

Home group questions on Judges 1-3:6

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Sermon summaries

Sermon 1, Judges 1-2:5

Theme: Israel forfeits full enjoyment of promised land through disobedience and endangers their spiritual faithfulness, despite YHWH's constant faithfulness.

Aims:

- See that making room for the world in our lives threatens our spiritual faithfulness to God.
- Hear the call to drive out encouragements to sin in our lives (cf. Heb 12:1-2).
- Draw courage and confidence from the example of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon 2: Judges 2:6-3:6

Theme: Israel's deepening apostasy is met with fresh discipline AND mercy in each generation.

Aim: Be amazed at the extent of God's mercy, even in the face of unrepentance.

Questions

- 1) Our own stage in church history is somewhat parallel to Israel's in the time of the Judges. They had entered the promised land, which you might say was the location of God's kingdom in those times. But they did not have full possession of it.

Similarly, the Kingdom of God is something that has come near with Jesus' first coming. It is growing on the earth, we are exhorted to seek and enter it, but we do not yet have full possession of it. We will only fully and finally enter it when Jesus returns. (See sample of verses listed below for the nature of God's kingdom in the New Testament)

- How are we in similar danger of missing out on God's kingdom, compared with the Judges generations?

You might like to look at Matthew 7:21-23, Mark 9:42-48, Gal 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 and 6:9-10.

N.B. the key here is to see that we can look like we've entered God's kingdom, but fail to enter it at the final judgment because of compromise with sin and worldliness. Like a little leaven, it can work through a whole church when left unchecked (1 Cor 5:6-8), so that church becomes hardened in unrepentance like the individual guilty of incest in 1 Cor 5. Similarly, if we give sin a small foothold in our lives as individuals, it can overpower us and lead to death (James 1:13-15). This explains the warnings against falling away throughout Hebrews (especially 5:11-6:12 and 10:19-39) and the exhortation to throw off all that hinders and entangles (12:1).

- How are we in a better position than Israel was in the time of the Judges?

You might like to look at the promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34, the promise of freedom from slavery to sin in John 8:31-36 and the work of the Spirit in Galatians 5:13-26.

The key here is to see that all who have truly believed in Jesus as Lord and saviour are no longer slaves to sin. We have received the Spirit, who is writing God's law upon our hearts and enables us to live godly lives, putting sin to death (see also Rom 6:1-14). So we should be confident that God will enable us to persevere!

- How do you need to take these warnings and encouragements to heart at the moment, as you seek to be 'in the world but not of the world'?
 - How might MRC need to as a church?
- 2) Look back over God's astounding mercy to Israel in 2:6-23. How does this encourage us as we recognise compromise with the world and sin in our own lives?
- How did Israel respond when confronted with their disobedience and compromise in Judges 2:4-5? How is this exemplary for us?
 - How does 1 John 1:8-2:2 reassure us that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to cover our failings?

A sample of verses illustrating the slippery, now-and-not-yet nature of God's kingdom:

- Matt 4:17 – kingdom is near, but not yet fully established.
- Matt 7:21-23 entry is still in the future – not all who call 'lord, lord' will enter.
- Matt 13:24-43 for growing nature of kingdom – not yet fully grown.
- Matt 21:33-46 for kingdom being taken away from rebellious Jews and given to others.
- Mark 9:1 – the kingdom had already come (in part) in the disciple's lifetimes.
- Luke 6:20 – something that already belongs to the poor.
- Luke 9:62 – something we serve now (cf. Col 4:11) – and seek now (Matt 6:33).
- Luke 11:20 – something that had 'come upon' them, demonstrated by J's driving out of demons.
- Luke 17:20-21 – not a kingdom that can be observed (at least as a geo-political entity on this earth), but which is nevertheless in our midst (cf. John 18:36).
- Luke 21:30-32 – a kingdom that would still be near when the temple was destroyed in AD70.
- Luke 23:51 – something for which godly Jews were waiting.
- John 3:3-5 – something which we must be born again of water and the Holy Spirit to enter.
- Acts 14:22 – something we must go through many hardships to enter.
- Romans 14:17 – a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- 1 Cor 4:20 – not talk, but power!
- 1 Cor 6:9-10 - something that wrongdoers will not enter (see also Mark 9:42-48, Gal 5:21, Eph 5:5, Rev 21:8, 27).
- 1 Cor 15:50 – something that not even flesh and blood can enter, but only the imperishable (hence needing to be born again and resurrected!).
- 1 Thes 2:12 – something God calls us into.
- Jam 2:5 – something God has chosen those poor in the world's eyes to inherit.
- Rev 12:10 – something that came as Satan was hurled down from heaven (cf. Luke 10:18).