

Judges Chapter 3 Part1

Last week we finished chapter 2. However, for the sake of context, we will review the last three verses and pick up on the topic of testing.

Judges 2:21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

Just included verse 21 for context.

Judges 2:22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.”

In order. A conjunction that expresses intention.

To test. This is an *infinitive* from the Hebrew *piel* verb stem which emphasizes the action. The infinitive can also express intent. The sons of Israel failed to clear out the indigenous population. But God will use these people as a way to gauge their spiritual development. This testing is not to try and make them fail, it is a way to assess their spiritual maturity.

Keep. This Hebrew word can mean keep, watch, preserve. There is a Greek equivalent word, *tereo*. Here, in the Hebrew the context would suggest it means something like obey or comply. But it is probably deeper than that. To obey willingly even with gusto. What about you? When you are tested in life, do you willingly, depend on the Holy Spirit for strength?

Here is the instruction from the second person of the Trinity, the pre-existent Christ, to the Exodus generation:

Deuteronomy 11:22 For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am

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commanding you to do, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him,

Deuteronomy 11:23 then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.

Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

Here is Jesus' commission to the church which includes the Greek work tereo:

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Observe. This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word to keep. Not only should we observe the command of Jesus to love one another of the same kind (i.e. filling of the Holy Spirit), but teach others to do likewise.

The application is that just like the sons of Israel were tested to show their willing obedience to God's word, so the Christian has tests to show whether we are willingly obedient to God's commission. It was the

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second person of the Trinity, the pre-existent Christ that spoke in Judges; It is Jesus Christ Himself that speaks to us in the Gospel of Matthew. Will you keep the “Way?” Faith Dependence/Reliance on God the Holy Spirit, learning doctrine and applying what we learn to our life.

Here is an interesting side-light about the word for keep or guard in Hebrew. In 1909, a Jewish organization was formed to guard and protect Jewish settlements in what would one day become Israel. Here is the text from <http://rmi-ministries.com/Shamar.htm> which is similar to information on Wikipedia concerning the organization called Ha Shomer Society.

“This was a group of men that became the “**watchmen**” or the “**guardians**”, “**protectors**” and “**defenders**” of Jewish settlements living in Palestine, ancient Israel from Arab attacks. For they were “**keepers**” indeed of the many villages around the country! The truth is that the word “**shamar**” literary means to “**guard, defend and protect, to keep and preserve**” and “**to treasure.**””

Way. This reminds me of John 14:6 where Jesus says He is the way, the truth and the life. As Christians, we have a clearer perspective of the second person of the Trinity than the Old Testament saints, even if we do not see Him now. We have a path laid out before us in the power of the Holy Spirit plus knowledge of the Bible. Yet, even with all the spiritual assets a Christian has, it has been estimated by some pastors, that more than 95% of Christians do not live in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Walk. Order one’s life.

As their fathers did. The initial generation of Israelites that entered the land understood walking by faith, even if imperfectly. The people of the book of Judges did not know the Lord (Judges 2:10).

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Judges 2:23 So the Lord allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

The Lord allowed. God is in charge of history. God allows many things to happen. What He allows has a purpose, always.

Nations. Divine institution #4, nations are authorized by God. When man tried to unite to impress God by building the tower of Babel, He scattered the people and caused the development of a variety of languages. Those people went throughout the world and formed nations based upon language, common territory, culture and other things.

Here we start with chapter 3 of the book of Judges. Remember, though, that chapter breaks are not divinely inspired. Judges chapter 3 verses 1-6 are connected with the end of chapter 2.

Judges 3:1 Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan;

These are the nations. They will be listed in verse 3.

Test. Same word again as in Judges 2:22. Not only is the word in the *piel* stem for emphasis, it is an infinitive which can indicate purpose. It is repeated which also serves to emphasize it again. But notice there is now a second purpose for the testing: to learn military skills. The first purpose was to be spiritual by following God's commands. By staying spiritual, they would be successful and blessed by God. Unfortunately, too often, they turned against God. So rather than be successful in battle, they were often conquered and enslaved. What about you? Do you rely on the Holy Spirit on a daily basis? Or are you enslaved by the details of life?

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Trent Butler sums up the two tests this way, “Thus they are a nation under test (2:22). The test has two prongs. One seeks to see if Israel will obey Yahweh (2:22, 3:4). The other tests them in warfare so they will know how to conduct holy war (3:1-2).” I disagree on his characterization of learning holy war. This is just plain warfare. It is true that Israel is a nation under God as a theocracy. But holy war was finished at Judges 2:1.

Judges 3:2 only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly).

Might be taught war. The word means to teach to learn to exercise. This root is used extensively in both Deuteronomy and the Psalms. It is only used this once here in Judges. The sons of Israel are instructed to learn and prepare for war.

This tells me that war is not always immoral. If you are to protect your country in war, you need to be prepared. Hence, the importance of a trained and equipped military. Of course, there are many countries that are out to expand by conquering neighboring lands. Look at what Hitler did? Look at the murder of Jews and others he engaged in.

I considered developing a detailed set of points on the military and war. Others have already done that. Thieme has pamphlets dealing with the subject. The Seattle Bible Church has an extensive doctrine on “God and War.” Thieme has a couple of pamphlets based on his teaching concerning the military. Instead, I would rather address some Biblical passages that would have been available to the sons of Israel from the Torah. The Bible rarely has a point by point exposition of a doctrine. Instead, you see concrete examples and in some cases, instructions from God on what to do. I want you to get a feel for this by reading a couple of passages from the Torah.

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Let us start by reading Genesis chapter 14. Then I want to look at the following verses in Judges and some specific words. The Bible is not a “systematic theology,” but it can illuminate principles. In this case, the Bible is clear. Having a trained and equipped military force is necessary to prevent war or in the case of war, to fight vigorously and defeat the enemy to protect you and yours.

Abraham had such a trained force which he used to free Lot from captivity. This is something I didn’t realize until recently. It is one of those things which you read a passage many times. Then all of a sudden, God the Holy Spirit illuminates the passage in a way you had not seen previously.

Abraham was a rich man with not only lots of sheep, goats, and other animals, but he also had many people in his employ. This included “trained men.”

Genesis 14:14 When Abram heard that his relative (i.e. Lot) had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Trained men. This is a hapax legomenon. This means it is used only once, in this case, only once in the Old Testament. It is used outside of the Bible to mean “trained men.” In this context, it means men trained for combat. And if they were trained for combat, they were also equipped for combat.

Went in pursuit. The first usage of this word in the Bible. It can mean pursue, chase and persecute. In this context it obviously means a combat force chasing or pursuing another enemy force.

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Genesis 14:15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

Defeated them. From the TDOT, “In military hostilities the primary goal is to get rid of the enemy, intentionally and speedily. Therefore *nkh* refers primarily to killing in battle.”

Also, “In military contexts the hiphil of *nkh* (like the Eng. Verb “beat”) can convey the more general sense of inflicting (or, with the hophal, suffering) a devastating defeat: the enemy host is not annihilated totally but decimated and battered and thus defeated definitively.” God did not command this action from Abraham. The narrative indicates this is a good and proper action to take. Indeed, subsequent to the battle, Melchizedek says God gave Abraham the victory. God was on his side in this battle.

Genesis 14:19 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”...

Take-away: Having trained and equipped men of war is a good and necessary thing to have for self-defense. God determines whether you will be successful or not.

Now, let us look at God’s commands to build up the military of the sons of Israel after they come out of Egypt.

Numbers 1:2 Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ households,

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according to the number of names, every male, head by head

Numbers 1:3 from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

Twenty years old. Interesting. God says starting with twenty years old. Should the military not allow anyone younger than twenty to enlist?

To go out to war. It is God that is commanding Moses to set up a military organization.

Armies. This is another noun from the same root as the previous word to go out to war. Words from this root are used 16 times in Numbers chapter 1 alone, assuming I can count. A common phrase throughout is “*whoever was able to go out to war.*” A census of each tribe is taken to determine who was able to go out to war. Sounds like universal military training. Many countries still have universal military training, like Greece. From Wikipedia, “Since 2009, Greece has mandatory military service of 9 months for the Army and 12 months for the Navy and the Airforce. This applies to citizens between the ages of 19 and 45.” It is not just about keeping the armed services manned. There is a discipline that is required in the military. A sense of responsibility and accountability. Too many young people today lack these qualities.

Now let us look at Numbers chapter 31.

Numbers 31:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The Lord is commanding Moses to make war on the Midianites.

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Numbers 31:2 “Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people.”

Take full vengeance. This is two words from the same root. The verb means to take vengeance. The noun means vengeance. That is why it is translated take full vengeance. It is emphatic. Perhaps you are familiar with Paul's quote of Deuteronomy 32:35 in Romans 12:19, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” Here God is instructing Moses to be the instrument of His vengeance.

Numbers 31:3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord’s vengeance on Midian.

Arm men. The word is often translated “arm,” or “equip” “It can mean to draw off or out, withdraw.”

War. Means “army, war, warfare.” It is used repeatedly in Numbers chapter 1 and other places.

The Lord’s vengeance. This confirms that it is the Lord’s vengeance and that Moses and the sons of Israel will be the instrument of God’s vengeance.

Judges 3:3 These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.

Five lords of the Philistines. I find them interesting. They may also have significance now and in the Tribulation, even if in the current day there

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are no real Philistines left. Rather than copy a lengthy article from Wikipedia here, let me just read from it. Otherwise, I might go on for an hour about them.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistines>

Canaanites. The Canaanites were the inhabitants of Canaan.

Sidonians. A branch of the Canaanites. These are what we know as the Phoenicians.

Hivites. Another branch of the Canaanites. Below I quote from Thomas Constable after the second list of peoples in verse 5.

According to Genesis 10, the table of nations:

Genesis 10:15 Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth

Genesis 10:16 and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite

Genesis 10:17 and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite

Genesis 10:18 and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

Genesis 10:19 The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

Let us compare this list to the people that are mentioned as enemies for each of the Judges.

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Judges	Offense	Enemy
3:7	The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.	Served King of Mesopotamia Delivered by Othniel
3:12	Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.	Served King of Moab Delivered by Ehud
4:1	Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died.	Lord sold them into the hand of King of Canaan. Delivered by Deborah
6:1	Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord;	Gave them into the hands of Midian. Delivered by Gideon
10:1	Now after Abimelech died, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar arose to save Israel	
10:3	After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years	
10:6	Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashraroht, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him	Lord sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon. Delivered by Jephthah
12:8	Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him	
12:11	Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him;	
12:13	Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him	
13:1	Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.	The Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. Delivered by Samson

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The table includes Mesopotamia, Moab (with Ammon & Amalek), Philistia, Canaan, Midian (with Amalek & Arabia) and Amon. So on a day by day basis, Israel was tested by the Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians and the Hivites. But God disciplined them with a mix of people, not necessarily on that list.

Judges 3:4 They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses.

Testing. Again this word shows up. A pastor in Tallahassee Florida was once asked by a young Christian how to grow and reach maturity quickly. The pastor responded that the Christian who wishes to grow quickly should ask God for much suffering. In the case of the Israelites, God gave them much testing, but they continually failed. God caused much suffering. But in this case, it was to get their attention.

Judges 3:5 The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites;

Here we have a second list of peoples. These were people that Israel failed to drive out from the land. Here is Thomas Constable's comment on these people:

"The "Sidonians" (v. 3) were the Phoenicians, Sidon being Phoenicia's chief port until about 1100 B.C. when Tyre began to eclipse it. The Hivites (v. 3) "were probably a branch of the Horites, or Hurrians, who established the kingdom of Mitanni in upper Mesopotamia about 1500 B.C." These enemies (v. 5) represented the whole of Canaan: the "Philistines" on the southwest, the "Sidonians" (Phoenicians) on the

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northwest, the "Hittites" and the "Hivites" on the northeast, and the "Canaanites," "Perizzites," "Jebusites," and "Amorites" in the central and on the southeast.”

Judges 3:6 and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

The reason this is wrong is the same reason it is wrong for a Christian to marry an unbeliever. The believer will be influenced indeed saturated by an ungodly culture. Often the believer will abandon his God. Rather than give the gospel to the indigenous people and convert them, the local population is causing the sons of Israel to become assimilated into the Canaanite culture. It is interesting to note that often Jews turn from being Jewish and try to assimilate into a culture. But the Jew is a unique people chosen by God. Even now, God appears to be calling His people back to Israel, even in unbelief. After the Tribulation, He will again call them. But then, they will be called in belief.

At this point, I include some points on testing from Robbie Dean.

Doctrine of Testing [R. Dean at <https://deanbible.org/old-testament-menuitem/judges-menuitem/message/2000-judges-008/read>]

- I. **Definition:** “A test is any situation in life when the believer has the option of choosing between applying doctrine or using his own resources to solve the problem.” I want to quickly add that application of doctrine can only happen in the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - A. “Any situation in life would include mundane every-day situations in life from how you drive to how you respond to someone at a check-out, a cashier at the local store, some telephone sales person who calls right in the middle of dinner,

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or responding to how politicians are handling situations, to the extreme disasters and adversities that we face. These can be pleasant situations, and it is the pleasant things that often distract us from taking in doctrine, or it may be an unpleasant situation of adversity. These situations involve people, family members, a spouse, children or parents, business associates, or people we don't even know such as someone else driving on the highway. It may involve system testing, all kinds of systems we work under—political, at work in terms of the structure of office politics, having to deal with a bureaucracy, etc. Thought is another category of testing. What is going on in our thinking? What is our mental attitude? Are we involved in mental attitude sins or are we rehearsing divine viewpoint and promises in our thinking? So any situation in life, then, is defined as any opportunity where you have to make a decision. It can be good, bad, mundane or extreme.”

- B. “The phrase “when the believer has the option of choosing.” This emphasizes the issue of volition. God created man with volition. What goes along with volition is personal responsibility. We are responsible for the decisions we make and we are accountable for those decisions and the consequences of those decisions. Volition emphasizes that it is *your* choice and *your* responsibility for making that choice, whether good or bad.
- a. **Principle #1:** Our lives are the result of the decisions that we make. We develop all sorts of habits as a result of decisions we make when we are very young, and yet, at that age we are not volitionally conscious, i.e. we are not fully aware that these decisions, habits, mental attitude patterns and practices may be extremely damaging over the long run. We don't understand the consequences and yet we have

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already made decisions and set a certain course for our lives at a very young age. Our lives are determined by the decisions we make, they are not determined by our environment, by the decisions that other people make, by the good or bad situations or circumstances that we find ourselves in that are beyond our control. Our lives are determined by the decisions we make in response to that environment, in response to the decisions others make that affect us, that are made in response to the good or bad situations that we find ourselves in.

- b. **Principle # 2:** We cannot blame the environment or others for our bad decisions.
 - c. **Principle # 3:** We are always accountable for our decisions, even when we are not aware of all of the negative consequences of those decisions. Ignorance is no excuse.
- C. The phrase "between applying doctrine or using our own resources."
- a. **Principle #1:** In any decision-making circumstance you are either operating in the sphere of divine viewpoint or the sphere of human viewpoint. All of Scripture presents one unified perspective on life which we call divine viewpoint. This presents God's values, criterion, God's way of thinking about everything. In 1 Corinthians 2:16 the Bible is called the mind of the thinking of Jesus Christ. This is divine viewpoint. In contrast to that there is human viewpoint which has another technical term called paganism. Paganism is not a pejorative term, it simply refers to those cultures, societies and thought forms that are not biblical. You either think biblically or you don't think biblically.

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- b. **Principle #2:** From birth on the only options presented to us (before salvation) come from our sin nature. The only way you have to respond to life situations comes from your sin nature, either as human good or as personal sin. Because you are devoid of the Holy Spirit, because you are not regenerate, because you do not have any way to understand spiritual things and doctrine, then you cannot do anything other than that which is produced by your sin nature. Therefore it is all human good and all human viewpoint. The result of that is even though these solutions might work they are ultimately self-destructive. Proverbs says, "There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof is death [self-destructive]." The issue is not "does it work?" If you are a believer the goal is not to make ourselves functional, the goal is to become spiritually mature and to glorify God. We need to realize that the only way to make life a success in the long term, which means eternity, is to solve problems God's way. So the issue is not "does it work? does it make me functional? does it alleviate the pain? does it make me happy or feel good? The issue is, does it have eternal spiritual value? In some cases choosing the biblical option means that you are going to stay in a difficult situation and endure suffering and hardship. Choosing the human viewpoint solution means that you escape the problem temporarily but eventually it will come back to haunt you.
- c. **Principle #3:** Our "own resources" means that mankind has developed many different techniques to handle problems. Many of them work, many of them temporarily alleviate the problem and make us feel better, but they do not ultimately solve the problem. The issue in testing is whether we are going to rely on human resources or on divine resources

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which are the ten problem-solving devices (stress-busters) which we have discussed, and whether or not we are going to rely on God's solution which is the only solution.