

ReGroups 8/11/24

One King For Another - Judges 2-3

Told you So

Judges establishes early on, that Israel did not respect that they served an unseen, all-powerful king. This, of course, was none other than their God, *Yahweh*. You may think - well that's silly, God can't be a king. A nation needs a living, breathing person to lead and protect them. Having never known this kind of world, it's hard to us to take such a notion seriously.

However, God was very serious about being Israel's one and only king. In fact, **Deuteronomy 33:1-5** tells us that there was an official ceremony in which Israel acknowledged *Yahweh* as their true and forever king.

Alas, this was all posturing on their part, as they quickly disregarded the Lord after settling the land. This was not surprising to God whatsoever. Earlier on in that same book, He warned them on multiple occasions that this would likely be their future.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-15 and discuss the following points:

- After reading this whole passage, why do you think God emphasized loving Him with our "whole heart" and being so "diligent" in devotion to Him?
- God stresses that the Promised Land had everything that they needed "pre-installed". How was this reminder meant to impact them after they had settled the land?
- If Israel was prone to forget after witnessing all that they had - how much more should we be alert and aware of falling down this same path?

Fast forwarding a couple generations, with Joshua's farewell warning in mind, it's clear that Deuteronomy was foreshadowing the book of Judges. In our closing text last week, we read **Judges 2:11-23**. Review this passage and go over the sequence below that describes Israel's decline:

- 1) Verses 11-15 - Israel chose to serve Baal instead of Yahweh. Why? Baal was a pagan god, a construct of culture that celebrated sin and hedonism rather than exposing it. Baal worship (and any other pagan idol) was attractive on the surface, because it promised freedom and pleasure. However, it's more than obvious that the devil used this to fill a religious void in people's longing hearts *and* enslave them with sin at the same time. The human race's descent into idolatry is detailed in **Romans 1:18-25**. Check out this passage and discuss how we are still guilty of the same thing, even if our "*idols*" are not the same today.
- 2) Verses 16-19 - Just as Romans doesn't end after that early indictment against humanity, God didn't judge Israel after their initial rebellion. He raised up Deliverers who would reflect His grace *and* His truth. While He showed them mercy on their sin, He fought to set them free from that same sin. These Judges weren't just there to bail them out, but to lead them forward. Likewise, **John 1:14** describes Jesus as full of both "grace and truth". How does God's efforts in Judges preview the work He wants to do in all of our lives through Christ?

An Internal Struggle

Judges 3:1-6 details a bold strategy by God. He chose to allow certain nations to remain antagonists against Israel "*to test them*". Verse 4 tell us that this was to know the authenticity of their faith. It's clear throughout history that God continues to keep His people honest with tests and trials. David testified to this being a good and gracious thing in **Psalms 119:67**.

What are your thoughts on this approach by God? When you are tested, is your faith affirmed *or* is it brought into question?

As we read and discussed earlier, it's not a question of if we will forget- we *will* forget and we *are* prone to wander. There is a battle within all of us to turn inward and away from God, even if we do possess some semblance of conviction. **Romans 7:21-25** summarizes our struggle and directs us towards Jesus. If not for Him, we wouldn't even be aware of our bondage. *Only through Him can we be delivered.*

A Woeful Exchange

Our final passage for tonight will be **Judges 3:7-11**, wherein we see a powerful point rise to the surface. Whenever Israel turned away from serving God as their king, they would always experience a takeover by some rival nation and an evil king.

Thus, all they were really doing was **exchanging one king for another**. To be even more clear, they were trading a good, kind king for a ruthless, wicked king. This brings us to an important point: We are creatures and we cannot function without a ruler of some kind. **We can either serve our Creator King or we will serve some lesser king.**

God is merciful, and part of this attribute means that He never forces Himself on anyone, anytime. If we choose to turn away, we are free to do so. The lesser, evil kings, however, are rather *unmerciful*. If they get any amount of power over us, they take and take until they have total control.

Before you dismiss, discuss the following corresponding questions:

- in **Matthew 8:34**, the people of Gadara asked Jesus to leave their region and He complied. How does this relate to God's response in Judges?

- Have you ever considered how the devil operates in the exact opposite way from God, in that he seizes any opportunity to control and enslave us? King Cushan filled a void in Israel and became ruthless ruler over them. Have you ever regressed in your devotion to God and then witnessed something ungodly or unwelcome take hold of your life?
- Othniel is the first named Judge of this era. How does Israel's cry to God and His response preview our current relationship with Jesus?