

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges

B. The Record Of Specific Judges, Judges 3:7-16:31

1. Othniel's Judgeship: Heeding God's Lessons To The Spiritual Forefathers (Judges 3:7-11)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Few people recall the lessons that our nation's spiritual forefathers had to learn, a face we hereby illustrate: Jim Nicholson, a former U. S. Ambassador to the Vatican, and Newt Gingrich, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, self-professing "lay Catholics," wrote the op-ed, "Introducing Pope Francis to America" in the September 19-20, 2015 issue of The Wall Street Journal, p. A13. They penned it because "Pope Francis has overtly embraced the contemporary political agenda of income redistribution and government economic control to reduce climate change" (Ibid., "The Politics of Pope Francis," September 22, 2015, p. A14). They wanted to explain to the pontiff how "Americans have not clung greedily to their wealth, but have shared prosperity with the rest of the world" in light of the pope's "recent speech in Bolivia" that claimed, "(T)he predominant global economic system has the 'mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature.'" (Ibid., Nicholson and Gingrich) Messrs Nicholson and Gingrich added that "our nation . . . of immigrants . . . rewards hard work and creativity" in "a free enterprise system that has lifted millions from poverty and has made America unique . . ." Ibid.

Many people do not know that these words by lay Catholics extol the Protestant work ethic that was brought to America by the Pilgrim forefathers. Fewer still know that the Pilgrims adopted that work ethic after being hurt by applying the socialism Pope Francis and many world leaders uphold today: after trying a commonwealth arrangement only to see it produce confusion, discontent and little production, Governor William Bradford of Plymouth Plantation assigned each family its own plot of ground to raise its own food, with great results! (Daniel J. Flynn, "Socialism Didn't Work At Plymouth Plantation, Either," humanevents. com, 11/25/2010) The Governor then noted in his work, "Of Plymouth Plantation" that "(t)he experience . . . may well evince the vanity of that conceit of Plato's and other ancients applauded by some of later times; that the taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God." (Ibid., Flynn)

Need: *So we ask, "With the bent to forget the lessons learned by our spiritual fathers, what would God suggest?!"*

- I. **After Joshua died, Israel forgot God and served false gods, so He let Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram Naharaim, or, of Upper Mesopotamia, oppress Israel, Judges 3:7-8; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 386.**
- II. **This was a "distant nation" to do this (Ibid.), but Joshua's closing admonition shows God used THAT nation to oppress Israel as a signal to get her to recall what her FOREFATHERS had to learn:**
 - A. Joshua's closing admonition to Israel that urged her to stay true to God *SPECIFICALLY* referred to avoiding the false gods **Abraham** had initially served on the other side of the *Euphrates* in **Mesopotamia**, Jos. 24:14 ESV; Ibid., p. 369. Abraham had moved from Ur in southeastern Mesopotamia to Haran in northwestern Mesopotamia before going to Canaan, and Cushan-Rishathaim later ruled the Haran area, Genesis 11:27-12:6.
 - B. Thus, the Lord sent a people group foreign to Canaan itself, a group recalling the origins of Abraham, to get Israel to recall and practice what Abraham had done and that Joshua later urged Israel to do -- to depart from the false pagan gods of even their **forefathers** upon learning to heed the **lessons learned** by the **forefathers!**
- III. **Of note, the man God used to save Israel had a great example in leaving the forefathers' false gods, v. 9:**
 - A. When Israel cried to the Lord for deliverance from Cushan-Rishathaim, God answered by raising up a deliverer in Othniel, son of Kenaz, who was Caleb's younger brother, Jud. 3:9; Z. P. E. B., v. Four, p. 552-553.
 - B. Caleb and Kenaz were sons of Jephunneh the Kenizzite (Joshua 14:6), a Gentile people of Southern Canaan that God promised would be displaced by Abraham's descendants in Genesis 15:1-21; Ibid., vol. Three, p. 782.
 - C. Thus, either Jephunneh or Caleb had made the choice to leave their native Kenizzite people and its pagan Canaanite gods to side with Israel, and Caleb had wholeheartedly followed Israel's God, Num. 13:30-14:10:
 1. Caleb had shown himself to be so outstanding a man of God and a leader that he had been selected by the tribe of Judah to be its tribal chief regardless of his former pagan Kenizzite heritage, Numbers 13:1-3, 6.
 2. He was thus chosen to be one of the twelve spies to spy out Canaan, and he gave a positive report, urging Israel to invade Canaan in reliance on the Lord and so to conquer it, Numbers 13:30.

3. For daring to give such advice, Caleb and Joshua were nearly stoned to death by a faithless generation in Israel (Num. 14:6-10), so God promised to bring Caleb into the land where he had gone, Numbers 14:24.
4. God thus preserved Caleb's strength all during the 40 years of Israel's wilderness journeys until he could conquer the land (Joshua 14:7-11), so he petitioned Joshua for the city of Hebron where the giant sons of Anak were, land in the region of Southern Canaan where his native Kenizzite people had dwelt, and he received it as an inheritance and defeated its giants, the Anakim, Joshua 14:12-15 with Numbers 13:33.
5. However, Caleb had wanted to encourage a later generation of Israel wholeheartedly to follow the Lord to defeat more Canaanites, so he promised his daughter's hand in marriage to the one who defeated Kirjathsepher, Jud. 1:12. Othniel defeated that city, winning the hand of Caleb's daughter, Achsah, Judges 1:13.
6. When Caleb then gave his daughter land at her wedding and she requested springs of water in view of the dry plot she received, Caleb gave her two springs, encouragement for the younger generation to possess the land, and even motivation for them to seize more of it from the Canaanites for blessing, Jud. 1:14-15.

IV. Thus, when Cushan-Rishathaim of Abraham's initial land of Mesopotamia oppressed Israel, from learning under Caleb wholeheartedly to follow God over the false gods once worshipped by forefather Caleb, Othniel was used of God to judge Israel and defeat her Mesopotamian oppressor, Judges 3:10.

V. Consequently, Israel enjoyed rest from war for forty years until the death of Othniel, Judges 3:11.

***Lesson:* When Israel failed to obey Joshua's call to heed the lessons learned by the forefathers to abandon their initial false gods of Mesopotamia or Canaan, God sent an oppressor from Abraham's pagan Mesopotamia to oppress Israel, and Othniel, who had known from the example of his uncle Caleb to abandon the false Canaanite gods of Caleb's Canaanite ancestors, was mightily used of God to defeat the Mesopotamian invaders.**

***Application:* (1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) If we face hard trials, we like Israel in Othniel's era should always recall the pilgrimages of our spiritual forefathers to discern if God is using our trials to signal our need to apply the lessons that our spiritual forefathers learned in their era for our blessing today!**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

(1) In our sermon introduction, we told how our Pilgrim forefathers learned through languishing for a time under a socialistic commonwealth the need to abandon that system and turn instead to free enterprise for success.

However, had these forefathers *initially* looked to **Scripture** like their Protestant Reformation forefathers along with 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2 had urged them to do ("Sola Scriptura," Scripture as the final authority), they would have avoided their initial troubles under socialism: (a) 2 Thessalonians 3:10 directs that a man work before he can eat. (b) Then, Micah 4:1-4 reveals that in Christ's future Kingdom, every man will dwell under his own vine and under his own fig tree in private property ownership. Thus, the Pilgrim forefathers learned by experience to heed the Scripture arrangement for private property ownership and personal industry in a free enterprise system!

(2) This lesson has direct bearing on the major themes pushed by Pope Francis in his visit to America, namely, helping the poor by the socialistic redistribution of wealth and addressing alleged human-caused climate change via government control as reported in the articles cited in our introduction: (a) re: helping the poor, Galatians 2:10 calls us believers to meet the pressing livelihood needs of the poor. However, 2 Thessalonians 3:10 with 1 Timothy 5:8 and Micah 4:1-4 then direct that each head of household earn his own family's livelihood in private property ownership.

(b) Re: the issue of climate change, Genesis 8:20-22 calls us to trust that God Himself will preserve the world's climate as moderated to the extent that man will have seasons and raise crops as long as the earth remains!

(3) Also, according to Francis X. Rocca's front page story, "Unease Greet Pope On Catholic Right" on September 23, 2015 in The Wall Street Journal, p. A1, and what has also been reported to me by a member of our Church, Pope Francis causes "the conservative faithful" of his Church to "fear" that he "is blurring the lines about seminal teachings" on "homosexuality . . . divorce . . . [and] abortion." However, Scripture at Mark 10:2-11 prohibits divorce, Scripture at Leviticus 18:22 with Romans 1:26-27 prohibits homosexuality and Scripture at Exodus 21:22-23 prohibits abortion at any trimester. Then, Scripture at 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2 calls Christians to heed written Scripture in view of their accountability to God at Christ's return, so all who profess faith in Jesus Christ must heed Scripture above any human's words to the contrary, be they from a president, a pope, a Protestant pastor or anybody else!

Thus, we need to recall the lesson learned by Othniel in the Old Testament, by the Protestant Reformers and our Pilgrim forefathers -- that of getting back to **Scripture** as our final authority and heeding it for blessing!

May we trust in Christ for salvation, and heed the lessons our forefathers learned from God's Word!