

March 1st, 2020

The Story - Next is NOW

Judges

Pastor's Notes

Last week Joshua successfully led the Israelites to a military victory

By faithfully obeying the Lord.

The walls of Jericho fell and the battle was won.

In Judges we pick up as the Israelites are taking control of the promised land

Joshua has passed away at 110 years old

There is no true leader at first after Joshua passes.

So the word of God is neglected and not handed down to the next generation

We begin to see a repeated pattern here as the Israelites move away from God

Each time they would rebel and turn away from God they would face the same consequences

A foreign army would invade take over and oppress them

Then a judge comes and replenishes their hearts to God

What do we mean by a Judge. Well a judge will be the leader who brings them out of the oppression, and heal a broken nation.

Judges will lead for roughly on average 24 years a piece

There are believed to be 12 Judges

Othniel	40years	Judges 1:11-13; 3:7-11
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Ehud	80 years	3:12-30
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Shamgar	NA	3:31
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Deborah	40 years	4, 5
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Gideon	40 years	6, 8
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Tola	23 years	10:1,2
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Jair	22 years	10:3,5
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Jephthat	6 years	10:6-12:7
Ibzan	7 years	12:8-10
Elon	10 years	12:11,12
Abdon	8 years	12:13-15
Samson	20 years	13-16

Judges 2:10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. 11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord's anger 13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist.

This is how the Israelites begin a series of cycles of sinning & worshiping idols, then being punished, after that they cry out for help, finally being rescued by a judge sent from God, but the routine continues by obeying God for awhile, before falling back into idolatry

The pattern becomes consistent from each Judge to the next.

One of renewal, then of disobedience

Followed by a Judges renewal again.

Time after time again this routine continues, well for at least a dozen times

You know at Mt Sinai God had made a covenant with the people

God would make them a special nation, protect them, and give special blessings to them

All they needed to do was Love GOD and obey his laws... simple faith was enough

But like a merry go round they always circled back to where they began

First shunning God and finding other idols.

Because of this God would no longer abide by the contract

But as a loving God, he still afforded a chance to come with him, to redeem themselves. He gave them the Judges.

Wouldn't you think that each time they would learn from their mistakes?

At least after 2 or 3 times the mindset would have changed after seeing God's protection

How many of us in our lives have done this same thing? Over and over again

Knowing the answer but turning from it, ultimately running from God!

You know some of the stories of the Judges are fascinating.

Ehud killed the King of the Moabites with a hidden sword, then used his army to defeat them

Many of the Judges were saviors and redeemers

Some provided rest and peace

Some were famous and powerful

Some leaders of the nation itself

But no matter the Judges style, each one demonstrated that God's judgment follows unfaithfulness but repentance brings restoration.

Through every circle of bad to good to bad again God did not leave them

Lets look at the story of Deborah first

Deborah is the only woman of the Judges

She has special abilities as a mediator, adviser, and counselor

When God called her to lead she planned, directed, and delegated

She was known for her prophetic powers

When I studied Deborah I was enamored with her steadfastness to the words God was passing to her.

She never wavered and she led by example. She tells Barak the Israelites leader that she will lead him to Sisera who is the commander of the oppressing forces

She steps into the battle and is on the mountaintop when the battle begins....

I'm reminded of something Pastor Billy said last week in what Deborah tells Barak just before the battle.

It is in Judges 4:14 Then Deborah said to Barak. Get Ready! This is the day the lord will give you victory over Sisera, for the lord is marching ahead of you.

The Lord is marching before you is what she said. He is prepping the battle, he is protecting your warriors, he is with you through it all.

God is there always. He is not sitting on his throne wondering what will happen. He provides protection, comfort, and strength if you are willing to be faithful

So what happens

Judges 4:15 When Barak attacked, the Lord threw Sisera and all of his Chariots and warriors into a panic....

They were frantic and the Israelites dispatched them.

They were victorious because they trusted God and the story also shows that God will use whom he wishes to accomplish his goals.

God will choose his leaders through his standards not ours.

Deborah did not seek power but only wished to serve God.

She credited God for all the praise she received and was humble about the victory

She still held her position as a woman in the culture of the time

But she did not become hindered by it either.

Focus on what Deborah did, she helped others and was able to do God's work all in one tightly knit package.

Another time the Israelites hit rock bottom before turning back to God is under Gideon

This is another case where God chooses common people to guide his people.

Gideon is a simple farmer but he will deliver Israel from Midian

He acted on his convictions, and with little military training was a master at surprise

This is the tactic of ambush and shooting from concealed areas and attacking when not expected

Our country was begun with similar tactics as the British wanted to fight in column formations and military precision.

We on the other hand used guerilla warfare as we stayed behind trees, walls, and every nook and cranny to protect our selves as we defeated the British and gained our independence...

Gideon was a master of this type of fighting despite being a farmer

Gideon of course had some weaknesses also. He feared he was not capable of doing Gods work. He thought his own limitations would prevent him from helping

God appears to Gideon in the form of an angel and here is what he says while speaking with God in

Judges 6:13,14

13 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” 14 The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

Ok first off God has come to you to do a task and speaks to you... Me I'm pretty simple ... God just gave me the ultimate Knute Rockne pep talk and Ill bust through any wall after that.

But Gideon, and I can see the expression now. Turning his head a little with quizzical eyes, maybe a finger to his mouth and he asks why have we been suffering.

God's response like a guiding father is simple and straight to the point he tells Gideon I'm sending you and you have the power to do this.

Again we are foretold that God has the situation in hand. Just have faith

Gideon still is not satisfied and asks how he and his clan could accomplish this. We are to weak, to meager, to small to win a battle.

Judges 6:15,16

15 “But Lord,” Gideon replied, “How can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!” 16 The Lord said to him, “I will be with you and you will destroy the Medianites as if you were fighting against one man.”

This time God reassures Gideon telling him that they will destroy the Medianites with great strength because he is with them.

How many of you would be ready to go to war at that point. Gideon nahh he is not done asking questions yet.

Judges 6:17,18

17 Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.”

I'm not sure if that was bold or dumb. But Gideon thought he needed to overcome his fears of his own inadequacy, his worries of his family, and his doubts on if the plan would work.

Now you would think that it would be over and off to battle Gideon would go, but Nooooo... Gideon needs even more assurance...

Judges 6:36-40

36 Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised — 37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” 38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” 40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

What? Are you crazy. Ask a million questions and then have God perform what would be simple parlor tricks to him... Is Gideon a 10 year old boy asking 62 questions to annoy you. Nope, nope, nope, I couldn't do it. God even if I questioned these things You would have had me when you appeared

So here is what happens. Gideon has now taken the army to the edge of battle with roughly 32,000 able bodied men but God says to him.

Judges 7:2 “You have too many warriors with you, if I let all of you fight the Midianites, then the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength.”

So God allows whoever is timid or afraid to leave. 22,000 left and Gideon was now left with 10,000 men

Alright then, I'm thinking, God says 10,000 is enough and I believe in God so we can do this. Is that what you might think if you were in that position. Or do you start questioning this whole battle thingy....

Next God says there are still too many people. He weeds out more by allowing them to drink from the river. He tells Gideon take only those who drink from their hands, not the ones who drink like a dog on their hands and knees.

Gideon does as God asks and at the end he is left with only 300 men...I call them the real 300....

I'm guessing a lot of negative thoughts are running through the men's minds and maybe even Gideon's 300 against an army?

But they do win the battle with just 300 men and their belief in God is strengthened

Trust me on this one...read this part in the Bible if you love good action movies. There is mis-direction, a chase scene, and victory for the good guys...

Now as with what Pastor Billy noted last week and Deborah earlier. Gideon tells the men that God has already given the victory before they have even attacked. Now all they need to do is believe in an all powerful God

You can see how God will provide under all circumstances if you are willing to obey.

Our last Judge we will look at today is the famous Samson. Not SAMPSON but Samson

"Yes he of the long hair gives me strength variety. He would be considered famous in his time. But before he was born God came to his parents and told them of the great things he would do and that they were to never cut his hair as he would be dedicated to God as a Nazirite.

Judges 13:3-5

3 The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. 4 Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. 5 You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines

Nazirites were known for love of God and Samson did his part as he grew up

But as a grown Man he had his own troubles to fight as he violated God's laws on many occasions.

He is obviously known for his great feats of strength.

But his love of women leads too much of his killing of Philistines

His strength is used unwisely and he seems to always listen to the wrong people

Stories of Samson killing a Lion with his bare hands amaze. But at his wedding he bets with other men that they can't solve a riddle about the lion that he only knows.

He losses the bet when the other men threaten his wife to find the solution to the riddle.

Samson then goes and kills 30 men to pay for his debt. Seems like Samson has some anger issues.

In one story Samson is given to the Philistines by his own people. But when the Philistines come down proclaiming their victory Samson breaks his restraints and grabs a Jawbone of a donkey and kills 1000 of them.

When he marries Delilah she has other ideas in mind for Samson.

She is offered money to find out Samson's weakness and after several failed tries she does get Samson to give up his weakness. At night she has his hair cut and his power is gone.

The Philistines capture him gouge his eyes out and make him grind wheat for a long period.

In the end Samson remembers his love of God and asks God to return his great strength back and he topples a large building when he pushes the main pillars down. He dies but takes thousands with him.

God in the end turned his failures into victory.

Things we might take from this are

Just like Gideon, God uses anyone despite their shortcomings, but God's presence does not take away that persons will to sin, that is their choice.

We can see this many times in Samson's adult life.

Review and prayer.....

The Israelites can not get themselves out of the merry-go-round of bad-good-bad, just like many of us

God seems to give them a sign and tells them they will overcome before it happens, it's a powerful message that goes on deaf ears after time goes by..

God uses the least of us at any time. Remember if God chose the biggest and best the sign could be mis-interpreted as not of God

God also shows us that even the famous and the ones destined to help his people can be flawed

Remember : God's judgment follows unfaithfulness, but repentance brings restoration.

What does your personal life look like when it comes to sin?

It might be bad but it can change as you confess to God that you are a sinner. Samson did in the end

You can see through Judges that God will redeem anyone who asks and believes.

But disobey and things can go cruelly wrong.

Are you struggling with anything?

Then pray to God for forgiveness and to create a better you. He will take care of the rest if you ask and believe.

Are you rebelling?

God will wait for you. He knows everything about you and is in it for the long haul.