Judges Chapters 1 & 2 – Raising Up Judges*

Introduction

- The book of Judges is a powerful transition of Israel in the wrong direction – from the tranquility of the final chapters of Joshua where the nation rested from war and enjoyed the Promise Land to the tragedy of the people in Judges – many negative behaviors and actions have transpired.
- Read introductory remarks from Redmond's book (pp. 3-4).
- It has been said, 'what you keep before you become your standards'.
- MacArthur includes a few fundamental questions:
    - What is the problem with not getting rid of the things that tempt you?
    - Why is it important to get those things that lead you astray out of your life?
- Wiersbe notes – "it was the worst of times… after a new generation took over [after Joshua] a generation that knew neither Joshua nor Joshua's God… Israel sank into apathy, instead of obeying the Lord, the people moved into apostacy, and instead of the nation enjoying law and order, the land was filled with anarchy."
- These would have been the 'headlines' found in the times of the Book of Judges:
    - Family feud leaves 69 brothers dead.
    - Powerful government leader caught in 'love nest'.
    - Gang rape leads to victims' death and dismemberment.
    - Girls at party kidnapped and forced to marry strangers.
    - Woman judge says travelers no longer safe on highways.
- READ Chapters 1 and 2 – as I read look for patterns in these two chapters.

Chapter 1 – Fighting the Enemy

- The setting – the tribes of Israel are in the Promised Land but the tribes have not fully claimed their inheritance by defeating and dislodging the peoples of the land.
- Initially, Israel sought God's guidance and Judah is victorious and even ask the tribe of Simeon to go to battle with them (vv. 1-20).
- Caleb's family had a strong faith in God and Othniel (Caleb's nephew) would become the first Judge (see Judges 3:7-11).
- The iron chariots of the Philistines (vv. 18-19) present a military challenge – yet, they claimed the hill country in this conquest.
- The key in this section of chapter 1 is God was with Judah therefore they were victorious.

- Though Israel conquered Jerusalem, they did not inhabit the city (v. 21), which was not accomplished until the time of King David.
- There was also victory for Joseph (vv. 22-26) in the city of Bethel (because of patriarchal connections – Genesis 12:8; 13:3; 28:10-12; 35:1-7).

Chapter 2 – Imitating and Obeying the Enemy

- The tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan all failed to overcome the enemy and had to allow these godless nations to continue living in their tribal territories.
- Remember our introductory questions from MacArthur – what sort of problem does this manifest and why?
- The tribal defeats of chapter 2 are clear and undeniable – Wiersbe says this was, "the first indication that Israel was no longer walking by faith and trusting God to give them victory."
- The new generation approached defeat and slavery by neglecting the Word of God.
- It WAS NOT cruel for God to command Israel to exterminate the nations in Canaan because God had been patient and longsuffering for centuries withholding His judgment for the wickedness of these nations.
- Israel struggled with a human issue that we continue to struggle with today – confusing tolerance with approval – Wiersbe notes "the Jews eventually became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn't see sinful anymore."

Conclusion

- There are many parallels between the experiences and lessons of Judges chapters 1 and 2 and us today – this is because we are human just as the Israelites were.
- The Jews made the error of disobeying God and keeping things in their midst that were explicitly instructed by God to be removed.
- Then, the Israelites became interested in how their neighbors worshipped, until finally the Israelites began to live like their enemies and imitate their ways.
- For believers today, the first step away from the Lord is 'friendship with the world' (James 4:4) which then leads to our being 'unspotted from the world (1:27), followed by a 'love of the world' (1 John 2:15) and gradually being 'conformed to the world' (Romans 12:2) resulting in being 'condemned with the world' (1 Corinthians 11:32).

*MacArthur, J. (2016). *Joshua, Judges & Ruth*. Thomas Nelson.

Redmond, E.C. (2023). *Christ-Centered Exposition – Judges and Ruth*. Holman.

Wiersbe, W.W. (1994). *Be Available: Judges Old Testament Commentary.* David. C. Cook.