



Judges 3:1–6 (NKJV)

**3** Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan <sup>2</sup> (*this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it*), <sup>3</sup> namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. <sup>4</sup> And they were *left, that He might test Israel by them*, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

<sup>5</sup> Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>6</sup> And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

***Vs. 1 says that the nations were left by the Lord that He might test Israel by them...***

- Now we know that the Lord didn't leave the nations, but Israel left the nations in the land by not driving them out
- But God honors Israel's disobedience by not driving them out
- The reason why he leaves the nations is to test Israel by them
- The hardship caused by these troubling circumstances were a reminder of what they really wanted – they chose to leave them in the land
- Here we see them living among the Canaanites (the very ones that God drove out of the land)
- God also used this situation to teach them to know war
- What would they learn about war? They can't win without the Lord
- The victory wasn't dependent upon their ability to fight, but their willingness to surrender to God
- It was also a reminder that they could make choices that would change the situation
- They could choose at any moment to obey the commandments of the Lord and that would change everything

***The troubling circumstances that we face in our nation are a reminder to us that we got what we wanted***

- We are appalled at the statements made by our President concerning his support of same sex marriage



- But it took a majority of Christians to vote him into office
- We are appalled at the laws being passed by the State of California concerning teaching young kids that homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle
- But it took a majority of Christians to vote Jerry Brown into office after he failed as governor the first time
- We've gotten what we've asked for
- Yes, we are in a spiritual battle, but we do not know how to war
- Yet in every circumstance, we are reminded that we can make different choices that will bring about a different outcome.
- So this year, vote your Bible
- One of the choices that Israel could make was to cry out to God for help
- Because they cried out to God... God raises up judges to deliver Israel

***Tonight we look at 5 of the 13 judges of Israel***

- They were ordinary people that God used in extraordinary ways
- Othniel (3:5-11): The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him
  - He conquered A Canaanite City
- Ehud (3:12-30): The left handed assassin
  - He killed Eglon, king of Moab and defeated the Moabites
- Shamgar (3:31): A Gentile Deliverer
  - He killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad
- Deborah (4,5): A Woman Deliverer
  - She convinced Barak to lead an army to victory against Sisera's troops
- Gideon (6:1-8:32): An Unlikely Deliverer
  - He led 300 men to victory against 135,000 Midianites

**Judges 3:7–8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. <sup>8</sup> Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.

***Cushan Rishathaim means dark one or double evil***

- The children of Israel served him for 8 years
- Think about that... it took them 8 years to cry out to the Lord



- That's stubbornness
- I think about Jonah... it says the 3<sup>rd</sup> day he cried out to the Lord
- What's this guys problem?
- You're getting swallowed by a fish... aren't you screaming to God as you see the teeth going by? Takes him 3 days to cry out to the Lord
- What is the problem here?
- But that's human nature... it took Israel 8 years to cry out to the Lord
- How long does it take you?
- Some of you I want to look goody two shoes will say... right away!!!
- But the rest of us who are honest, usually don't cry out to the Lord until we've exhausted every other option... He's the last one on the list

**Judges 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

***The Lord was waiting for them to cry out to Him...***

- He already had a deliverer picked out... the first judge Othniel
- Othniel name means lion of God or power of God
- He was Caleb's younger brother

***Some would say he had an in... but we are told in vs. 10***

**Judges 3:10–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. <sup>11</sup> So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

***The rabbis commenting on this first judge said that Othniel is foremost amongst the judges***

- He's probably around 70 or 80 years old at this time
- We are told in Joshua 15 that he is living in the land of Negev between two springs in Southern Israel
- He's driven all of the enemies out of his territory and he doesn't have any problems
- If there was someone who could have said – I've fought the enemy, I've driven them out of the land, I earned a peaceful quiet life – it was Othniel



- But he wasn't satisfied with living a comfortable life, playing golf, kicking it by the pool, enjoying his retirement... he wanted to keep going
- He conquers Cushan Rishathaim and the land had rest for 40 years.

***He is the first man of whom it is said... the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and that sets him aside***

- Let me just say... if you can live a comfortable life, if you can say I've raised my kids in the Lord, I've paid my dues, I've worked hard and now I'm just happy living out the rest of my days without being involved in anyone's life... you do not have the Spirit of the Lord
- When the Spirit of the Lord is on our lives we will live our lives for the benefit of other people
- We won't be content, satisfied with living a status quo life
- I wonder how many Othniels do we have at Worship Life?
- Men and women who are sold out for Jesus Christ
- Who want to make a difference in the lives of others
- In my life, I want a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit so that I will want to live my life for the benefit of others

**Judges 3:12–14 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. <sup>14</sup> So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.

***Eglon defeats Israel with Ammon and Amalek (long time enemies) and takes Jericho – City of Palms***

- He doesn't rebuild Jericho, but builds a palace in Jericho
- How sad – the very place that God went before them and defeated the enemy becomes the very place that the enemy sets up his throne
- He reigned 18 years before Israel cried out to the Lord
- Their stubbornness was even worse

**Judges 3:15–19 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed



man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. <sup>16</sup> Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh. <sup>17</sup> So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) <sup>18</sup> And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. <sup>19</sup> But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." He said, "Keep silence!" And all who attended him went out from him.

***Ehud was left handed and he made himself a dagger a cubit in length (from his elbow to his finger tip)***

- He fastened it to his right thigh
- According to the Bible, it was considered weakness to be left handed
- Ehud, who is left handed is from the tribe of Benjamin which means son of my right hand... so I could imagine that Ehud was constantly being teased
- But God is going to use Ehud and it's important to recognize because often we feel like left handed men in a right handed world
- We feel like we have a weakness, we're not like everyone else, I don't fit in
- I'm left handed in a right handed world
- And yet, God is going to use his "weakness" in particular
- When you pulled out your sword you would pull it out across your body
- So a right handed person would put their sheath on their left side and pull it across with their right hand – so they would often check the left side
- But Ehud being left handed puts his sheath on his right side where no one would really look for it
- He goes to Eglon under the guise that Israel is sending tribute to Eglon
- We are told the Eglon was a very fat man
- He's the only one in the Bible that the Holy Spirit said that Eglon was a very fat man
- Scholars believe he was around 300 inches around... that's 25 feet around... he was a very fat man
- Ehud is bringing the tribute which was normally paid in grain
- He turns his back on the stone images at Gilgal
- It was all Ehud could stand to see these idols in the place where Israel entered the promised land, circumcised themselves, dedicated



themselves to God, celebrated the Passover, a pile of stones were there that reminded them of the power of God that delivered them

- He turns his back on the idols and says to Eglon – I have a secret message for you
- Eglon tells Ehud, keep silent, he sends everyone out of the room so it's just Eglon and Ehud
- Ehud tells Eglon, I have a message from God for you
- He's probably approaching him with his left side forward, Eglon not suspecting anything
- He reaches in his cloak, pulls out the dagger and plunges it into Eglon's belly and kills him
- We're told the fat closed over the knife and he couldn't pull it out
- But his intestines come out and their probably filled with stinky stuff that the King James Version refers to as dirt
- Ehud exits the room and locks the doors as he leaves
- Eglon's servants return to the room and find the doors locked and assume that Eglon is going to the bathroom (attending to his needs)

Judges 3:25 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened *them*. And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.

- Ehud escapes, assembles the armies of Israel and kills 10,000 Moabite soldiers and we're told the land had rest for 80 years
- God uses what everyone believed to be a weakness to accomplish His purposes
- What you think is your greatest weakness is really your greatest asset in the hands of the living God

Judges 3:31 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

***We don't know a lot about Shamgar, but we know his name is not Hebrew***

- Scholars believe he was probably a Gentile



- His name means son of Anath – the name of a female goddess of sex and war among the Canaanites
- Shamgar was able to strike down six hundred Philistines using an ox goad
- An ox goad was a sharp pointed stick used to prod oxen
- Ehud makes a homemade dagger, Shamgar uses an ox goad
- God can win great victories with whatever is in the hand of a willing servant
- It's not the size of the weapon, it's the size of your God

**Judges 4:1–3 (NKJV)**

**4** When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. <sup>3</sup> And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

***After Ehud dies, Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord***

- Commitment which depends on some external force (like Ehud) is not real commitment
- They were good while Ehud was alive, but really their hearts had never changed so the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin
- He harshly oppressed the children of Israel for 20 years before they cried out to the Lord
- That is how stubborn Israel had become
- So the Lord raises up Deborah

***Deborah was unique from all other judges***

1. She was a woman – the wife of Lappidoth
2. She was already active as a judge – she didn't begin her career in response to foreign oppression
3. She was a prophetess – she received direct revelation from the Lord which enabled her to interpret the past, give direction in the present and announce the future
4. Deborah had a regular spot from which she judged Israel – under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim.
  - a. This is where she held Debbie's Court



- At some point in time Deborah summons Barak and gives him a prophetic word directing him to assemble 10,000 men and march to Mount Tabor.
- He was to secure his troops from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun
- God promised to draw out Sisera (leader of Jabin's armies) to the river Kishon
- Deborah told Barak that God would give Sisera into his hands
- Barak agrees to do it if Deborah would accompany him and Deborah agrees
- However, she warns Barak that if she comes that Lord would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman

**We read...**

Judges 4:18–21 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

<sup>19</sup> Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. <sup>20</sup> And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

<sup>21</sup> Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

- Now that's a woman – someone who would take a tent stake and drive it into Sisera's head
- What's interesting about Jael is Heber separated himself from the Kenites who migrated to the southern part of Judah
- He moved north to the general region of Kadesh
- Jael, Heber's wife, is relocated by God in order to be positioned to be used as the agent of God's salvation
- You may not understand why God is moving you, but know that God is positioning you for a greater purpose

Judges 4:23–24 (NKJV)



<sup>23</sup> So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

- Chapter 5 Deborah responds with a song of worship... which is what worship is... a response to God's goodness
- We are told that the land was at rest for 40 years
- Worship is our responding to God's power at work in our lives
- When I see a people who aren't responsive in worship, I automatically think that they don't understand the goodness of God and therefore they don't have gratitude for what God has done

Judges 6:1–6 (NKJV)

**6** Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, <sup>6</sup> So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

***And we read that the Lord sent a prophet to Israel who said to them***

1. I brought you out of Egypt
2. I delivered you from all who oppressed you
3. I drove them out before you and gave you their land
4. I said to you that I am the Lord your God, do not fear the Amorites
5. But you did not obey my voice

Judges 6:11–12 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!"

Notice God's view of Gideon – he is a mighty man of valor  
But Gideon suffered from an identity crisis... he didn't see himself the way God saw him  
He referred to himself as the weakest in all Israel  
Gideon asks for a sign and prepares an offering for the Angel of the Lord



We read in 6:21 touched the offering with his staff and fire rose up and consumed the offering  
Gideon freaks out because he realizes he has seen the Angel of the Lord and thinks he is going to die  
The angel says chill out Gideon, you're not going to die  
In the middle of the night, God instructs Gideon to destroy the altar's of Baal and the next day Gideon obeys the Lord and this angers the Midoites

Judges 6:34 (NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.

- Literally the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon like a robe
- Just like Jesus said, I will clothe you with power from on high
- Gideon says to the Lord, if you want me to lead the armies of Israel against the Midianites, you have to show me
- I will put out a fleece and I want the ground dry and the fleece wet and it was so
- Then he said, I was the ground wet and the fleece dry and it was so
- So Gideon agrees to go for it and calls together an army of 32,000
- The Lord says it's too much and he puts together a selection process
- If you're scared and want to go home.... Leave and 22,000 left
- The remaining 10,000 he brought to the springs and we've been there
- To get to the springs you need to get on your hands and knees
- He looks for those who lap the water like a dog versus those that get on their hands and knees and put their heads close to the water
- The ones who lap like a dog are selected – only 300 remain

Judges 7:9–11 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. <sup>10</sup> But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, <sup>11</sup> and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp.

I love that God wasn't bothered by Gideon's insecurities

Judges 7:16–18 (NKJV)



<sup>16</sup> Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: <sup>18</sup> When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*' "

- In the middle of the night, all this goes down
- Gideon attacks the Midianites and completely wipes them out.
- What we learn from Gideon is that God uses Him in spite of his insecurities, doubts, lack of preparation