

## Battling against “double wickedness”

This message looks at the first *enemy* who fully dominated the Nation of Israel, and the first *Judge* who was raised up by God to conquer this enemy. Through this incident that took place long ago, two fearsome enemies that you and I battle against today are identified.

### The Context

- **The location:** The land of Canaan (Israel)
- **The time:** Some thirty years after the death of Joshua
- **The circumstances:**
  - The Israelite Nation had not totally eradicated the ‘godless’ inhabitants of Canaan.
  - As a consequence, they allowed themselves to be seduced by the pagan Canaanites ... adopting their culture and ‘idolatrous’ practices.
  - Turning away from God, the Israelites turned to sin and fell under the subjection of an enemy king, Cushan-rishathaim, of Aram-naharaim (situated in the North Western region of Mesopotamia).

### Judges 3:7-11 records...

**v. 7** – *“The Israelites did evil in the LORD’s sight. They forgot about the LORD their God, and they served the images of Baal and the Asherah poles.*

**v. 8.** *Then the LORD burned with anger against Israel, and he turned them over to King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim. And the Israelites served Cushan-rishathaim for eight years.*

**v. 9.** *But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a rescuer to save them. His name was Othniel, the son of Caleb’s younger brother, Kenaz.*

**v. 10.** *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he became Israel’s judge. He went to war against King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram, and the LORD gave Othniel victory over him.*

**v. 11.** *So, there was peace in the land for forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died.”*

This message is divided into three parts.

### Part 1 - The fall into “double wickedness”

Verse 7 of our text says ... *“The Israelites did evil in the Lord’s sight!”*

Though created as God-dependant beings, the importance of the Lord in the lives of the Israelites began to wane to the point that they forgot Him altogether--Their attitude became ‘We don’t need God in our lives!’

By forgetting the Lord and the importance of His presence in their lives, the Israelites ‘fell into double wickedness.’ That’s what happens whenever we leave the Lord out of the picture... we fall into wickedness!

So, the Lord, unneeded and unwanted by Israel, allowed an enemy to make slaves of His people - a bondage that lasted 8 years!

The Lord brought onto 'centre stage' a colourful character by the name of Cushan-rishathaim, King of Aram, to give His people a 'wake-up' call.

The meaning of this person's name, and the meaning of the name of his kingdom, is very instructive... you'll be amazed.

The "fall" into double wickedness now takes us to ...

## **Part 2 - The face of "double wickedness"**

Cushan-rishathaim means 'doubly wicked blackness.' This man is said to have been the King of Aram which means 'exalted.'

- So, we have an interesting picture here--This 'Cushy Dude's' double wickedness is in relation to his self-exaltation... he was puffed up... full of himself!
- "Cushy Dude's" double wickedness is extreme pride! This is the first enemy to fully conquer God's people once they had forgotten Him!

Why is *pride* and *self-exaltation* called 'double wickedness'?

**Firstly:** Because there is nothing God can do with a man or woman who does not see their need of Him (The Creator-sustainer of temporal and eternal life)

**Secondly:** God resists the proud, because the proud resist Him! God says in...

- Proverbs 8:13 ... **"... I hate pride ..."** and
- Proverbs 16:18 ... **"Pride goes before destruction ..."**
- 1 Timothy 3:6 tells us that Satan uses pride to "bring us down."

Two well known biblical characters who fell 'big time' into trouble through prideful hearts were King Nebuchadnezzar and King Herod Agrippa ...

**Daniel 4:30-32 ... While walking along the rooftop of his palace, observing the city, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendour."**

**God's response?** *"While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time (7 yrs) will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.'* (Through pride, Nebuchadnezzar fell from King to cow!)

**Acts 12:20-23 ... Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon.** So, they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon his country for food. The delegates won the support of Blastus, Herod's personal assistant, and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his

royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"

**God's response?** "Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So, he was consumed with worms and died." (Through pride, Herod was turned into worm food!)

## Returning to our story

The Nation of Israel forgot the Lord! And in turning away from Him, they fell into double jeopardy through prideful independence, personified in the character of the 'Cushy Dude,' the King of Aram.

Friends, at the very heart of our sin-nature lie *pride* and *independence*.

- Prideful independence was the first enemy to overcome Israel in the days of Othniel.
- Prideful independence is a real and present enemy that stalk each of us today, looking to bring us down and enslave us.

**Question:** What can we do when we find ourselves brought down and enslaved through prideful independence? (The question is not "if" but "when".)

**Answer:** Do as the Israelites did – They "*cried out to God*" (v9).

It's a pity it took 8 years of captivity to soften the Israelites' "hard hearts" towards God! Nothing makes a heart harder than pride! Job 35:12 tells us that God does not answer prideful hearts. (Is God not answering your prayers?)

So, with softened hearts, the Israelites "cried out to the Lord," and the Lord did what? He responded against "double wickedness" ... with force!

**Part 1:** The fall...

**Part 2:** The face...

## Part 3 - The force against "double wickedness"

v. 9 - *But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a rescuer to save them. His name was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother, Kenaz.*

v. 10 - *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he became Israel's judge. He went to war against King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram*

The force God used to combat double wickedness was "***the Spirit of the Lord***"... channelled through an ordinary man named Othniel (his name means 'power of God').

This same godly "force" is available today to every Christian! Jesus says to us in Acts 1:8 ... "***You shall receive POWER when the Holy Spirit comes upon you ...***" Believers already possess the *power* needed to overcome prideful independence.

### Something else worth noting in verse 10

Othniel judged Israel before engaging in war against the “doubly wicked” King of Aram!

If Israel, when they were in the process of ‘forgetting the Lord,’ had judged the condition of their hearts and repented of their prideful independence, the ‘Cushy Dude’ from Aram would not have had a part to play in this incident.

- Self-judgement is a wise practise to adopt. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:31 ... *“if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”*
- I urge you to make this a regular life-practice (at home, work, church)

This incident reveals valuable lessons for us today--we need to be careful in...

1. **Guarding** our hearts against prideful independence (prayer).
2. **Practise** self-judgment
3. **Reverence the Lord** – live totally submissive to Him, and dependent upon Him.
4. **Rely** upon His power to overcome prideful independence in your life.

This incident assures us that as we humbly worship the Lord, living totally dependent upon Him, we will experience satisfying peace in our lives!

- When the Israelites had returned to the Lord, verse 11 of our text says, *“there was peace in the land for forty years.”*

Friends, I urge you to take hold the promise of Isaiah 26:3...

***He will keep in perfect peace those who trust Him, those who keep their thoughts on Him.***

William Joukhadar  
21 June, 2023