

The Book of JUDGES

Chapter 3 – 5

“Who Are You To Judge?”

CHAPTER 3- “DON’T FORGET THE LORD, SERVE HIM!”

(v1-4) The TEST – Verse 4 – **“to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.”**

(v5-7) Here is the three-fold tragedy of man, Israel, and the Church: (1) To ***“do evil in the sight of the LORD.”*** (2) To ***“forget the LORD their God.”*** (3) To ***“serve the idols or the ways of this world.”***

To pass the test all believers must separate themselves from the world, this is spoken of in the New Testament - 2 Corinthians 6:11 – 7:1; 1 John 2:15-17.

(Insight: ***Baal & Asherah*** - The people of Israel had been settled in the promised land for only a brief time before their attention turned to the deities of the Canaanites. The Book of Judges chronicles this apostasy. The people forsook the Lord God to serve Asherah and her husband Baal (Ashteroth is an alternative name for Asherah, Judges 2:13; 3:7). The name "Asherah" and its variant spellings occur thirty-nine times in the Old Testament. In a number of these instances, Baal is mentioned along with Asherah. The most shocking endorsement of Israel's buying into Canaanite religion was the construction of a temple for the worship of Baal at Samaria. This was promoted by Ahab (869-850 b.c.) and Jezebel, his wife, who was the daughter of the Tyrian king Ethbaal (1 Kings 16:29-34). This temple was constructed with the help of Tyrian artisans, along with an altar on which to offer sacrifices and a "sacred pole" (NRSV) or "wooden image" (NKJV). Because of this apostasy, judgment was poured out on Ahab and Jezebel. Jehu later destroyed this temple (2 Kings 10:18-31). The Israelites had been warned before settling the land of Canaan about established religious worship sites, particularly the "high places" taken over intact during the conquest. These sites were often furnished with basic cultic objects and resident sacred personnel. Cultic features included the following: small clay figurines (Judges 3:7; Micah 5:13); "sacred pillars" (1 Kings 14:23); an "incense altar" (2 Ch 30:14); an altar for offering the whole burnt offering (2 Kings 21:5) and "priests" and "priestesses. Several Canaanite high places were appropriated by Israel's religious leaders early in the settlement, including Bethel (Judges 1:22-26), Shiloh (1 Sam 1:1-18), and Gibeah (1 Sam 13:1-4). Both Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-4) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-17) encouraged worship at high places. Asherah and Baal worship caused the downfall of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel.)

(v8-11) God ***“sold”*** them into the hands of their enemy (rf. Deut. 32:28-47). After 8 years of misery Israel cries out to God for deliverance, thus God raises up the 1st Judge - OTHNIEL (meaning - ***Powerful One***); observe in verse 10 that ***“The Spirit of the LORD came upon him.”*** God calls, God anoints, God raises up, God delivers! Then the land had rest for forty years. Jesus said in Mark 8:34-38 - *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*

(v12-30) ***“Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.”*** - Beware sin keeps knocking at the door and this time Israel is enslaved for 18 years. Once again Israel cries out and God raises up a deliverer, which is their 2nd Judge- EHUD (meaning – ***Strong***). Under Ehud's strong leadership Israel had rest for 80 years.

(v31) The 3rd Judge – SHAMGAR (meaning unknown), but honorable mention!

CHAPTER 4 – DEBORAH, ONE TOUGH WASP!

(v1-3) Same story - new characters, “Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD”; notice that this Canaanite ruler had an army of 900 chariots and harshly treated the children of Israel for 20 years.

(v4-16) DEBORAH (means *wasp*) – She’s the fourth judge of Israel, a prophetess and the only female judge (Judges 4-5). The Bible tells us nothing about her family except that she was the wife of Lapidoth. Deborah's home was in the hill country of Ephraim between Bethel and Ramah. The palm tree under which she sat and judged Israel was a landmark; it became known as "the palm tree of Deborah" (Judges 4:5).

> **Who’s BARAK?** His name means *lightning* - Barak was summoned by Deborah and told to raise a militia of 10,000 men to fight Jabin, king of Canaan, the commander-in-chief of Jabin's army was Sisera. (**Insight:** Apparently during the battle, the Lord sent a great thunderstorm (v15). The rain swelled the Kishon River and the plain surrounding the battle area, making Sisera's 900 iron chariots useless (Judges 5:21). The Israelites routed the Canaanites. The victory is described twice: in prose (Judges 4) and in poetry, by the beautiful "Song of Deborah" (Judges 5). Barak is listed in the New Testament among the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32).)

(v17-24) Sisera’s splitting headache!

CHAPTER 5 – THE SONG OF VICTORY!

(v1-31) Deborah and Barak – Have a number one hit song!