

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

2. Ehud's Judgeship: Overcoming Confusing Error With God's Obvious Truths (Judges 3:12-31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Confusing error on the important belief of gaining salvation exists today in even major world religions:

(1) According to the Hadith, the traditions of Islam's founder Muhammad, all Muslims must "perform the hajj, the great pilgrimage . . . to Mecca at least once during their lifetimes" in hope of entering heaven (Robert Spencer, The Truth About Muhammad, 2006, p. 24, 160). However, Ahmed Al Omran and Summer Said reported in their story, "Crowds Collided In Mecca Tragedy" in The Wall Street Journal, September 26-27, 2015, p. A7 that 717 Muslims who were observing the pilgrimage to Mecca died in a stampede "when two large crowds of pilgrims collided as they came into an intersection from different directions." Accordingly, one wonders how a merciful God like "Allah" that Islam claims that it extols can require people to seek to gain eternal life by risking such a tragic demise before they can even finish performing the deed they are trying to accomplish in order to gain eternal life!

(2) Confusing error on its belief on salvation exists even in much of Christendom: (a) many mainline Protestants hold to the Documentary Hypothesis that claims that the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, were compiled from several different sources termed J, E, P, and D respectively over five centuries of time "long after Moses," meaning that the Pentateuch is not the God-inspired writings of Moses (Gleason L. Archer, A Survey Of Old Testament Doctrine, 1972, p. 73-82). This theory actually counters the Christian faith, for in Mark 12:26, Jesus cited Exodus 3:6 and credited the verse's authorship to "Moses," so if the Documentary Hypothesis is true, then Jesus lied about Moses' authorship of Exodus 3:6, He is not sinless so He cannot not save, leaving the Christian faith false.

(b) Not only mainline Protestants, but the Roman Catholic Church also has this confusing error: though the Church's Council of Trent affirms the divine inspiration of the Bible (Henry Bettenson, Docs. of the Christian Church, 1963, p. 368, "The Council of Trent, 1545-63: Ses. IV, On Scripture and Tradition"), The New American Bible For Catholics, 1986, p. 5, claims the Pentateuch arose by "joining . . . several historical traditions . . . conveniently abbreviated as J, E, P and D." This official Roman Catholic Bible then supports the Documentary Hypothesis that undermines the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and thus the credibility of Jesus and the entire Christian faith!

However, one asks how many in Christendom, Protestant and Catholic alike, can claim that salvation is by Christ if they hold to a theory on the Bible's origins that undermines Christ and the salvation He is said to bring!

Need: *So we ask, "With today's confusion on key beliefs on salvation, how are we to discern the basic truth?!"*

I. When Israel turned from God to errant idols after Othniel died, God caused her to need to recall her first crossing of the Jordan and the 12 large smooth stones Joshua had set up to testify of God's truth:

- A. Judges 3:11-13 reports that after Othniel's death, Israel sinned, so God sent the Moabites, Ammonites and Amalekites from the east under Moab's king Eglon to invade Israel, crossing the Jordan where Joshua and Israel had entered the land and possessing "the city of palm trees," or Jericho (cf. Deut. 34:3) that was located about 1 1/4 miles from Gilgal where Israel had first camped, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Jos. 4:19.
- B. This event was meant to get Israel to recall the Joshua 4:19-24 ritual of the 12 large smooth stones that were set up by Joshua at Gilgal in testimony of God's truth so as to motivate her to return to the Lord from idolatry:
 1. Joshua had told Israel to carry 12 large, river-smoothed stones from the dried-up riverbed to the west bank of the Jordan at Gilgal where he set them up as a teaching tool for future generations, Joshua 4:1-6, 19-21.
 2. These stones were to be used to instruct future generations on God's great works in Israel's Exodus and entrance into the Promised Land that Israel might always revere the Lord over false gods, Joshua 4:22-24.
 3. These stones provided this information in obvious ways (as follows):
 - a. First, their large size and smooth shape testified that they were carried from the midst of the river on dry ground to be moved to where they were finally set up, showing the miracle of Israel's crossing of the river.
 - b. Second, their location on the **west** bank of the Jordan indicated Israel had indeed come into the land from the direction of the wilderness to the east of the river in accord with the Scripture record.
 - c. Third, this crossing would also then suggest the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea just for Israel to get to the eastern side of the Jordan (Jos. 4:23), and imply God's 40 years of provisions for Israel to be

rescued from Egypt and provided sustenance with shoes, clothing (Deut. 29:5), food (Deut. 8:3), water (Ex. 15:22-27) and protection from harmful animals (Deut. 8:15) and foes (Ex. 17:8-16) in the wilderness.

- d. Fourth, the fact that such provisions occurred across the vast expanse of land from Egypt all of the way to Canaan was evidence that God was not just a local deity like the pagan gods, but that He was the God of the universe, the God of heaven and earth, like the pagan woman Rahab testified in Joshua 2:1-7, 8-11.
- e. Fifth, the fact that God met Israel's living needs for 40 years in the barren wilderness would signal God's infinite superiority over the pagan fertility gods of Canaan who could not match that powerful provision.

II. **Thus, when Israel cried for God's help under oppressive Eglon of Moab, the Lord used Ehud to deliver her (Jud. 3:14-15a) when Ehud saw the CLEAR contrast between the 12 smooth stones and errant idols:**

- A. Judges 3:19 shows Ehud began to implement his plan to defeat Eglon when he arrived **not** at the "quarries" as the KJV says, but at the "sculptured idols," *pasil* (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 369; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 820-821; Roland DeVaux, Ancient Israel: Vol. 2: Religious Institutions, 1965, p. 286).
- B. These idols were "near" (*'asher 'et*, *Ibid.*, Kittel; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 85-87) **Gilgal** where Joshua set up the 12 large, smooth stones, so Ehud was **confronted** with the *lie* of the *sculptured idols* that **SHARPLY contrasted with the clear evidence of God's vast superiority over idols** in the **12 large, smooth stones!**
- C. Seeing this glaring contrast between the truth and errant idolatry, Ehud returned to Eglon to whom he had just made a tribute of money and goods and carried out his plan to destroy this oppressor. He believed God who had so greatly helped Israel would give him the victory over the hapless false gods of Eglon's men, Jud. 3:19a.
- D. Ehud, a left-handed man, had hidden a special two-edged sword he had made under the cloak of his right hip opposite how other men who were right-handed wore their swords on the left hip, and he asserted he had a secret message for Eglon, so Eglon told Ehud to stay silent until Eglon's servants had left, Judges 3:19b.
- E. When they did leave, Ehud said he had a message from God, so Eglon stood up, leaving his fat belly an easy target, and Ehud drew his sword and thrust it into Eglon's belly, leaving it there to slay him, Jud. 3:20-22 KJV.
- F. Ehud then left, locking the door behind him, and when Eglon's servants returned and noticed the locked door and the odor due to Eglon's wound, they presumed he was relieving himself, so they delayed entering the room, giving Ehud ample time to escape past the hapless sculptured idols of nearby Gilgal unharmed by these idols and then to lead Israel in faith that God was giving them the victory over Eglon's men, Judges 3:23-27.
- G. God gave Ehud and Israel victory as they seized the fords of the Jordan and slew 10,000 demoralized Moabites who tried to flee back across the Jordan, and Israel had peace for 80 years under Ehud, Jud. 3:28-30.
- H. During Ehud's lifetime (cf. Judges 4:1), another man, Shamgar, was used of God to kill 600 Philistines with the unusual tool of an ox goad mimicking how Ehud had used an unusual weapon to slay Eglon, Judges 3:31.

Lesson: *In considering the superiority of Israel's God seen in the large smooth stones west of the Jordan at Gilgal in obvious contrast to the pagan sculptured idols there, Ehud [and later Shamgar] boldly led Israel to victory.*

Application: *(1) May we believe in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) May we then use the obvious truths we know to discern the error of what falsely troubles us or others that we follow the Lord in truth to spiritual victory.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Obvious, clear evidences of the truth answer the confusing issues raised in our sermon introduction as follows:

(1) As for Islam, the fifth century B. C. secular Greek historian Herodotus names Al-Lat as a key Arabian goddess, and she with sisters Uzza and Manah were daughters of the chief god, Allah, and all were associated with the Kaaba in Mecca in pre-Muslim days. (Will Durant, "The Story of Civ.," IV: 160-161 as cited in Dave Hunt, The Berean Call, Feb. 2000, p. 3-4) This objective testimony shows that Islam with its deity "Allah" was formed using pagan polytheistic elements, so Islam is false, and we hold that salvation is by faith alone in Christ, Romans 3:23-28.

(2) As for the Documentary Hypothesis that counters the Christian faith, this theory is based on the claim that "(t)he art of writing was virtually unknown in Israel prior to . . . the Davidic monarchy," that "therefore there could have been no records going back to the time of Moses" so that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, *Ibid.*, Archer, p. 157. Yet, the discovery of the Gezer calendar, a rock inscribed by a Jewish schoolboy around 925 B. C., reveals that the art of writing in Israel was well known and widely practiced in the tenth century during the Davidic monarchy, thus dismantling the Documentary Hypothesis, *Ibid.* Like the 12 stones by the Jordan in Ehud's day, this rock inscribed by a boy supports Jesus' claim that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and that supports the Christian faith.

May we trust in Christ to be saved. Then, may we handle confusing error by appealing to obvious truth, and may we heed our ultimate source of truth, the inspired Word of God, the Bible.