

## Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-26—Judges 1-8

I suggest that you read all of the book of Judges. Even though there are a lot of names that are hard to pronounce that discourage reading it all, if one does not read it all, he or she can miss important points sometimes. Verses 2-20 of chapter 1 tells us that the tribes of Judah and Simeon led by Caleb were the first to go to work to clear out the various Canaanite tribes from their inherited territory. They were fairly successful but verse 19 tells us that there were some that they were unable to drive out because they had chariots of iron. We're also told that Moses' in-laws, the Kenites, chose to reside among the tribe of Judah. Vs. 21 tells us that the tribe of Benjamin was unable to clear all of the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem out. The same applied to the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali and Dan with the result that they still had Canaanites living among them.

Chapter 2 tells us that the Israelites were reminded that this was a mistake and disobedience to God. The Israelites had served God so long as Joshua and the generation that had seen all that God did for Israel in bringing them out of Egypt died, and then they began to serve Baalim and Ashtaroth, the gods of the Canaanites. At first, God allowed their enemies to spoil them and they were unable to drive out their enemies from the land.

Chapter 3 tells us that God intentionally left some of the Canaanite kingdoms in the land to prove Israel by them to know whether the Israelites would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD. The Israelites began to intermarry with the Canaanites and to serve their gods. Remembering that we were told in Deuteronomy that if they people did this, God would deliver them captive unto other nations, God first did this with the Israelites by delivering them into the hand of the king of Mesopotamia. In this case they were not removed from the land, but rather served him in their own land for 8 years. This was their first captivity.

When they people turned back to God, He raised up a judge, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. (Read Judges 3:9-11) He defeated the Mesopotamian king and the land rested, or had peace for 40 years.

However, the people turned away from God again and God brought Eglon, king of Moab against Israel and Eglon prevailed against them. Israel then served Eglon for 18 years. When they cried unto God again because of their captivity, God raised up Ehud as a judge over them. (Read Judges 3:15-30) The land was at peace this time for 80 years following the defeat and destruction of the Moabites. The word "quarries" probably referred to the stone images of the Moabites.

(Read Judges 3:31) Another judge that helped deliver Israel was Shamgar who apparently slew 600 men by himself with an ox goad.

Chapter 4 tells us that following the death of Ehud, the people again did evil in the sight of the LORD and this time, God sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. (Read Judges 4) Note that it was not Deborah that killed Sisera, but rather the wife of Heber, a Kenite (of the children of Hobab, or Jethro, Moses' father-in-law) in accordance with the prophecy Deborah gave to Barak when he said that he would only go up against the Canaanites if Deborah went with him.

In chapter 5, Deborah and Barak sang a song that told how the Israelites had come together against Sisera and defeated him. In verse 17 we're told, "**Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships?**" In other words, Dan did not participate in the battle because he (at least the majority of the tribe) were in their ships. This has significance when we study the book of Revelation.

(Read Rev. 7:1-8) I believe this is talking about the time prior to and for a number of years after Christ. As I said in our lesson on this chapter, I believe that the four angels that are holding the four winds are four angels protecting the migrating Israelites from the Roman Empire as they migrate from their Assyrian captivity into western Europe. I would like to quote a portion of that lesson so that we can understand that short phrases like this can have significant meaning. We just have to search things like this out.

*“To seal means to secure or protect. John sees another angel coming from the east having the seal of the living God and he calls to the four angels holding the four winds to not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees until **“we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”** Then the angel proceeds to seal 12,000 of each of the tribes of Israel. The number “12” in Scripture denotes governmental perfection. The 12,000 doesn’t mean that there were just 12,000 of each tribe that were sealed, but rather denotes completeness. It just means that all were sealed, regardless of number. 12 x 12, i.e. 144, only emphasizes this governmental perfection, this completeness. Last lesson we said that the ex-Israelites that were escaping from the location of their captivity were moving north and west. Here we have the angel that is doing the sealing coming from the east. I submit that what John is seeing here is movement of these various groups of the Assyrian captivity Israelites moving west and the angel of God is sealing them, or protecting them from the Roman military as they continued to move west in accordance with what God told David in II Samuel 7:10, **“Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more.”** God did not allow them to go back to the land of Canaan, but rather appointed a new place for them as their original home was now not large enough for them. We will see later that some of these migrating tribes were ones who attacked Rome, such as the Germans, Vandals, Goths, etc. But until they complete their migrations into western Europe and to the British Isles, John is seeing symbolically God’s protection of them. Not only are these migrating Israelites to be protected but, the people of the Empire are likewise to be protected.*

*If you recall, when Jacob adopted Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, this gave him thirteen sons. In verse 8 we see Joseph listed, which would be the tribe of Ephraim and in verse 6, Manasseh is listed, so which tribe is missing? It is the tribe of Dan. It is important that we understand why this tribe is not listed as being sealed, or protected, here as this will give us further clues as to God’s overall plan. They are represented in the perfected kingdom by the fourth beast that was like a flying eagle and one of the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem would have had their name on it as Ezekiel saw it in Eze. 48, so Dan certainly does not disappear.*

*In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Judges, we have the story of the Israelites being in captivity to Jabin, king of Canaan. When they repented, Deborah, a prophetess and a judge in Israel, and Barak were chosen by God to take the people back out of captivity. Sisera was Jabin’s captain of the host and when they met in battle with the Israelites, they were defeated and Sisera tried to run away but was tricked by a woman by the name of Jael who then killed Sisera. When the battle was over, Deborah and Barak sang a song, in chapter 5, praising God and detailing some of the things that went on. In verse 17, the question was asked in their song, **“why did Dan remain in ships?”** The tribe of Dan had not participated in the battle because they were apparently*

*involved in sea traffic. This helps us understand why Dan was not sealed with the Israelites as they moved across Asia Minor and Europe to re-establish themselves in their new location. They were already there, having traveled by ship earlier.”*

The fact that we're told they remained in their ships just tells us that traveling by ship was their nature. When we look at the countries in northern Europe with so many names of cities, rivers, countries, etc. with some form of the name "Dan" and their history of the Vikings, etc., I think we can see why the tribe of Dan was left out of the tribes needing God's sealing, or protection.

Chapter 6 tells us that again Israel turned from worshipping God and went to worshipping the gods of the Canaanites. (Read Judges 6:1-10) This time God delivered them into the hand of the Midianites and Amalekites who destroyed their crops. Again the people turned back to God who first sent a prophet to remind them of why they were in the situation they were in. He then raised up another man to judge Israel. (Read Judges 6:11-24) Gideon could not understand that if God was with Israel, why were they so impoverished before the Midianites? He had to have a sign that this angel really was of God. The sign he received convinced him, but we'll see that in a sense he was a slow learner, but a good one.

(Read Judges 6:25-32) God instructs Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal and the grove that was next to it, that was apparently on his father's property. Gideon did as God instructed him. Notice that the men of the city wanted to kill Gideon for doing this, but Gideon's father was rather clever. He asked the men of the city why they were pleading the cause of Baal. If he was a real god, could he not plead his own case? This stopped the men from trying to kill Gideon. Gideon's father then called him Jerubbaal which means "let Baal plead." We will see Gideon called by both names as we continue our study.

(Read Judges 6:33-40) When Gideon learned that the Midianites and Amalekites were gathered together for battle against Israel, he summoned the men of his family, the Abiezrites (a family of Manasseh) and the tribes of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali to come help him fight against them and they all responded. Yet Gideon had some doubts and asked God for a sign. God gave him the sign of the fleeces.

(Read Judges 7:1-8) God told Gideon that he had too many men. If he was successful with that many men, the people would say that it was by their own strength that they won the battle, not by God's doing. So he gave Gideon ways to thin the number down. I'm sure it was to Gideon's surprise that from a beginning army of 32,000, God thinned them down to 300.

(Read Judges 7:9-25) Gideon's plan was quite clever. It was totally successful with the Midianites and Amalekites killing each other in their panic. Then Gideon called for men of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali to pursue after them until they had thoroughly routed them. He then called on the tribe of Ephraim to help and they were able to take two of the Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and kill them.

(Read Judges 8:1-3) The tribe of Ephraim was then upset that they weren't called by Gideon to the original battle with the Midianites. Gideon was quite diplomatic in dealing with them to make them satisfied again.

(Read Judges 8:4-9) Gideon and his 300 men continued to pursue the Midianites as they crossed the Jordan River. The people of Succoth and Penuel told Gideon that when he had the two kings of Midian in hand they might help them with food, but since they didn't have them in custody, they would not give Gideon's men any food. Gideon's threat to the people of both cities is rather interesting. To the men of Succoth, he said he would take the thorns and briers of the wilderness and tear their flesh and to the men of Penuel, he said he would break down their tower.

(Read Judges 8:10-12) The Midianites had lost 120,000 men at this point but these two kings still had about 15,000 men and Gideon was pursuing them with 300 men. He finally caught the two kings and thoroughly routed what was left of the Midianite army.

(Read Judges 8:13-17) He had to ask a native of Succoth to get a description of the leaders and elders of the city and then he went to Succoth, found the leaders and elders, showed them the two kings and then we're told that he took thorns and briers and "taught" these men. The margin of my Bible gives "disciplined" in the place of "taught." He wasn't that kind to the men of Penuel in that he broke down their tower and slew the men of the city.

(Read Judges 8:18-21) Gideon takes care of the two kings of Midian after he finds out that they had killed men of his own family. (Read Judges 8:22-27) An ephod was a priestly garment or a garment of royalty. I'm not sure just what this garment was like being made, at least partially, of gold. Apparently he didn't wear it, but put it on display. As a result, the people of Israel started worshipping the ephod. It is interesting to me that the people did not understand the freedom they had under God. They were always trying to find a leader to rule over them, I suspect to take some of their responsibility from them. We are at a critical time in our own history because of a lack of understanding by our people of what liberty and freedom really is and what it requires on the part of the individual. Gideon refused to rule over the people as he said God was their ruler. This was the way government was originally set up by God, but I don't ever see where the people accepted this on a long term basis. I think this was part of the reason they resorted to idols, they wanted a religion where they could see and feel their god. They were too insecure both religiously and politically to take the responsibility of freedom and liberty on themselves individually.

(Read Judges 8:28-35) People have very short memories. It did not take them long to forget what Gideon had done for them once he was dead. It didn't take them long to forget what God had done in helping Gideon. As a result they very quickly turned to worshipping idols again and we'll see in the next chapter that they willingly accepted corrupt leadership.

This finishes the story of Gideon, though not his family. We look at what a couple of his sons did in the next lesson. JRL