

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

PART ONE - CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

The 'who' and the 'when' of the book of Judges are unknown. According to Jewish tradition this book was written by Samuel, the last of the judges, but nowhere does it say so. It seems most likely that it was written in the time of David or Solomon because it was in David's time that many of the events that began in Judges were finally completed. If so it would be likely to be someone like Nathan or Gad, two of the prophets in the reign of David, who actually wrote these stories down.(I Chr.29:29; II Chr.9:29)

To appreciate the message of Judges it is helpful to be familiar first with the two books before it, Deuteronomy and Joshua, with which it forms a series. One command comes 44 times in the book of Deuteronomy, more than in the whole of the rest of the Old Testament, the instruction "possess". The people of Israel had been given a beautiful, rich land by God - but they had to claim it from the enemies who had occupied it. They were encouraged throughout Deuteronomy to possess it, to make it their own. In the same way we have been given everything in Jesus Christ that we will ever need but we have to take Him daily as ours by faith if we are to experience God's grace. The story of Joshua is the record of how they began to possess their land. As such it effectively pictures victorious Christian living. Even by the end of Joshua however there was still much land waiting to be possessed. Even by the end of our lives there will still be much of Jesus waiting for us to discover and claim by faith.

Judges describes how so often after the time of Joshua they failed to possess the land that was theirs and experienced defeat - until they came back, under the leadership of a new judge, to the simple command to 'possess their possessions'.(Obad.17) Failure always began in the same way when the Israelites took the gods of the neighbours into their thinking in place of the true God. It is still our basic problem when we take the view of the world around us as the meaning of life in place of the Bible's view of who God is and what life means.

1:1-7 Q1 Faced with the enemies who would try to rob them of God's best, how did the Israelites make a good start? How did they discover the value of both leadership and fellowship? How does this apply to us? Was their treatment of Adoni-bezek an example we should follow?

1:8-10 Q.2 Is there a contradiction between 1:8; 1:21 and Josh.15:63? What exactly did happen in Jerusalem?(II Sam.5:6-10)

1:11-15 Q.3 What principle of being a Christian parent was Caleb demonstrating in the offer he made regarding his daughter?(I Cor.7:36-38) How does she also illustrate an exciting example of the secret of a good marriage?(Jn.4:10,14)

1:16-21 Q.4 What is so significant about the Kenites being allowed to live alongside the people of Judah? Why was it at times that the Israelites won only a partial victory over their enemies? How does this happen to us? What was so special about driving out the sons of Anak?(Num.13:33)

1:22-26 Q.5 What would be so significant about capturing Bethel? (Gen.28 and 35) Whose example had the tribes of Joseph followed in the way they went about it?(Josh.2) What can we learn from their strategy?

1:27-36 Q.6 Several tribes had only partial success in claiming their territory. What dangerous compromise did they settle for? What effect would it have upon their societies? What mistaken view did they have of Christian leadership?(Lk.22:25)

2:1-5 Q.7 The angel of the Lord had appeared several times in the book of Genesis.(Gen.16:7-13; 21:17; 22:11,15; 31:11) Each time He had given clues as to who He was. How did He do the same again in this section? What important things did He now tell the Israelites about the conditions for a relationship with God? What explanation did He give for allowing them only partial victory over their enemies? How may we too have 'thorns in our sides'? (II Cor.12:7) What would have been the significance of Him going from Gilgal(Josh.4:19,20) to Bochim?

2:6-10 Q.8 Joshua means 'the Lord saves'. Whom does he picture to us? What does this section teach us about the enormous influence of real spiritual leadership? What on the other hand is the cause of national spiritual decline?

2:11-13 Q.9 When Joshua and his generation were no longer around to whom did the Israelites turn? How does such a thing happen even in a strong Christian society? What effect did it have on their relationship with God?

2:14-15 Q.10 What happens to our daily lives when someone or something else takes God's place? How does this affect, for example, the family?

2:16-19 Q.11 What means did God use to rescue His people from the consequences of their idolatry? What were the conditions of renewed victory or on the other hand defeat? What can we learn from the fact that victory only lasted as long as the latest judge?

2:20-23 Q.12 What makes God angry? What does this passage teach us about why God allows adversity to persist in our lives?(II Cor.12:7-10)