



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

What Child Is This?

Part 3

January 10, 2021

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

At the end of last week's Teen Tree of Life, we learned that Joshua was personally appointed by Moses to take over leadership of the Jews. Joshua was a charismatic warrior who led Israel in the conquest of Canaan after the Exodus from Egypt. Right before Moses died and turned over everything to Joshua, he gave the Jews specific warning about what would happen if they turned away from God.

An important fact we ended with is that, after Moses' warning, both the blessings of obedience and curses of rebellion were eventually lived out in Israel's history. After Joshua conquered the land, there were blessings until a generation came up that had not served with Joshua. Then a cycle of curses and blessings began as these Jews would rebel, be oppressed, repent, and be delivered by a judge God would send.

The same pattern continued during the rule of the kings. A good king would bring blessings and an evil king would bring curses. This is because the kings would lead the people in either obedience or rebellion against God.

Eventually Joshua gave different parts of the land of Canaan to each of Israel's twelve tribes. These tribes were like big extended families, with the oldest male (father) serving as the center of authority. As the tribes took ownership of their pieces of land, they settled down to build towns, grow crops, and raise herds of sheep and goats. The land these tribes owned was assigned by God, and so no one was to sell or give their property to anyone else. If that did happen, the land was to eventually be given back to the tribe God first gave it to. This would happen during the Year of the Celebration which was celebrated approximately every fifty years.

The tribe of Levi did not get their own land, because they were given a special task and would not be farmers or herders. The Law of Moses said The tribe of Levi would be in charge of offering sacrifices to God: **The priests, who are Levites, won't receive any part of the land of Israel. That also applies to the whole tribe of Levi. They will eat the food offerings presented to the Lord. That will be their share. (DEUT 18:1 New International Reader's Version).** The other tribes were to provide these sacrifices, and the Levites were allowed to keep some of the food sacrifices for themselves. So the priests from the tribe of Levi had an important place as the religious leaders of the other tribes: they would be the priests for all of Israel.

Even though the twelve tribes were scattered throughout different areas around Canaan, they shared a common history and followed the Law of Moses. Just before Joshua died, he called all the tribes together for a meeting at Shechem. He challenged them to remain faithful to God and never to worship other gods. What Joshua said to them is recorded in **JOSH 24:14-24: "Now, therefore, [revere or respect] fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and [faithfulness] truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we would abandon the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves, and did these great signs in our sight and watched over us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God." Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your wrongdoing or your sins. If you abandon the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and destroy you after He has done good to you." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." "Now then, do away with the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and [listen to] obey His voice."**

So, as these verses tell us, the Jews promised to remain faithful and Joshua set up a stone as a witness to their promises: **Joshua completed a Covenant for the people that day there at Shechem. He made it official, spelling it out in detail. Joshua wrote out all the directions and regulations into the Book of The Revelation of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up under the oak that was in the holy place of God. Joshua spoke to all the people: "This stone is a witness against us. It has heard every word that God has said to us. It is a standing witness against you lest you cheat on your God." (JOSH 24:25-27 The Message Bible)**

After Joshua died, the tribes of Israel continued to fight against the Canaanites, but they did not drive out all the people who lived in the land. In addition, the tribes of Israel were surrounded by other groups of people who were not friendly. During this

time, the Israelites began to forget the promises they had made to The Lord while Joshua was still alive. Some of them worshiped the Canaanite gods, Baal and Astarte, as well as idols of other gods from nearby. God was so angry that He let the surrounding nations raid Israel's lands and steal their crops and possessions: ***The People of Israel did evil in God's sight: they served Baal-gods; they deserted God, the God of their parents who had led them out of Egypt; they took up with other gods, gods of the peoples around them. They actually worshiped them! And oh, how they angered God as they worshiped god Baal and goddess Astarte! God's anger was hot against Israel: He handed them off to plunderers who stripped them; he sold them cheap to enemies on all sides. They were helpless before their enemies. Every time they walked out the door God was with them—but for evil, just as God had said, just as he had sworn he would do. They were in a bad way. (JUDG 2:11-15 The Message Bible)***

But when the people cried out for help, God felt sorry for them. His help eventually came from special leaders known as judges. The judges sometimes settled legal cases: ***Deborah was a prophet. She was the wife of Lappidoth. She was leading Israel at that time. Under the Palm Tree of Deborah she served the people as their judge. That place was between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. The Israelites went up to her there. They came to have her decide cases for them. She settled matters between them. (JUDG 4:4-5 New International Reader's Version)*** But most of the judges were more well known as military leaders chosen by God to lead the Israelites in their battles against their enemies.

Near the end of the period of the judges, a boy named Samuel was born to Hannah and Elkanah. They took him to Shiloh, where he was dedicated to the Lord by the priest Eli. Samuel stayed with Eli in Shiloh and helped Eli serve the Lord. While Samuel was still very young, The Lord chose him to be his special servant and he grew up to be the Lord's prophet: ***The Lord said to Samuel, "Pay attention! I am about to do something terrible in Israel. It will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. At that time I will do everything to Eli and his family that I said I would. I will finish what I have started. I told Eli I would punish his family forever. He knew his sons were sinning. He knew they were saying bad things about me. In spite of that, he did not stop them. So I made a promise to the family of Eli. I said, 'The sins of Eli's family will never be paid for by bringing sacrifices or offerings.'" Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the Lord's house. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision he had received. But Eli called out to him. He said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." "What did the Lord say to you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide from me anything he told you. If you do, may God punish you greatly." So Samuel told him everything. He didn't hide anything from him. Then Eli said, "He is the Lord. Let him do what he thinks is best." (1 SAM 3:11-18 New International Reader's Version)***

Samuel also served as a priest and was a leader in Israel all his life. Because his time as Israel's leader immediately followed the period of judges, he is sometimes called the last of Israel's judges.

{to be continued}