

Judges 1:1-15 - Thursday, August 23rd, 2012

- We begin the book of Judges tonight having completed the book of Joshua last week as we go through the Bible, Genesis to Revelation.
- Judges is a continuation of the historical books beginning with Joshua, however Judges will have a much different flavor than did Joshua.
- More specifically, the book of Judges is very encouraging in the sense that it is filled with victory after victory for the children of Israel.

- For the benefit of those interested in these kinds of things you'll be happy to know the Old Testament can be organized into four sections.
- While we did this starting with Joshua, I suppose this is another good opportunity to revisit a synopsis of the how all 39 books are organized.

#1. The Pentateuch - 5 books - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

#2. Historical Books - 12 books - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

#3. Poetic books - 5 books - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

#4. Prophetic books - 17 books –

- Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

- Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

- If you're anything like me, a book by the name of Judges probably conjures up images in your head of a man wearing a long black robe.
- In order to better understand what the book of Judges is about, it may help to know that they are more like deliverers than they are judges.
- Also, there are a total of 13 Judges, or deliverers, in all, twelve of which are men, and one of which is a woman whose name is Deborah.

- One of the lessons we'll have reiterated in our study of Judges is that a victorious Christian life comes vis-à-vis an obedient Christian life.
- Conversely, a life of defeat comes vis-à-vis a life of disobedience. I don't think we can underestimate this by virtue of its striking contrast.
- In other words, victory is contrasted by defeat, just as obedience is contrasted by disobedience. It's not only contrasting it's also cyclical.

- By that I mean obedience and disobedience is repeated in cycles, such that we see a template from the Israelites that resembles our lives.
- Let me explain, first it starts with a rebellion against God. This is willful disobedience meaning we, of our own volition, choose to disobey.
- The next part of this cycle is bondage, or being taken captive if you prefer. Sadly, willful disobedience will always lead into bondage to sin.

- This brings us to the third part of the cycle, which is calling out to God for deliverance from the sin that's defeated me, and enslaved me.
- This is what we'll see over and over again with the Israelites when in their rebellion they are taken captive then beg God for a deliverer.
- God in His mercy and grace is always faithful when our godly sorrow has led to a genuine repentance to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

- This is a three-pronged cycle, in that it's rebellion, bondage, and deliverance. The problem is after deliverance we're prone to rebel again.
- Then this starts the cycle starts all over again. We go from rebellion to bondage to deliverance, back to rebellion, bondage and deliverance.
- If the truth be known, you could sort of sum up the life of a defeated Christian in this way. They are always at some juncture in this cycle.

- By the way, we'll see this same exact cycle a total of seven times here in the book of Judges as the Israelites continue repeating their folly.
- Right about now you're probably wondering why I would say and see the book of Judges as encouraging with one victory after another.
- I suppose it's one of those glass half full or glass half empty things. This reminds me of a Facebook post about the glass of water half full.

It goes something like this; "the optimist says the glass is half full, the pessimist says the glass is half empty, while the opportunist just drinks the water that's in the glass, and the realist says it really doesn't matter anyway because the glass has to be washed either way. Then, you have the engineer who says either that the glass is too big, or it's twice the size it needs to be. Then, how about the Food and Drug Administration, they say the glass has a design flaw and needs to be sent back to China to be re-engineered. Not to be outdone by the Physicist, they say the glass is neither half full nor half empty rather, the glass is completely full, half with water, and the other half with air. However, the accountant chimes in and wants to know why you're wasting money on a glass that's obviously too large, but is met with a rebuttal from the analyst who says that the glass simply contains 50% of its potential capacity. Finally, you have the pastor, who as everyone knows must have something to say about everything at every time. It's for this reason that the pastor says the problem with this glass, whether you see it as half empty or half full of water, is that there's not enough water to baptize anyone, so I will simply drink the water so as to give myself some time to remember what my next sermon point was."

- Actually, the reason I see the book of Judges as the glass half full is because of the impact it can have on those of us who are in this cycle.
- First, it serves a warning to any of us concerning the consequences of having this cycle become the norm in our lives as Christians.
- Second, it teaches those who are in that cycle how to break that cycle, and the only way to break that cycle is repent, return, and repeat.

- While I realize that this sounds like another three-pronged cycle, it's not. The reason I say that is because of the power of our deliverer.
- When Jesus as my deliverer breaks the cycle, then His Word as my daily bread keeps me from going back into that sin cycle. (Psalms 119)
- What's interesting is throughout the book of Judges Israel will stay in the sin cycle because of the low regard they had for the Word of God.

- What's even more interesting is these seven cycles recorded in the book of Judges take place over a period of 325 years. That's too long!
- It's believed that Samuel was likely the one who wrote the book and chapters one and two are for the most part an introduction of sorts.
- What we're about to see is how it is that Israelites got into this sin cycle in the first place. Needless to say, we want to pay attention to this.

(1) Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"

- Here it would almost seem that we are off to a rather good start when the children of Israel inquire of the Lord concerning who goes first.
- Let's enjoy this for as long as we can, because about verse three, it will start going down hill in a hurry when they disobey God's command.

(2) And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand."

- It's interesting to note we don't know how the Lord said this to them, and can only speculate that it may have been the Thummim and Urim.
- What we do know is that the Lord said to send Judah first, which is also interesting by virtue of how we know the name is the nature.
- As one has suggested, Judah, which means, "praise" should always precede our service to the Lord, as well as our battles in the Lord.

(3) So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him.

- Now at first glance, it would almost appear to be a good idea to have this comradery, however, God did not tell Judah to bring Simeon.
- Before we come down too hard on Judah, we would do well to recognize how prone we are to going beyond the scope of what God said.
- To me the question becomes, did Judah do this because they wanted a comrade, or was it because they were coward. I think it's the latter.

(4) Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. (5) And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. (6) Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

- Here we're told of a rather large victory in the killing of ten thousand men, but we then see them cutting off Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and toes.
- The reason they did this was because he would now be disabled and unable to hold a sword with no thumbs and stand with no big toe.
- Again, God never told them to do this. Well why did they do this? It's because the pattern is already developing with small disobediences.

(7) And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather *scraps* under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that you wouldn't think this is how Adoni-Bezek would have responded.
- You would think that he would be indignant but instead he sees it as the justice of God, which tells me that man knows about God's justice.

(8) 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. (9) And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland. (10) Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron *was* formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. (11) From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir *was* formerly Kirjath Sepher.) (12) Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." (13) And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. (14) Now it happened, when she came *to him*, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" (15) So she said to him, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

- If this sounds like a passage we read recently, that's because this is like a passage we read recently, and one for which I don't want to skip.
- If you'll indulge me for just a moment, I think you'll see why, as there are just too many valuable lessons to be learned from this account.
- So much so, that Charles Spurgeon would make mention of how that the account first mentioned in Joshua 15 is recorded again in Judges.

Charles Spurgeon – "This exploit is recorded again the book of Judges; probably because the hero of it, in after years was moved by the Spirit of God to become a judge and deliverer of Israel."