

Guidelines for the exercise of the Lord's day Prophesying Message Six : The Intrinsic Significance of the Book of Judges and the Apostasy of Israel in the Worshipping of God

I. Overview:

Israel's inquiring of Jehovah in Judges 1:1-20 describes the beautiful scene of Israel's trusting in God; this marvelous picture of oneness with the Lord, prefiguring the organic union of God with His people. In His concept and desire, God wanted to be a Husband to Israel, and He wanted Israel to be a wife to Him. As unveiled in Judges, Israel did not have a heart to be the wife of Jehovah; rather, she forsook God as her Husband and went about as a harlot after other gods, resulting in Israel's history being full of miserable. The Angel of Jehovah is God Himself; Christ is the Angel of Jehovah. Since Israel did not regard Jehovah as the Head, He became a Servant to serve her. Apostasy means to leave the way of God and to take another way to follow things other than God. The house of Micah as a house of gods, with its idols, its ephod, portrays the apostate situation related to the worship of God among Christians today. Because Dan was successful, he became proud and individualistic; he cared only for himself, not for others. Today, in a time of apostasy, we need to testify the full revelation of the pure Word of God and to fight for the deeper truths revealed in the Word of God.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound the marvelous picture of the organic union of God with His people.

After the death of Joshua, the children of Israel inquired of Jehovah concerning who would go up for them first against the Canaanites in order to fight against them. Jehovah gave His answer and promise, saying, "Judah shall go up. I have now given the land into his hand". This picture of oneness with the Lord is the marvelous one of the organic union of God with His people.

B. Describe what kind of life Israel lived toward her Husband.

For some reason, she did not have a heart to be the wife of Jehovah. As a wife, she forgot her Husband, left her Husband, and acted according to her own desires. Eventually, Israel became a harlot. In the book of Judges there is a terrible picture of a wife forsaking her Husband and not even acknowledging His existence. This is an ugly picture of a harlot.

Day 2 —

A. Explain that at Mount Sinai God entered into a marriage union with Israel.

At Mount Sinai God entered into a marriage union with Israel and wanted her to remain in the most intimate contact with Him in this marvelous marriage union. But Israel rejected God as her Husband and as her King and went about as harlots after other gods and worshipped them. In dealing with this situation, the King became a servant to admonish the children of Israel.

B. Expound what the Angel of Jehovah did for His people.

The embodiment of the Triune God is Christ, and Christ is the Angel of Jehovah, who took care of Israel as the acting Jehovah in the Old Testament. Christ is the acting God, not a silent, passive God. For Christ to be the Angel of Jehovah means that God has appointed and commissioned Himself in His Divine Trinity to act in caring for His people.

Day 3 —

A. Explain the degradation of Israel being chaotic in government, worship, and morality.

God's tabernacle was at Shiloh, and the high priest had the Urim and Thummim, but there was no administration. Judges 17 and 18 reveal the abominable chaos in the children of Israel's worship. Micah set up a house of gods in his home. His mother consecrated silver to Jehovah to make an idol and a molten image. Micah then set up a house of gods, made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons to be his priest.

B. Expound how we may apply this picture to the present situation of Christianity.

Today's Christianity has many "houses of Micah," the most prominent of which is the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church has set up idols, made its own "ephod," and set up its own priests. In principle, Catholicism is the same as the house of Micah in Judges. The state churches, the denominations, and many of the independent groups are also houses of Micah, full of idols as replacements of Christ.

Day 4 —

A. Explain Dan's example being a warning for us.

In Deuteronomy 33:22 Dan is likened to a young lion, leaping forth from Bashan. As a young lion, Dan fought in order to gain more land, the land signifying Christ. After his success in his victory Dan became a serpent, a viper, acting individualistically and independently in his pride to set up an idol and a divisive center of worship and to ordain a hired priest in the city of Dan during the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

B. Expound Dan's act of setting up a divisive center is a great damage to God's people.

Many use the matter of the worship of God as a cloak for setting up a divisive center. According to the history in the Old Testament, nothing throughout the generations was more sinful or more damaging to God's people than Dan's act of setting up a divisive center of worship. In Deuteronomy 12, 14, 15, and 16 the Lord through Moses charged the children of Israel at least fifteen times not to offer their burnt offerings in the place of their choice.

Day 5 —

A. Explain Judges 18:30, "the children of Dan erected the sculptured idol".

The words for themselves in Judges 18:30 are very significant. Many who claim to be worshipping God are really doing something for themselves. Apostasy is doing something for the self under the cloak of worshipping God. Jeroboam had no heart for God. Rather, his heart was for his own little empire. In his heart he feared that the kingdom would return to the house of David. This is apostasy.

B. Expound that in the Old Testament, the Lord never forgot Dan's apostasy.

Nothing is more damaging than divisiveness. Nothing is more destructive than division among God's people. In principle, every divisive center of worship is the same. Those who establish them care only for their interests, their desires, and they neglect all the other saints. They are like Dan, who cared only for his tribe, not for the others.

Day 6 —

A. Explain after the church's degradation, Peter's burden was to inoculate the believers.

Second Peter was written in the time of the church's degradation and apostasy. The burden of the writer was to inoculate the believers against the poison of apostasy. In order to inoculate against this death-poison in his healing Epistle, Peter first prescribed the divine power as the strongest and most effective antidote. This provides the believers with all things related to the generating and supplying divine life.

B. Expound the word in Second Peter 1:3.

In 2 Peter 1:3 the word divine denotes the eternal, unlimited, and almighty divinity of God. Hence, divine power is the power of the divine life related to the divine nature. Here the word granted means imparted, infused, planted. All things which relate to life and godliness have been imparted to us, infused into us, by the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who has regenerated us and who indwells us.

III. Conclusion:

In the book of Judges, a particular saying is repeated a number of times: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did that which was right in his own eyes". But God was the King! According to the principle in the Bible, the husband is the head of the marriage and the head of the family. In creation God ordained that the man would have this authority; therefore, he also has the kingship. In typology and in figure, God is the unique man. We all are females because we, the church, are the corporate wife to Christ. Since God is our Creator and our Lord, He should also be our King. In the book of 1 Samuel, the children of Israel asked God to appoint a king for them. This was a great offense to God. Even though Israel was a wife to God, she became a harlot. She did not recognize God's kingship, and she did not recognize God as her Husband. Therefore, the children of Israel did what was right in their own eyes, and as a result they became rotten and corrupted. This is what we see in the book of Judges; Israel's history as recorded in Judges was full of the rottenness and corruption of a harlot. This is the intrinsic significance of the book of Judges.