

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

PART TWO - CHAPTERS 3-5

The ups and downs of our Christian lives, and the reasons for them are so vividly portrayed in the book of Judges. The key instruction of the book of Deuteronomy was to possess their possessions, for them the rich and beautiful land of Canaan. In the same way we are encouraged to claim by faith all that is ours in Jesus Christ from the moment we become Christians but which so often we are not enjoying. In Joshua's time they usually did; in Judges they frequently did not.

Some of their enemies were driven out and some remained. Those who remained kept constant pressure on the Israelites. When they trusted God, the Israelites were on top; when they did not the enemy won. Our enemies are the world of people, the flesh - our human nature, and the Devil. God has not promised to remove them out of our lives until we get to heaven but He has promised victory over them if we wholly trust Him. He has overcome them and He lives in us.(Jn.16:33)

Over the next few chapters, one by one, the Israelites' enemies cause problems for a time and then are defeated. Each enemy has his special characteristic and each teaches us a lesson about spiritual victory or defeat. The key problem in each case is the enemy's gods which for a time the Israelites take on as their own. These gods represent a way of thinking about the world we live in which is directly opposite to the God of the Bible. Just as it is not possible to have other gods as well as God,(Exod.20:3) so we cannot hold opposite views about anything and make sense. For our sake God lets us know this in no uncertain terms.

3:1-11 Q.1 Which two groups of enemies are described in this section? How were they similar and how were they different? What according to verses 2 and 4 were the reasons God allowed these enemies to be there? Why then does He allow problems to continue in our lives? How does this explain why God did not immediately destroy Satan after he had tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden?

Q.2 What two problems did the enemies cause Israel? How are these problems related to each other in our world today? Which particular gods did they follow this time? In what way was the same problem going on centuries later?(I Kgs.16:31-33) With what results? What does this show us about the ongoing effects of idolatry?

Q.3 What did God do about their sin? What would this situation represent in our lives? Why did they put up with what happened for so long? Why do we?

Q.4 What eventually was the response of the Israelites to defeat? How can we do the same? What was God's solution? How does it picture God's response in the New Testament? Who did God use to give them victory? What clue does this give us as to why the story of his marriage was recorded in chapter one?

3:12-30 Q.5 Who was the next enemy to cause trouble? Why did God allow this to happen? What do we know about the history of this group of people?(Gen.19:37; Num.22-25) Who were their allies? What do we already know about them?(Gen.19:38; Exod.17:8)

Q.6 What do we know about the king of Moab? What problem did he have? How might this illustrate the spiritual issue for the Israelites at this stage?

Q.7 When the Israelites finally cried to God who was His answer this time? What picture of Jesus can we find in his life? What steps did he take to defeat their enemy and set them free? What does the sword picture in the Bible?(Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12) What exactly was the role of the sword in their salvation this time? Once their saviour had done what was necessary for their deliverance what did the Israelites have to do to experience their salvation? How is the same true for us?

Q.8 What according to verse 19 was a special landmark near Jericho? What had changed since that landmark had first been set up? (Josh.4:19) What does this tell us about what had happened to the spiritual condition of the nation?

3:30,31 Q.9 How long a period of peace followed? What do you suppose the Israelites had learned that brought this about? Another enemy and another saviour are described. How is this similar to a later story? (Judg.15:15)

4:1-3 Q.10 What mistake did a new generation of Israelites make? How did their present oppressor resemble an earlier one?(Josh.11:1) What spiritual issue was at stake this time? What means did Jabin use to enslave the Israelites? What could this picture in our lives?

4:4-10 Q.11 How did God begin to prepare the Israelites for deliverance this time? Who or what is the saviour in this story? How did Barak respond to the call he was given? What was the outcome of his mission? Why was it not totally successful? What can we learn from his partial success?

4:11-22 Q.12 The enemy had escaped total defeat and was expecting to try again to regain control of Israel. What was God's solution? What in the Bible was the significance of a tent peg?(Zech.10:4; Gen.3:15) How does the tent peg solve the problem? How could there be a message for us in this gory story?

4:23,24 Q.13 What do these last two verses of the chapter teach us about the ongoing challenge of our main enemy today?

5:1-31 Q.14 In their hymn Deborah and Barak retell the story in song. What are the main lessons they drew from the events in which they had had a part? What do they teach us about the gospel and about writing good gospel songs?