

The Book of Judges – Study 1

Judges 1:1-2:15

Introduction

When you read a book, or watch a movie, do you like a ‘happily-ever-after ending’?

Sadly, not every story in real life has a happy ending. That’s often the case with Israel’s story in the Old Testament, as the book of Judges demonstrates.

A quick recap of the story so far. God spoke to Abraham and made him promises that God would give him a special land, and would bless his descendants (Israel) and, through Israel, the world. These promises were repeated to Isaac and Jacob. Years later, God spoke to Moses and sent him to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt and towards the Promised Land with great signs and miracles. Joshua was appointed to succeed Moses (do you know why?) and lead the people across the river Jordan and into the land. The initial entry into the Promised Land under Joshua went from strength to strength, and by the time of Joshua’s death, Israel was reasonably well established in the Land. But there was still work to do.

This is where we pick up the story.

Read Judges 1:1-10

1. Why was this campaign to defeat the inhabitants of the land necessary (Genesis 15:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6, 9:4-5; Numbers 33:50-56)?
2. How do Adoni-bezek’s words in 1:7 help us to understand what is happening?
3. How would you assess the progress of the campaign so far?

None of the other tribes enjoy successes approaching that of Judah. Two things are particularly disturbing.

First is the account of the conquest of the city of Luz in verses 23-26. Israel makes a covenant with a Canaanite to preserve the life of the Canaanite. However (unlike with Rahab in the conquest of Jericho in Joshua 2-6) the Canaanite, far from joining Israel, moves away a distance and rebuilds Luz. This preserves Canaanite idolatry in the middle of the Promised Land.

The second disturbing note is struck in verses 27-34. The reports are increasingly bleak in these verses. First, we are told that the Canaanites continue to live among the Israelites. Then we are told that the Israelites live among the Canaanites. Finally, we are told that the tribe of Dan is forced back into the hills out of their allotment of land.

The good start has first slowed and then been reversed. Israel has not fulfilled the charge God gave her in the Law to clear the Promised Land of its inhabitants.

That brings us to chapter 2 ...

Read Judges 2:1-5

7. What has Israel failed to do, and why was it so important that they do that?
8. What will the consequences be?

Read Judges 2:6-15

9. Why do you think the death of Joshua was such a significant turning point in the story (see Judges 1:1; 17:6; 21:25).

10. What are we told about the next generation (verse 10)?

Applying this to yourself

11. How does Israel's history serve as an example for us (1 Corinthians 10:1-14)?

12. In what particular way does this period in Judges 1-2 serve as a warning to us (1 Corinthians 10:14)?

13. What should we be careful to do, or not do (1 John 5:11; James 4:4)?