

Finer Grounds

Judges and Ruth

Lesson 2: What They Left Behind (Judges 2&3)

As we study thorough this lesson, remember, while we are in Judges 2 this is still an overview of the time period. In Judges 3 we will switch to a more chronological section; however, it is not in complete time order. Some events take place simultaneously. The nations that are coming in and causing problems for Israel aren't taking over the entire nation like Babylon would later; they are simply battling a few tribes at a time.

Read Judges 2:1-10

In these verses we have our first appearance of the angel of the Lord in Judges; he will be a common character throughout this book. Looking into the angel of the Lord and his role in the Old Testament is an interesting one and definitely worth your time; however, we won't be focusing on those aspects during this study, there simply isn't enough time.

Don't forget to continue marking anytime God or the angel of the Lord speaks. These occurrences will allow us to make some interesting observations about God and His character.

Read Exodus 34:10-16 and answer the following questions.

- What did the Lord promise to do for the Israelites?

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- What warnings did God give the Israelites?

- What would the consequence be for not heeding these warnings (Exodus 34:12)?

- Based on what we read in Judges 1, did Israel do as God had commanded?

Even under Joshua's strong leadership Israel still made mistakes that would continue to haunt them. They had disobeyed and left people in the land; they would now suffer severe consequences for doing so.

According to Judges 2:3, what consequence would the Israelites face for not obeying these initial commands?

Even though they were disobedient in this area, these were men of great faith. In fact, they continued to serve the Lord all the days of their life. In this passage we see sincere contrition of the Israelites at Bochim, but they were still given

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“thorns in [their] sides” because of the disobedience they had demonstrated.

God is always faithful to forgive us as Christians when we truly repent and seek His will; however sometimes we still face consequences for our actions.

What are some examples of thorns left in our sides because of disobedience?

Read Judges 2:11-23

Bible Marking: Mark each time you see the phrase “the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord” or anything similar.

List the sinful behaviors of Israel found in this section.

What was God’s response to these actions?

In a heartbreaking turn of events, we now see the children of the previous generation forsaking God. The stumbling blocks that could have been removed for them remained because of the disobedience of their fathers. While Joshua’s generation was strong enough to withstand the temptation of the Canaanite’s false gods, their children who had grown up steeped in the culture of this new land would quickly waver.

This is an incredibly sobering thought. We often times allow temptations into our lives that

we think don’t really affect us. While we may very well be able to remain faithful in their midst, we must continually ask ourselves if these are things that we want our children to battle. Are they strong enough? Will growing up surrounded by these temptations cause them to become complacent? Will they recognize true spiritual danger?

What are some of these temptations that we may leave in the paths of our children?

What are some things you can do this week to eliminate at least one of these?

One generation. That’s all it took. While my children will be required to make their own commitment and be held responsible for their own mistakes, I have a huge responsibility here. My obedience to God in all areas of my life will directly affect the faith of my children.

Judges is a book of patterns, some of them extremely unfortunate. This section introduces us to the cycle that repeats itself throughout the time of the judges.

List the steps of this cycle:

- **Judges 2:11-12-**

- **Judges 2:14-**

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- Judges 2:18-

- Judges 2:19-

Bible Marking: Mark each time you see steps in this cycle as we study through Judges.

Read Judges 3:1-6

When reading through scripture it is important to keep in mind that chapter breaks are a modern invention; the original text was written without them. While these breaks are helpful in navigating scripture, sometimes they cause us to put mental breaks in places where the text should naturally continue flowing. This is one of those sections. These six verses are still part of the overview of the time period before we begin looking at specific judges.

According to Judges 3:6 what vital mistake did the Israelites make?

Why is this such a massive problem?

Throughout scripture marriage to the unfaithful causes many issues. God created marriage to be an intimate coupling and when someone marries a non-believer it usually turns

out badly. It is hard enough to continually focus on God when my husband is standing by my side encouraging me. I cannot imagine attempting to follow God completely and remain faithful to a non-Christian husband. On rare occasion the faithful wife will win her husband to Christ, but it is far more common for the faith of the Christian to wane and eventually dissipate altogether.

Read Judges 3:7-11

Now we get to the heart of the book. We will begin to meet some of the characters that we have loved since childhood. Before we get swept away by the action, here are some questions to ask: Can I identify the cycle of the judges in this section? If so where? Why is this account included? What pattern is it illustrating? What do these events tell us about the nature of God?

List the elements of the cycle of the judges that are present in this passage.

In this section we are reacquainted with a familiar face. Our first judge is none other than Othniel, Caleb's nephew. We already know from Judges 1 that he was a brave warrior. He was prepared for this fight and God used him to rescue the Israelites.

Read Judges 3:12-25

List the elements of the cycle of judges that are present in this passage.

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Well ladies, I warned you that this is not a study for the faint of heart and this is just the first of many gruesome accounts throughout Judges.

In your own words describe the story of Eglon and Ehud.

God always chooses people that will fit his purposes perfectly; on this occasion that man was Ehud. We notice an odd detail in Judges 3:15, Ehud was left-handed. What purpose does this detail serve? Why is it included? Because he was left-handed we are told he was able to attach the small sword he crafted to his right thigh and conceal it under the cloak. Most men, being right-handed would have concealed a sword on their left side; for this reason, if Ehud was searched for weapons before entering the presence of the king a left-handed weapon would have been easy to overlook. Ehud was the perfect man for the task at hand.

What are some often overlooked qualities that make you ideal for work in a particular area?

What are some ways you can use these attributes in service to God?

Read Judges 3:26-31

Ehud didn't stop at simply killing the king, now he would follow through with God's directive and command the Israelite army to

attack the Moabites. At this point, Ehud the war hero, could have become prideful in his victory; however, he does not.

To whom does Ehud attribute the victory?

Ehud recognized that God was the prime mover in this situation. God had caused the Moabites to increase in strength and now God would be the one to remove their power. If there is one lesson that we learn from these accounts it is this: God is in control!

Who is the third judge and what did he accomplish?

Even with a brief mention we can see that God must have been with any man who could take a simple farm tool and kill 600 Philistines.

In Judges 3 the precedent for continually repeating the cycle is set. Already in one short chapter we have been introduced to three judges. It is often easy for us to sit back and discuss how little faith the Israelites must have had to continue in this behavior; however, we must realize that we are guilty of the same thing

To what sins do you continually return?

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What are some precautions you can take to break this cycle?

As you go throughout your week pay attention for these cycles in your life. Also, try to notice some of the harmful things you may be leaving in the paths of your children and future generations of the Lord's church.