

Othniel, Ehud, and Co.

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 July 2017

Preacher: John Shearer

[0 : 00] It's a joy to be with you tonight. I feel in a very exalted position here. I hope I don't move around, I'll be falling off the stage. After three great introductory sermons, and I took the time to listen to all three of them, I have to say, very comprehensive, we come to the first of the judges tonight that the Lord raised up to deliver his people.

So, if you have your Bible, we're in chapter 3, and we're reading from verse 7. The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

They forgot the Lord their God, and they served the Baals and the Asharahs. The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan Rishathayim, king of Aram Naharim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.

When they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel, son of Canaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan Rishathayim, king of Aram, into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.

[1 : 31] So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel, son of Canaz, died. Once again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil, the Lord gave Eglon, king of Moab, power over Israel.

Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the city of Pams. The Israelites were subject to Eglon, king of Moab, for eighteen years.

Again, the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer, Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gerah the Benjamite.

The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon, king of Moab. Now, Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a foot and a half long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing.

He presented the tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, who was a very fat man. After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way the men who had carried it. At the idols near Gilgal, he himself turned back and said, I have a secret message for you, O king.

[2 : 48] The king said, Quiet. And all his attendants left him. Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his summer palace, and said, I have a message from God for you.

As the king rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh, plunged it into the king's belly. Even the handle sank in after the blade which came out of his back. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it. Then Ehud went out to the porch, he shut the doors of the upper room behind him, and he locked them.

After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the house. They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them.

There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead. While they waited, Ehud got away. He passed by the idols and escaped to Syrah.

[4 : 07] When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them. Follow me, he ordered, for the Lord has given Moab your enemy into your hands.

So they followed him down, and taking possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab, they allowed no one to cross over. At that time they struck down about 10,000 Moabites, all vigorous and strong.

Not a man escaped. That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for 80 years. After Ehud came Shamgar, son of Eanath, who struck down 600 Philistines with an ox goad. He too saved Israel. And this is God's word. Amen. I was reminded recently that in forming a worldview, there are at least four specific questions that need to be answered.

If you're wanting to see the world in a certain way, you've got to answer four questions. Question one, where did everything come from? The question of origins, did everything come from nothing? [5 : 39] Or did everything come from something? Or did everything come from someone? To have a worldview, you need to answer that question.

Second question, what's happened to make us the way we are? Something's wrong. Why do people get sick? Why do people die?

As the old hymn puts it, change and decay in all around I see. Why? These things and many other things require an explanation because things are simply not as they are supposed to be.

And all of us deep down know that to be true. That's another question that needs to be answered.

What's wrong? The third question is, is there any hope?

Can what is broken be fixed? If so, who or what can fix it? And when and where and how can it be fixed?

[6 : 47] And then of course, there's the fourth question. What is the end of the story going to be? We need to address the issue of destiny.

So, if you're making a worldview, if you're wanting to have a worldview, these are the questions that need to be answered. As far as the Christian worldview is concerned, the first three questions are answered in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.

The Bible begins, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. There's the first answer to the question, as far as the Christian is concerned. And we're told that everything God made was very good.

Question one answered. Then came the fall, as our first parents rebelled and disobeyed their Creator. Death came into the picture, as promised. Everything was cursed.

Nature became raw in tooth and claw. That answers the second question. The problem is really sin. That answers question two.

[7 : 58] No sooner had that happened, and we have recorded that wonderful promise of hope in Genesis 3.15, telling us that the seed of the woman would come to bruise the head of the serpent. He, whoever he is, when he came, he would deal with the problem, but he would deal with it at great cost to himself.

And that points us, of course, to the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world on his great rescue mission. His name would be Jesus, for he would save his people from their sins.

That answers question three, as far as the Christian is concerned. And the rest of the Bible moves us on in expectation and anticipation of the day when Jesus will come again and usher in the new heavens and the new earth.

And that is the biblical answer to question four. How's it all going to end? In a few sentences, with a few broad brush strokes, as it were, there you have the Christian's worldview.

However, at every stage in world history, our problem as the people of God has been a failure to live in the light of these great foundational fundamental truths.

[9 : 17] Always say we believe them, but we've really failed very often to live in the light of them, and never more so than during the period of the judges. The problem with the Israelites in the time of the judges was that they fell again and again at this hurdle.

On the one hand, they failed to take sin seriously. On the other hand, they failed to fix their eyes on the one who is invisible. Therefore, they failed to glorify God in the midst of a surrounding godless culture.

God required of them the most radical response, in terms of a biblical separation from the world. They were to be in the world, but not of the world, not of the ways of the world, not of the wickedness of the world.

The peoples of Canaan were to be removed from the scene because their life and their culture had become incorrigible. But Israel didn't do this when they could have done it and should have done it. Instead, again and again, they deliberately disobeyed the Lord.

They became idolaters. They adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence. They compromised their faith in such a way that it led to their moral and spiritual influence being snuffed out.

[10:40] They reached a point where it was almost impossible to distinguish them from their neighbors. They fell into the trap old Matthew Henry, the English Puritan, wrote about and warned God's people in the 17th century when he said, men that have broken the fence wander endlessly.

They gave way in one thing and then another until everyone was doing what was right in his own hands. That's why the book of Judges I think is so relevant.

That's why I think it's so contemporary. If we put the world's view of anything before God's world view, give it any room to take root in our hearts and minds, we will find that such compromise will only lead ultimately to catastrophe.

Joshua saw this coming one generation earlier. He threw down the gauntlet to the people of God towards the end of his life.

He told them about all that God had done for them in bringing them into the promised land and then he said this to them in Joshua 24 verses 14 and 15 in what was his farewell address to the nation.

[11:55] I think it's been quoted before in one of the three introductions. Now fear the Lord, he said. He's an old man now. Fear the Lord, he said, and serve him with all faithfulness.

Throw away the God your forefathers worshipped beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day who you will serve.

Whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. In other words, listen, I have made my choice.

You must make your choice. But remember this, we will all become the choices that we make. And you remember how the people replied to that challenge?

Verses 16 and 18 of that chapter. Far be it from us, they said, to forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. It was the Lord, our God himself, who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes.

[13:01] He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites who lived in the land.

We too will serve the Lord because he is our God. Sounds good. Sounds plausible. But old Joshua wasn't blind.

Nor was he stupid. Their words were not matched by their deeds. And he could see it beginning to take place.

He saw the way they were living day in and day out. He could see the signs. He could read the trends. He saw the writing was on the wall. He told them that what they were saying with their lips was not being worked out in their everyday lives.

The red lights of danger, metaphorically speaking, were flashing. The alarm bells were ringing. The people lacked a heart experience of God.

[14:04] A generation was rising up who knew about the Lord. They probably have quoted all the doctrines that they'd been taught as wee boys and wee girls. But a generation was rising up who knew about the Lord but who didn't know the Lord.

And it was second hand to them. They had forsaken the Lord. They had done evil in the eyes of the Lord. When the days of Joshua were over, but he had seen it coming.

They entered into what is now known as the period of the judges with hearts that were rebellious and cold towards the God who created them and the God who had entered into a covenant with them.

God delivered them into the hands of their enemies again and again and again. Enemies who would eventually move them to cry out to the Lord for help and when they did so he would deliver them again and again and again by raising up judges, saviors, deliverers, military leaders, call them what you will.

So what I want to do is to look at the first three judges tonight. That's what I've been asked to do. Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar.

[15:23] I've called them the three mister men so that you might remember it. I did a series once in Musselboro on the mister men for the boys and girls. I was over in Ireland and I met a family there and one of them said to me when I was a wee girl I remember you did a series on the mister men.

Three mister men. Othniel. What shall we call him? Mister Unique. Mister Unique.

God had delivered the people into the hands of this man called Cushan Rishathain king of Aram in verse 7 chapter 3 because of their sin worshipping and serving the Baals and the Ashtaroths. The heat of God's jealous love will not allow his people to remain cosy and comfortable in their sin. If they don't obey his commands they will have to endure his chastening.

It's the mark of being a real genuine child of God. Cushan Rishathain in the Hebrew language I understand literally means Cushan of the double wickedness.

[16:39] God was angry with his people and that's why he delivered them into the hands of this wicked pagan king. I like what Ralph Davis has to say on this.

he says Cushan wasn't good news or bad news. He was good bad news in the sense that God is prepared to inflict misery on his people to waken them up.

Only Davis could put it that way. What God was doing would not save his people but it would at least be the beginning of them feeling their need.

Helping them to see what their true condition is. Their true position is. Israel was subject to this man Cushan Rishathain for eight years until finally and in sheer desperation and as a last resort they cried out to God to deliver them.

Now it doesn't say they repented of their sins. They may have done but on the other hand they may not have done when they cried out but they cried out for deliverance and God had compassion on them.

[17:48] He was reacting if not to their penitence then to their pain. And we read in verse 9 when they cried to the Lord he raised up for them a deliverer Othniel son of Canaz Caleb's younger brother who saved them.

He's the first judge. The man chosen by God to be their deliverer was called Othniel. I call him Mr. Unique even although there's nothing really very outstanding about him.

He has been described as a colourless character with no flash or dash and yet he was unique in the sense that he was the first of the twelve judges.

Now there's a sense we all know in which we're all unique. The dictionary meaning of the word unique is to be single and kind having no like or equal. When God made each and every one of us he broke the mould we often say that.

We're all unique in that sense but Othniel was also unique in the sense that he had no previous examples to follow no role model to give him his bearings as a judge.

[19:02] There were no guidelines laid down by those who had gone before because nobody had gone before. He was the first.

pioneer if you like in his own field and that's never an easy slot to fill but he's God's man God raised them up he's God's man for the hour.

Not everybody's type of ministry but it's got to be somebody's ministry to be the pioneer to be the trailblazer as a new need arises and a new ministry emerges as a new day dawns Othniel.

Surely a privilege to be the first to do whatever it is that needs to be done. I think it's interesting to read that the Jewish rabbis were so impressed by Othniel that they spoke of him and they wrote of him as the first among the judges not only in a chronological sense but in a spiritual sense.

Apart from his own God-given abilities I think there are a couple of things that contributed to his ministry being used by God and we can pick them up from the text.

[20:15] The Puritans would say let the text do the talking. What can we pick up from the narrative here? Well one thing we can pick up on was his previous experience. He had already proved himself to be a suitable material as a judge, as a saviour in Israel.

He wasn't a saviour who would save people from their sins. That unique kind of saviour is still to come. But at least Othniel can be of great help to the people of his day.

I cannot stress how important it is for all of us to first of all prove ourselves before we take on a leadership role. And that's what this man did.

When God chooses to use a man at this level, it's because he's already proved his worth to a certain degree at another level. That was true of Othniel. How do you know?

Well, Caleb, the great man of faith, a man who wholly followed the Lord, he had led the attack against the heart of Canaanite power at Hebron earlier, also known as Kiriath-Yarba, and God had given him a great victory.

[21:22] But there was another center of Canaanite power at a place called Debir, known as Kiriath-sephir, and Caleb had issued a challenge back in Judges 1 and verse 12.

Caleb said, I will give my daughter Aksa in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath-sephir. Othniel, son of Canaan, Caleb's younger brother, took it. So Caleb gave his daughter Aksa to him in marriage. Othniel was Caleb's nephew. He had earned his spurs sometime earlier on the field of battle.

I don't know what age he would be probably in the 50s, Caleb in his 80s, the prelude to and the preparation for greater things. It's an elementary principle, isn't it? But an essential one that needs to be observed.

If we're not proving ourselves in the work of God in smaller things, then we mustn't expect to be called in later life to do greater things. When it comes to leadership, you don't call people to be faithful, you call people who are already faithful.

[22 : 30] And Othniel was already that kind of man. That was his experience. But of course, his previous experience at another level was not in and of itself enough for this new venture. There's also his personal empowering.

You can see that in the text. So, no matter what the task is, if it's to bring glory to God and not ourselves, if it's to bring blessing to others, if it's to thin the ranks of the enemy and result in victory, it will need to be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And we all need to be reminded of that, although we already know it in our heads. I need to be reminded of it. We did in verse 10, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and he went to war.

The Lord gave Cushan Rishatham king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him, so the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Canaz died. It was that touch from God, that rush of the Spirit coming upon him, that made all the difference.

It was, call it an anointing if you like, it was that anointing that made all the difference. It was the empowering by the Spirit that brought transformation not just on the home front, but in penetrating the enemy's ranks.

[23 : 53] I'm not saying this is a second blessing. I'm simply saying this man went about his God-given ministry depending on the Holy Spirit. Yes, he had something in the box of experience he could draw on from his earlier days, but he needed more than that.

Every preacher, every leader, every child of God engaged in ministry of any kind, God.

No matter how gifted and how talented and experienced they may be, it must always be not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

The preaching of orthodoxy, the leading with great skill, the multiplication of activities, absolutely useless unless the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven is our portion.

Now, I'm not quoting John Wimber here, I'm quoting Professor John Murray, who's at the other end of the theological spectrum because this lies at the heart of historic reformed theology.

[25 : 11] We're back here to the importance of the place of prayer in our lives and in the life of the church, which Al Martin once referred to as the conscious spreading out of our helplessness before God.

You look at Othniel. Something in the box of experience, yes, but he needed that anointing of the Spirit. Without him, we can do nothing.

Therein lies the strength of the persecuted church in so many parts of the world tonight. Therein lies the strength of any church worthy of the name. Therein lies the strength of Othniel, the first judge.

Mr. Unique. But alas, it would only be temporary because you read that he died.

So time moves on. Life moves on. And along comes Ehud. How shall we describe him?

[26 : 16] Mr. Unusual. Gordon Keddie in his commentary on Judges suggests that the story of Ehud is the stuff of which swashbuckling Hollywood movies are made of.

That's how he puts it. A man can change his generation if he's a man entirely at God's disposal. But that same man cannot guarantee the spirituality of the next generation.

The spiritual tide ebbs and flows. After 40 years of peace under Othniel's leadership, the cycle of sin returns as the Israelites become prayerless and careless following his death and they begin to do evil again in the eyes of the Lord.

And in verse 12 we read of how God dealt with them. It's interesting when you read it. Because they did this evil, the Lord gave Eglon, king of Moab, power over Israel. You have to read that sentence twice.

Because they did this evil, the Lord gave Eglon, king of Moab, power over Israel. Getting the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel.

[27 : 31] They took possession of the city of Palms, Jericho. The Israelites were subject to Eglon, king of Moab, for 18 years. Now you read that and you immediately come to the conclusion that God's in control.

He always is. We read that it was God who handed Israel over into the hands of Eglon, king of Moab. It wasn't a fluke incident. It wasn't a freak accident. God raised up this man, king of Moab, actually strengthened him so that he would be in a position of power to actually inflict damage on Israel, his people.

And it took Israel 18 long years before they eventually came to their senses and cried out to the Lord. And needless to say, God heard their cry, raised up another deliverer, another man he could use, but a man completely different from Othniel.

His name was Ehud. The etymology of the word Ehud or Udea as it is for short is unknown. I called him Mr.

Unusual simply because he was a left-handed man. No disrespect to anybody here who might be left-handed, but he's unusual because he's a left-handed man and he belongs to the tribe of Benjamin, which means son of my right hand.

[28 : 45] Now, for any of us to be left-handed may mean nothing more than to be slightly different from most other people in how we handle things. Perhaps a little awkward, especially if you're looking to borrow somebody else's golf clubs.

It's not a handicap or something that puts limitations on anyone. But the meaning of the word in Hebrew carries with it a sense of being bound or hindered in some way.

I also read somewhere that the word in Latin actually means sinister. Now, we also know that in those days it was thought by some as being a defect.

We're not going to go down that road, be that as it may. It certainly made Ehud because he was a lefty. It made him stand out as being markedly different from others. And that's why the person who wrote the narrative draws our attention to it.

He never said when he introduced Othniel, he's a right-handed man, but when he's introducing Ehud, he tells us he's a left-handed man, the son of Gerard the Benjamite. He's a left-handed man in a world of right-handed people.

[29 : 52] He comes from the tribe of Benjamin, as I've said, son of my right hand. And for that reason alone, I call him Mr. Unusual. But God chose him. And again, I would like to mention just a couple of things from the text about him.

When you read the narrative, you come to this conclusion, Ehud was a faithful man. You read in the book of Proverbs 20, verse 6, many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man, who can find?

To be a faithful man is to belong to a rare breed, especially when the spiritual tide is out. Anybody in Christian leadership would tell you, give me a dozen faithful people.

Makes all the difference. And yet, this is the quality that God looks for, isn't it? More than anything else in a human being. This is the quality he'll reward more than anything else on the last day. I mean, let me throw it out.

Is there anyone here who doesn't want to hear the Lord say to them when we render our account, well done, good and faithful servant? Enter into the joy of your Lord? Of course we want to hear that.

[31 : 00] Ehud was faithful because he was a man who not only trusted God, he was a man who could be trusted by God, especially when it came to money.

Don't miss that in the passage. Handling money. No one in human history has been able to serve God and money at one and the same time. It is absolutely impossible to do both.

I can say that with confidence because Jesus said it. It's got to be the one or the other. Ehud was a man who served God in his day and he was able to handle money wisely and carefully.

We read in verse 15 that the Israelites sent him with tribute to Edwin, king of Moab. He's entrusted with the task of paying the tax that was due to this overweight, blubbery, 20 stone plus king.

Those who sent him obviously trusted him to deliver the goods without dipping into the purse as Judas did in his day. In that sense he's similar in caliber to Othniel.

[32 : 16] Clearly he's proved his worth to be given such a task in the first place. And as we look into what happened, we need to be careful. We don't need to allegorize this. We don't need to typologize it.

We don't need to moralize the story. We don't need to put any spin on it. The person who wrote this story, he's not embarrassed in writing it. If anything, he enjoyed writing it. And it must have been a story often told and accompanied with great laughter for years to come and many in Israel like home.

What happened that day? This man, who was a faithful man, had a pointed message. He had a pointed message in more ways than one.

You remember when God made Esther, he made her very beautiful and it was her beauty that was instrumental in her being in the right place at the right time.

when God's people would be in a state of crisis. When God made Ehud, he made him unusual, if I can allow you to use that term, in terms of being a lefty in a right handed world.

[33 : 21] He chose a left handed man to be the man of his right hand and it was this that won the day. It was this unusual feature yielded to God that was instrumental in defeating the enemy and in delivering the people of God from a tyrant.

Yes, it took courage for Ehud to do what he did. Yes, he must have thought things through carefully before he did it, but the impact of what he did was felt for eighty years.

Yes, he was a man of his times and we must understand what he did in that context. He was able to salute the king with his right hand without making the king sense there was any danger coming from his left hand.

Thus he caught the king off guard when he said, I have a secret message for you, O king. And then later when he got the king on his own in the upper room of his summer palace, I have a message from God for you, O king.

And it was then he delivered the pointed message in the form of thrusting what was probably an eighteen inch dagger into the king's belly. it says in verse 22, even the handle sank in after the blade which came out of his back.

[34 : 38] Ehud did not pull the sword out and the fat closed in over it. And so he walked out the room, shut the doors behind him, locked them, left the king's servants to wonder for a while as to what was going on while Ehud made his getaway.

Now, brothers and sisters, it's a long time ago. But there are principles here. There are bits and pieces in all of our lives that make you and me tonight unique.

And perhaps some of it is even unusual. Sometimes we lament over these things, we forget that this is the way God has put us together in our mother's womb for his eternal glory.

We excuse ourselves sometimes from being useful and usable instead of offering ourselves just as we are to the Lord, making our mark on the sands of time before it is forever too late.

Even in dark days when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes, God was at work during the period of the judges. I said there were three Mr. Men in chapter 3, Mr.

[35 : 47] Unique, Mr. Unusual, and finally Mr. Unknown, Shamgar. I wonder if you were the preacher tonight, what would you say in Shamgar?

He appears at the end of the chapter in one verse. He comes in between Ehud and Deborah in the next chapter, as someone has said, just like an advert in television, between two interesting and exciting programs.

The story of Ehud, that's exciting. The story of Deborah, wow, that's exciting too. But Shamgar?

He's only referred to in this one verse, chapter 3, verse 31, but what a significant mention.

Even though some commentators have little or nothing to say about him, they pass him by. It says, after Ehud came Shamgar, son of Anath, who struck down 600 Philistines with an ox goat, he too saved Israel.

Not bad for a one line-up. He's also mentioned later in the Song of Deborah, chapter 5, verse 6, where we read, in the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned, travelers took to winding paths.

[37 : 04] Now, you take those two little snippets of truth, and you come out with the conclusion that life was difficult and life was dangerous in those days. And Shamgar, he doesn't come onto the stage of Israelite history with a fanfare of trumpets.

We know very little about him. Paul, Saint Paul, Augustine, Saint Augustine, Columba, Saint Columba, Shamgar, Saint Shamgar, he's an unknown quantity.

His life is summed up in the briefest of comments. But he was a legend in his day. Some time ago, I read a book called The Elect Lady.

It was on Selina, the Countess of Huntington. Some of you may have read it. She was an aristocrat. She was able to support men like George Whitfield and John Charles Wesley.

In their day, other great evangelical preachers in the 18th century, Howe Harris in Wales. She moved in high society as an aristocratic ambassador for the Lord Jesus. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, remember what he said?

[38 : 28] He said, brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth, but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God chose what's weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what's low and despised in the world, even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are. Selina, the elect lady of the Countess of Huntingdon, she used to say she was grateful for the letter M in the word many in that passage.

if it had said not any, not any wise, not any influential, she would have been left out. She was an aristocrat. I don't know that there are any aristocrats here.

Most of us are very ordinary creatures. Came from a background of relative obscurity in the world. My father was a coal miner. His father was a coal miner.

And his father before him was a coal miner. I come from a wee village in the west of Scotland, New York Hill. It's a dump. Forgive me for saying it. There's nothing in it.

[39 : 35] I think Shamgar was a wee bit like that. Nothing exceptional in his breeding, but God used him mightily. He slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad.

Now we're not told if he did it all on his own or was it as a leader with the help of others. You know it says sometimes in the Bible David slew the Philistines but it was David with the army behind him.

Well was it here that Shamgar had men behind him when he did this?

I don't know. I don't know. All I know is a ox goad was a wooden stick that could be as long as eight feet long with a sharp metal point at one end for driving the ox and a blade at the other end for cleaning the plough and yet he put to death all these Philistines.

That was all he had. Just a couple of things about him. It would appear that this man came out of paganism. It's easy to miss that point but Shamgar is probably not a Hebrew name at all.

You check the commentators. It is in all probability a Canaanite name just as his father Anath is the name of a Canaanite god of sex and war.

[40 : 48] Now that's a guess although it may go down as an educated guess we have a problem in that from a family lineage perspective we don't know if he ever had any Israelite roots this man.

God seems to have dug him out of the pit of raw paganism to enlist him into his royal service. The name Shamgar unknown in Israel until this moment in history.

He comes out it probably is true he comes out out of paganism but and he also stands out as being a peasant. His weapon tells us he's something of a country yokel and yet he saved Israel from their enemies.

Shamgar was later written into the annals of their history as a hero his name being mentioned in the lyrics of a song by those who came later. Shamgar what else can I say I don't know what else to say about these things.

Let me just say this we're all unique in some respects. Tonight we're all unusual in many ways and we are all without exception in the category of being known as unknown as far as this world is concerned.

[42 : 11] But do not forget tonight that God knows you. He loves you. Look what He's done for you in Christ and what He's been doing for you, many of you, for decades.

When I was in Burma, Myanmar as it's called today, with Martin Dudgeon from Asia Link, we had a couple of hours free when we were in Rangoon, Yangon, the capital city, and we decided to visit the cemetery on the outskirts of the city where we knew that hundreds and hundreds of British soldiers had been laid to rest, men who fell in the Burmese War.

Most of them were in their late teens or their early twenties. It was quite something just to grave after grave, headstone after headstone, 19 years of age, 21 years of age, 18 years of age, 22 years

of age, right along the line, line after line.

We walked up and down, row after row of graves. The headstone would tell us what regiment they fought with, how old they were, but we came to a grave where it just simply said, unknown soldier. And Martin turned to me, and he said to me, he said, John, he says, there are many unknown soldiers in the Lord's army. Very few people, if any, know who they are.

[43 : 37] beyond the place where they live, but God knows who they are. I just want to say to you tonight, whatever age you're at, whatever stage you're at, I just want to say to you, if you are one of his unknown children, God can take you up and use you for his glory.

If you'll but place at his disposal all that you are and all that you have, no matter how little it may be. I speak to those of you who are my age, mid-70s, you think it's all over?

No, it's not. You've got to go on until you breast the tape. You've got to be faithful unto death, and he will give you the crown of life. It's not about how much we have, it's what we do with what we have that counts, no matter how little it may be.

And that's the challenge of this chapter, I think, and in particular, the man at the end of the chapter, but the other two as well. Put them all together. You know, it was D.L. Moody who once said, the world has yet to see what God can do with one man fully yielded to him, and by the grace of God, I intend to be that man.

Now, God doesn't want you to be Othniel, and he doesn't want you to be a lefty like Ehud, and he doesn't want you to be Shamgar, he wants you to be you, in your generation, me and my generation, living for his glory.

[44 : 57] Mr. Unique, Mr. Unusual, Mr. Unknown, but God has got his hand on you, and he wants to use you with every breath you've got in your body, until he calls you home.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your word, we thank you for these men who lived so long ago, in a completely different world from the world we live in, we thank you that you raised them up, you shaped them, you equipped them, and you used them for the extension of your kingdom, for the blessing of your people, for the glory of your great name.

Help us to feel tonight, to know tonight, that in some small way, we can be in the same train that they are in. and we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. OK. Thank you.