

Judges 3:7-11 (Judges 1:11-15) ; Othniel the Husband Savior I. Israel's Sin II. God's Anger III. God's Grace

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this week we move from the introduction of Judges to specific judges that God raised up within Israel. Last week we saw that pattern established- God's people rebel in sin, God rebukes Israel for their rebellion, Israel cries out for deliverance, and God saves them again. Today we find the first example of this pattern in the raising up of Othniel. Remember that Othniel was the Caleb's nephew. Caleb had said in 1:12- whoever conquers the city of Kiriath Sepher will get my daughter in marriage. So Othniel rises to the challenge- he defeats this city and gets the lovely Acsah in marriage. Although we are considering a very dark time in Israel history, we do find light. The fact that men like Othniel are around is a great blessing- although the nation has strayed from the LORD- although many have married Canaanite women and have ceased to put idolatry to death- we find that Othniel has in fact married an Israelite and has a history of putting wickedness to death! Even though Moses and Joshua have died- that first generation of godly elders is no longer living, there is still some hope; there is still faith and obedience in the 2nd generation. Even in dark times, there are still righteous ones in Israel. Although the church may appear to be very small at times- even then there are those who are faithfully serving and worshiping the LORD! Many years have passed between chapter 1 and chapter 3- so it is likely the Othniel was an older man by this point. But we still see that our Mighty God delivers His people from wickedness by the hand the faithful husband judge, Othniel.

I. Israel's Sin

Our passage begins in v. 7 by highlighting Israel great sin and wickedness. Again Israel does evil in the sight of the LORD- they forgot Him. Now this forgetfulness is not a simply overlooking- like when we forget. We forget names and dates- we sometimes leave something on the stove and forget about it. As people get older, names and dates become a little fussier. This kind of forgetting is more of an overlooking- a slip of the mind. It is not a conscious decision- but a mental lapse. But this forgetting in v. 7 is not a passive or negligent event- it is nothing less than an active rebellion and a conscious turning away from. It can literally be translated as they ignored God and turned away from Him. Adding

to this wickedness- it was not just some ruler or king that they ignored- it was the LORD their God- the very one who created all things- the one who revealed Himself to Abraham their father. How can you forget the LORD your God- it is worse than an animal forgetting its master! You know that dogs remember their masters- for years- if they see their old owner they are still loyal to him. But not Israel! The Lord- He was their God- and they were His people! He had delivered them- they were His special people yet they ignored the one true God and they turned to false gods. They served the Baals and Asheroths. This word for service is very important in our passage- it is closely connected to bondage and worship. Because the thing you worship is the very thing that you place yourself under. Israel willingly placed itself under bondage- into slavery to false gods, idols and images of wood and stone. They made themselves slaves to created things! That is really what addiction is- we become lost in despair and enslaved to sin. We need to have it- drugs, pornography, sensual pleasures- these are cruel taskmasters! Instead of serving the one true God, they bound themselves to idolatry, adultery, and sexual promiscuity! Forgetting or ignoring God is a very serious sin- and when we worry, fret and fuss about the things of this life- are we not forgetting who God is and what He has done? And when we are full and satisfied- when everything appears to go well- do we neglect to give thanks to our God? Forgetting and neglecting the LORD is a constant temptation for us. When times are difficult, we neglect to pour out our hearts to our God. When times are well, we forget to give thanks and praise to Him! This is evil in the sight of the LORD! The fact is- an easy life leads to laziness! We become spiritually slothful- in pride we think we are better than others. We forget grace- thinking we are more deserving than others. So Israel no longer becomes a light to the nations- she forgets her identity and she loses her mission!

II. God's Anger

So in our passage, the LORD'S anger is kindled against His people. Literally we read that God's nose becomes flared- His face becomes hot- His fury burns. And as Dt. 8 promised- when you forget me, you will surely perish. So Israel is sold into slavery- Israel is made captive to the King of Mesopotamia. Sin brings about God's intense anger- His justice and wrath rise up against those who rebel against His Word. So God sells them- they are placed into bondage to the kings of the nations. Notice the twist-

Israel served the Baals- so Israel is made to serve Cushan. Israel chose to be a slave to false gods- so God makes them a slave to an oppressive ruler. Not much is known about this King Cushan- his kingdom was in the NE. But his name tells us a little about him- literally his name means- “Cushan doubly evil!” The king of double wickedness becomes the ruler over God’s people! God uses a bitter and a hostile nation to rebuke and chasten His people. God gives them into slavery because they chose slavery over service to Him. If you chose sin- the way of this world over God- God will give you the desire of your hearts! He gives people over to the whip of slavery to show us- this is what the gods of the nations are like! God is using nations as a test and a scourge- to fulfill His will and carry out His plan. If you will not serve me, I will make you a slave to the heathen kings. I will show you what sin leads to- bondage and oppression! This is also a reminder that when you are going through dark valleys- that does not mean that God has forsaken you! God can and does break the hold of enslaving sins- His anger can flare but His love last for a thousand generations! And once again- in this low state- now in bondage Israel sees the wickedness of her way. As we saw two weeks ago- the anger of God is a jealous anger- motivated by love! There is hope here- because God does not let His bride go! The fact is- there is still a way to be saved! In spite of your sins- even though we are all prone to wander and rebel- God can and does save you! The act of showing us our sin is an act of mercy, love and grace! We are helpless slaves in our sin- that is why we need to cry out- to pray to God for Him to save us! And He is mighty to save!

III. God’s Grace

Although we do not read of repentance, we do see that Israel cries out to God for deliverance in v. 9. At least Israel cries to the correct one! And here in distress, Israel pleads for mercy! And the wonder of God’s grace is that God listens and hears! God heard and heeded Israel voice! Again, Israel’s need for deliverance is made clear to them. Israel failed to see her sin- so God makes their wretched state even more clear. Bondage is made plain and visible- and the people moan and wail- they cry out to God and God answers! Our loving God inclines His ear- He listens to the cry of His people! God’s grace and mercy are still active in Israel- He has not forgotten His covenant and He will not completely cut off His people! In His grace, God raises up a judge. Although Othniel was older and had been in Israel the

whole time, God begins to build Othniel up so that deliverance will be given by his hand. The LORD raised a savior from within Israel- a child of Abraham from Judah comes to the fore as the instrument of God's mercy and grace. And it is by the hand of Othniel that victory is given. Notice in v. 10 that the Spirit of the LORD was upon Othniel- the Holy Spirit filled Othniel and prepared him for service. This Spirit empowering will be seen in later judges as well as kings and prophets within Israel. By the Spirit, Othniel's heart was opened to believe and trust in the God of the fathers- and by faith Othniel was a fit instrument in God's hand. God is equipping His servant so that by the hand of this man, mighty deeds will be performed. Notice also the two parts of Othniel's service- he judged Israel and He delivered Israel in v. 10. Within the nation of Israel, Othniel served as a judge within Israel- one who performed a role of government and represented righteousness. And outside of Israel, Othniel was a mighty king who suppressed the nations and delivered Israel from hostile kings. So Othniel was both a judge and savior- righteous and powerful. Othniel purged idolatry from within as judge- and delivered Israel from external bondage as a warrior! And God gave Cushan into Othniel's hand- and Othniel prevailed over the king of Mesopotamia. So by the hand of Othniel, Israel is taught war! Othniel was from the tribe of Judah and his name means "God is mighty!" God's might is clearly seen! Israel is taught who saves- who rules and who gives the victory. Othniel provides rest for 40 years. Rest from war, from oppression, and rest from slavery! Othniel is a just and powerful judge- but it is God who rescues and delivers His people. God raises the judge up- and God saves His people. God's people enjoy the blessings of peace- there is joy for those who are delivered. But what makes Othniel unique is the prize He receives. The spoils of war- if you will- are a godly wife! A beautiful, chaste bride was received in ch. 1! By obedience and faithful service- by delivering God's people and destroying the enemy- Othniel gets a bride! A wife that was promised to one who would save! As I said a few weeks back, each judge reveals a characteristic of the perfect Judge- Jesus Christ! Here we see that Othniel- from the tribe of Judah. As Number 13 says- Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim, but it was Caleb who was from Judah. So Caleb's brother and nephew would also be from Judah. He we have a ruler judge who saves and delivers- and upon initial victory he gets a royal, beautiful bride as promised! Othniel does not want a Canaanite bride- like

everyone else- he held out for a godly bride and the Lord richly blessed him! After receiving a bride, He continues to rule until all enemies are placed under his feet! We cannot help but see Othniel as a type of Christ- who not only judges, saves and delivers from the foe- but also receives a bride as a reward!

Othniel is the husband judge- while Jesus remains the perfect husband of the bride- His church! It is Jesus who will save us from the foe of sin, death and hell- destroying the forces of evil and judging with righteousness!

To conclude, we can see that there are many ways in which this passage points us to Jesus Christ. At the baptism of Jesus we find that He also was filled with the Spirit as Isaiah 61 had promised and Matthew 3 fulfills. And in this Spirit Jesus performs many mighty miracles and delivers many from the effects of sin and bondage to that sin. Jesus Christ is the perfect Savior and Deliverer- He is the one whom the Father raised up to be our just judge and to deliver us from bondage to sin and hell. He is the righteous one who is all powerful. And Jesus Christ is the rest bringer. The rest that Othniel brought was only temporary- for 40 years- but then Othniel died. That generation enjoyed peace in the land because of God's mighty savior- they enjoyed justice because of God's righteous judge- but that savior and deliverer ceased to serve. Othniel dies- and leaves a gap that will soon be filled with evil, idolatry, and bondage all too soon. This is the last leader from Judah that we find in the book of Judges- this is really a high point in the book of Judges- from here we continue to spiral down. We see sin rear its ugly head- and God's people soon forget and ignore the LORD their God. But our God is mighty- He will save His people from wickedness! He will send One to be our Savior and Husband Judge! God will Himself deliver His people from bondage to sin and He will provide that lasting rest and peace! Our Mighty God delivers His people from wickedness by the hand of Othniel in our passage- but today Our Mighty God delivers us by the hand of Jesus Christ our Lord- it is this ever-living Savior whom has secured the church- His bride by His faithful deliverance!