

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

Judges (Part I)

SERIES INTRODUCTION

The book of Judges captures the period of time between the death of Joshua and the inauguration of kings. The “judges” were clan chieftains and war leaders who defended and delivered the Israelites from time to time when they were threatened by enemies.

The generation of Israelites after Joshua neither knew God nor what he had done for their forefathers. They worshipped other gods and provoked Yahweh to anger (2:10-13). God handed the Israelites over to their enemies to be punished for their sins. Yet in his mercy, God raised up judges to save them from those enemies. However, the Israelites were not truly repentant. Hence, the cycle of punishment and deliverance kept repeating itself.

Why did God continue to abide with a rebellious people? What did they keep doing to provoke God to anger? What can we learn about God’s character and about ourselves from this Book?

12 Apr

Incomplete Invasion

Judges 1:1 – 2:5

19 Apr

When Men Forgot God

Judges 2:6 – 3:6

26 Apr

Three Kings

Judges 3:7-31

Incomplete Invasion

JUDGES 1:1 - 2:5

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

It is easy to get confused by the beginning of verse 1 - "After the death of Joshua" and think that the events that occur in the next few verses occurred after the death of Joshua. This is not the case. Judges 1:1- 2:8 happened in Joshua life-time. Joshua's death is recorded in Judges 2:8. "After the death of Joshua" - is a header for the whole book of Judges. What can happen when our obedience to God is qualified with all kinds of reasons and excuses?

For Study and Discussion

1. Success

Judges 1 gives a list of successes in the latter part of Joshua life.

a. Bezek (1:4-7): What happened to Adoni Bezek (i.e. Lord of Bezek)?

Why did Adoni Bezek agree with the outcome?

b. Jerusalem (1:8, 21; 2 Samuel 5:6-10) – It was destroyed by the Benjamites, but it was not taken.
When was it taken?

c. Hebron (1:10-15; Joshua 15:13-19) – Caleb got his inheritance - what did his daughter want from him? Why?

d. Bethel (1:22-25) - How did Israel capture Bethel? What happen to that man who helped them?
(Note: the city mention is not in the Promise Land)

2. Failures

The Israelites experienced plenty of failures too.

a. What reasons were given for their failures in these verses?

i. 1:19

ii. 1:27

iii. 1:35

b. What happen when Israel became stronger? (1:28, 33, 35)

3. Ultimate Reason

The ultimate reason for their failures was Israel itself! They disobeyed God in two ways:

a. They made a covenant with a people in the land (2:2; the Gibeonites – see Joshua 9:3-16)

i. How were the Gibeonites able to make a treaty with the Israelites?

ii. What did the Israelites fail to do before they sign the treaty? (Joshua 9:14)

b. What else did they fail to do?

c. As a result, why did God not drive all the nations out?

d. What was the Israelites' response?

Discipleship Pointers

We are in a covenant relationship with God through Christ Jesus. As Christians, we have obligations to God.

- What are those obligations to God?
- Are you keeping them?
- God keeps his promises, but we often do not.

The case of the Gibeonites reminds us that we have no excuse if we sin due to the actions of others; it is still sin. Let us not try to excuse our sins by blaming it on the temptation of others.

Above all as Christians, we must not compromise the Gospel of Jesus Christ and God's word in the Bible. We must seek to obey the Gospel and God's word fully.

Family/Group Moments

Little compromise can lead to major departure from God and his commands. We need to be spiritual alert and honest all the time. We must not allow spiritual "successes" e.g. a good season of walk with God, fervent service, or ministry result to blind us from staying on guard or be complacent.

- What kinds of spiritual compromises are most common in school or in work environment?
- What can happen when we compromise?
- Once we have compromise, why is it often difficult to reserve our actions?

When Men Forgot God

JUDGES 2:6 – 3:6

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The word “apostasy” comes from the Greek word “apostasia”, meaning defection or revolt. Used in the Christian sense, it refers to rebellion against God (see Joshua 22:22; 2 Chr. 29:19). This study passage focuses on Israel’s apostasy and its consequences. The downward spiritual spiral trapping Israel is most poignantly captured by the statement that “when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers” (2:19). When we read this, we may be inclined to think, “We will not be like those Israelites. We know better. We will not forget God.” The reality is, however, likely to be otherwise.

For Study and Discussion

1. Hint of Israel’s Apostasy (2:6-10)
 - a. “The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua...” (v7) What can we learn from verses 6-10 about the significance of a:
 - i. Godly example; and
 - ii. Godly leadership?
 - b. What are some possible reasons that “another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel” (v10)? Consider these verses (a sample only):
 - i. Deuteronomy 4:9-10, 6:6-12, 6:20-25
 - ii. Leviticus 10:8-11; Malachi 2:6-10
 - iii. Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Hosea 4:1-6
 - c. What can and should we do so that the next generation would grow up knowing God and what he had done in the redemptive history of the world?

2. Pattern of Israel's Apostasy (2:11-19)

What do verses 11 to 23 show about (Be specific in your answers by referring to specifics in those verses):

a. God and Man:

i. the character and attributes of God; and

ii. the nature and heart of Man?

b. Why did the appointment of judges not make things better in the long run?

3. Israel Tested (2:20 – 3:6)

a. God was angry with Israel and he punished them. What can you say about God's character through the manner that he punished?

b. What was the purpose of the test?

c. What do these verses warn us about marriage with unbelievers?

Discipleship Pointers

- The importance of the private and public reading, explaining and application of God's word cannot be over emphasised. We neglect these disciplines to our spiritual peril.
- Whether we prove to be faithful or not, God is and remains ever faithful, merciful and patient towards us. He shows his grace and compassion over and over again. Praise God!
- The Bible does not teach that a man is an island or "every man for himself". Rather, it teaches that the Christian belongs to a body and is part of a body. Body life entails and requires mutual support and accountability, always desiring for one another to grow in Christian maturity.

Family/Group Moments

- Parents, resolve to share and talk regularly about your Christian faith with your children. Especially at those special Christian seasons of the year (e.g. Christmas, Easter), resolve ever more to share and talk with them the true meaning of such times.
- Look out spiritually for one another. Pray for one another, that none will turn cold but each will always keep faith in the Lord.
- Take special note of the warning about marriage with unbelievers. Do not compromise!

Three Kings

JUDGES 3:7-31

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Introduction

The Israelites thought they could co-exist with the Philistines without trouble – they were wrong. From their first step of compromise – letting the inhabitants of Canaan remain in the land – they progressed to marry their daughters and eventually served their gods. In his anger, God punished. Yet in his mercy, God delivered them. In each occasion, we see clearly about the character of God and his mighty deeds. He is the same God who delivers us from sins today. How should we respond to him?

For Study and Discussion

1. God judges
 - a. Why was God so angry with the Israelites (v8a)? What had they done? (vv7 & 12)

 - b. How did God punish them? Who did he use? (vv8, 12b-14)

 - c. What do phrases like “[God] sold them into the hands of...” (v8), and “the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel” (v12) teach about the relationship between God and the affairs of Israel’s history?

 - d. What warning should we draw from the Israelites? Consider also Hebrews 3:12-19.

2. God saves
 - a. What did their oppressions and sufferings drive the Israelites to do? (vv9a & 15a)

 - b. How did God respond to his people? (vv9b & 15b)

 - c. Were the Israelites deserving of God’s help? Why then had God responded the way he did? (Deuteronomy 31:8)

d. How does this background help us to better understand God's saving action for humanity?
Consider Romans 5:6-8.

3. God gives power

a. How did it come about Othniel and Ehud were able to overcome Israel's oppressors? (vv10 & 28)

b. What do you notice about the way the judges defeated that Israel's oppressors? (vv16-27, 31)
Was it by sheer military might or sophisticated weaponry? (vv15-16, 31)

c. How does this background help us to better understand God's saving action for humanity?
Consider Colossians 2:13-15.

4. God gives peace

a. When God delivered the Israelites from their enemies, how long did they experience peace?

b. When God delivers humanity from sins through Christ, what do believers experience?
Consider Hebrews 7:23-25.

Discipleship Pointers

God punishes the evil and unfaithful but powerfully saves those who turn to Him. Let us trust in God's faithfulness and rely on the power of Jesus Christ, our eternal Saviour, so that we may live in obedience to God.

- God is holy and righteous: He punishes the unfaithful and those who do evil in His sight.
- However, God is also loving and merciful: He is faithful and brings salvation even when His people have been unfaithful.
- Jesus Christ has, through His saving work on the cross, conquered sin and death once and for all.
- We who believe in Christ can live a life of faith and obedience to God because we have been freed from the oppressive power of sin and death.
- We can rely on the saving power of Christ our Saviour who lives eternally and forever intercedes for us.

Family/Group Moment

- In what areas of your life have you been testing God's patience? Why?
- How has God been patient with you? What could he have done instead?
- Peace with God both now and forever is possible in Christ. Where do you stand right now in your relationship with Jesus? Do your trust and obey Him daily?