

THE FIRST JUDGES OF ISRAEL

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed for wisdom and read the Bible to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes below to meet the needs of your students.

Lesson Aim: To shun the sins of Israel and to seek the blessings of Christ by obeying Him.

Suggestion: Give next week's Student Lesson to your class to answer the questions. Let them share their answers in class. The questions below will reveal important truths you may want to emphasize.

Introduction: The book of Judges continues the history of Israel following the death of Joshua. Whereas the great theme of the book of Joshua was the faith and victory of Israel, the theme of Judges is the disobedience and defeat of Israel. The key verse is 17:6, "in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The initial success of Judah and Simeon in conquering much of the land allotted to them was offset later by the compromises of the other tribes including Judah (1:19, 21, 27-36). At the core of the problem was a refusal to obey the LORD to drive out their enemies with their idols. This caused them severe bondage to some foreign nation and much sorrow. A recurring cycle of sin, slavery, sorrow, salvation and security can be detected in Judges. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble" (Proverbs 4:18-19).

Why were Judah and Simeon successful in conquering several strong cities? 1:1-19

The LORD commanded Judah to go up first and conquer the Canaanites in their lot and He promised they would be victorious. Judah believed the LORD's promise and obeyed Him. Simeon had a lot within Judah's allotment, so they helped each other and were quite successful. If we obey Jesus' command to witness to lost people around us, He will keep His promise to bless our work by bringing some of them to Him for salvation (Mt 28:19; Jn 4:19).

Why did Judah fail in driving out all the Canaanites in their lot of land? 1:19

Judah was successful in driving out the Canaanites in the mountains, but failed in the valley, because they had chariots of iron. Was the LORD unable to defeat those with chariots? No! He had already helped Joshua defeat those with chariots and he burned their chariots! Judah believed the promise of the LORD in the mountains, but lost his faith in the LORD in the valley when he faced chariots of iron. Do you lose your faith in the LORD to help you witness to the people that frighten you? The LORD is not afraid of them and He is in you. He will help you witness to them. The righteous are as bold as a lion (Prov 28:1).

Why did the people of Israel weep? 2:1-3

The Angel of the LORD (Christ before He became a man) said He brought them out of Egypt into Canaan and promised never to break His covenant with them. They were not to make a covenant with the people in the land, but to throw down their altars. But they made covenants with these people and broke their covenant with the LORD. Now He would no longer help them drive out these wicked people. Instead they would be thorns in their sides and their gods would be a snare to them. The Israelites wept. Their sins of disobedience caught up with them and now they had to suffer the consequences. This also is true if you refuse to obey Christ's commands to witness to the lost and be separate from their evil ways. He will let them become thorns in your social lives and snares in your spiritual lives.

What is the cycle of sin that is found in Judges? 3:1-15

The Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD: **SIN** (5-7). They served the Mesopotamia king: **SLAVERY** (8). They cried to the LORD: **SORROW** (9a). The LORD raised up a judge to save them: **SALVATION** (9b-10). They had rest: **SECURITY** (11). Everyone has experienced the cycle of sin (Rom 3:23). You can break this cycle if you confess your sin as soon as you realize it and forsake it (Prov 28:13). Now obey Christ commands (Jn 14:15, 21, and 23).