

Judges

The King Who Saves and Governs



The Disobedience of Israel

Have any of you ever flown to a state and thought that part of the state looked like it was really cool? So you planned to go back at another time and maybe see the entire state, but when you went back and saw the entire state, you were kind of let down? It wasn't what you thought it was and perhaps you made this statement: I don't ever want to go back there again! Have any of you ever been somewhere where you have great expectations, but once you have been there and you experienced it, you vowed to never go back? I have made that vow. I am never reading Judges again. When you read the daily scripture readings, did any of you get depressed like I did? This book is depressing. I've got to be honest with you, I have flown into Judges many times, picked out a city; Ehud, Shamgar, Gideon, Samson, and I thought wow, the book of Judges is a book about super heroes! I have tried to use those men in my life and in the life of other men for us to draw examples of how to lead people. But man, when you park your camper and build a fire, and you read and study this book, this book is not about super heroes, at all. This book is about the depravity of sinners. It starts out just like the book of Joshua and wow, that was a good book. Joshua started out after the death of Moses. Then, when they transitioned from Moses to Joshua, can I just say, it worked out well. So now, when we open the book of Judges and read those words, "After the death of Joshua," we are thinking this is going to be cool. This is

going to be okay. What we see is the children of Israel transition from the leadership of Joshua, and the first question that is asked is who will the Lord choose to drive out the inhabitants of the land for us? The lot falls to Judah, but remember that Jacob said Judah will be the ruling tribe. And the next thing you know, Judah is talking to his brother, Simeon, and said hey Simeon, will you go with me? If you will go help me take my inheritance, I will help you take yours, and they began to drive out the inhabitants just like God said. Now why were they supposed to drive out the inhabitants? It was not because Israel was righteous, but because of the wickedness of the inhabitants of the land. So now, they are driving them out. Then it mentions this little city that was in the territory of Benjamin that Judah actually helped conquer, and that was Jerusalem. There were some Jebusites that lived there. So we've got Jude and we've got Simeon, and they are doing what God has said to do. Everything is going good, and then all of a sudden, we read in the first chapter that Benjamin, (the tribe) did not take the city of Jerusalem. They did not drive out the Jebusites. Man, my heart started pounding about right there, because God gave them specific commands for them to obey. Joshua had already put life and death before them, and he tells them to choose life. If Israel obeys, we know the blessings that will follow them. But we know if Israel disobeys, there will be some curses that will come into their life. And they will not just affect one man, one family; it will affect a whole nation of people. And then, (following Benjamin) Manasseh doesn't drive out their inhabitants. Naphtali doesn't drive out his inhabitants. Asher doesn't drive out his inhabitants. Zebulun doesn't drive out his inhabitants. And the next thing you know, the Bible says Dan doesn't drive out his inhabitants; the Amorites just rise up against the Danites and tells them, you are not taking this land! You can have the hill country, but you are not having our fertile bottoms. And the Amorites stand against the people of God.

A Nation of Unbelievers

And then Joshua dies again...I mean, he died in Joshua, and he died at the beginning of Judges, and now he dies again in Judges! Now he is not really dying that many times. He just dies once. But what is the writer of Judges

trying to tell us? The writer of Judges is trying to tell us that it's a new day in Israel. Joshua has died, and then all of a sudden, not only Joshua, but his generation dies out. Then the Bible makes this statement referring to death, "And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord..." Did you hear that? Now I have got to ask you this question: How can that be? How can you have a generation of people who wandered in the wilderness for forty years, die out, the next generation rises up, follows Joshua into the land, and then the generation that follows them doesn't know the Lord? They have not seen Him work in Israel as He did for the generations before him. Did He not tell them, I'll be with you and I will drive out the inhabitants? He said we will not do it all at once, because if we drive them out all at once, the wild beasts would overrun the land, but we are going to gradually conquer them. But whatever you do, don't leave any of the '...ites' in the land. And the next thing you know, they don't drive them out. Do you remember what God said? *Man, they are going to be a thorn in your side.* Have you ever had a thorn in the side? Somebody that just pesters you; somebody that just irritates you, just messes with your mind all the time, messes up your day? Then, God said their gods are going to be a snare to you. Then we see the fulfillment of that. There is a generation that grows up that doesn't know the Lord. Now I have got to ask this question. How is this possible, when God commanded the children of Israel daily to teach their children the law of the Lord? I mean, how can one generation teach their children on a daily basis who the Lord is and what He has done, and the next generation not get it? One generation taught the law, and then weekly celebrated a day of rest. As they celebrated the day of rest, they looked back to when they were slaves in Egypt and remembered the great redemption with which God had redeemed them. They taught daily, they celebrated weekly, and then came before the Lord yearly with these feasts. A feast, like Passover, in which they take a lamb, kill it, and remind themselves of what God has done for them. I can't help but ask how can you have something done daily, something done weekly, and something done yearly and then the next generation not get it? Now, as a parent, the first thing you would

probably think is, *oh, I blew it!* But we don't know that, the Bible doesn't say. You know God gives our children a choice too. So while we can teach our children, our children must listen and decide for themselves if they are going to choose life.

Now I want you to get this, and here is why I don't ever want to go back to this book again as long as I live. I'm serious. After it says they knew not the LORD, chapter 2:11-19 says:

“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.” They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.”

God Anger was Kindled

Guys, I am depressed. We have a generation of people among the people of God who do not know the Lord. This phrase, "do not know the LORD," does not mean they did not have information about Him, but it means they didn't have intimacy with Him. They didn't have a relationship with Him. They could not recall, personally, first hand, any of the works of the Lord and what He had done for their fathers. We are talking about a people who God has chosen to be His people. He has put them in the land for them to be His people and fulfill His plan and the nation is a nation of unbelievers! They are a nation of sinners and they are totally depraved. And what do they do? They do evil in the sight of the Lord. They started serving the gods that the Canaanites served. They begin to bow down to them. They begin to give them praise for what was going on in their life, and what was going on in their life was evil. The Bible says God's nose burned hot. The anger of the Lord was kindled; this is a phrase used in the Hebrew. You know, you can sometimes tell when somebody is getting irritated or getting mad. You can see it in their face. They try to act like they're not, but they get really red. That is what this is saying. God's nose burned red; He is angry! As a matter of fact, He is so angry, He takes nations who are living outside the land, and raises them up to bring into the land to do harm to the children of Israel because they are whoring after other gods! Israel had a wedding with God in the wilderness at Mount Sinai. They became His bride and now their heart is going after other lovers! He had already told Israel, I am a jealous God and I will not share you with anyone, so He brings in an enemy. And now His bride is oppressed and she is hurting and groaning, and she cries out. As soon as she cries out, God is there. And what does God do? He raises up a judge. Now you need to note this; this is not a judge who settles matters in court. There are two ways this word was used in the ancient world. , First of all, a judge was a deliverer or a savior. So instead of calling this the book of Judges, we could call it the book of saviors; little 's', or the book of deliverers; little 'd'. And so once a judge had delivered the people from the enemy, he would then govern the people the rest of his life. The Bible teaches that God was with the judge that He raised up all the days of their life, but did the people listen to the judge? Nope...Can you imagine having

a governor in the land who had delivered you from your enemy, and you don't respect him to let him govern, or listen to or follow him? But because God was with him, the people had rest from their outside enemies all the days of the judge. But just as soon as the judge died, we start all over again.

I used to believe that the book of Judges was cyclical; things just happened, and it happened again, and it happened again. But I don't believe that anymore; I think it is a roller coaster. They are up, and then they plunge. Then they twist and they turn and they cry out, and then all of a sudden, wow, they are headed back up! It just seems like the judges build and the deliverance gets greater, and it gets more miraculous; they are seeing what the Lord is doing. I mean, a guy named Gideon took three hundred men and went up against a whole army! No nukes, just a pitcher, without water, a candle on the inside, and get this, with musicians! They played a trumpet in one hand and held a pitcher in the other! They had the opportunity not only to know the Lord, but to see what the Lord is doing, and what do they do? They plunge even farther, they're back up, and they plunge even farther.

"Right in Their Own Eyes"

Now, I don't want you to get the idea that the writer just throws those stories in at the end. It is my opinion that the writer of Judges is telling us about this roller coaster Israel is on, and then he wants us to know how bad it really is. Then he gives us two examples. These are not extreme examples; I believe they characterize the age of the Judges:

1. Idolatry

2. Immorality

Remember this; idolatry always leads to immorality. Look at Micah chapter 17. Micah steals money from his mom that has been dedicated. So there is a curse on him, but he fesses up. Mom removes the curse, gets him blessed, and they take part of the eleven hundred pieces of silver and they dedicate that part to the Lord. Guess what they do with it? They take it to

a silversmith, he melts it down, and they make a god. Did you hear that? Now he has a god. Well if you have a god, you have to have somebody who speaks to you on behalf of the God, right? And so he ordains one of his sons as a priest, and now he thinks he is a blessed man. Now you have heard me tell many, many times that the god most people worship is just a figment of their imagination. This man has now made his own god, he has it in the house, he has his son serving him and the God, and then the Bible says this, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Wow...there would be more hope for these people if the Bible said this, *There was no king in Israel and everyone did what was wrong in their own eyes*. But that is not what the Bible said. The Bible has already told us that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. Now the Bible is telling us that because there is no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Now how can you have people doing what is right in their own eyes, but what they are doing is evil in the sight of God? Somebody is not seeing the same thing in the same way! Somebody has an eye problem. Either God has an eye problem and He is old fashioned, He is not up to the times, or the people of Israel have an eye problem. Now, who do you think has an eye problem? We are going to believe the people of Israel have an eye problem. But now, let's be careful here. We are talking about depraved sinners. We are talking about people who do not know the Lord. Do you know what people do who do not know the Lord do? They make their own gods, and then they begin to worship them. Now in particular, the children of Israel are worshipping the god of Baal. You have to remember that when the children of Israel went into the land, they took the hill country, but they couldn't take the fertile valleys. So the Canaanites served Baal, and he was the fertility god. He was the god that would bless your crops with rain. He would bless your livestock to multiply. He would bless your wife so that she could have a child. Now, in order to have Baal's favor, you had to go down to one of Baal's altars, and there he had a temple prostitute, and as a man, you had to have sex with the temple prostitute. As you had sex with the temple prostitute, then Baal would bless your crops. He would bless your livestock. He would bless your wife. The Church struggles today on how to get men to be men in the church. Baal had it figured out; it got

the men to the temple. Now all of the children of Israel are looking down into the valleys and they are seeing these awesome crops, and up on the hill, well, their God is just not doing what those other gods are doing, so they began to worship other gods. Why? It was because instead of wanting the Canaanites to be like them and serve their God, they want to be like the Canaanites and serve their gods. And the next thing you know, there is not one God who sets the absolute standard. Everybody has their own god who they have imagined, who they have made; they are carrying them around with them. They think that is pretty cool! Everybody is doing what is right in their own eyes, and they don't realize they have got a problem.

Last year, I went to Brazil with the team. Now, I realize that I'm at an age now where I've got to have these glasses. I don't like having these, but I've only got to have them to read. I want you to know that. It's all I need them for, but I'm beginning to discover about everywhere you go at my age, you got to read something. Well last year I was preparing for the trip, and my daughter was going with me and I told her, "Don't worry. I will get our supplies and I go into Walmart." I go into Walmart to get us two twin bed sheets. I don't know why on the Amazon, it can be 105 in the day, but when you wake up at three o'clock in the morning you are freezing to death and you are trying to find something to cover up with! So I knew to take two sheets. If you have to sleep in a hammock, a twin sheet is perfect. So I go into Walmart, I grab the twin sheets, and I pay for them. We get on the bank of the Amazon River, and we get ready to open up those sheets and they are not flat sheets, they are fitted sheets! Now can I be honest with you? In my eyes, I had the right sheets, but my eyes failed me! I do not know how my eyes saw fitted and thought flat, but they did!

The children of Israel had a set of eyes that would look at one thing and because they were idolatrous in their heart, their eyes were not seeing what God saw. Because if their eyes saw what God saw, here is what it would have said, *everyone did what was wrong in his own eyes*. Now there have been many times in the Christian Church when you and I do something we know is wrong and we do it anyway. And we say what we did was wrong, but we know it was wrong, and we do it! This is not what Judges is teaching. Judges teaches that there is a people so depraved that

what God says is evil they say is right. Do you know where it led them? It led them into immorality. When you and I begin to have idols in our life, it always leads to immorality. And this story is so amazing, but it is not an extreme story; it is an example story of a culture, of a people, who lived without the knowledge of the Lord and needed a deliverer. See, the book of Judges is not talking about you and me, the Church. You have got to be careful here. This is not talking about that in the Church there is being raised up one generation who does not know the Lord. That is possible. The application for us is that we, the Church, are living in a culture that does not know the Lord. They are not to influence us; we are to influence them! They have a different god than we have; they have their own god who they have all made up. And they serve different gods; therefore, everybody wants to do what they want to do without regard to the consequences! And under a democratic government, fifty percent is all that matters. It is not really even fifty percent, because the United States of America is not a theocracy. We are a democracy; that is, we are a republic that uses democratic principles. Here we are living in a culture where people do not know the Lord, and what the culture is pleading for is tolerance. Be tolerant, let me do what I think is right, because I have my own god! Ultimately, he is a figment of my imagination. So ultimately, I am god of my life.

It led to immorality for the people of Israel. And here is the immorality: A Levite has a concubine and they are traveling. While they are traveling, some of the cities have not been Israelite-ed yet; they are still Canaanite-ed. You get that play on words, right; even though it wasn't really a word? I made it up; you can do that when you are from Dexter, KY! So the Levite says hey, we are not going to stop in that city, because, whoa, they are depraved; they are sinners. We are going to try to get to a city where we occupy it, and so they go to Gibeah, which is in the territory of Benjamin. When they get there, nobody invites them into their house. Now that is strange to them, because if you were a child of Israel and someone was passing through the night, you were to take them into your home, protect them, give them a place to stay, and give them food. The next day, they would go on their way. They were supposed to love strangers. They were supposed to be hospitable. They were standing in the open square

when an old man who had come into the city from Ephraim sees them. And he says sir it is just not safe for you stay here. I mean, you know, if you are from Dexter or Hardin, you know when people travel through town, we tell them about the parts of town it is not safe to stay in. Every city that you come from has that part of town. So the man says hey, it is the square here; don't stay in the square. I'll tell you what, if no one else will take you, I'll take you into my house. So he takes him into his house and feeds him. So they are eating and having a good time, and all of a sudden, there is a knock on the door. The ESV says some "worthless fellows" knock on the door and say hey, have you got a man in there? Bring him out so that we can know him. Whoa! These people don't know the Lord, but the god they have invented says it is okay to know a man, as a man. The man inside said, I am not bringing him out. So they began to beat the door down, saying we are going to know him before this night is over. Then, what the old man said next just BLOWS MY MIND! But it tells you the code of honor of protecting a stranger and being hospitable. The man said, I will not give you the man for you to know, but I have a virgin daughter, and here is his concubine; you can have them. Listen to this! This culture is so depraved that a man knowing a man is called wicked and outrageous and the better option for a man would be to give his daughter who has not known a man to a group of men. This is not saying that was right, but it is showing the depravity of mankind! Here is a man that, at all costs, is going to protect a man from being sexually abused by another man, even at the cost of his daughter and the man's concubine being sexually abused! And those worthless fellows, by the time they got through with the concubine that night, she died the next morning...and the Levites cut her into twelve pieces and took pieces to each of the tribes. Israel was so outraged at the immorality of those men that they called for the men of Benjamin to deal with those men, but the men of Benjamin protected them! We ought to be weeping! We ought to be heartbroken, because that is exactly the society we are living in! What God says is evil, and wicked, and outrageous, and not to be named among men; man says, it's my right, it's my body, I've got my own god. I can do what I want to do. And there is always somebody wanting to protect the people who are doing right in their own eyes, because they also don't recognize it is evil in

the sight of God. The children of Israel are so outraged that they literally wipe the Benjamites out down to six hundred men! Then they stop, but they made a vow; we are never giving one of our daughters to a Benjamite man. Now they are down to six hundred men. They are not going to have wives. It is over for the tribe of Benjamin, and then they come up with a solution. Do you remember the solution? "*In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*" I am not coming back to this book ever again...

Redemptive Markers

Let me tell you why I don't have to come back to this book again. It is because there are two redemptive markers.

- 1. The people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.**
- 2. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.**

Here is what I now know. Those super heroes that I thought was super heroes are not super heroes. Do you know why they were not super heroes? It is because they could not deal with what was wrong with Israel. What was wrong with Israel was not the outside oppression; that was a consequence to what was wrong on the inside with them. So every deliverer that God raised up knows he was not a super hero. He was the man who just brought temporary halt to the judgement of God on a totally depraved people. But I got good news. The Old Testament is getting ready to transition from the period of judges to the period of kings, where we will learn what God's people really need is a king. In the book of Judges, Jesus is the Deliverer and He is the Governor. Why do we not live like depraved sinners? It is because we have a King who rules on the throne of our hearts, and He has delivered us from what was wrong with us. And what was wrong with us was that we were under the penalty of sin, separated from God. We were sinners, dead to God, alive to sin. But Jesus Christ went to the cross, and on that cross, He paid our debt. When He paid our debt, He was paying our debt not just so we would be forgiven, but so we would be free from what held us. He set us free from the power of sin, by crucifying our old nature with Himself, on the cross. He gave us a new

nature that is not dead to God and alive to sin, but alive to God and dead to sin. And He not only saved us, He governs us! He takes up residence by the Spirit of God in our life, and He initiates a living relationship with His Father in Heaven. I have Jesus, the Word of God! That is why I am not under law, but I am under grace. It is not about what I have to do, it is about what I want to do. And the reason I want to do it is because I am in a living relationship with my Deliverer, who is also my Governor.

Now Israel's problem was, Israel made it ok, till their judge died. But when their judge died, he didn't get back up; he stayed dead. So Israel began to think, we need a judge who won't die. No, what they needed was a judge who would die, but once He died for what was wrong with them, He would be raised again to never die again! That is why you and I live differently! We do not live like sinners, therefore we will not, the true Body of Christ, let the world Canaan-ize us. They will not influence us, but we will influence them. We will not do what is right in our own eyes because God has fitted us with the glasses of salvation. When we see life now, we don't see life as a sinner sees life. We see life as a saint of God sees life.

Let me say this: *The King is coming!* When you read Judges, here is what you know; the King is coming! Let me say this to the Church: *The King has come, but the King is coming again!* And when He comes again, we will not only be set free from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, but the presence of sin will be eradicated once and for all! And then eternity will say, everyone did what was right in God's eyes. That is our desire, to bring ourselves under King Jesus, so that what we do is right in His eyes.