

JUDGES

Message Six

The Intrinsic Significance of the Book of Judges and the Apostasy of Israel in the Worshipping of God

Scripture Reading: Judg. 1:1; 2:1; 17:1-5; 18:1, 30-31;
2 Thes. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 1:3-21; 2:1, 15

I. We need to know the intrinsic significance of the book of Judges:

- A. Israel's inquiring of Jehovah in Judges 1:1-20 describes the beautiful scene of Israel's trusting in God; this marvelous picture of oneness with the Lord, prefiguring the organic union of God with His people, is a continuation of the oneness in the book of Joshua when the people of Israel first entered into the good land as described in Joshua 6—Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 22:10; 23:9-10; 2 Sam. 2:1.
- B. According to the full scope of the Old Testament, at Mount Sinai God married Israel—Exo. 20:6, footnote 2:
 1. In His concept and desire, God wanted to be a Husband to Israel, and He wanted Israel to be a wife to Him, living in the most intimate contact with Him in this marvelous marriage union.
 2. In writing the books of history, Samuel put Judges after Joshua to show us the kind of life Israel lived toward her Husband.
 3. As unveiled in Judges, Israel did not have a heart to be the wife of Jehovah; rather, she forsook God as her Husband and went about as a harlot after other gods and worshipped them—2:11-13, 17; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6; cf. Jer. 11:13; Ezek. 16:25-26; Hosea 1:2; 2:2.
- C. After the account of Judah and Caleb in Judges 1:1-20, Israel's history as recorded in this book is full of the rottenness and corruption of a harlot:
 1. Whereas Joshua is the book of Israel's history full of marvelous victories over the inhabitants of Canaan in the presence of Jehovah, Judges is the book of Israel's history full of miserable defeats under their enemies in the forsaking of Jehovah.
 2. This is the intrinsic significance of the book of Judges.
- D. The content of Judges consists of the children of Israel trusting in God, forsaking God, being defeated by their enemies, repenting to God in their misery, being delivered through the judges, and again becoming corrupted; this became a cycle repeated seven times in Judges—1:1-2; 2:11—3:11.

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II. Judges 2:1 speaks of the Angel of Jehovah—5:23; Num. 22:22:

- A. The Angel of Jehovah is God Himself in His Divine Trinity serving His elect as a Servant—cf. Heb. 1:14.
- B. The embodiment of the Triune God is Christ, and Christ is the Angel of Jehovah, who took care of Israel as Jehovah in action in the Old Testament—Exo. 3:2, footnote 1.
- C. For Christ to be the Angel of Jehovah means that God has appointed and commissioned Himself in His Divine Trinity to act in caring for His people.
- D. Because Israel did not act as a proper wife, the very Jehovah who was the Husband, the Head, and the King of Israel became a Servant to His wife:
 1. Jehovah came to her not as a Husband, Head, or King but as the Angel of Jehovah, who was sent by Jehovah—Zech. 2:9-11.
 2. Since Israel did not regard Jehovah as the Head, He became a Servant to serve her; His word to Israel in Judges 2:1-3 was not a rebuke or a command but the admonition of a servant.

III. Judges 17 and 18 reveal the apostasy of Israel in the worshiping of God:

- A. Apostasy means to leave the way of God and to take another way to follow things other than God, and it is to do things for the self under the name of Jesus Christ and under the cloak of worshipping God—Acts 9:2; 18:26; 2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21; Jude 11; Judg. 18:30-31.
- B. “The man Micah had a house of gods; and he made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons to become his priest”—17:5:
 1. The house of Micah as a house of gods, with its idols (as replacements of Christ), its ephod (representing the authority of God), and its hired priest (representing the clergy-laity system, vv. 7-13), portrays the apostate situation related to the worship of God among Christians today.
 2. Micah’s mother offered something to God, but her offering was mixed with the leaven of idolatry (vv. 1-4); the same mixture and apostate situation exists in Christianity.
 3. We may apply the picture of Micah’s “house of gods” (v. 5) to the situation of Christianity.

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4. Today's Christianity has many "houses of Micah"; the Roman Catholic Church, the state churches, the denominations, and many of the independent groups are "houses of Micah," full of idols as replacements of Christ.
- C. "The children of Dan erected for themselves the sculptured idol," and they "set up the sculptured idol that Micah had made the whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh"—18:30-31:
 1. The apostasy with Dan was the setting up of a divisive center of worship—17:9-10; 18:27-31; 1 Kings 12:26-31.
 2. Dan fought as a young lion to gain more land (signifying Christ), but after being successful and victorious, he became proud, individualistic, and independent—Deut. 33:22; Josh. 19:47; Judg. 18:27-31.
 3. What the Danites gained made them proud and independent, unwilling to submit to what the Lord had ordained—vv. 1-31; Deut. 12:5, 8:
 - a. Because Dan was successful, he became proud and individualistic; he cared only for himself, not for others—33:22; Judg. 18:27-31.
 - b. The source of Dan's apostasy was in not caring for the other tribes; not caring for other parts of the Body is the source of apostasy.
 4. Nothing throughout the history of Israel was more sinful or more damaging to God's people than Dan's apostasy in setting up a divisive center of worship—Gen. 49:16-18; Deut. 33:22; Judg. 18:1, 30-31.
 5. Every divisive center is set up for someone's self-interest; such a practice causes not only division but also competition—vv. 1, 13-31; Gen. 49:16-18; Deut. 33:22:
 - a. The tabernacle was in Shiloh, and the graven image was in Dan—Josh. 18:1.
 - b. "They set up the sculptured idol...the whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh"—Judg. 18:31; 1 Sam. 1:3.
 6. In the history of Christianity there have been many "Dans," who were not willing to submit to others but set up another center of worship—Judg. 18:1, 13-31.
 7. The best way to be safeguarded from falling into apostasy is to care for the entire Body and the Lord's unique testimony in the Lord's one work—1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12, 27.

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- D. There is a strong prophecy in the Bible that before the Lord's coming back there will be a great apostasy among His people—2 Thes. 2:3:
 - 1. The day of the Lord's coming will not come unless the apostasy comes first—vv. 2-3.
 - 2. This apostasy will be a falling away from the straight way of God's economy as revealed in the Scriptures—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9.
 - 3. Even today there is a tendency among some Christians to leave the straight way of the New Testament—2 Pet. 2:15.
- E. The background and burden of 2 Peter is apostasy—a deviation from the right track of God's truth—2:1:
 - 1. The apostasy distracted the believers from the economy of God by leading them into the human logic of puzzling philosophies—Col. 2:8.
 - 2. The teachings of the apostates did not lead the believers to partake of the tree of life, which gives life, but to participate in the tree of knowledge, which brings in death—Gen. 2:9, 16-17; 2 Cor. 11:2-3, 12-15.
 - 3. The antidotes used by Peter in dealing with apostasy are the provision of life and the revelation of truth—2 Pet. 1:3-21:
 - a. In verses 3 through 11 Peter used the provision of the divine life for the proper Christian life to inoculate against the apostasy.
 - b. In verses 12 through 21 he used the revelation of the divine truth to inoculate against the heresy in the apostasy—2:1, footnote 3.
 - 4. Because today's Christianity is filled with apostasy, the Lord needs a recovery—the recovery of life and truth—John 1:4; 8:12; 10:10b; 14:6; Rev. 2:4, 15.
- F. Today, in a time of apostasy, we need to testify the full revelation of the pure Word of God and to fight for the deeper truths revealed in the Word of God, including:
 - 1. The revelation concerning the eternal economy of God—Eph. 1:10; 3:9.
 - 2. The revelation concerning the Divine Trinity—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.
 - 3. The revelation concerning the person and work of the all-inclusive Christ—Col. 2:9, 16-17; 3:11.

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4. The revelation concerning the consummated life-giving Spirit—John 7:39; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 22:17.
5. The revelation concerning the eternal life of God—John 3:15-16.
6. The revelation concerning the Body of Christ, which is the church of God—Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; 10:32.