

Who are the Judges?

Objectives

To know about the judges and the book of Judges and this period of life for the children of Israel

References

Study in the books of Judges, and Ruth, Fr. Yakoub Malaty, St. George Church, Sporting, Alexandria

Scriptural Verse

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6 and 21: 5)

Lesson Outlines

The Judges and the Book of Judges

- ❖ The Book of Judges is written most probably by Samuel the prophet in the days of Saul the king.
- ❖ It states the history of the Judges who ruled over Israel around 310 years; 20 years after Joshua’s death till the enthronement of King Saul.
- ❖ This period was a sad period in the history of the Jews. They became lukewarm and forgot their promises to God and shared sins with the people of the land after the death of Joshua whose time was a period of struggle, winning, reign over and dividing the land (Judges 2: 8-10)
- ❖ This period is called after the “Judges” as the ruler was a judge with less power than a king. He cannot put orders or burden over the people but his job is to watch over the commandments of the Lord and to punish the criminals and idols worshippers.
- ❖ The book of Judges declares how the loving God deals with His people to repent through getting them into sufferings and tribulations.
- ❖ There was no real succession for the judges. Some of them came later after the previous judges and some came in the same era with other judges. Some judges ruled only over some areas while others had wider areas under their care.
- ❖ Among the judges was a woman, Deborah the prophetess who judged for 40 years.
- ❖ The reason for the presence of the judges is that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, so the anger of the Lord was hot against them and delivered them to their enemies, nevertheless the Lord raised up judges to deliver them (Judges 2: 11- 16).
- ❖ The judges were a symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour who came to save us from slavery of Satan and to give us power over lust and sin.
- ❖ The hand of the Lord was with the judge to deliver Israel, but after the death of the judge, the Israelites corrupted themselves more than their fathers (Judges 2: 18-19).
- ❖ This period ended when the people of Israel asked for a king in the days of Samuel the prophet and the judge (1 Samuel 7: 6 and 15) and God told him “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8: 7).
- ❖ God chose a king to reign over Israel, the best one in appearance (1 Samuel 9: 2 and 10: 23) as the Israelites wanted to show off with their king (1 Samuel 8: 20).

- ❖ The Holy Bible mentioned 14 judges. 12 of them were mentioned in the Book of Judges and 2 in First Samuel like Eli The priest (4: 18) and Samuel the prophet (7: 6- 17)”

God’s choice for the Judges

God chose the judges among regular people with all their weakness and mistakes to emphasize that the victory is not due to their righteousness but to the work of God. Here are few examples:

- ❖ Gideon declared: “my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”
- ❖ Jephthah the Gileadite was the son of a harlot.

God chose also weak people with weak weapons to accomplish great victories. Ex:

- ❖ Shamgar the son of Anath killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad.
- ❖ Samson killed a thousand men with a fresh jawbone of a donkey.
- ❖ God chose Deborah, a prophetess woman, to judge over Israel (Judges 4: 4). She was great and opposed the army of Sisera the Canaanite, that oppressed Israel for 20 years, She brought a great victory and succeeded to judge for 40 years (Judges 5: 31). God also permitted that Sisera be killed by another woman “Jael” with a tent peg (Judges 4: 21)

God created from the weakness of His chosen ones “Mighty Men of Valor” as he did with Gideon, Samson and others by:

- ❖ Encouraging: “I will be with you” (Judges 6: 16 and 13: 5).
- ❖ Declaring that he is the Lord: (Judges 6: 22 and 13: 22).
- ❖ Giving a sign: The fleece (6: 36- 48), the loaf of barley bread (7:13- 15), the lion (14: 6).

Conclusion

God in His love never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8); the man is he who changes his position with God. Sometimes he faithfully struggles and asks to get God’s promises and other times his love is lukewarm and renounces God. Man’s attitude brings him under the severe punishment yet God will not forsake him forever but He always works for his salvation (Judges 2: 15- 16).

Activities / Discussion Points

1. What do you know about the following judges?

- ❖ Gideon (Judges6- 9) God created from his weak saul a mighty man of Valor.
- ❖ Jephthah (Judges11) He saved his brothers who drove him out; His Daughter’s story.
- ❖ Deborah (Judges4:4) a prophetess woman.
- ❖ Shamgar (Judges3: 31) killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad.
- ❖ Samson (Judges13 – 16) A story of strength and failure but God is always there
- ❖ Eli (1 Samuel) was punished because of his sons’ sin.
- ❖ Samuel (1 Samuel 1- 25) Anointed the 1st and 2nd kings of Israel.

2. Discuss and give examples of how God uses those who have apparent weaknesses to serve Him and how He gives them strength.