

Old Testament Characters: Ehud – God’s Choice

Goldstone Church – 07-Aug-16 10:30am

Judges 3:12-30

Introduction

Our society today seems to be consumed with knowing who or what is first. If you are not top of a list you are just not good enough. In life as whole, *second* in a list, is often overlooked.

By contrast, Ehud was Israel’s second Judge. He may not be a well-known Bible character, but I believe he carries a message for us today.

The first Judge of Israel was Othniel, who God raised to save the Israelites from the king of Aram (north of Israel). But after Othniel’s death, the Israelites went back to their old ways and did evil again. As punishment, God raised Eglon, king of Moab (south of Israel), who oppressed Israel for 18 years. Then our hero appears.

At first reading, the story of Ehud just seems a minor, bloodthirsty account. One Bible commentator almost writes him off as nothing more than a cold-blooded assassin. But there is more to Ehud than this.

1. LOWLY ORIGINS (Judges 3:15)

v.15 describes Ehud as being “*the son of Gera the Benjamite.*” More accurately, Ehud was a descendant of Gera, not his direct son. Gera was Benjamin’s 4th son (Genesis 46:21), and Ehud was an *indirect* descendant of Gera. In other words, this is a near anonymous heritage, an uninspiring beginning.

Ehud came from lowly origins; historically, there was nothing special about him. But God still knew Ehud and used him.

Today, it doesn’t matter what your background is: God knows you, all about you - and He will use you for His purposes. You might think of yourself as anonymous, but God knows you, He cares for you, wants a relationship with you - and he will use you.

2. LEFT HANDED (Judges 3:15)

v.15 also describes Ehud as “*a left-handed man.*” The phrase literally means to be “*defective as to his right hand.*” Some Bible commentators think this was some form of physical disability with his right hand. Others suggest that Ehud was “both handed” i.e. ambidextrous. Either way, according to the culture at that time, left-handedness was considered “unnatural”.

Interesting that left-handedness marked many Benjamites; Judges 20:16 says that 700 men were left-handed. We don’t think left-handedness as a big issue now, but it has been a significant factor throughout the ages.

For Ehud, his left-handedness was considered “unnatural” - and probably carried some shame and dishonour. But God still knew Ehud and used him. In fact, it was *because* Ehud was left-handed that he was selected for the mission, and why he did such a good job.

Today, it doesn't matter if you have what other people might describe as a disability or something unnatural: God knows you, all about you - and will use you for His purposes. Just because you have something that some people think will hold you back, God still cares for you, He still wants a relationship with you, and He will still use you.

3. LASTING CHANGE (Judges 3:28)

The rallying call to the people, "*Follow me, for the Lord has given Moab into your hands*" (v.28), shows that there has been a remarkable transformation in Ehud.

Before going to Moab, Ehud must have had low self-esteem. He was from a lowly family, left-handed, and the Israelites "*sent him [off] with tribute*" (v.15), i.e. they him to go with no guarantee of a safe return!

Ehud was secretive when delivering the tribute in Moab. The first time Ehud speaks (v.19), he seems unwilling to talk in front of other people. Instead, he tells the king of Moab that he has a *secret* message for him from God.

But having returned from Moab, Ehud's previous timidity seems to have gone. Instead, he launches a rallying call to all the people (v.28).

Notice: Ehud was called and appointed by God *before* he went on his mission (v.15). "*The Israelites cried out to the Lord, and [God] gave them a deliverer – Ehud*".

It is clear from Ehud's rallying cry, that he knows that God has been at work. Ehud calls the people to follow him because there has been a profound and lasting change in his life. Ehud has seen God at work, and he is a new person. There is a lasting change in his life.

Ehud's rallying call is for the Israelites to turn to God; to follow God, and to live in the strength that God gives.

When we are in Christ (followers of Jesus Christ), we are a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). It's what's on the inside that makes all the difference. There is a lasting change. For Ehud, the circumstances around his life helped to pull him down. But with God in his life, he was a new person, with a new strength and a new vitality.

Today, with God in our lives, we are changed for ever. We have a new self-image; an image that shows how valuable we are to God. We are a new creation.

CONCLUSION

Ehud may not be a well-known Bible character, but there's much we can learn from him today.

- Your background doesn't matter.
God knows you, all about you; He loves and cares for you and wants a personal relationship with you. God knows all about your upbringing, family, nationality, education, etc – and He will use you.
- What other people might describe as a disability doesn't matter.
God knows you, all about you; He loves and cares for you and wants a personal relationship with you. God knows your weaknesses – and He will use you.

- With God in your life, you are a new creation. A lasting change has taken place within you. God knows all about you; He loves and cares for you and wants a personal relationship with you. With the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are filled with His strength – and that makes a lasting difference.

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7). God is looking at your heart today, looking at the real you. He knows your background, He knows your strengths and weaknesses, yet He values you highly and loves you unreservedly. God considers you a priceless treasure - a precious gift.

In response to this privileged status, may we be people today who are:

- *Not* downhearted, but excited by our relationship with God.
- *Not* uninformed, but deepening our personal relationship with God.
- *Not* silent, but speaking-out to others about our personal relationship with God.

Let us take Ehud's example and have hearts ready and expectant to be used by God.

AMEN