

Sunday Night Message

June 3, 2018

Judges 1 – *Failure to Drive Out the Canaanites*

Series – *Judges*

Text – Judges 1

Background to the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges covers the period of time from the death of Joshua to the beginning of the monarchy when King Saul was anointed. (Approximately from 1380 BC to 1050 BC) Joshua had driven out most of the inhabitants of the land, but there were still enemies within the borders of Israel that needed to be removed. Throughout judges, we see the victories and, unfortunately, the defeats of God's people as they contend with these Canaanites and others.

During this period, Israel was ruled by judges. These judges were not necessarily sovereign rulers over the entire nation, but were mostly regional military and civil rulers and some of the dates of their leadership overlapped other judges.

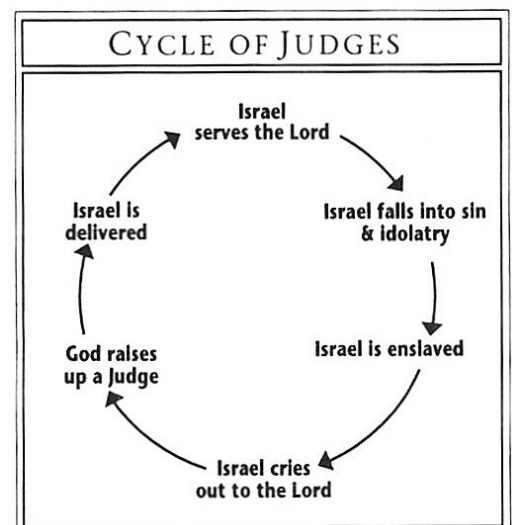
The Book of Judges was probably written by Samuel, as is suggested by the Jewish Talmud. It had to be written after the coronation of King Saul as the Book claims four times that "there was no king in Israel." (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) Judges would have to have been written after there was a king, but records history from before there was a king. It also had to be written before 990 BC, when David drove out the Jebusites from Jerusalem:

"And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day." (Judges 1:21)

There were fifteen judges in all: thirteen mentioned in Judges, and then Eli and Samuel who are revealed in 1 Samuel. There is one female judge named Deborah.

Throughout the Book of Judges we see a repeated cycle:

1. Israel in a right relationship with God receiving God's blessing of provision and protection.
2. Israel moves away from God and begins to worship idols and fall into sin.
3. God drops the hedge of protection that was placed around them, and Israel's enemies begin to conquer them.
4. Israel cries out to the Lord.
5. The Lord raises up a judge.
6. Israel is delivered.



Warren Wiersbe describes the period of the judges accurately:

FAMILY FEUD LEAVES 69 BROTHERS DEAD!

POWERFUL GOVERNMENT LEADER CAUGHT IN "LOVE NEST."

GANG RAPE LEADS TO VICTIM'S DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT.

GIRLS AT PARTY KIDNAPPED AND FORCED TO MARRY STRANGERS.

WOMAN JUDGE SAYS TRAVELERS NO LONGER SAFE ON HIGHWAYS.

Sensational headlines like these are usually found on the front page of supermarket tabloids, but the above headlines actually describe some of the events narrated in the Book of Judges. What a contrast they are to the closing chapters of the Book of Joshua, where you see a nation resting from war and enjoying the riches God had given them in the Promised Land. But the Book of Judges pictures Israel suffering from invasion, slavery, poverty, and civil war. What happened?¹

The problem for Israel in this period of time is they would frequently forget and forsake God:

See Joshua 2:7 – 11

A key verse in Judges is 17:6, which is repeated in 21:25:

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."
(Judges 17:6)

God's people will always get into trouble when they are doing what they think is right instead of what God thinks is right:

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
(Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

None of these judges were ever considered or intended to be kings. Even Gideon refused to be Israel's king:

"Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you." (Judges 8:22-23)

The solution was not to make a human king, but to keep God as the king.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1994). Be available (pp. 7–8). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Judges 1

The Conquests of Judah (vs. 1 – 20)

At this particular point in Israel's history, the leader of the tribe of Judah was Caleb, or he was at least the senior statesman. Some of this material, we already saw in Joshua. (Joshua 14:6 – 15; 15:13 – 19)

The tribe of Judah were unable to drive out all of the inhabitants, even after asking Sileon to help, which God did not tell them to do:

"And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." (Judges 1:19)

Chariots of iron should not have been able to stop God's people.

Was it fear?

Was it faithlessness?

Was it failure (sin)?

For some reason, God had not completely delivered the Canaanites into the Israelite's hand.

The Collapse of Benjamin (v. 21)

The Tribe of Benjamin failed to drive out the Jebusites, which would remain in the land until time of David:

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David." (2 Samuel 5:6-7)

The Compromise of Joseph (vs. 22 – 29)

Joseph did not have to send in spies or "descry" (search out) Bethel. They were well able with God's help to conquer them without making a deal with this man and his family.

Within the tribe of Joseph was Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh put the Canaanites to tribute instead of driving them out. Ephraim failed as well.

The Crash of the Rest of the Tribes, Especially Dan (vs. 30 – 36)

All of the tribes (except possibly Reuben, Issachar, and Gad who are not mentioned) failed in their task of ridding the land of the Canaanites, but Dan was actually driven up into the mountains by the Amorites. (vs. 34 – 36)

Israel was slipping militarily, which was the result of their slipping spiritually. God's blessings were slipping away as well. As Joshua's generation died off, the nation of Israel forgot about God. Eventually, the Israelites would fall even further into full-blown idolatry.