

As in the Days of the Judges...

Judges 6:1-9:6

“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”¹ Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul uses events in Israel’s history to teach the church at Corinth principles by which God acts today. “What happened over a thousand years ago”, he says, in effect, “is relevant for us now.” Does God speak to us today prophetically through historical events? Are there principles we can learn that correspond to the situation we find ourselves in locally and nationally? Recently several of us have felt that God is speaking to our situation in Southampton today using the life of someone who lived over 3000 years ago. Please read on and see if you agree...²

The cycle of events we see repeated in the Book of Judges has parallels with the responses to God we see in our own land –and in our city of Southampton. It was a time when every person did what was right in their own eyes,³ but like Israel of old, there have been individuals and groups who God has sent to us –as a nation, and a city. The waves of oppression from the enemy have been temporarily abated, but then the people have lapsed from seeking God and evil has once more gained the upper hand.

Judges 6 describes such a situation when the ‘sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of the Midian seven years.’⁴ Through our actions, both as a nation and as God’s people, we have yielded to the enemy –and adopted a siege mentality.⁵ We have preferred to engage with one another in the church, rather than with those around us in the city and nation and consequently –as Jesus predicted– been trampled underfoot by men.⁶ As a result we have been brought very low, and this has caused us to begin to cry out to the Lord.⁷

In this is our hope. God’s response then was to raise up an anonymous prophet.⁸ His response today in Southampton has been to raise up those who pray and prophesy. They are largely unknown, but seek to share God’s perspective on the city where he has called them.⁹

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:11

² Your insights and reflections would be greatly appreciated. Please give feedback to either: abaker@tinyworld.co.uk or chrishalls@mac.com

³ Judges 21:25

⁴ Judges 6:1ff

⁵ ‘The sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.’

⁶ Matthew 5:13. Perhaps never before in our history has the church in Britain been regarded in such low esteem –boring, irrelevant and not having the truth. This perception of God’s people is based on caricature and bears little resemblance to the truth, but is widely held.

⁷ Judges 6:7

⁸ Judges 6:8-10

⁹ Cf. Jeremiah 29:7. There are parallels with Israel in Babylonian exile and the church in a post-Christian Britain.

A Corporate Gideon? “You shall defeat Midian as one man”

Prayer and prophecy paved the way for God to raise up Gideon; someone who would speak into the public arena and address idolatry and evil.¹⁰

God’s intention today is to bring to the fore, not one individual, but a body of people who, while conscious of their own inadequacies and weaknesses, like Gideon, will nevertheless emerge from their ‘dens’ and ‘caves’ and proclaim God’s righteousness. God called Gideon¹¹ while he was seeking to protect his own possessions from the enemy¹² in order that he might bring the country back to God. Today, God seeks to raise up a corporate Gideon¹³ in Southampton –those who will set aside their personal (and congregational) agendas and interests, to pursue his wider larger plans and purposes for the city and beyond.

The heart-cry of many today for manifestations of God’s supernatural power, echoes that of Gideon who cried, “Where are all his miracles which our fathers told us about?”¹⁴ It is only through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit upon us that anything lasting can be accomplished.¹⁵

We are to be those who will ensure that it is his plans and strategies that are obeyed, rather than those we devise. He is the one who must shape what takes place, not us.¹⁶ Although the bigger picture for Gideon and the people was to throw off the oppression of the enemy which had been ravishing the land, the immediate task for Gideon was to obey the Lord – what he was saying about his own family. So we too must take responsibility for the situation we face here in Southampton.

Are the seven years of Midian captivity drawing to a close? The number required to change the nation of Israel for a generation was not large.¹⁷ Who knows how few God will require to change the culture and spiritual climate of our city. Is the prophetic word returning to Southampton? Will we, as God’s people, heed his voice?

*Alan Baker & Chris Halls,
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¹⁰ Judges 6:11

¹¹ The Angel of the Lord is commonly taken to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. The altar Gideon built was to *Yahweh Shalom* –the God of Peace. Christ is our peace –he alone can bring peace to the land (cf. Ephesians 2:14, Judges 8:28).

¹² The wheat from his father’s field.

¹³ “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man” Judges 6:16

¹⁴ Judges 6:13

¹⁵ Judges 6:34 “The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him... Do we not need to ‘desire earnestly the spiritual gifts’, 1 Corinthians 14:1.

¹⁶ Judges 6:25-27

¹⁷ Judges 7:7 & 8:28 Deliverance came not from the original 32,000 soldiers, but just 300. The land had peace for 40 years.