

~ **Our Spiritual Safari** expedition through the entire Word of God continues our march through the Old Testament in this report and we have, obviously, arrived in the Book of Judges. We can write over Judges Proverbs chapter fourteen verse thirty-four, "... righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Deuteronomy, Joshua, and now this book of the Bible, have had - and will have - alarming, harsh and extremely difficult lessons for us to learn. Judges is going to outline our safari philosophy of the history of mankind. This philosophy we are beginning to undertake has been followed down through the centuries; and Isaiah is going to reiterate and fully develop it in almost untenable terms when we come across his prophecy. In our last report, which concluded Joshua, we saw the beginning of the departure of the nation Israel from the Living and True God evidenced by the high priest acquiring land. That may not sound so bad, but the priests were not to be given any land. Well, the new high priest, Phineas, was given land, against the expressed commandment of God, as we learned in our previous report from Joshua.

So, we enter a particular period in the history of Israel in which judges rule the land. There is no one single man to be their leader, as Moses and Joshua had been. We will read four times in Judges, "... in those days there was no king in Israel." Evidently, this was written during a time when there was a king; and this account is looking back to the time when there was no king. That is one of the great purposes of this book, in my estimation. I believe, however, that there is another two-fold purpose for us to discover in Judges.

First, Judges records the historical period of the nation Israel from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel. Samuel was the last judge, and the first prophet. Judges bridges the gap between Joshua and the rising of the monarchy under King Saul, the first king of Israel. There is no succession of leadership after Joshua's death, as there had been when Joshua took Moses' place. This is the trial period of theocracy after they had entered the Promised Land to possess it.

The second purpose of Judges is a moral purpose. This is a time of deep declension of the people as they turn from their unseen Leader and descend to the low level of “... every man doing that which was right in his own eyes.” That’s the last verse of this book; and when a nation reaches that type of anarchy, friends, you have a real problem. We will refer to that verse often as we go along now – you know, to make sure we don’t lose sight of it. That’s quite a contrast to the opening verse of this book, too, by the way. The period in which we are studying is a time when every man just did his own thing - they did that which came naturally. That's never good....

I

1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

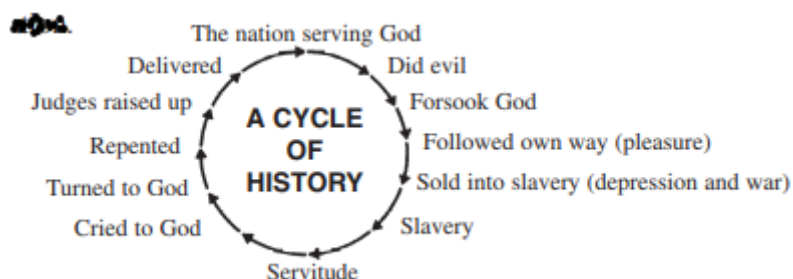
~ Alright, so far, so good – they turned to the Lord after the death of Joshua. Unfortunately, it's not going to last long. By the time we reach the end of Judges, we discover every man with his own moral code. If you look around you today, you’ll discover we are back in this same period of history; every man today has his own philosophy of life - and every man and woman simply does whatever they think should be done. We have absolutely no regard for man’s law, or the proper moral code – we have no standards – and we have become totally and completely ignorant of the Word of God as it is perverted and bastardized in American and world society.

Friends, this world is in the lowest level of morality since the dawn of recorded history; if you don’t think so – then you are desperately gullible and naive. There is no high calling, and there is no lofty purpose to contemporary life. The lost man simply trudges through the motions of a mundane life while forcing functionality in a society they disdain as they medicate their pains and emotional wounds and intoxicate themselves on an endless rut of glutenous recreational entertainment that enables them to embrace and admire their own pathetic state and internal sadness, all while devouring hate, discord, pornography and violence like children

watching cartoons. There is no purposeful goal for mankind anymore. Doleful? You bet your life it is.

The period we are studying – and the modern age in which we live – SHOULD be a glowing torch of Olympic style successes for the nation Israel. However, the book of Judges mirrors their current history – and ours – of repeat failures. Israel entered a land that held great promise and they entered with high hopes and exuberant expectations. We should have expected these people, who had been delivered out of Egypt, led through the wilderness and brought into the land through an awe-inspiring demonstration of the power of God and His direction, to attain a high level of living and victory in the land. But that's not the way it turns out. Ignoble failure and miserable suffering of defeat after defeat further mark their checkered history in every record. Ultimately, both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah go into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. Again, that's the philosophy of history.

Chapter two of Judges at verse eleven is where the old wheel of prophecy really begins to turn fast. It has been called the "hoop of history." It begins with a nation serving God. Then the downward spiral begins. They did evil in the sight of God – they served Balaam – they forsook the Lord God of their fathers – they followed other gods – bowed to those gods – and they provoked the Lord to anger! That's when God delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them. As if that weren't enough, next, God sold them into the hands of all their enemies round about. Israel could no longer stand before their enemies at that point. See, sin was their reproach. The problem isn't God. The problem was their sin.



So, they spent time in servitude before – you guessed it – crying out to the Lord for deliverance from their distress and sad plight. When they cry out

to God, and they turn to Him and repent, then God hears their cries and judges were raised up. God delivered them – and they were, once again, at the top of the wheel serving God. What a circle they make time and time again throughout the historical account of this book. From here, it's just the same old song and dance over and over again. They will again do evil – forsake God – follow their own desires – be sold into slavery – servitude ensued – they cried out – turned to God and repented – judges were raised up that delivered the nation – and we are back to the nation serving God. It makes me dizzy just typing that paragraph. Then, like a wheel rotating at a hundred miles per hour – there they go again! The wheel just keeps spinning around and around. That wheel takes us right on through the Bible, too, friends.

The same is still true today. The old bromide “history repeats itself” is deadly accurate. I think it nicely defines the historical cycle of the people we are now examining closely. “A philosophy of history” is about as correct terminology we could assign to this section of Scripture. When we arrive at Isaiah’s prophetic message, God Himself is going to repeat this philosophy. There are three steps every nation makes on their way down the drain: 1. Spiritual apostasy. 2. Moral awfulness. 3. Political anarchy. So, one, two, three – a, b, c – and away we go – every time. Political anarchy is ALWAYS the death bed of any nation. Now, I ask you, which stage do you think the United States of America is at? Well, let me help you out with that answer: we are WAY beyond moral awfulness tonight as I type and as you read my report. That’s all summed up in the harshest of terms in the first chapter of Isaiah; and we’ll get there soon enough on safari. If you think my messages have been not nice – or altogether unlovely – so far – well, you ain’t seen NOTHING yet, friends!

This descension and going in circles as we go down just happens to be and has been the state of mankind throughout our history. General Douglas MacArthur said, “.... in this day of gathering storms, as the moral deterioration of political power spreads its growing infection, it is essential that every spiritual force be mobilized to defend and preserve the Christian base upon which this nation was founded; for it has been that base which has been the motivating impulse to our moral and national growth. History fails to record a single precedent in which nations, subject to moral decay,

have not passed into political and economic decline. There has been either a spiritual re-awakening to overcome the moral lapse; or a progressive deterioration leading to ultimate national disaster!" - THAT'S how up to date the Book of Judges really is, my beloved readers. From the Book of Judges to a hundred years ago and right into today – nothing's changed.

The children of Israel had entered the land with such high hopes I think we could have reasonably expected them to serve God and never look back. After forty years out there in that terrible wilderness, and another forty years of God delivering them by miracle and might – and His evidence so visible in their lives – you would think they would come to a plane of living that was somewhere up in the clouds. You would THINK there would be nothing but victory in their lives. Well, friends, such is just not the case. They failed epically and they suffered defeat after defeat as a result of propagating the philosophy of history we have now laid out.

So, God raised up judges to deliver the nation when they apostatized and cried out to Him in misery. This book takes its name from the men God raised up between Joshua and Samuel, of course. Most of them exercised their ministry in a local and restricted area; and they were all limited in their capabilities. In fact, each judge seems to have had some sort of defect or handicap which was NOT a hindrance to the plan and purposes of the Almighty God. Now, THAT is simply amazing – if anything is amazing! They each become a positive asset under the sovereign direction of God Himself. None of these judges will be national leaders, and none will appeal to the total nation as Moses and Joshua had; and this is not a continuous record, either – it is simply a spotty account of local men in local situations within the nation Israel at the time in which we are studying.

Nine of the tribes are mentioned and the accounts are completely confined to their particular failures. The three not mentioned are Reuben, Issachar and Gad; but we must assume that they, likewise, each also failed. Each tribe faced a particular enemy; and at no time in Judges will the entire nation come together to fight against any particular foe. The weaknesses of the tribes is hereby revealed from the word "go." Obviously, the Canaanites were well entrenched in the land, so we know – for sure – they haven't yet been driven out. The Canaanites were a thorn in the side of

Israel all through the reign of Saul and David, too. So, let's keep all of that in mind as we begin reading....

2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

~ The Canaanites were largely concentrated in the southern region Judah and Simeon possessed. Verse three reveals one of the innate weaknesses of the tribes - and of the nation as a whole. This may appear to be a fine sign of cooperation; but it was pure weakness for Judah to ask for help driving out the enemy from their own particular land. They were perfectly equipped to handle the problem; and they should have done the dirty work themselves. Remember, it is GOD Who was fighting for them. All they had to do was hold their peace. They didn't lay hold of that power. The result of that disobedience was the Canaanite never being totally driven out. They're still there today....

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

~ After that victory, it would seem reasonable to assume the tribe of Judah would be confident God would deliver victory into their hands every time; but it doesn't work out that way. Kirjathsepher means "city of books." This was the national library at the time. Alright, the astute student of Scripture will notice that, since we have made the statement there was a weakness in each of the judges, it appears, at face value, that Othniel did rather well. Frankly, Othniel was the very best of all the judges we are going to meet. However, even he has a particular sign of weakness. This man was chosen as the judge at this particular time ONLY because he was the son-in-law of Caleb; and that exhibits the awful reality of nepotism. Othniel was only chosen because he was part of the family. Caleb was as well-known in Israel as Joshua had been - and if this hadn't been his relative, Othniel would have NEVER been chosen for the position of judgeship, you may be absolutely sure. Men today occupy positions of prominence NOT because of their abilities – but because family business usually stays that way in this country; and it's the same story around the world. Napoleon was once called a "man of destiny" – and Napoleon admitted very frankly that the

man had to line up with a point in circumstantial history. If Napoleon had lived in our day that we live in, NOBODY would have even heard of him....

14 And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

27 Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the

inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

~ All nine tribes listed have a recurring theme of complete failure. Dan was chased way up into the hill country. Remember, they are in the Promised Land. God has given it ALL to them and they STILL failed – every single one of them – to lay hold of the land God had delivered to them. This is tragedy for the nation Israel. How about you, friends? Are you possessing all the territory God has promised you? Are you running away from an enemy? Is the Lord fighting for you? Are you holding your peace? Remember Exodus chapter fourteen verse fourteen....

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

II

1 And an angel of the LORD – the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ – came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into

the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

III

1 Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

3 Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

8 Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.

9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of

Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

~ So, the “hoop of history” is spinning like a top at this point; and God is continually going to be raising up judges for the children of Israel. Each time the nation scrapes the bottom of the barrel, God will be faithful to raise up a judge for their deliverance! Our Spiritual Safari is going to move quickly through the era of the judges. I hope you'll read all of it after praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment. This is how we learn the Bible, friends. By this time in Israel's history, the people have intermarried with everyone from the Canaanites to the Moabites. Every tribe is now thoroughly infected with outside ilk. God had forbidden this - but they followed the way of Balaam. As we proceed forward through the Bible, these enemies will emerge again and again. This intermarriage is, actually, a direct result of the very apostasy we have come to today in the church.

Well, we have now considered the first judge – certainly the best of all the judges – and I don't really want to criticize unnecessarily, but if he had not been in the family we would have never even read his name. Othniel was completely incapable in and of himself; and his incompetence was not even considered as a determining factor in his appointment to a position of authority. That fact is ALWAYS worthy of critique. Anyways, we can find a bright spot in all of this if and when we understand the type of man God will use. That means maybe – JUST MAYBE – God can use you and me. This book should encourage us, friends; even though we are studying the darkest period of history in the nation Israel ~

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