

12 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 16:20

LESSON
The LORD
has departed

VERSE 20

*And she said,
The Philistines be upon thee,
Samson. And he awoke out
of his sleep, and said,
I will go out as at other times
before, and shake myself.
And he wist not
that the LORD
was departed from him.*

This final time Samson answered Delilah was the beginning of the end for him. He was still so very enamoured of Delilah. The lords of the Philistines set a trap for him. They were ready to pounce on Samson at an opportune moment.

“And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him” – very tragic indeed. This statement only goes to show Samson’s complacency in his own self-sufficiency. Here was the consequence of Samson indulging himself in his lusts of uncleanness. God allowed him to do that foolish thing.

Note that Samson’s continued consecration to God was to be his strength. His strength, by promise, not by nature, might be a type and figure of the spiritual strength of believers [Colossians 1:11, 29]. According to Matthew Henry, “Therefore the badge of his consecration was the pledge of his strength; if he lose the former, he knows he forfeits the latter.” That was what happened to Samson.

If you remember, the Holy Spirit left King Saul who was later replaced by David as the next king of Israel. In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit would come upon a person to fulfil a certain task for God. After that, the Holy Spirit would leave that person. It is however not so in Samson’s case. It was because of his sinful disobedience that the Spirit had departed. Beware of the pride of your own achievements. Do not rest on your own laurels. Remember that pride always goes before a fall. Be warned then and heed the words of the hymn “Nothing Between my Soul and the Saviour”.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 KINGS 25
HEBREWS 7

THOUGHT

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. — 1 Corinthians 10:12

13 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 16:21-27

LESSON

Samson's
downfall

VERSE 21

*But the Philistines took
him, and put out his eyes,
and brought him down to
Gaza, and bound him with
fetters of brass; and he did
grind in the prison house.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 1-2
HEBREWS 8

THOUGHT

This passage records the downfall and humiliation of Samson. “Once bitten, twice shy” is not true of Samson. It seems that he did not learn his lesson at all. From the first Philistine woman in Timnath [Judges 14:1], the second a harlot and the third, final one Delilah, Samson was bewitched by them all. He allowed his heart to rule his mind, thereby resulting in his downfall.

Samson even lied 3 times to Delilah concerning the secret of his strength. How much lower can a person go? Be warned therefore that when a believer loses his testimony, he will easily sink deeper and deeper into sin.

We read of Samson being tortured by the Philistines. That was one of the cruel punishments of those times [Numbers 16:14; 2 Kings 25:7], and still, or till quite lately, practised by Oriental oppressors to make their rivals incapable of reigning. Grinding was the most degrading form of labour, the punishment of slaves among the Greeks and Romans [Isaiah 47:2]. His enemies mocked and ridiculed him. Even worse was the fact that the Philistines praised Dagon their god for their victory over Samson. Samson's weakness resulted in God the Almighty being mocked at.

This serves as a warning to all believers. What we do will affect every area of our lives. When we fail in one aspect, the world will conclude that our Lord is unable to guide and protect us. However, God will vindicate the glory of His own great name.

“... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”
— Romans 12:19b

14 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 16:28-31

LESSON

Samson's
revenge

VERSE 28

*And Samson called unto the
LORD, and said,
O Lord GOD, remember me,
I pray thee, and strengthen me,
I pray thee, only this once,
O God, that I may be at once
avenged of the Philistines
for my two eyes.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 3-4
HEBREWS 9

THOUGHT

Samson judged Israel for 20 years. He was a lone hero from the tribe of Dan, delivering Israel from oppression from the west. Today's closing chapter of Samson's life is a reminder of what God can do when His children turn back to Him in repentance.

This is the first mention of Samson praying since that memorable occasion in Judges 15:18-19 when he gave that fountain the name of En-hakkore. His affliction and shame thankfully brought him back to God, humbled and penitent. His prayer was very earnest and intense. The threefold name in addressing God the Almighty – LORD, Lord, GOD – shows great tension of spirit.

God mercifully heard Samson's prayer and cry for help. No matter how wayward we had been before, God will never turn a deaf ear to us when we truly repent of our sinful ways. He always hears and answers prayer. But we must also face up to the consequences of our sin, like what Samson did. He knew he was facing certain death but he did not shrink from it. His last, final act was to destroy the oppressors of Israel.

We must constantly allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and reveal whether or not we are still on fire for the Lord as we once were. Christianity is neither a mere form nor a code of ethics. In fact, it is life itself as seen in our Lord when He walked on this earth. It must be living, practical faith.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

— Revelation 2:5

15 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 17:1-6

LESSON
Confusion
and declension

VERSE 6

*In those days
there was no king in Israel,
but every man did that which
was right in his own eyes.*

The concluding chapters 17-21 of Judges represent the author's supplement or appendix which reveals the awful, moral declension and confusion of the period of the Judges. Declension means moral deterioration and worldliness. The heart, principles and walk are in unison with the world.

Neither honesty nor the fear of the Lord moved Micah to restore the eleven hundred shekels of silver he stole from his mother. Instead of rebuking her son for stealing, she reversed the curse with a blessing and re-invested two hundred shekels of silver to make a graven and molten image for her son's idolatrous setting up of a shrine. By his mother's persuasion, he turned his home into a centre of idolatrous worship. He set up his own temple of idols with copies of an ephod and teraphim.

The temple had a syncretistic character, serving both God and idols. He put the true God of Israel, the Lord Jehovah, among all his false gods. Worship at this site was conducted by one of his sons who became "his priest" [v 5]. Micah and his mother worshipped in their own abominable way.

There was domestic spiritual decline and self-made religion. There was disregard for the precepts and principles of God's Word. There was confusion in the home, in the religious life of the nation and in the worshipping community. It stemmed from the heart of man [v. 6]. God's house in Shiloh was forsaken. Doing what was right in one's own eyes led to dubious motivations and decisions. We are to be guided by God's Word.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 5-6
HEBREWS 10

PRAYER

Lord, help us lead the lost away from all that is false. Lead them to You, the one and only God, Who alone offers true life.

16 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 17:5

LESSON

Self-made
religion

VERSE 5

*And the man Micah had an
house of gods, and made an
ephod, and teraphim, and
consecrated one of his sons,
who became his priest.*

Micah (meaning “who is like Jehovah”), whose wicked life belies his name, had a house of gods – a domestic temple, a private religious establishment of his own. He had objects of idols such as a graven image and a molten image. In addition, he made an imitation of the ephod (a breastplate designed by the Lord God for only the High Priest to use to communicate with Him). An eminent part of the priestly garment [Exodus 28:4] was for his appointed priest. A teraphim – tutelary god of the household [Genesis 31:19, 26], usually a small idol in human form was kept for posterity. They were on occasion used as oracular instruments [Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2]. He made or intended to make in his home an imitation of the house of God in Shiloh. He installed one of his sons to be his priest.

Micah did not abandon the worship of God under the names of Jehovah and Elohim by which He was known to the Israelites. He blended the idolatrous practices of the neighbouring Canaanites with the worship of Yahweh. The culmination was a self-made religion that fostered spiritual apostasy and anarchy among God’s people. All of this was against God’s instruction for Israel [Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 27:15]. Creation of idols take God’s place, leading to all manner of sinful deeds. God is a refuge and security only to those who have contact with Him. Those who fashion their own religion, with its own god and priest, will also find that in dire trouble the true God is very far from them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 7-8
HEBREWS 11

PRAYER

Lord, protect me from presumptuous folly of doing religious things, instead of Your will.

17 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 17:7-13

LESSON Priest for hire

VERSE 10

*And Micah said unto him,
Dwell with me, and be unto
me a father and a priest,
and I will give thee ten shekels
of silver by the year,
and a suit of apparel,
and thy victuals.
So the Levite went in.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 9-10
HEBREWS 12

PRAYER

The young Levite mentioned in Judges 17:7 temporarily lived in Bethlehemjudah which was not a Levitical city. The priests and Levites were not to move out of their 48 Levitical cities assigned by Moses. The priests were the sons of Aaron set apart by God to minister the worship of Jehovah. The Levites were other sons of Levi, not priests. They assisted the priests and were scribes or teachers of God's Word to Israel [Nehemiah 8:7]. They were to live off their ministries. They had no right, authority or claim to be priests. Under the new covenant, all Christians are priests [1 Peter 2:5, 9].

Evidently that Levite was unemployed and had no place of permanent service. Instead of seeking the Lord to meet his needs, he decided to relocate. This indicated that the apostasy had left him without tribal support. He did what was right in his own eyes and came to Ephraim to the house of Micah. He extended an official "call" to his local shrine. This included an annual income of 10 shekels of silver, a suit of clothes, plus board and lodging. He gave up God's call in place of comfort and security. He was consecrated by Micah and served as a private hireling priest.

Like Balaam who was a hired prophet, the Levite was a hired priest. He had abandoned his divinely appointed responsibility and became a mercenary for hire. He had sold his unique spiritual service for filthy lucre. True priesthood is a divine unction and not a human monopoly. Leaders who know better yet sin will be judged with a greater condemnation by God.

Lord, take away the idols in my life so that, completely undivided, I may serve You.

18 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 18:1-2

LESSON

No king,
no law

VERSE 1

In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

God's will had already been expressed as to where the tribe of Dan were to settle in the Promised Land [Joshua 19:40-48]. Having failed to possess its allocated land because of inability or lack of energy to drive out the neighbouring Amorites and the Philistines, they resolved to take the allocated land elsewhere that was easier to conquer and possess. That took place at a time when Israel had no king.

Four refrains [Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25] basically say, "In those days there was no king in Israel". Two of these refrains, however, made a further note adding, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes". When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, He established Himself as their King and gave them His law. In Psalm 74, Asaph looks upon God's action during the exodus as evidence that God is the King of Israel [Psalm 74:12-15].

Although the Israelites had God's law, they ignored it and did what was right in their own eyes. Rather than follow the law of God their King, they became a law unto themselves. Total freedom does not mean that we can do what we like.

We are the children of the great King and under a supreme obligation to respect and obey His law. Those who have not submitted to God's will, needless to say, will end up doing whatever seems right in their own eyes. We are to submit to and obey the mind and will of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 11-12
HEBREWS 13

PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 18:3-4

LESSON

I am
his priest

VERSE 4

*And he said unto them,
Thus and thus dealeth Micah
with me, and hath hired me,
and I am his priest.*

In the course of their journey, the five Danite spies were hospitably entertained at the house of Micah, who dwelt in the hilly country of Ephraim. Micah lived in state and had a domestic Levite priest. He also possessed household gods in which he trusted and a genuine sacrificial vestment which he prized. The spies noted those things and were fascinated by the house of gods.

There, they recognised the voice of Micah's young Levite priest and enquired concerning his presence and activities in Ephraim. He simply replied, "Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me and I am his priest" [v. 4]. In other words, the Levite laid a pile of baloney on the Danite men. He justified his decision to work for Micah. The Danites realised that they had come across a two-timing spiritual compromiser. This pleased them because they were interested in his services.

God never hires His servants. They work for Him freely out of love and thanksgiving. He rewards them for their faithfulness out of His grace.

"He was not of Aaron's line and had no Biblical basis for assuming the role of a priest. He was deceived thinking that what was wrong in God's eyes was really "right" because that's what he believed to be right. This is the ultimate in wilful deception and no man is immune to this spiritual trap when he begins to wander from the highway of holiness and soon right is wrong and dark is light." – Keil and Delitzsch

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
I CHRONICLES 13-14
JAMES 1

THOUGHT

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
— Isaiah 5:20