

Judges Ch 1

Now when we hear the word “Judges” we’re prone to think of a man who sets over the people in the sense of judgment wearing a black robe and deciding the outcome of people’s lives. However that wouldn’t be an accurate assessment when it comes to the book of Judges, as a matter of fact if you have a little heading in your bible concerning the book of Judges you can probably read of the fact that the Hebrew word that’s been translated “Judges” also means “rulers” “deliverers” or “saviors”. And so we’re not really speaking of judges in the judicial sense but rather in the heroic sense, these Judges were Spirit-endowed men, raised up of God and empowered by him to meet specific crises in Israel's history. And the book of Judges is basically the story of 12 men and 1 woman whom God raised up, empowered and used as instruments to judge those who had wandered away from Him, and deliver those who even thought they were being held captive, were seeking Him. As far as the time period of the book of Judges or what amount of time the book of Judges spans, it’s somewhere between about 320 to 400 years and it covers the amount of time that took place between the death of Joshua and the raising up of Samuel the priest, the prophet and the judge. Tradition holds Samuel as the author of the book of Judges, and the theme that runs through this book is that of *defeat* and *deliverance*. Backsliding and the amazing grace of God in *recovering* and *restoring*, throughout this book we’ll see a pattern, or a cycle that’s repeated 7 times. And one that I have no doubt that from the outside looking in we’re prone to chastise and criticize but if you’ll allow the Lord to search your heart and you’ll be honest with yourself, if you’re anything like me you’ll probably find that it’s a pattern that’s not all together foreign to our own personal lives. And anytime we come upon various OT accounts of failure or the reality of the struggles for the people of God I try to be quick to remind us that these records weren’t kept so that from the outside looking in we could scold these people and stand in awe at how quickly *they* could forsake God and follow after the desires of their own hearts. 1 Cor 10:11 tells us regarding these OT accounts that, “*all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition.*” Now did you catch that? They weren’t written in order that we could admonish or rebuke them, they were written for our rebuke, that we might learn from their examples, what not to do, these records were kept so that we would be with out excuse. And I’m not sure who it was that said this, but there’s a famous quote that says something to the effect that a people who do not know their history will be condemned to repeat it; and that’s true, because we’re to be learning from past mistakes so that we won’t repeat them. The pattern that surfaces in this book that’s all too familiar to many of us is the fact that Israel is found serving God, then they succumb to sin, then they’re enslaved to sin, they find themselves sorry for their sin, and then God saves them from their sin. It goes rebellion, retribution, repentance, restoration; sin, enslavement, servitude, supplication, and salvation by the grace of God. Decline, decay, defeat, repentance, and deliverance, now is that so different from the way it sometimes goes even in our own lives?

We, through sin, rebel against God, we experience a moral and spiritual decline and decay, next thing you know we're living a defeated life, until we're so sick of it we cry out to God through repentance and God is always so faithful to deliver us from the chains and the bondage of sin. Now, the reason that Israel would find themselves carried away into captivity and miserable was because of what happening in their lives?

Disobedience, and the reason that I point that out is because if tonight you feel miserable or as if life is 1 big disappointment, it could very well be because there is an area in your life whereby you are being disobedient to the Lord and His word. It could be that you aren't being faithful to the things that God has shown you and to which He has called you, you see as to where the book of Joshua deals with entering into the land by faith, the book of Judges deals with enjoying the land and the blessings of God by faithfulness. But the vs that basically capsulizes the book of Judges is an unfortunate vs but it's found in the last vs of the last Ch 21:25 and it says, "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" Sounds a lot like the philosophy of modern day USA doesn't it, no absolutes, what's right for you, then that's what's right to do. Everyone doing what was right in his own eyes, why? Because there was no king in Israel, what? What do you mean there was no king in Israel? Look at 1st Samuel ch 12 Vs 12

Vs12

You see Israel has never been with out a King, and Back in Ex ch 19 when they were at Mt Sinai, it was there that the Lord said that He would make them a kingdom of priests meaning that He alone was to rule and reign over them as King. And they were reminded of that over and over again, Moses reminded them of that, Joshua reminded them of that look back at Judg ch 8 vs 22-23

You see they had a King, they just simply wouldn't acknowledge Him as their King. In Duet ch 6 God gave the nation the basic outline or responsibilities which were simply to love and obey the Lord as the only true God, teach their children the word and law of God, be thankful for the blessings of God and separate themselves from the worship of pagan gods in the Land of Canaan. But this new generation that we'll read of in Judges failed in every one of these different points of responsibility. You might say that they didn't want to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" because they'd rather experiment with the idolatry of the godless nations around them. And as a result the nation was plunged headlong into moral, spiritual, and political disaster (have things really changed) I don't think so. The book of Judges is a record of the reproach that we read of in Prov 14:34 "*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.*" And may this book be a wake up call to us, and may we cling to Jesus Christ and not fall into the same reproach and sin cycle that Israel fell into but rather learning from their mistakes may we lead our lives, our whole lives as unto Jesus Christ

Vs 1

So things start off well, their leader dies and immediately they inquire of the Lord, the nation of Israel finds themselves at a critical point because they've lost an incredibly significant link in their godly leadership. Moses had been the great leader used by God to bring them out of Egypt; Joshua had been Moses' assistant, and the great leader used by God to bring them into the land of promise. But Joshua didn't have any assistant that he could appoint to lead the nation as a whole. And God raises up some incredibly wonderful human leaders that He appoints over His work and it's always difficult for the people of God when their human leader passes on, but it's critical that the proper perspective is maintained. That being that, that individual as wonderful and godly as they may've been was simply an instrument, and he may've died but God lives on, and He's the One that we're to be trusting in and looking to anyway. And so when Joshua dies things seemingly start off good, they inquire of the Lord, God what's Your will? Who is it that you desire to go up on our behalf and begin to wipe out the Canaanites? They seek the Lord and the Lord directs them.

Vs2

So God says Judah is going to be the one, the tribe that would bring forth the Messiah would lead the way into the Land. And it's interesting that the name Judah means "praise" because praise always has priority in warfare, it seems to clear the way or make the pathway straight and sets the stage for victory. You remember on the day of Pentecost *before* Peter stood up and delivered the message that would result in 3000 people being brought into the kingdom, and tremendous spiritual victory, but before that happened the Holy Spirit moved on the disciples inspiring them to worship God, and magnify the Lord, glorifying Him as they spoke in other tongues. Praise seems to play a uniquely significant part in the warfare and here Judah, or "praise" is to go before the people bringing them into victory.

Vs3

Now did you catch what just happened? Some commentators see this as wisdom, making the work easier, working together as a body. I disagree, I see this as compromise, who did the Lord command to go? Judah, did He say Judah and Simeon? No, He said Judah shall go up, for I have delivered the land into *his* hand. Judah entered into compromise right here, boy it sure was subtle wasn't it, it seemed like a logical thing to do, there's strength in numbers right? But you see that's not the point, what was one of the lessons that we learned out of the book of Joshua? That common sense isn't always Kingdom sense, I'm not sure if Judah felt inadequate or somewhat afraid to take on the task alone, but the bottom line is that God called Judah to the task, therefore Judah should have trusted the Lord to be their strength and moved forward with the instruction and direction that God placed before them. When God calls you to something trust Him for it and go for it, you don't need anyone else to go with you, why? Because God's callings are God's enablings and equippings, and He is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. God is able to make you stand, and so if He calls you to something, He's going to equip you for the task, as Jonathan said, "*For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.*" But I just wanted you to notice how subtly compromise can seep in.

Vs4

Bezek means “Lightning.”

Vs 5

Adoni-Bezek means “Lord of Lightning” so Adoni-Bezek was the leader or king of this city that they’ve come upon.

Vs6

Boy, talk about “de-feeted” this brings new meaning to the word. Now again we can read into this very practical reasons for treating him the way they did, because he was a king, a man of valor and might and influence. And they’ve just rendered him useless as a warrior, it’s pretty difficult to wield a sword with no thumbs, and he’s not going to be maneuvering or running anywhere to fast with out either of his big toes. And this was a fairly common way to treat captives during that culture but here’s the catch, if you were a pagan or heathen culture. Israel here has adopted a pagan way of dealing with their enemies, find a place in the scriptures that God commands them to torture their enemies, or just maim them for life. I personally don’t know of one, Israel wasn’t commanded to torture their enemies, they were commanded to utterly destroy them, they were to wipe them out completely and not save them alive, lest they learn of their ways and compromise with their culture and begin to worship foreign gods who were in reality nothing more than wood and stone.

But they weren’t obedient and as a result they learned of the heathens ways, began to worship pagan gods, intermingled their different cultures and fell away from God. What does the bible say? 1 Cor 15:33 quoting from the NIV “*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."*” Prov 13:20 says, “*He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*” Prov 22:24-25, “*Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.*” And Prov 12:26 “*The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*” And that’s exactly what happened with the nation of Israel, the way of the wicked led them astray, and be careful the company you choose to surround yourself with, because the way of the wicked, the way of the non-believer will lead you astray. Sometimes the way of the confused believer will lead you astray, so use discernment when it comes to the company that you keep, because he who walks with wise men will himself be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. But ultimately even in this act of disobedience God was able to take it and use it to teach Adoni-Bezek a lesson of divine retribution.

Vs7

You’ve probably heard the old cliché, “what goes around comes around.” And that actually has biblical roots, it’s called the law of sowing and reaping, and we reap what we sow Gal 6:7 “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*”

And there's no escape, if you're prone to chopping at people or cutting people, - oh, not too badly, just a toe here or a thumb there, an occasional jab, be warned, the day is coming when you'll reap that harvest, it's the undeniable irrevocable law of God, that's why Jesus said, blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Vs8-

Again they may've overpowered it but they never fully over took it because it wasn't fully taken until David took it, that's why it's called the city of David.

Vs9-15

A couple of insights here, #1 in that day the young men really couldn't marry the young ladies with out offering the father of the girl some form of dowry, but if they didn't have much to offer (which was really alimony in advance in case it didn't work out) but if they didn't have anything then they couldn't have the daughter. And so here's a chance to have a wife even if you don't have much to offer, you take the city and she's yours, and so Othniel sees a chance believes God is in it for him, goes for it, God honors it and he gets blessed. That's the other thing that we see here, God seems to bless and honor the initiator, the blessing isn't on the procrastinator, it's on the initiator, the one who believes God has a plan for their life and doesn't delay in seizing by faith that which God has placed before them. And did you notice here any resemblance to this request and the prayer of Jabez that we've heard so much about lately? She asks her father for a blessing, and the basis for her request is in the fact that she knows that her father desires to bless her because he's done it before. But she's not asking for the type of blessing that she has the power to amass to herself is she, she's desiring that which only her father can do for her, she realized that all she had was useless if it weren't accompanied by the springs of water, you might say that she's asking for torrents of living water to be given into her life, and how did her father respond? Was he critical of her request, did he say, "I can't believe you have the audacity to make such a request of me, as if I haven't already given you everything you have, now you want more!" No, he wasn't critical in the slightest, he gave her what she asked for and he gave it in abundance, in large measure. Jesus said, *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

Vs16-19

Now, what's going on here? Why couldn't Judah drive out these inhabitants of the lowlands, because Judah was focused on the obstacle, on the circumstance, and not on the Lord. Because I don't care how formidable your enemy might be, if the Lord is your strength and your focus, you will be an overcomer, but if you're focused on the problem, if you're looking at the Lord through your circumstances rather than your circumstances through the Lord you're going to be in big trouble. You see if you're focused on the problems of the past, in bondage to past snares and fixed upon old habit patterns, you're not going to drive it out.

You cannot do in the efforts of the flesh the work of the Spirit, you can't use the flesh to defeat the flesh, you've got to lift your eyes higher, set your sights on the Father, the One who's able to defeat your adversary, it's not by your might or your power says the Lord that you're going to obtain victory in your life anyway, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts. So surrender to the Spirit in order that you might defeat the flesh, you see if Judah would've lifted his eyes a little higher than the chariots of iron to the one who commands the chariots of the heavens (according to Jer 4:13) then I'm convinced they would've had the victory. A lot of times we're ensnared by the struggles and battles of our past, we think that because the iron chariots have defeated us before that we're going to be defeated with each confrontation, but that's a lie from the pit of hell. Remember what we learned concerning singleness of mind Sunday morning, Paul said, "*one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.*" What are some of the things that are behind you? Defeat, discouragement, wounds, failures, and sins, forget that which is behind, lift your eyes higher than your problems and place them on the solution of Jesus Christ and He'll give you victory. We all know what happened when Peter focused on his boisterous problems when walking on the water, he began to sink, this is the same lesson, focus on Christ, and you'll experience the victory, focus on the problem and you'll have problems.

Vs20-26

Did you see what just happened? This man was just spared; he was just saved, delivered from certain death, and how did he respond, what did he do? Did he join the people of God like Rahab? No. After experiencing deliverance, he went into another land and built a city just like the one that had just been destroyed. The same thing still happens today, people go through hard times, and so they receive the blessing and the mercy and forgiveness of God. But then after things ease up, they find themselves going back to the old way of life to rebuild that which the Lord had destroyed in their lives and leading the old life again. People get delivered only to let their guard down when things seem to ease up and they return to the mire and it happens to them as Peter said, "*according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*" When God delivers you from a certain snare, praise Him for it, don't think man that was rough but now I can sort of ease up on my devotions, I can back off on the intense prayer times, because all you'll do is begin to rebuild those old ways and reconstruct that old way of living.

Vs27-28

Again a lesson to be learned, they were commanded to drive these people out, but instead they thought hey, "we can harness this, we don't need to fully get rid of it, because now we *got it under control*".

But we're going to see that this compromise would be a plague to them and because they didn't drive it out with out compromise fully, what they thought they had under control will soon enough be controlling them.

Vs29-33

Same lesson, living in compromise, and it'll only cost you in the end.

Vs34-36

So the episode begins in compromise and failure to be obedient to what God has called them to do, and it will reap heartache and misery untold, I pray that we can learn from these chapters the fact that it's just not worth it to live in disobedience, but rather we'll lift up our eyes above our problems and fixate them on Jesus Christ that we might lead lives of victory and with out compromise.