



A Spiritual Encouragement Message December 1, 2020

We Ought To Be Different

by Oscar Velasquez

When God introduced the Israelites in the promised land, Joshua was charged to give them their inheritance and to teach them to be different and be set apart from the pagan gentiles from Canaan. Joshua enforced the Torah given by God to Moses so they could remain in God's blessings, have dominion over their enemies and remain in the land. Joshua did as he was supposed to do, but another generation after he died started to do what was evil in the eyes of the Lord (Judges 2:7-11). That went on and off for a period of four centuries (Acts 13:20), which was called the time of the Judges. During that time the Israelites lived in a reprobate repetitive cycle: they did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, they were oppressed by their enemies as consequence, they cried to God for help, and God sent them a deliverer every time. The ungrateful Israelites repeated that bad cycle again and again for at least seven times. Examples like that one, traditionally formed the kind of mentality Peter had when he asked Jesus if he was to forgive his brother up to seven times Mt. 18:21, Lk. 17:4. By the end of that long period of disobedience, God sent them a deliverer who became the most famous judge. 20% of the book of Judges was dedicated to his story. By that time, the years of the judges have gone from good to bad and from bad to worse, from eighty years of Ehud ruling to only six years of Jephthah. Also the years of oppression went from eight years under Mesopotamia up to forty years under the Philistines.

After Joshua conquered Canaan, God had left some enemy tribes in the land for various purposes (Deuteronomy 7:22-26), but especially to test his people (Judges 3:1-6).

The philistines have come from Greece crossing the Mediterranean Sea with the intent to conquer Egypt during the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses the third. They failed miserably and settled in the south west region of the land of Canaan. The Philistines were advanced in the metallurgical science of their time, upgrading from the Bronze age to the Iron age before other nations. So when they were oppressing Israel they controlled every weapon (1Samuel 13:19-23). That is why you see a lack of real weapons in the whole period of the judges. Ehud made his own dagger, Shamgar had only a tool used to put cattle to

work, Jael used milk, a stake and a sledgehammer, Gideon used trumpets, pitchers and lamps, a woman used a piece of a millstone, Samson used his bare hands and then a donkey jaw. Israel had been oppressed by their enemies as a result of living like them and refusing to be different and set apart for the Lord. At a certain time they were so long gone in their sins and accustomed to their iniquities that they didn't even cry for help any more. God in His mercy sent them a strong deliverer. He chose Samson before he was even born to give Israel a message. Samson was supposed to be a Nazarite (Judges 13, Numbers 6), for life, from the womb to the tomb. Instead when Samson grew up, he started following the desires of his flesh, he became ceremonially unclean as a routine, he deceived and dishonored his own parents, he was irreverent, problematic, ego-centered and had very bad temper, always full of lust, he was a fornicator, a punisher, and psychopath assassin. As expected, he was full of marital problems within the first week of marriage, and the only part of his sanctification vow that he observed was to have long hair, but even that he ruined. Samson was supposed to be different and sanctify himself to God, but he never intended to do that and that was precisely God's living message to Israel, the Nation trusted with the Torah but living openly in sin (Exodus 19: 3-6). Samson's sins were just like the sins of Israel. God gave them the Torah and they needed to be set apart and different from the other nations but they just weren't.

God in His mercy and grace gave you and I a greater living example by sending His Son to live a perfect life to give us His message to be different and be set apart for Him (Ephesians 1:3-7). Jesus prayed for us to be different. "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word" (John 17:15-20 ESV).

We ought to be different.

"Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:6 ESV).