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The Pattern

Quick-Reads

The Book of Judges

PATTERNS
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To my wife Teresa and children for their love and support

Preface

As one reviews the book of Judges, it becomes evident that there is a pattern present that represents the stages in which we often find ourselves as we walk with God. You will discover the God's is to bless us beyond believe by giving us access to His presence, His people and His Word.

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The Judges and Israel

During the time of the book of Judges, Israel was ruled by twelve individuals. In chronological order, they include: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah/Balak, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.

The story of the Judges provides us with a contrast between the 2nd and 3rd generation of Israelites. If you recall, the 1st generation, though miraculously delivered from bondage in Egypt, died in the wilderness because of its murmuring and unbelief. The 2nd generation was alive during the time in which Joshua led Israel into the good land. They appropriated their inheritance. The 3rd generation is the focus of the book of Judges. This generation practiced evil in the sight of the LORD and did not know Joshua, the elders or the great works of God. They had lost memory of Israel's divine history. Their conquest begins with victory, but not much time elapses before they are met with failure. Initially, we are informed that they are removed the enemy from their land. As we move through the text, we discover that they become more permissive and eventually allow the enemy to co-exist with them.

The text informs us that Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Judah, Manasseh, Naphtali, and Zebulun all failed to remove the enemy out of the land they

possessed. These nations eventually became a thorn in their side. Though these nations paid tribute to Israel, they eventually became the cause of their downfall.

God had established a covenant with His people. The stipulations indicated that Israel would not be in league with the enemy and would destroy their altars. They were specifically commanded to shun intermarriage with the idol worshipping nations. Even though God sought to bring Israel back into a state of blessing by reminding them of His great work and covenant, they repeatedly refused to listen to His voice. In this article, we will note the pattern evident in this book.

FIRST STAGE

When God's people align themselves to God's will, they are blessed.

During the first stage, God's people lived in obedience, praised, sang, sacrificed to Him and rehearsed the righteous acts of the LORD. As a result, God revealed Himself as the God and judge of Israel. His people were blessed beyond belief and exercised dominion over the mighty. Israel experienced repeated victory and successfully drove out the enemy. However, when their leaders died, a state of declension ensued.

SECOND STAGE

When God's people live contrary to God's will, they incur judgment and discipline.

During the second stage, Israel spiraled downward. The book of Judges outlines the crimes committed against the LORD by His people. We are informed that Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and every man did what was right in his own eyes. The record reveals that Israel forgot Him, forsook Him, disobeyed His commandments, refused to hear His voice, transgressed His covenant and failed to remember God's mighty works in Egypt. Israel made itself a whore by choosing, following, bowing, and serving the gods and groves of their enemies. They turned from the way of their fathers by failing to serve the God of Israel. Instead of responding to God's call to repentance, they corrupted themselves, became stubborn, and returned to their sins. They did not cease from their doings. They sought counsel from an ephod and served the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. They set up a graven image instead of the house of Shiloh and appointed their own priests. They wrought folly and committed lewdness in Israel. They established leagues with the nations and committed the worst crimes in the history of Israel - homosexuality, rape and murder.

This stage in the process brought about God's rod of discipline. Because of their crimes and sin, they

provoked the LORD and His anger was hot against them. As punishment, God refused to drive out their enemies, allowed them to dwell among them so that the enemy became a thorn in their side. They were delivered into the hands of the spoiler and were sold as slaves. They could no longer stand before their enemies. The gods of the enemy became a snare to them. Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil. They were in a constant state of war. The LORD gathered and strengthened the enemy to smite Israel. The enemy constantly plundered their goods and destroyed their land. They took their sustenance, sheep, ox and ass. The enemy prevailed against them and they hid in dens, caves and strong holds in the mountains. Israel became greatly impoverished. God declared to them, "I will deliver you no more. Cry to the gods you chose. Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." Israel was in a state of misery and distress. The enemy vexed and oppressed them continually. In this stage, God's people reaped what they had sown.

THIRD STAGE

When God's people suffered judgment, they were then awakened to their sin and cried out to God.

In this stage, the results of sin cause Israel to reconsider their lives. When judgment visited them, they initially questioned God about their condition. "Why has all this befallen us? Where are all the miracles You performed for our fathers? The Lord has forsaken us. He has delivered us into the hands of the enemy."

As a result of severe judgement brought about by their grievous sin, Israel, inquired of the LORD and sought His counsel. They lifted up their voice and wept before God. Their great distress made them aware of their fallen condition and led them to the confession of their sin. They were awakened to their moral failure and offered themselves willingly to God. They recognized that they had forsaken the LORD and in turn began to serve Him. They put away their strange gods, fasted and presented burnt and peace offerings. Their pain and suffering awakened their need for repentance.

Scripture records that God's soul was grieved because of their misery. It repented the LORD because of their groaning by reason of the enemy who oppressed and vexed them.

FOURTH STAGE

God's people re-align themselves to God's will. Peace is restored and God's people once again enjoy living under the cloud of God's pleasure and blessing.

In the last stage, God's people are fully restored and once again enjoyed the presence and peace of God. The LORD raised up judges to deliver Israel from the spoilers and subdued the enemy. The LORD discomfited the enemy with the edge of the sword and avenged His people. Though the enemy gathered like grasshoppers for a multitude and camels without number as the sand of the sea, those led by God were delivered. The LORD provides Israel with a brief history lesson: Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammon, Philistines, Zidonians, Amalekites, Maonites who oppressed you. You cried to me and I delivered you out of their hands. The stars in their courses fought against your enemies and delivered them into your hands. The enemies of the LORD perished and those who loved the LORD became as the sun when it goes forth in his might. God granted them rest. It is here that God's people returned to stage one.

Upon review of the book of Judges, Israel moves through these four stages continuously. God would have us enjoy His presence while we remain in stage one of the process, but sin robs us of God's best and when we embrace it, we spiral downward to self-

destruction. When we move away from God and his provision of leadership, it seems that every detail begins to disintegrate. This is the pattern evident throughout the book of Judges.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PATTERN

How might a book like Judges apply to the believer today. First of all, it is important to remember that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is immutable. His character does not change, therefore, this pattern must apply to the community of faith. Review your personal history. We do not have to go far to confirm that God is speaking to us through the book of Judges. As I preview my life, I find evidence of times in which I have been in one of four stages of the process.

I recall my initial conversion. Something in me was awakened. Everything seemed to become new. I felt like my sight had been restored. I was observing life for the very first time. There was a newness and freshness I had not known before. I acquired new desires and became consumed by the presence and speaking of God. I became hungry for fellowship and the Word of God. It seemed like I was tasting the powers of the ages to come. I was zealous for spiritual things. (Stage One)

I recall crowding out God. The Word in me was choked by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lust of things. I neglected God's presence, God's Word and God's people. I began keeping company with the community of unbelief. It was not long before, I seemed to become numb to spiritual things. Not long after, I began to notice that my world

began falling apart. I was cast into a state of confusion and chaos. My life became characterized with a haunting sense of emptiness. I would still attend church, but my attitude had changed. I was not able to put my finger on it. It was not until distress and pain walked into my life that I began to look up. I realized my need for re-aligning myself again to the will of God. In tears, I cried out to God who restored the joy I had known in the beginning. (Stage Two-Three)

I recall watching God undo the mess I had created. It was miraculous. God restored me to Himself. I was able to discover joy and peace once again. Those who opposed me and were responsible for the misery I was experiencing appeared to vanish and I was delivered from myself and my condition. (Stage Four) Once again, it seemed that I was re-awakened. Everything became new. I was restored and was able to enjoy God's presence, God's people and God's Word again. I returned to Stage one.

I see the love of God. He does not want to judge or punish us. His heart is that we would enjoy His presence, His people and His Word. I wonder how often we must go through this cycle before we learn that sin pays no dividends. Sin robs us of God's best. The ideal is always to align our lives with God's will. Paul declared, "In union with Christ, everything falls into place." When we seek first God's presence, God's

people and to align ourselves to God's Word, all we need in this life will be added.

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of
Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey
The Oracles: Repentance from Dead Works #1
The Oracles: Faith Toward God #2
The Oracles: Baptisms #3
The Oracles: Laying on of Hands #4
The Oracles: Resurrection of the Dead #5
The Oracles: Eternal Judgement #6

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