

Lesson 2 5 February 2012

God Delivers Israel

Lesson Scope: Judges 3-5

Lesson Focus

God's desire for Israel was continuous security and prosperity in the land of Canaan. He had provided all that was needed and had revealed Himself sufficiently to them. He had also explicitly warned His people of the results of failure.

But Israel did not follow God's will. They failed to drive out all the inhabitants of Canaan. The people of Israel forgot the true God, worshiped other gods, and intermarried with the heathen. God then chastened them so that they would learn their true condition and return to Him. The children of Israel experienced seven cycles of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation. Today's lesson deals with the first three of these cycles.

During the period of the judges, some of the oppression seems to have been localized and more than one judge may have been in authority in different localities at the same time.

The Lord knows how to bring man to the end of himself. When man repents and cries to God for help, He provides deliverance.

The Septuagint suggests that Barak wanted Deborah to go along to battle because of her gift of divine wisdom, which enabled her to say when to attack the enemy. Deborah told Barak which day to attack (Judges 4:14). In Judges 4:9, Deborah told Barak that a woman would receive more glory for this victory than he would. That the men did not take their proper place is a gauge to the spiritual fervor of the Israelites. It is not God's will for women to fill leadership roles in the New Testament.

Lesson Aim: To see how God moves to provide victory for His people.

Theme Verse: [2 Chronicles 7:14](#). If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Lesson Text

Othniel

Judges 3:7 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.

Judges 3:9-10 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.

Ehud and Shamgar

Judges 3:12 ¹² And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

Judges 3:15-16 ¹⁵ But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamites, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. ¹⁶ But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

Judges 3:20-21 ²⁰ And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat. ²¹ And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

Judges 3:30-31 ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years. ³¹ And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

Deborah and Barak

Judges 4:1 ¹ And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

Judges 4:4 ⁴ And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

Judges 4:6 ⁶ And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Judges 4:23 ²³ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

Judges 5:1-2 ¹ Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, ² Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

Judges 5:7 ⁷ *The inhabitants of the villages* ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

Judges 5:18 ¹⁸ Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

Judges 5:20-21 ²⁰ They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. ²¹ The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

Judges 5:30 ³⁰ Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey; to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?

Questions for Study

Othniel

1. What factors contributed to Israel's downfall?
2. What are some essentials to experiencing victory?

Ehud and Shamgar

3. What qualities prepared Ehud and Shamgar for their roles?
4. How can we prepare ourselves for the work of helping God's people experience victory?

Deborah and Barak

5. Who defeated Sisera?
6. What lessons can we learn from the example of Deborah?
7. How can we attain Christian victory?

Analyzing the Passage

Israel does not appear very united in the time of Judges, particularly in the earlier part of the book. The phrase "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" explains this disunity and its attending chaos. Some of the tribes seem to have been more like rivals than brothers.

The name Othniel means "powerful one of God." He was Caleb's relative, and his zeal for the Lord's work was similar to Caleb's.

Eglon ruled over the Moabite region east of the Dead Sea and south of the Ammon. He oppressed Israel along with the Ammonites and the Bedouin Amalekites. Evidently he subdued the tribes east of Jordan enough to pass through their land. The Moabites and their allies crossed Jordan into Benjamin and occupied Jericho, "the city of palm trees" (Judges 3:13). Following Eglon's death, Ehud and his men first took the fords of Jordan, the enemy's escape routes to their own land. There Israel slew of Moab ten thousand choice men of war (Judges 3:28-29).

One Hebrew meaning of the word lefthanded is "shut up," suggesting that Ehud's right hand was impeded in some way.

"A mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7) was a title of respect. She was benefactress to the children of Israel, judging and giving direction and encouragement.

Principles and Applications

Othniel

1. The Spirit of the Lord brings deliverance through faithful men (Judges 3:10). Othniel's relationship with the Lord and the inspiration of his father-in-law, Caleb, enabled him to deliver Israel. The Lord directs faithful brethren and sisters in His work of spiritual deliverance today. If God's people will live in victory today, each one of us must cultivate a vibrant relationship with the Lord and press on in the conflict of truth against sin.

Ehud and Shamgar

2. When God's people apostatize, the enemy gains ground (Judges 3:12). Not only did Israel lose God's protection, but at the same time their enemy gained strength. God allows the pressures of the world to test our spiritual strength. If we apostatize in the issues of separation, we will lose God's spiritual protection. If we allow the process of apostasy to continue, God will turn against us. "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

3. The Lord hears and answers the cries of the repentant (Judges 3:15). God answered the cry of the repentant Israelites. God answers the plea of the sincere person repenting today. God is "not willing that any should perish." Mercy's gate is open to all.

4. God triumphs when His people use their meager resources for His cause (Judges 3:31). Shamgar had only an ox goad, and Ehud was left-handed, but their limitations did not hinder God. God glories in using the small things to confound the wise. He has accomplished much through the ages by the willing service of those who were ready to use the small resources they had.

Deborah and Barak

5. God provides victory for those who follow His battle plan (Judges 4:6, 23). God provides the principles for spiritual victory in His Word. To study God's Word with the goal of making room for the flesh will lead us to defeat. The church helps us to apply these principles to our everyday life. Victory is assured to those who obey all the commands of the Scriptures and submit to the church.

6. God subdues the enemy when His people willingly sacrifice themselves for His cause (Judges 5:2, 18). Do we live in such a way that shows we are ready to sacrifice our lives for God's cause? Can others see that God's work comes first in our lives? Jesus laid down His life so that we can have spiritual life. God uses and blesses even the small sacrifices that we make for His kingdom.

7. God's people can triumph when parents sense the urgency of the battle (Judges 5:7). Deborah perceived the plight and the oppression the Israelites were experiencing. She also sensed the urgency of the need for deliverance. Her faith and courage nurtured the faith of Barak and his men. Parents need to be awake to the threats their young people face. The new technology around us is a real attraction to them and us. The church has established safe guidelines for using the computer and cell phones. God calls us to obey those guidelines and to build respect for a conservative approach in our use of technology.

8. God's resources for victory are unlimited (Judges 5:20-21). The battle for truth in our day of deception and apostasy can wear us down. Material interests can cloud our spiritual vision. But let us look beyond today and place our faith in the unchanging God who performed miracles in the past.

He is not limited. He will triumph gloriously in the end!

9. Victory over the enemy brings rest to God's people (Judges 5:31). Through faith, God's obedient people possess a strength that can subdue "chariots of iron." We dare not let this God-given peace lead us into complacency, but rather let us continue to build on the spiritual victories of the past. We enjoy rest and peace in our hearts today, but we also look forward to the eternal rest that God has promised His people. May this hope inspire each of us to press onward.

Important Teachings

1. The Spirit of the Lord brings deliverance through faithful men (Judges 3:10).
2. When God's people apostatize, the enemy gains ground (Judges 3:12).
3. The Lord hears and answers the cries of the repentant (Judges 3:15).
4. God triumphs when His people use their meager resources for His cause (Judges 3:31).
5. God provides victory for those who follow His battle plan (Judges 4:6, 23).
6. God subdues the enemy when His people willingly sacrifice themselves for His cause (Judges 5:2, 18).
7. God's people can triumph when parents sense the urgency of the battle (5:7).
8. God's resources for victory are unlimited (Judges 5:20-21).
9. Victory over the enemy brings rest to God's people (Judges 5:31).

Answers to Questions

1. What factors contributed to Israel's downfall?

The children of Israel forgot the Lord their God and served the idols of the nations around them. They failed to keep the worship of Jehovah alive and did not pass it on to the next generation. They intermingled with their ungodly neighbors (Judges 3:6).

2. What are some essentials to experiencing victory?

We must look to God to give us deliverance. We must ask the Lord for grace and the presence of His Spirit to guard us in our conflict. We must keep clear the line of separation between us and the world. Victory will take time and energy. God works through willing and obedient people.

3. What qualities prepared Ehud and Shamgar for their roles?

Ehud had the courage needed to act alone when the time was right. He might have felt that he was at a disadvantage, but he was willing to do what he could. Shamgar used the simple tool he already had.

4. How can we prepare ourselves for the work of helping God's people experience victory?

We must be willing to serve in the place to which God has assigned us. God uses and blesses even small sacrifices. God needs willing people who use what they have for His service.

5. Who defeated Sisera?

God worked through Barak and the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to defeat Sisera. It seems that a rainstorm came up suddenly, flooded the Kidron River, and mired the chariots of iron in the mud. Deborah inspired Barak, and Jael smote Sisera.

6. What lessons can we learn from the example of Deborah? She was in communication with the Lord. She was a prophetess and benefited her people in that role. She perceived the true condition of the Israelites and was active in leading out in deliverance. She inspired Barak to lead the armies of Israel. She directed the praise for victory to the Lord of heaven.

7. How can we attain Christian victory?

Barak followed God's battle plan for victory. We need to do the same. They sacrificed time and put their lives at risk to deliver God's people. We need to face our foe and ask God for strength each day. We cannot relax our spiritual guard but must keep pressing onward.

Summarizing the Lesson

Victory is assured for God's people. Even though the conflict is sometimes intense, God will lead the faithful to victory just as He has in the past. Will we be numbered with the victors?

Research Guide

Check a Bible dictionary for information on the Moabites and the Kenites. Many of the judges are listed with some interesting information.