

Judges Study #1: Judges 1:1-3:6

Introduction to Judges

Overview

Content: The cyclical narrative of the time of the judges, with emphasis on Israel's repeated lack of covenant loyalty.

Author: The Book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges. Internal evidence indicates that the author of Judges lived shortly after the period of the Judges. Samuel fits this qualification.

Date: The Book of Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 B.C.

Historical Coverage: From the death of Joshua to the beginning of the monarchy.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Judges can be divided into two sections: 1. Chapters 1-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2. Chapters 17-21 which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time "when there was no king in Israel."

Theme: The contrast between the idolatry, immorality and violence of Israel and God's covenant faithfulness and gracious deliverance of the people.

Intro: If you could pass down just one lesson for future generations, what would it be?

These opening chapters of Judges describe the national and theological condition of Israel following the death of Joshua. They set the scene for the coming of the judges.

Read Judges 1:1-2:5

Question #1: As we read chapter 1 of Judges, we will encounter a statement repeated several times, along the lines of, "So the Canaanites lived among them" (see vv. 21 ["Jebusites"], 29, 30, 32, and 33). Given what we already know about the book of Judges and the instruction from Deuteronomy 7:1-4, what is the danger in Israel's allowing these people to remain in the land? Why couldn't they drive them out?

Question #2: When do you find it hardest to follow God's commands instead of your own "common sense"? Why?

Question #3: In 2:1-5, the angel of the Lord indicts Israel for unfaithfulness to the Sinai (Mosaic) covenant. What has Israel done to break the covenant, and what is the punishment for their disobedience?

Read Judges 2:6-3:6

Question #4: The death of Joshua is recorded twice in the book of Judges (1:1; 2:6-10). What is the significance of his death, and the death of that whole generation, for understanding the book of Judges?

Question #5: It is easy for a new generation to lose the “knowing” of the Lord that the previous generations may have experienced. What is it about the Lord and His actions in the past that you tend to lose sight of? How can you keep in fresh touch with these?

Question #6: Most of the judge narratives begin with a statement such as, “And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (2:11). What reasons can you give for why the people so readily went after foreign gods while neglecting the one true God?

Question #7: In 2:16-23, the text explains why the Lord raises up the judges and what they do for Israel. What does the text say about these judges?

Application:

How have you seen the “Judges cycle” in your own Christian life? How does the reality of your sin and of God’s grace prompt you to praise and thank Him today?