

Lessons From the Book of Judges: Heroes for God From All Walks of Life

Lesson One: Judges 1-2

Intro:

- I. The book of Judges is necessary to study because it contains the account of one the most important chapters in the history of God's people:
 - A. The events that are set into motion after the initial conquest of the land under Joshua will go on to shape the future the generations to come:
 1. There will be names of places, people, and nations that may seem insignificant upon an initial reading, but you will find them at the heart of the plot of stories in later books of the Old Testament
 2. Likewise, there are characters and places in the book of Judges that tie up loose ends from stories that began during Moses' leadership of the people
 - B. Perhaps most significant is this: There is a strong case to be made that the events of the book of Judges set Israel on a path that would ultimately divide the nation, and see it conquered and sent into captivity: But that will come later!
- II. Even taken by itself, and removed from the bigger picture the book still had many great lessons for God's people today
 - A. It contains example after example of God showing His patience and mercy
 - B. It clearly portrays God as one who can be wrathful, but is always just in doing so, and quick to relent
 - C. It gives numerous examples of men and women who demonstrate what a strong faith in God looks like
 - D. It rivals even the period of the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings for offering up examples of what God's people need to avoid acting like:
- III. These are reasons to study Judges; our goal tonight will be to introduce ourselves to the book and prepare for future studies therein:

I. Getting to Know the Book of Judges:

- A. When did the events of this book take place?

1. Roughly speaking starting around the mid 1360's BC (somewhere shortly after the initial conquest under Joshua), and lasting until the starting years of King Saul's reign in the 1060's BC: A Period of about 300 years or so:
2. Acts 13:17-20, Paul describes the period of the Exodus, the conquest, the distribution of the land, and then the generations that lived after in Judges, to have taken a period of around 450 years total.

B. What is the central theme of the book?

1. Bob Waldron points out in his book *In the Days of the Judges* that the events of this books sum up the history of mankind: Man Sins, God Chastens, Man Repents, God Saves:¹
 - a) But it is this cycle, that we should keep at the forefront of our minds when studying this book:
 - (1)The Nation Sins
 - (2)God uses another nation to oppress Israel
 - (3)The people cry out for God
 - (4)God sends a Judge to deliver them
 - (5)Peace prevails in the land
 - b) This cycle is given to us in Judges 2:10-19

C. What is a Judge?

1. Is is not the role occupied by our English word Judge:
 - a) In fact, there are hardly any mentions of these men and women doing anything close to what we would think of as a Judge, (some exceptions being Deborah and Samuel)
 - b) Nor were they rulers over the nation, (although there will be self appointed Judges such as Abimilech who would try to make it so)
 - (1)Very often they were only active in a specific portion of the Land of Israel
2. The purpose of the Judges is revealed to us in **2:16-19**
 - a) These verses make a few important facts clear to us:

¹ Pg 59 *In the Days of the Judges*, Waldron, Bob,

- (1) The source of the Judge's authority and power was Jehovah, who raised them up (vi6)
- (2) The purpose of their appointment was not judicial, but for deliverance
- (3) That which they delivered Israel from was external oppression, not internal arguments among the people:²

D. To Who and for What Purpose was the book Written:

- 1. The book was written as part of the history of God's people, and the emphasis placed on Israel's repeated rebellion, hardening of the hearts, and infatuation with Idolatry should serve as a wakeup call to God's people in all generations: Don't forget that the Lord is our God, and we must serve Him faithfully!

E. Real People, Real Places:

- 1. Always emphasize: as fantastic as some of these stories are, they are about real people: Doing God's will, failing to do God's will
- 2. They happened in real places: these events would shape the future: The lessons learned here have real value, beyond that of fables:

a) Illus. Of Jewish Rabbi explaining away the problems of Jephthah as an allegory:

In the remaining time, we are going to do a quick overview of the events of the first two chapters, and then close by pointing out some lessons found in the first two chapters that have both immediate application for us, while also serving as some recurring themes throughout the book:

II. Chapter One: Successes and Failures:

A. The largest portion of chapter one is going to focus on the great success of the Tribe of Judah in taking possession of their land:

- 1. Recall that there is still a good bit of conquering left to do: The major strongholds and fortresses have been destroyed by this point, as well as the major Kings of the land, but Deut. 7:20-24 records the instructions of God stating that afterwards they would drive out the remnants of the people little by little:

² These three facts regarding the roles of the Judges were summarized from pg 22, *The New American Commentary: Judges and Ruth*, Block, Daniel I.

2. They still had the dirty work of taking over the various villages and towns that still populated the individual inheritances of the various tribes:

B. The Overview

1. 1:1-3, Judah and Simeon form an alliance to help each other drive out the people occupying their land: Judah had been appointed as the lead tribe after the Exodus, (Numbers 2:9) and is seen here again taking the lead
2. 1:4-7 gives the account of God bringing justice to the wicked tyrant Adoni-bezek, who had captured 70 kings, removing their thumbs and big toes as they were pressed into service at his table; he in turn received the same treatment
3. 1:8-10 tells of the razing of the city of Jerusalem: this is important to remember because even though Judah captured it, the city would not be under Israelite control until King David
4. 1:11-15 introduces us to our first Judge before he is called to action: Othniel the nephew of Caleb is seen as a man ready for action, and capable of fighting God's enemies as he captures the city of Kiriath-sepher in order to marry Caleb's daughter
5. 1:16 Tells us about the descendants of Moses' father in law, the Kenites settling down with the Israelites: they will be seen again in the book, as well as in Jeremiah
6. 1:17-20 records the rest of the cities that they took
7. 1:21-36 is a much grimmer picture, as it records the failures of the rest of the tribes to take various cities:
 - a) In v 19 Judah is said to have failed to take out people in the hill country due to their Iron Chariots:
 - b) This was certainly not a failure on God part, and should be interpreted that Judah, who had been on such a roll, had a moment of faltering faith when they saw an obstacle they thought too great to overcome
 - c) Benjamin has a similar issue, recording in v 21 that in spite of Judah's razing of Jerusalem, they had let the Jebusites regain control and could not push them back out
 - d) Manasseh and Ephraim both failed to drive out the men of numerous cities, choosing instead to put them into forced labor

- e) Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali, are all said to have gone down the same path
- f) Dan has the worse of the situation, not only failing to ultimately drive the people out, but they themselves were driven out by the Amorites into another part of the land:
 - (i) Always stop and think when you see the territory of Dan on a map: that's not where they should be!

III. Chapter Two: 3 Rebukes of the People:

A. This chapter divides up into three separate rebukes of the people for their failures listed in chapter one:

1. The first rebuke comes from a messenger of God: 2:1-5
 - a) The people are reminded that God not only brought them out of Egypt, but were given a strict charge: v2
 - b) They are rebuked for not keeping it, and reminded of what the consequences were in v 3
2. The second and much longer rebuke, comes in the form of the commentary of the author: 2:7-19
 - a) He points out that their service was fervent, but vanished when Joshua died
 - b) They are charged in v 10 of raising generations who didn't know the Lord or what he had done
 - c) They are rebuked for turning to idols, and in establishing the previously mentioned cycle of the book, he simultaneously rebukes them for failing to exact an lasting change among themselves
3. The third rebuke comes at the end of the chapter, where it is recorded that the Lord allows the people to fall into the hands of the numerous peoples that they had allowed to stay in the land **2:20-23**

IV. Take Home Applications:

A. Our Service to God has to be based on our personal relationship and devotion to Him, not our circumstances or quality of leadership:

1. The people were very faithful during the days of Joshua, and even in the time of the elders following him: 2:7

2. But when those who had been the spiritual compass for Israel were dead and gone, the nation quickly served their own desires:

a) This will be a story that repeats itself throughout this book, and the books that follow it as well: From Kings to Galatians!

b) Our service and devotion to God must be rooted deeply in our hearts, not dependent on the presence of any preacher, teacher, elder, family member, etc.

B. God expects followthrough in our service to Him:

1. All of the nations started to complete God's command of driving out the nations: none of them completed it: *Ecc. 7:8*

a) *Illus of a Model Car, or a fixer upper*

(i) service to God is not a hobby that we can pick up and tinker with when we feel like it: It is an all consuming commitment that we are always pursuing:

C. We must be on Guard to make sure our Faith stays strong: not let it Wax and Wane:

1. Chapter one is filled with the names of tribes who had both seen and experienced the power of God first hand: and yet we see them listed one after the other as failing to drive out their enemies: that failure never lies with God, but always with man

2. 1 Cor. 10:12, 1 Peter 5:8, passages that encourage us to watch out, and stay on guard lest we find ourselves defeated and snatched away due to a lack of faith

D. Sin has longterm, and unintended consequences:

1. 1:28,20,33 all record of Israel becoming strong and forcing the people to become slaves:

2. At the time that probably seemed like a great idea: less work all around!

a) It was not what God commanded!

b) They most likely didn't imagine the people they had in captivity one day oppressing them, or further down, their influence causing them to go into captivity:

c) We may not see all the ways our sin will affect us, but rest assured it will be in ways that don't imagine when we are caught up in it:

(i) But then again, we do know the ultimate consequence: *Rom. 6:23*

E. The Forgetful Nature of God's people:

1. In 2:10 it mentions a generation of people who didn't know God
 - a) It is hard to imagine the people so quickly forgetting the Lord's deliverance from Egypt, and the gift of the land they now lived in: especially when all the other nations seems to remember so clearly:
 - b) It is hard to imagine the people forgetting the consequences of falling away so many times throughout the book, constantly repeating the cycle:
 - c) And yet we do it so often as God's people: which leads to another point:

F. The Apathy of God's people:

1. Sometimes it isn't a matter of forgetting: many times it is a matter of just not caring:
2. Look again in 2:19: Eventually the cycle had repeated itself so many times, there was simply no way literally not know their history:
3. They knew, but they were more dedicated to serving themselves than God:
 - a) How many people are held back from following God for just that reason!

Conclusion:

- This is an exciting study we are undertaking!
- In the book we see the people failing to take advantage of the promises God gave them: don't make that mistake tonight!
- If you have failed to drive out the sin from your life in the way they failed to drive out the people...