

Judges 3:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

Analysis

And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

This passage relates to early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, demonstrating God's sovereign choice and empowerment of deliverers. The judges themselves display varying degrees of faith and character flaws, yet God works through these imperfect human instruments to accomplish His purposes. This illustrates the biblical pattern that God's power is made perfect in human weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Theologically, these early judges establish the pattern of divine deliverance through unlikely means. God chooses the weak, marginalized, and flawed to demonstrate that victory comes from His power, not human strength. This anticipates Paul's teaching that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

The military victories recorded here serve spiritual purposes—they deliver Israel from physical oppression but more importantly provide opportunity for spiritual renewal. Each deliverance creates space for Israel to return to covenant

faithfulness. However, the repeated cycles show these deliverances provided only temporary relief, pointing to the need for the ultimate Deliverer who would provide permanent victory over sin and spiritual oppression through His death and resurrection.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about early judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶלָּהֶם	רְדוּ	אַתֶּם	בְּנֵתִים	וַיַּעֲשֶׂה
And he said	unto them	Follow	after	and suffered	
H559	H413	H7291	H310	H3588	H5414
me for the LORD	your enemies	the Moabites	into your hand		
H3068	H853	H341	H4124	H3027	
וְיֵלֶךְ	לְמֹאֲבִים	בְּיַדְךָ	בְּיַדְךָ	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי
And they went down	after	him and took	the fords	of Jordan	
H3381	H310	H3920	H4569	H3383	
לְמֹאֲבִים	אֲלֹא	בְּנֵתִים	אֲשֶׁר	לְעֹבֶר:	
the Moabites	H3808	and suffered	not a man	to pass over	
H4124	H5414	H376	H5674		

Additional Cross-References

Judges 12:5 (Parallel theme): And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

Joshua 2:7 (Parallel theme): And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

Judges 7:9 (References Lord): And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

Judges 7:15 (References Lord): And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

1 Samuel 17:47 (References Lord): And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.

Judges 7:24 (Parallel theme): And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.
