

A CHALLENGE TO THE AMERICAN CHURCH
THE JUDGES SERIES #3
August 5th, 2018

TEXT: Judges 2:1-4

CONSIDER THIS: Judges is an amazingly contemporary book. It reveals the human heart and human experience; not just as it once was over 3,000 years ago, but as it is today. To read and understand Judges properly is to feel compelled to search one's own heart. Am I an idolater? Have I redefined God to make Him fit what I want Him to be? Am I disobeying His word? Are my priorities and motives pleasing in His sight? Am I on friendly terms with a world that hates Him? Are my life and character compromised? And then there's this: Will He ask me the same question He asked the people in Judges 2:2?

I THE QUESTION GOD ASKS

NOTE: God never asks a question to acquire knowledge He lacks. He asks questions to impart knowledge we lack or to expose what we attempt to hide.

A) "Why have you done this?"

1. Disobedience = making covenants with the Canaanites
2. Disobedience = worshipping Canaanite gods. They knew Exodus 23:31-33 and disobeyed it.

Do you think you can justify your disobedience to God when He asks "why?"?

B) Other instances of this type of question are preserved in the Bible to warn and instruct us. Please see I Samuel 15:19-23; II Samuel 12:9; Acts 5:3-4.

C) There are always reasons for our disobedience, but there are no true excuses.

II CHOOSING YOUR LOYALTIES

A) Throughout Judges we keep encountering the "once again" cycle that always comes from a divided or compromised heart. See 2:11, 2:19, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1.

KEY: The person who loves God and seeks to be loyal to Him will always have to "swim against the current" and move "against the grain". We live in a fallen world, energized and influenced by Satan. The constant temptation and pressure we face is to give in and swim with the world's current. It seems so much easier.

B) As Joshua's life was nearing its end and Israel would now be led by the Judges, he challenged Israel to choose her loyalties (Joshua 24:14-24). This choice was faced by every generation in Judges. Each of us faces it today.

C) In the New Testament, James issues the same challenge (see James 4:4-5). The "world" (cosmos) is not a reference to the physical planet or to the people who inhabit it (we are commanded to love our neighbors). The "world" is an attitude, a man-centered perspective that is opposed to God's glory and His moral authority. It is a system energized by Satan that says "do your own thing", "you deserve to be happy", "go for the gusto", "live for the moment". The world pressures, ridicules and rejects those who resist it and refuse to conform to it.

Your heart can be likened to a king's throne. The throne is always occupied by someone or something. That is the case this very moment. The choice is yours to make. But as you weigh your options, imagine how it felt in Judges 2:2 to be asked this question by the LORD: "Why have you done this?"

III A GOD WHO RESTORES

Even in the dark chapters of Judges God reveals His merciful heart (2:18). Sin always comes with consequences and its scars never completely fade away, but God restores hope for He loves His children. I will never stop preaching the grace of a faithful God for it is anything but a license to sin ... grace understood is holiness desired.

THE IMPORTANT BACKGROUND TO JUDGES

In many ways, Judges is a very dark book. Its record of human behavior is an account of rebellion, murder, greed, deceit, pride, rape, sexual perversion, cowardice, betrayal and idolatry. What makes it especially depressing is that these were supposed to be God's people. In order to understand what was happening during this period known as "the time of the Judges" it is important to understand the historical context. The following dates are approximations.

- 2050 BC ... God (the LORD Jehovah) establishes His covenant with Abraham marking the founding of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3).
- 1875 BC ... Jacob and his sons join Joseph in Egypt.
- 1446 BC ... Moses leads the exodus of Israel out of Egypt
- 1446 BC ... Moses receives the Law from God
- 1406 BC ... Death of Moses
- 1406 BC ... Joshua leads the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land
- 1406-1397 BC ... Conquest of promised land
- 1370 BC ... Death of Joshua
- **1370 BC ... Judges begin to lead**
- 1050 BC ... Saul become Israel's first King and the loose confederation of Jewish tribes becomes a monarchy. This brings a close to the time of the Judges.

After the exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the people of Israel were almost ready to enter the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses sent 12 spies into the land on a reconnaissance mission. Among them were Joshua and Caleb, who both said the land could be conquered. The other ten spies were defeatists who insisted that the various Canaanite people (the Promised Land was known as Canaan) were too powerful. The people of Israel, rather than trusting the power and promises of God and the leadership of Moses, listened to the ten spies and rebelled against Moses and God (Numbers 14:1-5). As a punishment for their incredibly wicked sin, God declared a 40 year period of wandering in the barren wilderness (one year for each day the spies had been in the land). At the end of the forty years in the wilderness, Moses died. Joshua inherited the role of Israel's leader and it was Joshua who led the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The Canaanite people were among the most wicked and perverted people in human history. They worshipped many gods and part of that worship included sacrificing babies and widespread sexual immorality with male and female prostitutes. God commissioned Joshua and the people of Israel to conquer Canaan and destroy its inhabitants. This was to be God's judgment against the sin of Canaan. The concept was similar to God judging the world in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:11-13).

KEY: The Jews did NOT completely rid the land of the Canaanites and their continuing existence had a horrible spiritual and moral corrupting influence upon Israel that is a major element in the Book of Judges. Decades earlier, when the LORD had given His Law to Moses, He revealed to Moses that the Canaanite influence would be embraced by Israel and disaster would follow. The key to Judges is Deuteronomy 28-31. **Pay special attention to Deuteronomy 31:14-29.** This is why we find so much darkness in Judges. But because of the LORD's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Israel endures!!