

Judges

Christendom Found Wanting

by Mary M. Bodie

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle...Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”

Revelation 1:13; 2:1

PREFACE

The following instructive pages are the result of many years of pains-taking study. They were given as a series of most helpful and inspiring addresses by the Author at a “Grace and Glory Camp Meeting” in Topeka, Kansas, August 15-25, 1918. The lessons are entirely new and original, setting forth with graphic clearness the disappointing condition of Christendom, the cause of its failures, and the sure remedy for its troubles. The secret of certain victory is pointed out, the path of the full-overcomer made plain. We bespeak for this book a studious reading and a hearty heeding of its teaching. Secure a copy, read it, and pass it on. This is the 2nd Edition.

The Publishers, 1957

REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names, such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest:** Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20th century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

Note: *Definitions of references pulled from WikipediA, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

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UNITY IN THE BEGINNING

"Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying who shall go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? And He said, Judah shall go up. Behold, I have delivered the land into his hand." [Jdg.1:1-2]

The book of Judges is a record of Israel's failures in contrast to Joshua which is a record of their triumphs. Joshua the valiant leader and commander of the host of the Lord have passed off the earthly scene. The effects of his going are soon apparent. The tribes fall asunder after some years and the unity of the nation is broken. Consequently they are soon in bondage to a common enemy, though God raised up judges and revival after revival was the result, yet even these finally fail. The last judge, Samson, at the close leaves them in bondage to the enemy which continued until Samuel's day.

This is not only faithful history, but typical prophecy, pictured for us by a Divine Artist, of whose wisdom and skill there cannot be the least question. Nor are we left to our own vain imaginations as to the happenings of Israel. Scripture plainly asserts that the history of this wonderful miraculous people was recorded for our benefit [1Co.10]. The history covers a period of 350 years.

Furthermore, as we study the book we learn that it is of special interest for our own day. The book of Joshua has shown us the portion and blessing of a heavenly people. It is answered in the New Testament by the book of Ephesians as to the entrance and inheritance in the land and by the book of Acts as to the practical outcome of the heavenly life in the world. Judges, which follows Joshua, gives us without doubt the further history of that people which is marked by failure. The book takes its name from these outstanding overcomers, the judges, who were the link between God and the people of that day. Likewise the revivals of The Church have kept a remnant of true believers who were in fellowship with God all during this age. God was with them. The Church, visible here, is seen in its broken condition and captivity to different forms of evil and errors.

Also, we see God's manner of deliverance exemplified in these men of consecration and power. These judges, whom the Lord raised up, are types of the different revivals of this age. The final deliverance, which will come when the Lord catches away His people, is not pictured here, except as we see it in Samson's victory at the end.

KEY VERSES

The key verse of the **first part** of the book is **Judges 1:1**.

The key verse of the **second part** is **Judges 20:18**.

DIVISIONS IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Div.1, The Unity of the People	Jdg.1-16
Div.2, The Disunity of the People	Jdg.17-21
2 Incidents of Div.2	
1 st — The Tie Which God Loosened [Jdg.17:1-18:31]	
2 nd — The Ties Which Hold God's People Together Are Dissolved [Jdg.19:1-21:25]	

The following is a “general index” of the book of Judges.

Israel's Obedience	Jdg.2:6-3:4
Israel's Disobedience (Their Strange Gods)	Jdg.2:11-15
Revivals and Declines	Jdg.2:16-23
The Testings of Israel	Jdg.3:1-4
The 6 Captivities	
1 st Captivity (Othniel)	Jdg.3:7-11
2 nd Captivity (Ehud)	Jdg.3:12-30
3 rd Captivity (Deborah/Barak)	Jdg.4:1-5:31
4 th Captivity (Gideon)	Jdg.6:1-40
5 th Captivity (Jephthah)	Jdg.10:6-12:7
6 th Captivity (Samson)	Jdg.13:1-25

DIV. 1, THE UNITY OF THE PEOPLE [JDG. 1-16]

JUDGES 1

Notice the question asked in the very first verse, which is the key verse of the first division of the book.

Key Verse: *“Now after the death of Joshua...the children of Israel asked the Lord, who shall go up against the Canaanites?”* [Jdg.1:1]

There was no leader. Hitherto they had inquired of Joshua and looked to him for direction and guidance, but now they are cast upon the Lord. The history of the Church corresponds in this respect perfectly. Paul, who answers to Joshua, was taken away by martyrdom from the saints of this age. There was no one upon whom his mantle fell, though there have been many like Timothy and Titus who have been loyal to God and His Word. Nevertheless of real leaders there has been none, even as in Judges. Joshua gave Israel words of instruction and admonition before his going [Jos.24] and likewise Paul. They put the responsibility of the people on the Lord. They were to obey His Word, serve Him and He would bear the burden. See Paul's words in Acts 20:32 as an example, *“And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”* The Church, even as Israel, was to look to God for guidance. Their safety as well as victory

depended on their obedience to the Word of God. They failed likewise as Israel. History has repeated itself and today we are confronted with the result in Christendom, a wreck and a ruin. The unity of the beginning is gone. Divisions are manifested on every side which loudly speaks of departure from the fundamentals of the faith. In fact, the “falling away” prophesied of the end is with us today, so we know these are the “last days.”

At first, the people were one, and in complete subjection to the Lord, which alone is true unity. The record begins with their asking, “*Who shall go up for us to fight against the Canaanites?*” and ends with exactly the same question, only now the foe is no longer external, but their own brother Benjamin. How serious must be the awful declension between these 2 incidents which begin and end the book. They emphatically proclaim, with no uncertain sound, that there “*is nothing new under the sun.*” Man is always the same, declining and degenerating constantly, until some gracious Divine Work lifts him up again and gives him another chance to redeem himself, or rather another opportunity to prove his woeful incompetency to do so.

Thus we clearly get the key to the book of Judges in these 2 verses:

“Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?” [Jdg.1:1]

“Which of us shall go first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?” [Jdg.20:18]

The path between these 2 points is clearly a descent, gradual but nonetheless sure, like that from Pentecost, where they that “*believed were all of one heart and one soul*” [Act.4:32] to the condition manifested today that “*all seek their own and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s*” [Phi.2:21]. But this was not an uninterrupted descent, as even the type assures. It crossed many a healthy mountain range, as by the continued mercy of the Lord. The course of The Church would at times turn and rise above the low mists and swamps of unbelief and discouragement, to some fair tableland of faith where all was green and growing, and it seemed as though the tide would never ebb again. But each succeeding tableland was a little less elevated than its predecessor, with fruit a little more earthly flavored and joy a little less heavenly; while the bog and more that followed was ever lower and more tainted with the noisome clay of a deeper departure than before.

But such is man. He can get down quickly enough after he has been sovereignly raised up; but he never can get up without divine help when once he gets down. In this book, which we are now considering, we may truly trace, in type and shadow, the course of those who were called of God to a holy heavenly inheritance. We can see but too clearly the lesson, which Scripture is ever affirming, about the weakness and instability of man. How poorly he rises up to the privileges and power of the call of God and his place in divine things. He is always a failure. Above his resting place at the end of all his wanderings it surely can be written of him, “Ichabod—his glory has departed.”

Judges commences in the same way as Joshua, only in the book of Joshua it is Moses who has departed, and the mantle falls on another able, fearless “servant of the Lord,” who carries on the Lord’s work in the power and spirit of Moses. Now Joshua too, has passed away, and there appears to be none able and willing to walk in their steps. The people are apparently left to themselves and gradually decline, as with a machine that has been turned off. Every revolution of the wheel is a little slower, plainly evidencing the fact that the power is gone.

PRAISE TO THE FRONT

Judah is designated by God as the leader. He is to go up first and overcome the enemy. Everything depends upon him. If he is defeated the other tribes stand no chance whatever. This is significant. **Judah** (“praise”) is the reason he is in the front; for the spirit of praise is the

spirit of power. It puts God first and implies a devotedness to Him, a joy in obedience which gives courage and enthusiasm. Praise carries no burdens, but counts that the cause is the Lord's and it must prosper. If Judah is weak, Israel as a whole must languish.

Judah obeys the call of God. He turns to his brother Simeon for his help.

"And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him." [Jdg.1:3]

Here is true unity. The fight is against the Canaanites, not against one another; and they are united in their stand for victory. God would emphasize the unity existing in Israel. They are one people. The cause of one is the cause of all. One tribe could not say to the others, "We have no need of thee." They were all needed. They all had their place and portion in the land, and this fact was to be recognized; for upon their unity depended, to a great extent their power. Even the world, whose axiom is, "In union there is strength," recognizes the power of a united people.

Now the spiritual application, which is our concern, is easily read. We only need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to see that this speaks of the wonderful unity of The Church (the body of Christ). The unity is there whether we recognize it or not. God declares that we are "*one body*." But our power and victory over the enemy comes by our acknowledging the fact and "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" [Eph.4:3]. By the baptism into one body on the Day of Pentecost, The Church was all made one provisionally; and this unity was evidenced in those first early days, as the Acts of the Apostles witness. Judah was then inviting Simeon to go up with him. They stood together as one man and all the power of the world was fallen for them. "Gold and silver" they had none but they had such power over Satan that they could loose his bands and set his captives free. They could bind and fetter the strong man in the name of Jesus, which very name stands for unity. "*For we being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one Bread*" [1Co.10:17].

Now, the marvel of this Book of books. We read the very same thing in "hearing," both he and the worthy fellow "praise," go up to battle and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hand. They slew 10,000 men in **Bezek** ("*fetters*"). This city has a king, **Adonibezek** ("*lord of fetters*"), whom they fought against. He fled when they withstood him, but they pursued him, and when they "*caught him*" they "*cut off his thumbs and his great toes*."

"And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died." [Jdg.1:7]

That is, this lord admits he was true to his name; he "fettered" kings; but now the tables are turned; he is fettered himself. Satan has fettered the old creation. He has hindered man's service (amputated thumbs) and halted man's walk (amputated toes). But man has been redeemed. Christ has come and gotten the victory over Satan. The fettering one has been fettered and he soon dies in **Jerusalem** ("*foundation is peace*"). He cannot survive long in this place of victory. And here was where The Church stood in the beginning—a new creation—with all the power of Satan under their feet. The strong man had been fettered by the Stronger. Christ had conquered. We read further of the mighty triumphs of those early days.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH

And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron, now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba; and they slew Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi." [Jdg.1:10]

We have had an account of this achievement in the book of Joshua, but there it was ascribed to Caleb [Jos.15:13]; while here it is given to the tribe to which it belonged. This again is another proof of the unity which was manifest; Caleb's victory was that of every other member of his tribe. The emphasis is not so much as to which one overcame the 3 sons of **Anak** (*"the long necked"*), as that they were conquered and their city taken and dwelt in by Israel. The **3 sons** figure pride:

Sheshai (*"white"*) — Pride of personal character, clean life, morality.

Ahiman (*"who is my brother"*) — Pride of station, class, blue blood. One can almost read the meaning in the name, a high man. The third son also,

Talmai (*"my furrows"*) — Pride of one's work, is very expressive. It could be rendered **A TALL ME** defining itself.

But these high things must all come down when Judah comes up and blows the trumpet. *"For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh"* [Phi.3:3]. The whole family of pride is dispossessed from the city of **Kirjath-arba** (*"city of our father"*) and its name is changed to **Hebron** (*"communion"*).

"From thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir, which before was Kirjath-Sepher. And Caleb said, he that smiteth Kirjath-Sepher and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah, my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife." [Jdg.1:11-13]

Here we have another repetition of an incident recorded in Joshua. But Scripture is not afraid of repetition which evidences God's delight in the achievements of His people. Notice that Achsah's request for the springs of water is cited as equal with Othniel's capture of the city. How different indeed are God's thoughts from ours. We would never think of associating two such wildly varying feats of conquest. Truly, only the deeply spiritual interpretation could reconcile them.

We are again called to view the taking of **Kirjath-Sepher** (*"the city of the book"*) from Canaanite hands. It is **Othniel** (*"the lion of God"*) who performs this mighty feat. He is stirred to action by the promise of Caleb, that the one getting possession of this city should have his daughter Achsah to wife. **Achsah** (*"decorated feet"*) represents the Bride of Christ. Christ is the antitype of Othniel, the Lion of God, who takes **Kirjath-Sepher** (*"the city of the book"*) and transforms it into **Debir** (*"oracle"*), a living oracle; for *"the Word was made flesh"* [Joh.1:14].

The written Word is exactly as was the Living Word in the days of His flesh. They approached to judge Him; but they departed judged by Him. Poor vain sinful man, cover him up with all the learning that this world affords, or all the righteousness that the old man can heap up; they are as ineffective to hide his true condition as were Adam's fig leaves. The word **judges** exposes, lays bare man's inmost heart, and speaks conviction to his conscience. It knows and tells the secrets of his heart and proves beyond a doubt it is divine. And he, to whom the Word does not speak its own divinity, needs to have profound anxiety as to his own condition. And it is *"the Lion of the tribe of Judah,"* [Rev 5:5] who has made this very book, living and energetic—the voice of God. And as a reward for this mighty glorious victory – opening a sealed book, He is given a Bride, as well as a beautiful south land as an inheritance.

"And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs." [Jdg.1:14-15]

But on coming to Othniel, Achsah asks more than the goodly inheritance which the Father had given her as joined to the Conqueror, the Lion of God. She desires springs of water in order that her land may be fruitful and enjoyable. Debir can never answer to its name without the water. So The Church tarried for the Holy Spirit. She felt the need of the refreshing presence of the Comforter. He was to guide her into all the lengths and breadths of her land and show to her all its beauties and treasures. Without Him her lovely sunny portion could not be fruitful—Christ could never be reproduced in her life. She would never know anything of the life of worship, basking in the Father's favor, living in His presence as joined unto the Lion of God. For this she needs those "*upper waters*," though the "*lower springs*" too are a necessity. The lower springs refer to the Holy Spirit in our service man-ward, while the upper waters are necessary to our life God-ward. Without the reviving unctuous presence of the "living water," we are of little use to God or man. Our inheritance might be appreciated, but could not be enjoyed.

Achsah lighting off her ass, when she requests the water, is very significant. The **ass** typifies humiliation. Jesus entered Jerusalem as the King riding upon this poor despised beast of burden. He was in disguise, humble and lowly. It was not yet the day of His glory. He will come later, riding upon a white horse, symbol of victory and power, as contrasted with the ass. So in like manner today, she of the "decorated ankles," is in humiliation; she is riding upon an ass. But on the day of Pentecost, it was as joined to Christ in glory that she requested and received the Holy Spirit, not as in a body of humiliation. For a little moment she was "off the ass," seated with her Lord in the heavenlies, as part of this new creation of which He is the glorious incomparable Head.

"*And Caleb gave her the upper springs.*" Here for the while, **Caleb** is representative of the Father, the "wholehearted." God would emphasize at the outset in repeating this little narrative, that the provision for victory was complete. There was no lack. The Word of God was the perfect living, controlling, and powerful voice of God, and the Holy Spirit had come to guide and direct into all Truth. Because of this, the failure which followed was so much more serious and unwarranted, for there was no excuse for it.

In this happy and blessed threesome (Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah), we have the high-water mark of Israel's faith. Now mark the ebbing tide of failure on all sides to drive out the Canaanites, the old dwellers in the land. Here are the firstfruits of timid unbelief. Has there not been the exact counterpart of this in us, "on whom the end of the ages has come?" Even from the first, has not The Church, as did the nation of Israel, left some of the Canaanites undisturbed?

Canaan ("*merchant*" or "*trafficker*") represents selfish worldly principles that are opposed to God and which faith alone can overthrow. Canaan was brother of Mizraim, which is Egypt [Gen.10:6] and the latter is a type of the fallen nature in independence of God. So, the Canaanite principles are closely allied to the fleshly lusts which govern the natural man, only here they are viewed in relation to the new man. This is the only difference. They represent fleshly principles in the Lord's people which must be kept in the place of death, or they will bring us into bondage. "*Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*" [Col.3:5]. All these will keep us out of our portion or "towns," some phase of Christ, some victory in Him that belongs to us till at length we are again bond slaves, not in Egypt again it is true, but in our own land. And the failure and lapse is more marked, for God is now for us and against our enemies. There is no need of failure. As the epistles, especially those of the Lord to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3), the course of Judges will proclaim (in figure, through fact and prophesy) the sad condition of The Church. The failures and weaknesses of the people of Israel in the land are only shadows of the same unbelief that has characterized The Church of Christ in her

responsible character as a witness in the world. However, at the same time we view, with delight, the wondrous grace of God which again and again met those failures of old and has been no less active in reviving His people during the long age which is almost at its close. In the past 50 years we have had a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit with His attendant gifts of power. These have been marvelous days of refreshing for all those Christians who took down their umbrellas of doubt and reasoning and **LET THE PENTECOSTAL SHOWERS FALL ON THEM.** What joy and blessing they have gained by yielding to the Spirit, and of usefulness in the omen service of God, no tongue can tell.

BEGINNING OF FAILURE

"And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went up and dwelt among the people. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah." [Jdg.1:16-17]

We notice the fact of the Kenites settling among the children of Judah in the South. They are the Midianite tribe from whom the wife of Moses came. They are also descendants of Abraham by Keturah, and thus are linked in a double way with the children of Israel. They accompanied Moses upon his invitation, into the land. But they were never united to the people of God, though apparently one with them. They are viewed in Balaam's prophecy as separate to the last.

The play upon the name "*thou puttest thy nest (ken) in the rock*" [Num.24:21], evidently shows us the meaning of their part here. They are Midianites, men of the world of strife; yet, like others of their race, not at strife with Israel. No. They make themselves a nest among the people of God, and it is for a nest that they are in Canaan. We read, they come now and make a place for themselves on the south border of Judah in the wilderness, south of Arad (the home of the wild ass). They keep their desert manners in the land. They are not at home there, although they enjoy the security it affords.

All the above history describes, but too well, the condition of many who attach themselves to the people of God today, yet are not of them. The victories of the children of faith impress, invite, and make way for them; but their presence is no strength and no sign for good. They are generally connected in some way with the people of faith, either by blood or marriage, but not really Christian. The churches are full of such strangers and they are the cause of the dead unspiritual condition among the Lord's true people. This little record of them is dropped in here apparently without any significance, but it is a hint of the cause of the later failure.

Next we find Judah helping Simeon in his lot. Hormah was destroyed by fire [Num.21:3]. There we saw in it a representation of the power of the world in Satan's hands to hinder the progress of the people of God. In the time that has elapsed it has revived. How easily the world recovers power; now it is called **Zephath** ("*overlaying*" or "*crust*"). This is indeed the world: Bright and glittering enough, but devoted to destruction by the Word of Jehovah even though Satan puts a covering over the curse. It is **Simeon** ("*hearing*") who takes off the false show, reveals the evil, and makes Zephath what it really is—**Hormah** ("*destruction*").

"Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Ashkelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." [Jdg.1:18-19]

Three of the Philistine cities fall into Judah's hands: Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. "*And the LORD was with Judah;*" but then most abruptly, it would seem, we read of a limit to the power which he displays. Judah obtained possession of the mountains, but the inhabitants of the valleys had

chariots of iron, and so could not be driven out. What a contradiction! Omnipotence stopped, as it were, by chariots of iron. In a sense it is true; the principle of victory is the simplicity of a faith which alas, is so seldom simple. God said that He had delivered the land into Judah's hand whether the people had chariots of iron or not. There were no limits put upon the power that was at Judah's disposal; but he measures the might of the Lord, and the Lord answers according to the measure put forth for him. The principle is always, "*according to your faith be it unto you*" [Mat.9:29]. Right in contrast with this failure, yet in conformity with the principle, we are reminded of the complete success of Caleb against the terrible sons of Anak. Faith shall never suffer defeat, though the people of God as a whole are defeated. This is for the encouragement of the individual, that in the midst of wholesale failure, there is opportunity for the overcomer. Faith is never so much appreciated by the Lord, and so abundantly rewarded, as in the days of apostasy and failure; for the darker the night, the brighter the light shines in the midst. Right here, at the outset, we read the story of the victory of the Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah to stimulate and encourage the personal faith of the poor and needy.

This failure of Judah's is ominous. It marks the beginning of the declension which is so very manifest later. If Judah fails, even in a little measure, what may we expect of the others?

"And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites which inhabited Jerusalem: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin unto this day." [Jdg.1:20-21]

This is woeful failure. While Judah poorly manifests the ideal of faith, yet here we find Benjamin in contrast even with Judah. Judah had already taken Jerusalem and burned it with fire, as we have noted, while Benjamin, without an effort that we read of, permits the Jebusites to dwell among them. The city of Jerusalem lay on the border between Judah and Benjamin, the most populated district lying in Benjamin's borders. Judah burned only what lay within his borders. In not following Judah's example, the failure of Benjamin is more marked when we consider that the former is the warrior tribe; and spiritually, Benjamin represents Christ in us—the power of a fruitful life. Benjamin in alliance with the Canaanites is the utter contradiction and opposite of this, and is the core of all unfaithfulness to God. When Benjamin refuses to live in the power of his name, false associations and inconsistency of his walk are soon multiplied. The next session continues the assurance of Benjamin's weakness.

"And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.) And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day." [Jdg.1:22-26]

Bethel belongs to the above tribe; yet we read that Joseph comes up and takes it out of the enemy's hand. Lying at Ephraim's border, there is a natural reason for his action; but the spiritual meaning is what we are seeking and it always underlies the natural. While in hands of the Canaanites Bethel was called **Luz** (represents separation). The capture of Bethel was its transformation. Luz is a city of peculiar delight to the heart of the Canaanite; having many attractive forms which are all more or less selfish though often garbed religiously. These are the results of being away from God; one must then toil in self-service and, apparently, in self-renunciation. But when God is known and acknowledged, separation from the world and its people becomes necessary, for it is the touching of the unclean which results in the unequal yoke. The line must be drawn, but so drawn that God shall be owned and honored; then Luz becomes **Bethel** ("*the house of God*"). It is simple enough how Joseph may aid Benjamin

(Joseph: Not only Ephraim but Manasseh as well). Manasseh' earnest in pressing on is a necessary adjunct to the full development which **Joseph** ("adding") figures. When we seek to win Christ, all alien things drop off; and on this path of separation we shall find none but those who seek Him. Thus Bethel, with all that this implies, is attained or added to us.

But there is another lesson here. One Canaanite is spared out of the city, and there is no similarity here as to Rahab's case—no faith like hers. This one Canaanite does not take his place with Israel but goes away into the place of the **Hittites** ("sons of terror") and builds another Luz. Though cut down to the root, the tree may revive; and the old principle left, as no longer formidable, may even go far off to sojourn yet survives and has to be met with again. Indeed, how often these spared fellows, with their cities, come our way once more to hinder. Here is another hint of the consequent failure in Israel and in The Church...the flesh was spared. So the sequel is of course disastrous.

"Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." [Jdg.1:27-28]

Manasseh ("progress, energy, pressing on") heads the list of the following accused tribes, which is in conformity with the significance of his name. Yet, in spite of this he has a record of 5 cities left to the Canaanites, and that when he had the power also to drive them out. The loss of energy is plainly set forth.

"Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries." [Jdg.1:29-30]

Ephraim's failure follows naturally in as much as in the order of attainment, **Ephraim** ("fruitfulness") is dependent upon **Manasseh** ("pressing on"). Ephraim has only one city recorded to its loss, that of **Gezer** ("cut off"). But this is a serious loss for an Ephraimite, for fruitfulness is impossible without the city of Gezer being a reality to us. It is a good city to hold, and occasionally we can view its lengths and breadths and heights and depths, and realize the love of God which provided the cross, the "cut-off" place.

Then comes **Zebulun** ("the dwelling one"), with failure attached to him also. He allowed the Canaanites to dwell with him, though they are forced to pay tribute.

"Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out." [Jdg.1:31-32]

Asher ("happy") follows with a long list of lost cities; and here we find a lower state of things revealed. The Asherites "dwelt among the Canaanites," instead of the Canaanites among the Asherites, bad as that would be.

"Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them." [Jdg.1:33]

Naphtali ("wrestler") comes next on the list with 2 cities. He represents the "wrestler," the one who refuses defeat; but here he too is losing character and letter down. Both of the towns that the Canaanites hold of Naphtali's portion, speak to us of settled relationships: **Bethshemesh**

("house of the sun") and **Bethanath** ("house of response"). The one tells us that the overcomer must dwell in the light, and the other that this will result in abiding in a place of continual response to God's attitude of love. Naphtali must keep his cities (have a home in God) to be the overcomer, which his name implies.

"And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley: But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward." [Jdg.1:34-36]

Dan ("judging") closes the tale of ruin with worse failure than the others. The Danites are forced by the Amorites out of the valley (the low level so necessary to true spiritual judgment) "into the mountain." It is especially striking that it is the **Amorite** ("talker") to whom Dan loses these low places, as well as the 2 cities of **Mount Heres** ("mountain of clay"): **Aijalon** ("apprehensive") and **Shaalbim** ("hollow hearted"). These all speak without comment. When Dan allows the Amorite, the open blasphemous talker (the infidel old man), to force him out of the place which God has given to Dan "the judge," we need not be surprised that he loses all ability for true judgment. The world is not seen in its real character as hollow and unable to give peace, and every portion of the world is clay, it is earthly and corruptible. We are further assured that the Amorites "would dwell" there; that is, he has a real portion in Israel's glorious heavenly inheritance. This is always the case and it is the consequences of failure. We begin by letting the enemy have an inch of our land; we allow his intrusion into our portion, and finally he takes a mile or 2, calls it his own, and he abides there...we are the apparent intruders.

JUDGES 2

"And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?" [Jdg.2:1-2]

This change of position on the part of the angel of the Lord is very significant; for He is none other than the Lord Himself, who had, as Captain of the Lord's host, taken His place with them at Gilgal to lead them to victory [Jos.5:14]. He had been at Gilgal ever since. It was here the tribes were commanded to gather and rest after every victory. Here they renewed their strength for further triumphs. But Israel left Gilgal. As the sequel shows, Israel had not been returning to that vantage point for some time because they had not had victory. It is a neglected spot; so the "Captain" leaves it too.

But what is the spiritual lesson? Gilgal tells us that "*the reproach of Egypt was rolled away*" [Jos.5:9]. It figures our assent to the Word of the Lord; that no good thing dwells in the flesh. All confidence in the flesh comes to an end at Gilgal. We acknowledge that it is unprofitable and unfruitful and must be continually judged (or cut off) that we, the new man, may have the victory. Alas! That Israel should ever leave so glorious a place where they could boast alone in Christ, which meant present joy and future glory, but they did. They failed to appear there. Their confidence in the flesh revived. They became strong in themselves; consequently, they became independent of God. This is the reproach of Egypt, independence of God. It is strange, yet sorrowfully true, that what Israel did in figure, by leaving Gilgal, The Church has done in reality. As individuals, we too may have a like experience. We may think that we have so learned the lesson which Gilgal teaches that we will never leave so sacred and precious a spot. But, there is such a constant tendency in the flesh to self-confidence that, before we are hardly aware of our condition, another painful and humiliating experience awakens us to the fact that we too have again left Gilgal. It is the lesson of a lifetime; not once learned and never

forgotten, but gradually, because of God's unfailing goodness, we learn to make longer stays at this place of victory—Gilgal, until as the father's, of whom John tells us, we too only "*know Him that is from the beginning*" [1Jo.2:13-14]. We abide in Him and, in happy occupation of heart and mind, leave the old "I" to utter forgetfulness.

But what of Bochim? What is the spiritual signification that they gather at this place now instead of Gilgal? **Bochim** ("*the weepers*") is the home of those who weep. What a contrast with Gilgal, the place of joyful song and happy boasting in Christ. The angel of the Lord is at Bochim; he meets them according to their state. Their condition called them to the place of weeping. It is the place for us today. It is not a popular spot, especially in this day of vain boasting and religious prosperity. Those who frequent **Bochim** may have to bear the modern term of reproach "pessimist." But we need not care, for we will find good company there. Let us glance at a few of these favored ones who have, in their day, pitched tent at Bochim. It lies in the way that most of the "little flock" traveled. We read of those "*who passing through the valley of Baca*" (same root as Bochim) "*make it a place of springs. The rain also covereth it with blessings*" [Psa.84:6 RV]. These are just "passing-through" pilgrims in Bochim; but the angel of the Lord meets them there; springing water and heavenly blessing are the result.

We have one of those distinguished visitors to Bochim, in Daniel the Hebrew captive in Babylon. We see him with his windows opened toward Jerusalem, the city of his fathers, and with a scroll of Jeremiah before him, praying, supplicating, and confessing; humbling himself in every way and with no formal heart nor dry eye. He met the Lord at Bochim and He showed His tender and strong appreciation of this weeper, the man "*greatly beloved*" [Dan 9:23; 10:11,19]. Surely, this is strong encouragement to seek quarters in this favored spot. Even our blessed Lord Himself was found there in His day, when He marked the enemy's apparent, though only temporary, triumph in the death-shade that hung over that home in Bethany (the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus). When Jesus saw the tears falling on every hand, He too entered Bochim, as we may say, for "*Jesus wept*" [Joh.11:35]. We need not be ashamed to be found there.

Our dear Apostle Paul often found his way to Bochim as he saw the enemy's work in scattering and devouring God's heritage. He writes even "*weeping*" [Phi.3:18], of the enemies of the cross of Christ and from Bochim, addresses a letter to Corinth "*with many tears*" [2Co.2:4]. As we loiter at Bochim, we will find the most excellent company. We read of this city in Ezekiel 9 where 6 men are seen with slaughter weapons in their hands and one man in their midst, clothed in linen with a writer's inkhorn, is commanded by the Lord. "*Go through the midst of Jerusalem and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that are done in the midst thereof*" [Eze.9:4]. These men are dwellers at Bochim; who, in the midst of apostasy, are morally separated from it and are not ashamed to weep.

Jeremiah continually found his way to this city. It became his abode, as it were. He beheld the desolation of Jerusalem and the condition of the people of God and his tears flowed. "*For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye, runneth down with water*" [Lam.1:16]. "*Let mine eyes run down with tears day and night and let them not cease for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow*" [Jer.14:17]. We must remember that Bochim is no place of accusation of any saint. He who accuses his brother never visits this weeping place. No mere railer at the veil amid the Lord's blood-bought flock. No wicked person who thus holds it up to the reproach of the world is a true Bochim pilgrim. The voice of accusation is silent in this city of tears. Bochim is a peculiarly fitting place for us today. We are not deceived at the boastful cries of progress, civilization, church activity, peace proclamations, and the conversion of the world. When we bring these things up to the Word of God, the only true standard, they come far short. The children of God are scattered; each having its own fencing to keep out other sheep, each its own "*shibboleth*" [Jdg.12:6].

How far different from the scene in the beginning of the dispensation:

- When not one that believed was in the slightest degree separate from another.
- When they were all of one accord, gathered together in one Name, by one Spirit, in bonds of love; Greek to Barbarian, Roman to Jew, as brethren.
- And, simply because they were brethren, not endeavoring to make the unity by compromising the truth; but only **endeavoring to keep the unity which is already made**. Simple in faith, lowly in mind, with no claims to be anything at all in distinction from other saints, owning the “oneness of Christ” in deed as well as in word.

Compare with conditions now and if the contention and strife, with the loftiest pretensions, are not sufficient to call us to Bochim, then truly our ears are waxed heavy and our hearts “gross” [Mat.13:15, Act.28:27].

But mark this well, discouragement, discontent, or cowardice have no tent-space at Bochim. It is here courage revives, for the Lord is here to look with favor and delight upon the broken and contrite in heart. We have not received “*the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” [2Ti.1:7]. Our enemy is strong, crafty, and subtle. Though The Church of God is like a defeated army, scattered and demoralized, one division in a panic, another surrendering to the enemy, while the foe on every side is blowing the trumpet of victory; yet “*Fear not...be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me by the Lord*” [Acts 27:24]. God is for us to the end and not one blood-sheltered lamb shall be lost. Lift up the voice, “*utter a song*” [Jdg.5:2], to cheer the feeble saints. Bochim does not mean cowardice or fear, but self-judgment and confession of the failure and our part in it, which is the very root of courage and strength.

Neglect not in these days, Bochim. Seek this place often, for there we will find no veiled angel of Jehovah, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in all His tender love and infinite compassion, ready and waiting to meet and sup with us. “*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” [Col.4:12].

Table of Contents From Judges 2:6 to Judges 3:4 inclusive, we have an inspired index to the whole of the book of Judges. This may be divided into 4 parts:

1. Israel's Obedience
2. Israel's Disobedience (their strange gods)
3. Revivals and Declines (Declensions)
4. The Testing of Israel

1. ISRAEL'S OBEDIENCE

“And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his own inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that He did for Israel.”
[Jdg.2:6-7]

All goes well as long as Joshua and the elders contemporaneous with him lived. At least there was an outward conformity to the Word of God; Israel “*served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua*” [Jdg.2:7]. But there comes “*another generation*” after them which “*knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel*” [Jdg.2:10]. The “flesh,” that which knows neither the Lord nor His gracious dealings, begins to claim a place and degeneracy is marked. The decline is rapid.

It adds an extra solemnity to be living after a revival has passed away. It is the cause for stronger crying, for deeper self-judgment, for increased watchfulness, for a greater coming together in mutual love and exhortation; for history always repeats itself. Even in the days of the apostles the same seeds were there, corresponding to those cropping up in Israel in that far off day. Paul wrote, “*All they in Asia are turned away from me*” [2Ti.1:15]. John wrote, “*Even now there are many antichrists*” [1Jo.2:18]. “*The mystery of iniquity*” [2Th.2:7] was already working. The same conditions follow every revival. See how quickly the tide ebbed again after the days of Luther. The next generation saw formalism again taking the place of power. Neither were the results different after the blessing in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, etc. Nay, another generation followed in no equal power; and the result is in evidence today in the various professing bodies of different denominations, whose ministers can lightly dishonor the same Scripture which their fathers revered as Divine. We can always see that the “first man” is never to be trusted. He goes lower and lower after the power of each succeeding visitation of God has passed away.

“And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.” [Jos.24:29-30]

There is a significant change here in this connection of the name of Joshua’s inheritance from **Timnath-serah**, as it is given in the book of Joshua, to **Timnath-heres**. The one word is simply the reversal of the letters; but the change of meaning is striking, for thus **serah** (“*an abundant portion*”) becomes **heres** (“*a portion of the clay*”). In this apparent contradiction in the name of Joshua’s inheritance we have, no doubt, the cause of the declension and failure which follows in this record. When The Church, or an individual, loses the vision of the abundant heavenly portion into which Christ has entered by His resurrection and ascension, there is soon manifest failure; for we have no hope in Christ’s death if there is no resurrection. He has only a “*portion of clay*” to share with His people and thus is only the first man. In its decline, The Church has lost sight of her heavenly portion in Christ and changed it into mere earthliness, thus leaving the Lord, as it were, in the grave. This is further emphasized by the words “*on the north side of the hill of Gaash;*” the mystery side of the “quaking” (Gaash) earth, out of which the Last Adam rose. As we realize the power of the resurrection of Christ and its significance to all the universe of God, we have the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. The **quaking of the earth** signifies that which is shaken can be moved. The “*yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven;*” tells us of the “*removal of those things which are shaken*” [Heb 12:26]. For faith, this was accomplished when Christ arose, and out of a judged and shaken earth there was the beginning of the call of a heavenly people (a new creation) which can never be removed.

2. ISRAEL’S DISOBEDIENCE (THEIR STRANGE GODS)

In this 2nd part of the TABLE OF CONTENTS, the first of a series of 7 occurrences of the refrain, “*The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.*” The 7 occurrences are found in Judges 2:11, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1 (Judges 2:11 and 3:7 contain the additional statement of “*and served Baalim*”).

“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.” [Jdg.3:7]

The “*evil*,” as this verse assures, was in forsaking the “*Lord God of their fathers, which brought them up out of Egypt.*” Who do they put in His place? Baal and Ashtoreth. Letting go of Him who would draw upward to Himself, they take hold of those who draw downward till they are floundering again in the mire where there is little to distinguish man from the beast, except that man goes

lower. Man's real progress depends altogether upon the link with God. Where this is broken, everything goes wrong; political anarchy, moral depravity, social disorder, and confusion are manifest everywhere.

But here we see that Israel have substitutes for God. Man must worship something. If there were no God, he would invent one, but one suited to his own fancy and perverted reason. Though Israel does not have to do this; yet they invent one according to their own desire. **Baal** ("lord") is often translated OWNER. The word **Baal** has in it the idea of "power" and is the male deity; while **Ashtaroth** ("flocks, sheep, riches") is the female deity. Baal has been connected with the sun as Ashtaroth with the moon, subsequently going lower as Jupiter and Venus. Thus, when man departs from God he worships that which speaks to him of "power" on the one hand and "fruitfulness" on the other. But these being according to his own invention, must necessarily correspond with himself; which means, of course, that they are evil. In a bad sense, power is but violence and is well personified in Jupiter of the Greeks. In an evil sense, fruitfulness is corruption and is shamefully personified in Venus. In giving up God, who is love and light, they replace Him with violence and corruption (Baalim and Ashtaroth); truly, a poor exchange.

3. REVIVALS AND DECLINES (DECLENSIONS)

In the 3rd part of this TABLE OF CONTENTS, we read of "*judges*" being raised up, "*which delivered them out of the hands of those who spoiled them*" [Jdg.2:16]. Nor are these merely men who judged between man and man; but they form a renewed link with God Himself. Surely then, it is of vital importance as to what or who answer to these judges today. In the first place, we must not seek their antitypes in individuals, because there is more than one who would thus answer to them in some respects and in others not at all. We believe the antitypes of these judges will be found in certain principles which they represent.

The raising up of a judge leads to a recovery from backsliding; consequently, a return to God is in evidence with victory, peace, and liberty. In other words, a revival has begun. This simply means that a revival in that day, as well as ours, is dependent upon judgment. This is the first necessity, whether in the case of the individual or the entire tribe. Self-judgment, a true estimate of the condition of things, is a putting away of the idols and giving the Lord His rightful place.

And so it ever is. As soon as a spirit of self-judgment rules, or in the language of our book, "as soon as there is a judge raised up," then the Lord is with that lowly spirit, whether in the individual, the local assembly, or a still wider sphere.

Throughout Judges, we can trace these manifold captivities and the marvelous deliverances, always differing from one another. They are not of the same character in detail; and as time elapses, there seems to be an increasing guard against the claims of the "old man" with all his vaunted pretensions until with Samson, the last "*judge*," we get a very imperfect deliverance by a very imperfect Nazarite.

JUDGES 3

4. THE TESTINGS OF ISRAEL

This is the 4th section of the TABLE OF CONTENTS; and includes the first 4 verses of the 3rd chapter of Judges.

"Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof; Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses." [Jdg.3:1-4]

We read that nations were left in the midst of Israel to prove them. All *"the nations which Joshua left when he died"* [Jdg.2:21]; but this in itself is evidence of their unfaithfulness. Their state will not permit the absence of the nations altogether. Is not this the case with every individual saint? God cannot trust us without *"the nations,"* or what answers to these. They are thorns in our side. There are some who claim, that as to themselves, no more are *"the nations"* in them...the flesh is all gone; they say that the old man is taken out root and branch. But surely Scripture speaks a different language; for even our own Apostle Paul, after such wondrous revelations given to him as were unutterable, had also given to him *"a thorn in the flesh"* [2Co 2:17]. One gift offsets the effects of the other; for Paul was still in a body of humiliation even after the most exalted of revelations.

While it is true *"the nations"* are still here with us, it does not follow that they are to be served; but rather, they are to be forced to pay tribute to further God's purposes for us and not oppose them. They are *"to prove (humble) Israel."* This is the very reason He leaves us in, and leads us through, this *"great and terrible wilderness, that He may humble us and prove us, to know what is in our heart"* [Deu.8:2]. Yet He does know; it is we who are ignorant of what we really are, as to our flesh. We have to learn our weakness and need as well as our source of power and secret of victory. Yes, and we learn all the above through many a defeat, many a humiliation, many a sorrow...but all works for our good. *"The nations"* were not left in Israel to bring them into bondage; nor is the flesh left in us that we should serve its lusts, but to learn by war, the love of His heart, the strength of His arm. To learn that He is willing and able to make even our enemies work His purposes of grace. What was it that brought from the heart of God all those rivers of refreshing comfort that we find in the epistles of our own Apostle Paul? It was the foolishness and errors of His saints. The church at Corinth was in moral as well as doctrinal evil; yet this very condition was made the occasion of drawing down from God, letters of unfathomable glorious purposes concerning us. Consider Peter's sin in denying His Lord and lying and cursing. What has shown our Lord's grace in dealing with backsliding more than this? Listen to, and hear, Peter's foolish (as we now see them) objections to the Lord's washing of his feet:

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." [Joh.13:6-8]

Do not His answers reveal to us such depths of love and tender care, that we can almost feel thankful to the unworthy one who was the occasion of their display? But no; we will not thank the "eater" because he is forced to provide meat for us, neither the "strong" that must yield sweetness; but we will praise Him who alone is able to make all things work good for us as well as furnish the display of perfection of His love and light.

"The nations" then represent various forms of evil natural to the old Adam. Their "false gods" would be what the fallen nature loves and upon which it depends. "Serving those gods" signifies, as relating to a Christian, allegiance to or dependence upon the flesh, which always results in slavery and misery. There is but one alternative; yielding to, and depending upon

the Lord, with its consequent result, liberty, and victory. We must go on in the light that we have received; otherwise, we will go backward in our experience. We will bow down to some other god, serve, and depend upon a fleshly prop. However, we do not learn to obey and serve God by the history of the failure of others. As individuals, we must practically meet all these “*nations*” which are left to test us. Thus, discipline becomes a school of faith. We are overcomers only in the measure that we have been tempted in “all points” and have not succumbed. Overcoming is a personal matter that is especially the lesson which the book of Judges teaches us. The very evils manifested in Christendom furnish to faith the exercise that is needed to overcome. As in the history, the people as a whole disappear, or else form just a background as contrasts with those few figures in the front, which walk apart with God. There have always been these men of God whose hearts have been stirred by Divine Love, and who must go on regardless of the manifested failure and ruin.

THE VALUE OF NUMBERS

The Bible is a book of numbers, all replete with wonderful meanings. In this TABLE OF CONTENTS, we have observed 4 parts, or 4 numbers.

ONE stands for unity. “*There is one body...One Lord, one faith...One God*” [Eph 4:4-6]. While The Church maintained her oneness with Christ as her Head, she had victory and was filled with glory.

TWO is the number of division. When people forsake, or separate themselves from the God of their fathers, of course there is defeat; the glory departs and they come into bondage to the flesh. Paul does not even say: “Jesus and I,” as recognizing 2 parties; but declares emphatically one personality when he states that it is no longer I that liveth “*but Christ liveth in me*” [Gal.2:20].

THREE is the Divine Number. This is very wonderful, coming in here as the 3rd division of this TABLE OF CONTENTS. Division, or separation from God, necessitates judgment. Hence, judges were raised up. But, note that this judgment has its foundation in the judgment passed upon the old creation at Calvary. God judged the first Adam by the death of His own Son, the Last Adam; who, through the power of the Spirit, bore this judgment. When we practice self-judgment, we imitate and cooperate with the triune God.

Finally follows number **FOUR**, the number of the testing of man.

Our Shepherd

May the Lord our Shepherd,
In His goodness show
All the verdant meadows
Where still waters flow;

May He gently lead you
With His staff and rod
On the joyous pathways
Where the saints have trod!

THE 1st CAPTIVITY

“And the children of Israel, did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of

Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.” [Jdg.3:7-8]

The first of everything in Scripture is peculiarly interesting and significant. It ever calls for our deep consideration. Generally it is a pattern of all that follows; as here in this 1st captivity, we get the root principle of all the later developments of evil. The instrument that the Lord uses for the chastening of His people corresponds exactly to the evil which it is called to correct. It is not selected arbitrarily or without reason. Israel herself selects, in a certain sense, her own punishment according to the principle of reaping what one sows. This absolutely closes the mouth of the chastened. Who can we blame if the harvest is just what we sowed? And this principle always maintains the balances of God's justice. Has the sowing been generous? Then the reaping will be the same. The harvest depends exactly upon the character and quantity of the seed sown. Oh how solemn and searching are the words, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap”* [Gal.6:7]. And mark that this is not confined to unbelievers, though it applies to them also, but is distinctly addressed to The Church. We shall all receive according to our planting, and it is the Lord who is the Judge.

Thus in the case before us there has been the sowing of departure from God. But with the individual, it has been a gradual declension. In the first chapter we noted the fact that the Canaanites were allowed to *“dwell among”* the children of Israel, but now the evil has grown; the children of Israel are allowed to dwell among the Canaanites. This is quite a different thing. Israel is permitted to remain if they make no trouble. The ancient inhabitants of the land are again the prominent ones. The next step follows—alliance with the enemy. *“They took their daughters to be their wives and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods”* [Jdg.3:6]. It is the universal consequence—the horror of sin—which weakens thus allowing it, and gradually results in alliance with it; the heart departs from its own portion. So always does declension begin, both in the individual and in the assembly. *“I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love”* [Rev.2:4]. No longer is the Lord Jesus Christ the one supreme attractive object of the heart. Other persons, ambitions, self-interests share His place; then gradually displace Him altogether, until like Israel, we too “forget” and the Lord must come in and take a hand in the affair. Thus we read, *“He sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim.”*

Now who is this oppressor with the strange name, and what are we to learn from this “happening” to Israel? There is no other mention of him in Scripture; therefore we must learn the significance from his name. There is no uncertainty as to its meaning. It is clearly “the darkness of double wickedness.” And the Lord's people being given over into his hand signifies that they are in bondage to their old taskmaster “darkness;” but now it is in a two-fold way. This is not mere natural darkness. It is much more. It is light rejected, turned away from, and this is the worst form of darkness. *“If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness”* [Mat.6:23]. If the light which we have received has not really enlightened; if we have had the shining in us, and we have loved the darkness rather than the light, then our case is doubly evil. In the early church, we read of many who were in danger of this very enemy. The Galatians were warned of this fellow, *“But now after that you have known God, or rather are known of Him, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”* [Gal.4:9]. The Hebrews were warned of this enemy, *“for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift...if they shall fall away to renew them again to repentance”* [Heb.6:4-6]. More clearly than all do we view this “double wickedness” exemplified in 2 Timothy 3, *“This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves; covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”* [2Ti.3:1-5]. In this list we have the same abominations mentioned which characterize the heathen [Rom.1:29-31]; but here it is connected with *“a form of godliness,”* which is the full development of “the darkness of double wickedness.” The seeds of the above condition were sown at the very beginning of this dispensation. Here is the reaping:

This Chushan-rishathaim is king of Mesopotamia, or as we read in the margin, "**Aram-naharaim.**" Mesopotamia (Aram-naharaim) signifies "*the exalted land of the 2 rivers.*" It is the land that is lifted up, because of its 2 rivers, upon which it depends. Observe the same plural in the name of its kind: "*2 rivers,*" and "*double wickedness.*" Israel had been delivered out of a land, Egypt, whose boast was in its single river, the Nile. She was independent of heaven, for no rain fell upon her; but her river overflowed its banks, sending its fertilizing refreshing waters over the desert sands, making the soil rich and fruitful. She knew not whence that river came; but she knew that she was not dependent upon the rain of heaven, and this was her boast, "*My river is my own and I have made it*" [Eze.29:3].

What a perfect illustration of the natural man in his separation from God: Constantly receiving blessings, but blindly as the beasts, without any true recognition from whence they come, except quite assurance that they are not from God. It is true that in late years, men have claimed to have discovered the source of the Nile River, just as they have in their scientific researching found, apparently, a simple natural reason for everything, thus leaving God out of their calculations. They tell us the river merely comes from a chain of lakes in the far south. These are the source to the Nile. Still, there comes the troublesome query, "But whence come the lakes?" Nor is it sufficient to know that they are filled by thousands of rills (streams) and springs, for still the questions remain,

- From whence these lakes?
- Are they self-supplying?

Now, like the question which the Lord asks the scribes and Pharisees as to John's baptism, the answer must be "*from heaven*" or "*of men.*" The man of science or Egypt is truly in a quandary. If he says "*from heaven,*" we will say, "Why then do you not believe?" Or, if "*of men,*" then all men will count him a fool. Yes, little as the world desires to acknowledge the fact, it is absolutely dependent upon God for all its natural, as well as its spiritual, blessings. These 2 spheres are figured by this "*lofty land of 2 rivers,*" that now provides the oppressor. It speaks not merely of independence of God for natural blessings; but as for asking Him in spiritual things as well. It speaks not merely of independence of God for natural blessings; but as forsaking Him in spiritual things as well.

The Church left her first love, or portion. Jesus, her Lord, was no longer absolutely necessary to her. She could get along without Him, since she had other resources, earthly sufficiencies—"rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing" [Rev.3:17]. But, as with Israel, this leads to captivity. This is worse than their first bondage, because they have had the light; the liberty depending upon God and finding Him enough for any circumstance. The greater the light, the greater the condemnation for not walking in it.

The land of 2 rivers is thus doubly provided for. There is no lack anywhere. Well is it named **Aram** ("*lifted up*"). It speaks truly of complete independence of God; in everything forgetting God; and thus Israel forges her own chains, becomes captive to the darkness of double wickedness. And this is the oppressor that ever lords it over that land that is lifted up because it is independent of God. But praise the Lord! There is hope for even this awful condition; the deliverance is very simple.

"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. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died." [Jdg.3:9-11]

A cry is all that is needed. An acknowledgement of the condition, a sense of the misery is always a forerunner of deliverance. “*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses*” [Psa.107:6]. Independence from God eventually leads to trouble; either in the case of the individual or The Church, and this necessitates a cry to the Lord, which never fails to bring Him upon the scene. This cry is a confession that we need God; He is always found where He is needed.

A deliverer exactly suited to the condition of things is found in **Othniel** (“*the lion of God*”) for he speaks of the dependence of faith. We have had some lessons before regarding him. He is closely related to the whole-hearted, Caleb, and like him, has learned the secret of victory. For “*even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men utterly fall*” [Isa.40:30]. Because they are depending upon their youth and strength; “*but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint*” [Isa.40:31]. There is no question of age when we are depending upon the Lord. Time has no effect upon the resources of faith. Years cannot sap the strength that lies hidden in weakness which counts on God’s strength. Infirmities and necessities become a very delight because they are the means of bringing in Omnipotence. Oh, how poorly we realize the greatness of the paradox; how little we comprehend the magnitude of the power that lies at the disposal of the weak.

But Othniel, the deliverer from this awful wicked oppressor of Israel, has found the spring of eternal youth. He is the son of **Kenaz** (“*the recipient of strength*”); that is, the spirit of dependence gives birth to the overcomer of the present captivity. And mark the fact that he is of Judah. He is as we may say, “*The Lion of the tribe of Judah,*” [Rev.5:5] a name significant indeed; for He it is who will be found, in a soon coming day, “*worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof*” [Rev.5:2]. And it is intensely interesting to find that this is exactly what Othniel the overcomer here, has already done. It is he who captured **Kirjath-Sepher** (“*city of books*”) and changed its name at once to that of **Debir** (“*the living oracle*”).

Now, we find this Revealer of Secrets, the suited deliverer from Chushan-rishathaim; for he is only the one who can open the book that is able to withstand “*the darkness of double wickedness,*” and loose the bands. In Kenaz, the spirit of dependence, we have the very opposite of this king of **Aram-naharaim** (“*the exalted land*”). He is the very principle of conscious weakness, helplessness, and need that begets the suited deliverer, Othniel who is the principle of courage and faith. The voice of God is thus again heard and heeded in the land; and He comes forth in mighty power to Israel’s help, and delivers the oppressor into the hand of the overcomer.

We are especially impressed in this narrative with the marvelous union which exists between Christ and His people. They are so intimately associated in these prophetic figures that one can hardly separate them. In Judges 1, Othniel is mentioned in connection with Achsah and Caleb; this refers especially to Christ alone, the One who was able to open the book and fulfill the Scriptures. However, here, as the Deliverer, Othniel portrays the principle of courage which has been born out of weakness, whether in Christ Himself or in His people. The overcomer that first takes the city out of the hand of the enemy, and then takes the enemy out of the city, is Othniel, the Lion of God.]

I Will Arise

I will arise and go when Jesus calls for me,
When out from heaven’s dome there rings the melody,
The anthem of redemption,
The bugle-blast so loud and clear.
I know His shout will sound from out the atmosphere.

I will arise and go whene’er that golden
Judges — Page 21

Voice commands me to appear and makes of me His choice.
That trump of victory shall surely summon me above,
Where overcomers meet upon their quest of love.

I will arise and go; no power can make me stay
In this old world of night, when dawns that glorious day.
The might of gravitation shall be broken.
Christ is near.
And He shall call His Bride into the stratosphere.

I will arise and go far up o'er shadows' pall
Into the azure blue above this earthen ball
Where I shall sit with Him upon His everlasting throne
To be His Bride forever, e'en His very own.

THE 2ND CAPTIVITY

"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." [Jdg.3:12]

Othniel dies and immediately, as though Israel's faith were buried in his tomb, we read of their evil doings. Whenever the spirit of dependence dies out with its attendant virtues, at once we are at the mercy of the enemy—captive again—not necessarily to the same oppressor, but maybe a worse one. It was so in that day of Israel's pilgrimage, it has been so in The Church, and it is so with every individual since. The doing evil immediately follows the decease of a judge.

Eglon, the king of Moab, is the instrument the Lord has made ready for the chastening of His people at this time. Observe that he is an instrument exactly adapted to the evil he is designed to correct; so we may get a fair idea of the disease from the remedy used to counteract it. The meaning of **Eglon** ("circular" or "wheel") refers not only to the form, but also to the motion: Revolving. Thus, Eglon figures the law of unceasing, wearying, circling change. Nothing is ever new. It is the law of restlessness that governs the world in unbelief and away from God. When the Lord's people let down in their faith, give way to fear, and talk unbelief they soon come under the power of Eglon...they become restless and discontented.

Eglon is king of Moab. Let us examine his genealogy a little and we may get some idea of his connection here. **Moab** ("seed of a father") speaks to us of the shame of his birth. He is the bastard son of Abraham's nephew, poor, world-loving Lot, yet whom God calls a "righteous man" [2 Pet 2:8]. Moab's country touched Israel's land on the southeast; but their land was not given to Abraham's seed; but was divinely secured to Moab. It was separated from the Amorite, the infidel, by the river Arnon. The Moabites are thus near to Israel by birth and location. But observe that they do not dwell in the land as the Philistine. They especially figure the world in relation to faith. Not the world bordering The Church; but The Church bordering the world. There is a deep separation between The Church and the world—the strong boundary line of death figured by the river Jordan. But when Israel loses possession of the fords of Jordan; the Cross, the power of which bridges death, she loses her place as dead and buried with Christ. Invariably, she becomes captive to the world in some phase. Thus, Moab stands for mere profession. Now we begin to see the different forms of evil that have afflicted The Church. And this oppressor does not come alone.

"And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years." [Jdg. 3:13-14]

“He gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek.” This is perfectly simple and intelligible. An unconverted profession gathers to itself all heresies (Ammon) and makes room for all the lusts of the flesh (Amalek). They take the city of **Jericho** (*“city of palms”* or *“a place of fragrance”*) [Deu.34:3], and the world finds a home there under Moabite protection, under cover of a false profession. These daughters of Moab are fair and not alone in that distant day when on Moab’s plains, the tents of Israel were spread out *“as gardens by the river’s side”* [Num.24:6], proving to be a snare to the heavenly pilgrim. But every fair, attractive, worldly delight which causes us to forget our upward calling is a daughter of the Moabite. Therefore, Moab figures the world in proximity to The Church. For a saint to be captive in his toils is to have his usefulness hindered. His joy wanes, his power waxes faint. In other words, all spiritual vigor departs when worldly ambitions step in...form becomes dominant. It is a natural consequence and yet a punishment from the Lord. *“Having a form of godliness but denying the power,”* [2Ti.3:5] is distinctly Moabitish. Many of God’s people today are captive to Moab and are not ashamed of their chains.

As further help to discover this disguised enemy, we note that he bears this mark to distinguish him from the Philistine. The Philistine is one who has come up from Egypt (the world) into the domain of faith without any right there whatever, while the Moabite goes down from this realm of life and truth into the world. The children of the Lord’s people, when they have not been true to their heavenly calling, often go in this direction; falling away from all vital piety and settling down in the world. The Catholic Church, with its ecclesiasticism, is the fullest expression of the Philistine, while the Moabite bears no less the marks of worldly dead Protestantism.

GOD-ORDAINED DELIVERANCE

“But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.” [Jdg.3:15]

Who is the divinely selected Deliverer from this awful condition? He is *“Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left handed.”* The judge figures some principle or spirit that must rule the Lord’s people which will deliver from the rule of mere profession. **Gera** (*“meditation”*) is the father of this overcomer. This is what must precede deliverance, and from which springs, in happy contrast to empty, dead profession, a joyful realization of our own wealthy portion in Christ. Ehud is close kin to Judah and has the same significance. This *“meditation”* gives birth to praise—the energy of faith, and then the great world-ruler, Eglon, is doomed. But let us consider the worthy sire of this active energetic Ehud. He is relegated to obscurity in our day. The spirit of the age is too busy to tolerate his presence. He is called a dreamer and impractical; but the Scriptures assign him a most honorable place.

Psalm 1:1-2 couples his name with the man who walks *“not in the counsel of the ungodly”* but who delights in the law of the Lord and *“meditates”* therein day and night.

The New Testament gives him no lesser place: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think (or meditate) on these thing”* [Phi 4:8].

Mary kept sitting at Jesus’ feet and meditating on His words.

It was while the Psalmist mused, the fire burned. It is not sufficient that we are active in service, nor yet that we are constantly taking in fresh food from God’s Word, apart from meditation. We need to lie down in the green pastures by the *“still”* waters (as do the cattle in the fields) and ruminate or chew the cud of what we have already cropped. This is no waste of

time, but it is an absolute necessity for spiritual growth. A healthy child does not work or eat all the time; he must rest and play while the food digests. We cannot exhaust (press out) with the teeth of faith all the sweetness and nourishment contained in the many sided fully matured grains of corn. Ruminant upon the truth. Meditate, it deepens our experience because it is then that Gera takes us by the hand and leads us into a deeper enjoyment of our glorious portion in Christ; it is from this that Ehud is born. He does valiantly.

Let us not forget that Ehud springs from Gera; praiseful activity springs from meditation. But, Ehud is left-handed. Yes, already it is beginning to be evidenced that God is endeavoring to hide pride from Israel. More and more the weakness of the instrument used is manifested. Israel is more and more in danger of vaunting themselves because of decreasing realization of the truth. We shall note this more as we go on.

"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. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. 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. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out. Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them."
[Jdg. 3:16-23]

Ehud is sent by Israel on one kind of errand; however, the Lord sends him on another. They send Eglon a tribute expressive of their bondage, which is a humiliating service for this Benjamite who is of this warrior tribe. This happy child of meditation serves another Master, bearing another message, no tribute of servitude but a 2-edged dagger which is able to deliver captive Israel. How simple the interpretation as to the 2-edged weapon. It is the Word of God which is living and powerful *"and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* [Heb.4:12]. The hand which grasps this invincible weapon of defense may be the weak left hand (little faith), it will effectually rout the enemy.

Mark its length: *"one cubit long"* which has reference, no doubt, to the simplest truth of God's Word. This, when grasped by faith, is enough to pierce through all the apparent prosperity of the world...the fat belly of Eglon. One may not be able to understand the deep things of God and know little of prophetic and dispensational truth, yet be a most energetic Ehud. *"For who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* [1Jo.5:5]. Here is a dagger of *"one cubit"*...effective and powerful. It must be girded *"upon his right thigh"* ready at a moment's notice; *"instant in season, out of season"* [2Ti.4:2] with the preaching of the Word.

Note that *"Eglon was a very fat man."* Fat is the emblem of prosperity all through the Scriptures. Here Eglon figures fair, worldly prosperity. The thought is further emphasized by the fact that he possessed the city of Palm Trees (Jericho) which is also a symbol of prosperity, sometimes used in a good sense but here it is the opposite. It simply means that the child of God has come under the power of worldly prosperity. Their bank account has increased. They now have a larger income. They have come up in the world and are living in style. In the eyes of their friends they are prospering greatly. But what does the light of the Sanctuary reveal? It reveals a shriveled soul, a tuneless heart, a dumb spirit. The chains of the captive are visible. The saddest part of all is the fact that they hug their chains, they love their captivity and utter no cry for deliverance.

Let us return to the overcomer Ehud who “*himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal*” [Jdg.3:19]. This word “*quarries*,” should be “*boundaries*.” They refer to the stones which were taken out of the river Jordan (a memorial of the fact that “*the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord*,” [Jos.4:7] and the children of Israel passed over on dry land and camped at Gilgal). The connection implies that these stones were at the borders of Eglon’s territory which he had wrenched from Israel; this is full of spiritual meaning. All hope is not lost when we still hold in our remembrance the Cross, where the waters of death were rolled away forever. This is surely the separating line between The Church and the world because Gilgal is the place where, by the sharp knives of circumcision, the children of Israel assented unto the judgment of which the river Jordan is a figure. They said “*Amen*” to the verdict of the Lord that no good thing dwells in the flesh. It marks the boundary between faith and unbelief; between The Church and the world. It is “*the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world*” [Gal.5:14]. It is a solemn place for worldly prosperity to meet faith armed with the sword of the Spirit. Face to face, alone they stand; the fat, prosperous world and poor left-handed faith.

The scene is quickly over. Into the very belly of Eglon, sinks the sharp dagger of Ehud. The very belly, the self-center of all that is in the world, “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*,” [1Jn 2:6] is pierced through and through. What is the result? Let us look at this carefully and view what the sword has revealed: “*and the dirt came out*.” Its nature is exposed. Let us not be as foolishly sensitive or delicate as to turn away from such lessons of Divine Reality. The prosperity of the world, fat and flourishing as it appears, is nothing but dung when viewed under the lens of God’s unerring Word. Yea, and so says another Benjamite who was adept at handling the sword, our own Apostle Paul, who beheld the very choicest things of this world as dung in comparison with winning Christ: “*...do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” [Phi.3:8].

Ehud escaped. He passed the boundary stones again (the place of death and resurrection) and then on to **Seirath** (“*the rugged*”). He was thus fitted to endure greater hardship as “*a good soldier of Jesus Christ*” [2Ti.2:3]. He sounds the trumpet loud and long. The overcomer of the world cannot be silent. He must let the Hebrews hear of the victory and share the spoils of conquest; for wherever that trumpet blast is heard, the slave leaps up a free man.

The children of Israel hasten to respond. All were waiting for the sound of the trumpet blast of faith. It is not in vain to make our boast in the Lord. “*The humble shall hear thereof and be glad*” [Psa.34:2]. They followed after Ehud and took the “*fords of Jordan*,” the only place where the waters of death may be crossed. Where is this? At the Cross where, in Christ, we passed over dry shod and untouched by death and judgment. Secure this vitally strategic point. It belongs to the people of God and it is here that all the boasted power of the world will fail even 10,000 fat and lusty Moabites; not one man shall escape.

“So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.”
[Jdg.3:30]

Oh, what a victory...80 years of peace and quietness! All because one man was not afraid to expose the world. What far-reaching results, dependent upon faith in God’s Word, he provides deliverance for the whole nation from an oppressor and a revival of whole-hearted, joyful obedience to the Lord. Who would not desire to be an Ehud with his sharp 2-edged dagger that he has learned to wield effectively and bring to pass such mighty results? There is plenty of room for all upon this path of faith. The crowds are not going this way.

“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.” [Jdg.3:31]

Here is just one single verse devoted to a wonderful exploit of faith. There is no word of any fresh evil doings on the part of Israel, nor of any consequent bondage; but merely “*after him was Shamgar.*” This is much more than a mere historical fact. There are depths to the Scriptures that no one has ever sounded. We have little to help us in the interpretation here except the names, so we must examine each one carefully as well as every little item in connection therewith. We may infer from the manner of introduction with no fresh lapse on Israel’s part, that it forms somewhat of a moral complement to the deliverance under Ehud. The phrase “*after him*” clearly points to the fact that Shamgar’s victory followed that of Ehud; but they do not necessarily indicate the death of Ehud. In fact, Judges 4:1 is proof against this: “*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead.*”

“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.” [Jdg.3:31]

The example set by Ehud was followed by Shamgar. Unbelief is very contagious; but so is faith. After Ehud, Shamgar walked in the same path of faith and thus these 2 mighty victories are closely connected. The one is the sure result of the other and carries the work of the gracious deliverance to completion. Shamgar is a companion deliverer of Ehud, leading us out of the world and its bondage. **Shamgar** (“*here a stranger*”) is a striking proof of this. He perfectly and beautifully figures the spirit of being a stranger which is the basis of a pilgrim walk. We must be strangers ere we can be pilgrims. If we are at home in this world, then it surely cannot be said that we are passing through, which is what the word pilgrim implies. Shamgar is out of touch with this old creation scene. His hopes are treasures that are not here. He has absolutely no fellowship with its schemes, its ambitions, or its affairs. He feels as sage and as much at home here as a sheep in a wild forest of wolves. If this is not our experience as a Christian, it is because we are not very well acquainted with the Shepherd’s Voice and consequently are no stranger here—we are no Shamgar. Shamgar’s parentage is significant. His father’s name is **Anath** (“*answer*”). So we infer that a stranger here is the “*answer*” of God to the cry of our heart. A spirit of dependent, watchful prayer follows upon the exposure of the world; such prayer always gets God’s answer. Anath is born and he later produces Shamgar. Thus Shamgar is the son of Anath. To be a pilgrim in the world we must first be a prevailer with God. A neglected throne of grace is responsible for a settling down here which eventually brings the chastening of our Father’s hand.

The enemy that Shamgar overcomes is the Philistine. While he bears some resemblance to the Moabite, yet there is a wide distinction. The **Philistine** (“*wanderer*”) is always in the land. He claims the land of Canaan, although he is not a pilgrim here but a mere “*wanderer*.” He has never, from his own place in Egypt whence he came, crossed the Jordan, but has stolen in some other way. He knows nothing of the death and resurrection with Christ—judgment all past—and of being “*holy and without blame before Him in love*” [Eph.1:4]. All this is foreign language to him and he calls it presumption. He is still alive in the flesh, and though religious, is an enemy to the Cross of Christ. The Philistine is easily detected by his special characteristics as one who is correct, formal, precise, worshiping God, and serving man by ordinances and ceremonies. Shamgar is his fitting conqueror. The one, who is so well acquainted with God, talks to and hears from God, that the world cannot charm, makes great havoc with mere worldly form. Six hundred of these formidable “*wanderers*” are no match for one Shamgar armed with a simple ox goad.

The number suggests to sight, a troop; but “**six**” is man’s number and when opposed to God is only weakness. This is surely its significance here, for 600 fall before 1, armed with only an ox goad. But what instruction has the ox goad for us? It is not a very suitable weapon for such work; but it is sufficient when in the proper hand. Let faith grasp it and an ox goad may be as cutting as a sword; for it also speaks of the Word of God. A wise man tells us that “*the words of*

the wise are as goads,” [Ecc.12:11] that is, sharp, pointed, and effective, to stir up and send along the pilgrim path any who might become indifferent or loiter by the way.

Here from the same armory we have 2 different weapons. They are the very same instruments which the fathers used and found sufficient. There have been no improvements along this line. They are not out of date and need not be dull nor rusty. The Holy Spirit will keep them in perfect repair. These old fashioned instruments have never been superseded with rifles or explosives. Faith alone is needed to make them as effective as dynamite. They will fire up, call down, put to flight, and kill all at the same moment. They are invincible when rightly handled. But it is not enough to admire the worthy. To be Ehud or Shamgar, we should grasp the same weapon and learn to use it effectively in disturbing the peace and putting every oppressor of God’s people to flight, be they Moabite or Philistine. We have found a sword of 1 cubit in the words, “*Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” [Act.8:37]. This is indeed a pointed call to press on, and surely will prick and sting if we attempt to settle down in this scene. Let the hand of faith grasp this and we are armed at once with Shamgar’s ox goad and all earth-dwelling Philistines must die. For if I have passed through the cold dark waters of death with Christ and been raised up with Him, then where He is, in the light and glory of the heavenlies, is my home. My name is Shamgar; I am a stranger here.

He walks amidst a scene of danger with Satan near;
But looking up, he passes on, a stranger and knows no fear.

Oh Love! Oh Love!

O love, that sought me when in sin,
That went to Calv’ry love to win;
That fills and thrills and burns like fire,
Makes sense be dumb and flesh retire.
And meets the depths of man’s desire!

O love, constraining and constrained!
This all consuming, uncontained;
Which flows in billows, deep and wide,
True essence of the Crucified,
There is no other love beside.

O love, that none can comprehend,
Which even angels’ grasp transcend!
The Christ alone, this love possessed;
Its fullness, He made manifest,
In bringing me profoundest rest.

O love, that would not let me go,
That moved my will and bro’t me low!
I find my happy home in Thee,
A captive bound, yet ever free,
I could not live apart from Thee.

O love, that draws me to the sky,
To reign in heav’n with Thee for aye,
Thy Bride is hallowed forever be;
Thy glory Thou wilt share with me;
All honor shall be giv’n to Thee.

THE 3RD CAPTIVITY

"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles." [Jdg.4:1-2]

Eighty quiet years of rest and peace have followed the double victory of Ehud and Shamgar. This is a double 40, the limit of the years of peace which followed the victory of Othniel, and confirms our interpretation, that these 2 deliverances were closely connected. We are reminded again that we are studying a book which tells us of failure. Not that we may do likewise, but that we may learn the secret of overcoming; for always side by side with the doing evil, there is a judge raised up.

We are introduced to the 3rd captivity by the phrase "*The Lord sold them*," as though He had lost all interest and ownership in them; He is not enriched thereby. "*Thou sellest Thy people for nought, and dost not increase Thy wealth by their price*" [Psa.44:12]. The Spirit takes this manner of informing us that now they have another Master. The Lord has given them up because they refused to hear or heed His counsel. They wanted to do as they pleased, according to their own depraved reasoning mind, so the Lord sells them. They become the slaves of reason, believing only what they can understand. It is a principle with God that the reaping shall be as the sowing. Just as truly as we begin to do as we think regarding Divine Things, and not as God says, we will end by being led captive to the above mentioned despot, Jabin. The Lord chastens His people in this manner. There is marvelous significance in the fact that it is the 3rd captivity, the number of resurrection, revival, and manifestation. The Lord rose on the 3rd day. Accordingly then, we are not surprised to find in this case a revival of some old enemies, foes which Israel had met years ago and utterly destroyed. They again make their appearance, lusty and energetic as in former days. Who would ever have expected to find that old city of Hazor rebuilt and dominant again after such recorded destruction: "*And Joshua at that time turned back and took Hazor*" [Jos 11:1]? He smote the king thereof and all its inhabitants: there were not any left, and he burnt Hazor with fire. We would surely infer that this was the end of Hazor; that never more would it rise from its ruins and confront Israel. Yet, this is just what happened and even the very same king, as far as his name goes, is reigning. It was Jabin, king of Hazor, who was the head of the confederacy of northern kings whom Joshua defeated at the waters of Merom. So here is Jabin again, though of course another personage, and yet not another morally because in what he figures, he is but a repetition of the first. This is surely in perfect harmony with what the number 3 expresses. Herein is a solemn yet gentle warning to us personally. The Church, as a whole and individuals (in particular), has been overtaken and led captive by a Jabin at one time or another.

JABIN AND SISERA

"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." [Jdg.4:1-3]

Let us consider this long-lived fellow Jabin and his city of Hazor. He has a mighty captain, Sisera, who dwells in "*Harosheth of the Gentiles*." All the above is wonderful when viewed under the microscopic lens of the Holy Spirit. It becomes full of Divine Illumination and tells us of the cause of much of present failure in The Church. **Jabin** ("*reason, intelligence, wisdom*") is not a

bad name in itself. In fact, it sounds intellectual, aristocratic, and refined. But when opposed to God it must necessarily have a very bad significance. Intelligence is good, but when an enemy of God, it is a foe that must be utterly routed or Israel will be captive. Jabin represents the fallen corrupt reasoning faculties of man at enmity with God and every ready, whether in the past or present, to bring the Lord's people into bondage if they do not maintain their place as a new creation. There was a time when Jabin was slain. He was put to death with Christ on Calvary. And for The Church, in those first early days of matchless victory when they stood as one man against all the power of the world, he was a conquered foe; for every "high thought," (Jabinite) which exalted itself against the knowledge of Christ, had to come down. But alas, she, like her prototype, has forgotten what she received and heard, and "high thoughts" have dominated her for many years as conditions evidence on every hand. Jabin is a crafty foe. And we are very susceptible to his power.

Jabin's royal city is **Hazor** (*"an enclosure, a place surrounded by a wall"*), surely an appropriate dwelling for him. The fleshly understanding; narrow, bigoted, bounded on all sides and of necessity bounded by its own limited capacity, admitting nothing that is beyond its power to reason out; necessarily giving out nothing but its own thoughts. Truly Jabin has a suitable city for his dwelling place. But even then he is not content of his host **Sisera** (*"battle array"*). That is, he is offensive as well as defensive. In those early days, when he was defeated by Joshua, he was only defending his own portion, as it were; but now he is going further; he is attempting to take Israel's name as well as his portion. Sisera, judging by his name as well as his actions, is certainly a fighter. He especially represents the aggressive form of depraved human reason that is destructive to the liberty of faith. His dwelling place confirms the interpretation, as well as adds to the harmony and instruction of the entire record. God is surely desirous that we understand the teaching contained in these apparently trivial items, such as the name of the city, when He has undertaken to inspire the historical writer who has given us these facts. He would have *"the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* [2Ti 3:17]. Alas, few are the men of God in this sense, today.

Harosheth (*"cutting" or "carving"*), is certainly a suitable place for the captain of Jabin's host. It is especially emphasized as a Gentile city, and thus refers to the cutting work of those who know not God. This lack of knowledge of God is always said to characterize the Gentiles: *"even as the Gentiles which know not God"* [1Th.4:5].

All these meanings are in perfect, if sorrowful, harmony. The whole series proclaims the fact that vain, depraved mental activity may again take the place of lowly subjection to God's Word; the result of which is a constant aggressive "carving" of one another—a "biting and devouring"—which Paul admonishes, *"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another"* [Gal.5:15]. They again walk as men, yea as Gentiles who know not God, and this is clearly evidenced by the cutting work—the sectarian differences between the Lord's blood-bought flock. How sad is the condition manifest in this respect today.

Remember, it is the Lord who sold His people to Jabin. They refused to be subject to Him so God gives them another Master and they have to serve him. The contention goes on. The rasping and cutting continues. The different voices are raised, each contending for his own little doctrine upon which he has been grazing for years and which affords no pasture for anyone else. Nothing juicy or refreshing; but they must talk although they say nothing of any value to anyone. The Lord has sold His people. They are no longer of any use to Him as testimonies of what His grace can make of them. No longer do men recognize them as disciples of our Lord, by the evidence of fervent brotherly love. The Lord has sold them. They are, in this sense, no more His *"riches"* [Eph.1:18] by whom and through whom He is able to manifest Himself. The cutting work goes bravely on, and by their works they are known. They proclaim by whom they are held in bondage. The Corinthians were captive to this enemy, as

well as the Galatians, because the Apostle wrote, "*For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men*" [1Co.3:3]. Furthermore, we must admit to our shame that the shoe fits us all rather well today.

WHO ARE FREE?

Let us see who are free from captivity to Jabin. He who has no circle of fellowship, or church, or denomination smaller than the all saints whom the Father includes; the one who has no Hazor, no enclosed city, with its walls and fences of tests and conditions (product of our own reasoning mind and not of the word of God); for such shut out those whom we are bidden to receive: "*Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God*" [Rom.15:7]. Many of the Lord's people, who once were free from sectarian domination, are again coming into and dwelling in this old city of Hazor. They seem to like its world-revered walls and bulwarks. They like an enclosure to which they can point with pride and say, as others, "I belong to such and such a church." A few short years ago, when the Spirit of God began to fall as on the day of Pentecost, it appeared like Hazor was certainly gone forever. But no, it is still in our midst, rebuilt it may be, but the same sectarian position and selfish narrow principles are gradually becoming more manifest and are again dominating some of the Lord's free men.

This Jabin is "*king of Canaan*." **Canaan** ("*merchant*" or "*trafficker*"), is a word often found in the Scripture, and always in a bad sense. "*He is a merchant (a Canaanite); the balances of deceit are in his hand*" [Hos.12:7]. The Canaanite was a trader for self-aggrandizement; he sought his own not another's wealth; his own not the things which are Jesus Christ's. This old Canaanite was alive in our Apostle's day and he is still very much in evidence today. Whenever there is any cutting work going on, whenever there is envy, strive, and division manifested among the saints, one may be sure the Canaanite is not far away. Diotrephes, of whom John warns was a mighty Canaanite in his day, and his spirit still lives and "*loveth to have the preeminence*" [3Jo.9]. So as to exalt self, he is the spirit that ever lords it over God's heritage; trafficking in the truth, making merchandise of the people: "*And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you*" [2Pe.2:3]. He is the spirit that seeks to build up "my church," instead of the saints; desiring to make proselytes to "my company," instead of adding to the whole Church, "*such as should be (were being) saved*." [Act.2:47]. How is it with us? Are we captive to Jabin, king of Canaan?

THE DELIVERANCE

In these 2 worthy ones, Deborah and Barak, we have the God-appointed way of deliverance pointed out for us. May it cheer our hearts to trace the manner of Israel's victory, and note that there is hope for us.

"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." [Jdg.4:3]

The first thing needed is a cry. Alas, we are living in a day when there is little "crying," little self-judgment, but rather a kind of despairing contentment with the miserable state of affairs, or else the much worse condition of boasting in ourselves, saying "*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*" [Rev.3:17]. But the children of Israel cried unto the Lord; for the bondage was in the extreme. The oppressor had "*nine hundred chariots of iron*." He was treating them "rough," as is the expression used today in connection with the tank corps, a very aggressive form of military service. What are "*chariots of iron*" in comparison with that strong right arm of the Almighty God which is ever for His people when they cry unto Him in their dire extremity? There must be the cry, the sense of need.

"And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." [Jdg. 4:4-5]

With every increasing care, lest Israel vaunt themselves, a woman is now the judge; not even a left-handed man would do in this case; but one more expressive of recognized weakness. Her name is exactly what we would expect to find in such a condition of affairs in which the Word of God has been superseded by the wisdom of the world. **Deborah** ("a bee"; "*her speaking*"), who now judges Israel, teaches us that deliverance from Jabin comes by judging everything by the Word of God upon the subject. They must take its counsel and instruction and obey its voice before deliverance will be manifested. Furthermore, Deborah is married and she is never divorced from her husband. She must be in living connection with another to be effective. She is the wife of **Lapidoth** ("*lamp, firebrands*"). How perfectly this expresses the Spirit of God, the only true enlightener of our darkness. The Word, thus connected with the Spirit, truly becomes "*a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path*" [Psa.119:105]. In Deborah and Lapidoth, whom God hath joined together, we have the Word illuminated by the Spirit which enlightens, purifies, consumes, and delivers. Observe her dwelling place, walk around it, and mark its verdancy and shade; its spreading branches affording shelter and refuge from the head and storm. No Harosheth, no cutting or carving of God's true saints in the home of the Word joined to the Spirit.

But, you will find her "*under the Palm Tree of Deborah.*" The palm-tree, according to Scriptures, is the figure of prosperity; as it is written, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree*" [Psa.92:12]; so here it expresses the blessed spiritual prosperity of those who are abiding by the Word of God, whose counsels are their standard of judgment. It is a happy place, a glad state, in which to live; not our thought or reasoning but the "*thus saith the Lord*"...the answer to all our questions. We then are truly prospering—blessed and happy—dwelling under the shadow of Deborah's palm tree, though to the world we may appear as poor, wretched, and friendless.

The exact situation of this lovely tree is still further and very carefully described so that we may not be mistaken regarding Deborah's dwelling place. It lies between **Ramah** ("*the heights*"), and **Bethel** ("*the house of God*"). The names of these cities are significant. Ramah speaks of Christ exalted, the true standard of self-judgment, and our secure place in Him as crowned with glory and honor. On the other hand, Bethel emphasizes the fact that communion is maintained by self-judgment. Here then we have the 2 sides of our Christian life, our standing and our state; each having its place, one on each side of Deborah's palm tree. From here, Ramah is well in view; one may see clearly the wonderful place of security and blessing in the Beloved, even as He. Then, we turn and look in the other direction finding that we are fully in sight of the house of God. The one city is a call to the other. Deborah dwells between them both; the Word of God is the balance, giving to each its due weight.

In this present scene, the exalted place to which we are called demands a house of praise, worship, and prayer. Thus the Divine Significance of these series of names is very wonderful. The Word of God (Deborah) illuminated and set on fire by the Spirit (Lapidoth) energizes and maintains us in spiritual prosperity (the Palm Tree) by judging all that is contrary to God. Thus, there is a perfect agreement between our standing on high (Ramah), and our state here on earth (Bethel). All this must be practically learned before there can be deliverance from Jabin's captivity. It is only when the Lord's people have found "*the Palm Tree of Deborah*" that they are ready for the next step—the calling of Barak.

PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED

We have learned that all these deliverers are principles which must be in evidence in individuals before the enemy can be overcome. They all speak of the necessity of a true judgment of self; but this is especially manifested in the deliverance by Barak.

"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? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh." [Jdg.4:6-9]

Barak ("*lightning*") speaks very loudly of judgment; for lightning is not light in its gentle beneficent action; but is tempest, wrath, and terror. The Lord spoke of His coming in judgment upon the whole earth to be "*as the lightning shining from one part of heaven even to the other*" [Luk.17:24]. It will be the day of the exposure and the overthrow of error because God, who is light, will be upon the scene. His full manifestation will result in the fullest judgment. Falsehood and hypocrisy will perish forever; everything will be laid naked and bare in The Light. Thus, the calling of Barak by Deborah, teaches that a true estimate of the Word of God calls for Christ to act in fullest harmony with the character of God. He is to act in us, to act for us, in conformity with the truth; to shine into our hearts as the lightning, so that the darkness and deceit will be truly manifested and judged in the light and forever put away.

But, Barak's father, **Abinoam** ("*the father of pleasantness*"), seems to deny this interpretation. How can such judgment be born of that which is pleasant, amiable, and good? Well, this is exactly the case. To the spiritual mind it is easy to understand; for such are ever ready to justify the Father in all His dealings, be they unwelcomed or desired. The thought of judgment of what is evil, whether it is in him or others, is not necessarily unwelcome to such a one. Rather the contrary. It is, in one view of it, "*pleasantness*;" for we are thus conformed to the "*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" [Rom.12:2] whose grace is thus revealed against him. We rejoice in the overthrow. In fact, when we get a glimpse of our standing in Christ, dwelling in communion with God under Deborah's palm tree, we call for Barak; we refuse to allow any high thought to lift up its head against God. We call for judgment upon it; "*casting down imaginations and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" [2Co.10:5]. This is Barak in action against these realities, of which Jabin and Sisera, his captain, were but the figures.

Judgment on Israel's foes was really mercy toward Israel. These evil imaginations, these high things, and our enemies would defeat God's purpose for us, hindering us by holding our possessions. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, called Barak into action; listen to his anthem of rejoicing at the result of Barak's coming; "*At midnight I will arise to give thanks to Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments*" [Psa.119:62]. They are "pleasant." Indeed, it is in this manner that the earth is to be purged from the evil and made new "*when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*" [Isa 26:29]. Love is not shocked, as some have falsely assumed, holding that judgment on evil is inconsistent with love. Nay, but the contrary is the case. Divine Love necessitates judgment, because great fear comes on all His people and "*believers are the more added to the Lord*" [Act.5:14]. "*Our God is a consuming fire*" [Heb.12:29] toward all that is contrary to His holiness.

Deborah sends for Barak and she knows exactly where he is to be found. He abides in **Kedesh-Naphtali** (*“the sanctuary of the wrestler”*). We must certainly consider this dwelling place of Barak; because when we need him, we will still find him in this same holy place. By this we may always know the spirits who present themselves to us under this honored name of “judgment according to God;” for indeed many false Barak’s are abroad in the world today, who are really little better than Sisera’s, though covered with a thin veil of much apparent piety and fair speech. In his day, Diotrephes, no doubt, made himself out a Barak; but he was only a Sisera disguised. A true Barak begins in lowly self-judgment first by “*casting out the beam from his own eye*” [Mat.7:5] not by judging his own true brethren, separating from them, or casting them out. As shown by **Kedesh** (*“the sanctuary”*) being in **Naphtali** (*“the wrestler”*), an energy is manifested; it is holy, fiery zeal, and energy which discerns the true foe to be resisted and routed.

The divinely appointed instruments chosen for this deliverance are the 2 tribes of **Zebulon** (*“dwelling”*) and **Naphtali** (*“wrestler”*); names which are truly instructive and yet in a strange paradoxical manner. They mean quiet rest on the one hand and associated with the closest conflict on the other. Peace and war seem not more opposed than Zebulon and Naphtali; yet they are here drafted for joint service in a common cause, to march side by side with one aim to one victory. Apparently, it would have been better to send Naphtali (the *“wrestler”*) first, to do all the fighting and let Zebulon (the *“dweller”*) follow as a natural consequence. But no, incongruous as it may appear, they must go together, hand in hand, that we may learn some necessary lessons which will keep us properly balanced.

We have much need of Naphtali, for we too “wrestle,” though not with “*flesh and blood*”, but with “*spiritual wickedness*” in the heavenlies [Eph.6:12]. There is no form of conflict which puts such a strain upon every fiber and muscle of the body as wrestling. There is no rest for mind or body while the fight goes on. Where then, one may ask, is there place for Zebulon? Yet paradoxical as it appears, Zebulon is equally of prominence with Naphtali; for while wrestling in this spiritual conflict, we may, in a sense, “rest,” because it is in this “rest: that we find the strength needed for the wrestling. We would have small hope of victory in the conflict in which we are engaged, without Zebulon.

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” [Isa 40:31]

The enfeebled condition of Zebulon (they were not dwelling in that which is their own portion) results in a self-seeking which this revival of the Canaanite indicates. Jabin could have never gotten a foothold if Zebulon were enjoying his land. Although, Hazor is in the land of Naphtali, proving that if we do not wrestle against our true foe, Satan, we will eventually wrestle against our brother. We will strive with words to no profit and yet think we are doing God service because this is always the case when Jabin is reigning; where he is dominant, Naphtali is prostrate.

But Barak refuses to take the land without Deborah; for it is the Word which brings the deliverance figured here. This is what is most certainly needed today—the Word of God brought to the heart in old time Pentecostal power. Not another wonderful experience to bring the saints into unity and love, but the Truth set on fire by the Spirit of Truth who has come to guide us into all Truth. The saints have already been made one by the “baptism in the one Spirit” on the day of Pentecost: “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” [1Co.2:13]. We will enjoy the unity and demonstrate the love when we believe the facts which the Word of God emphatically declares. God’s saints are running hither and thither, seeking experiences and excitement, losing their lives, frittering away God-given opportunities to redeem the time. They are making no use of the precious talent from “*the power from on high*” [Luk.24:49]; the Gift which

has been entrusted them for service. Instead of waiting upon God for an understanding of His Word, which He has magnified above His name, they are waiting for another “shower” or a nameless something. They will awaken to their sad condition when the first rank of overcomers is taken out and they are left in this scene when God’s judgments are being poured out. Then...they will turn to the Word; for everything else will be failing. War, famine, pestilence, and death follow one another in rapid succession. No hope because they would not heed the unfailing Word of God which revealed these dire judgments and the way of escape. If we do not judge the old man in ourselves and allow God to put down every manifestation of his presence in us, we will, no doubt, be here to suffer when the world is judged.

The Fair Evening

O fair will it be in the evening
When the sunset encircles the West,
And the clouds in their golden adorning
Slip quietly down to their rest,
While we shall mount up in the gloaming
To harbor on Jesus’ strong breast.

O fair will it be in the evening
When the day shall be over and one,
And men from their work are returning,
So glad for the setting of sun,
While heroes of faith shall be shouting,
Up-going last mile of the run.

O fair will it be in the evening
With glint of the red in the sky,
When the Lord shall come forth in His beauty
And to His best loved ones shall cry,
“Come hither, my Love, to your mansion;
Rise up to your palace on high.”

O fair will it be in the evening
And happy the glorified be,
When Jesus and loved ones together
Will gather by the crystal sea,
And sing the glad song of redemption
To the ages of eternity.

JUDGES 6

THE 4TH CAPTIVITY

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.” [Jdg.6:1]

Israel “*did evil*” again. Who would have thought of such a thing? We would have concluded, and have been justified in our conclusions, that never again could Israel forget the Rock which bought them. Surely such a wonderful deliverance will introduce the Millennium. Israel will walk with her Divine Deliverer with abiding joy and constant singing for 1,000 years. We would truly have inferred that Deborah’s impassioned fiery zeal and energy, her burning utterances, and her song of celebration had burned themselves into the hearts and lives of the people of Israel. But alas, no. Why? Because the true Deliverer had not yet come out of Zion. Israel is

still unregenerate and 40 years are enough to make the victory merely a historical fact. In that brief time the joy and gladness (the liberty consequent upon their deliverance) has ebbed away. They forgot the power and the sufficiency of their Savior, their God, and for the 4th time it is recorded that they “*did evil in the sight of the Lord.*”

This is not simply a little moral lapse, a side step, as it were, from the path of rectitude. Oh no, this is much deeper. The external outward departure into sin is only the evidence of evil; it is not the evil itself. The sin was there before it was manifested. The Lord sees the inward condition, the coldness, the indifference toward Himself and His concerns, and calls it “evil” even though the outward condition may be most religious and correct. A stream of water may be filled with mud and filth and have every evidence of corruption, but it will not avail to make it better to pick out all that we can see. No, the trouble is deeper. We must get to the source of the corruption and remedy this; only then will the water will be pure. So here with Israel the tide is going down. Divine Influences have lost their attractive power. Earth’s influences are swaying them now. They are going with the tide. Its downward tendencies are too strong for them. It requires too much dependence upon an invisible God to stand and withstand the current of popular opinion. The clubs of ridicule and mockery soon beat the weaklings back to drift with the tide. This is “*evil in the sight of the Lord.*” This departure was manifested early in the course of The Church. Soon the Lord had to say to her,

“Thou hast left thy love, thy primary love. I am not first with thee. Other loves, other interests, other props, other attractions have superseded Me. You are concerned with service for man; you must get sinners saved; you love to work; but you have left your first purpose, your primary love; you have fallen from your place. Your primary love should be for Me as that of a wife toward her husband and this you are not giving Me. I refuse a secondary place. I am jealous over you. If you do not give Me this first place, this primary love, I will depart from you.”

But The Church did not heed the voice of her Beloved. He wanted to be first; but she was concerned with the world and its interests; its needs were first with her. She did not take home to herself His sweet words. She left her first love. But now, we believe that the Lord is talking to the individual. Some are waking up to the significance of His words. They are beginning to believe that He loves them as a bridegroom loves his bride, although this comes far short of it, and they are reciprocating this burning love that will not let them go. They are putting Him first. He is more to them than anything; more than a great name, even a great religious name, more than power, more than fame, more than numbers. They love Him; they are not ashamed to declare it. He is the attraction, the Lode Star which guides them upward and onward. They are constrained by love, by privilege not duty or law. He is all-in-all to them. Other loves, other people, even their nearest and dearest, take a secondary place.

The number 4 (the symbol of weakness—the creature in contrast with the Creator) is most significant and suggests lessons connected with it. It speaks of testing on every side. There are 4 corners of the earth; and as we pass through from east to west, from north to south, we trace the trials of the wilderness. It is thus the number of the world; the wilderness number. Numbers, the 4th book in the Bible, is distinctly the book of the wilderness. Thus, we may expect to find in this present captivity, the result of the world’s admittance into the first number which allows division of The Church of God.

Midian (“*strife*”), the enemy who now oppresses Israel, is closely related and often identified with Moab; both stand for the world in its separation from God. Naturally, Amalek is not far from Midian, for the “*lust of the flesh*” [1Jo.2:16] is closely allied to the “lust of the world,” and both spring from contention and strife in the professing church. In James 4, we have a marvelous connection between Moab, Amalek, and Midian, that is, between world-loving, lusts and strife:

"From whence come wars and fighting's (Midian) among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (Amalek); ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world (Moab) is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." [Jam.4:4]

Therefore, Midian represents the principle of carnal strife to which God gives His people over to because of their love of the world. Each fall results in more developed "strife" until here in this captivity, Israel is viewed in awful bondage to this cruel oppressor, all due to the worldly principle which was held sway.

"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains and caves and strong holds." [Jdg.4:2]

Israel is lower than ever now. Indeed, she is in an evil case. God is chastening His people so that even faith has to find refuge in dens and caves of the earth; however, it is ever followed with the tender appreciative eyes of a loving Father. Israel is ashamed and distressed. Her Gideon's and even David's may be in humiliation; Israel only sees nothing but weakness and defeat; but the Divine Verdict upon such is *"Of whom the world is not worthy"* [Heb.11:38]. There is never keener appreciation and greater reward of faithfulness than in times of general indifference and coldness. Mark this fact, which is evidence as to the above statement, the people of today are on a even lower plane than those in the day of Barak.

"And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice." [Jdg.6:7-10]

For the first time Jehovah sends a prophet. The people are not even conscious of their awful condition. They need to be awakened to the truth that the trouble is with them. They cried unto the Lord in their distress; but they did not acknowledge their own sin. The prophet comes for this purpose. God's chastening hand is never upon us merely that it may be withdrawn when we cry to Him. There is a greater object than this at which He aims. God would have the need of the chastening brought home to the conscience so that His people would not only get deliverance but blessing.

So, welcome the prophet that comes with the Word of Jehovah; for the prophet must precede the judge. He tells them of God's wonderful grace—what He had done for them. He brought them out of Egypt, He brought them out of the house of bondage, He delivered them from the power of the Egyptians, He delivered them from all their oppressors, He drove their enemies out from before them, and He gave them their land. God said unto them:

"I am Jehovah your God. Fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but ye have not obeyed my voice." [Jdg.6:10]

The prophet comes before the deliverer. We are not told this prophet's name. The Lord would have us occupied with the message not the man. However, we are told to *"despise not prophesying"* [1Th.5:20]. This does not necessarily consist in the foretelling of future events; but as here, in a Word from the Lord directly to the conscience of the people...He aims to touch their heart. His goodness to them was the cudgel He used. He "clubbed" them 7 times with His love. He brings this vast array of blessing and mercy to bear upon their conscience and

awakens them to their condition and His attitude toward them. Not one word of law, only a tender pleading questions of

“Why have you requited me thus?”

“Why not obey my voice of love to you?”

“Did I not deserve obedience, I who had only done you good?”

The prophet’s loving message was not in vain. It broke the hard heart. The stiff neck bowed and acknowledged the justice of Jehovah’s chastening before deliverance came. Then, the judge (Gideon) is called.

“And there came an angel of the Lord and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine press to hide it from the Midianites.”
[Jdg.6:11]

This angel of the Lord is none other than Jehovah Himself in hidden character. He sits under the oak that is in **Ophrah** (“*dust*”). This is again is the one essential truth of strength in weakness; so easily forgotten yet ever insisted upon. The oak is always the symbol of strength; but the strength is prostrate...in the dust. Furthermore, this place of dust belongs to **Joash** (“*the despairing one*”), the father of **Gideon** (“*cutter down*”). Despair of self gives birth to the principle of spirit that cuts down all that exalts self. The oak is in Ophrah...strength in weakness. All is harmonious and perfect.

Gideon is busy, no idler is he; but it is a menial task which engages him. He is threshing out the “*wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.*” Pregnant with deepest significance is both the action and the place. Although it apparently is a little thing, to get a little wheat threshed in a day of bondage and strife is a mighty achievement. The wheat is a figure of the Word of God; a necessity for the up-building of the new man. The only place that it can be threshed out, when the Midianites and Amalekites are swarming the land, is “*by the winepress.*” Where is this but in the sacred place of bruising...the cross of Christ. There is always wheat in the winepress. It is there we get the wine as well as the wheat; both are the result of Calvary. This is the only place we are safe from Midian, that spirit of strife that ever robs the Lord’s blood-bought flock of their food. Midian never finds the wheat that is his way to the winepress; this is the principle of biting and devouring cannot exist by the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the place where the Lord meets this mighty overcomer, Gideon.

Note the startling address with which Gideon is greeted:

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.” [Jdg.6:12]

Oh how these words of encouragement must have amazed Gideon. How they would have cheered and gladdened his downcast heart and saddened spirit if he could have believed them. Appreciation, comfort, and blessing are contained in them. But they seem to be too good to be true. They manifest circumstances and conditions that too plainly evidence the opposite of this language. Gideon’s voices the discouragement of his heart:

“And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” [Jdg.6:13]

Although the Lord’s address was to him personally (“*The Lord is with thee*”), Gideon referenced the people of God as a whole, not just himself alone. Gideon had been concerned for the Lord’s

people. Because he identified himself with all his brethren, their condition was his condition. They were God's people, consequently they were his people. He had been endeavoring to thresh out a little wheat for the sustenance of all, that the famine consequent upon the enemy's invasion of Israel's land might be alleviated in some measure. Oh yes, the Lord's people were dear to him; this is the reason the Lord now singles him out and chooses him as the deliverer. What an honor...*"a vessel unto honor"* (the link with the Lord) *made meet for the Master's use*" [2Ti.2:21]. His question is the evidence that he had been much with God. He had meditated upon God's dealings with Israel in the past and wept over the contrast to the present scene of bondage and woe. Though it be in tears, faith always turns to the mighty dealings of God in the past. It fills us with much more comfort and strength to *"remember the works of the Lord ...Thy wonders of old"* [Psa.77:11], than even our own song in the night. There is very little comfort to remember our past feelings in a time of trial, famine, and affliction; but the memory of His gracious deliverances are bound to fill our heart with cheer.

Gideon asks, *"Why then is all this befallen us?"* Surely we too are justified in asking the same question; for the today's condition of the Lord's people is not unlike what it then was in Israel. A little remnant (here and there an individual) is beating out a little food from the finest of the wheat but in secret for fear of the spirit of strife that ever takes it away from the people. The principle which Gideon evidenced is still alive. We may say...His spirit lives! And still, as then, we seek to feed and cherish the saints of God and deliver them from strife. This can only be accomplished as they feed upon the fine flour mentioned in Leviticus 2:1, and are *"strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man"* [Eph.3:16] because Christ is dwelling in the heart rooting and grounding them in love and enabling them to comprehend with all saints the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

"And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?" [Jdg.6:14]

Literally, this means that the Lord turned His face upon Gideon; God let it shine, with all its warmth of love and power, down on him. What is *"this thy might?"* Ah, here is a valuable secret...Gideon's might; well may we all covet this. It is more than all the influence, the fame and the power of the world. Listen, it is the Lord looking upon him that is Gideon's might; but it is his confessed weakness that brings this glorious result. *"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my Word"* [Isa.66:2]. His face is ever turned upon the weak and helpless that trust Him. He still sends such to deliver and bless others. Gideon thought the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, that no more would He deliver them; their case was hopeless until their own resources were all departed; until, like in Elijah's case, *"the brook had dried up"* [2Kg.17:7]; otherwise He could not be the *"might."* *"Thou shalt save Israel,"* He whispered to Gideon. He is overwhelmed. I, save Israel?

"And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." [Jdg.6:15-16]

Yes, Gideon's family is poor. One of these "forgetting" fellows (Manassahites), said he was *"less than the least of all saints"* [Eph.3:8]. However, the question is not about the weakness of the "I," but about the might of Jehovah. It is easier to confess to our poverty and lack than to our infinite riches in Christ. We often shirk responsibility by the salve to our conscience that we are too lowly, too humble; this is but pride after all. If there was no "I," then the Lord would have His place and everything would be easy. *"I can do all things through Christ"* [Phi.4:13] would be our triumphant boast because God has said, *"I will be with thee."*

Every difficulty will be for Him.

Every foe will meet His arm.
His wisdom will plan and empower the campaign.
His grace will sustain.
His love will embrace us to the end.

"And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again." [Jdg.6:17-18]

Poor, yet happy Gideon. He is the exact expression of the spiritual level of those whom God is using for His mightiest works today. They believe yet are timid; true yet hesitating; not fully assured that the Lord means all His mighty promises. They are not entirely prepared to receive all the floodtide of goodness that the Lord is longing to pour out upon them. Yet, they are still following on that they might know more fully. Gideon is a most interesting, as well as instructive, character for us to observe and to mark the gracious dealings of our God, with whom we equally, shrinking and cumbered with weakness, have to do.

Gideon desires a closer acquaintance with this One who speaks so kindly to him because his heart was beginning to burn within him as he listened. He must entertain this stranger; he must give; he must offer, even as did 2 others at a later date who walked and talked with this same gracious Person on their journey to Emmaus [Luk.24]; but still being uncertain as to the identity of his guest. This was not worship as in full recognition of the Divine Presence but rather an endeavor to constrain this wonderful heart-warmer to abide with him and not consider the tender, patient condescension of Jehovah's *"I will tarry till thou come again."*

"And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight." [Jdg.6:19-21]

This surely is the same One who, at another time, manifesting the same condescending grace, said *"Children, have ye any meat?"* [Joh.21:5]. Here too, He is actually going to sup with Gideon and the kid and cakes are consumed; but the manner is according to Jehovah's power. They are accepted, fed upon with the fire of God, and then with this final seal of gracious good-will to poor bewildered Gideon, *"the Angel departed out of his sight."* Gideon knew Him then, as did those 2 on the road to Emmaus; but why not before. We read, *"Their eyes were hold that they should not know Him"* [Luk.24:16]. Who closed the eyes? Did God hold His hand over them all along the way as they walked and talked with Jesus? Was it the Lord's desire that their vision of Him should be dimmed? Surely not. The cause was in them. They were not looking at Him. Their gaze was fixed upon circumstances which were certainly depressing and discouraging. They were remembering the betrayal of Jesus, the trial, the shame, the cross, the grave...all were filling their vision. And there they stopped. *"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"* [Luk.24:16]. "We expected more of this crucified One," they say. In like manner, Gideon had before his eyes the trying circumstances of the hour; the captivity; the suffering, and the humiliation of being poor, despised, and helpless before their enemies. "I had expected better of the Lord," says he. "Where are all the miracles which our fathers told us about?" Is it not exactly the same faithless speech not of rebellious infidelity, not of old A Theist, or Miss Trust but of our old familiar acquaintance, Little Faith, who is always with us. However, Gideon's eyes are not closed now, they are wide open. Listen to this mighty man of valor, this deliverer of Israel.

"And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites." [Jdg.6:22-24]

"Alas, O Lord God, because I have seen an angel face to face." Surely after such an exhibition of weakness there is hope for any of us. If the Lord's grace was sufficient for such foolishness and slowness of heart to believe, we need not fear. He knows our frame; He remembers it is **Ophrah** ("dust") and His compassion is infinite. "*A bruised reed shall He not break*" [Isa.42:3] for it is ever out of weakness that His people are made strong. However, the weakness must be practically known, not held as a theory but as a reality felt in life. Before he could have any true power with God, Jacob's height, his strength, was put out of joint...and he felt the pain. It was real to him. His walk was affected. He needed the strength of an Almighty Arm to lean upon. He knew he was lame; this was when his name was changed from **Jacob** ("the supplanter") to **Israel** ("the prince with God"). It was then he saw God "face to face" [Gen.32:30].

"Peace be unto thee; fear not: Thou shalt not die." And lo, there is a great calm. The storm has passed, the clouds have gone, the sun shines, and all is well. Then, there is an altar. As a matter of course, **worship follows peace**. Things are getting right with Gideon because now he not only recognizes the Lord; but, far more, he recognizes that the Lord is for him. And...not only that the Lord is (even the devil knows that), but "*that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*" [Heb 11:6]. Gideon commemorates this peace in naming his altar **Jehovah-Shalom** ("*Jehovah is Peace*"). Not "Jehovah sends peace;" that tends to weaken the wine and modify the joy because it put Jehovah at a distance as only sending peace. This will not suffice this mighty man of valor. Nothing must be between Jehovah and Peace. Jehovah Himself is Peace.

This is exactly the way another Gideon designated His altar "*Jehovah-Shalom*:" "*For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us*" [Eph.2:14]. The only true peace in all the universe, never to be broken or marred in any manner, has been made through the Lord Himself by the blood of the Cross. We have an altar, "*Jehovah-Shalom*," our Lord Jesus Christ. Harken to this altar of Gideon's for a moment. These inanimate things of Scripture have a marvelous way of instructing us. We learn here, without an uttered word, that there can be no worship without peace. There may be work. We may preach, teach, visit the sick, and even pray without peace. We may be a respected member, in good standing of the most orthodox denomination; president of the Epworth League, Christian Endeavor, or even a Red Cross nurse, and yet have no peace. But we cannot worship in any true sense of the word without peace. Most of us who read these lines can witness to this truth.

On the other hand, **having peace we must worship**. God has revealed Himself to us as our Savior-God. No one has ever received this in faith but that instantly becomes a worshipper. Further, as he continues, simple, lowly, dependent upon the same free grace, he continues a worshipper. We do not leave our altar. We abide close by it. The atmosphere is clear, nothing has been covered up; all has been seen in the light, judged, and put away upon the basis of redemption. We are loved; nothing can "*separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*" [Rom.8:39].

"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night." [Jdg.6:25-27]

Then activity begins. Working, watching, warring all come **after worship**. Gideon commences at home. There is a rival altar there, which is generally the case. And here the work of deliverance must begin. No one can be used in delivering others without a judging of everything not in harmony with God in one's own home. Not a blow could Gideon strike at Midian while the altar to Baal stood in his father's house. It was these altars that were the cause of the captivity. Therefore, the cause must go before the effect would cease. Thus revival ever begins. God works the sense of failure deeply into the conscience of His people; they become aware of the altars of Baal in their own lives. They do not accuse one another; for each has his own Baal altar to throw down, and faith strikes the first blow at home. If it does not do this it is not faith at all. It is true that it is weak at first. Like Nicodemus, "*he came by night*" and demolished his father's altar; but he thus added courage to his faith. This marks the first step which is always a costly one.

"And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built."
[Jdg.6:28]

Gideon does more than merely cast down the altar of Baal. This is only a negative victory. God will not only have the enemy dislodged; but He wants the place of his throne. The place of every false idol must be filled up by Himself; nothing less will satisfy the heart of our God. He is a jealous God and will not share His honor with another. Gideon obeys to the letter. Baal's altar is replaced by Jehovah's altar. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom*" [Psa.111:10, Pro.9:10] and it drives out all other fear.

Victory is now assured for the deliverer; for he has not left the enemy behind him. There is always opportunity for Gideon, that is, for the principle he represents, men who cut down their own idol altars and instate the Lord's. But someone may ask, "What is an altar of Baal to us? What does it figure?" It is a figure of our dependence upon another "god" other than Jehovah. It is any other prop upon which we lean, burn incense to, or worship. It matters not whether these are persons or things; if they are more real and substantial to us than God they are idols and we are Baal-worshippers. Whenever we look to money, influence, numbers, family, or friends for help in time of trouble, sorrow, or poverty instead of God, we have another idol. The psalmist said, "*My help cometh from the Lord*" [Psa.121:2] and he refused to worship Baal. No one can be a true deliverer of the people of God until he has cast down every idol and depends absolutely upon God. This is the reason there are so few Gideon's.

"And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar." [Jdg.6:29-32]

This causes great excitement in Abiezer. The enemy roars. It proves it was a great victory. He wants the life of the man who dares to say, "There is no other God than Jehovah;" who dares to get off the fence and boldly declare that he is on the Lord's side and doesn't care who knows it. Yes, this will create some stir indeed. Effective work meets fierce opposition. Satan will be gentle as a dove, and allow you even to preach the Gospel without much of a whisper against you; but, if you attempt to cut down any Baal altars, boldly take a stand for the Lord in your home, his teeth are bared immediately. And so Gideon found it. But his boldness is God's means to embolden others so that Joash, his father, steps into the ranks. To the cry that his son be put to death he answers that Baal is able to plead for himself if he be God,

which timely sarcasm smites down all the opposition and leaves to Gideon, the name of **Jerubbaal** (*“idol-challenger”; “Baal will be contended with”*).

In the strife now beginning, the very existence of this man of faith, and the victory already achieved, are a pledge of that which is about to follow.

“Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered and went over and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.” [Jdg.6:35]

The conflict is drawing very close and there is a loud call for reality in the presence of these swarming thousands of Midianites. We can sing our glad hymns and spiritual songs, (expressing the most exalted confidence) with great unction and “Amen” the same sentiments from the Scriptures with great power in our meeting places; but, when actual dangers threaten, “it takes some believing to keep things afloat.” Our confidence must be as real as the danger or the trial which confronts us.

“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.” [Jdg.6:34-35]

The enemy is here seen coming in like a flood; but the Lord has promised that upon such occasions *“the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him”* [Isa.59:19], this He now fulfills. The Spirit comes upon Gideon and he blows the trumpet and there is a gathering of some of the tribes to him.

“And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.” [Jdg.6:36-40]

But the deliverer is not yet fully prepared, and so he calls upon the Lord for a sign. He dares to ask God to show him if He really would do...save Israel by Gideon’s hand. God does not slay him nor even reprove him for the question because for He well knows His poor Gideon’s, His mighty men of valor, are but dust and He, in tenderest sympathy, answers Gideon according to his request. So the first night the ground receives no dew; it was quite hard and dry; but the fleece was so saturated that *“a bowl full of water”* [Jdg.6:38] is wrung out from it. But yet Gideon is not satisfied, he argues...

“It may have been a coincidence.” “I dare not press forward on so responsible a work without the clearest evidence. I may be deceiving myself; for I may have misunderstood Him. It seems impossible that He should make use of such a poor and feeble instrument when He is able to get great and mighty men for His work. I will venture further and see if He really means what He said. I will ask another sign, and yet I know this does Him injustice, my conscience warns me I am doing wrong, what shall I do? I am tempest-tossed; from side to side I roll, not knowing what to do.”

And so Little Faith chatters on. At last he decides to ask again. *“Oh Lord,”* he cries. *“Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once”* [Jdg.6:39]. It is but the language of his father

Abraham who timidly, yet with much true knowledge of God, asked for Sodom's safety until he got to the "*ten righteous*" and was unable to go further. There is a stopping place for even Little Faith. So Gideon says, "*Do not think, Oh my God, that I want to trouble Thee further*", only "*this once*."

The answer follows again, according to the request. The fleece is quite dry while the dew lies thick on every side. No doubt in all of this Gideon acted directly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who had come upon him because He knew exactly all the circumstances of the case:

The true confidence in God,
The self-distrust in the heart of Gideon,
The low state of Israel, and
All that would so depress and cast down.

This all was typical teaching and is a most wondrous sign to us of God's dealing with Israel. In the first sign, the fleece, the skin of a sheep, was all wet with dew; we have this chosen nation of destiny figured—they are covered with the blessing of God, refreshed and fruitful because of His mercy. Then in the second sign the conditions are reversed; we view the children of Abraham cast out, dry, and unfruitful, and the dew upon all the other nations who formerly were not blessed with spiritual or literal dew.

In type, God gave Gideon an outline of His dealings with Israel. This also proves that, like the dew which is soon gone, God's blessing can never rest very long upon any special company of men, whether they are a nation, or an assembly, who is called out for a special testimony, because Divine Grace is always His purpose in calling them out. But, alas, they very soon, by lofty assumption, turn the dew elsewhere; God can only pour His blessing where it is needed. For individuals, the lesson is the same. Would we have the dew upon us? Then let us abide in Him in conscious helplessness and need and we will never be a "*dry fleece*," but moist and refreshing to others.

JUDGES 7

"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose early and pitched beside the well of Harod, so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh in the valley." [Jdg.7:1]

God now takes us over and shows us the battleground before the conflict begins; we may be assured this is not without significance. The first point emphasized is the fact that Israel pitched "*by the well of Harod*," which being interpreted, is the well of "*trembling*," no doubt suggestive of their condition before the enemy. They were in fear and trembling, yet they believed and obeyed God. Notice that Gideon is now called by his new name...**Jerubbaal** ("*the idol-challenger*")...because he alone is the one who can deliver God's people.

The enemy has the best of the position—they are encamped on the north side of Israel's camp by the hill of Moreh—the object (cause) of fear, the dark mysterious side, the side of shadows and gloom. It is no marvel that Israel was afraid with such a dark unfathomable prospect in view. Their weakness was certainly manifest. God will most surely come to their help now, for they are truly in dire need. But no, they are not poor enough yet. God cannot save Israel as they are because they are too strong, too many for Him to deliver by their hand. If He gives them the victory, they will attribute it to their own sword, their superior marksmanship, wisdom, ability, or sufficiency. They will "*vaunt themselves before God, saying: My own hand hath saved me.*" [Jdg.7:2]

There is an immensely important lesson here; the interpretation of many a sorrow, many a humiliation, and many a loss which we have suffered; which, at the time, we did not understand the dealings of our gracious God. He has to bring us low ere He can lift us up. Before honor is humility. Abasement first and then exaltation. The cross and then the crown. It is the principle upon which God works, and has always worked, *“that no flesh should glory in His presence”* [1Co.1:29]. So, as God has a purpose for Israel, the humbling must come. But it is the Lord Himself not Gideon who gives directions for the abasing of Israel. No doubt Gideon would fain retain all the people who were with him, but the Lord commands 2 tests.

“Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.” [Jdg.7:3]

The first is a proclamation to *“the fearful and afraid.”* This first test is simply the one commanded through Moses: *“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart”* [Deu.20:8]. Fear is contagious and sweeping through, from heart to heart over many results in what is termed a panic. No fearful one can be a vessel of deliverance; for fear is born of unbelief. *“Perfect love casteth out fear”* [1Jo.4:18]. The heart that has ceased from self-effort and is truly confiding in Christ is not fearful or afraid of the foe even though they see that they are facing Moreh (the cause of their fear) and momentarily tremble.

Even our dear brother Timothy was drinking from this well of Harod; for his father in Christ (the Apostle Paul) wrote him that this was bad drinking water and urged him to *“drink a little wine,”* [1Ti.5:23], for his weakened condition, reminding him that *“God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* [2Ti.1:7]. Thus, we may catch a glimpse of another meaning in the Apostle’s words:

“Drink no longer water, Timothy; thou hast had enough of those waters of Harod. There is no joy in their depths. Take little wine; turn from earth’s refreshment and quaff of heaven’s vintage, because from here comes strength and courage.”

“And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.” Gideon sees his army melt away. Two men out of every three have been trembling at heart and desirous of the opportunity to get out of the fight, and they depart to take no share in the victory even though its benefits and blessings will reach those who turned back in the day of battle. If we so desire, God will always give an opportunity to get out of the danger and the fight. It is written of some overcomers that *“if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned”* [Heb.1:15]. So here, to Gideon’s army, a host of 32,000 fighting men, God gives the chance to retreat and it results in a loss of 22,000 men. Their real inward condition is revealed; Gideon will fare better without such. He has 10,000 valiant ones left. But even this number is too many. Israel will yet vaunt themselves and attribute deliverance to their own power. They must still come lower. Jehovah Himself now tests them.

“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappedh of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.” [Jdg.7:4-6]

One by one, no longer as a whole, they are brought down to the water to drink, and all unconscious of the consequences of the difference, some keel down to drink, others take a little water in their hands and lap it up as a dog would. Kneeling down to drink is clearly the natural and easier way, and almost all do it that way. Only a pitiful 300 lap water from their hands.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, by these three hundred men that lapped will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." [Jdg.7:7]

These men selected themselves. It is a principle with God upon which He ever acts. A man sows and then reaps exactly what he sows; he can blame no one but himself for the harvest he gathers. God tests and proves His trusted servants and deliverers are not full-grown in a night. Many of the God's people wonder why they were never used of Him in any important matter; when no doubt the fact is, they have been tried in the balance and found wanting. It may be they did not know they were being tested; but the Lord knew. There is nothing hidden from His all-seeing eyes. We have known many who have been laid on the shelf. God wants sterner stuff for His warriors. Men who can say "No" to their own heart's desire, whether it be affection, ambition, or even religious success. There can be no question that these differing methods of quenching thirst show us the inward condition of those drinking; exactly as did the proclamation concerning those who feared. Let us notice the details closely and we may discern the condition.

The water here cannot figure, as is often the case, the Word of God; for there is no penalty attached to "*kneeling down to drink*" of this pure spring. This water must surely come from the well of Harod, and would speak rather of the refreshment that this world provides (natural blessings so to speak), not necessarily to be adjoined altogether, but to be used as not our own.

Kneeling to drink was the natural way. It was expressive of a giving up oneself to the drinking; a letting go to the need of the occasion. The thirst for the water was a natural appetite. There was nothing wrong in desiring the thirst to be quenched; but the manner of its quenching was conclusive proof that they did not keep their body under. Its needs were considered first. Their bodily appetites must be satisfied to the full. In other words, they gave themselves up to the pleasure of eating, drinking, resting, etc. They saved their lives by taking care of their bodies and satisfying its natural cravings.

But the unnatural way was, as is always, the way of faith. The taking up of the water in the hand, expresses taking only what can be held in control. There is no cessation of watchfulness or vigilance for an instant. The one drinking is ready for action at any moment. He is aware that the enemy is near and it is a time of danger. Conflict is inevitable; Israel is in bondage and needs deliverance. In view of this he cries, "*All things are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any*" [1Co.7:42]. That is, I will not kneel to drink but will take it in my hand. I will not drink to excess of any stream of refreshment of this world's providing.

Here surely is the key to the 2nd test by which about 99 percent failed. Oh, let us meditate upon this necessary qualification for honored service. Multitudes are being tested in this way today. One thing and another, to which they are giving up, is the cause of their being set aside. This is not a question of salvation, but altogether of service; there are few who qualify according to God's requirements.

First, unbelief, looking at circumstances and difficulties rather than to God, disperses 22,000 men. Of course, these cannot be trusted. They are the very ones who would take to themselves the glory for the victory that is surely on the way. Then the yielding to one's own comfort, a saving of one's own life; not willing to "*endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*"

[2Ti.2:3]; this altogether makes these unfit for strenuous service. These are not soldiers who are seeking an easy way, a soft snap (as the saying is); who want the gain without the shame; who are choice as to their service, not desiring hard work. Jesus urged the apostles to pray for “*laborers*,” and He spoke of some who “*having put his hand to the plough* (this is no easy work) *and looking back*” [Luk.9:62], regretted the ease and comfort which they formerly enjoyed and thus were unfit for His service.

These 300 were the only ones who could be trusted for the work at hand. They had been tried and proven worthy of the place as aides to Gideon. They had the deepest, truest sense of their own nothingness. They boasted indeed, loud and long, but it was in the Lord. They thirsted for the battle more than for the waters of this life. Their action spoke of joyous confidence in the Lord, a knowledge that His eye was upon them, a conviction that He was able to deliver; they were ready and waiting for service.

Praise God, there are always a few brethren who recognize that “*the time is short*” [1Co 7:29] and “*who weep as though they wept not, rejoice as though they rejoiced not, buy as though they bought not, use this world as not being their own*” [1Co.7:30]. A few who recognize the bonds that are around the Lord’s blood-bought flock and who are joyfully willing to keep themselves free from the controlling power of anything this world, however innocent that they might be, can give “*a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use*” [2Ti.2:21].

This winnowing has resulted in only 1 out of every 100 of the original company being left. How careful the Lord is forced to be, in a day of weakness, lest “*Israel should vaunt themselves*” [Jdg.7:2]. Only 300 as opposed to a multitude that lay along the valley “*as grasshoppers*.” [Jdg.6:5]. Some no doubt said, “Poor Gideon: what can he do with that little crowd? He had better quit right now, there is no chance for him. How can he expect to win against such odds?” That is how flesh, sight, and unbelief always reason. The ways of faith do appear so very unreasonable; but, unbelief always omits the one principle item—God.

Listen, “*Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie; to be in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity*” [Psa.62:9]. Vanity means just nothing at all—it is a cipher. So the men of low degree, are 300 ciphers; and Midian’s host, men of high degree perhaps, but yet just a host of ciphers. Now a million ciphers are of no more value than 300. Each company is equally helpless. Is strength with the myriad of ciphers waiting there the valley or with the 300 chosen men of Israel? Oh to see with the eye of faith! To see as God sees! To count as He counts! Unbelief invariably counts the ciphers but omits the one. Faith takes no count of the ciphers but reckons absolutely upon the One God and seeing Him says, “*We are well able*” [Num.13:30] to go out against them. Let us then be of good cheer; for though we cannot boast of numbers, we have a promise that is infinite in capabilities; not alone to 300, but even to the “*two or three*” [Mat.18:20] gathered in helpless dependence upon One Name. The power is ever in Him, never in numbers. Let us count Him in, and count on Him alone, even to the end.

As for Gideon, the Lord remembers again that he is dust and needs strengthening for his faith that has been so severely tested. So in tenderest consideration, He suggests another sign to confirm and strengthen this mighty man of valor, ere he goes down to meet the foe, and at the same time keep him in that lowly sense of helpless dependence in which alone is safety. He and his servant, **Phurah** (“*growth*”), creep up close to the lines of the Midianites host, and listen while a man relates a dream to a comrade, concerning a cake of barley bread which he saw rolling into the midst of the Midianite camp and striking a tent, felling it to the ground.

“And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and

said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.” [Jdg.7:13-15]

The cake of barley bread is clearly a figure of utter insignificance in contrast with the tent it strikes. But what can God do with even such a little thing as barley bread? The simplest kind of food, a figure of the simplest portion of the Word of God, elementary truth, we may say; but quite sufficient to overturn all the tents of strife. Paul rolled such a loaf of barley bread into a similar camp in Corinth, when he asked, “*was Paul crucified for you?*” [1Co.1:13]. We have many such powerful cakes of barley bread in the Word of God which will fell any camp of Midian which they touch, and will invariably put all the men of strife to flight. Gideon is rejoicing and worships God. He is now fully prepared for the conflict. Yea, to his faith it is all over, as he says to his soldier band, “*The Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.*”

“And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.” [Jdg.7:16-18]

Then Gideon divides his little company into 3 bands of 100 men each, and in every man's hand is a pitcher enclosing a torch, and in the right hand a trumpet. All is in perfect unity, and perfect harmony reigns. They are governed by 1 leader, Gideon himself. What he does, they do; when he blows with the trumpet, all give a similar blast, and break the pitchers in their hands, and hold aloft the torches which now unhindered, throw their light on the surrounding darkness. How foolish this all sounds to the natural man. Imagine the folly, he would say, of going out to a deadly conflict against overwhelming odds, with one hand grasping a trumpet, the other an earthen pitcher with a torch within. What an army! Who would be afraid of such a foolishly equipped regiment? But it is written, “*The foolishness of God is wiser than men*” [1Co.1:25] and it is by just such means that God delights to blow contempt upon the pride of man. It is by the foolishness of preaching that He saves them that believe.

Now, let us look closely at this strangely equipped band of warriors and see if we can discern the teaching for us, for it is full of instruction.

THE TRUMPETS, HELD IN THE RIGHT HAND

There were 2 kinds of trumpets used in Israel. Moses was commanded to make **2 trumpets of silver** for the priests, the sons of Aaron, to be used for a 3-fold purpose: (1) The calling together of the congregation, (2) the starting of the different camps in perfect order on their journeying, and (3) the expression of joy in connection with all the ministry of the tabernacle [Num.10]. We can understand why they were made of silver. It ever tells of redemption by which alone we can joy in God, walk with God, and meet with God. A silver trumpet still calls His people together. It is with such a trumpet, the outward signal of pure grace, that we will be gathered together for our upward flight and wing our way to realms of light.

But there were also other trumpets of quite a different material. There were **trumpets of ram's horn**, speaking of power, energy, and judgment. They were sounded in defiance of the enemy. It was these that the scoffing multitude of Jericho heard, day after day, encircling their city until Israel's shout joined with the trumpet blast and their walls fell flat in a moment. It was these trumpets of ram's horns that were in the hands of Gideon's men; they expressed confidence, a well-founded courage, a boasting in the very face of the enemy. The ram, from

which the horn was taken, is a strong, courageous animal, fearless and defiant in the face of his foe, even when the foe is more powerful than him. He is a marvelous figure of a good soldier of Jesus Christ, who is not afraid of Satan, because the Lord is the strength of his life. These were held in their right hand.

THE PITCHERS (HIDING TORCHES), HELD IN THE LEFT HAND

Paul gives us the interpretation: *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God"* [2Co.4:7]. The pitchers beautifully express the men who held them; for man is but a poor pitcher, an earthen vessel; what can God do with such weak things? Break them; that is all. As long as the pitchers were unbroken, they were worse than useless. They only hid the light within and prevented its shining out. The pitcher must be smashed; then the hand that holds it, speaking of the confidence that is lingeringly attached to the earthen vessel, changes its hold to the torch and in absolute dependence (the left hand speaks of realized weakness) the light shines out unhindered. *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give forth the light (radiance) of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* [2Co 4:6] is the consistent lesson that runs all through Scripture; to be of any use to God or man, the earthen vessel must be broken. But someone may ask: "Must I break myself?" No, this is not possible. All that those 300 warriors did in smashing the pitchers was to drop them. The pitchers then broke without any effort on their part. Look at Paul dropping a pitcher, *"Within me (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing"* [Rom 7:18]. He did not hold onto something that was useless. His hand, which is here the figure of confidence, loosed from the pitcher, it went to dust from whence it had originally come. It was smashed.

Thus breaking the pitcher is equivalent to having *"no confidence in the flesh."* These *"are the circumcision, which worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus"* [Phi 3:3]. They have looked forward to Calvary and saw God Himself, in the person of His Holy Son, breaking the pitcher and they rejoice in this fact. They blow the trumpet loud and long when they drop the pitcher. Mark it well, these 2 things always go together: Only where there is no confidence in the flesh can there be a boasting in Christ Jesus. Neither of these things is easy to learn. It is, generally speaking, rather difficult to drop that pitcher. We are either very pleased with it or else we are disappointed and wish it were better; we endeavor to strengthen and beautify it. Now, as to the outward appearance, many of us succeed quite well for a time; but, we are powerless as regards the quality, durability, and strength of the material of the vessel. The vessel is fragile, crumbling; the beauty on the outside soon rubs off. We will always be disappointed with it and mourn over its weakness. But, when we expect nothing, literally nothing, from the flesh in ourselves or anyone else; then, and not until then, have we learned the lesson of the broken pitcher. We trust in it no more. We leave it altogether. We abide in Christ and have our confidence in Him. Then the sound of holy joyful boasting takes the place of dismal lamentations.

We ought to be boasters. The world has its trumpets which are sounding loud, never as loud as today, boasting of the first-man and his works. It is almost the close of this evil age. The nations, Christian so called, are lauding one another, handing conquests, as it were, to one another; telling of the mighty achievements; the wondrous ingenuity; the skill, the daring, the masterminds, etc. Especially are they handing the lamp of leadership, willingly, though unasked, to our own young, strong, free land of the West; to this the most wonderfully endowed nation of all history. We can almost see the shadow of the anti-Christ looming on the horizon; the language is so blatant and blasphemous. Man is worshipping himself. "He has arrived," as the saying is. Who can do more? The age will end with trumpets. Man will blow first; but God will blow last. He will sound the *"last trumpet"* and then even death and the grave will boast no more [1Co.15:52]. The chosen of God should lift up their trumpets and make their boast in the Lord. There is nothing which so imparts courage to others as the sound of

boasting—true boasting—justified boasting. Hear the great king David when he came from a king's court to that poor cave in Adullam, *"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord;"* and this wonderful result follows, *"the humble shall hear and be glad"* [Psa.34:2]. Though he is dead his trumpet lives.

Now, one little word as to the torches, which were held when the pitcher fell. These figure Christ in whom is our confidence. He alone is, at all times and in all places, the light and as His people show Him forth and manifest His life, then there is light...there is victory. They thus say, *"I am crucified (I am broken)...nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ"* [Gal.2:20].

What is the result in Gideon's case? Victory at hand! Glorious victory! Complete and in striking accord with God's righteous principles. The children of strife (Midian) consume one another. So it is written, *"If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another"* [Gal.5:15]. Two princes are captured, **Oreb** ("raven") and **Zeeb** ("wolf") [Jdg.7:25]. Who dare deny the significance of names? For what could more graphically express corruption and violence which are the rulers of strife? As opposed to the dove, the raven is an unclean bird, a bird of darkness. The wolf is the fierce destroyer of the lamb. Thus, here the raven (corruption) is slain at the rock Oreb and the wolf (violence) comes to its end at the wine-press of Zeeb. This is not a difficult interpretation. The rock and wine-press are both found at Calvary. There is the sharp rock and the wine-press of judgment; all corruption and violence must come to their end. Christ was made *"sin for us"* [2Co.5:21]. He became the raven and the wolf (all wickedness) and was judged accordingly.

Be sure that whenever the Lord's people are captive to Midian, these 2 princes, *"Oreb and Zeeb"* [Jdg.7:25] are not far off. They are at hand, though hidden, for they are ruling powers yet of all brotherly conflict. Let us pursue them, drag them to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and let them lie there slain. Let us not suffer them to live among us.

JUDGES 8

"And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply." [Jdg.8:1-2]

Here Gideon received the first rebuff from his brethren. The men of Ephraim (the "fruitful" ones) are envious of him and now they come and chide him for not calling them to the battle. When people are important in their own eyes they resent anyone else being honored in service but themselves; and, they have little joy in the Lord's victories through others.

This incident serves to sorrowfully evidence the inward condition of Israel. What power could Midian (the children of strife) ever have had over Israel if the spirit of strife had not been there. The very deliverance itself is made a cause for quarreling and chiding. Alas, this is always the case when we are away from God. Everything that our brother does is wrong. Everything that he says has a different meaning from that intended. The worst construction is put upon everything and there is a steady trend toward alienation and separation—this is captivity to Midian.

"And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." [Jdg.8:2-3]

For a time, by his lowly-mindedness, Gideon averts the conflict with his brethren. He thus manifests why God has chosen him. Remember he was called and commissioned by God Himself. He had nothing to do with this but to follow. Neither was he to blame for those who

aided him in the conflict. They were the Lord's choice too, tested and tried picked men indeed were Gideon's hand. He made no mistake; for they "went over the top" as the saying is, in the fullest sense of the word.

Ephraim is envious; and again Gideon proves himself the overcomer. "*He that ruleth his own spirit*," is greater than "*he that taketh a city*" [Pro.16:32]; the idol-challenger is equal for both. How beautifully he exemplifies the apostle's words of "*fulfill ye my joy that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*" [Phi.2:2]. But how is this possible? "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" [Phi.2:5]—longing, not for the highest, but for the lowest place; ever seeking to get, not above, but below my brother; to be if possible, even more unknown, unnoticed, and in "*honor preferring one another*" [Rom.12:10]. What can Ephraim do against such a spirit as that? Ah, it is a wonderful standard, unattainable indeed, except as "*Christ liveth in me*" [Gal.2:20]; this mighty man of valor attained to it. He will have no strife where Israel needs unity. "*What have I done now in comparison with you?*" he says. This was a master-stroke of wisdom. Whence did it come? When pride is met by such lowliness it is ever the worse for pride; when it is met by pride, then comes contention and strife between brethren and a shameful conflict ending in mutual destruction. "*A soft answer turneth away wrath*" [Pro.15:1] is proved in this case; for the foolish Ephraim seems to have been greatly inflated by Gideon's answer and turned away in self-complacency; but later, this led to bitter humiliation by another hand less able, less willing perhaps, to endure his vauntings [Jdg.12:1-6].

However, the great Ephraim is quite satisfied that they have killed the princes and leaves Gideon and his faithful 300 to keep up the pursuit alone. Oreb and Zeeb are slain; but the kings Zeba and Zalmunna are still alive; and so the victory for Gideon and his little band is not complete. They must have every enemy under their feet. So they pass over the river Jordan, "*faint, yet pursuing*" [Jdg.8:4]. The same indomitable spirit that would not kneel down to drink still holds them to press on, though hungry and weary. They hate what he hates though they bear, have patience, and labor. And this is all keenly appreciated by the Lord as the record here proves.

But Gideon receives little fellowship from those of his brethren who should have been the first to respond. The men of Succoth, in flippant unbelief that is ever out of harmony with the way of God, sneeringly enquire, "*Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thy army?*" [Jdg.8:5]. These men were Israelites. They refuse to share even a little of their carnal things with these overcomers who hazarded their lives for victory and delivered Israel from a foe who was getting their substance. Nothing short of actual possession has any weight with them now. They will not acknowledge the victory that has already been gained. They own the power of "things seen" and nothing else. Well, in a little while, thorns and briars of the wilderness teach them painful lessons. Gideon, with his select few, gives the instruction; it is only those who have overcome that are able to overcome others.

PRIVILEGE ABUSED

Next they come to **Penuel** ("*face or vision of God*," "*that sees God*"), a place of holy memories because it takes us back to that wrestling of Jacob, when the "*sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel*," halting upon his thigh [Gen.32], where he learned that wonderful secret...strength that lies in weakness. Surely the dwellers in such an honored place must recognize a true son of **Israel** ("*prince of God*") and his faint yet pursuing 300. Not at all. They had let the precious truth, of which this place speaks, slip. No doubt, they made their boast about living in this ancient spot, probably called themselves Penuelites, and could point to the very place where that famous wrestling took place. There may even have been a statue of Jacob there; but they knew nothing of the precious lesson Jacob had learned at the price of a lamed thigh. No

indeed, they had a tower now and in this was their confidence, their strength, instead of in God.

This is ever the way of poor men. They must have a tower, something they can depend upon that makes them different and greater than others. It may be influence, knowledge, or spiritual gifts; or in an organization they are, perhaps unconsciously, making their confidence (their tower). Man is a great tower-builder. He commenced it long ago when the world was still young [Gen.11] and thought to build a way to heaven, but he did not succeed. The tower fell down; and so must every tower upon which we depend, before we can find our true place with God. This breaking down of towers is a painful experience, as the men of Penuel found when Gideon returned with the 2 kings Zebah and Zalmunna.

"And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king." [Jdg.8:15-18]

Gideon pursued Zebah and Zalmunna and, at length, came upon them at **Karkor** ("battering down" or "the city of destruction"). It appears inconsistent that they would stop in a place of such a name and deem themselves secure. This city (a type of the doomed world) is where the worldly take refuge and say "peace and safety" [1Th.5:3]; but suddenly, like a thief in the night, the blow falls and Zebah and Zalmunna become captives.

Who are these kings? What do they represent in this connection?

They seem to bear a close kinship to Oreb and Zeeb, the princes who were slain previously. **Zebah** ("religious slaughter") and **Zalmunna** ("spiritual shade") seem to suggest more than the evil in fallen human nature. **Oreb** ("raven", the bird of darkness) is the prince and **Zalmunna** ("spiritual shade", the unholy darkness) is the king. There seems to be a direct reference to the unseen spiritual world in these figures of evil spirits. Of their respective characters, the princes appear to represent evil in man and that which is behind this; he whom man serves as king—Satan himself (the leader of wicked satanic forces, controlling and empowering the merely human), as the king does the prince. Of course, the slaying of these is not literal but figurative in the bringing their power to nothing...Satan gives strength for this. It is not every one that can put a king to death. His wicked emissaries have no power against faith. The cross of Christ annulled Satan "who had the power of death, that is the devil" [Heb.2:14].

"And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks." [Jdg.8:20-21]

But the youth Jether has no rulers, and as the connection is evil, it enables the saint to stand and withstand Satan; how much more does it take to slay him. Saul can kill the ordinary person; but it took Samuel to dispose of king Agag. An older soldier is needed; one who has not only had training but has seen effective service (service in the army of the Lord) that has learned the might of Jehovah's Arm was able for this conflict...Gideon himself has to wield the sword.

A SUBTLE SNARE

We now come to the only sorrowful incident in this wonderful overcomer's life [Jdg.8:24-27]. Gideon fails, as so many others have done, in the moment of his greatest victory. He is the proof against the cry "*Rule thou over us*" [Jdg.8:22]. He puts away from him, and his descendants, the proffered crown; yet he would appreciate some memorial of this mighty deliverance from Midian. He requests the jewels of the captive foe and with these he makes, not a crown as we would infer, but worse...a golden priestly ephod...and hangs it up in his own home-town of **Ophrah** ("*the dust*"), the very place where the Angel of the Lord first appeared unto him. On the surface, it seems to be a pious act. It proclaims so strikingly the faithfulness of the Lord's Word, "*Thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man*" [Jdg.6:16]. It is hung up solely for the Lord's glory; but notwithstanding all this, it is a great mistake, for it became "*a snare to Gideon and to his house*" [Jdg.8:27].

Is this merely history, or is there a lesson for us? Have those of us today whom the Lord has used in any little measure, never hung up and exposed to view the spoils of the victory? Do the Lord's people never run after the poor feeble instrument and give him the place which belongs to the Lord who deigned to use him? We tell of our work, of the victories of the Gospel, of the blessing upon our ministry, the souls saved, those healed, etc.; all of course and solely for the Lord's glory. But, how often in this, if not always, are we not hanging up the trophies in **Ophrah** ("*dust*"); for do they not exalt us too? Then Ophrah belies its name...it is no more "*dust*." We begin to be a little exalted, for have we not been the honored instruments. Poor Israel goes further away from Jehovah, whom Gideon desires alone to exalt, and begins to adore the ephod. So today, the people exalt the poor feeble instrument and give him the place of the Blessor Himself.

There is ever this downward trend; a sad law that gravitates earthward. At the command of the Lord, Moses makes a brazen serpent, lifts it upon a pole, and all those that look thereon are healed. But a few centuries later there are crowds adoring the brazen figure itself, as though it were the source of blessing [2Kg.18:4]. The eye of flesh always sees the figure, not the Lord, behind it. Therefore, Hezekiah has to break it up and call it just what it is – **nehushtan** ("*a piece of brass*"). Man so soon gives to the creature, or thing, the place of God. God calls a poor monk from his cell, and uses him mightily to deliver His saints from superstition and error; now we have a Lutheran Church, with none of this man's joyous faith or power. Again He picks up a Wesley, a Whitfield and many another honored servants; and time after time, His people put the instrument in the place of The Hand holding it. So today, we have a multitude of sects calling themselves by the several names of their leaders, making them a court of appeal, instead of the "*thus saith the Lord*." It is a great snare.

Today, we are especially impressed with the significance of this awful fact which is so prevalent among us. Man with his personality, his power, his influence, is the foremost topic of the pulpit, as well as of the press. One of the country's great men died when we were writing these lessons and the papers were filled with an account of his mighty achievements; his almost super-man foresight; his irresistible, breezy, magnetic personality; ad infinitum. But, as though this were not enough, the preachers took this popular man as their subject on Sunday. They took his life and his death as their text. Christ, the God-Man was forgotten; while Satan's man was eulogized, lifted up, and preached to the people. The language regarding him was almost blasphemous, as for instance...

"Now for a week the nation has been silent, subdued, and voiceless in the helplessness in which his gigantic figure does not stride across the landscape as if it were eternity itself. Voiceless because we have no language with which to speak the immeasurable absence of

him. In the evening, at midnight, he was here. When dawn broke, frightened above the melancholy hills; he was gone."

Such language belongs to the Creator not the creature.

The following is from another Christian preacher:

"I do not know that I could picture a greater element of force than that embodied in the life of the great and good man now gone from among us. We behold in him what it is to live and serve. I doubt if there ever lived a man who embraced more different orders of capacity."

He did not even except the Son of Man; because this age is rapidly drawing to a close. The mystery of iniquity is soon to head up in such a man, "*the man of sin*" [2Th.2:3]. The so-called Christian Church, the synagogue of Satan, is making the world ready for its ruler.

Of course, Gideon's failure cannot be compared to the above; but his conduct as to the ephod is the forerunner of such. Men who are used of God often mistake their experience. They falsely interpret God's dealings with them, as in the case before us. Gideon no doubt believed he was ordained to the office of a high priest, because he had been commanded by the Lord to offer sacrifice. His sacrifice was not of a mediatorial character, as was that of the Aaronite Priesthood; but rather intended to vindicate God's claim to the worship of Israel in opposition to Baal, whose altar had just been overthrown. Gideon's sacrifice answers to the sacrifice of "praise and thanksgiving" from the Christian heart; Aaron's to that of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The ephod belonged only to the high-priest, the representative of the nation before God, and Israel going after it sinfully, intimates that they so regarded it. That it was made of the spoils of victory would suggest that in Christendom, as faith lessened and grew, is the very fervor and piety of individuals tended to exalt them to a foremost place, which later became official and representative. Thus, the ordinary Christian became the secular, the laity. They dropped back, taking a place distant from God, needing the assistance of the more aggressive, the more godly, to intercede until gradually an official priesthood intruded upon the work of Christ without rebuke. This is in our midst today; full-fledged and rampant, as may be seen in Romanism or as the clergy in Protestantism.

We need not be surprised then that this proved a snare to Gideon's house; nor that soon, **Abimelech** ("*my father a king*") proceeds from the loins of **Jerubbaal** ("*idol-challenger*"), the deliverer of Israel.

Borne In A Basket

Thru a window in a wall to flee away
From my foes, who seek my earnest life to take.
I was carried in a basket one lone day.
In such weakness, now I glory,
Tho' it seems a fairy story;
For in weakness, God is strong the foe to break.
For the Gospel of God's Grace, I am withstood,
And am constantly in peril day and night.
'Cause I love the Lord, who is so great and good.
In a basket ride, I glory,
Tho' it seems a fairy story;
Since in weakness, God arrays me for the fight.

STORY OF ABIMELECH

"And it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead that the children of Israel turned again and went a whoring after Baalim and made Baal-berith their god." [Jdg.8:33]

As long as Gideon lived all went well with Israel, at least externally. But the idol-challenger passes away and with him goes also all Israel's devotion to Jehovah. Her fickle heart soon turns to other lords which is literally the meaning of Baalim. This is very significant when we consider the fact, which is apparent in the following chapter, that men themselves have lost their name as men and are also called **Baalim** ("lord"); this is not apparent in our authorized version because the word **baalim** is translated "MEN" and reads as: "*the men of Shechem*," the significance is lost thereby. The thought is that they are all "lords" now; they all claim the chief seats in the synagogues. Their moral character is thus consistent with the object of their worship; they are named according to their character. They are **Baalim** ("lords") and are filled with the same spirit of self-exaltation which ruined him who is called the devil. They would take the glory from God. Now notice the result of such a condition.

JUDGES 9

"And Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal, went to Shechem to his mother's brethren and communed with them...saying, Speak I pray you in the ears of all the men of Shechem whether is better for you that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are three-score and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you. Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." [Jdg.9:1-2]

The foe which now menaces Israel is from within. No external conqueror over them is needed. The internal leaven works rapidly puffing up and exalting. There is one from among themselves ready and eager to assume the headship that Gideon refused. He is the prominent character upon the stage here, so we must observe him closely. His name **Abimelech** ("*my father is king*") is quite suggestive and fits in here most wonderfully. There is a Divine Reason for the name and it will be clearly manifested as we proceed. If the father (Gideon) had scruples about lording it over God's heritage, the son has none whatever. He proclaims his right to this place of honor, or rather...dishonor, by his very name: "*his father was king*." In effect, Abimelech is saying.

"Gideon fought for Israel and liberated them from captivity and he ought to have reigned over them. He deserved the throne and I am his son; so I will take it."

Abimelech lives up to the meaning of his name. He boasts in his father who did not boast in himself. He exalts himself and claims honors because of his father's prestige and renown. He slays all of his father's sons, save the youngest who escapes [Jdg.9:5], and thus attains the coveted place as ruler over God's heritage. He is indeed a worthy exponent of the worship of Baalim, himself being a "Baal, lord."

But what has this to do with us, someone may ask?

Can this lordly fellow be discerned today or is he dead and buried?

Is there no one that answers to his presumption in religious circles; no one ever seeking to lord it over others?

The word **lord** suggests the answer to these questions. Peter warns us of the Abimelech of this age when he says, "*Neither as being lords (mark the word) over God's heritage*" [1Pe.5:3]. Although the father (Gideon), whom he claims to succeed, refused this coveted place, this is exactly

what Abimelech desired. He demanded such honor on the basis of his succession as the son of Gideon. Do we not view the very same presumption in our midst today? Verily, history repeats itself and there is nothing new under the sun; the above narrative fits in most perfectly with present day conditions.

We are confronted on every hand with ecclesiastical pretention; but especially is this manifest in a marked degree in the Roman Church. She claims and asserts her right to ecclesiastical lordship on the strength of succession from the apostles. Notably from Peter, who himself refused this exalted place. The pope, the cardinals, the bishops; the whole hierarchy of this satanic system owes its existence to an illicit alliance between The Church and the world, even as did Abimelech to that of Gideon (with the concubine of Shechem). This false church claims succession from Peter...“Abimelech, my father was king,” it cries. “He was the rock upon which The Church was built and here am I the venerable son and successor of St. Peter.”

Is not this true in every detail?

Can we not see the sinister shadow of this lord, this clergyman, who takes a place and office that the Word of God forbids? Gideon had cut down these altars to Baal. In the same spirit, Peter wrote, *“To whom, coming as unto a living stone...ye also as lively stones, are built up”* [1Pe.2:4-5]. Who is this Living Stone? Peter? Nay, verily, but Peter's Lord—Jesus Christ. The Lord only shall reign over the Lord's people. He is always governed by the same lowly spirit; while Rome, and all ecclesiastical pretention on the other hand is equally governed by the opposite spirit, that of Abimelech, assuming the place of rule and crushing out, even to blood, all opposition to her claims. The anti-type fits the type most wonderfully.

This name Abimelech is quite well known in the Scriptures. It is the successional name for the kings of the Philistines. They are all “Abimelechs,” even as all the emperors of Rome were “Caesars.” It is a Philistine name; therefore our Abimelech, by nature, is a Philistine. We have already learned something of these. The Philistines will cross our path more prominently later; but at this point, we may profitably remember that they are mere “wanderers” in the domain of faith. They are Egyptians, but they lay claim to the land of Israel. As we learn in Abraham's day [Gen.26:17], they are adept in stopping up wells; but they are powerless when it comes to opening them. They are indeed a perfect picture of the old man...the first Adam creation...assuming the place and claiming everything that belongs to the Last Adam creation, thus closing up all blessing, refreshment, and fruitfulness. Wherever we can discern this ecclesiastical assumption today, this longing for government, this love of preeminence, there is the Philistine. It does not matter whether this ecclesiastical assumption is in Rome (the Mother Harlot) or her daughters (priest, presbyters, or council); the name is of little concern. It is the reality which we need to discern, of which we are to beware, for it is sometimes much nearer to us than we imagine.

Now, for a most significant statement regarding Abimelech.

“And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.” [Jdg.9:6]

This lordly fellow asserts his claims at the stone which Joshua erected at Ebal, the mountain where all the curses connected with a broken law were uttered [Deu.11:9, Jos.8:30]. When The Church gave up her heavenly character, the hope of her calling, her joyous standing in Christ, as justified by simple faith, and her present perfect acceptance in Christ and claimed the place of the Jews (though they *“are not”* [Rev.2:9]) who had put themselves again under The Law (with its attendant curses and its distance from God). Then, once more, there arose a class of privileged ones—the clergy, the priests—who alone could approach God. In other words, Abimelech was again crowned at Ebal. It is always the old man, the self-righteous Pharisee,

who wants to lord it over others. Law keepers always desire to rule their brethren. They want to take the law to them and make them do what they themselves are not doing. Is not this a striking picture? Surely we must all admit it was sketched by the master stroke of divinity.

JOTHAM, THE WITNESS

But God is over all. He is not defeated nor baffled by either the devil or the old man. Furthermore, God always has a witness who escapes the corruption; a remnant which cleaves to Him, in simple faith. This remnant is a dependent, helpless, little people, who make no claim to being "lord" of anyone. This poor, despised, despairing remnant, through some secret, known only to faith, always finds its way to Gerizim, the mount of blessing [Deu.11:29]. Listen to the name of this child of Grace, it is **Jotham** ("*Jehovah is perfect*"). Beautiful heavenly name! Jotham's name, in the very face of all man's boasted pretensions, tells of a testimony to Jehovah, our Lord Jesus.

"And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you."
[Jdg. 9:7]

As in the days of the Smyrna persecution [Rev.2], this dear kinsman of ours stands alone, an **Antipas** ("*one against all*"). Nevertheless, he shouts the message, and the message continues to be shouted, from Gerizim to Ebal and over the intervening valley (there is a great gulf fixed between law and grace). Maybe we can yet hear the sound and translate the message.

He begins with a parable of the trees seeking a king to reign over them [Jdg.9:9-15]; and they first choose the most worthy for this high honor. They offer the scepter to the olive tree, then to the fig tree, then to the vine; but all refuse, each esteeming its present ministry, for which by nature it is adapted, far more than authority over its fellow trees. Then, the trees invite the bramble, a thorny, useless part of creation, to reign over them; and this poor bramble gladly accepts the honor on the condition that they all trust in his shadow (as though a bramble-bush could cast a shadow).

There is a wonderful sermon in Jotham's parable to which we all do well to take heed. First he strikes at the very root error of men assuming to be **Baalim** ("*lords*"). Authority is far inferior to fruitful, lowly service. With scorn, the olive, fig, and vine refuse the proffered dignity. They already have a better place. No one who has ever had the joy of service in absolute dependence upon the living God will ever claim, or assume, the vain and empty honor of a self-exalting authority. Those who do so only advertise the fact that they are self-seeking. They know nothing of the glory of being nothing and serving, in self-forgetful delight, the people whom Jehovah loves. Yes, like the Pharisees of Christ's day, there are still plenty who climb high and seat themselves in Moses' seat. But, as Jotham shows, this is a dangerous place although still very popular with the old Adam.

Let us observe those which refused to reign; for we are assured there is some blessed instruction for us here. They represent 3 different phases of ministry.

The 1st is the olive tree. This is the tree of testimony. Its fruit provided the only oil that was allowed to be used in lighting the Holy Place. It beautifully exemplifies the witness for God on earth, which, amid all the surrounding darkness of error, burns and shines because it is full of oil. Israel of old was so set; "*Ye are the light of the world*" [Mat.5:14]. But they failed to shine. So, they have been set aside for a season while The Church takes their place in testimony. Hear how our Apostle Paul speaks to us Gentiles: "*For if thou (Gentiles) were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these, which be the*

natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree" [Rom.11:24]. The Gentiles have gone the very same way as the Jews; wise in their own conceit, leaving off boasting in the goodness of God and now boasting in themselves. He too shall soon be cut off. There is only one good **Olive Tree**, even as there is only one **True Vine**, whose fatness is all for God's glory and man's light. Only by abiding in Him and receiving a constant supply of oil can anyone shine in this dark scene; honoring God and giving light to man, by testifying to the truth in regard to each...all done in full view of all the vain boasting. The good Olive Tree does not want to do any ruling; but is quite content with serving.

The 2nd was the Fig tree, the tree of food. When our Lord was hungry in His days on earth, He sought fruit from this tree of sustenance, but the tree was barren. What a perfect picture of Israel and also of all men in the flesh. We never did, we never will, because we never can give God one grain of real satisfaction. But, there is a true **Fig Tree** which always bears fruit—Jesus the Son of Man, a perfect human; the one root out of dry, barren ground. He is the true Food of God; and man feeds upon Him too. Well did Jotham's fig tree say, *"Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit and go to be promoted over the trees?"* [Jdg.9:11]. No, indeed. Who would desire to leave such a satisfying, helpful, filling place just to lord it over others? How much better to feed them.

The 3rd was the wine-giving Vine. The Scripture affirms that wine *"maketh glad the heart of man"* [Psa.104:15]. This vine figures Christ, as a wise son, giving joy to God making Him glad. God never derived any joy from the old Adam. God brought Israel, a vine out of Egypt. He planted it in a goodly land, watered and cared for it, and then expected that it should bring forth grapes, however, it brought forth wild grapes. So it ever was until the True Vine came. Now, we may see God gathering grapes of refreshment and comfort from this True Vine. At last, God gets some real joy and gladness from man: *"This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"* [Mat.3:17]. He declares His appreciation of the Vintage from this True Vine. It *"cheereth God and man"* [Jdg.9:13]. Abiding in Him, the branches are laden with the same fruit which abundantly comforts, refreshes, and exhilarates the beloved people of God.

The olive, the fig, and the vine most beautifully figure the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ, which is sufficient to meet the whole need of man (spirit, soul and body) and sanctify every part of his being to the service of God, wherein is perfect freedom.

The 4th was the Bramble. But what of the bramble, that misnomer of a tree, which God never intended as part of His good creation at all? It came in with the sin of the first head of that creation. The ground was cursed, doomed to bring forth thorns and thistles until the day of its regeneration. Therefore, the bramble is a realistic picture of poor Adam (the old creation) away from God, self-centered and fruitless. It did not even afford shade by the wayside for the weary; rather, it brought forth that only which hurt whatever touched it. It is that perfectly useless, harmful thing that will assume to lord it over fruitful trees which are *"planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in their season"* [Psa.1:3]. At this juncture, it will not be amiss to remind ourselves that we all have this *"bramble"* nature which we must continually judge by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But then, is there no authorized rule or authority among the people of God? Most certainly there is; for it is written, *"Obey them that have the rule over you"* [Heb.13:7]. However, this is the rule of love and nothing else. The sheep will recognize such shepherds if they are well-fed; then, if the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine are giving freely of their fruit the bramble will have no following. As was said, this is a love service; love that seeks no authority, no exaltation. Love that recognizes that the greatest place is His who serves as the Master; He who *"came to not to be ministered unto, but to minister"* [Mat.20:28]. Such heavenly love addicts itself unto *"the ministry (service) of the saints"* [1Co.16:15].

But what of Jotham? How did his parable end? Let us see.

"If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech." [Jdg. 9:19-20]

Jotham applies the point of his parable. He says his father gladly, lovingly served Israel; ventured his life and delivered them. How had they rewarded him? They killed all of his sons and made one who had done nothing for them a king. He positively affirms that his rule will be that of the bramble. It will result in their mutual destruction. So it came to pass.

In 3 years the true condition of things became evident. There is no real unity between the lords of Shechem and this lordly fellow Abimelech. Gaal, the son of Ebed, leads an insurrection against Abimelech and there is war. If ever we have Divine Significance in names, it is here.

Gaal ("loathing" or "hatred"), and **Ebed** ("slavery").

The loathing born of slavery is the natural revulsion of man from the dominion of ecclesiastical authority. It is of course the flesh opposed to flesh. We may readily discern in Abimelech that religious pretension so fully expressed in Rome (the Jezebel that is so prominent in the letter to Thyatira [Rev.2]). However, on the other hand, we may plainly see the natural rebellion to Rome's tyranny which was equally evident in one aspect of the reformation. There were very few, who like Luther, stood independent of any arm of flesh, and acting, not from fleshly hatred born of bondage; but as moved by God in defense of the truth. Political alliances were made, armies were set in motion, and for 30 years Europe was deluged in blood. It was flesh against flesh. The loathing (Gaal) born of a long period of oppression (Ebed) rises up against the oppressor (Abimelech). We need not go back as far for the illustration. We have the same conditions prevalent in our midst today (though not so extreme). This is especially true among the Lord's people who have received the Holy Spirit. The majority have come out from the dominance of Rome, or her daughters, casting off all clerical presumption. There is the opposite danger of which to beware...refusing all rule...even that of God-appointed shepherds that *"watch for your souls as they who must give account"* [Heb.13:17].

Let's continue our narrative. If it is at all prophetic (which we believe), the struggle to be free though partially successful at first is in vain. Abimelech and his officer, Zebul (contraction of Jezebel, which tends to confirm the interpretation) gets the best of the conflict. **Gaal** ("loathing" or "hatred") is eventually overcome. Do we not see him dying, as it were, in our midst? Rome is gaining. Her shackles are now not only tolerated but actually loved. It is a symptom of bigotry to hate her ways; a symptom of liberalism to tolerate her soul-destroying wickedness. Truly the tide is turned and Protestantism has ceased to protest, they have a name to live but are dead to its power. They do not loath the mother church, as they call her, any more; but, are turning again to her with more or less complacency. There is an increasing tendency to form and ritual; the replacing of the simple singing of the saints, by unsaved hireling choirs; classical music by ungodly artists, who make their living in this manner; and an ever increasing imitation of Roman architecture and power of the clergy. Gaal is dying. The spirit of this condition is clearly manifest among the true Church of God. We must be like other people. It is so difficult to depend absolutely upon God alone for power, prestige, and results. "We must not go too far in throwing off the yoke," is the cry. "We must be careful and fence up our people some way and have some order and rule;" in other words, Abimelech is gaining in favor with us. We are dreadfully afraid of the opposite danger (lawlessness); for this too, is in

our midst, as it is in the world, and we have not sufficient confidence in the Lord to trust Him alone.

But so it is. The word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed as to a light shining in a dark place, proclaims such a condition at last. There is to be but one expression of the religion of the old man and that one is a woman, "*Babylon the great, the mother of harlots*" [Rev.17:5]. But even this is, for a short time, the solemn sound that will soon be heard, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen*" [Rev.18:2]. Just as truly as Abimelech, so shall that great city be cast down. See the correspondence with the type; even the language is similar. "*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all*" [Rev.1:21]. This "*mighty angel*" is no doubt figurative of Christ, the Head, and The Church, His body, who will have been gathered home to their safe shelter, their tower at that time; together they will be the judges of this awful system of iniquity "*which reigneth over the kings of the earth*" [Rev.17:18].

Thus the rule of man ends in mutual destruction. The same trouble was there on every side. While Abimelech wanted to rule, yet it is evident that the same spirit was in those others so significantly called "lords." They too, wanted to be uppermost...this is not very far from all of us. Have you not read of 2 of Christ's chosen disciples who wanted the highest place, to sit one on the right hand and the other on the left of the King? But were they any worse than the other 10 who contended with them because of this request? Our dear Apostle Paul warns of this very condition, "If ye (as the bramble) *bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of the other*" [Gal.5:15]. This biting is rampant today. Hear the spirit of Christ wooing us to the other path of the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine in the sweet and holy words of "*By love serve one another*" [Gal.5:13].

One more word as to Jotham...Where has he fled from the midst of the conflict?

He has been dwelling all this time at **Beer** ("*the well*"); the happy home of faith [Jdg.9:21]. By the springing well of never failing water, whose exhaustless supplies come from heaven. We too, may abide with Jotham; pitching our tents beside that well of love, the dwelling place of all those who have learned the all-sufficiency of Christ, and find a plentiful supply to water all the plants in God's farm or tillage.

JUDGES 10

TOLA AND JAIR

"And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years." [Jdg.10:1-3]

We have here an unusual thing in the book of Judges: 2 defenders of Israel, following each other, without any intervening lapse on the part of the people or even any specified trouble coming between and separating them from each other.

The tempestuous reign of the bramble is over and, in the following, we have a happy contrast to it. Abimelech's reign was short but it made a great deal of history. Its few years take up a long chapter of 57 verses, while the record of the next 2 judges, covering a period of 45 years, is embraced in 5 short verses. It has been well said, "Happy is the people that have no history, for history is indeed little more than a record of the sins, the sorrows and the sufferings of mankind."

But let us see what the Holy Spirit has to unfold to us in these condensed 5 verses. There is hidden treasure; **MULTO IN PARVUM** (much in little or small) as it were. There seems to be little more than a string of names, and if these are not divinely significant, there is really nothing of instruction in this little narrative for us. What possible interest can I have in the fact that Tola was “*the son of Puah*,” or that he was “*buried in Shamir*?” When we translate these names into our own language, then the record becomes wonderfully interesting and instructive.

TOLA

Tola comes after Abimelech, after the man who would exalt himself to the highest place; the striking picture of the old man and especially as headed up in the “*man of sin*” [2Th.2:3] that wicked one of prophecy who is yet to arise in the end of this age. **Tola** (“*worm*”), is the exact opposite of this, a contrast we may say. He represents the man who would humble himself. Having this clue, it is not difficult to discern of whom he is the impressive figure, for there was only one who fits the description; the one who cried out in the deepest hour of His humiliation on the cross, “*I am a worm and no man*” [Psa.22:6]. Surely then light dawns upon us. The lofty one is here replaced by the “*worm*,” the lowly spirit of self-effacement and self-abasement that is ever the Savior, the Deliverer of Israel, whether in that day or in the present one. But from whence has this lowly one sprung? Who has brought him forth? He is the son of **Puah** (“*utterance*”), the son of **Dodo** (“*His beloved*”); Dodo of the same root as David. So the genealogy would read thus...

“The realization of Divine Love, that is, that we are the beloved of the Father, standing in the same relationship to Him as His Son, gives birth to utterance.”

We cannot be silent concerning this wonderful fact. We must make it known. The good news must be proclaimed. “*I believed therefore have I spoken*” [Psa.116:10]; but speech is not the end of such a faith line. No indeed! Corresponding conduct follows, in lowly hiding and self-effacement in harmony with such grace which is what saves Israel. Although 3,000 years or more have rolled around since then, it is still true that “*he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*” [Luk.14:11]. It is a principle with God that Tola ever saves Israel; however, we cannot make too much of Tola. God can even thresh a mountain with him, “*Fear not thou worm Jacob and ye few men of Israel...Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth and thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small and shalt make the hills as chaff*” [Isa.41:14].

Surely then we discern in Tola the figure of that holy and blessed spirit that was the essence of our adorable Lord and Savior. He was the exact opposite, a perfect contrast to the first man and his devil-instilled spirit of self-exaltation. This is the pattern that we are to consider, “*the mind that was in Christ Jesus*” [Phi.2:5-8]; for herein is safety, blessing, and a future elevation. Tola passes away; but in a sense he never does, for he is buried at **Shamir** (“*unchangeableness*”). He had lived with God alone as his strength and his firmness. Shamir has all these meanings, and here Tola is buried, as if in quiet confidence he could leave his beloved people to the unchanging care of Him who remains forever—“no change Jehovah knows.” This interpretation is confirmed by the unusual spectacle already commented upon, to 2 judges united together with no intervening departure of the people. After **Tola** (“*the worm*”) came **Jair** (“*the enlightener*”). These 2 judges beautifully harmonize and complete the picture of Him who came, first as the “*worm and no man*,” but later will arise as “*the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings*” [Mal.4:2]. Tola refers to His humiliation, Jair to His exaltation.

JAIR

We are not told any great things of Jair. His name is again, as in the case of his forerunner, the only clue to his character. He is a **Gileadite** (“*witness*”) and he is buried in **Camon**

("resurrection"). These names are again wonderfully expressive. The figure of the future Enlightener, who will arise to chase every dark sinister shadow away, falls asleep; but even in the grave, in Camon, he speaks of Him whom the grave could not hold but who liveth after the power of an endless life. There is a strange addition to the record of Jair:

"He had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities which are called Havoth-Jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead." [Jdg.10:4]

If there is nothing beneath the surface, nothing for our profit here, why would the Infinite Mind have inspired such a common-place piece of information as to manner of riding? Does God take care for asses? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written; therefore let us look for the interpretation.

Jair, we have noted, is the "*Enlightener*," He who, in a soon coming day, will throw His holy beams over this dark earth as the Sun of righteousness. His holy light will first fall upon Jerusalem and the inhabitants will perforce "arise and shine" as it is written, "*For the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*" [Isa.60:1]. That is, they will share the glory of their King. This is what we have here (in type) in the children of Jair associated with him in his rule. Notice, they are not on white horses (the symbol of victorious battle) but are on asses (the beast of service and peace), symbolizing the quiet, peaceful reign that will follow the putting away of evil.

They represent the people of the Lord who have been "faithful over a few things" [Mat.25:21] in His absence and in the day of humiliation and thus are qualified to have corresponding rule over cities. The number 30 also confirms the interpretation: 10 times 3 (10—faithfulness in responsibility and 3—fully manifested), because we are divinely equipped.

Thus far, the world has had nothing but the reign of the bramble. But "*after this*," and now the Divine Significance of this word "*after*" is plainly evident. After this is passed away, after the bramble reign of the first man has run its full course, then comes the "*Tola-Jair*" reign of the Second Man...a time of peace such as this world has never enjoyed nor heaven ever looked down on.

Thus Tola and Jair form 1 united figure of Him who shall in due time replace the reign of the thorn-bush (bramble). For the "worm" and the "sun," the suffering and the glory, are connected, as they always are, in the life of the Son of Man. They cannot be separated. The humiliation and service ends in glory and honor. Notice that Tola has no sons; Christ's people are not associated with Him in His atoning work but in the glory which shall follow. Is this not all most beautiful and harmonious? First that which is natural, in the proud self-exaltation of Abimelech; then after that, a Ruler and Judge for which the world still waits, but in whose kingdom and patience, we now, thru grace, have a most realistic place. But here is a change, a going back as it were; because it seemed, according to the typical teaching, we were already enjoying the reign of the just Judge. But the Lord has other instruction for us, therefore we read of another lapse on Israel's part.

THE 5TH CAPTIVITY

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth and the gods of Syria and the gods of Zidon and the gods of Moab and the gods of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines and forsook the Lord and served him not. [Jdg.10:6]

Israel has fallen lower than ever; for the 5th time we are informed that they "*did evil again in the sight of the Lord*." Now, there appears to be a wholesale abandonment to evil that was lacking heretofore. They serve Baalim and Ashtaroth and all the gods of their neighbors as well; they desire to propitiate all. Baalim and Ashtaroth, representing violence and corruption, seem to

give character to all of the others. Jehovah, the true God...the God of Israel, their own God...appears to be the only God forgotten. Therefore, according to a Divine Principle, He gives them up. For a while, He lets them go their own way until they are ready to return to Him. He gives them up to learn, by bitter experience, exactly what such service is in contrast with His own easy yoke and light burden. His anger is hot against Israel.

God sells them into the hand of the Philistine and to the Ammonite (the only servitude that is given us in detail). We must remember that today we are looking upon actual realities of which these things in the book of Judges were just the pictures; the shadow of present happenings with The Church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have the counterpart of these enemies, these false gods today.

But, we cannot apply these terms directly to any men now. They figure principles which govern or dominate the Lord's professed people; therefore these Ammonites are among us. We may be able to discern them if we trust our Guide, who has come to lead us into all the truth. Let us notice all the Scripture information regarding these Ammonites.

First...their source. They are the progeny of Lot and his youngest daughter. They have a kind of connection with the household of faith and its profession; but it is spurious, for they were "*bastards and not sons*" [Heb.12:8]. Their land lay east of the Jordan; as we may say, on the world-side of the cross of Christ. They figure that which does not, and cannot, enter into the meaning of the cross. They are connected with the Philistine and yet are a contrast to them also. As the Philistine was the threatening foe on the one side, the Ammonite was on the other side. The Philistine figures ritualistic formalism with its claims to successional authority, as Abimelech asserted; therefore, the opposite of this (the enemy on the other side) is the principle of "rationalism" with its proud claims of independence of all Divine Authority. We see the one (Philistine) in the Thyatira Church [Rev.2]; while in the church of Laodicea we have the other (Ammonite); they both are with us to the end. The possession of our own land, faith's land, lies between these 2 foes, that is, between formalism on the one hand and rationalism on the other.

The Ammonite (the reason, which he figures) settles down in things seen, for where else could he find a home? This world is all he sees. He boasts that it is good enough for him; he knows nothing else nor does he even care to enquire the way into the better things. Of the land which lies beyond the waters of Jordan, which border his land and limit his vision, he is entirely ignorant. If he does venture to cross over, it is only for the purpose of distressing Israel; it is but to make an attack upon faith and to boast in taking away from Israel that which he can never make truly his own. It is the materialistic rationalism of the present day. Here then we get the oppression which the Lord's people suffer from the dominance of the unsanctified carnal reason that would undermine the foundation of faith; rob us of the Scriptures as being the revelation; bring down everything to the level of man's depraved reason; and reject all that is beyond it. Thus, we give up the worship and service of the true God and become slaves of the god of the Ammonites, **Molech** ("*the king*"); soon feeling the pressure of his yoke. But someone may ask, "Who is this Molech?" We would judge it means the enthronement of reason. But not true reason enlightened by the Word of God, kept in the place of dependence by the Spirit of God; but, reason exalted to the throne and quite independent of, rejecting the source of all true light which is Christ the light of the world.

Truly it is plainly to be seen that the Ammonite is rampant in our day. This is the spirit which is dominating Protestant countries. The higher criticism that dares to lay destructive hands on and dissect the Word of God; that dares to deny the supernatural and miraculous in the things of God is the same old Ammonite raider that is responsible for the preaching and the teaching that is current in so-called orthodox churches. He is certainly making bold inroads today into

Israel's land. The atonement and justification by the precious blood of Jesus, the redemption of man by the cross, is denied with bold insistence or ignored altogether. But more than this, God as the Creator is even bowed out of His own universe; a mysterious evolution, demanding far more credulity, is taking His place.

Yet the Ammonite does not figure plain, outspoken infidelity; but infidelity robed religiously with possibly a "Reverend" before his name and a "D.D." after it. It is an infidelity claiming as his own the possessions of faith, claiming to be Christian and standing in Christian pulpits before apparently Christian people, and denying the very foundation truths of the Christian faith while impudently claiming to defend them. Truly, the Ammonite is on the throne today and most are content that it is so.

Is reason, then, an enemy of faith?

Must we feel outrage in order to believe? It is outrage reasoning that alone distinguishes the man from the brute (animal)? Must we refuse the evidence of our physical sense in order to believe the Word of God? Is this faith? No, indeed. This is the way of the Philistine but not the way of Israel. Faith in God is alone consistent with the highest, purest reason. God never says one word that is contrary to reason, rather it is above it or it would not be reasonable. If I could fully fathom the infinite by finite reason, then God would be on my level which would imply that God was not God at all. The Ammonite is simply the carnal, debased, sinful reason that shuts God out of its calculations; and with Him all true intelligence, all light, and all love. Let us then boldly claim that, far from Israel (the new man's possessions belonging to the Ammonite), the land of the Ammonite belongs to Israel.

Although the old man does not feel it, it is indeed hard bondage. But, the new man soon begins to groan under the inroads of the raider against Judah, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim in the land. For what does the new man have left when praise (Judah), power (Benjamin), and fruitfulness (Ephraim) are hampered and hindered? Surely the picture is eloquent of experience.

When did any one witness a saint bursting with joy and filled with praise when the old enemy, the Ammonite, was taking possession? When did any such show any spiritual power or abound in fruitfulness? Is it not so? As soon as any one begins to let his unsanctified reason have the ascendancy in things spiritual, immediately the fact is evident...he is praiseless, powerless, and fruitless.

But there is hope when Israel appeals to Jehovah, as they did in this case; though it appears that He hesitates to deliver them, God does some reasoning now.

"Ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." [Jdg.10:13-16]

Surely that is reasonable. Jehovah meets them on the very ground that they have chosen.

Now they are truly in a quandary; for while the Ammonite is an adept at robbing, he is a very poor giver. He will take away but never replace. He will steal from us every consolation but give nothing in return. He will rob of every comforting assurance in time of affliction and disappointment and leave us to face them all alone. At the tomb when faith, with tender sympathetic hand, would take away all the bitterness from the tears and comfort with words of promise, he would deny all such foolishness and therefore we must sorrow as *"without hope"*

[1Th.4:13]. There is absolutely no deliverance to be expected from Molech the Ammonite god (reason exalted to the throne.) This is independent of God and this alone is the liberty that we really need to fear.

Yet Jehovah's heart is grieved for His people. Although He says "Go," because of His justice, and on account of His grace, He must forgive and help them. When they put away their false gods, their helps and their strength, and confess their sin, He begins to move for them, but not in the open active way as of old. As is evident, they are now on a lower plane. There is always something new and different, suitable for the time and place. Let us then not look backward but upward, "*wait thou only upon God*" [Psa.62:5].

"Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh." [Jdg.10:17]

The children of Israel now gather together at **Mizpeh** ("*the watch tower*"). It is the place where deliverance must ever begin. They are awake; no longer oblivious of or indifferent to danger, but fully recognizing and opposing it. This is ever the first principle in any victory.

But who shall lead them? They need a leader...so do we. Not merely a human leader; there are too many such, but a strong principle that shall rule and govern us in our conflict with the present day Ammonite. We find him where Israel found him.

JUDGES 11

JEPHTHAH, THE DELIVERER

"Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman." [Jdg.11:1-2]

Who is this Jephthah, the man of the hour, this one who is so much needed? He is a **Gileadite** ("*a true witness*"); a native of the very land which the Ammonite is claiming.

His name again affords us light. **Jephthah** ("*one who opens*") is surely the leader that is needed against the Ammonite. Why is this? Has he, like the Philistine, closed up some well of blessing and refreshment which needs must be opened before deliverance will come? Assuredly he has. When the Philistine is in possession, the living energetic Word of God becomes a dead, silent, closed book. Jephthah is he who opens it once more; and this is exactly what is needed to throw all the reasoning powers of man into confusion. Let the Word of God be opened by one who is a true witness (Gileadite), and its true spiritual meaning opened up, applied, and enforced, and all the carnal reasoning of the old creation is revealed, confounded, and abased.

But here is a strange thing, this "*one who opens*" is not a true-born child. He was "*the son of an harlot*;" and, for this reason he has been rejected and cast out by his brethren. What an unlikely instrument to use against the base-born children of Ammon; but things are getting lower than ever with Israel. The Lord has to humble His people by selecting an instrument for their deliverance with the stigma of his birth upon him; one who has been rejected because of this. Here is the fitting leader to bring down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It is by these foolish base-born things that He brings down the wise and the proud.

Let us observe Jephthah a little further.

"Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him." [Jdg.11:3]

A fugitive from his father's house, he finds refuge in the land of **Tob** ("goodness"). Is this not a productive soil for our champion? He finds the land of goodness and dwells there after his brethren have cast him out. We can readily see in Jephthah that spirit of lowly faith which in time of sorrow and rejection turns to the Lord and finds in Him a Confidant and Refuge—a land of goodness. This is fruitful soil for "*the one who opens*." It is good training-ground for a deliverer from the Ammonite. To Jephthah, as to David in his day, assemble a number of shady characters, as they are called. These "*vain men*" bring neither glory nor prestige to their leader; but their association with him changes them altogether and they finally become mighty men of valor. That principle of lowly faith which opens God's Word to the heart, and the heart to the truth of God (which is our interpretation of Jephthah), can transform a knave into a king.

However, Jephthah signifies even more than faith as a principle; he connects us with the object of faith, the Lord Himself. Before the victory comes, Israel had to own and claim the rejected Jephthah as their kinsman and deliverer. So, in like manner, does the champion over the Ammonite today. He must truly, in some measure, enter into the sufferings of Christ; he must really fellowship in deepest experience the reproach of the world, the rejection of his brethren, and count his every loss but dung before he is a qualified deliverer from the reasoning, rationalistic spirit of this evil age. We may readily discern in Jephthah a figure of far greater things... "*is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?*" [Mar.6:3].

Jephthah is established as the leader of the people. He prepares for the coming conflict by a peace parley, a feature quite distinct from the example of any of his predecessors. No other leader reasoned with the enemy; but this is in harmony with the principle for which he stands and the deliverance which he brings to pass. Jephthah does not shrink back, he meets the enemy on his own ground; nor does the Spirit of God ever shrink from discussion. In fact, He calls us to come and reason together with Him [Isa.1:18].

The Ammonite is quite ready to state his case.

"Israel took away my land, when they came out of Egypt, from Arnon to Jabbok and unto Jordan; now therefore restore those lands peacefully." [Jdg.11:13]

As most things do that the Ammonite says, it sounds most reasonable indeed; but Jephthah is not at all influenced by their claim. His answer is most interesting and instructive; and it is simply a testing of their statement by the Scripture. He goes over the record of Israel's doings in connection with the nations with whom they came in contact, until they came to the land in question, the land which lay within the boundaries specified, "*from Arnon to Jabbok*," and here they found not the "*Ammonite*," but the "*Amorite*" [Jdg.11:15-22] Jephthah proves that the former had already lost his land to the Amorite who was in possession.

But who then is this mighty fellow, this Amorite? Again, his name is our only solution. **Amorite** ("*the speaker*" or "*the talker*") but this does not seem to have an evil sound. Speech is the distinguishing feature of man in contrast with the animal creation. It is this faculty, connected with the spirit of man, which alone separates him from the beast and marks him as intelligent; it is open infidelity.

Now the Ammonite has a kind of relationship with faith, spurious it is true, but still he is a child of Lot; poor world-loving, yet righteous Lot. That is, as we have interpreted, worldly Christianity naturally gives birth to a rationalistic spirit; and this Reasoner claims and insists on

dwelling within the borders of faith, although they are on the world-side of the cross of Christ. As long as this Reasoner retains this place the claim is allowed. But in this instance this is not so for the Amorite; no such claim has he. Jephthah (the opener of the Word of God) says, "You Ammonites could not hold your land when you had it. Israel did not take it away from you. You had already lost it to the Amorite, that blatant, boasting infidel, who makes no claim to being kin to faith, and we took the land away from him." So it was then; so it is today. The spirit of higher criticism (the reasoner) always, sooner or later, loses his place, giving way to infidelity, yet still claiming the domain of reason as peculiarly his own. On the other hand, faith insists that the land is his, as in full harmony with God, and so the conflict must be fought to the finish.

Jephthah's answer is worthy of his name. He certainly can open the Scriptures. We would interpret it as follows: Faith, personified as Israel, finds reason (the sphere of the spirit) not in possession of mere rationalism (personified as the Ammonite), but of avowed infidelity (personified as the Amorite) and recovers it from the Amorite.

Shall he now give up without a struggle what he has acquired by divinely given power?

Shall he be false to his Lord who has given the domain of reason into his hand?

Shall faith surrender its inheritance to this weak, spurious kinsman, this so-called higher critic, who was unable to keep it from infidelity?

Furthermore, reason, that is—true reason, has been the inheritance of true faith for 300 years, which surely gives title to the land. Jephthah asks, "Why did you not come up long ago and take it from us if it belonged to you?" His logic is reasonable, but the reasoner refuses to hearken to the words of Jephthah.

We are told nothing of the conflict itself; this has its beauty too because it is in harmony with the deliverance. The Ammonite is already beaten before the actual conflict begins. The opener of the Word of God has defeated, by his unanswerable arguments, all the boasted pretensions of this enemy of Israel. The victory has been gained by the Scriptures alone.

But now Jephthah shows signs of frailty. He bargains with Jehovah.

"If thou wilt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands; then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." [Jdg.11:30-31]

Here is the only jarring note amidst all the joyous songs of victory. Listen to poor Jephthah's wail of sorrow when his daughter comes out, with timbrel and dance, to meet him.

"And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back." [Jdg.11:34-35]

He is blaming the poor child for his own mistaken zeal and legal heart. The troubler was himself. Jehovah had not asked Jephthah for any vow. Furthermore, it seems as if he almost knew it would be his daughter who would be the first from his house to meet him.

We understand that the bloody sacrifice of the dear child was not involved; rather, she was consecrated to God to live an unmarried life. However, there seems to be a dark cloud resting

over the scene and silence upon the subject which emphasizes the lesson that this was failure on Jephthah's part. He had proved himself well acquainted with the Scriptures and therefore was aware that the Lord had provided for the redemption of any child of man from the consequences of a vow by the payment of 10 shekels of silver [Lev.27]. If he had taken advantage of this provision and redeemed his daughter, his vow would have had no further claim. The girl would have been free. Why all this mourning? It is because Jephthah does not desire that his vow be remitted. He is ready, in his self-imposed zeal for the Lord, to slay anything that meets him; the dearer the object, the more reason, he argues for him to be firm and fulfill his vow and the more precious the sacrifice to Jehovah.

This is but another pen-picture of a phase of the old man that is often manifested in those whom the Lord has used to open the Word and cause a mighty revival among the people. They would slay the nearest and dearest because the more painful the sacrifice, the more it adds to the morbid self-complacency of such, since it evidences the more extreme faithfulness and zeal. They want to be hard on themselves and therefore they are hard on everyone else. They foolishly imagine that God is pleased when they are suffering. They know little of Him as a loving, compassionate Father who desires His children to enjoy, rather than earn, His love and favor by being hard on themselves.

Apparently, Jephthah wanted to feel that the victory, which was of God alone, cost him something. How much this episode reminds us of present day hard luck stories that one so often hears: "It cost me everything to go this way," one says; another tells how he died to this and that instead of proclaiming how he died with Christ to everything nineteen hundred years ago; yet another boasts that he just got up and left all to follow Jesus. "It's a hard way," they affirm when it is generally their own foolishness that makes it hard for them. This gives them something besides the cross to glory in, and we do so want to have a hand in our own salvation. History truly repeats itself.

JUDGES 12

THE FOOLISH EPHRAIMITES

"Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand." [Jdg.12:4-6]

We are now given a further evidence of Jephthah's hard ascetic spirit in his treatment of his brethren; for while there may be a question as to the fate of his daughter there is none whatever as regards these Ephraimites. These foolish children of Israel begin to deal with Jephthah as they had done with Gideon; however, they find just the opposite spirit here. Instead of following the example of the gentle Gideon, who by a soft answer turned away wrath and thus won his brethren, Jephthah does not hesitate a moment in turning his victorious sword against his brethren and seizing the fords of Jordan. He puts 42,000 Ephraimites ("fruitful ones") to death

What a strange place to slay his brethren. The fords of Jordan is the one place which united them; because it is only here that Jordan (the river of death) could be safely crossed and the Gileadite and Ephraimite be made one. These fords which divided them speak of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ *"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"*

[Heb.2:14]. It is only the death of the cross which permits anyone passage over Jordan. Here is truly the proper place for the slaying of the lusty Moabite [Jdg.3:28], all that is in the world or of the flesh; yet, it is the one precious uniting place of all that is of God, the basis of all fellowship. It is here at this significant place that Jephthah cuts off his brethren.

This is not difficult of interpretation, for we have the anti-type before our eyes today. It is generally where the death of Christ is most perfectly expressed that the cutting off of brethren is manifested. There may be some degree of oneness enjoyed in service, prayers, and Bible study; but in the breaking of bread and drinking of the wine, where the unity of the one body is shown forth [1Co.10:17], here is the cutting off place. Just like the case before us, that which should have united them is made to divide them.

The things which various Shibboleth's serve to evidence are those who are not in our church, not in our denomination, not in our circle, nor in our fellowship are generally as trivial and inconsistent as the people who frame them. If one does not share convictions on a multitude of questions as to which intelligence may differ, "If he cannot frame to pronounce it right exactly as we do, then cut him off at the fords of Jordan." Translating this into present day language, "If he has not received the Holy Spirit and spoken in tongues; if he has not been baptized in water; or if he has not been baptized in the name of Jesus, cut him off...he is not saved." Oh is it not sad that God's people who have provisionally been made one by the cross are, in actual experience, so woefully divided. It is indeed a scene to make us weep when no longer a clearly recognized Moabite (worldly) but an Israelite from whom our difference is difficult to discern, suffers at the fords of Jordan. Moab may indeed rejoice, and Ammon, who has previously been vanquished, may be comforted when Israel thus cuts off Israel.

It appears as though Jephthah reduced everything to the same level. He made no distinction between his brethren and his enemy; his offering up of his daughter is now followed by the slaughter of part of his own people. In other words, he reserved the same treatment for the people of God that he did for the enemies of God. This is not the will of God. We can deal with Ephraim, if he is to be blamed; but it is quite another thing for me to take the fords of Jordan and compel everyone who passes this way to speak just as I speak, to compel him to say "*Shibboleth*" [Jdg.12:6], and if he cannot say it to cut him off. **Shibboleth** ("*flood*") refers to that which divided Gilead from Ephraim. So the meaning is this: If those of Ephraim cannot quite pronounce as to what divides in order to treat them simply as the enemy—cut them off—this is certainly faithfulness running amuck; it ceases to be faithfulness and comes to be destruction.

IBZAN OF BETHLEHEM

Jephthah foolishly imagined that God wanted him to do what was unpleasant for him to do, simply because it was unpleasant. Such betokens a morbid conscientiousness, and tallies with the experience of an undelivered soul in the bonds of legality. In Abimelech we have had a view of a formal, dead religion, the failure of man's rule, when seeking his own aggrandizement. In Jephthah, we saw the opposite condition, a zealous, fanatical religion, the failure of man's rule when the conscience is under the power of legalism. There is apparently, a decided correspondence between these 2 sections.

Following the end of Abimelech's reign, came Tola and Jair (figures of the Lord Jesus Christ) making right the evil consequence of the first man's rule. So, here again, we most surely discern the same blessed one in Ibzan of Bethlehem ("*the glorious one*," "*illustrious*"). Here there is no mistake for there is only one whom the description fits so perfectly. How marvelous are these names in their Divine Significance. Ibzan, the dazzling star of the morning, is coming soon. He will arise and shine and put an end to all the failure of man. The Restorer of all breaches; the Faithful and True, the one who off-sets the Philistine rule of empty formal

ecclesiasticism as seen in Abimelech, and of fanaticism as viewed in Jephthah. Yes, only Ibzan of Bethlehem, the Holy One, the Resplendent One, Christ in resurrection, is able to put matters right now. There is no hope of anything better until He comes.

"And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead. And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem." [Jdg.12:7-10]

Ibzan appears immediately following the death of Jephthah. He breaks down all false barriers by "*sending abroad*" his closest relations beyond the narrow walls of rigid sectarianism. We may be sure that our typical Ibzan made no forbidden marriages with the heathen nations round about, not overthrowing any true barriers. The casting down of false barriers only strengthens the true; emphasizing the distinction which is completely lost by the spirit that levels foe and friend alike—Ammonite and Ephraimite—Antichrists of whom we are warned to beware [2Joh.], and the brethren whom we are admonished to receive [3Joh.] when they are walking in the truth.

ELON OF ZEBULON

After Ibzan, comes "*Elon of Zebulon*," and this is in perfect order.

"And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun." [Jdg.12:11-12]

For **Elon** ("*strength*"), is the natural result of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Elon is of the tribe of **Zebulon** ("*dwelling*"), resting in peace and plenty. His reign was followed by that of Abdon, the son of Hillel.

ABDON, THE SON OF HILLEL

"And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites." [Jdg.12:13-15]

Abdon ("*servitude*") was the son of **Hillel** ("*to be praised*") which, when translated into our language, simply means, "Service that is born of joyful praise." This is certainly harmonious and in fitting accord with the reign of Christ which is surely typified in this section. All is beautiful, and speaks of the result of the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not without significance that this ruler, Abdon is an Ephraimite; poor, humiliated, wounded, cut-off Ephraim. This refers, no doubt, to the 10 lost tribes who are once more, through the blessed restorer, in the place of honor.

Then we get a further description of this last judge of this series. We are informed that he had a family of "*forty sons and thirty nephews*" (or grandsons, as the margin reads) which rode on asses colts. His numerous progeny shared his kingdom and glory and rode on the ass, the beast of service and peace. No bloodshed, no retaliation, no counter aid against Gilead, no battle cry, no Shibboleth. No indeed, Abdon is on the scene and everything is in perfect peace. A silence has fallen upon all party-cries and only the peaceful fruits of joyful praise are in evidence. We are surely getting close when we are able to discern Jephthah among us. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

Only Today

Yesterday's sun went down the line.
Tomorrow's sun has not yet come.
Only the sun of today doth shine
Over the path that leads me home.
If I would win the Prize at last,
I dare not loiter, but must run fast.
There is hope in the future and help in the past;
But only the sun of today is mine.

Yesterday's work was done at eve.
Tomorrow's work is not begun.
Only today may my shuttle weave
And finish the task when day is done.
I've learned the adage and hold it fast,
There is hope in the future and help in the past;
But only today is mine to believe.

JUDGES 13

THE 6TH CAPTIVITY

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years." [Jdg.13:1]

For the 7th and last time in Judges, we read the sorrowful refrain, "*Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.*" There is always something solemn and pathetic about "the *last*," e.g., it is the "*last time*;" these are the "*last days*," etc. It calls for a review of the long path of sin, sorrow, and failure which, on the one hand, preceded and mercy and long-suffering of God followed. It suggests anticipation of what shall follow. More than all, it calls loudly for self-judgment that we may be enabled in the perilous "*last days*," which are at hand, to discern the will of God for us as individuals and walk therein...depending upon our almighty Guide. In our present lesson we may learn, in type, the secret of the failure as well as the secret of the power which are both so manifest today. This is the last deliverance recorded in Judges; therefore, it has its special lessons for us at this special time.

History surely repeats itself. We have seen, more or less, distinctly in the various captivities which once (in a material way) afflicted Israel, and have now (in a spiritual sense) afflicted The Church of God; until in the last scene at the fords of Jordan we viewed a most realistic picture of the passing away of brotherly love in The Church (Philadelphia) and the beginning of the lukewarm condition of Laodicea. The end has almost come and we have the privilege of living in these "*last days*," which are wonderful days even though they are peculiarly evil and pregnant with satanic power. We are privileged, I say, to be living today when we may view the end approaching. This last deliverance is our special type because Samson, the strong man, particularly figures the last revival which has come upon the Church and is now going the way of all other deliverances. In fact, it appears to be disappearing more rapidly than even its predecessors, if one may so speak.

Let us then study carefully this last judge and the character of the deliverance which he wrought. We will surely be profited thereby.

As was noted, Israel is again given up into the land of the Philistine. We have met this people often before in the course of our study; but as this is the special enemy which continually

ensnares and finally overpowers our strong Samson, we must review their history more particularly that we may learn their wiles and thus avoid these charmers, for they undoubtedly possess great attraction for a Nazarite. In fact the peculiar danger of the last days is from the Philistine.

THE BLACK, OR SUN BURNT ONE

We find the genealogy of the Philistine in Genesis 10. He is there recorded as the offspring of **Ham** ("*black one*" or "*sun burnt*"). Dark he is; but darkened by the sun. For our admonition, God wanted to depict His view of man as turned away from God (The Light), so He brings Ham ("*black one*", no light) on the stage of this world and emphasizes the sorrowful truth in this name. Ham is a vivid portrait of the old man. The sun has shined upon him but he has not received its light; and more, he has rejected The Light. He would not come unto The Light that his deeds might be reproved. He hated The Light because it made bare the inmost secrets of his heart...it exposed him, so he turned away from its penetrating rays. However, it must have some effect on him. What was it? It darkens him. If he never had light, he would not have been as dark as he is; the brighter the light, the darker he becomes when he turns away from it. His is like the blind Pharisee whom Jesus warned; saying "*If therefore the light that be in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" [Mat 6:23]. It was the Pharisee who was told that his deeds were evil. It was the Pharisee, the religious man of that day, with The Light of the world shining clearly before his eyes, which asked for a sign. If someone would ask for a light at noonday it would prove nothing but his blindness. Oh blind Pharisee. Oh dark Pharisee. Oh dark child of Ham; we have him with us all the time. The unregenerate religious man, the unconverted church-member, the Cain of Abel's day; how great was his darkness and is even up to this day—a "*black one*" indeed!

Ham begets Mizraim who seems to have derived his name from, rather than given it to the land of Egypt; from the country which exemplified the character of which the word **Mizraim** ("*double strip*," "*two mounts*," "*a fortress*") speaks. Egypt is a double strip of land on either side of the great river Nile, which flows through it, and upon which it is dependent, thus making it independent of God. Poor Egypt. Mizraim gives birth to **Casluhim** ("*folly*," "*foolish*"); this is, of course, the natural result of becoming independent of God. In Romans 1, we have the interpretation of the type: "*their foolish heart was darkened*," and [Rom 1:21] "*professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*" [Rom.1:22]. This is truly the descent of the religious man of the earth, ever ascending in his own eyes and thus getting further and further away from God.

Casluhim, the foolish one, begets the Philistine ("*wanderer*"), the charmer of Samson. By his name, he expresses the fact that he is never at home. He lives in the place of another. His real home is Egypt but he has come over into the land of Canaan by the "*near way*," and has given his name, Palestine, to Israel's land.

Therefore, we see that the Philistine figures the natural man who has come into spiritual things, not by the power of God, through a supernatural birth, but by natural ways. The way of the Philistine was marked in Exodus 13:17 as the "*near way*" out of Egypt; but which Jehovah refused to allow His people to take when He led them out. It was as easy as it was near...no Red Sea; no Jordan as a barrier to entering the land of Canaan (where they are always found). Could anything picture in a more startling manner the natural man, the old Adam, ignoring the cross of Christ and coming into the place of blessing some other way and then laying claim to all the inheritance that belongs to the Second Man, the Last Adam? Therefore, the Philistine represents the spirit of formalism, worldly, dead ecclesiastical pretention which is soon to produce "*the man of sin, the son of perdition*" [2Th.2:3] who even now lords it over God's true children and seeks to bring them under bondage to its power...to deaden and kill all life, joy, and spiritual power.

EAR-MARKS OF PHILISTINISM

Wherever there are claims to **sole authority over the refreshing fountain of God's Word**, which is therefore tightly shut up; there is the Philistine, for that is what the Philistine did to Abraham's wells.

Whenever there is the teaching of some **way into the land of blessing other than by the Red Sea and Jordan**, the way of death (figure of the cross of Christ); there is the Philistine.

Wherever there is **uncertainty as to sins forgiven** (a cold dread fear that all is not well with our soul) because there is no positive knowledge of the one offering "*which hath perfected forever them that are sanctified*" [Heb.10:14]; there is the Philistine.

Wherever there is the **introduction of carnal principles** into the things of God, principles which the flesh can understand and approve, there is the Philistine.

Wherever there are **principles which would bind the energy of faith and therefore limit God's power**; there is the Philistine.

Wherever there is **bondage to any kind of form, method or arrangement in the things of God** whereby the fire of the Spirit of God is quenched and His free movement is checked; there is the Philistine.

Further, we must not forget the teaching which we have had in the Philistine king, **Abimelech** ("*My father was king*"). It is the **claim of succession** so fully expressed in that apostolic succession that is the chief of Rome's pretentiousness which is, by any means, not confined to Rome; but, like every other Philistine mark, it may be found in even that which is supposed to and claims to be the very opposite of Rome. Have you never heard amidst all the strife and contention of the professed people of God, similar claims of "being the only original company?" Or, "We can trace our church back to John the Baptist." Or, "We are the only people that are truly scriptural." Or, "We are the only apostolic folks left." These claims sound like the Philistine king Abimelech, "My father was king, and here are we his sole heirs and representatives in the world." Yet, strange to say, none agreed with the other but they raise their voice to swell the claim of the party they had joined. If you join with one you get the excommunication of the others. If you join none, you get the excommunication of all. Who shall deliver? Is there any hope, any way out of the awful confusion? In type, here in the book of Judges, who did deliver? "The Nazarite" was the overcomer then, and the principle which He figures is our only hope now. We are assured that this is the only possible deliverance in these "*last days*."

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON

"And there was a certain man of Zorah of the family of the Danites whose name was Manoah and his wife was barren and bare not. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son." [Jdg.13:2-3]

Previously, we observed that the Lord is increasingly careful "*lest Israel vaunt themselves*" [Jdg.7:1]. We have left-handed men and women prophetesses. Here God appears to a barren woman; not in answer to any cry, but in absolute sovereign grace which must be most perfectly expressed in this last deliverance of Samson. God must have the right-of-way. Man seems to be altogether put aside as witness because Manoah, the husband of the barren woman, is not even addressed by Jehovah. This simply teaches that in this last deliverance, God is only taking notice of weakness. He has all the strength Himself. He is not asking man to furnish

anything but the empty vessel; showing that there is room for all of us in this last revival. Praise the Lord!

Let us closely observe Samson's supernatural life and the manner of his birth. These barren women of the Bible all teach us a most necessary lesson: Absolute dependence upon God for fruit bearing. To such a one, and she so insignificant as to be unnamed, the Angel of the Lord appears and addresses to her these seemingly cruel words; "*Thou art barren and bearest not.*" Ah, did she not know this well? Had she not felt the reproach of her condition? Had it not been the burden of her cries to Jehovah night and day for many weary years? Yet, the Angel of the Lord touches this tender sensitive spot with "*Thou art barren and bearest not.*"

Beloved, has He ever spoken thus to you? At times, the Lord appears cruel in His treatment of us but it is always for our blessing. We will never be among the deliverers of God's people if we have not heard His voice saying, in no reproach but in tender love, "*Thou art barren.*" He always wounds before He heals; kills before He makes alive. We must be conscious of entire impotence before we can bring forth Samson (the "strong man"). Samson is born of weakness. This is the same old story which Sarah and Abraham learned. As far as bearing children was concerned they were both as good as dead. God's principles are always the same. He cannot use our strength; but He graciously condescends to use our weakness. He is looking for barrenness where He can come in and display His power. Do you want to be the mother of a Samson? In our day, it does not seem to be a coveted honor because so very few are able to stand the necessary training. The reproach of barrenness is awful when everywhere we hear the boasting of the woman with the many children. It is humbling to hear the Angel say, "*Thou art barren;*" but far deeper are the wounds of friends who know nothing of our helplessness nor weakness.

These words of truth to this unnamed barren woman, the future mother of a Samson, were quickly followed by words of grace, "*Thou shalt conceive and bear a son.*" This also is a sure principle of Jehovah's dealings with man. "*Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" [Joh.1:17]. When we hear His words of Truth and acknowledge them as such, He will shortly speak words of grace.

"Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."
[Jdg.13:4-5]

The arrival of Samson was to be anticipated by a course in harmony with what God purposed him to be—a Nazarite from his mother's womb. She who was to bring forth this mighty deliverer must first be a Nazarite herself. The very name **Nazarite** means "*separation.*" Do you begin to see the deep significance? The strong man Samson springs from the weak one who is separated unto the Lord. He is not brought forth in a day. He is the result of many tears and agony of soul, with deep despair of, and a turning from, any expectation of self, before there is the slightest sign of this lusty son...he who would "*begin to deliver Israel.*"

Remember, Samson was the last judge whom Jehovah raised up to deliver His people out of the hand of the Philistines. This spirit of Nazariteship is what is needed today to deliver The Church from the same enemy—the Philistine; a dry, joyless, formal profession without power. A separation from earth's joys and defilements can alone produce the deeper spirit of Nazariteship—a glorying in the Lord. We must have found the Lord as the all-sufficient joy-giver before He will be found as the all-sufficient strength-giver; the one comes first, giving birth to the other.

The Nazarite of Israel's day was known by 3 unmistakable marks:

1. Abstinence from the vine in every form, even the seeds and skin were to be refused
2. The loss of the dignity of manhood by his long hair.
3. Separation from the dead, his own family included.

The mother of Samson was obliged to have the 1st and 3rd characteristics of the Nazarite.

Samson was to have the 2nd mark, *“never was razor to come upon his head,”* in addition to the other 2 marks. As long as he lived, he was to be a separated man; thus should he *“begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistine.”*

Notice that little word *“begin.”* It is prophetically significant of every deliverance The Church has ever had because there was only a beginning. In a short time she was again a captive to the enemy. Even the last deliverance, which Samson especially figures according to the type, will only have a beginning, for the Lord will come and catch away His people. This last revival will end in glory to the utter discomfiture of the Philistine, who cannot believe anything so foolish as the coming of the Lord and translation of the saints.

MARKS OF NAZARITESHIP

These details are given us in Numbers 6. We here find that a secret hidden motive led some Israelites to give up all that in the natural was held fast by the world. While others might enjoy the vine and its fruit, without sin, he, apart from any compulsion, touched it not.

Yet this Nazarite was no mournful sad one. No indeed, quite the reverse. A holy joy pervaded his countenance and spoke aloud of some secret source of satisfaction which could not be accounted for naturally. How emphatically this speaks to us of the all-sufficiency of Christ to fill the heart and charm the eye, making us independent of earth's attractions. For earth's attractions are what the vine, with all pertaining to it, signifies: The intoxication of the world, its pleasures, fame, money, etc. Here then is the **1st Mark of the Nazarite** of the “last days:” A heart-separation from the world in all its phases which results in a voluntary letting go of all its allurements.

Does this appear extreme and fanatical? Well then the Nazarite of Israel's day must have been extreme and fanatical because of his separation from the grape. Jehovah does not so regard it. In fact it was His ordinance; His principles are unchanging, they demand an extreme carrying out in practical life. Anything less is nauseating to Him...God abhors half-heartedness. He wants us to be either cold or hot. Let me ask some questions:

“Can there be a too absorbing delight in Christ?”

“Is it possible to *“seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth”* [Col.3:1] too diligently?”

“Can we lay up too many treasures there?”

This is not legality; this is deep heart love and desire after Christ, running hard after Him that we may win Him. We cannot run too fast nor go too far in this race.

The 2nd Mark was a separation from the rights and dignity of manhood. The glory of a man is his strength. But this one confessed, by his long hair, that he had learned the precious secret of glorying in another as his strength. His long hair was a veil which hid him altogether, even as the woman to whom it is given as a covering, *“if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him”* [1Co.11:14]. Yes, truly the natural man counts it a shame to be weak and helpless and dependent upon another...this is the woman's place. But the Nazarite accepts the shame and

glories in it. His very loss becomes his crown, for this is just what the Holy Spirit calls the long hair of a Nazarite, "*The consecration of his God is upon him*" [Num.6:7]. The word **consecration** is the same word that is translated **CROWN** elsewhere; for instance, "*The crown of his Lord*" [Lev.21:12].

The Nazarite of our day learns to glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ may cover him like a tabernacle [2Co.12:9]. When so clothed, we see him slaying lions and thousands of Philistines. Weak indeed are all our foes against the Spirit of God, who only needs human helplessness (a yielded vessel) to display His strength. If we are correct in the typical significance of Samson, then the character of the deliverance of the "*last days*" is before us. The Lord is calling for weak, helpless, earthen vessels; here there is room for all of us. Nothing will debar us from being deliverers but human strength and wisdom.

The 3rd Mark is the deepest, sweetest secret of all: The Nazarite confesses that he has another life altogether. He has a double-hidden life, "*Hid with Christ in God*" [Col.3:3], a new creation, a resurrection life, entirely unaffected by death. He knows no man, no, not even his own mother, father, brother, sister "*after the flesh*" [2Co.5:16]. Thus, he keeps judging that "*if one died for all, then all died*" [2Co.5:14]. He has no fellowship with the old creation. His hopes, plans, ambitions, and interests are in another scene altogether. It is no dry, musty, theological dogma to such a one; instead a simple, living Truth "*that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death*" [Rom.8:2]. He counts all that the flesh has incurred its condemnation (all to which it clings, all that it possesses all its ability) as nothing to him. He will not glory in his own flesh neither in the flesh of another. He has been crucified unto the world and the world unto him [Gal.6:14]. Yes, this Nazarite does not even know Christ after the flesh. The cross is the end of all flesh for him. He knows only Christ in resurrection and the "*man in Christ*" [2Co.12:2].

In due time, the promised son arrives; his mother named him **Samson** ("*sunlike*"). The Nazarite is not the sun, only His representative during His absence. He is to shine as a testimony to His absent lord.

"The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol."
[Jdg.13:25]

Samson was of the tribe of Dan. The tribe of Dan speaks of the service of rule; a rule which for blessing must be first of all over one's self. That is, he must be an overcomer at home before there is any public demonstration. Samson sees the need of victory among the people of God. The Philistine rule is apparent everywhere and he cries mightily to God for deliverance. The Spirit of God urges him to break the enemy's yoke and lead the people into freedom. He is moved to begin his mighty works.

JUDGES 14

"And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." [Jdg.14:1-3]

Let us learn through his folly and steer clear of this danger. Here is Samson's first mistake; he goes "*down*," an ominous beginning for an up-going man. He sees a woman of the Philistines, who pleases him well, and he says to his parents, "*Get her for me.*" He desires an alliance with the very people from whom he was to deliver Israel and would not be denied. But this can

never be. There is no fellowship between Nazarite and Philistine. The Nazarite stands for separation from the world, the Philistine, separation from God. All these women in Samson's life are typical of principles today, the adoption of which are snares for God's Nazarites.

The name of this woman, whom Samson would legally wed, is not given. All we know is that she is of **Timnath** (*"portion"*). Timnath, as connected with the Philistine, portends evil to this strong man. That is, Samson is leaving his own portion to seek one elsewhere, just as the words of his parents would indicate: *"Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren?"* It is an alliance with the enemy which our deliverer is choosing. So it has ever been.

"Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done." [Jdg.14:5-6]

Martin Luther fell quite in love with the Philistine, drew very close to her at one time, and barely escaped her embraces. This is a very dangerous path for a Nazarite. It leads through the *"vineyards of Timnath,"* the very place one, who must eat *"nothing of the vine from the seed-stones to the skin,"* ought to shun. Here he meets a young lion. Satan is always found lurking in the *"vineyards of Timnath,"* waiting for the Nazarites.

"The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him" and he tears the lion as a kid. This is Samson's first conflict and, fresh from the victory of it, he goes to visit the Philistine woman, who yet pleases him well. The soldier of Christ is more readily lulled to sleep than overcome in battle. He slays the open foe but is deceived by a hidden one—a Philistine alliance. Today, many of God's Nazarites are snared by these women. They find out Samson's weakness; a weakness which finally results in utter wretchedness. This woman of Timnath is but a counterpart of Delilah of Sorek. It is the wile of the enemy, not the fiery dart; the craft, not the power; the charm of some Philistine principle that is embraced, and against which the Nazarite is weak.

But this is rather vague. Where do we see such a principle in evidence today, ensnaring Samsons? We must remember that the Philistine, while really Egyptian, the old man yet claims all that belongs to the new man. The Philistine figures some religious principle which pleases the flesh and which ends, when embraced, in the undoing and uncovering of the Nazarite. Legality is one of these fair women. It has weakened and dwarfed many a Samson. The Galatians were in the coils of the woman of Timnath; that is, they were seeking their portion elsewhere than in Christ. There are hundreds of these principles today by means of which Samsons are brought into bondage. The Corinthians were uncovered and shorn of their strength when they were endeavoring to enjoy their portion in this world, reigning as kings without Christ [1Co.4:8]; boasting in their gifts, their utterance, their knowledge. The Church ruling, teaching, limiting, fencing, organizing, is these women snaring the Samsons, shearing them, binding them, and bringing them down to shame and utter defeat.

The slightest trust in the flesh (the modern system of revival) in all the worldly ways which are rightly called *"church work,"* are far from being the *"Lord's work;"* all are daughters of the Philistine. An alliance with the enemy is courted, the aid of the world is diligently sought; men say, *"We must have it in order to obtain deliverance from the world. We must have fleshly attractions, eloquent speakers, exquisite music, and advertising schemes to get the crowd."* All of these are in the guise of religion and all please us well. The fair daughters of the Philistines are a type of these *"things"* even though they have proved to be the undoing of the Nazarite.

A NAZARITE RIDDLE

"And he went down and talked with the woman and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion and behold there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion." [Jdg.14:7-8]

In spite of his parents opposition (illustrative of God's attitude to this alliance), Samson went down and talked with the woman and his fetters were forged. He is captured; *"She pleased him well."* Strange infatuation! How prevalent it is today. A Nazarite, having the Spirit of God abiding in him, so strong that he can tear a lion as easy as a kid and yet at the same time be overcome by some fair enemy in friendly guise that shall eventually put out his eyes and make sport of the foolish fellow who is so enamored of her.

Some time elapses and again we see Samson on his way to Timnath; but now he is going to his wedding feast with his parents in his company whose objections he has apparently overruled. He passes the spot where he had previously met the lion and he turns aside to view the remains. He finds no evidence of the flesh (though the bleached bones abundantly witness of the vanquished foe); but instead a swarm of bees delights his eyes. Death has made room for a multitude of life with abundant, ordered activity, and consequently there is honey for the Nazarite. Thus *"out of the eater has come forth meat and out of the strong, sweetness"* [Jdg.14:14]. Out of the power that was against him, met and conquered by the mightier power of God which tabernacled upon him, Samson finds refreshment and strength for himself and others. This is possible solely because of another life that has come into the very hold of death and fills the place of corruption with order and sweetness. Truly this is a Nazarite experience: By the transforming power of God, that which is contrary to him becomes for him, reminding us of the *"all things which work together for good to them that love God"* [Rom.8:28]. On the cross this was most gloriously expressed...the greatest power manifested in the greatest weakness; and in the worst act of rebellion the world has ever witnessed, God was given the greatest opportunity to display His grace. Out of apparent defeat comes victory. Out of death comes a harvest of life. The battlefield becomes a banqueting house; the table is not only furnished with good things in the presence of our enemies but is actually from that which they themselves have provided. All these things, which like Jacob, are against us, the Nazarite finds are for him. This is the personal experience of faith; a secret hidden from the Philistine.

"And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion." [Jdg.14:9]

Samson takes of the honey and eats, giving some to his father and mother. They no doubt would not appreciate the honey if they knew its source. We cannot tell some spiritual things to others because the meat is too strong for such. They are not able to bear all the truth, though they may, at the same time, be eating of its fruit, partaking of its blessing even at our hands. Indeed Samson's riddle is but little understood by the Lord's own people, much less the formal worldly professor of religion.

Samson, after eating the honey, still proceeds on his journey to accomplish his marriage. And God allows it, for He is going to accomplish His purpose thru this very alliance. He is going to use this very circumstance to stir up Samson against the enemy of Israel and thus he shall begin to deliver them. The Lord often allows us to have our own way when it pleases us well and we insist upon it; but, He is not defeated thereby and neither will He allow us to be defeated, only apparently, if we have purposed in our heart that His will shall be done in us. He will bring us up out of death into resurrection; out of defeat into victory.

A MARRIAGE FEAST

Samson makes a feast to celebrate his wedding. His friends, including his best man, as we would say, are all Philistine (bad company for a Nazarite), and he proposes to them a riddle as a test of wisdom.

"And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle." [Jdg.14:14]

Truly, to know the answer to Samson's riddle is wisdom, though not as the world counts wisdom, but that which is such before God. But no Philistine ever yet had the faintest chance to guess the meaning of Samson's riddle; and Samson has no such thought in giving it: but if they can guess the answer, each one shall have a change of garments as a reward. The one that can penetrate the mystery of a life of faith (out of weakness, strength, death, or resurrection—the paradox of a Christian life) must have a suitable garment, a robe of righteousness, befitting such wisdom. He would thus prove he was no Philistine.

Remember, these people represent professed Christians and Samson is just testing their profession by his riddle. They of course failed to penetrate the secret; yet Samson loses his wager, for the Philistine woman discovers his weak side: *"And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted."* He can tear a lion; but a weeping woman is too much for him. He succumbs to her blandishments and is undone. He himself gives away the answer of the proposed riddle, and she in turn tells it to her people.

"And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." [Jdg.14:18]

The secret is known by the Philistines, and yet it is not known. They do not understand it; yet they glibly provide the answer of *"What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"* But Samson is not deceived. He knows they have learned it from his wife (they had *"ploughed with his heifer"*). This was only natural (although Samson seems surprised); she was but Philistine, and of course had fellowship with Philistines. The strange thing was not that Philistine plowed with Philistine, but that Nazarite desired fellowship with such. The anger of Samson is kindled; but he must pay the wager. So we read...

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon him suddenly and he went down to Askelon and slew thirty men of them and took the spoil and gave the changes of garment unto them that had declared the riddle." [Jdg.14:19]

Notice that this was done in the will and power of God: *"The Spirit of the Lord came upon him."* He went to **Askelon** (*"the fire of infamy"*), and slew thirty of their men and gave the changes of garments from the spoil which he gathered. The Philistines are repaid with other Philistine garments and thus are suitably arrayed; though the change, judging from the name, would seem for the worse rather than the better. Now the necessary strife, for it is of God, commences between Nazarite and Philistine. The alliance with the woman of Timnath is broken off which is the result, though remote and veiled, of the slaying of the lion. Thus all things are working well.

JUDGES 15

"But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. And

her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her." [Jdg.15:1-2]

The second part of the story now commences in which Samson is continually in open conflict with the Philistines. At first he seems to be still enamored, for he goes to visit his wife with a kid. We would infer that the kid figures Christ as the Savior which Samson desires to present to the Philistine woman. He still wants fellowship with her, but now he insists that only on the basis of redemption may this life-union be consummated. He has only partly learned his lesson. Her father refuses to allow Samson to see his wife.

Samson learns his wife has been given to his best man, the friend of the bridegroom and his wrath breaks out. His wrath does not come forth as private vengeance against the Timnathite, but against the Philistines as a whole.

"And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand (or, torches) in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives." [Jdg.15:4-5]

He catches 300 foxes and joining them in couples by the tails with a lighted torch between the tails he lets the terrified animals loose into the cornfields and olive-yards of the enemy, just at the time of harvest. The fires spread and the destruction of the corn, the olive-yards and even of the vineyards of the enemy followed.

What is there in this for the man of God today? The mere historical fact is entirely too trivial for a place in the oracles of God if there is no lesson in it for us. Let us notice it carefully.

THE FLESH: We are impressed that at the outset that no Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson here and we argue from the omission that this is no work of faith or labor of love. Samson is acting apart from the Spirit; therefore he is in the flesh, and we have the key to the incident. We need not expect anything praiseworthy or noble from one walking in the flesh, though he may be aiming at the enemy of the Lord's people...the Philistines.

THE FOXES: Further observe, that Samson requires foxes (or JACKALS, as the word is also translated) and he catches 300 of them. Now, this action certainly seems unworthy of the Nazarite, the strong man. His friends would scarcely be amazed at his wonderful prowess if they saw him chasing jackals. It is a poor business for anyone, especially a Nazarite. As we throw the light of God's Word upon these creatures, we get some idea of their significance. We read, *"If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall"* [Neh.4:3]. Here the fox (jackal) is clearly a figure of utter weakness, or rather contemptuous insignificance. Then it is written, *"They shall be a portion for foxes"* [Psa.43:11], which suggests the thought of an unclean creature feeding on carrion or corruption. Further, we have a hint of their destructive tendency in the admonition, *"Take us the foxes...that spoil the vines"* [SSg.2:15]. The words of Jesus *"Go ye, and tell that fox"* [Luk.13:32], referring to Herod, a type of the Antichrist, bode no good omen as to the helpers of Samson's vengeance.

Therefore, we rightly infer from the above Scriptures that the Nazarite is out of his element. He is not acting worthy of the dignity or character of his calling in making the unclean, destructive, sly jackal, the minister of his ire. He is truly pouring coals of fire on the enemy's head but it is mixed with a little dynamite. This is unworthy of a Nazarite; but such things are not uncommon in our midst. Do not many of our Samson's (strong earnest souls) sometimes resort to unclean or unworthy means to give expression to their indignation against what is truly Philistine? Yet their real motive is to work a personal revenge. There are but few of the Lord's people who have not, at some time in their experience, caught and used some jackals.

THE TORCHES: The torches which Samson put between the tails and then set on fire, has wonderful significance also; however, for the interpretation we are dependent upon him who sets them on fire. If God kindles the torch, as He did when Abraham saw a fire passing between the pieces of the sacrifices [Gen.15:17], it is well; but if it is set on fire by man it has quite another meaning. In this case, Samson himself, not led by the Spirit, sets fire to the firebrands, therefore the significance is evil. We would gather that the torch speaks of fleshly anger, carnal indignation, rather than Divine Judgment.

THE FIRE: Let us hear the apostle James on this matter of firebrands. We believe he can throw a little light on the subject. *"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature and it is set on fire of hell"* [Jam.3:5-6]. Ah, he helps us considerably. We begin to see from whence Samson's fire comes. The tongue is also likened, by the same apostle, to a bit and a rudder, small but very effective. When we have control of the bit, the horse is controlled; when we have control of the rudder, the ship is controlled; when we have control of the tongue, the whole man is controlled. It is the heart that is really meant, of which the tongue is the index...it is a great boaster. What mischief the tongue can accomplish. It is like a spark in a bale of hay; let it get started and who can extinguish it? Let it have its way, under control of the old nature (foxes) and, in the natural course of things, it will set everything on fire with which it comes in contact. But when we trace these burning denunciations, these righteous indignations, as we love to call them, to their true source, we find as in this present case, they are set on fire of **Gehenna** ("hell"). It is the awful energy of evil. Samson kindled the torch with his own fire and then gave up all control of it to the 300 jackals, to be taken wherever these unclean animals listed. Samson and his 300 jackals are quite a contrast in every respect to Gideon and his 300 men. Gideon's 300 men also had torches, but they were not harmful, they did not destroy any corn, wine or oil, rather they were helpful, for they lighted the pathway when the pitchers, which held them, were broken.

But do Samson and his 300 jackals deliver Israel? Has this raid against the Philistines brought blessing to the people of God? Most surely not. There is nothing bad in corn and wine and oil, quite the contrary, they are the produce of Israel's land (rather Immanuel's land) and therefore do not belong to the Philistine. It is never God's way to destroy growth of His property. He is ever careful of the land of Canaan, so much so that no tree that gave fruit for man was ever to be cut down, even in laying siege to an enemy's city [Deu.20:19]. Though the old corn of the land was grown under the Canaanites, as soon as God's people crossed Jordan it became the food of them; so it is never a type of evil but of good. This being undoubtedly the case, we would therefore infer that the corn, the wine and the oil speak of blessings—the food, the joy, the power, which are the heritage of faith, are found as joined to Christ in the heavenlies. These are never to be destroyed although they may be in the Philistine's hands.

THE SAMSONS OF TODAY

Methinks we have the perfect anti-type of this in our midst today...the Pentecostal movement which began a few years ago. God's sovereignty was abundantly in evidence in this last revival. It commenced simultaneously all over the world. The strong man was born, not in any organized, orthodox, respectable church, but in little groups of people gathered together in dependence upon God, praying for an out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. And it came; a perfect deluge for awhile, Samson was the result. He endeavored to draw near and identify himself with the established churches, as one with them in fellowship and union; but it would not work at all. They could not understand him, for he was an Israelite of a very special character, a Nazarite and they were Philistine. He was a riddle to them—poor, uneducated for the most part, unknown, without prestige or influence of any kind, and yet claiming and proving to be the strong man, having *"power from on high"* [Luk.24:49], able to resist and defeat Satan, and deliver the

helpless out of his hands. Finally, they profess to receive him and extend to him the hand of fellowship; but it is upon the ground that they are as wise as he. They assure Samson that they know all about the power of the Holy Spirit. He has no secret which they cannot solve, no experience of victory of which they are ignorant. They call attention to their knowledge of the Bible and their years of experience and service for their church. With pride, they point to their influence, numbers, religious prestige, and marvel that Samson would think for a moment that he had more of salvation than they enjoy. But, the Nazarite is not at all deceived. He is sure that they have never learned his secret of victory by their experience of being filled with the Spirit; but have gathered it from the woman (The Church) with whom he claims fellowship, she having learned the secret from him.

The above is neither farfetched nor imaginary. These very things have happened before our eyes. Remember that the Philistine principle may be manifest in the most orthodox and scripturally gathered assembly; and this enemy, formalism, is more to be dreaded than fanaticism. It is more alluring to the Nazarite (this present-day strong man) because he is little and unknown, feels his separation from organizations and assemblies (presumably Christian), and makes overtures toward joining them. He knows he is different but hopes by this union to be fruitful and thereby increase his usefulness. But it is not a success. There is no real fellowship. They insist he has nothing more than they have always had. They can even teach him, they argue but Samson will not stand for this. He knows it is false and he, as energized by the Spirit, rewards them with that which belongs to them. He does not agree for one minute that they understand or have his experience and thereby can wear the garments of a Nazarite. No indeed. He fits them in garments which suit them, that is, he tells them the truth. But he is lonely. He feels he is cast-off and the Philistine woman still pleases him well. He wants her fellowship. The anti-type of this lusty fellow does not yet want to walk alone in dependence upon God. He wants to be like the other churches—respectable, refined, and orderly. He does not like to be reproached, nor persecuted, nor termed peculiar.

They have apparently found out his secret of strength—victory out of defeat, sweetness out of death—and they want no more of him. He is not wanted. They do not desire the power—resurrection power—which he manifests. They refuse to acknowledge their death and consequent helplessness. They are strong and able and Samson is in disrepute. They do not want to be identified with him. He is forced to walk alone. This is of God, who is doing a new thing. He does not want this present day Nazarite to look back and copy his predecessors. He has something better for him. God is sufficient; He wants us to watch Him work.

Samson does not see God in this and does not realize that the Lord wants this breach to come. His anger is hot against the Philistine and he goes to get revenge. He commences to retaliate with venomous words. He denounces them on every occasion. A fire is started in anger and blazes briskly for awhile. Samson's strength is all directed against the Philistines, and this was good, were it not that the corn, the wine and the oil are burnt too. That is, because of the ire of Samson who desires revenge, the food of God's people is destroyed. The saints are kept from getting the truth because it is in the hands of the Philistines and thereby suffer in consequence. The lusty son is weakened. Oh yes, Samson was a Nazarite, but a Nazarite apart from the Spirit of God can do more mischief than any other man. We are living in Samson days, and many of us have observed the mighty works of the separated child of weakness when under control of the Spirit. We have also seen the mighty evil he can do, the fire he can kindle when the flesh is in control. We have seen the inevitable results, "*If ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another,*" even as in the case of Samson, our type.

But the incident with the woman of Timnath is not yet closed. Fire answers to fire.

"Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire." [Jdg.15:6]

Ah, the Philistine is bitterly opposed to everything that in any way is allied to true separation to the Lord, and reality of experience. Samson retaliates, smiting them *"hip and thigh with great slaughter"* [Jdg.15:8]. His strength has not waned. He still hates what the Lord hates, though his energy is wrongly directed for he is warring after the flesh, wrestling against flesh and blood. In type, he has left his own portion, for he went down to **Timnath** (*"portion"*), and thereby results all the failure. In like manner, Samson of the present day has left his own inheritance in the heavenlies, where his fight was the fight of faith, resisting the wicked spirits, and is seeking a portion in the world. He leaves his Ephesian calling, as "the Assembly glorious," joined unto the Lord, and chooses another place, a lesser place—an earthly portion, and, for the time being, loses his separated heavenly character and eventually loses the best place in the glory.

The burning of the corn emphasizes the above interpretation. It is called *"standing corn"* [Jdg.15:5] referring to resurrection. That is, by the failure of Samson at this stage of his career, the truth concerning the teaching of our standing in Christ (as raised up and seated together with Him in the heavenlies) is destroyed. The saints are not getting their true portion in Christ because of the strife and division manifest. The "strong man," who has lately come upon the scene, wars against formalism so aggressively and to such an extent that he gets into the other extreme, fanaticism; the precious truth, which has apparently been in the hands of the Philistines (though only held in theory) is burned, and all the consequent strength, power, and joy which comes from its reception is lost. How sad! But such is man. The pendulum always swings to one side or the other. Because The Church has not walked in the light of Paul's epistles (though accepting them as doctrine) it is no excuse for us to refuse these wonderful revelations concerning the saints of this dispensation. To do so is to lose immeasurably of the true riches; the unsearchable riches; and then we begin to walk and war as men and not as long-haired Nazarites.

SAMSON REVIVED

"And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam." [Jdg.15:7-8]

Now there is a change. We begin to get a better view of the Nazarite. He comes to himself, as it were, and realizes that his actions are unworthy of his high calling. He is ashamed of his foolishness. He retires to **Etam** (*"lair of ravenous beasts"*), wonderfully significant name, and abides in the cleft of the rock. The meaning of Etam tells us of the character of this world and its attitude toward a Nazarite. Paul was at this place for he writes *"I have fought with wild beasts"* [1Co.15:32]. And he found the same secure and happy shelter as Samson—the clefted rock—and was safely kept in this place of danger. The rock is the natural dwelling of those feeble folk, the conies [Pro.30:26], and all people who have long hair; for *"that rock was Christ"* [1Co.10:4]; therefore we may look for recovery and restoration now.

"Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi." [Jdg.15:7-9]

The Philistines find out the place of Samson's refuge and a great host of them comes to take him captive. The men of Judah, his own brethren, consent to deliver him into their hand. Have you never read of some who say *"they are Jews and are not"* [Rev.2:9, Rev.3:9] or *"false brethren who come in privily to spy out our liberty"* [Gal.2:4]. Surely these men of Judah were kin to such.

"And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee." [Jdg.15:10-12]

Oh, poor men of Judah, how low they have sunken. But are we quite sure that we can throw any stones? Have we never given up Divine Principles of separation, in which alone is Divine Strength, because we are subject to claims that are the tradition of the elders, the antique relic of the dark ages, and has no "thus saith the Lord" to back it up? Yes indeed, often it has been so. It is especially true today, that many are giving up the principles which bring deliverance and becoming a captive again to lifeless formalism. Many of the Lord's people have been stirred by the mighty energizing power of the Holy Spirit in these last few years, and have burst through all barriers, leaped over all bounds, kicked off the grave clothes and gotten free; then...the men of Judah have come, saying,

"This is quite irregular; this is against all order; it is not proper for us today; you are breaking all traditional rules and church regulations, and these are our masters. We are governed by 'form' which will not permit any kind of ecstasy or Holy Spirit intoxication. It is not decent. You must get back in the grave, Samson; put the bands on again."

Oh, how true to life. The anti-type fits the type most perfectly. Not that Samson has not made mistakes; we have noted his failure in detail. Flesh has been manifested in dealing with flesh. Extreme formalism has been met by extreme fanaticism. Rigid rule and somber silence have been scandalized by lawlessness and levity. Senseless demonstrations in many places, have taken the place of preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Consequently, ignorance of the Truth prevails. All this we admit as true. The Nazarite acted foolishly at first. He was beside himself. His freedom in the Spirit was so wonderful that he misused it greatly; but at least he had life and power. He did things. His salvation was real to him. He demonstrated it. Though he had his faults, Samson was not icily regular nor a regular icicle. But this is the important fact which we do well to remember...he was God's Nazarite. God Almighty launched him upon the scene and he is here to stay; for he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistine. We are not through with him yet.

"We (men of Judah) are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines." The Philistines are tired of his foolishness and are determined to put a stop to his outrages against them. It is beautiful and pathetic to hear Samson say to the men of Judah, *"Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves"* [Jdg.15:12]. He wants no quarrel with his brethren; for he is there to do them good. He is the deliverer of Israel not the destroyer. Oh, that God's people had ears to hear. This last revival is for their good. Samson was born to be a blessing to the men of Judah and a menace to the Philistine; but the Philistines have ruled so long over the people of God that they do not want their freedom. Samson allows them to shackle him; apparently he is bound and that by his own people...the men of Judah. This seems the lowest stage of his career, rejected and given into the enemy's hands by the men of Judah, who appear more afraid of their God-sent deliverer than they do of the people of whom they are in bondage. Is not this also true as to the anti-type? But all shall work good for our Nazarite.

"And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock." [Jdg.15:13-13]"

The men of Judah bind him with “*two new cords*,” quite new, made expressly for the occasion. Most surely, Satan never lacks for new cords with which to curb the free, unrestrained Divine Life energized by the Holy Spirit. Some new rule is made to suit the occasion, as at the present time we can readily discern these 2 cords, with which Samson is bound, as “organization” and “ordination.” They are “new” because the brethren refuse to acknowledge these new bands by their old Philistine names; but they have the same effect and serve the same purpose. For instance, one longs to proclaim this full Gospel, which has set him free, but there is a new cord to bind him—he has never been “ordained”—he must not preach, though filled and urged by the Spirit, until someone in authority has laid his hands upon him and he has been given papers authorizing him to let the Holy Spirit have His way. Or, if the Lord works mightily in some place, saving and filling with the Spirit, the Nazarite being born, then come the men of Judah to “organize” and make him a part of The Church—to bind the strong man, to make him independent of his risen Lord, his heavenly Head, and cripple and hinder his usefulness.

The word for **CORDS** is also very suggestive. Its root meaning is to “*intertwine*,” giving the thought that it is the product of human hands. This is exactly what all these Philistine rulers are—made of and by men. They are not in God's order, not divine, but of human manufacture and as soon as God's Word touches them they become as flax; for God's Word is a fire when lit by the Holy Spirit. For instance, see the fire touch one of these cords, the “ordination” cord, “*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” [1Pe.1:10]. This sets the Nazarite free to use every gift in direct responsibility to the Giver alone.

Here is another; watch it burn the “organization” cord and free Samson quickly, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” [1Co.12:13]. The Church is an organism, “one body,” indwelt and energized by the Holy Spirit, with the Head and source of life in heaven, and is therefore independent of every man-appointed leader or head, whether he be pope, president or, bishop; however, there are God-appointed pastors and shepherds, whose faith we are exhorted to follow. We cannot organize this organism nor get into it except by a new birth.

THE NAZARITE VICTORY

But Samson is not bound long; for when he comes to **Lehi** (“*jaw*”), named no doubt in anticipation of the coming victory of the jaw, the Philistines shouted in triumph; and this was more than he could stand.

“And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi.” [Jdg.15:15-17]

The Spirit of the Lord came suddenly upon him, and the cords which were upon his arms became as flax that is burned in the fire, and the bands were loosed from his arms. He needs no jackals now. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him...and, there is no lack of a weapon. Anything will suffice when the “Power from on high,” is in evidence. A fresh jawbone of an ass will serve the purpose. The feebler the instrument, the more God is glorified in its use. This is surely written for our comfort and encouragement. The “ass,” the firstling of which had to be redeemed with a lamb [Exo.13:13] speaks of the first man, the old creation. And, as to him, the first necessity is that he must be put out of the way or dead. The ass has to be done with the jawbone before the Lord will pick it up and use it. As long as it was in the mouth of a living ass it could not be of any force against the Philistines; but let it be the bone of a dead ass in the

hand of a living Nazarite, controlled and possessed by the mighty Spirit of God, and the slaughter of the Philistines is sure to follow. A thousand men are slain with a few deft blows. Samson is jubilant. He sings with joy: "With the jawbone of an ass, I have made asses of them; with the jawbone of an ass, I have slain a thousand men."

But there is a special point in relation to this jawbone which demands emphasis. It was a "fresh," a moist jawbone, not "new," as our authorized version would indicate; for the word is quite different from that used in relation to the "cords" which bound Samson. Marvelous are the results of a moist jawbone in the hand of a Nazarite. Jawbones are for the most part so very dry today. There is so little moisture in them. Plenty of human learning; also at times plenty of knowledge of Scripture; for in late years men have learned much about dispensational, prophetic and Church truth; but that does not necessarily mean "freshness," unction, or vitality. No indeed, we have often noted Philistine principles rampant and ruling over such. No jawbone is of service apart from unction. It must not be just a dry, dead bone; it must be wet with the dew from heaven. The ass must be dead; but there must be life in the bone.

After his victory and consequent peon of triumph, Samson throws away the jawbone. He will not keep it, for it might become a snare to him. Israel might give it the glory for the victory, instead of the Lord, and go whoring after it as they did Gideon's ephod. So, Samson lets it go. It has served its purpose; after all, it is nothing more than the jawbone of a dead ass. Oh the lesson in this for us. We are prone to exalt the poor weak instruments that God deigns to use. Do we not hear the encomiums of the jawbone on every hand? What a wonderful man is so and so! What marvelous fluency! What beauty of exposition! What magnetism! What a powerful speaker! Yes, we hear all these foolish utterances. Just as well might our Samson say, "What a powerful jawbone! What a magnetic jawbone! What a wonderful jawbone!" But no, he put the jawbone in its right place lest it detract from the glory of Him to whom all glory is due. He threw it away.

"And he called the name of that place Ramath-lehi ("exaltation of the jawbone"). Samson no doubt marveled at the results of such a one-sided battle—that one man should kill 1,000 and attain such a victory over the enemy. He was so deeply impressed with the telling effects of the jawbone that, although he throws it away, yet he must leave a memorial of its prowess.

"And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years." [Jdg.15:18-20]

Now our hero is brought low, down to the very verge of despair...*"he was sore athirst."* The Lord saw the need. His much-grieved servant might have become exalted without this abasement. God is doing great things for Samson today. He is having some wonderful experiences and he is learning some wonderful lessons. He has just realized the fact of his great strength and now there is the opposite extreme; he is realizing the fact of his great weakness.

The teaching at this point is very important. Samson, the strong man, is just entering into the meaning of his being called a Nazarite. It must be a reality to him before he can be the judge of Israel. Although he had just had a mighty victory; yet here he is poor and needy again. In this respect, Paul is the anti-type of Samson when he exclaimed, *"When I am weak, then am I strong"* [2Co.12:10]. He too was a Nazarite, had long hair and was not ashamed of this fact. He gloried in his necessities, infirmities, etc. because they made him call upon the Lord for his every

need. God is sufficient for the Nazarite in every age and clime. Weakness is the special mark of Nazariteship. It is the result of his separated life.

Now this is written for our admonition. If we would be an overcomer, the deliverer of the "*last days*," we must be brought to a despair of self. Weakness must be actually felt; our need must be realized not theorized; and thus, we will be brought to depend upon God alone. Happy are the people who have arrived at this stage in their life. Samson is learning this necessary lesson. He finds that the Rock, in which he abides, is not only a refuge from danger, but a great supply house, wherein is stored all manner of provision waiting a call upon it. Samson draws upon this sufficiency with faith's irresistible argument: "Thou hast given wonderful deliverance to me this day and surely Thou wilt not let me die of thirst now." No, no, Samson, not till heaven and earth pass away shall the man be confounded that trusts in the Lord. There is a plentiful springing up of water for these poor and needy ones at any time, any place...even the most unlikely. God therefore answers His servant by cleaving the bruising place in Lehi so that water comes out of it. The likeness to the cleft rock in the wilderness is very evident. The cross, where our Lord was bruised, from whence all refreshment as well as all victory comes, is no doubt figured; and "the place of bruising" makes the reference more plain. Our version calls it the "*hollow place that was in the jaw*" or Lehi (in the margin).

The fact of Enhakkore being "*in Lehi unto this day*" is sufficient witness; but the connection is also clear. The bruising place that is in Lehi reminds us surely of the Philistine defeat. Yet the springing water is in marked contrast; for not by bruising, but by being bruised for our iniquity did the Lord of glory bring forth water for our thirsty souls. So we find figured here, not only Satan's bruising, for he is the father of the Philistine, but the refreshing presence of the Holy Spirit; the result of the bruising of the cross. Samson drinks to the full, and his spirit comes again. He is revived and strengthened. Wherefore he called the name thereof **Enhakkore** ("*the well of him that called*"). Happy Samson; he has learned the secret of continual strength—dependence upon the Lord for his every need—joy as well as power. He is now ready for the judgeship; "*and he judged Israel twenty years.*"

Again we are assured that Samson's history has special significance as regards our very own time. If we are correct in our interpretation, that he figures the present revival of The Church, then we have now reached (in his career) the full overcoming period. He is in the place of victory, free from all Philistine rule. He has cast off all Philistine bands and delivered his people from her tyranny, in which glorious freedom the people rejoice for 20 years. Yet, with all this manifested strength which has brought blessing to the people of God, he himself is weak. He is dependent, helpless, cumbered with infirmity and happy man...he knows it. He makes no boast whatever as to his wondrous defeat of the Philistines; but immediately after he is again found calling upon God. There is another need. He must call again for help.

We believe we have about reached this place of glorious overcoming. Many have arrived and are pushing on in victory. Some may have acted unwisely in the past; may have been beside themselves and have gone, in some respect, to excess in their fleshly zeal and antagonism against the Philistine abominations prevalent in Christendom after the people refused to accept the Nazarite testimony regarding the Pentecostal outpouring; and then later were overcome, after all their denunciations, by these very lordly principles and were bound with the old time sectarian ropes, though claiming they were new. They cannot be disguised, call them by another name if you choose, the purpose is the same; they bind and hinder the Nazarite, and they are Philistine. They originated in Rome, the mother of the religious abominations which the professed people of God seem to love but which God hates. Samson hates them too; temporarily they put their "cords" on him, but he does not enjoy the restraint, for he is God's free man. He was born free and he is going to die free. He cannot stand to be deprived of liberty of speech nor liberty of action. He is against organization of every form, little or big,

for its tendency is sectarian and selfish. It's a denial of the truth of the "one body," a departure from Christ as the Head, and Samson rises up, in the Spirit, and breaks the ropes.

We are at this place in the present revival. Some people are refusing all fleshly man-made bands because they are getting hold of the truth. "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*" [Joh.8:32]. Samson is casting off all ecclesiastical rule even though put on by men of **Judah** ("*praise*"). Not that he may become lawless "*but under law to Christ*" [1Co.9:21]; owning His rule to direct and govern His own body in the power of the indwelling Spirit. Samson is the last judge. Let us bear this in mind that he will be in evidence when Jesus comes. The principles, for which he is the figure, shall deliver his people; not all at once but in ranks (companies) at different times. At the present day, there is a complete separation by some people, from all that the world offers—its pleasure, fame, and wealth—not unto some church, but unto the Lord, finding Him the all-sufficient Joy-giver and Strength-giver. They are winning souls unto Him, not unto their own little clique or company. They are chanting His praises, holiness and beauty, not talking of themselves. This is Nazarite testimony, and the strong man will be on the scene at the finale, still slaying the Philistine. He is born to rout this old enemy.

Even now there is a company of Samson-like people with a Nazarite testimony. The principles which he figures are real to them. They have, when seen in the Spirit, an experience which tallies with his. They understand his weakness as well as his strength; his failure as well as his victory. He is no riddle to them. They are the overcomers today; they are the judge. They will shortly sit with Christ upon the judgment seat in the heavenlies. They are in training today, this much-graced people, whom the world does not understand and at whom even "*men of Judah*," look askance. But they judge now, "*he that is spiritual judgeth (discerneth) all things*" [1Co.2:15] and therefore they are being fitted to judge the world and later the angels. The Word of God is the Arbiter to them. "What saith the Scriptures?" is their only court of appeal. They care not how aged is the tradition nor how holy. Its origin was not begotten of God nor inspired of the Spirit is nothing to them. They have ceased from man whose breath is in his nostrils, whose days are few and evil, and who abideth not in honor. Their eyes are unto the Lord; their expectation is from Him and they shall not be disappointed. They have a well of "*Enhakkore*" to which they continually resort in every time of need and it sufficeth. They are satisfied—drinking of its abundance, their thirst is quenched and they are happy abiding in their Rock. This is the judge, Samson, the strong man.

JUDGES 16

SAMSON AT GAZA

"Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went unto her." [Jdg.16:1]

Previously, we left our hero in victory. He had found the source of strength and refreshment, the water that flowed from the bruising place, which had come in answer to his cry of need, and thus he becomes the overcomer, the judge over Israel. We saw that this was of great significance for our day, as Samson especially represents the last revival of The Church.

We would mention that there are stages of this deliverance, a 1st, a 2nd, and a 3rd:

1. Samson in the rock,
2. smiting the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and
3. drinking of the well, the refreshing fountain of answered prayer, he is at his best.

At this stage of his existence, Samson represents the principles which must evidence the first rank overcomers who will remain unto the translation, which were also in evidence in the first rank overcomers who will be resurrected with them. For instance, notice the correspondence at this place in the Nazarite's history with the Nazarite Church as shown in the letter to Smyrna [Rev.2:8]. Smyrna signifies myrrh. It was the persecuted Church. Myrrh was the first named ingredient of the holy anointing oil in the tabernacle service, and one of the 3 gifts brought to the holy baby Jesus by the wise men. It was an exquisite perfume. It is also a sacred disinfectant and was used to anoint for burial [Joh.19:39]. Therefore, Smyrna saints "*are unto God a sweet savor of Christ*" [2Co.2:15] and through the anointing of the Spirit, they perfume and disinfect the world. They suffer with Christ; they may be cast into prison and die cruel deaths; many of them have because of their loyalty to Christ. They "*die daily*" [1Co.15:31] and are in jeopardy every hour; nevertheless, they are full overcomers, "*more than conquerors*" [Rom.8:37]. If they die they will come in the first rank resurrection, even the resurrection out from among the dead. Samson at **Etam** ("*lair of ravenous beast*"), where he found the Rock, is the perfect expression of persecution and death. Surely this was the same locality in which poor, yet rich Smyrna dwelt; on all sides of her the ravenous wild beasts roared and she felt their fangs in her flesh, but she is in the cleft of the rock, her life is "*hid with Christ in God*" [Col.3:3] and they cannot kill her. She died once with Christ on Calvary and cannot be hurt of the second death. Therefore, Samson, at this apex of his career, represents the translation of the first company of The Church, the full overcomers, the Bride of Christ: for according to the above quoted Scripture the Nazarite comes down from this elevated place where he was abiding. A strong trend toward the Philistines draws him from his rock, down to **Gaza** ("*stronghold*"), which surely answers to the world, where Satan's throne is about to be placed, the devil having come down with great wrath, because he knows that he hath but a short time. Surely here we have the dark ages again repeated, though now the darkness is of a different character—a worse form.

"*If the light that be in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*" [Mat.6:23] Jesus said. So here we are surprised to contemplate our "strong man" somewhat enchanted by this very condition. But, let us notice the second enchanter of Samson. She is unnamed, except that she is plainly called a "*harlot*," no disguise about her. Samson is not deceived at all. He knows her character and reputation. He walks into her embrace with his eyes wide open. He knows all about her; but he wants her fellowship. He has somewhat of a need of her, wants to use her as it were.

She lives in a stronghold, place of abode, which he rather favors at this time. Surely this is easy of interpretation. The enchanter is easily recognized as "*that woman Jezebel*" [Rev.3:20] who seduces the Lord's servants to commit fornication. Still later, when she is in full development, we see her as the same impure woman; only now, she is under another name which is plainly written upon her forehead as the "*Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth*" [Rev.17:5]. Here there is no disguise. She is shown up.

Samson, a figure of the principles which deliver the people of God, is again a captive to "organization" from which, for awhile, he had been delivered. But the worst part of this failure is the fact that he walked into the trap with his eyes open. He knew she was a harlot. He had no idea of a legal union with her; he only felt a need of her. The things seen were filling his vision. She was in a stronghold and he wanted her protection and embrace. He was not walking in the light. So the church leaders say that we must "organize" in order to have the protection of the government. They are not willing to trust God absolutely for authority to worship; hence, they embrace the one whom they know to be a harlot. Hear God's exhortation: "*Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*" [2Co.6:17].

"And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day,

we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron." [Jdg.16:2-3]

The inhabitants at Gaza (*"strong, vehement, harsh"*) learn that the strong man is in their midst. He has come in without an invitation, secretly, we would infer, and they are glad to have him, as they think, in their power. They compass him in and wait in quietness all the night expecting to kill him easily by the morning light. But Samson is alive to his danger. The Spirit of God is with him still. He rises up at midnight, lays hold of the gate of the city with its 2 posts, and lifting them upon his shoulders, goes away with them. For the moment he gains a mighty victory. He achieves a brilliant success in the presence of the enemy. The inhabitants of Gaza are so taken by surprise that they are rendered powerless. The contemptuous daring of Samson intimidates them. He breaks into their place of strength, and then breaks out again when he pleases, leaving it dismantled and defenseless. He carries the gates and posts toward Hebron, Israel's territory, but then drops them where they can be found, as if to say there was no need to deprive them of defenses as insignificant as he had proved them. He flaunts the weakness of their so-called place of strength in their face. Even the moral decline, which his presence in the midst demonstrates, seems to have no effect in diminishing the wonderful strength which at previous times brought defeat and shame to their ranks. This was a warning to them which they would have done well to have heeded.

Also, there was a warning for Samson, to which he listened no more than they. It is true, God did not leave him to the consequence of his folly. The strength of the Nazarite, which was divine, did not desert him in his hour of need. But, though he splendidly insulted the enemy, he in no wise harmed him; and, the power which should have delivered Israel was, in this case, put forth only to deliver Samson. He, instead of the Philistine, was forced to flee. His marvelous strength was manifested; but nothing was gained thereby. He only got out of the trouble, which he had gotten into by his own foolishness, without any added dignity or renown.

From the very first, the snare to the Nazarite had been a Philistine alliance; however, he had openly and honorably courted it. It was to be a marriage. In the present case he has no such intention, nor does he endeavor to vindicate his course as being lawful, though he yields to the situation and falls prey to the temptation. What are we to learn from this story of failure and victory? We hinted at the answer previously. Samson wants the protection which Gaza affords. He yields to the embrace of the harlot to further his own interests. He imagines this is the part of wisdom. He is judging by the sight of his eyes—walking as men. He needs shelter from the storm which is about to break over his head and he takes refuge in the strong city (a type of religious organization). We see the result: The Philistine is there and would disarm and conquer the Nazarite; therefore it is a dangerous place for Samson, he must flee. In leaving, he proves how weak is the stronghold upon which they lean and in which he too had confidence; he takes away with him all their vaunted means of safety and protection. That is, their "organization" is exhibited as weak and ineffectual as regards the Nazarite. All their bolts and bars are of no avail to hold him. Samson cannot be bound nor held by the Philistine, for this would make void the prophecy concerning the Nazarite: *"He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistine"* [Jdg.13:5]. Therefore, it is impossible to fetter the strong man for any length of time. He must be free.

AN AWAKENING

We surely have at this stage of his history, at the time figured here, which speaks of recovered energy, an awakening of some of God's people to their calling and destiny. Samson goes up to the top of a mountain that is before Hebron and abides there. He is now in a good condition spiritually, a state of moral elevation, that the physical fact may well figure, when we remember

that Hebron signifies “communion and fellowship.” We are surely given to see that Samson is again revived.

This “reviving” will happen after the 1st rank overcomers have gone. The principles which made the full overcomers to stand and withstand, in their day, will awaken other saints who have heretofore been indifferent and careless. The fire will burn again. The power which they had not appreciated will be sought and obtained. They will be stirred, even as their predecessors, against all formalism and will arise and do valiantly. To the chagrin and discomfiture of ecclesiastical rule and order, the power of God will be evidenced. They will laugh at the locks and bars by which the old harlot would hold them. They will be on the mountain top alone with God, in dependence and consequent fellowship with their Lord and Head. Shortly, they too (like Enoch) will not be here for God will take them.

Thus far in Samson's life 2 ranks have been discovered, there is yet another; for part of The Church is still here, as Samson, the figure, clearly evidences in what follows.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

“And it came to pass afterwards that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”
[Jdg.16:4]

Here is the last infatuation of Samson. He loves another woman, Delilah, which name, because of the character here, has become synonymous of all that is deceitful and alluring. Before we were acquainted with the inspired story of the overcoming of Samson by this well-named siren, we often heard the name used as a description of women of intrigue and artful design. Although he does not appear to court her honorably with the intention of marriage, Samson becomes enamored. It is rather a covered union he contemplates with this woman of Sorek; yet it is written that “*he loved a woman.*” This is a deeper infatuation than that which he experienced for the harlot of Gaza. Delilah has a deeper hold on him.

Delilah figures most preeminently in Samson's life, therefore we must consider her carefully. Her name has no good significance. **Delilah** (“*weak*”, “*exhausted*”) and the name of her home town is **Sorek** (“*choicest vine*”). Sorek is a reference to the world as a place of pleasure and intoxication, while yet religious, for the Philistine was there and he always figures the religious element in the old man which is continually on the alert to defeat the Nazarite. Delilah figures the last phase of the ecclesiastical world, the Laodicean condition, fully identified with all the alluring and seductive influences of the last evil days, which we read are “*perilous times*” [2Ti.3:1]. “*Men*, (religious men, it goes without saying, for we expect nothing else of irreligious men), *shall be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*” [2Ti.3:2].

There is more of this inspired description of these “last days” which even now fit existing conditions perfectly, and which will become more evident as time passes. They “*have a form of godliness*” [2Ti.3:5]. Oh yes, this is what makes the times perilous. If they outwardly manifested their awful apostatized condition, Samson could easily detect and turn away from such; but when it is considered so respectable to be religious, when everyone is a member of the church, when reform and the broader Christianity is the topic of the day, when it is only the narrow and so-called sectarian who are true to God and His Word; this is what causes even the Nazarite to become enamored of Delilah. She does look good. Like Jezebel of old, her marvelous type, she is all fixed up...she will “*paint her eyes and tire her head*” [2Ki.9:30] until one might think her quite young and attractive and not recognize in her the harlot of ancient fame. But, when we get a glimpse of her in the sunlight of God's Word, and view her not through the artificial glare which she loves to provide (as witness her stained glass windows, hiding the light), we see that she is very old—**Delilah** (“*exhausted, passing away*”). Her time is almost

over. John refers to her when he informs us that *“the world passeth away and all the lust thereof”* [1Jo.2:17]; surely she is of the world and the god of this age is her god. Oh, how sad to read that Samson loves her...that she has beguiled the Nazarite.

“And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.” [Jdg.16:5]

The lords of the Philistines learn of the infatuation and quickly avail themselves of the opportunity to get the man who has heretofore escaped their hands. What troubles them is for all they can see, one that is so apparently weak and helpless has been able to keep out of their power. Yes and more, he has actually defeated and put them to shame on several occasions. They desire to get to the root of the matter; to learn the secret of his great strength and rob him of it. They promise a great reward to Delilah, 1,100 pieces of silver from each of them, or 5,500 in all. There were 5 of these lords, representing the 5 Philistines cities: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. These cities are wonderfully significant of the danger in gradual intensity which threatens our Nazarite.

Gaza (*“the strong”*) is a great city. It is greater, apparently, than Jerusalem; that is, the formal professed people of God are a much greater and more influential people than the true Church of God. They seek numbers and influence which is, in their estimation, power, by whatever means acquired they care not. To secure power, they are content to be joined and subject to the kings of this world. They thus deny the Headship of Christ. This city generally wields a greater influence over the individual, her power is more felt, her bands are more real than the invisible city, the spiritual Jerusalem *“whose Builder and Maker is God”* [Heb.11:10].

Ashdod (*“the spoiler”*) shows the manner by which she sustains and increases her strength. She robs God and man. She takes the Lord’s heritage, even some true children, and makes them obey and serve her rather than God: therefore she also plunders them of all inheritance in Christ.

Ashkelon (*“the fire of infamy”*) tells us of the weapons of her warfare against those who dare resist her authority. Reproach of character, railing of all kind even curses, are some of the firearms to which she resorts to effectually blast the good name of those who do not yield to her sway.

Gath (*“the winepress”*) takes us further on in her ways. The word **winepress** is used in Scripture for the infliction of wrath, even Divine Wrath [Rev.14:20] which is what Rome, and her progeny, feign theirs to be.

Ekron (*“rooting out”*) is the 5th city and gives us the end of the matter. She would completely extirpate all those who differ with her.

These 5 lords conspire against the Nazarite in a decidedly desperate, yet hidden manner. Samson is again in their power by courting Delilah. He loves her (loves Jezebel, though disguised it is true, and called by another name). Without any apparent solicitation on her part Samson yields to this charmer. He is caught, not necessarily by Rome, but by the bondage and rigid formal rule of which she is the mother.

Samson seems blind to the parentage of Delilah. He is deceived as to her family; for surely the Nazarite would not succumb so easily had he known whose child he was courting. She certainly was fixed up.

Now, she deceives him further. She willingly lends herself to the wishes of these Philistine lords (What can he expect? She is of the same family); and begs Samson to tell her the secret of his great strength, and what would avail to bind him. He lies to her.

"If they bind me with seven green cords that were never dried, then shall I be weak and be as another man." [Jdg.16:7]

She tried it and cried, "*the Philistines be upon thee, Samson*". He breaks the cords as easily as a thread of "*tow is broken when it toucheth the fire*" [Jdg.16:9]; still, his strength was not known. But she is not discouraged. She tries again and again he lies.

"If they bind me with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak as another man."
[Jdg.16:11]

Philistine ropes are easily obtained, plenty of them to spare; Delilah binds Samson with them. He breaks them off his arm as a thread. Notice that the cords were on his arms, this was a binding of his service. Reproaching him for mocking her, once again she endeavors to learn how he may be rendered helpless. Again he treads still further on dangerous ground.

"If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web." [Jdg.16:13b]

Then he foolishly sleeps. As he sleeps, she weaves the 7 locks of the long hair of the Nazarite with her loom and fastens it with a pin to the beam. For a time she appears to have control. But notice, he has gradually approached the truth as to his great strength.

In his first answer there is a hint of it in the number 7. That is there is a 7, the number of perfection, in the answer to her question. It points to his 7 locks of hair.

In the second he adds that the cords must be new, "*never have been used*," like his hair upon which razor has never come; there is an element of separation in this answer.

In the third instance, he plainly names his hair as having in it, in some way, the secret of his strength.

Thus his 3 answers put together would read: "the secret of my great strength lies in the fact that my 7 locks of hair have never yet been touched." He is almost shorn now. Poor Samson. This is easy of interpretation. It simply means that the fair religious world gets the Nazarite, yet the strong man, interested in her work. She weaves his power with her doings, reformatory and philanthropic; thus he is joined to her in her man-made schemes. The sad part of it is that he does not realize the fact that his strength is thereby ebbing away.

We have seen the above actually take place in the individual Nazarite (a hidden one with some secret power) whom the religious world enticed to share her work, soothing them with popularity and praises, finally putting them to sleep upon her knees. Do not for one moment imagine that the spirit figured here is what man deems wicked. No, indeed, no literal impurity, nor drunkenness, nor profanity is here in view. The Philistine was not a Moabite, the ungodly, nor yet an Amorite, an avowed infidel. In fact it is quite the opposite; the Philistine is the most religious spirit. You will find it in the temperance movement. You will find it in the united philanthropic, political peace platform. You will find it in church-membership (the substitution of Christ-membership). You will find it in any fellowship which puts man over the flock of God and takes away from the Headship and authority of Christ. Samson would never have been attracted to a foul, ugly form (face); nor will the present-day Nazarite be drawn from his place of separation by any moral or spiritual wickedness. To win him there must be a fair show on the surface. It must appear religious and good; but it will only be the form of godliness without

the power. We must bear in mind that these women in Samson's life represent the craft, the wile of Satan, rather than his roar or fangs; only a spirit sensitive to the glory of the cross and the unrivaled authority of Christ as Head is able to discern them. They are very close to Samson today.

But to return to Samson intoxicated with Delilah. She awakens him with the cry, "*the Philistines be upon thee, Samson,*" and once more, for the last time, he is free. His long hair still hides him. Oh, that he had ears to hear.

We are assured that the individual, who is in the toils of these women (organizations, with their religious bands which make men independent of God), is often aroused and awakened by some clear evidence of Philistine duplicity toward the principles of separation. His own motives may be pure, he may mean well, and generally does. His associates are not as he, separated from the world, but otherwise, they are part and parcel of it, to whom his Lord and Savior is unknown. They are banded together for what appears such excellent work to purify the world and make it more pleasing to God. But ever and anon his spirit shrinks from the association, startled by some manifest evidence of the distinct enmity to the separation of the cross; it is our associations which really show our character. To say that Enoch "*walked with God,*" [Gen 5:22,24] is to describe the man fully in the fewest possible words. Voluntary association with the enemies of the Lord is not consistent with a desire to walk with Him; for it is written: "*Can two walk together except they be agreed?*" [Amo.3:3].

Samson, found in fellowship with Delilah, is not walking with God; but yet he is not bound very securely in the siren's meshes. It is the cry, "*the Philistines be upon thee, Samson,*" which is the test as to how tightly he is bound. For a moment he is free: but he does not step entirely outside of Delilah's influence and thus gets deliverance once and for all from these Philistine associations. Consequently, he soon returns to his ensnarer and speedily, alas, he is captive again. Then blindness (he never sees the light again) follows, and finally death.

We have actually witnessed just such an experience in the individual life. We have seen the power of organization bind and cripple the man filled with the Spirit until he was as weak as any other man—shorn of his strength. Like Samson, he is never delivered, though he ever anon rises up and makes a bluff of being free once more. There is no hope for him. He has dallied too long with the charmer; he did not overcome her in the beginning. As we noted, the enemy does not come in hostile, clothed in battle array. In fact, it is just the opposite. They love us. We are necessary to them. Our influence is felt. We are so spiritual, have so much power, etc. We foolishly commence to listen to them instead of God. We begin to reason as to the situation. We want to be useful; we want to reach the people. There are more opportunities in "organization"...we need to be banded together. If the leaders die, there will be no one to lead on; we will be scattered, etc. These are some of the arguments brought to bear upon the Nazarite, to induce him to depart from his simple life of separation and single eyed dependence upon his Lord and Master.

"Organization" is of the devil (and we make no apology for the statement). Satan was the first organizer, hence, its subtle power. He has organized forms of wickedness in the heavenlies, which are banded together against God and His Christ. All the trusts, unions, brotherhoods, churches, etc., in the world are by his instigation, and are, in some measure at least, under his control. He is the backbone of these clashing elements, which are warring one against another in these last evil days (for instance, capital and labor). They are all together and singly against God; therefore, the Nazarite should stand aloof from it all, religious and otherwise.

If he loves the world and the things of the world, sooner or later she will discover the secret of his strength and rob him of it. Every saint who trifles with the world, fair and religious as it may appear, always comes to the “last time,” as witness Samson in the toils of Delilah. We left him escaping for the last time. This stands here, on the Divine Page, as a lighthouse beacon warning us of the rocks upon which he suffered shipwreck.

Delilah continues to press him.

“And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;” [Jdg.16:16]

So at last, worn down by her coaxing, Samson bares all his heart to the gaze of her, who had 3 times before shown him how she would afflict him if she only had the power. Alas, now she has the secret, though she never could have discovered it herself. Who would ever have thought that long hair, clear evidence of weakness even of womanly weakness, was, after all, that in which his great strength lay. She clearly recognizes that she has the secret at last: and she sends for those Philistine lords whom she has so often disappointed. They come with the reward of her hire in their hand [Jdg.16:18]—wages that the prince of this world pays for the defeat of God's Nazarites.

Now mark the subtle ways of Delilah, and learn the manner of her shearing, that we may not lose our long hair.

“And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.” [Jdg.16:19]

Samson's strength was absolutely in the fact that he was hidden. If the world, in its fair friendly guise (respectable and religious), can steal away our hair (our heart from absolute dependence upon Christ our living Head), our strength goes with it; also our liberty, our light, and therefore our spirituality. There is a solemn admonition to the church of Philadelphia, “*Let no man take thy crown*” [Rev.3:11] which comes to our remembrance at this time. It seems well to call attention to it.

The overcomer in the above mentioned church has a crown, present tense, which he was warned to let no one take. He represents the last Nazarite testimony—the 1st rank overcomer. He is the Nazarite crowned. Someone may ask, “What is that crown?” It is his long hair, the sense of absolute weakness, insufficiency. Let that be gone and his Nazariteship is lost. The result is the same in the churches, as in Samson's case, she too becomes “*miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” [Rev.3:17]. As we mentioned previously, the long hair of the Nazarite is called his crown, although in the Authorized Version this is hidden. His very name of Nazarite is derived from it “*because the crown of his God is upon his head*” [Num.6:7]. The translators have so rendered it in a parallel passage as “*for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him*” [Lev.21:12]. Jesus Christ was the true spiritual Nazarite; but there are others of this new creation who did not lose their long hair. For instance, Paul, continually boasted in the Lord and took pleasure in infirmities, necessities, etc., because all such made him dependent upon his glorious all-sufficient Head.

There were some in the past who did not lose their long hair and there will be some crowned ones when Jesus comes. They will rise—the resurrected and changed living ones—the 1st rank overcomers, to meet Him. This is figured for us by Samson calling on the Lord in weakness and need after his mighty victory over the Philistines [Jdg.15:18]. He had his long hair then. Later we had another rank figured by Samson on the mountain top in **Hebron** (“*communion*”) after he bore the gates and bars of the strong city on his shoulders [Jdg.16:3]. He yet had his long hair; the strength was another's. But later, it is clear that Samson lost his

crown—Delilah sheared him; likewise the 3rd rank of The Church, judging from the type, will have the same experience. They will not heed the warning to “*Let no man take thy crown.*”

The Nazarite tells his secret himself. Then the enchantress puts him to sleep. She knows well she can have no power over him until he is asleep, and she knows well the arts to employ in order to bring him to this condition. It is “upon her knees,” the place of familiar affection. Surely she can have no evil intention toward him; see how deeply she loves him...she cares only for his comfort. She soothes him with her caresses and honeyed speeches until he has succumbed to her blandishments; he sleeps. Oh how true to the anti-type. The world now loves The Church; desires that she rest and not be so earnest, so separated, so wakeful, looking for her Bridegroom to come at any moment from heaven. “Why so watchful, fair Church?” she enquires. “Thou art no longer in an enemy's country, times have changed, the world is all Christian now. Peace has been declared; the League of Nations has been formed; the treaty has been signed; the millennium has come. Sleep, fair Church, sleep, there is nothing to fear.”

THE SLUMBERERS

Just as sure as Samson slept, those remaining of The Church, will, like the virgins that represent her [Mat.25], slumber and sleep. This is Delilah's opportunity. She has him now in her power. She calls for a man, and for the first time in his life, a razor touches Samson's hair. His 7 locks are cut off: then “*she began to afflict him and his strength went from him.*” [Jdg.16:19]. Oh, how sad!

This is all very simple, and equally simple is the interpretation. The anti-typical Samson having been soothed to sleep, the church-going world now proceeds to take away his crown of Nazariteship. She uncovers him. Hitherto he has been hidden, now he is seen. Hitherto weakness is all that has been seen in him, with some strange, unknown power which has been displayed in that weakness. But now that is all gone. There is no confessed weakness. In place of it there is a self-confidence that the world can very easily understand. She sees through him now. There is no longer any secret.

“And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.” [Jdg.16:20-21]

Delilah awakens the Nazarite; and he, poor deluded man, “*wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*” Many an individual saint, after walking in a path of separation and usefulness, little and unknown, glorying only in the Lord, has suddenly been taken up by some respectable Philistine connection; seduced from his dependence, made prominent, and therefore his testimony to the power and resurrection of Christ is at an end. And oh, the sadness, “*He wist not.*” No, such a one never realizes his defeat in such a case, rather the opposite, he is elated at what he thinks is success. He judges that he surely is all right when he is popular “*rich and increased with goods*” [Rev.3:17]. But Paul speaks quite differently of this fellow **Demas** (“popular”) who “*hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil age*” [2Ti.4:10]. Paul and world-popularity are never at agreement. So the Spirit speaks to the last state of The Church with her crown gone, and says, “*Thou knowest not*” [Rev.3:17].

And the very manner of its occurrence is the same in the assembly as in the individual case. The Lord's people become what the world calls respectable. They are no longer the off-scouring of all creation as were Paul and his dear associates of yonder days. The “*tongues*” which “*are for a sign*” [1Co.14:22] are taboo. They become prominent, wealthy, influential, and

orderly. They are organized like all the other sects in Christendom; consequently, there is no longer any secret as to their wonderful power, for they have none...it has departed. The world understands them now. They are just like her - showy, proud and self-sufficient. They are uncovered and shorn of their strength. This will actually happen after the first and second regiment of God's warriors has joined their living Head. Those who are left will be caught for awhile in the toils of the world-church. Such a condition is commencing today even among the Samson company, the strong man, who was born in these latter times.

But there is more. This is not the end of the Nazarite. The Philistines take poor Samson (did they ever spare anyone who got in their power?), put out his eyes, bind him in fetters of brass, *"and he did grind in the prison house."* Let us consider him well. Is he not wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked? And this is exactly what the Lord says in His reproof to the church of Laodicea -- the last phase of The Church. Samson, by his fellowship with Delilah, has partaken of the Laodicean condition. The principles which were to deliver Israel from the Philistine rule are all gone. But God is still God and there is hope.

"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven." [Jdg.16:22]

Why? Because he is conscious of his condition; he owns that he is helpless. Oh, happy Samson! His strength comes with his weakness. But, see his last moments.

"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars." [Jdg.16:23-24]

He is in the lowest depths of humiliation, being made "sport" for the uncircumcised Philistine, the old enemy of his people. They are filled with exulting merriment at his sad state. Why not? They have defeated God's Nazarite, the one who was to begin to deliver Israel out of their hands. But they are not done with him yet. God's Word regarding him is not in vain. It is true he is in a sorry plight now. His place of judge, his sight, and his liberty are all gone; universal confusion bespeaks the captivity of the strong man. But this is just before the end. Samson is between the pillars.

"And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars." [Jdg.16:25]

Have you never read that The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth [1Ti.3:15]? He cries to Jehovah in his need: and his cry is not in vain. It is evident that the Lord is with him again. He is the Samson of old.

"And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." [Jdg.16:26-30]

Samson takes hold of the pillars which upheld the house and moved them with his magnificent strength, pulling the house down upon all the lords and upon all the people; he too was involved in the ruin. But this is victory for him—victory in departing. The strong man here figures the translation of the last company of The Church—the body of Christ. Their departure will be the end of The Church as the house of God upon the earth, though Christendom will continue on as though nothing had happened; however, God will be dealing with another earthly people...Israel, His people, the nation of destiny.

But Samson, not getting his sight again, is very significant. We believe it figures the fact that the last rank in The Church (the 144,000) will not have their spiritual understanding opened to the sovereign calling, place, and purpose of The Church as the Bride of the Lamb. The revelation given to the apostle Paul will be hidden from them though they too are a part of Christ's body. The first apostles who are going to sit as judges over the whole house of Israel [Mat.19:28] with other saints raised from the dead, will no doubt form part of this mighty company caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and in their departing, Christ will spew out of His mouth the professing thing left. It will be an awful ruin.

DIVISION 2, THE DISUNITY OF THE PEOPLE [JDG. 17-21]

JUDGES 17

NO KING IN ISRAEL

"And there was a man of mount Ephraim whose name was Micah; and he said unto his mother, the eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee about which thou cursedst and speakest of also in mine ears, behold the silver is with me. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord my son." [Jdg.17:1-2]

We have now arrived in our study at the last division of Judges. It is now no more the outward condition of things in Israel that is spoken of; no more is a judge raised up to deliver the people from captivity; rather, we see a graphic picture of the internal condition of the professed people of God thrown upon the screen. We are thus shown the source and spring of the external awful state of affairs. The 2 incidents that we find recorded in the latter part of Judges must have occurred much earlier in Israel's history, because the immigration of Dan is mentioned in Joshua 19:47; while Phinehas, who is mentioned here as the officiating priest [Jdg.20:28], was a grown man in the days of Moses [Num.25]. Morally, the Spirit of God sets them at the end as a summing up of the whole condition of things in Israel. They reveal the hidden root of the trouble: First Godward and then manward. This is clearly the bearing of these 2 sections of this division.

THE 1ST INCIDENT (JDG. 17:1-18:31)

In this 1st incident we see the tie, with God loosened; and, as a consequence, in the 2nd incident the ties which hold the people together are dissolved. If God be denied (the fear of Him be gone), if dependence upon Him is not a reality, if there is no reverence, no obedience toward Him, men will not walk together in agreement and love; no matter what other apparent bands hold them in unity. They will only walk as men, hateful and hating one another. There will most certainly be divisions among them, contesting parties, sects and cliques in every sphere of life, be it social, political, or religious. This is a weighty truth. Anarchy, which is about to be fully manifested, is simply the result of denying God, as was cruelly evidenced in the French Revolution of a century ago; though we need not go even that far back for an illustration, for we have almost the same condition before our eyes today. Lawlessness is

surely abounding on every hand, no respect for God or man; the sure herald of anarchy and Bolshevism such as has never been known. But to proceed.

Ephraim's lot is the scene of the incidents which we find recorded in this present portion of Judges. The tribe of Ephraim emphasizes fruitfulness. It is here that God must look for fruit, if anywhere. In this, in contrast with all other nations Ephraim stands for the nation of Israel. If God is unable to gather grapes or figs off this people, where can He look for fruit? Remember, that The Church is the anti-type of the nation and God is looking to us for fruit today. What shall He find? We are afraid God will find mostly wild grapes [Isa.5] and "*very naughty figs*" [Jer.24:2]. Today, His people yield very little fruit for their Divine Gardener, even as was the case in Israel, when He came to the fig tree (Judah) which proclaimed by its abundant leafage (profession) much fruit, but left God hungry still [Mar.11]. Here in our lesson we have the same thing.

"And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah." [Jdg.17:1-4]

Micah ("*who is as Jehovah*") proclaims, by his name but in no other way, the supremacy of the Lord. Micah is a representative name for Israel. They were to be Jehovah's witnesses upon the earth. "*Thus saith Jehovah, ye are my witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yea there is no God. I know not any*" [Isa.44:8]. They were to be a Micah in the world, proclaiming ever, "Who is like Jehovah?" Yet it is this very one that has a house full of false gods. Inconsistency of conduct with a big profession is the lesson here.

This is the very same condition of the false witness of this age of which Israel was but the type. The Church was to be the witness of the resurrection from the dead of the Son of God, with all that this implies...

- the utter hopelessness and entire judgment of the flesh and the perfect justification and complete acceptance in God's favor, of every believer;
- her own distinct heavenly place, with distinct heavenly character and hopes,
- that she is not of this world, for she has died with Christ and been raised up with Him to walk in newness of life and
- is waiting for her Lord and Bridegroom.

Her whole testimony was to be, "Who is like unto my Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom of my heart? He is the "*chiefest among ten thousand*" [SSg.5:10] the One "*altogether lovely*" [SSg.5:16].

But is this so? Do we see such a heart testimony to the beauty, power, sweetness, and all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is The Church living as a chaste virgin espoused to one husband [2Cor.11:2]? Nay, nay! The hand of the professing church is warmly clasping the hand of the world, which is still red with the blood of Christ! While, as she speaks to her religion, she is back again at Mount Sinai, enveloped in darkness and gloom; the mystic veil of Moses is spread over her heart so that she cannot see the shining face of Jesus Christ. It is as though The Law had not silenced every proud boast of man by nailing the holy Son of God

to the cross when He took man's place under its condemnation. The Church is false to her Lord, false to her profession, and false to her marriage vows; and God so judges her. He is going to speedily take vengeance.

But as to Micah, the narrative opens with a most shameful exposure which stated in such a simple ordinary manner as though it was nothing but a daily occurrence. He and his mother are speaking together in the most natural, unconcerned way about theft, cursing, and idolatry. Micah does not fear to steal his mother's 1,100 pieces of silver but he fears her curse. Superstition reigns over men's spirits just in the measure that the fear of God has waned. The foolish mother, upon getting back her silver, blesses her thieving unrepentant son—the same tongue uttering, equally vainly, blessing and cursing [Jam.3]. Then she calmly assures him that she so deeply felt its loss because she had dedicated it unto Jehovah, “to make a graven image and a molten image.” No one would ever imagine from her apparent religious conversation that in Exodus 20:4 Jehovah had said, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.*” This simple clear fundamental command was nothing to her. Its force was lost. Tradition had obliterated God's Word. What man said weighed much more with her than what God said.

At this time, it was probably considered an evidence of great piety to have a graven image. The people's corrupt conscience fully approved of it. They had a quiet conscience because they were idolaters. They were not troubled, for were they not religious? It is always the same. The devil succeeds in getting man's conscience on his side. His conscience does not trouble him, because perforce he attends an idolatrous, demon worship institution called “The Mass.” If he listened to, or read the pure Word of God, his conscience would accuse and condemn him, because of disobedience to the corrupt traditions of men, in other words, his church. It is certainly the highest achievement of Satan (his master-stroke) when he can actually get men's conscience on his side. This is actually accomplished when men's conscience is ruled by any religious system and not by God alone. However, this is not, by any means, confined to Rome. It is much nearer home; we have only used her as an illustration, for she is the mother of every abomination and her methods are copied by even the so-called Pentecostal assemblies. How is it with you? Is God's Word supreme with you, or are you swayed by man's opinion because it is more popular, and because the tradition is so very antiquated? Remember, the Word of God is older than any tradition. It comes to us from the beginning, from the Ancient of days and will continue for all eternity, manifested and established in the New Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God which will dwell with men. Therefore, let us hear its voice, refusing all fear of man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whom Jehovah likens to the grass which today is green and growing and tomorrow is gone [Isa.40:6-8].

APPARENTLY PROSPEROUS

“And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod and teraphim and consecrated one of his sons who became his priest.” [Jdg.17:5]

Ah, Micah is getting along fine. He has everything decent and in order, “*an house of gods,*” etc. All he lacks is a priest. As to this, he must do the best he can so he consecrates one of his own sons. Of course, it is not quite as it should be. It was written that only Aaron and his sons were called to the priesthood; but Micah is doing his best. The following verse gives us the key to the situation. It is pregnant with meaning and fits the case so well today also.

“In those days there was no king in Israel; but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” [Jdg.17:6]

Did they not have a king? Was not Jehovah Himself their King? Yes, He was. It was a little later they insisted on having a visible king, like all the other nations round about, and the reason is stated by God that “*They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*” [1Sa.8:7]. The

rejection of the Authority and Lordship of Christ is what the trouble is at the present time also. If we lose sight of, and consequently let go of, the Headship of Christ (the last Adam) then we need not be surprised that everyone goes in his own way, doing what is right in his own eyes. Jehovah alone can unite His people in a true unity.

Now we come to a great reformation in Micah's household. He sees a benign providence at work in his behalf. A Levite, wandering from his own city in Judah, comes to his door

"And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in." [Jdg.17:7-10]

Micah immediately hires the Levite as priest; giving him board, lodging, clothing and 10 shekels a year. This is not so bad a bargain, especially considering the present high cost of living.

"Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." [Jdg.17:13]

Micah is now not only happy; but he is filled with complacent assurance and congratulates himself that now surely Jehovah will do him good seeing he has a Levite for a priest. This is the same strange reasoning of his mother regarding the graven image [Jdg.17:3-4] seeing I have for my priest one whom Jehovah has not called to this office [Jdg.17:9-13]. It is almost laughable (if it were not so serious in the eyes of the Lord), and so true to conditions in our midst.

What is the source of such awful departure from God's expressed commands, in religious things? Apparently, it is worshipping God in a manner which He has not only not authorized but has actually forbidden? God's Word has become of no importance and therefore seems to have lost its power. A thousand abominations which are forbidden by God are done in the name of the Lord. All kinds of wickedness is legitimized and sanctified because it is done religiously, in and for The Church, to help the congregation out of its financial difficulties.

THE 2 PRIESTS

There is quite an interesting parallel between these 2 priests of Micah when viewed in the light of the history of The Church (of Christ). The time may be divided into 2 parts:

1ST: A long period of degeneracy with the increasing claims of the clergy being in evidence - the Nicolaitanism which the Lord hates [Rev.2].

2ND: The Reformation coming in, a new start, as it were, which again more rapidly degenerates only on opposite lines.

In Micah's case, the priesthood corresponds to these 2 periods.

1st, Micah appears indifferent as to which tribe his priest belongs—he appoints his own son, who was simply a convenient substitute for the reality and who had not the slightest pretention to the priesthood, by birth, tribe, family, or anything. His sole claim rested on the fact that he was "ordained."

But later (2nd) there is a change; Micah has a real live Levite for his priest, one who was of the tribe divinely set apart for the service of the tabernacle [Num.3:7]. Surely all will go well with him now. So The Church argued. Before the days of the Reformation she made those priests who were not even Levites, not even ministers of the Word, having made no pretention to any connection with the true tabernacle (Christ) which God pitched. The Church of Rome simply ordains one of her son's as priest; she deems sufficient qualification that he is one of her sons. But Protestantism distinctly improves on this. She must have a Levite for her priest, one whom God has set apart for His ministry. So, she takes a true Levite (a true minister, one whose place and privilege it is to serve); and, like Micah, makes him into a false priest, spoiling him by putting him into a place of superiority over his brethren. Then, like Micah, she congratulates herself that seeing she has a Levite for a priest God will now do her good.

The basis for the whole proceeding is utterly contrary to God's order. It is unwarranted presumption in the one case, as much as the other. We have but one High Priest over the house of God, who is now sitting down at the right hand of the throne of "*the Majesty on high*" [Heb.1:3], because He has accomplished the work of redemption. He is able to save to the uttermost all those that "*come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them*" [Heb.7:25]. This is true, effective priesthood maintaining every individual connected with Him in unbroken relationship and fellowship with God. How refreshing to turn from the empty pretensions of men to the Divine Reality. This One has indeed "somewhat to offer;" a sacrifice that has availed to atone for the sin of the world and to put away the guilt from His people forever so that there never need be the slightest hindrance to their approach to God. His people have boldness to enter into the holiest place by the blood of Jesus (the basis of such liberty of access). The greater the boldness with which they approach God, the greater the honor they confer on Christ and His precious blood.

There is another very important truth connected with the priesthood, that is, every believer is a priest by the fact of his new birth. Aaron and his sons are typical of Christ and His people. We are to believe the fact that we are "*a royal priesthood*" [1Pe.5:9] and enter into our office, inside the veil, offering "*the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*" [Heb.13:15]. The song which shall first be heard in heaven will be unto Him who has made us "*priests unto God and His Father*" [Rev.5:10]. There is no "special calling" in this. The Apostle Paul is no more a priest by calling than the feeblest believer, though, no doubt, he entered into and enjoyed its privileges more than most saints.

A selection of a superior class, out of the redeemed, to a priesthood, under any name, to stand between the people and God, to approach God on their behalf is exactly Nicolaitanism—"ruling over the laity"—which is an abomination to the Lord. This does not mean that there are no Levites in office today. No, indeed. God does call some to the lowly ministry of His Word; to the office of serving the true tabernacle of God (the saints), building them up, etc., as witnessed by Paul and Timothy, Barnabas and Titus, faithful lovers of the Lord; hence faithful lovers of His people. There are some of these under shepherds even now, not ruling over "*God's heritage but being themselves ensamples to the flock*" [1Pe.5:3].

Micah was triumphant because he had a priest, with which arrangement he was assured that God was well pleased. Yet, our next chapter opens with the sad refrain, which is characteristic of this part of Judges.

DAN SEEKS ANOTHER PORTION

"In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel?" [Jdg.18:1]

The phrase "*there was no king in Israel*" is repeated 4 times [Jdg.17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25] and answers to the refrain that we heard so often in the first part, "*and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord*" [Jdg.2:11; 3:7,12; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1]; doing evil being the worst, as is always the case.

When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, every tribe had its inheritance divinely marked out for it by lot. Among these, Dan had a portion, which we may be sure, like every portion that God gives, was more than sufficient; but we read "*for unto that day the inheritance had not fallen to them*,". The lot had fallen to them but the inheritance had not. Why was this? The answer is simply that they allowed the Amorites to force them out of their divinely given place: "*The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain; for they would not suffer them to come down into the valley*" [Jdg.1:34].

Dan is now independent of all God's provision for them, as oblivious to the Lord's appointment as Micah or his mother; they are turning away from their own inheritance to seek another, but this is self-will. How wonderful is the correspondence with the present condition of things religiously. The lesson is weighty and practical for us as individuals. We too have been given a portion, by God's allotment, a most extensive fertile inheritance, which is clearly defined for us by the Apostle Paul, (to whom was entrusted the revelation of the Divine Allotment), where it is written, "*He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus*" [Eph.1:3]. If we are not in possession of this inheritance, so that we are getting real enjoyment and satisfaction from its fruitful fields, we may be assured that we are taken up with something else that God has not given us. This "something" is generally the **Amorites** ("*talkers*"), (figures of the lofty carnal reason of man) that kept us out of our possessions, forcing us up into the mountains where vain "*imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*" [2Co.10:5] prevent us from reaching the lowly valleys upon which the approving gaze of our God ever rests, whether in the realm of nature or of grace: "*To this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my Word*" [Isa.66:2].

Without doubt, if we do not get our feet upon what is our own we shall take what belongs to others. The Corinthian church was driven by the Amorites into the mountains (a lofty assumption of knowledge); the result is that failing to enjoy their own heavenly portion they claimed an inheritance in this world to reign even now as kings [1Co.4:8]. In taking this action, they foreshadowed the whole Church, God's witness upon the earth. The Church is going to covert the world, clean it up, and bring in a righteous reign of peace. That is, take an inheritance which has not been given to her; and this, because she did not enter in and enjoy the portion which was given her—the heavenlies in Christ. Who would desire the lesser when they were in possession of the best? Assuredly, no one. Therefore, the conclusion is reached, that the trouble (the real reason) with God's people today is that they are so restless, so easily moved from one doctrine to another, always looking for some further great experience (excitement) because they have not yet caught a glimpse of their riches, the unsearchable riches in Christ. They have lost sight of, if they ever had the vision, of the real core of salvation and are nibbling on the edge, as it were. These lesser things, some of which are actually harmful though as easy to conquer as Dan found Lacish, absorb the interest of the Lord's people to the loss of their own true riches. Oh how we, who have seen the glory of these heavenly treasures, should stand against the wicked opposing spirits, that our vision of

them may not be dimmed in the awful confusion of these last evil days. We may more and more prove their satisfying power, so that we can truly say, “*the lines are fallen*” unto us “*in pleasant places*” [Psa.16:6] therefore we covet “*no man's silver or gold*” [Act.20:33] neither the portion of the worldly, nor yet Israel's earthly lot, though it be fair and fertile.

“And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here?”
[Jdg.18:2-3]

The tribe of Dan is restless. They have not enough land to keep them busy and happy, so they send out 5 men to spy out the country. These 5 men come to Micah's house where they recognize the voice of the young Levite, and at once they enquire as to how he came there, and how much he was getting. The young man has no shame in confessing himself a hireling priest when he says that Micah “*hath hired me, and I am his priest.*” Is not this a perfect picture of conditions that exist today? Has not this “hiring” of a priest become a very common occurrence today? “*Ten shekels a year, the suit of apparel and the victuals;*” the salary, at that time, has been increased considerably since that far off day in Israel, but the principle is still the same. For the most part, the “minister” is but a “hired priest;” consequently, he must work for, please, and satisfy his employers. He is not God's Levite, but is now the people's hireling.

Oh the depths of degradation into which The Church has fallen! From such infinite heights—the heavenly places, joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, the living Head of The Church, who was, and is sufficient for every need of His body. Gifts there are in abundance; evangelists, constrained by His love, proclaiming the Gospel free of charge to the poor and needy; pastors and teachers, constrained by His love, freely feeding and watering His blood-bought flock. Whose servants were they? Who hired them? Who paid them wages of which even the laborer is worthy? [Luk.10:7]. Was this all a bargain between The Church on the one hand and the minister on the other? Was it a simple business transaction, so much ministry for so much money, where the rich secured the most gifted while the poor must perforce be satisfied with lesser stars? Nay, my brother. From the same glorious, sufficient Head flowed grace for every part of the body; and this was manifested, not only in the free ministry of spiritual things, not only to those who could pay well, but to the whole body, irrespective of class. While the same constraining love moved the whole body to a sharing of carnal things, all was abundant, spontaneous, free. Thus, there were joyous songs of praise on every side; both givers and receivers joining in the grand chorus of “*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift*” [1Co.9:15].

“And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.” [Jdg.18:6]

Micah is a graphic picture of “itching ears.” The men piously beg the Levite to ask counsel of God, and he, cunning man as he is (seeking his own, as do all hirelings), knows well what is wanted and supplies the very answer they want, “*Go in peace: before the Lord is your way.*” Is it not laughable? It is all so very religious and yet altogether an abomination to God. The spies wanted the answer that they were in the will of God and would not have been pleased if Micah's priest (not God's) had not so directed. Professing Christians everywhere are going contrary to God's Word, seeking their inheritance in a world under judgment; joining in a mad race for riches, just like the world. But it is alright, for they have one whose business it is to enquire of the Lord; they hire him for this purpose and he says, “*Go in peace: before the Lord is your way.*”

All goes smoothly for them, then and now. It appears as though the hireling really voiced the mind of God. Prosperity and peace attend their way. They find what they want in the extreme north, far off from God's dwelling place, the tabernacle in Shiloh. They are a people dwelling in a careless sense of security; this, in connection with the fine land they possess, is sufficient inducement for the Danites, 600 men "*appointed with weapons of war*" [Jdg.18:11] to emigrate.

On their way north they come to Mount Ephraim and at a hint from the 5 spies, who had informed them of Micah's convenient priest and of his false gods, the whole band turns aside and mounts a guard at Micah's house. The 5 spies go in and appropriate the "*graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image.*" [Jdg.18:17]

Micah's hired priest looking on mildly expostulates at the outrage saying, "*What do ye?*" The answer is a "call" and a notice to a greater sphere of usefulness:

"Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel" [Jdg.18:19b]

The argument is irresistible and the question meets with a ready response. The priest's heart is glad. He accepts the "call" immediately, knowing it is of the Lord, because of the greater salary and increased opportunities to do good...serving 600 men instead of 1. Micah's priest is certainly in luck, such honor conferred upon him while he is yet young. So he takes charge of all the idolatrous paraphernalia and departs in peace in the midst of the people.

But there is no peace for Micah.

"And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house." [Jdg.18:22-26]

Micah and a few of his loyal friends follow the thieves and there ensues a conversation that certainly forces a smile. The Danites begin, "*What aileth thee?*" they enquire. Micah answers, "*Ye have taken away my gods, which I have made,*" (notice, manufactured gods), "*and the priest, and ye are gone away; and what have I more? And what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?*" This is truly adding insults to injury...steal a man's gods and his priest and then, because he is slightly disturbed by the incident, ask him what is the matter. They do not appear to think that Micah has any right whatever for complaint, and they give him some weighty counsel which they advise him to heed: "*Let not your voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.*" In other words, "Shut up." Poor Micah has to return home disconsolate, bereft of his gods. He took the Danite's counsel perforce because they outnumber his company, "discretion being the better part of valor". Here is the last we read of Micah, however, he no doubt made other gods and consoled himself. The narrative follows the Danites.

"And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first. And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and

Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." [Jdg.18:27-31]

The Danites have the prominent place now in the drama. They have the priest and the stolen gods. They capture the city of Laish and change its name to **Dan** ("judging") after the name of their father; as if the deed had given honor to that name that should speak only of righteous "judgment." Then they set up the graven image and **Jonathan** ("*Jehovah hath given*") (for at last we are told the Levite's name) the son of **Gershom** ("*the stranger*"), the son, not of Manasseh, as in our version, but of **Moses** ("*drawn out*"). Jonathan, and his sons, were priests to the tribe of Dan until the captivity of the land.

What a witness the above genealogy gives us of the need of another birth than that of the flesh. No doubt there are links omitted, but the teaching is plain: This hireling, idolatrous false priest, is a direct lineal descendant from Moses, the faithful servant of God. There is no transmission of piety by natural generation. The offspring of the most Godly servant needs another birth "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" [Joh.1:13]. Moreover, the above also teaches, the self-evident fact which is before our eyes, that the descendants of the most orthodox, scripturally gathered assembly (in the beginning) go in the way of all flesh. As God says, "*All flesh is grass*" [Isa.40:6]. Nothing is stable nor are there enduring results from the efforts of the flesh.

In time, there is a departure from the truth that was the very foundation of their church or else they hold these Divine Revelations in theory. If their founders were here at the present writing, they would not be allowed to preach in their pulpits. Take the Lutheran denomination as an example. Martin Luther stood for...

- absolute justification by faith of the believer,
- the entire deliverance of the Christian from law, and
- one Headship, that of the Lord Jesus Christ over the whole Church.

But how is it now? Need we ask? Other sects are in the same class; far off from what their honored fore-fathers taught.

Dear reader, do you think that we are informed of all this simply as a matter of history? No, indeed. We have a vital, direct interest in it all; for we are living in days of exactly the same character and in the same state of things as herein portrayed. Is there not on all sides an abundance of religion—a "form of godliness"—while "the power" is denied? This does not refer to the "power" as we are accustomed to use the word, referring to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but rather it refers to the birth of the Spirit, the new life, which we receive from the Last Adam and which alone can qualify us to live Godly. The old creation endeavors to live the Christian life without the Christian birth, but it is a failure.

It is true that all seems to go well with the Danites. God appears to be silent, as He did in Israel's day. No convulsion of nature, no earthquake, no sun in blackness marked His displeasure of their deed. Why then appeal to an old Book for its verdict against it, when providence was so evidently for it? As generation has followed generation and God has not taken vengeance someone may be tempted to enquire "Do you think we are so much wiser and better than those who have gone before?" If God does seriously disapprove of the worldliness, the hired ministry, the sectarianism, the organization, the dependence on money, and many other things that we protest against because they are not in harmony with the Scriptures, and in fact are opposed to God's revealed will, why then are such conditions allowed to continue? Because God is allowing things to run a certain foreordained course.

However, there will come the “due time.” God knows what He is doing. There was a limit in Israel's time, and there is a limit now. Notice, that the limit was not exactly public approval of it all but rather “*the captivity of the land*” [Jdg.18:30]. So shall it be that “sudden destruction,” shall come in the very midst of the public's cry of “peace and safety.” Long-deferred judgment shall fall at last, and woe upon the religious abominations of Christendom then. It will be plainly manifest, that it is that “Great City Babylon” that has come into judgment. “In one hour,” a very short period, she shall be “*made desolate*” [Rev.18:19]; “*for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her*” [Rev.18:8]. Be not deceived my friends, the time of reckoning will come. “*God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap*” [Gal.6:7].

The above incident gives us one view of the inward condition of Israel, which was the cause of all the outward state of affairs, (which we have had in the previous part of Judges) and which necessitated the intervention of God, in the revivals and restorations therein recorded. The teaching for us, this is what interests us. What does such an inward state in The Church signify? It is this, the deepest, most far reaching lesson for us today:

The trouble in The Church is all caused by failure to give Christ His place as Head of His own body. God's people do not believe in the oneness of the body of Christ, that we are members one of another, and this by the fact of our new birth of the Spirit not because of our anointing by the Spirit.

Christ Himself is the life of this organism, which is a new creation. By the very fact of its being a living body, The Church, as a whole, does not believe that there is unity in this body. This unity is in evidence when each member is yielding to the Living Head; subject to all His movings, willing to walk in His way. Then the Levites (ministers) will not be running around job-hunting, as is the case now, nor asking the people for more money. No, indeed. According to the judgment of their Head, they will have enough, and more to spare; they will not be dependent upon any earthly source for even earthly things. Alas, that so beautiful, so sufficient a provision should be so little appreciated, so little understood, that the world is taken into counsel, and the aid of the enemies of our Glorious Head sought, to help the members of His body and keep them from starvation. Observe: All this condition is the result of departure from the basic truth of The Church, of which the epistles of Paul give us the revelation.

JUDGES 19

THE 2ND INCIDENT (JDG. 19:1-21:25)

“It came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mt. Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehem-Judah.” [Jdg.19:1]

We noted in the beginning of our study of Judges, that the unity of Israel was a reality in the early days. Judah asked Simeon to help him in ridding his land of the Canaanites, and Judah helped Simeon [Jdg.1:2-3]. They were in fellowship; the cause of one was the cause of all. And, as we know, this unity was repeated in the beginning of this present age because The Church also had the same wonderful experience, “*neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed were his own*” [Act.4:32]. But now, in this 2nd incident, we are about to view the sad failure in the end which also has its counterpart in The Church.

The story here recorded is truly a shameful one; and that it is here given in detail is surely proof that there is a corresponding need of its lessons. What a world this is, and what depravity man has reached when such scenes are possible. The thing we need to do is trace them to their root and let the lesson sink deep into our souls and teach us to cling close to our

Father's arms; standing in Christ, our glorious and complete Head, that He may hold us fast to one another in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*"And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah."
[Jdg.19:1]*

This portion is comprised of 3 chapters. It begins and ends with the strange and significant phrase *"In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* that we have already noted. Let us consider this phrase a little further. These words imply the fact that there was no recognized authority to which they must submit. Everyone was a law unto himself and did what he considered right. The people were sovereign. It is democracy in religious circles. To this all things tend in the world, political and ecclesiastical. Daniel's image informs us of the political realm; one which is confirmed, especially in our day, by the manifest trend among the nations of the earth; while the word "Laodicea" may to our opened ears tell the same story in the ecclesiastical realm.

Laodicea (*"the people's rights"* or *"the rights of the laity"*) is the reaction from the awful tyranny of Jezebel, the rights of the clergy, as we might say. Although, they have been spurious rights, ecclesiastical assumption, from which extreme the people have swung to the opposite pole, denying all rule and authority in The Church. The spirit of democracy, of insubordination and impatience of all restraint has surely invaded religious ranks. The heart is no longer subject to Christ, under law of Christ, as Paul says; it no longer recognizes His rulers, His under-shepherds, in the lowly ones who toil and serve the saints. These things which are here in type are all plainly discernible in the professing church. Self-justification and accusation of other brethren are the distinguishing mark of the "last days;" and this spirit is prevalent among the true children of God.

In the present case, we have to do with a Levite also; and here the story commences with him as the principal actor upon the scene. He sojourned on the far side of **Mount Ephraim** (*"the fruitful hill"*) and took himself a concubine out of **Bethlehem-Judah** (*"the praiseful house of bread"*). This Levite represents the Lord Jesus Christ, the true minister of God. The woman figures Christendom, who claims to be the Bride of Christ. Observe the important fact: She is not his lawful, wedded wife, she is only a concubine; further, she is not true to him. She departs to her father's house where she has other lovers. The father no doubt represents the Gentiles, of whom the woman is a part. The Levite arose and went after the woman to speak friendly to her. He does not chide her for her broken vows but endeavors to woo her to himself. He stays in the father's house 5 days, representative of this age when God is visiting the Gentiles *"to take out of them a people for His name"* [Act.15:14]; and as the day is declining the woman departs with him. The night is almost upon them (a figure of the end of the age when the true Bride is home with the Lord).

"And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah. And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin." [Jdg.19:11-14]

Jerusalem, the city of God, affords him no shelter. It is no longer known by its name. It is now **Jebus** (*"trodden down"*), for it is in the hands of strangers. This is easy of interpretation: It speaks of the Lord being a stranger in that place which calls itself by His name. Although He

stands at the door and knocks, inviting individuals to come out that He may have fellowship with them, He is outside the door of His own house, as it were.

So they turn aside to Gibeah, a city of Benjamin. Here they are coldly welcomed, sitting down in the open space, awaiting some hospitable door; but this does not come till late. The whole scene speaks of departing from brotherly love. At last an old man, one in whom the fire has not been entirely quenched, coming in from his day labor, invites them to enter his home. The Levite had desired to enter a city of Israel and not the city of a stranger, yet they find Gibeah is Sodom over again; Israel never changes from this character. Speaking of the prophets, God cries that “*they are all of them unto one as Sodom and the inhabitants as Gomorrah*” [Jer.23:14]. Here is the proof of it. Every shocking trait of Sodom is seen in this Israelite city of Gibeah, even as Christendom can produce the same evil fruit as heathendom. We have the catalogue of each; compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5 with Romans 1:29-32 and see the correspondence. Man is the same in every age, more degenerate is the only difference between the first state and the last state. Man is vile, impure, burning with passions to which he is an unconscious slave, from which he cannot deliver himself by any means, and no external form will help him. Before there can come any outward change, there must be another birth, an inward change in the soul.

Why is this shameful record here in Judges 19:15-29? What are its lessons for us, upon whom the end of the ages has come? We believe it is fraught with the gravest, deepest teaching for the “last days.”

The Levite hands over his concubine to these degenerate men of Belial. He abandons her to the lust of the mob. The morning light reveals the full cost of his escape from them. The dishonored body of the woman lies dead at the door, with her hands upon its violated threshold, as though calling for that protection which she did not find. The Levite carries the body to his home, then cuts it into 12 pieces, and sends a portion to each of the tribes, as a witness that the evil is not that of a few, but of the whole nation. It is universal, as the comment of the Scriptures assures that “*there was no such deed done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day*” [Jdg.19:30]; the conditions never were ripe for it before.

This is all most wonderfully significant. The concubine represents the false woman of shameful destiny, the famous harlot of the Scriptures—“*The Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” [Rev.17:5]. The “*mother of harlots*” is representative of Rome. She is the mother of harlots and mother of abominations of the earth; in other words, every modern religious system sprang from her; but they are not the harlot. We always inferred that she figured the whole of Christendom; but such is not the case. Protestantism is not included. Rome alone is the woman. She is the first church, though she has departed far from the power of the truth, yet she does hold to the foundation principles of Christianity. The Lord holds her responsible, being “*the mother*.” She was espoused by the Apostle Paul (to whom was committed the stewardship of The Church) to one Husband, that he might present a chaste virgin to Christ [2Co.11:2]; but she proved false to her liege Lord. By her profession, she accepted the marriage ring; but by her flirtations with the world, she proved herself utterly unworthy of such a union with Christ. She has accepted other lovers...other heads. She has yielded to the influences and commandments of men rather than those of God; the Lord meanwhile endeavors to woo her to Himself, but in vain. Her profession of faith is not a reality. The Protestant sects are her daughters who, at the time of the end, will have gone into woeful apostasy and it is these Protestant, or rather infidel nations, which destroy the harlot. She has been sitting in the saddle of the world empire (including both Protestant and Catholic nations) directing the affairs of the world and they get tired of her domination and throw her off.

At the time figured here, the true Church is at home with her Lord, He having come for her some time previous; the concubine represents the professing thing left. But she claims the name of Christ and that she belongs to Him; therefore, He is obliged to deal with her accordingly by manifesting her duplicity to the world and punishing her with the judgment due to the false relationship she bears to Him. The manner of this judgment we have figured in this narrative. She will be given into the hands of the kings, with whom she has been, in some sense, in fellowship: *"These shall hate the whore and shall make her desolate and naked and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire"* [Rev.17:16]. These kings, representative of nations, are figured here by these *"children of Belial,"* who insist upon knowing the Levite, but for no good intent, as the sequel proves. That is, they do not desire the fellowship of the Lord spiritually, but carnally; loudly proclaiming by their actions that he belongs to them. But Christ (figured by the Levite) denied any such association; giving over into their hand the false woman, The Church, who has been in guilty fellowship with the world (which is at enmity with God, even though they claim otherwise) and finally will receive her full reward at the hands of nations who though they may not be so-called Christian nations, yet are, at the time, figured in a league of nations over which the harlot is reigning. God will put into the hearts of some of them to turn and rend her.

The dissected body affords us further light upon this interesting subject. Christ's body, The Church, has been cut up into multitudinous sects and divisions, as is manifest everywhere, The cause of which is: Unregenerate men have been allowed within its fold claiming fellowship with Christ. These unregenerate men are, though indirectly, the cause of her downfall, and God takes vengeance on account of her illicit relations with them. They have joined themselves to this great religious system that has power over all the world; she has yielded to their embrace, sought their protection and influence and they are, rather than Christ, the recognized heads of The Church; He is a Husband in name only. This is the significance of the sending of portions of the dissected body to each one of the 12 tribes. All nations have been in guilty fellowship with this famous harlot, therefore Christ judges them all as guilty of her untimely end. He puts the blame upon the world which has claimed her as its own, whom she has loved, and with whom she has lived in harmony. We infer from the figure, as well as the sure word of prophecy, that not all the nations are directly instrumental in the matter of her destruction. We read that it is only *"the ten horns"* on the beast that *"hate the whore"* [Rev.17:16]; the powers allied with the League of Nations for a short period of time. There are other kings, represented by the beast having *"seven heads"* [Rev.13:1], the foremost nations comprising the league, that *"bewail her and lament for her when they see the smoke of her burning"* [Rev.18:9]; yet, it is the League that have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her; therefore they are the indirect cause of her judgment at the hands of the other kings, who did not love her, but rather hated her. Thus, according to the Levite, they are all guilty and the sin is laid at the door of the world and cries for vengeance. God uses 11 of the tribes to spank the 1 tribe, as we are shown in the next chapters, but themselves are first spanked by the 1 tribe which is all full of instruction for us.

JUDGES 20

"Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord, in Mispheh." [Jdg.20:1]

Here we are shown a great gathering of all the tribes to the Lord, Benjamin alone is the exception. There is an apparent solemnity and dignity connected with this mighty assembling of the people that is very striking. It looked big and impressive. From the description, there is surely unity of purpose; but alas, they are united against themselves and the Lord assures us that such a house cannot stand. As was noted earlier in the book, the question in the beginning was, *"Who will go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?"* [Jdg.1:1]. And in the end, the question is, *"Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?"* [Jdg.20:18].

This figures the end of the Church Age, the age of greatest privilege, when, from among the Gentiles, God is taking out a Bride for His Son, a Queen for His King. It ends as every age has ended, in woeful defeat and failure. Yet, in spite of it all, God has not failed. He has the woman all perfected and glorified at the time figured here. She was an overcomer in the midst of the declension and manifest ruin; in fact, the “all things” that were against her worked good for her. The awful departure from God and His truth, with its attendant evil, were stepping stones to victory for her. The darker the night of sorrow, the brighter shone her lamp of testimony. It is in such conditions that wholeheartedness, with its companion—faithfulness—is appreciated by the Lord and rewarded correspondingly. It costs us something to follow a rejected Lord. But we get rewarded in the glory according as we have lost on the earth—eternal gain for transient loss—an exceeding weight of glory for light afflictions. Who would not desire such an exchange? Alas, even God’s people do not believe in all the good news that is told us in the Scriptures of Truth. Many are swayed by the things seen and therefore are losers of the unseen and eternal. There is unity at last, but it is man-made unity.

Although it is a religious affair, God had not ordered this gathering; it is called the “*assembly of the people of God*” [Jdg.20:2], and He will allow it to serve His own purpose. The Levite is a witness and gives account of the wicked deed.

“And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.” [Jdg.20:4-7]

This is added proof of that which we said before, that the enmity of these men of Belial was really toward the Levite, and they destroyed the woman because she, as they believed, belonged to him. The interpretation is plain. Catholicism will come to her end in like manner. The nations who destroy her will hate God and His Anointed. They will turn on that great mystery of iniquity and in 1 hour her judgment shall come. It is the Lord who has judged her guilty because her sins have reached unto heaven and God hath remembered her iniquities; therefore “*shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her*” [Rev.18:8].

The words of the Levite against the men of Benjamin work upon the host of Israel mightily. They are moved by 1 impulse; they are gathered as 1 man; they arise as 1 man. Is not this unity? They are apparently in a right position and in unanimity. What more can be desired? Let us see as we proceed.

“And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house. But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it; And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.” [Jdg.20:8-11]

Swiftly the 11 tribes leap to judgment; instantly their swords are out; loud are their indignant threats, which shall evidence their own superior purity and burning zeal for God. They will do as The Law commands and “*put away evil from Israel.*” Little do they realize all that this signifies or how closely this will shave them. Put away evil! Why, it is from Dan to Beersheba. It is in the very warp and woof of their nature; and their domestic lives evidenced this (witness the story

of Micah). But they see only the mote in Benjamin's eye, ignoring the beam in their own, as is ever the case with the self-righteous old creation; they deal with the mote in others.

The above meeting is a great gathering in unity, yet Israel takes but a little counsel of the Lord. They ask, "What need, is not our duty clear?" A hard, lofty, exasperating message is sent to Benjamin, "*What wickedness is this that is done among you?*" [Jdg.20:12]. It is only "*among you*," we are quite free from the evil. It is no marvel that Benjamin would not hearken. So they go to battle and the Lord permits, yea more, He authorized the battle. It is the fruit of the universal declension from the Headship of Christ. For the same reason, this conflict has been manifested in some measure all down the age; but, at the end comes the full development of the separation at the very time when Christendom, including Catholicism and Protestantism, has apparently been organized into a most beautiful harmony. Ha! Ha! One is surely constrained to laugh, even as God does, at their feeble efforts to bring about a unity of such widely divergent doctrines and religions; shortly, they will have a regular hodge-podge. Everything religious will be put into 1 pot; but, as the poor blind dupes of Satan will find, to their sorrow, there will truly be death in the eating. They will not heed the Word of God which plainly says that the end of Gentile rule as well as that of Catholicism is defeat.

The very cause of the shameful end of both is the shallow confederation of religions, the league of churches, which is coming to the front today. It will succeed for only a short time. This great wonderful religious league, dominated by religious Rome, will sit in the saddle of the world's affairs, guide the League of Nations to its promised peace, and boost it into power and prominence. But Rome's power will be thrown off by some of the Protestant nations, the "ten horns" of Revelation 17; and then, Oh sad denouement of that which began so fair; she will be trampled to death. Her power will be gone; her prestige destroyed; her luster dimmed: but this will cause a rupture in the League of Nations. There will be war again. Doubtless the "*merchants and kings that bewail*" Rome's overthrow will rise in arms against the 10 horns.

After this great gathering (representative of professedly Christian nations) had determined upon their course of action, even binding it with an oath, they went up to the house of God to ask counsel. But there were no tears, no sorrow, no self-judgment, no consciousness of the common sin, no real recognition of relationship (though Benjamin was part of the league); they simply assumed the place of the righteous executors of wrath; and the only consideration with them is, and they ask the question of the Lord...

KEY VERSE "*Who shall go first against the children of Benjamin?*" [Jdg.20:18]

The first day's battle has a strange result. Defeat is the portion of the 11 tribes. The effect is good, for now the people weep. There seems to be sorrow mingled with their amazement; and they go up and ask counsel of the Lord. Mark it that this time, the question is not "*Who shall go*" but "*shall I go up to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?*" [Jdg.20:23]. They emphasize the unity. Yes, the Lord says, they must go up again. It is not the permission of complacency but rather of continued discipline. The lessons must be plowed in deeper. They must reap what they have sown.

Again the blood of the 11 tribes flows freely; again defeat and humiliation is their portion. They are perplexed indeed. They have asked God "*Who should go up?*" and then "*Should they go up at all?*" They argue that it is only in simple obedience that they have gone to battle and now they are shamefully defeated. Ah, we have the secret: It was the chastening hand of God upon them. They had united themselves in a league with all nations under one head, and also in a league of religions, no doubt under one head too; thus endeavoring to make a unity themselves after they had failed to hold the one true unity which God had made. Therefore, they are given up to bite and devour one another and thus learn that there is no unity without dependence upon

God. They only succeed in destroying one another. The 1 tribe, the smaller number, appears successful which proves that the Lord has taken a hand in the controversy. He wants them to see that they are equally guilty, with Benjamin, of the concubine's death; or translated into anti-typical language, the Lord holds all nations equally guilty of the downfall of Roman Catholicism; because they had joined hands in fellowship, thus throwing off all subjection to God and His Word.

As the Lord knew it would, the second defeat appears more effective than the first because now the people not only weep but wait quietly before the Lord and offer, at last, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; fasting that day until evening. They begin to discover that God has a controversy with them, as well as with Benjamin, and they humble themselves under His mighty hand in repentance. They are heard of God and obtain the assurance that Benjamin will get his punishment tomorrow.

Victory comes on the third day, but it is a sad, sad victory, with which there is no joyful song connected. No Miriam or Deborah is found to raise a peon of triumph; there is still nothing but weeping, and it is now as much on account of their victory as before for their defeat. They vindicate their indignation and wrath against Benjamin's conduct and then they celebrate the victory with tears. At last they awaken to the fact that it is their brother Benjamin who is annihilated. A feeble remnant of 600 remains and they take refuge in the rock Rimmon. All others of the tribe perished (man, woman and child) and unless some expedient be found, the 600 too must die out; for all the tribes have sworn with an oath not to permit any marriage with Benjamin and therefore Israel would be composed of only 11 instead of 12 tribes. But in that same day they had sworn another oath that whosoever *"came not up to the Lord to Mizpeh should be put to death."* Now they see that, with a little ingenuity, they may be able to make one oath offset the other; the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead came not up to their assembly, and so they must answer for their neutrality with their lives.

The law of the Medes and Persians cannot be broken. The people will most religiously keep their oaths which first demands the cutting off of a tribe; and now demands the cutting off of a city to save the tribe from extinction. The wounds must be healed by the sword which heretofore was too freely used; one foolish oath offsets the effect of the other. The people cannot, and do not, carry the oaths out consistently. If they did, both the city and the tribe would have perished. They spare 400 maidens; as if this was not as much a breaking of their oath as if they had spared the city. The innocent children must die; but the 400 maidens may live. They can be useful to them. Happy inconsistencies since at least some are spared. However, the scheme is only partly successful. The 400 young girls, grieving, no doubt, over their slain relations, do not suffice; so others must suffer that each man may have a wife. A feast of the Lord affords an opportunity for service in this respect. They counsel, taking advantage of it for plunder and thus turn its joy into mourning. The closest human ties are sundered that they may maintain their integrity as a nation of honor and uphold their laws and by-laws.

That anything could possibly be wrong with their self-imposed oaths never seems to suggest itself to them; therefore, the book of Judges closes in gloom. Yet, had you enquired of these Israelites, after all the bloodshed and rapine was over, as to the cause of the trouble, each would have assured you that he, at least, had done right. It is this that is left ringing in our ears at the end...*"every man did that which was right in his own eyes."* Midah was right with his false gods and his religion; his mother was right in her fellowship in this pious idolatry, the Danites were right in stealing whatever they wanted (gods, priest, and inheritance); did they not desire religious instruction? They wanted Bible study! The tribes did right in swearing oaths, and, they were right in evading them. Everyone is right. No one has a guilty conscience; no one is convicted of sin. However, it is the application that especially concerns us. The

aforementioned war, with its disastrous effects, figures a serious break in the soon-coming league of nations; it is coming. Although now it appears as dead, it will have a resurrection; as also will its first Emperor. The nations, in sympathy with Rome, will rise up against those who destroyed her; overpowering and defeating them in battle. The league will thus be almost disrupted. The very nations who engineered the peace platform, with the consolidation and unification of the nations (the very foundation of it) are the successful ones. This causes no joy but the opposite; the peace league has failed. It was formed to maintain and enforce peace; they took an oath to this effect, and now there is no peace.

Yet there is a way out. They must have a league of nations at whatever cost to anyone. It has been formed and has been successful for awhile. It must be continued even if the power of Rome and its sovereignty is abolished. The league must live. The world demands it. So they get together again, some way, though we may not understand all the details of its reconstruction. This much we do understand, the world will go right on with its counterfeit millennium, worshipping its counterfeit Christ, until Jesus, with His saints, is revealed from heaven. As to religion, the nations will quickly patch up their differences when the old harlot is out of the saddle. The apostasy will develop rapidly then, the 3 measures of meal will all be leavened. The truth concerning the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the revealed Word of God will all be given up. This is the time when Paul tells us that *"God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* [2Th.2:11]. They will be so deceived by Satan that they will accept him, clothed with humanity, as the Christ. The dove of peace will apparently have lighted upon the earth. Harmony will reign. Inconsistencies will be covered with a mantle of charity. The people will almost deceive themselves into thinking that they are all right. This is just before the end of this evil day.

All the above is not figured in the type. There we are given a sight of conditions, as God sees them, just before the King is revealed from heaven. The cause of all the trouble, bloodshed, sorrow, and sin manifested in the end is, we are informed, because the King is not upon the scene. God has not yet *"set His King upon His holy hill of Zion"* [Psa.2:6]. Peace and safety before His revelation is only sudden destruction.

"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." [Jdg.21:25]

A Far-Off Strain

The world was dark, I had no peace,
I could not make my sadness cease;
And disappointments haunted me,
On fairy lands and buoyant sea.
"What shall I do?" I cried aloud;
To tell a friend I was too proud,
Just then, I heard a far-off strain -
"My Son has borne thy grief and pain."

I listened to that song so grand,
Although I could not understand;
None ever heard a sweeter sound;
It seemed that heaven was all around.
Is this a dream or is it true,
That I may know just what to do?
Again I heard that soothing strain -
"My Son has borne thy grief and pain."

"What must I do?" I sobbed and cried,
"Do nothing, child," the song replied;
"But wait and rest while more I sing,
Accept the tidings which I bring.
For God so loved the world, He gave,
His Son thy soul from sin to save;
Believe, believe the glorious strain -
That Christ has borne thy grief and pain."

I dared to trust that heavenly song,
It thrilled my soul the whole day long;
The darkness fled and peace came in,
His blood had made me free from sin.
I cried for joy and told my friend,
Of deep contentment without end;
And now I sing and sing that strain -
God's Son has borne my grief and pain.

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