes a dagger approximately 18 inches long and fastens it to his right thigh.

Now because he was handicapped on the right side, no one would think of him concealing a weapon on that side. He again used his handicap for an advantage.

VERSES 17-19

The name **“Eglon”** means *“a little calf.”*

When you look at his size and what was going to happen to him, he was really a fat calf being prepared for the slaughter!

Now after Ehud and his group paid their taxes, he sends out these men and tells Eglon that he has a secret for him and thus, Eglon clears the room of everyone so that now it is just Ehud and this King.

Now, did Ehud lie, trick the King?

I don't believe he did.

You see, the message is this, *“If you are going to oppress God’s people, if you are going to touch the apple of His eye, then you will be judged for it!”* This was a secret message just for the King! And He will get the point!

VERSES 20-26

This was a pretty brutal period of time and definitely not for the weak.

Ehud is able to get close to the King, grab his dagger and thrust it into the King.

In fact, this King was so fat, He was extremely obese, kind of like Jabba the Hut from Star Wars, that the whole blade went in and the fat covered it, and he fell down dead.

Now the King’s servants came to see what was happening to the King and found the doors locked.

And they came to the conclusion that he was **“covering his feet”** which is a euphemism for body elimination. In other words, they thought that he was going to the bathroom!

Obviously, you don’t want to bother anyone when they are involved in this activity and especially this King!

Because of that they waited patiently for the King to finish his business, and they waited and waited until they reached the point that they were embarrassed he took so long.

To make sure that he was okay, they unlocked the door to see what had happened, maybe peering in not to disturb him and they found the King dead on the floor.

This delay allowed Ehud to escape out of the window and flea to safety.

Now these stone images mentioned in Judges 3:19 and 3:26 were probably *“the actual stones set up by Joshua to commemorate the miraculous crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4:19-24) and thus were a well-known landmark.”* (Cundall)

VERSES 27-30

As Ehud arrives in the mountains of Ephraim, he then blows the trumpet for battle and the children of Israel rise up to assist in the work and they defeated Moab, killing 10,000 men.

Can one man make a difference?

You bet! You see, it only takes one man or one woman to stand up for God and God will use that person mightily as he did with Ehud.

In fact, Ehud Judged Israel for 80 years, which was the longest period of rest in the book of Judges.

Yes, God can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think!

So we saw – ***SIN, SERVITUDE, SUPPLICATION, SALVATION!***

There is that cycle once again!

VERSE 31

Now we aren't specifically told that they fell into sin again in this verse, but we do see God raise up Shamgar to deliver Israel, which tells me that they were in sin and servitude!

So we see here that Shamgar was the third Judge sent to deliver the children of Israel but not much else is spoken of him. We don't have a lot of information.

Now the period of time that Shamgar was a Judge could have taken place sometime during those 98 years of the previous Judge, Ehud, who judged Israel for 80 years and prior to that were 18 years of oppression. I think he was raised during those 18 years of oppression and keep in mind that these Judges did not operate in the same area. They were different Judges in different areas of Israel.

So there could be an overlap of these two Judges since they did not rule the entire nation, just local judges described in the previous section. (Judges 3:12-30).

And in judges 4:1 we go back to Ehud and his death, which again tells me that Shamgar probably overlapped with Ehud.

Again, the reason that there is no mention of Israel doing evil in the LORD's sight is because it took place during the rebellion of Ehud's day. I think that is what is going on here.

Now I am not going to speculate who this man is, what his background was, but God did use him mightily and if God wanted us to know more, He would have told us.

But this we do know.

Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with just an ox goad.

Now we don't know if this was accomplished at one battle or during a lifetime.

Whatever the case, he accomplished it with just an ox goad, which was a sharp metal tipped stick some 8 to 10 feet long and used to direct the animals.

The other end was usually a chisel-like blade for cleaning the plow.

Why did he use an ox goad?

Understand that the enemies had taken away many of the implements of war, so Shamgar used what was available, an ox goad, to defeat the enemy.

And as silly as that may sound to fight against the enemy, Clarke rightly tells us, ***“In the hands of a strong, skilful man, such an instrument must be more dangerous and more fatal than any sword.”***

Let me expound on it like this. Anyone who is surrendered to the Lord can use what is available in their hands to defeat the enemy of God because it is God that is bringing about the victory and not us!

I think that is a great lesson for us to learn. Instead of complaining about what we don't have, we use what is available to us for destroying the enemy and building up the kingdom.

What is in your hand?

What has God given to you to use?

Don't become frustrated or discouraged by what you have in your hand, be like Shamgar and use it for the glory of God!

Think about the prior examples of men of faith that we have seen.

God said to Paul, ***"What is that in your hand?"***

And Paul said, ***"A pen for I am a scholar."***

And God said, ***"Great, that is what I will use."***

And God used Paul to write 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament!

Look at the apostle Peter.

God said to Peter, ***"What is that in your hand?"***

And Peter said, ***"That is my Pope hat!"***

No, he didn't say that.

But he did say, ***"It is a fishing net for I am a fisherman."***

And God said, ***"Great, that is what I will use."***

And God made Peter a fisher of men!

I think we at times look at our lives and wonder how God can use us.

God asks us, ***"What is that in your hand?"***

And we reply, ***"It's just a computer."***

And the Lord is saying, ***"Great, that is what I will use."***

How can God use a computer for His glory?

Don't negate what God can and will use as He calls you for a work.

Look at those who have computer skills in this church and how they are using what is in their hand for the glory of God. They were called and they stepped forward using what was in their hands!

And many of you are doing the same, using what God has given to you for His glory, the thing that is in your hand!

With these three Judges we have seen the focus on the southern tribes, where these Judges were raised up.

Next time as we move into chapter 4, we will see the northern tribes dealt with and that will cover Judges 4:1 through 5:31.

Look at what we have seen with this Judge. Again, Shamgar used what was in his hand to serve God and God was able to use him greatly.

What about you? What is in your hands that God wants to use for His glory?

And I will close with this for you to think about.

It says that Shamgar was "**the son of Anath**" in Judges 3:31.

We don't think much about that but hear me out. Anath was the name of a Canaanite idol!

I think what the Lord is showing us is that Shamgar came from a family of Idolaters!

What does that mean to me?

It means that you may be the only believer in your family, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, but you can still stand strong for the Lord as Shamgar did!

Ehud had a physical handicap and God used him mightily! Shamgar had a spiritual handicap and God used him mightily! God uses all types of people for His glory, and He wants to use you!