

EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

Message #15

Judges 10:1-18

I believe the United States of America is on a downward slide that is actually coming from the sovereign hand of the Sovereign God of the Bible. I do not think it is a coincidence that the economy is falling apart; that immorality is flaunted and that false religions like Islam and Mormonism are flourishing. All of this says the God of the Bible is in the process of turning His back on us, just like He did on Israel during the days of the book of Judges. When Israel turned away from God and His Word, those were exactly the kinds of things God did. After all, as Clinton McCaan said, "How much can God stand?" (*Judges*, p. 78).

I also believe that the book of Judges in many ways mirrors the Christian life. The Christian life has periods of time when spirituality seems to be flourishing and the blessings of God seem to be abundant. Then there are moments of lapses and set backs, and the Christian doesn't seem to learn anything and falls right back into the same rut of being a spiritual loser.

In the New Testament there are some serious warnings given to a believer. One of those warnings admonishes believers to not keep willfully sinning because you can throw away your confidence in God and your rewards (Hebrews 10:26, 35).

What this teaches us is that there can come a point when God says "I am done fooling around with you." "I am done using you." "I am done blessing you." That very point is seen right here in **Judges 10** in what happened to Israel. God can and will make His people's lives miserable if they do not walk humbly and honestly with Him.

GOD'S PEOPLE CAN SO ANGER GOD THAT HE WILL CUT THEM OFF FROM HIS BLESSINGS AND GIVE THEM UP TO THEIR ENEMIES.

Now the first five verses of **Judges 10** present a good picture. After Abimelech was gone, God raised up a couple of key individuals whom He used to put Israel back on an award winning path. Both of the leaders God raises up are seemingly quiet men who were involved in directing Israel back to His blessings. They are called "minor judges"; not because they aren't important, but because of a lack of data we have about them. God gives us a "little vignette" portrait of these two because they were good men. These two certainly did not have the dynamic flare of a Gideon, but they were used by God in their own way and in God's time.

If you read the history of the West, you will discover that back in the late 1800's there was about a twenty year span (1874-1894) when there were some very famous lawmen who kept the peace. Men like Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, Bat Masterson, and Bill Tilghman. You will find a lot of information about these men in books. But the fact is, many other lawmen, not nearly so famous were also important to keeping the peace. Ira Aten, the Texas Ranger, Chris Madsen, and the black marshal Zeke Miller who tracked down numerous outlaws and never had to shoot a man. Although there is more data on some, the fact is they were all important.

That is the way it was in this case with these two minor prophets sent by God to help Israel.

HISTORICAL REALITY #1 – After Abimelech’s death, Tola arose and saved Israel and judged it twenty-three years. **10:1-2**

Tola was named after one of the sons of Issachar (Gen. 46:13). His family was in the tribe of Issachar. He was the son of Puah and Dodo. He lived in the central portion of the Promised Land, which was the hill country of Ephraim and he judged Israel for twenty-three years, which is the longest span of a minor judge.

We don’t know much more about him except he “saved Israel.” The word “saved” indicates some form of military victory over some oppressor. He became somewhat of a “national hero.” He put Israel back on track to receive the blessings of God. He restored social order and a proper attitude toward God. He lived in Shamir and died in Shamir. It is not known for certain just where Shamir is located, but it is in the central part of the Promised Land. So we may assume he was an important judge who made a major impact for God in a large area.

HISTORICAL REALITY #2 – After Tola’s death, Jair arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. **10:3-5**

After Tola died, God raised up another judge name Jair. There is no family pedigree given. However, some suggest he was the great-great-grandson of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph (Num. 32:39-41; I Chron. 2:22-23). He lived and judged from the land of Gilead, which is located east of the Jordan river. He became a very wealthy man and powerful man. He had thirty sons and thirty donkeys, which indicate great wealth, and he was in charge of thirty cities. Donkeys were a sign of wealth, as horses would not be imported into Israel until the days of Solomon. Jair was wealthy and he judged Israel for twenty-two years and things were good.

After the evil of Abimelech, God gave Israel a reprieve of about forty-five years. He used these two good, godly leaders to help keep things on track. For nearly half a century these two men kept Israel on the right path and she enjoyed great freedom and blessings. God raises up different people at different times with different backgrounds, and the job of the person God raises up is to point the people toward God.

There is an interesting verse of Scripture in Deuteronomy 8:10 that says “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.” We tend to pray and thank God for the food before we eat. But how often have we prayed and thanked God after we have eaten? Israel enjoyed God’s blessings after Abimelech for nearly fifty years, but it is obvious she was not really focused on God for her blessings. She was not really dedicated to the Lord. **What this tells us is that God in His grace can give a nation His blessings, including an absence of severe problems even when that nation is not really focused on Him. However, the nation must never assume that God will not pull the plug on His blessings if the people drift away from Him.**

One thing this book of Judges does teach is that we want to be with people who love God and love the Word of God at all times, or else we can get pulled away from God into doing what is right in our own eyes. As long as the people of Israel were under those who loved God and His Word, things were good. However, as soon as the faithful men were gone things became evil.

HISTORICAL REALITY #3 – Israel again did horrible evil in the sight of God. **10:6**

As soon as those two godly men were gone, Israel was right back to her old ways. As Andrew Fausset said it is a “monotonous formula” of Israel’s stupidity (*Judges*, p. 180). This is the sixth time in the book of Judges that Israel has turned her back on God to worship a foreign idol. Each time the depravity got worse and worse. She sank lower and lower in her paganism. As Gary Phillips said, “This verse catalogs the most extensive description of apostasy found in the book” (*Judges*, p. 162). This is as evil as it gets. **Israel not only served false gods, they completely ignored, forgot about, and turned their back on the one and only true God.**

Things became so evil in Israel that not only were they serving the idols and false gods of the Canaanites, but now they were also serving all other false gods. There are **seven false gods** mentioned, which include some of the most depraved and perverted religious practices known to man. In some of these religious ceremonies there was immorality and ritualistic sacrifices, and child murder.

- 1) The Canaanites worshipped the **Baals** and **Ashtoreths** (Judges 2:11-13).
- 2) **Amram** had their gods they worshipped.
- 3) **Sidon** had their gods they worshipped.
- 4) The Moabites worshipped **Chemosh** (Num. 21:29).
- 5) The Ammonites worshipped **Molech** (I Kings 11:5).
- 6) The Philistines worshipped **Dagon** (Judges 16:23).

At the end of **verse 6**, the text says “they forsook the LORD” and “did not serve Him.” This evil went to another level. They got to the point where they didn’t even recognize the true God. They were given over to evil. **These were God’s own people completely given over to evil.**

It is one thing to leave a person. It is another thing to leave a person and pursue another person. It is another thing to leave a person, pursue another person and forget about the first person. That is exactly what Israel did. She left God, pursued false gods and forgot about the only true God.

There is a spiritual insanity to sin. Depraved sin makes no logical sense. It doesn’t matter how successful or smart you are; if you sin and choose to put a breach in your relationship with the God who is blessing you, you are out of your mind.

HISTORICAL REALITY #4 – God was so angry, He sold them as slaves for eighteen years. **10:7-9**

When God gets angry at a nation, an organization, a church, or an individual, He can cause things to fall apart. God can and will cause the world of one in rebellion to completely collapse. In **verses 8-9** there are three verbs that show what God did and how bad things were: “afflicted,” “crushed,” and “greatly distressed.” God was the One doing this to His own nation and people. He was afflicting them, crushing them, and putting them in situations of great distress.

God was so angry He allowed the Philistines to dominate His people in the west, and the Ammonites to dominate His people in the east. The Ammonites lived in the hill country on the east side of the Jordan and the Philistines lived on the Mediterranean coast on the west side of the Jordan. These oppressions were orchestrated by God and occurred at the same time. As one commentator said what we have here is “oppression in stereo.” God kept them under oppression for eighteen years.

One must wonder why God didn’t just wipe them all out. The answer is because God is a covenant-keeping God. **The nation Israel cannot ever lose its national significance in the program of God, but it can lose all of God’s individual protective blessings.**

God can make a life miserable. He can make things so bad that people are desperate.

HISTORICAL REALITY #5 – Israel cried to God admitting their sin . **10:10**

Here is one of the most graphic confessions of sin we get to see in the book of Judges. However, it appears to be a very shallow and hollow confession. As one commentator observed, **there is a big difference between regret and repentance**. Sometimes children are truly sorry for what they have done and sometimes they are sorry they got caught.

Regret means a person is sorry about the consequences of an act, but repentance means one changes his whole thinking about the act and turns away from it.

We may recall that earlier in the book when we did get some glimpses of real sorrow, there were also real tears (2:4).

HISTORICAL REALITY #6 – God reminded them of past deliverances and said He refused to deliver them anymore. **10:11-14**

God basically says I am tired of you playing games with Me. He said I am not accepting your plea deal. You have turned your back on Me one too many times and so I will not help you. Turn to your false gods and let them get you out of your situation.

God does not ever respond to some superficial regret. He will only respond to true change of mind and true heart repentance. God gives Israel three messages:

Message #1 - I have delivered you multiple times. **10:11-12**

God lists seven deliverances that He gave to Israel. God delivered them from the Egyptians in Exodus; the Amorites (Num. 21:21-35), the Moabites (Jud. 3:15-30), the Philistines (Jud. 3:31). God delivered them from the Sidonians (Jud. 4:1-3), the Amalekites (Jud. 3:13; 6:3, 33), and the Maonites (Jud. 10:12).

Message #2 - I am not going to deliver you anymore. **10:13**

When God's people cry to God there are four answers He can give: 1) Yes; 2) No; 3) Work; 4) Wait; 5) Watch. In this case God says "no."

Perhaps the worst judgment God can ever give is to let a person, a church, a nation go its own way because He refuses to intervene. There is nothing scarier than this.

We tend to think that we, who live in the United States, live in the "land of the free." But the fact is our land is dominated by unrepentant evil. Our courts are filled with homosexual pervers; our clinics are filled with the blood of butchered and aborted babies; our government is filled with leaders who promote false religions and the removal of the true God of the Bible. This is not the land of the free, it is the land of a nation being abandoned by God (**Judges 10:13; Romans 1:21-32**).

Message #3 - Cry to your false gods for deliverance. **10:14**

God will save you when you are in a pigpen. But if you stay in the pigpen after He saves you, He won't do anything to some form of half-hearted repentance.

HISTORICAL REALITY #7 – Israel again confessed their sin, got rid of their idols and asked God for deliverance. **10:15-16**

Israel begged God to forgive her and she did get rid of the evil idols and started serving the Lord. **The terms of God's forgiveness demand that people acknowledge their sin and turn away from it.** Proverbs 28:13 says "He who conceals or covers his sins will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion and mercy." You cannot expect God to forgive you and bless you if you are going to hang on to the vile sin.

HISTORICAL REALITY #8 – Israel prepared to fight hoping God would send someone to lead them. **10:17-18**

The Ammonites camped in Gilead and prepared for a major attack. Israel assembled itself together with a renewed spirit and renewed heart. The nation looked pathetic. It looked like they would be trounced by the Ammonites.

Israel was hoping that God would take notice of their repentance and that He would raise up a leader. Israel camped at Mizpah which was a key lookout point. She was finally aware of the fact that she needed a good, God-selected leader to direct her to the will of God.

Here is a critical point to see. **If any group is to get a victorious work done for God, it needs leadership that will direct it to the Word and will of God.**

Notice the end of **verse 16**; God could not bear His people's misery any longer. God's people deserve to be miserable, but look at the heart God has for His people.

The fundamental point we want to see about the character of God, who says in verse 13 “I will not deliver you again,” and then in verse 16 “He could bear the misery of Israel no longer,” is that God’s character toward His people is one that continually desires to offer grace and mercy and forgiveness to His people.

I am convinced that one reason why so many of God’s people have never known the dynamic power of God in their lives is because God demands a radical facing up to sin and a radical dealing with sin before He will do dynamic things. God longs to grant grace and mercy to His erring children, but He will not do it until one has faced sin.

Perhaps you are here tonight and you know you have been involved in some depraved things and you sense God’s blessings are far removed from you. You flee to the grace of God. You flee to the mercy of God. Confess the evil and get the evil out of your life and you will experience His blessings again.