

RELIGION

God uses everyone for his purpose

Judges 13

One of the things that we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. Each generation seems to think that it will not need to learn from the old folks, but can meet each challenge with some kind of inborn expert knowledge. This attitude keeps our race in a constant state of chaos and mental confusion.

God used Joshua to establish the children of Israel in the promised 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." Judges 2:7. However, "...there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Judges 2:10b.

At the time of the conquest of the land, the children of Israel did not have a complete victory. However, the land was divided to the various tribes, with the responsibility of each conquering their assigned territory. Near the end of his life, Joshua warned these people of the dangers of

mingling with the idolatrous inhabitants who remained in that land. "Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you." Joshua 23:13.

The Canaanites were a warrior people. Their might, and that of neighboring kings — often the Philistines — overpowered the children of Israel. God — in his mercy — sent judges (Judges 2:16) to be leaders in different areas, and, eventually, gave victory to his people, when they returned to him. Most of the judges seemed to have come out of nowhere and became leaders of the people. However, Jehovah is not a God of chance nor of uncertainty. All of these individuals were God-called, and God-directed.

Individual lives do not just happen. Isaiah 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5. There is a divine design that involves each indi-

Sunday School Lesson

Rev. James Temples



vidual. As we look at certain situations, one might wonder at the accuracy of this statement. However, it is important for us to remember that each person has a will that must be submitted to that divine plan. God will not force an individual to be obedient — that would not be obedience, but spiritual robotics.

We are told that "the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." Judges 13:1.

Thus, began another phase of the spiritual roller coaster ride of this nation. We are told that "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." Judges 13:2. The fact of barrenness — inability to produce

children — was a disgrace in that society.

The heavenly father — the creator of the universe — in "Declaring the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10a) began to develop a plan for the deliverance of his people. This is another of the few occasions in history, when a heavenly messenger was sent to a woman, informing her of the coming birth of a child. "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." Judges 13:3.

This welcomed information was followed by specific personal instructions. "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 (Numbers 6:1-21) unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." Judges 13:4, 5.

This message was shared with her hus-

band. "Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor any strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death." Judges 13:6, 7.

The request made by Manoah reflected his personal desire to be obedient to God, even in a time of national spiritual backsliding. "Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." Judges 13:8. The angel came, again, to the woman, while her husband was in the field. Judges 13:9. She told her husband, and they both came to the man. Judges 13:11. When the messenger was questioned, he

repeated the instruction for both of them. Judges 13:12-14.

Manoah recognized the heavenly nature of their visitor. He offered to make "ready a kid (young goat)" for the visitor. Judges 13:15. The visitor instructed Manoah to prepare the animal as a burnt offering. Judges 13:16. When the visitor was asked his name, "the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret." Judges 13:18, see Isaiah 9:6b. We are told that "when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar." Judges 13:20b.

"The woman bare a son, and called his name Samson..." Judges 13:24a. The choices made by this man did not always reflect his divine calling. However, God used him for the original purpose. What choices do we make? Are we faithfully following the divine plan for our lives? Hebrews 11:32d. May we learn from the past, and never become spiritually handicapped through our rebellion. Judges 16.

The reason and reality of Jesus Christ

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

— Luke 12:49-53,

NASB

The Peculiar Reality

Though the gospels only record a portion of the things that Jesus actually said during his lifetime, there is enough material presented to keep us busy for a lifetime. Some of the things he said were easy (Matthew 11:28-30; John 3:16), some were hard (Luke 14:26-27), while others were downright peculiar (like this text, Luke 12:49-53).

But since the Bible is trustworthy and true, and since no passage of scripture can contradict another passage of scripture, then we have to accept that the prince of peace came to earth to bring deep division.

The Gospel Truth

Dr. Charles DeVane Jr. First Baptist Church



We see this division in the world. About a third of the 8 billion people who live on our planet profess to believe in Jesus as Lord, while two-thirds do not. Among those who profess belief, only a small percentage of them actually practice born-again, Bible-believing, active, evangelical Christianity. The sheep are greatly outnumbered by the goats, and the division in this world is very obvious to any discerning eye.

We see this division in the family. Jesus made special reference to family in this text. The Bible and history both testify to the fact that first century Jewish families were especially harsh on members who became members of the Christian church. Still today, we often see

many families, even marriages, torn apart when one person decides to follow Jesus and the others do not.

And yes, we see this division in the church. The church exists in the world as a particular form of family. Therefore, the same forces that force division in the world and the family also are at work in the church. Most of our New Testament epistles record this peculiar reality (1 Corinthians 1:11-13, etc.). And the more the church operates like a worldly business instead of a loving family, the more division we will have.

The fact, or the peculiar reality, is that there is division all around us. So what is the reason for all this division in the world, the family, and the church?

The Particular Reason

Jesus said plainly in verse 51, "I came to grant ... division." He did it. As we proudly proclaimed during Christmas, he is the

reason for the season. Yet he is also the particular reason there is so much division in the world, in some families, and even in some churches.

Jesus divides because he is the gospel. Churches are divided today because churches no longer require that members maintain a minimum of evidence that they actually believe the gospel. Jesus Christ himself is appalled at so-called members who won't pray at prayer meetings but want to vote at business meetings, who won't come to worship on Sundays but find time to hunt, fish and travel, who won't come to Bible study but won't miss their favorite television show. Yes, the church today is deeply divided into regenerate and unregenerate members, and Jesus and his gospel is the cause.

Jesus divides because he is the living word of God who testifies to the veracity of the written word of God. Jesus loves the Bible, this I know,

for the Bible itself tells me so. Yet there are many in the church of today who would ditch the Bible for modern mores and man-made rules.

As long as churches ordain homosexuals, as long as churches lack biblical discipline, as long as churches forsake or pervert the biblical roles of pastors and elders and deacons, as long as we violate the word of God for the sake of our own whims and wants, there will be division in the church, and Christ and his word is the cause.

Jesus divides because he is the head of the church. When any pastor, deacon, individual member or group seeks to wear his crown, Jesus himself will grant division.

Yet here is where we can take our stand to stop division in our local church.

Having now studied the peculiar reality and the particular reason, next week's article will discuss the practical remedy. Stay tuned.

CHURCH NEWS

Southside Baptist

Jeff Cleghorn will give an organ and piano concert Jan. 25 at 6 p.m. at Southside Baptist Church. He is a native of Warner Robins and has a bachelor of music degree from Mercer University and a master of arts in church ministries degree from Luther Rice University.

At present, Cleghorn is the minister of instrumental music, among other duties, at Second Baptist Church in Warner Robins.

Bethel Baptist

Bethel Baptist Church will have an association-wide missionary program Jan. 25 through Jan. 28 at 7 p.m. each night. Missionaries from all over the world will share their stories from the mission field. Everyone is invited to attend.

Arlington Baptist

Arlington Baptist Church will host an "On Mission Celebration" with international missionaries, North American missionaries and state missionaries beginning Sunday, Jan. 25 at 11 a.m. and

Sunday evening at 6 p.m.. Services will continue Monday through Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Many other churches in the Bethel Baptist Association will host missionaries during this time. For a complete list, visit www.bethelassociation.com.

Harmony Baptist

Harmony Baptist Church will have revival services Jan. 25 through Jan. 28. Bro. Russell Carlisle will be the speaker. Services begin at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. Everyone is invited to attend.

Shiloh Outreach

Dr. Alex Howell will speak at Shiloh Outreach in Edison Tuesday, Jan. 27. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Midway M.B.

Midway Missionary Baptist Church will celebrate their pastor's first anniversary Feb. 8 at 11:30 a.m. Rev. Charles McDonald will be the guest speaker. Everyone is invited to attend.

THANKS

The family of the late Mary Ann Trice would like to thank everyone for the food, flowers, prayers and phone calls during this time of loss. Thank you and may God bless you all.

The family of Mary Ann Trice

A sincere "thank you" from all of the Foster family for the support and love shown by everyone at the loss of our home by fire. Your presence, support and love made this ordeal easier to bear and brighten our days. Our special thanks go out to the members of the fire department and especially Chief Jones for the professionalism and courtesy shown.

Sincerely,
Theresa Foster



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