

God's Providence in God's People

Contra Costa Gospel Church
Adult Sunday School

THE JUDGES (Part 3)

We know now that the Period of the Judges was a dark one in Israel's history. It was a time when Israel lacked a king and because of that, they lacked spiritual direction. This is encapsulated in the repeated phrase found in the book, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25). It's interesting to note that, in the eyes of the author, the lack of spirituality and faithfulness is directly attributable to the lack of a king. Why is this not intuitive?

Due to Israel's lack of faithfulness in fulfilling the terms of the covenant, the Lord did as He "promised" - enemies attacked Israel time and again. Each time they did, the people of Israel would repent and the Lord would subsequently relent, providing for them a judge/military leader to deliver the people from their invaders.

While it might seem like a good thing that the judges saved Israel each time, the author's refrain still rings in our ears: "There was no king." We, the reader, are supposed to see lack and insufficiency in the lives of the judges. We are supposed to see them as flawed individuals, as leaders who got the job done, but were not the ultimate answer to Israel's problems. Israel's problems needed better than what the judges provided.

As we read about each of the five prominent judges, we do so with all of this as our framework. We read with an eye to uncover what it was about each one that was such a glaring weakness, which would disqualify them from serving as Israel's king.

Deborah and Barak

- 1) The story of Deborah and Barak is told in Judges 4. Although listed in the Book of Judges and regarded as a judge, Deborah is a different kind of judge. How so? Read Judges 4:1-24.

- 2) There are few details the author gives us about Deborah. She is a prophetess, we know the name of her husband, she adjudicates disputes between the peoples of Israel, and she calls Barak for him to fight the armies of Sisera. On the whole, there isn't much there. What do you think Deborah's "glaring weakness" is, in the eyes of the author? Or, put another way, what was it about Deborah that made her less than ideal to serve as Israel's leader? How do you know this? Where else do you see this issue come up in this chapter?

- 3) This chapter stirs up strong, visceral emotions in many of us because it seems to suggest that the Lord looks down upon women. How might you address this charge? What is the Lord's opinion and viewpoint regarding men and women?

We have now read through two of the five prominent judges in the book. Let's fill out the chart below with the glaring weaknesses of each of these judges, to keep these fresh in our minds:

Judge	Weakness/Insufficiency
Ehud	
Deborah/Barak	
Gideon	
Jephthah	
Samson	