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JUDGES

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An Overview - Why Study Judges?

We are about to study Judges. On a casual reading, Judges is defeating and depressing. But when we begin to dig, we will find truth that is both challenging and empowering. However, we must have a motivation to study through these dark days of Israel or we will quit before God has communicated to our hearts all of the jewels of truth in this book. Is this book applicable for us? Absolutely! Let's see how.

Note: This is an overview lesson. We will get into more depth and detail in later lessons.

Stop and Pray – God, open my mind to Your thoughts and Your ways.

1. What is the point of studying in general? What does it achieve for you versus simply seeing or reading something?
2. What is the warning for you in I Corinthians 10:11-12? Why is this warning necessary?
3. Judges covers the 300 to 350 years between the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua and the anointing of Saul as king over Israel. The entire period is characterized by Judges 21:25. Write out this verse. How is this like our society?

Study Tip: Repeated Phrases - the Bible was originally passed on orally because it was too costly and time consuming to make many copies. Therefore, the author would often repeat the major idea he wanted the audience to remember. As they heard the same word or phrase repeated, it would stick in their memories. Looking for these phrases or words will help unlock the meaning of the text.

4. How does Israel get into the state of moral relativism described in Judges 21:25? The book of Judges describes this decline and we will study it in depth in future lessons. For now, note that the book can be divided into three sections, which are summarized by the following words. Use a dictionary to define each word. Note the progression of the decline.

Apathy (Chapters 1-2)

Apostasy (Chapters 3-16)

Anarchy (Chapters 17-21)

5. Describe what comes to mind when you think of a judge.

Note: The term judge as used in the book of Judges describes twelve men and one woman whom God raised up to deliver His people from their enemies. These judges not only settled disputes and administered civil justice but served as spiritual leaders as well.

Read Judges 2:10-19 several times. (A copy of this text has been included with your lesson, as well as suggestions that will aid in observation of the text.)

6. In the midst of this downward progression, you will see a cycle which repeats itself and aids in the decline. Below is a breakdown of the cycle and a word for each step that will help you to remember the cycle. Jot down next to each one why that particular word is appropriate for that step in the cycle.

Sin (Verses 10-13)

Sold (Verses 14-15a)

Sorrow (Verse 15b)

Salvation (Verse 16)

Security (Verse 18)

Sin (Verse 19)

Heart Check: In our lives we also go through this cycle again and again. At which stage are you currently living? Are you dwelling in security with the Judge maintaining peace? Have you started to dabble in sin again? Are you currently living under an oppressor designed by God to bring you back to Himself? Answer with honesty after prayerful consideration.

7. Let's consider some things about the people mentioned in Judges 2:10-19.
a. What was the attitude or action of the people just before God raised up a judge? Did repentance of their sins earn them a judge? Support your answer.

- b. What was the result of God raising up a judge?
- c. When the judge died, what did the people do? Did they get better or worse?
- d. This decline is not only an Old Testament phenomenon, it also occurs in New Testament times and even today. What do you see in the following verses from the New Testament that you see happening today?
Ephesians 4:17-19

Romans 1:18-32

- 8. Studying this cycle in Judges teaches us much about our God. Reread Judges 2:10-19.
 - a. What was God's response to Israel's sin?
 - b. What was the purpose of the judges?
 - c. Why was the judge successful in delivering Israel from the hands of their enemies when for years Israel had been incapable of throwing off their oppressors?
 - d. God is love (1 John 4:8b) and God is good (Mark 10:18). Giving Israel into the hands of their enemies was part of God's good and loving plan. What state did the Israelites need to reach, before God raised up a judge to save them?
 - e. What motivated God to raise up a judge? Keep in mind your answer to 7a.

f. What limited the effect that each judge had on Israel? (See verses 17 and 19.)

9. This period in Israel's history was preparing them (and us) for the coming of Jesus. Compare and contrast the portrayal of the judge, of God, and of the enemy in Judges 2:10-19 with Jesus' role in our lives.

Digging Deeper: For those who want to dig deeper, look up Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:39-40 and Ezekiel 11:19-20 to see the method by which God will help us listen to and obey our Judge.

10. Even with just this limited introduction and understanding of Judges, why do you think that we, living in the twenty-first century, need to study this book written so long ago?

Final Thoughts: *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed unless he fall."*

(1 Corinthians 10:12) The book of Judges is full of God's truth and of wisdom that will help us live a life worthy of the calling we have received. The compassion and faithfulness of our God in the face of humanity's appalling wickedness should profoundly move us to thankfulness and a willingness to live as He asks us. Let us prayerfully, diligently, and humbly seek God's truth in this study. Through His empowering, may we then endeavor together to live out the truths we discover.

Pray that by the end of this study:

- Your eyes will be opened to your God, yourself, and your enemies.
- You will be able to name your enemies and, by God's help, get them out of the Promised Land.
- You may understand your flesh, its desires, and the way your flesh will deceive you into apathy, apostasy, and anarchy.
- You may be more thankful than ever for your God, who planned a Deliverer for you before you even knew you needed one.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path..." (Psalm 119:105)

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 1 — Overview — Judges 2:10-19

Examine your text. The author of Judges frequently refers to different persons in the same sentence using only pronouns, such as them, they, he, their, etc.. When we examine our text, we will attempt to clarify who does what by marking it in special ways. We will also include the Judges text with each lesson so that you can mark it. We will be using the New American Standard Version because it most closely translates the Hebrew text. You may be tempted to skip the marking step each week, but we encourage you to take the time to complete it, as it will make the book of Judges much easier to understand and will help the truth jump out at you.

Mark your text. Put a jagged line under Israel's enemies gods or the pronouns for these gods. Put a box around time words (e.g. then, now, after). Put a circle around conditional words (e.g. so, so that, as, and yet). Underline all references to the following, including pronouns (e.g. he, who, me, they):

- Israel in blue
- an enemy in black
- God in red
- the judge in green

Judges 2:10-19 — The Cycle of Judges

10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, 12 and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. 14 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. 16 Then the LORD raise up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers. 18 When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered 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 oppressed and afflicted them. 19 But it came about when the judge died, that they

would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

(Judges 2:10-19, NASB95)