

JUDGES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to the book of Judges chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we move from Joshua to Judges we move from the children of Israel walking in the Spirit and seeing the salvation that the Lord brought to them, to apostasy. It truly was a very dark, a very black period for the nation of Israel!

And yes, there were those who loved the Lord but it was usually born out of a period of judgment that was upon them. You see, no longer did they have a leader in Israel, like Joshua. The priests were to do that as they were spread throughout the land of Israel, occupying 48 Levitical cities, but they failed. Thus, instead of drawing close to God they moved away from God because there was no one there to encourage them, no one to help keep them moving in the right direction, teaching them the things of God!

We are going to see in our study of this book that the nation will go through a cyclical pattern in their walk with the Lord. The cycle begins with a time of prosperity and rest as God blesses the nation. During this time of peace and prosperity they become complacent in their walk with God, they turn from God and fall into idolatry.

As they turn away from God, as idolatry fills their lives, God brings His judgment upon them. And this judgment is manifested as the enemies of Israel rise up and oppress them. As this judgment continues on for years the children of Israel finally come to their senses and fall on their knees, repenting of their sins before God, the one they told Joshua that they would serve wholeheartedly! It is then that they do return to the Lord.

Then God raises up a Judge who comes on the scene to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression they were facing with their enemies. Thus, out of this is born a time of peace and prosperity that continues on for a time, until the Judge dies, and then they return to their complacency and turning from the Lord and the cycle repeats itself over and over again!

Now keep in mind that this is not a picture of the entire nation of Israel going through this at the same time. But these things occurred within the various tribes of Israel and God then raised up a Judge or deliverer to bring them out of the bondage they were in. But as you will see, this apostasy or falling away from God will eventually cover the whole nation; they all will have a time of falling away!

Here is how it is played out. We will see the southern region of Israel affected in Judges 3:5-31. Then the northern region of Israel will be affected in Judges 4:1-5:31. Next we will see the central region of Israel affected in Judges 6:1-10:5. Then there is the eastern region of Israel affected in Judges 10:6-12:15. And finally we see the western region of Israel affected in Judges 13:1-16:31. Not a pretty picture as all of Israel, in a time span of about 300 years or so went into apostasy! Now, if you added up all the years of servitude and rest it would total 410 years but keep in mind that some of these judges and apostasies overlapped each other and in the end it was about 300 years and it brings us up to the time of Samuel.

Who wrote the book of Judges? Many feel that it was Samuel who not only wrote the book of Judges, but also Ruth and of course I & II Samuel. Also, the Talmud, which is a collection of ancient rabbinical writings, they too ascribe the book of Judges to Samuel as well as Ruth and Samuel!

Now, how could a nation that was directed so powerfully by God, saw the hand of God upon their lives in so many ways, fall into such sin? The answer is given to us in the book of Judges several times. In Judges 21:25 we are told, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** And that is never a good thing! You see, there was no one leading them. The priests were not doing what God called them to do, and the people turned away from the Lord, doing what they felt was right in their own hearts. And there is the problem because the Bible tells us that our hearts are wicked and capable of the most atrocious things. And a heart that is doing its own thing is a heart that is in opposition to what God desires of them.

And as I have said, God does raise up Judges to deliver them once they repent of their sin. Now when we think of a judge we think of a person who sits in a courtroom, they are wearing black robes and they deal with the law. That is not at all what these Judges were all about. The Hebrew word is SHAPHAT and that is the title of this book, Judges and it basically means a deliverer or a heroic leader. That is what these 12 men and 1 woman were all about! Now some say that there were only 12 Judges and we will deal with that as we move on, but some say that Gideon’s son was not a Judge.

Now don’t get the idea that these Judges were some kind of superhero. They did not come flying in to save the day but they did save the day, not in the power of their might, but the Lords! I like that because I see over and over again God using average people, not superhero’s according to the world’s standards. He uses the weak, those that may not have all those degrees, those who are not powerful, those who are not rich and He uses them in a very powerful way. And what God did back then He is still doing today and I like that!

Paul makes this point in I Corinthians 1:20-31 as he tells us, **“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”**

Do you see what God is doing here? He is bringing us all down or up to the same playing field. It is not that education is wrong but that the world's wisdom, the world's education can't save you, it can't bring you to Jesus! God does not need our strength, our resources for victory. Yes, He will use them, but if you think it is about you and how great you are, well, don't stand next to me! God is looking for people who love Him and people that are available. He will use the weak, the poor, those that may not have all those degrees to put to shame those that do because they are gloating in them! You see, God will use us with the gifts, the abilities we have until we think that without us, God is in trouble and then you will be put on the shelf until you humble yourself before the Lord. You may still be involved in ministry, but it is not fruitful.

You see, you can never be too small for God to use you, but you can be too big! The key, of course, is that we can't boast in what we have done but we surely can boast in all that Lord has done, He gets the glory! And that is what we see with these Judges that God raises up. What a comfort to know that what God was doing back then He is still doing today in the lives of His people!

Before we begin our study in Judges, let me just share this last point with you and that is what Arthur E. Cundall wrote. We are told:

There is much in Judges to sadden the heart of the reader; perhaps no book in the Bible witnesses so clearly to our human frailty. But there are also unmistakable signs of the divine compassion and longsuffering. . . . As the lives of these lesser-saviours are considered, there may be a realization of the need in modern times of a greater Saviour, of unblemished life, who is able to effect a perfect deliverance, not only in time but for eternity.

- Arthur E. Cundall

May we not lose sight of that fact, that we have a righteous Judge, Jesus who is our deliver and He is not only delivering us from the many things we face here and now, but for eternity! What a joy, what a comfort, what a Savior we have in Jesus. With that said, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

JUDGES 1

VERSE 1

1. Here is the link from the book of Joshua to the book of Judges; Joshua has died. We have seen two very strong national leaders, Moses and Joshua, pass off the scene and now would the people continue on in the faith? Remember at the close of Joshua how he told the people that they needed to choose whom they would serve, either the Lord or those foreign gods, but you can't serve both. You can't serve the Lord half-heartedly because He will judge you for your lukewarmness to Him. And the people responded back to Joshua by saying in Joshua 24:21, "**And the people said to Joshua, 'No, but we will serve the Lord!'**" And in Joshua 24:24 we are told, "**And the people said to Joshua, 'The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!'**" Now would they be faithful in what they promised not only to Joshua but also to the Lord?

2. Now keep in mind that under the leadership of Joshua the children of Israel broke the back of the Canaanites military strength. But there were still those pockets of resistance that needed to be dealt with and the children of Israel ask the Lord who should go and fight against these Canaanite pockets of resistance? You see, without a national leader they now had to go and seek the Lord and trust Him and what He tells them on a more individual level. That is not a bad thing. In fact, it shows spiritual growth!

VERSE 2

1. What a great lesson this is for us. Israel sought the Lord, they were not sure what they should do and the Lord answered them, the Lord directed them. It is as Jesus said in Luke 11:9, **“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”** In the Greek all three of these verbs: ask, seek and knock are to be a continuous action and not a one time prayer even though God does answer our prayers like that sometimes. I think The Amplified Bible gives us a better reading of this verse as it tells us, **“So I say to you, Ask and keep on asking and it shall be given you; seek and keep on seeking and you shall find; knock and keep on knocking and the door shall be opened to you.”**

You see, I believe God answers every single one of our prayers but not like the health, wealth and prosperity teachers teach us. Sometimes God says, “Yes.” And other times God says, “No.” And then there are times that God says, “Not yet.” You see, He does answer them; we just might not like what He is telling us! But the idea here is that we need to keep praying for the situation we are in because God will direct us as He did here with Israel!

2. God calls the tribe of Judah to go forth and destroy these Canaanite pockets of resistance. And here is the great thing; God already assures them of the victory all they needed to do is walk by faith. And folk’s, Paul also tells us this in I Thessalonians 5:24, **“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”** The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Faithful is He Who is calling you [to Himself] and utterly trustworthy, and He will also do it [fulfill His call by hallowing and keeping you].”**

You see, God is working in you and through you and since He called you, He will complete the work, He will give to you those victories against the enemies of your life, primarily the flesh! Many times we refuse to walk, either we don't want to let go or we are afraid to walk. Keep your eyes focused on Him and see the salvation He will bring to you!

3. One last point here. God called the tribe of Judah to defeat this enemy and Judah means praise. I truly believe as we go into these battles, if we do so in praise, God will give us the victory. If we go in murmuring and complaining, how is that honoring to God? Case in point. In Acts chapter 16 Paul and Silas are thrown in a Philippian jail for delivering a girl who was demon possessed, a fortune-teller. You see, her owners lost their income with her deliverance and had them thrown in jail.

And in Acts 16:25-34 we are told what transpired, **“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”**

Now you would not think of having victory in a dungeon, a jail but God gave Paul and Silas this victory and I believe it was born out of them praying and praising God. They were not praising God for being in jail but for who He is. And out of all this we see the Philippian jailer get saved, his family and I believe the other prisoners who were in that jail with Paul and Silas. What a witness, what a victory all born out of Paul and Silas praying and singing songs unto the Lord, just praising Him. What a great lesson for us as we find ourselves in dark, stinky situations!

VERSE 3

1. Now some don't see a problem with what Judah did here, partnering with the tribe of Simeon, but I do see it as a problem. God did not say, "Judah and Simeon go and take care of these Canaanites, make mince meat out of them." No, He said, "**Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.**" Joshua 1:2.

You may not see this as a big problem but to me it shows a lack of faith on Judah's part. God said He delivered this enemy into their hands but a lack of faith caused them to ask for help instead of seeing what God could do in and through the tribe of Judah in this battle.

2. Folk's, this is not an uncommon response when God calls a person or a group of people to take a step of faith. We saw this also when the Lord called Moses to deliver Israel from their bondage in Egypt. God tells Moses "**Come, now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.**" Exodus 3:10. And Moses, this great deliverer of his people begins to argue with the Lord, and finally Moses tells the Lord that he can't do it, he is not qualified, he can't speak, Jupiter is not aligned with Mars or whatever excuse that he could come up with so he did not have to walk by faith. Yes, he knew that he could not do it but that was not the issue. Moses was overwhelmed and he just tells the Lord his lack of ability to do the job. He says, "**O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.**" Exodus 4:10. Again, that was true but that was not the issue!

Moses rightly saw his weakness but the Lord said to him, **“Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”** Exodus 4:11-12. The point the Lord is making is that He has created us, and He knows us better than we know ourselves. And the battles will not be won in the strength of our flesh, but by the power of His Spirit upon our lives. He will teach us, He will guide us and equip us for the work He has called us to and we must walk. And understand that if He has called us to take a step of faith, He will equip us for that work. If we look to ourselves, we will fail, but if we look to Him for our strength, the enemy will be defeated. He is the Master Artist, and He sometimes uses the smallest brush to achieve the best results. As an instrument in the hands of the Master Artist, we need only be submissive to His will, and a beautiful picture will flow from His hands!

VERSES 4-7

1. Interestingly enough Bezek was far north of the territory that Judah occupied and yet God called them to go forth and they did. We too may be called by God to go places or do things that may seem out of our territory you might say, but if God is calling we need to walk by faith and see the victory God can give us as He did with Judah.

2. Now the leader of Bezek was called Adoni-Bezek and his name means, “Lord of lightning.” As tough as that sounds, God brought him down and the children of Israel cut off his big toes and his thumbs. I know, kind of strange but not when you really think about it. By doing this he would not be able to hold a sword nor could he run and thus, as a military leader he was useless! So it was a smart thing to do!

In fact, this was a common practice to make the person worthless as a warrior. In fact, Clarke tells us that this practice continued on as he wrote, “It was a custom among those Romans who did not like a military life, to cut off their own thumbs, that they might not be called into the army. Sometimes the parents cut off the thumbs of their children, that they might not be called into the army.”

3. What we also see here is the principle of sowing and reaping. You see, Adoni-Bezek cut off the thumbs and toes of 70 kings during his reign, making them into nothing more than beggars. And now this was done to him and he realizes he is only getting what he sowed. That same principle, of sowing and reaping can be applied to our own Christian lives. Paul said in II Corinthians 9:6-7, “**He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or out of compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.**”

Now some apply this to money, and I think that is true, but it goes far beyond that. It speaks of our time, our resources, and our life! How much do you give unto the Lord for His use? And this is where we need to be careful, if you can't give your money, time, resources out of a cheerful heart, a hilarious heart, then don't give at all. And again, the idea is sowing and reaping. What are you sowing because whatever you sow, that is what you will get back!

VERSES 8-9

1. Now this is interesting. Judah defeats the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they occupied it for a time, in fact the king of Bezek, Adoni-Bezek dies in captivity there. But they didn't completely destroy the enemy and according to Judges 1:21 the city fell back into the hands of the Jebusites. It was not until the time of king David that Jerusalem was taken back. In II Samuel 5:6-10 we are told, **“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, ‘You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,’ thinking, ‘David cannot come in here.’ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said on that day, ‘Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul), he shall be chief and captain.’ Therefore they say, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’ Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. So David went on and became great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.”** They could have had the city earlier if they were fully obedient to the Lord.

VERSE 10

1. Hebron is located about 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem in a valley lying about 2,800 feet above sea level. And this was the area of land given to Caleb, the area where the descendents of Anak were located.

VERSES 11-15

1. Debir was located farther to the south, about 8 miles southwest of Hebron. And it seems that Debir was a cultural capitol of the Canaanites, for its name means "books" possibly implying they had an extensive library there. We see that Othniel takes Caleb's challenge and defeats the inhabitants of Debir, and obtains Achsah, the daughter of Caleb, for a wife. (Othniel is either the brother or nephew of Caleb). And because this area of the south was very dry, Achsah asks that her husband speak to her father to see if he would give them the upper and lower springs so they could be assured to have a fresh water supply. As strong as Othniel was in defeating the enemy, he seems a little gun-shy of Caleb, thus, Achsah asks her dad for the springs, which he does give to them.

2. Look at the faith of Caleb's daughter here and there are some principles we can carry away with our own walk with the Lord.

- She knew it was her *father* she asked and of course, we need to bring our heavenly requests before our Heavenly Father!
- She went humbly, yet eagerly. We too, as we approach the Lord, we need to humble ourselves before Him. We need to seek His will and not ours!
- Her father asked her what she wanted - God will ask us the same thing, and we should know what we want. And here is the great thing, as we are walking with the Lord, the desires that He places in our hearts are His desires!

- You should actually ask for it; it is a pleasure for God to hear you ask. People are afraid or they feel they are not to ask for things from God, just pray for others. That is wrong, we are to bring our requests before the Lord and He does delight to give us the desire of our hearts!
- Her father gave her what she asked. And I believe that our Heavenly Father will give us what we ask for, He will answer our prayers. It may not be always the way we want, but He will answer in such a way that it will be the best for our lives!

VERSES 16-18

1. Here we see the descendants of Jethro, Moses father-in-law, and they were nomadic people and the Kenites, as I have said, were the descendants of Jethro. And they are moving farther to the south, Arad was a city out in the Judean wilderness, west of Masada and the Dead Sea. And then Judah went and attacked and took Zephath, which was close by. They also were moving towards the Mediterranean Sea, down to Philistine country. And these Philistine cities along the Mediterranean Sea, the children of Israel took, but they did not drive out the Philistines, who were a thorn in the side of Israel.

VERSES 19-20

1. Judah had a successful military campaign and yet, it was incomplete. They did not drive out the enemy, and it wasn't because of the chariots, it was because of their lack of faith. It didn't matter what the latest military equipment the enemy had, even chariots because God had already told them that the enemy was defeated, but they did not walk by faith, but by sight. Thus their mind told them it was impossible to defeat the enemy that had chariots, and that was reflected in their actions.

Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 20:7, “**Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.**” What a great lesson for us, what are we trusting in for our victories in life? May it be the Lord!

2. We also see Caleb get Hebron, the area that was promised to him by Moses, and he does drive out the enemy. How? Because he walked by faith and believed in the promises of God! Yes, it is easy to look back and see the salvation that the Lord brought to that situation, but can you see the salvation that He will bring before the battle is over? God wants us to, to trust in His promises, all of them and not just some of them!

VERSE 21

1. What did we read in Judges 1:2, “**And the Lord said, ‘Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.’**” And then in Judges 1:8 we see the results of what the Lord said to Judah, “**Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.**”

The Lord gave it to them, in fact the battle was already won, all they had to do was just enter in and it would be theirs. But they did not do that. And once again we see all that God had given them and then that nasty three letter word, “but!” And because of that but, Jerusalem was not theirs yet! And folks, think about this. “But” is just an excuse for compromise, for sin, for failure on our part of not walking. Let’s get rid of it or say, ***“BUT GOD!”***

VERSES 22-26

1. To understand this story, you have to know what these men were looking for, and it was not the main entrance to the city, which was easy to find and its gates could be locked down. Many of these cities would have a tunnel that would take you out of the city so you could get to a fresh water supply if they were under attack from an enemy. Hezekiah had something similar, he built a tunnel that was dug through 1,700 feet of solid rock, to bring in a fresh water supply into the city, which is still in existence today. So these spies were shown how to get into the city of Bethel, and they destroyed the city. Now please understand that it was not their military strategy that brought them this victory, it was the Lord and it is always the Lord folk's! He gets the glory and we are just the instruments that He uses to work through! And that is what we see here as the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh take the city of Bethel!

VERSES 27-29

1. At first these pockets of resistance may have been no problem, but as they were left in the land they grew and eventually became a problem. To deal with this they put these Canaanites under tribute to work for them, but again, that eventually brought the children of Israel down because the worship of those false gods entered into the nation of Israel! And the same things happen in our own lives. Instead of driving out the enemy completely we try to co-exist with them or make a profit off of them.

We see that in the church today where some have bingo nights, casino night's and-so-on. We are to drive out the enemy, not make a profit off of them. And it doesn't matter how good it sounds or how much you will make and use these funds for a good cause. In Chicago they were using the Lotto, gambling, to help our school systems. What is next, prostitution? We are not to go into business with the enemy or make a profit off of him. It is totally wrong! What we are basically saying is that if we can't beat sin, at least let us make a profit off of it. Wrong! Do not try to rationalize away what God has told you to do! As Proverbs 10:2 says, "**Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death.**" Some bring false doctrine in so they can make friends with the enemy. Forget about that! Folk's, God is not broke and He will meet our needs, we don't have to help Him out and compromise our faith! ***NEVER MAKE A PEACE TREATY WITH SIN!***

VERSES 30-36

1. Over and over we read of their incomplete failure to drive out the enemy - do you think God is trying to make a point here? Of course He is. He wants our complete obedience - not to go half way and stop. Not to dwell with the enemy - for how can light and darkness dwell together. And what ends up happening is that your light grows dimmer and dimmer till you become like the darkness that is around you.
2. And notice what happens to the tribe of Dan? The enemy pushes them all the way to the north. This was the result of not completely destroying the enemy - don't live in defeat instead of the victory that God has given us in Christ.

3. Now here's the thing as we begin to rap up our study tonight. The Israelites did not say, "We are going to forsake the Lord!" No, they did not do that, at least not yet. What they did do is they decided that they would be satisfied with far less than God had for them. And because of that they found themselves in trouble and they did not attain what God desired of them!

The same is true for us as Christians. We might not say, "I am going to forsake the Lord!" But are we satisfied where we are? Are we satisfied with less instead of taking all that God has for us? And again, there is danger in that. God truly has so much for us and many times I think we become satisfied with less. Don't do that but seek the Lord, walk as He leads and see the salvation that He will bring to your life and to the situations that you face. Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:13, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

Do you believe that? You need to, it is a promise from God and "**all things**" means just that! May we not compromise our faith but drive out the enemies of our lives and see what God can do in us and through us as we allow Him to work and we walk by faith!