

## IBZAN, ELON, AND ABDON

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE SERVICE

Introduction:

1. This section of the book covers the last three “minor” judges. {*Previous ones were Shamgar, Tola and Jair.*}
2. These three men followed Jephthah as judges over Israel.
3. Very little is recorded about them or their labors.
4. However, there are important lessons to be learned from the record of Scripture.

- I. Ibzan (12:8-10)
  - A. Though it cannot be established with certainty, his name seems to mean “Illustrious.”
  - B. He was from the town of Bethlehem – probably in Zebulun rather than in Judah (cf. Joshua 19:15).
  - C. When his family is considered, Ibzan lives up to the name “Illustrious.”
    1. He had 60 children, indicating that he was prosperous and able to provide for a large household.
    2. He sent his 30 daughters into other lands to find husbands for them.
    3. He acquired women from other lands to be wives for his 30 sons.
    4. This indicates he was a man of great influence and wealth.
  - D. He judged Israel for seven years.
  - E. Upon his death, he was buried in his hometown of Bethlehem.
  - F. Josephus wrote about him: “He did nothing in the seven years of his administration that was worth recording, or deserved a memorial.”
  - G. *Although highly unlikely, there is a Jewish tradition which says that Ibzan is another name for Boaz who married Ruth.*
  
- II. Elon (12:11-12)
  - A. It seems that the name Elon means, “Oak” or “Terebinth.”
  - B. Elon was from the tribe of Zebulun and he judged Israel for ten years.
  - C. When he died, he was buried in Aijalon – the town where Joshua had commanded the moon to stand still in the sky (Joshua 10:12).
  - D. Josephus wrote, “Neither did Helon ...do anything remarkable.”
  
- III. Abdon (12:13-15)
  - A. The name “Abdon” has some relationship to the word “servant” – either “servile,” “service,” or “servant.”
  - B. It is likely that Bedan is another spelling of this name, leaving off the “a” (cf. 1 Samuel 12:11).
  - C. His father’s name was Hillel and he was from the town of Pirathon in Ephraim.
  - D. He had a large family with 40 sons and 30 grandsons (*nephews* in the KJV).
  - E. Each of these was well mounted on the colts of donkeys – indicating that Abdon was a man of wealth and standing.
  - F. He judged Israel for eight years and, upon his death, was buried in his hometown.
  - G. Josephus wrote of him: “[T]he public affairs were then so peaceable, and in such security, that neither did he perform any glorious action ...he died an old man, and obtained a magnificent burial.”

Judges 12:8-15

- IV. The Importance of Routine Service
- A. None of these judges is remembered for great political speeches, brilliant military strategies, or extraordinary wisdom or leadership.
  - B. They are remembered for adequate service in a routine job.
    - 1. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states: “No mention is made of great public services rendered by him, but it is said that he had seventy well-mounted sons and grandsons. So far as we can judge, he was placed in office as a wealthy elderly man, and performed the routine duties acceptably. Very likely his two next predecessors Ibzan and Elon were men of the same type.”
    - 2. They performed their duties acceptably.
  - C. But, they are remembered!
  - D. No matter one’s background – God desires service from all.
    - 1. Ibzan and Abdon seem to have been wealthy men of position; yet, they were still required to serve God.
    - 2. Shamgar was a common laborer with only an ox goad; yet, his service was needed and necessary.
    - 3. God needs your service (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 3:26-29).
  - E. No matter one’s past – God desires service from all (1 Corinthians 10:6-9; 1 Timothy 1:13; Philippians 3:13-14).
  - F. No matter one’s cultural conditions – God desires service from all.
    - 1. Some were blessed to live in a time of relative peace.
    - 2. Others had to face war and suffering.
    - 3. All had to face the influence of an idolatrous, pagan world.
    - 4. Yet, they still had to step up and serve acceptably.
  - G. No matter one’s talents – God desires service from all.
  - H. No matter how *ordinary* one’s service might seem, it is important to God.
    - 1. Josephus said that these men did nothing worth mentioning.
    - 2. Yet, they were mentioned in God inspired word.
    - 3. If faithful, their names are in the Lamb’s book of life!
    - 4. Our service does not have to be “great” to be noticed by and pleasing to God.

Conclusion: *Serve God where you are with what you have while you can.*

“Just an ordinary member  
Of the church,” I heard him say,  
But you’d always find him present  
Even on a rainy day.

He always gave so freely  
And tried to do his share  
In all the ordinary tasks  
For which some have no care.

He had a hearty handclasp  
For the stranger in the aisle  
And a friend who was in trouble  
Found sunshine in his smile.

His talents were not many  
But his love for God was true,  
His prayers were not in public  
But he prayed for me and you.

When the sermon helped him  
He told the preacher so,  
And when he needed comfort,  
He let someone know.

An “ORDINARY” member –  
I think that I would say  
He was EXTRAORDINARY  
In a humble sort of way.

- Author unknown