

Unfolding Unveiling: Studies of Christ Revealed in the Types of Joshua, David, and Solomon

Part Three: Judges

Chapter Eight: Some Stories about Levites

The book of the Judges is not chronological. The series of events in chapters 1-16 overlap one with another (if they were events occurring back to back, the time taken between entering the Land the building of the temple would be longer than the 480 years mentioned in I Kings 6:1). More importantly than that, however, is that the events of Judges 17-21 occur during the time of the judges recorded in chapters 3-16. The events of this book are not recorded in chronological order because the writer is trying to bring out certain truths, not a timeline. His point is better made by consolidating the events that make his desired points into larger sections.

We have just studied the section in which Israel mixed with the inhabitants of the Land, which resulted in bondage and the inability to disinherit the inhabitants altogether. Also in this section, we see Israel from God's point of view and how He is trying to bring them back to Himself. To summarize, we could say that the former section had to do with Israel's heart condition – they were far from the Lord – and the third section had to do with the Israelites living as individuals instead of being gathered up in One.

The third section is comprised of two unrelated stories about individual Levites, both of which bring into view the civil unrest and divisive attitude of that time. The Levites were dedicated to the Lord for His work as substitutes for all the firstborn males of Israel. The state of the Levites, then, is a representation of the state of the entire nation. The writer of this book was attempting to give the reader an overall impression of the darkness in which Israel lived and their failure to perceive that they were living in darkness. The best way to do with was to focus on the representatives of the nation.

A Levite and His Idols

Judges 17-18 is about a Levite mediating for idols. He hired himself out to one man, but when he was offered to mediate for an entire tribe, he jumped at the opportunity for promotion. We see in this story so much that is displeasing to the Lord: idolatry and using authority for personal promotion. Was this Levite ignorant of the fact that he was provided for if he lived under the requirements of the law? The carnal mind, which is an enemy of God, will never submit to God's law (cf. Rom. 8:7). Perhaps his desire for career advancement had more to do with wanting to be important than it did with earning a living.

Just as important, than the apostasy we see in the Levite is the lack of vision of the tribe of Dan in desiring a priest of their own. Hiring a priest for themselves is only symptomatic of their ignorance of the Lord and His ways. They had separated themselves from their brethren and their Lord, an act which can only grieve the heart of God in light of the work that Jesus wrought at the Cross, a work that was in His heart from before the foundation of the world. God sees Israel as both one with Christ and with each other. But Dan would not be conformed to God's ways; instead, they chose to conform God's ways to their own situation of moving so far to the north (It was so peaceful there; they would not have to fight anymore, either for themselves or for their brethren. How selfish!) and hiring their very own priest (thus saving themselves the inconvenience of having to make the trip to the tabernacle to worship).

Their separate mentality fostered the self-motivated and false viewpoint that we as believers are autonomous entities who can relate to the Lord right where our natural life resides, wherever our ambitions, preferences, and selfish motivations take us. We assume our Lord's promise to never leave or forsake us (cf. Deut. 31:6) refers to our living however and wherever we please not affecting our spiritual well-being. A selfish viewpoint always misinterprets the Word of the Lord. His promise to never leave or forsake us is referring to our union with Him, that we are now bone of His bone. But if we are ignorant of this reality, or if we choose to live a life contradictory to it, then we will separate ourselves from both the abiding relationship that is ours in Christ and the indispensable interdependence among those who are living in Christ. Not only will we separate ourselves from our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will not even see the need or importance for the joining between us that was wrought at the Cross. We will think that we can do just fine spiritually without the help of the saints.

It is not spatial proximity that is the issue here, nor is it how often we find ourselves fellowshiping with other believers. Separating ourselves from our brethren directly relates to judging one another after the flesh. When we judge after the flesh, we see no need for inconveniencing ourselves to make the brethren an indispensable part of our existence. We are blind to God's reality. But when we judge that "he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15), then we recognize that we are all part of the same new creation, and relate to our brethren accordingly.

Sidonians: The Easy Life

The inhabitants of Laish lived after the manner of the Sidonians, without anxiety, quiet and secure, without magistrate, having no business with any man. This lifestyle was exactly the kind of life all of Israel was leading at the time, with "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes!" These inhabitants did whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. They lived the good life, with no accountability, living a completely individualistic lifestyle. They had no responsibilities or problems. They fought no wars. They had no ruler. They had no interest in keeping in contact with their neighbors.

These are the inhabitants that Dan dispossessed when they became dissatisfied with their inheritance. It is easy to dispossess these inhabitants because they are not a warring nation like their neighbors further south. They are easygoing, comfortable, and disinterested in the goings on around them. This life appeals to the weary believer who is tired of being in bondage to the inhabitants. These inhabitants do not conquer us by brute force as the others; instead, they conquer us by appealing to our desire for comfort and rest for the flesh.

It is a dangerous place to live, in the Land of the Sidonians; they do not figure into God's dealings with Israel. Under the more aggressive nations, Israel's misery would drive them to cry out to the Lord, but here in the Land of the Sidonians, nothing makes us uncomfortable enough to need the Lord. The New Testament comparison that comes to mind is the Laodicean church (cf. Rev. 3:14-22). They think they are rich, but really they are poor, miserable, blind, and naked, and Jesus is standing on the outside, knocking to get in.

To be dominated by this inhabitant is to live independently of the body of Christ and to seek earthly comforts, mistaking them for the blessings of God and His will for our lives. These will not be inconvenienced by their brothers or by the appearing of Christ, which happened at the national tabernacle. They think that they can know the Lord just fine all by themselves. What a precise picture of the state of the entire nation of Israel!

A Levite and His Concubine

Judges 19-21 is about a Levite and his concubine. The state of the Levites was very serious, indeed, if keeping a concubine was normal custom. Perhaps this represents the false idea of union that was being lived by the entire nation at that time. Like a concubine has a relationship with a man that is not considered a lawful union for propagating offspring. Likewise, Israel had an improper relationship with the Lord. They were still the Lord's people, but they were not walking in a union with Him that He could recognize as lawful. The Levite joining himself to someone he should not have joined himself to resulted in a chain of events that nearly wiped out the tribe of Benjamin.

When we are not properly joined to the Lord, we wreak devastation among our brethren without intending to. Our relationship with the body of Christ is bound up in Christ; when we abide there, our relationships with other believers are beneficial and glorifying to God, but when we live in the natural realm by our selfish desires and carnal mind, we cause destruction and chaos among those who are the apple of His eye.

No King in Israel

There are some common statements made throughout this final section that open to us the nature of the problem being expounded upon. In these five chapters, twice it says that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Four times it says that in those days there was no king in Israel. Both times it says that every man did that which was right in his own eyes, it is preceded by the statement that there was no king in Israel. Chapters

17-21 of the book of the Judges show us how God's people live if they are not gathered up into and being governed by the One but are each doing that which is right in his own eyes.

This phrase is first mentioned in Deuteronomy 12:5-11, which states that individual living stemmed from the lack of a temple as a place of worship. Because there is no designated place of worship, each man will worship God according to his own ideas, or as Moses puts it, "every man (doing) whatsoever is right in his own eyes." It is interesting to note that Moses equates doing whatever is right in our own eyes with not having a temple established in the Land, but the author of the book of Judges equates doing whatever is right in our own eyes with not having a king.

This apparent contradiction will be reconciled in the book of I Samuel, where God will remove the ark and curse the priesthood, and then brings back the ark under David's reign and re-establishes the priesthood after the temple is built under Solomon.

God gathers up all into One – the king – and everything is worked out from the king as head and origin of the spiritual people of God. The location of the temple and the temple itself is established under the king – the One – which harmonizes Deuteronomy 12:8 with Judges 17:6 and 21:25.

The period of the Judges can only be fully seen for what it is when it is viewed in light of David. Without a contrast, this book looks like another time period in Israel's history, but when we see Christ as David, we will see the horror of the darkness and depravity that had descended upon Israel at this time.

The writer of the book of Judges is trying to draw the reader's attention to the fact that not having a king and each man doing that which is right in his own eyes go hand in hand. When there is a king, the king is the One, the head in whom all are included. The king is the one to whom God relates. He either rejects the king, and therefore the whole kingdom, as in the case of Saul, or He accepts and loves the king, and therefore accepts and loves the whole kingdom, as was true of David. When there is not a king to be gathered up into, the result is that every man does that which is right in his own eyes. If we are not gathered into the One, then we are viewing ourselves individually, and living that way, too.

The emphasis is on the fact that all of this occurred because there was no king. These stories in the Book of Judges represent the spiritual state of the priesthood at that time, while also emphasizing that there was no king in the land. This is what happens to the priesthood when revelation is not the government of God's people.

Own Inheritance

Joshua is the stage where we enter into Spirit-realm living for the first time. But seeing Christ at this level has its limitations, one of which is that we still view the portion of Land that we live in as our own inheritance. As long as the inheritance belongs to individuals, their inheritance can be infringed upon by other individuals.

The Joshua/David/Solomon order of revelation does not apply to how deep we go into the knowledge of the Lord. There are unfathomable depths to seeing the Lord in each of these ways of seeing Christ. It follows that a person can stay in Joshua, and go farther than any of his peers in plumbing the depths of entering in to the Land and to be able to instruct others in the knowledge of the Lord. But this does not mean that this one has moved into the reign of David.

Why does it matter? David is a type of the One who is the head of a kingdom, which, in order to be a part of it, we must have embraced death to self. Death to self does not happen during Joshua's leadership, so there is a strain of self working in Israel up until David's death, burial, and resurrection, and Israel's acknowledgment of His kingship.

We can even deal with the same truths under these three different stages of Joshua, David, and Solomon, and they will come anew and afresh under each respective rule, or leader. Under Joshua, we possess Spiritual reality. Under David, it begins to govern us, and under Solomon, we are knit together, and others can see the reality through us.

As long as we live under Joshua, there is the potential for going into a period of Judges and the reign of self. It does not matter how much of the Land we possess: there is still no king in these days (cf. Jud. 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). Until there is a king, self will taint everything we see and do. Anything we possess of that spiritual reality of Christ will be seen as "mine". If someone sees the Lord, it is "his" revelation. If God uses someone to minister to others in a particular way, it is "his" ministry. Only the things of God that pertain to our little sphere encompasses our view. Nothing is beyond "me". Ministry and revelation gratify something in "me". We gather those things to ourselves and they can be used to bolster our sense of worth, or when we see these things working in others, they make us feel insecure. It is a separate mentality that, though we are learning to live in Christ, still keeps us separate from our brother.

The Potential for Every Believer

Every believer who enters the land has the potential to slip into a time period of judges. It is a time of a lack of victory, government, and direction. The believer's attention is drawn away from his heavenly position, perhaps without his noticing, and is mixed with elements of a natural mindset that subtly tie him to the natural, rendering him powerless to defeat the inhabitants over which he had experienced such decisive victories in times past. The effects of this lapse are usually more serious than the believer can see at the time of his bondage, and they can be nothing short of devastating to his abiding in Christ.

He has trouble maintaining what he first possessed yet fails to recognize that his dependence is not solely upon the Lord.

That he is living in darkness is evident to everyone but himself by how he treats his brother. Do you separate yourself from your brothers because you think your knowledge is greater and theirs is incorrect? Do you look down on those poor insignificant Christians because they lack your superior insight? Do you have no need for other believers because you get all your knowledge straight from God Himself? Maybe you have moved to your very own part of the land where you will not be inconvenienced by the shortcomings of others in the body of Christ. If so, then you are toting around a concubine, something with which you have a pseudo-union relationship, and unbeknownst to yourself, you are creating dissension and schism in those with whom you do have contact.

These are strong words, but the deception that blinds those living in the period of the judges is a strong one. We do not see the seriousness of our state, or we would not continue to live there.

Now we must be quick to mention that when the believer finds himself at this place, he must not think that he has left off following the Lord or that he has somehow failed God. Under Joshua there is not a lasting answer to the problem of the self-life. In Christ there is a lasting answer, but we as believers do not see it when we see Christ as Joshua. David is the ruler who deals with it in finality.

To stop at one stage, especially the Joshua stage, can be extremely dangerous to our spiritual health. If we do not recognize that being under Joshua is only for possessing spiritual reality, that it does not provide certain safeguards and light that further unfoldings of Christ revealed will bring, we will become potentially subject to deception. This is the first time in our lives that we have begun to live in Christ on a consistent basis, and we can think that we have arrived. What we do not know is that though this truth may have been fully shown to us, it has not been fully worked into us in a governmental way.

The deception is that because the Lord is causing us to see, that we automatically have it working in us. We begin to act on Spiritual reality that we have in our head, but we do not live on a daily basis. This is why we have seen people who have experienced great spiritual depths fall into perversion of the truth and great deception. As long as we perceive our growth to be in the kind of knowledge that does not confront the lack of Christ in our day to day life, we will sit complacently and comfortably in all our deep revelation, judging ourselves right and everybody else wrong. We will be subject to bickering, factions, strife, and living by self, and it will never occur to us that we are living contrary to the truth we are propagating because we are deceived by thinking that revealed knowledge is all that there is.

We truly possess that knowledge when we allow it to pass on into the David/Solomon rule where they get worked in us and we live them by faith. Until this happens, until there is a true work of the Cross where self is brought to an end and David emerges as king, we

can come to great depths under Joshua, but we will never get to David, and Saul will still rule as king.

It is not our knowledge of Christ revealed that takes us out of the period of the judges. It is the Cross that achieves this. The great deception is that we substitute knowledge for the Cross and faith. And yet the knowledge of the Lord comes to us, into which we are capable of entering; about this there is no doubt. Indeed, the ministry of Christ revealed as Joshua is to cause us to enter in to the Spiritual reality. But it is the knowledge of the Lord that brings about the change of heart condition that moves us out of one stage and into another.

The book of the Judges is probably the darkest time in Israel's history up until the captivity, and it was because of loss of vision. There is no one preeminent reality that stands out through the book of Judges. In the Book of Joshua, Joshua was magnified in the sight of all the people. Under David, Israel approached him to make him king. He was high and lifted up. Under Solomon, there was no wealth or glory like his in all the earth. But in Judges, there is nothing. There is little mention of the tabernacle in this book. There is no fellowship with God in the basic understanding of sacrifice for our sins. There is no spiritual communion with the Lord on any level. Israel under the judges is void of spiritual reality.