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ISRAEL'S EXPERIENCES TYPICAL, ALLEGORICAL

– *JANUARY 3. – JUDGES 2:1-19. –*

NATURAL ISRAEL'S ENEMIES – SPIRITUAL ISRAEL'S ENEMIES – NATURAL ISRAEL'S JUDGES OR DELIVERERS – SPIRITUAL ISRAEL'S REFORMERS AND HELPERS – TYPICAL IDOLATRIES AND THEIR ANTITYPES – ISRAEL'S LAST DELIVERANCE NOW DUE – GENTILE TIMES HAVE ENDED – PALESTINE SOON WILL BE POSSESSED BY ABRAHAM AND HIS NATURAL SEED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF MESSIAH AND HIS SPIRITUAL BRIDE, THE CHURCH.

**"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." –
Hosea 14:4.**

TODAY'S Study tells us of the death of Joshua, who became the leader of the Israelites at the death of Moses. He was a worthy example of faithfulness to God amongst his people. Under Divine direction he divided the land of Palestine amongst the ten tribes of Israel, giving each his portion with the understanding that the portion was the gift of the Lord, and that the more faith possessed the more quickly would the tribe enter into its inheritance.

The Israelites were enjoined by the Lord through an angel, especially sent as God's representative, that they should speedily take possession of the land, driving out their enemies, destroying their idols and altars of worship, and thus conquering the entire country for themselves as God's people and ridding themselves and their children of all idolatrous temptation. But instead of doing this, they made leagues with the various heathen peoples inhabiting the land, and brought themselves into more or less of a friendly relationship. This disobedience to Divine command proved to be a serious snare.

In studying the history of Israel, we are to remember that the Apostle tells us those things were allegorical. (1 Corinthians 10:11.) They were true, they were real occurrences; but their chief object and purpose, from God's standpoint, was to illustrate certain great truths for Spiritual Israel, coming afterwards – the Gospel Church. Thus, for instance, when the Christian enters upon his new life as a result of his consecration to God, it corresponds to crossing Jordan – dying to old interests and entering into the new inheritance. Under the leadership of Jesus, our Joshua, we enter into new life full of courage and faith. Victories result.

Then we learn that the New Creature is to conquer the perverted appetites of his own flesh, which correspond to the idolatrous peoples who resided in Canaan. It is the duty of the New Creature to drive out these earthly hopes, ambitions, weaknesses, perversions, and oppositions to the Lord and His righteousness. If the work of exterminating were carried on thoroughly, the result would be a ripened character, strong in the Lord, full of faith, obedience, joy, peace and blessing.

However, like the Israelites of old, in too many cases the Lord's people make a truce with their own fleshly weaknesses. They fail to drive these out, and fail to overthrow the altars of passion, avarice, etc. These weaknesses and depravities of the flesh for a time cower before the new nature, entreating mercy, patience and a measure of gratification. But so surely as these are granted, the result is that the passions and weaknesses become stronger and stronger and the New Creature is worsted in the battle, until he must cry to the Lord for deliverance, lest he perish before the onslaught of his own passions and desires. Thus the lives of many Christian people are a succession of battlings and defeats – captivities. The battle should have been fought out at first. The will should have been fixed firmly on the side of righteousness, truth, obedience to God.

It is difficult to determine how much all of the Lord's people suffer as a result of not being firm enough, rigorous enough, in their dealings with their own flesh, especially at the beginning of their Christian experiences. The only remedy is to cry unto the Lord as the Israelites did when they found themselves hard pressed. As the Lord delivered them, so He is willing to deliver all of His Spiritual Israelites.

However, it is certainly a shame for Christians that their defeats are so numerous, as it was a shame to the Israelites that, during the period of the Judges, they were eighteen times oppressed by their enemies – slaves where they should have been masters. The one great lesson of all this to the Natural Israelites and to the Spiritual Israelites is the lesson of God's mercy, as expressed in our text. The Lord is very gracious, willing to forgive our trespasses and to assist us when we realize our **[R5598 : page 381]** wrong condition and appeal for help. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

JOSHUA'S WISE EXHORTATION

The Book of Joshua closes with the account of his death, and the Book of Judges begins with incidents covering the same period. When Joshua realized that his work was done and that he was about to be gathered to his fathers – to sleep with his fathers in death – he called the Israelites, and reminded them of the Lord's mercies and manifest favors toward them in bringing them thus far and finally giving to each tribe the allotment of its inheritance in the Promised Land. Then he warned them respecting the dangers of the situation, the necessity for being separate from the people of the land – Gentiles; otherwise the tendency might be toward idolatry. He urged upon all a full settlement of the mind, the will, on the side of the Lord and against all the heathen religions. It was then that he took his stand and announced, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; as for

me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The others joined with him in the same resolve.

Our lesson tells us that all the days of Joshua, and the days of the others of the judges who outlived Joshua, things went well with the Israelites. They had the Lord's blessing and were prosperous. These leaders had in mind the Lord's wonderful dealings, and realized the importance of being on the Lord's side, if they would have His blessing. The idolatries that came in were subsequent.

The true God has always prohibited idols, while the false gods have usually been represented by idols. The idols, according to human reasoning, would appear to be an excellent way of keeping religion before the mind; but it was not God's way, and hence was not advantageous. As the Israelites noted the idolatrous worship of their neighbors, they doubtless felt that the latter were the more religious, because of this outward demonstration.

Moreover, in connection with the heathen forms of worship were various licentious practises, which to some extent would draw from curiosity and, through the weaknesses of the flesh, appeal to the Israelites. The true God, on the contrary, had instituted in their midst a worship which was pure in itself, in every way condemning sin, pointing out the necessity for its cancelation and the need for drawing near to God in the way of His appointment. In a word, the true religion appealed to the highest and noblest sentiments, while the false religions of the Canaanites appealed to the baser passions, combining a form of godliness with gratification of the flesh, dancings and various saturnalia.

But as for the Christian who condemns the Israelites very severely for wandering off, time and again, into the idolatries of his heathen neighbors and requiring to be punished of the Lord

that he might turn again and seek the Lord in the right way – let such Christian remember the antitype – how forms of godliness are inclined to take the place of true heart-worship, reverence; and how the weaknesses of the flesh are inclined to assert themselves, to justify themselves and, if possible, to make themselves appear to be in accordance with the Divine will. Let them remember that many today worship the golden calf more than they worship God, requiring chastisements time and again to correct them, to awaken them to their real condition. Let them remember, too, that the Christians have made idols equally as hideous as any made by the heathen – not idols of stone or wood or bronze, but more hideous misrepresentations of the Divine character – our printed creeds.

Verse 17 and its connections seem to indicate that the record of our lesson covers a long period of centuries of Israel's experiences, under many judges. When they repented, the Lord raised up judges, or, as we say, deliverers, through whom their adversities would be corrected. Yet even these repeated experiences did not deeply enough impress the great lesson, so that they needed to learn their lessons over and over. When the judge would bring them back from their adversities, and they would have rest for some years during his lifetime, it was merely to fall away after his death. Nevertheless, the Lord's Covenant was with the nation. The centuries since have shown the persistency of God's mercy.

GOD'S FAVOR RETURNING TO ISRAEL

As we have previously pointed out, the Bible indicates very clearly that Israel's last great lesson of oppression under the Gentiles closed in 1914. The period of chastisement, twenty-five hundred and twenty years long, began where the crown was taken from King Zedekiah, B.C. 606. (Ezekiel 21:25-27.) They have not been an independent nation in all these twenty-five hundred

and twenty years. As the Lord declared, Zedekiah was the last of the line of David who should reign until Messiah's Kingdom would be established. The end of Gentile Times, then, marks the beginning of Messiah's Kingdom. Everywhere we see manifestations that He as the great Judge is taking over the affairs of the world, and that Israel's final deliverance is at hand.

Spiritual Israel must first be delivered by the glorious "change" of the First Resurrection. Thus the Spiritual Empire will first be established. Following that great event and the incidental Time of Trouble will come the exaltation of representatives of Natural Israel to be the **[R5599 : page 381]** earthly exponents of the Heavenly Kingdom. These will be the Ancient Worthies of the Hebrew people – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the Prophets. Others of the Hebrew people, delivered from Gentile domination, will nevertheless get their blessing through their acceptance of the Kingdom arrangements, which includes the thought that their eyes of understanding will open and that they will recognize the great King.

Thus it is written that they that pierced Him shall look upon Him and mourn because of a realization that they crucified the Prince of Life. Nevertheless they will have a great blessing, in proportion as they have been seeking conscientiously to serve God and the principles of His righteousness. Then the Lord will pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication, in connection with which they will have so much blessing. (Zechariah 12:10.) And this blessing of the Lord, coming upon Israel first, means also the blessing of all the world.

All who realize the fulfilment of the Times of the Gentiles should be looking for and co-operating with the further steps of the Divine Plan. One of these is Israel's repossession of the control of Palestine, the inheritance of Abraham and his family. The time is ripe. It remains for Jews, who by God's favor have

the wealth now, to use that wealth in the furtherance of the hope of Israel. But a failure on man's part to appreciate and use opportunities will not interfere with the Divine Plan. The hour of blessing is coming. Through some instrumentality Palestine will shortly pass into the possession of the Jews.

Note the fact that promptly at the close of the Jewish year in September, Russia published her decree giving the Jews full religious liberty and privileges as citizens. Germany quickly followed. Great Britain also honored the Jews. Legally, therefore, the Jew today – since the close of Gentile Times – is accorded the same liberties as other people. He is no longer "trodden down of the Gentiles."

