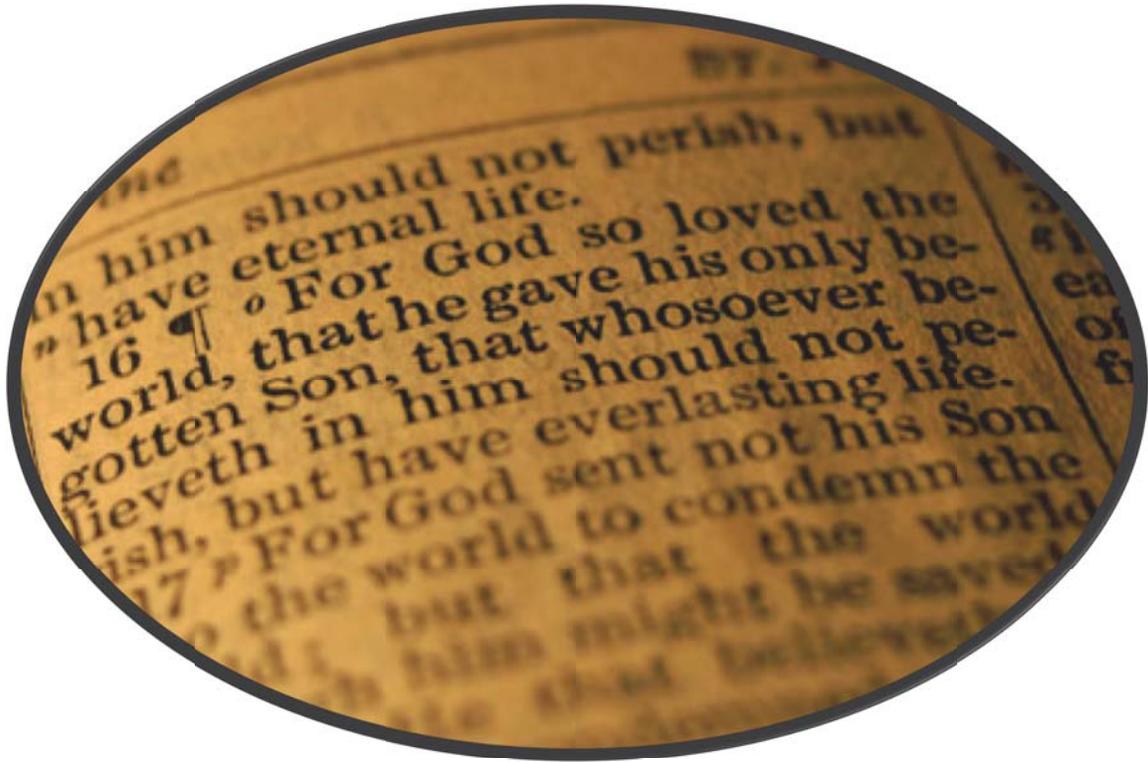


THE HEART OF GOD
JUDGES – I SAMUEL



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Heart of God: Judges through 1 Samuel
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
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Introduction to *Judges through 1 Samuel*

The period of the judges represents a season of self-discovery and transition. God let His people drift from Him so that they could come to see how desperate they were without Him. And He led them through a period of being deeply unsettled into the first phases of the next stage of His covenant.

Israel had a lot to learn during this period, and many of the lessons came hard. The love of God and His covenant faithfulness remain with His people throughout the period of the judges, and, toward the end of the period, God raised up prophets to help lead His people into a renewed relationship with Himself.

Saul, the first king of Israel, turned out to be not the right man for the job. But God used him in certain ways nonetheless, even as, in the background, he was preparing the king whose dynasty would outline the rest of Old Testament history.

The Heart of God studies provide a road map through the Scriptures, unfolding key unifying threads and following the development of those matters closest to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation. Through all our study we'll see how the Scriptures lead us to Jesus, and how He, in turn, brings into the presence of our heavenly Father and His Kingdom. There, as we encounter God and His glory, the Spirit can transform us increasingly in to the very image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

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1 Grace in the Time of Trouble

Read and meditate on Judges 1-3.

The period of the judges, spanning some 320 years of Israel's history, shows us the consequences of rebelling against God's covenant. God promised to be faithful to His Word, even when that meant He would have to respond to His people with discipline. Yet whenever they returned to Him, He was ready to forgive and renew.

For reflection

1. Already, in chapter 1, we find the book of Judges looking back and looking ahead. We see this in the designation of Judah as the tribe to take the lead in continuing the conquest of the land (vv. 1, 2). How does this action on God's part link the people of this period to the previous eras of His covenant? How does it point forward to further development of God's covenant?
2. The people seem to have lacked the strength to lay hold on all the land God had promised them. How does this serve as a warning to us, who are heirs of the promises of God in our day (2 Pet. 1.4)?
3. How did Israel respond to the pagan influences yet remaining in the land of promise? How did this affect their covenant relationship with God? How should they have protected themselves against these influences?
4. What was the role of judges during this period? What seem to have been their primary duties? Does the Lord appoint *judges* to serve among His people in our day?
5. The early judges delivered Israel by *military* means. But this was never enough, since the people kept lapsing into sin and disobedience. What's the lesson here about what God's people need in order to realize the fullness of His promises?

Summary

Chapters 1-3 of Judges establish a pattern that will continue throughout this book and, indeed, throughout the Old Testament. God's people are unable to remain faithful to Him, so He brings discipline upon them, in order to recover them for Himself. But they tend to rely mainly on *political* and *military* leaders, rather than on the kind of leaders Moses promised them in Deuteronomy. A nation and people need political and military leaders, but why are such leaders always inadequate to bring the people of God into the fullness of His covenant?

Closing Prayer

Many times He delivered them;
But they rebelled in their counsel,
And were brought low for their iniquity.
Nevertheless He regarded their affliction,
When He heard their cry;
And for their sake He remembered His covenant,
And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.
He also made them to be pitied
By all those who carried them away captive.
Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the Gentiles,

The Heart of God: Judges through 1 Samuel

To give thanks to Your holy name,
To triumph in Your praise.

Psalm 106.43-47

2 Gideon

Read and meditate on Judges 6-8.

The work of Gideon gives us a closer look at the way God called, prepared, and used the judges to further His purposes among His people. Gideon is in some ways a microcosm of the nation, since he began his work in trepidation, pursued it energetically and in faith, but failed to finish well.

For reflection

1. God's glory, God's people, God's work of redemption: How would you describe the state of these unifying threads of Scripture at the beginning of the book of Judges?
2. How can you see the *grace* of God at work in the calling of Gideon? Does Gideon seem like the kind of person to carry out God's plan for the deliverance of His people? Why or why not?
3. As Gideon's calling begins to unfold, how can you see God working to make sure that He is glorified in this effort?
4. Notice how the people responded to Gideon's leadership (Jdgs. 8.1-22). What does this suggest about the spiritual condition of Israel at this time?
5. Gideon declined to serve as king, but it's clear he was disgruntled and pouting about the way things had worked out. How can you see in chapter 8 that Gideon was seeking some glory for himself (N.B., in v. 31, Gideon named his bastard son *Abimelech*, which means *My father is king*)?

Summary

Gideon's story is one of faith, but failure. He believed God and served Him according to the Lord's call. But neither he nor the people had the spiritual stamina to stay close to the Lord. Again, even when God's leaders are faithful, the judges cannot bring the people fully back into God's covenant through political and military means alone. What is God trying to tell us through these repeated cycles? Do His people need something *more* in a deliverer? In what they should be seeking from the Lord?

Closing Prayer

How long, LORD?
Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy burn like fire?
Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You,
And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.
For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his dwelling place.
Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!
Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,
For Your name's sake!

Psalm 79.5-9

3 Collapse

Read and meditate on Judges 19-21.

The end of the book of Judges finds the nation in near-total collapse. Idolatry and immorality are widespread; vigilantism has taken the place of justice; and the people have become their own worst enemy.

For reflection

1. How would you describe the state of true faith in Israel at this time? Can you see any remnants of covenant faithfulness? But in what ways is it clear that Israel is totally compromised with paganism?
2. The situation in chapter 19 appears to have shocked the nation into some modicum of sensibility. How can you see that in verse 30? Does God sometimes allow His people to hit “rock bottom” before they begin to turn their eyes to Him again? Explain.
3. Notice again the role of Judah (Jdgs. 20.18). Why are we told this again, as at the beginning of the book of Judges? Is hope to be found through Judah?
4. After the decisive battle with the tribe of Benjamin, the people seem to be truly chastened and keenly aware of their need to preserve their status as the people of God. Why? What does this suggest about the status of God’s covenant with Israel at this point?
5. Chapter 21 shows us Israel trying to get things right again, but having to resort to compromise and equivocation in order to do so. What overall warnings or lessons can you derive from the book of Judges for God’s people today?

Summary

Judges ends pretty much right where it began. The people are compromised, the nation is in jeopardy, and every good effort of their judges has not been able to return the people to a secure covenant relationship with God. Meditate on Judges 21.25. To what seasons of God’s covenant does this look back? How does it point us forward in God’s covenant with His people?

Closing Prayer

I cried out to God with my voice—
To God with my voice;
And He gave ear to me.
In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing;
My soul refused to be comforted.
I remembered God, and was troubled;
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. *Selah*
You hold my eyelids *open*;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
I call to remembrance my song in the night;
I meditate within my heart,
And my spirit makes diligent search.
Will the Lord cast off forever?
And will He be favorable no more?

The Heart of God: Judges through 1 Samuel

Has His mercy ceased forever?
Has *His* promise failed forevermore?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?

Psalm 77.1-9

4 Ruth

Read and meditate on the book of Ruth.

God is faithful, even though His people often fall short of His glory. But *when* His people are faithful, even though turmoil and confusion may prevail all around, He blesses them with His grace and peace. The book of Ruth, which takes place during the period of the judges, reminds us of the true nature and rich promises of God's covenant.

For reflection

1. Notice how the book of Ruth begins (1.1) and how it ends (4.22). The focal point of Ruth is the tribe of Judah and the city of Bethlehem. What seems to have been the purpose of the book of Ruth, and how does it fit into the ongoing development of God's covenant with His people?
2. In the book of Ruth, which of the unifying threads of Scripture – God's glory, His people, His work of redemption – seems to be especially in view? Why would this have been important for the first recipients of this book?
3. Ruth was not a Jewess, but a Moabitess. Yet God brought her into His covenant people and blessed her powerfully. Ruth is not the first Gentile to be grafted into Israel (cf. Gen. 38, Josh. 6.22-25 and Matt. 1.5). What is God foreshadowing here about the scope of His covenant? What significance should we attach to the fact that Ruth is brought into the covenant community *in* Bethlehem, *through* the tribe of Judah?
4. In two instances – her gleaning and the law of levirate – we see Ruth being cared for by provisions of the Law of God. How can you see that the Law of God, rightly obeyed, leads to the promises and blessings of God?
5. What role does Boaz play in this story? How does his fulfilling the requirements of the Law benefit Ruth? Does his being from the tribe of Judah have any covenant significance for the unifying threads of Scripture?

Summary

Where God's covenant is faithfully kept, and His people walk in obedience to His Word, there His blessings abound, so that even those from beyond the pale of faith can find safety, hope, and blessing within the covenant of the Lord. How can we see each of the unifying threads of Scripture weaving together and re-emerging in the book of Ruth?

Closing Prayer

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Psalm 33.1-5

5 Transition

Read and meditate on 1 Samuel 1-3.

Here, near the end of the period of the judges, the people of Israel enter into a time of transition. God is moving His relationship with His people to a new stage, but only after they stumble during their first steps into monarchy.

For reflection

1. Like the book of Ruth, 1 Samuel begins in a personal story of a faithful woman. From that story will emerge the next stage of God's unfolding covenant relationship with Israel. From what you see in these chapters, how can you see each of the unifying threads of Scripture?
2. In what ways do God's dealings with Hannah remind us of previous periods in God's covenant? Would this have mattered to the first readers of 1 Samuel? Why?
3. In her song (1 Sam. 2.1-10), Hannah seems acutely aware of various stages of God's covenant with His people. How is she encouraged by this awareness? How aware does she seem to be of the unifying threads of revelation? How can you see that Hannah is able even to glimpse ahead in the development of God's covenant?
4. God chose to bypass a priest in order to reveal His purposes to a child (1 Sam. 3). What does this suggest about the state of faith in Israel at this time? What does it suggest about those whom God chooses to use in furthering His covenant?
5. Meditate on 1 Samuel 3.19-21. Given the kind of judges Israel had prior to Samuel, how should we be encouraged by what we see here? And why does the writer make a point to tell us that all Israel sensed something new was up?

Summary

The birth of Samuel represents the beginning of a turning point – out of the period of the judges into the monarchy. It's both a step forward and a step up, since now, with Samuel appearing as a *prophet*, the Word of God resumes its proper status among the people of God. This is not, as we know, the final stage of God's unfolding covenant, but it is a *new* stage while, at the same time, a *return* to a *former* stage, when the Word of God was prominent among His people. In what ways is Samuel a prophet like Moses?

Closing Prayer

O God, in the multitude of Your mercy,
Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
Deliver me out of the mire,
And let me not sink;
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
And out of the deep waters.
Let not the floodwater overflow me,
Nor let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.
Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness *is* good;
Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.
And do not hide Your face from Your servant,

For I am in trouble;
Hear me speedily.
Draw near to my soul, *and* redeem it;
Deliver me because of my enemies.

Psalm 69.13-18

6 False Start

Read and meditate on 1 Samuel 8-11.

Israel takes on a new identity by appointing a king to rule over her “like all the other nations.” But that has an ominous sound, no?

For reflection

1. It’s clear that God chose Saul to be king over Israel. But he was the wrong man, from the wrong tribe, even though all the people jumped to anoint him. Why did God allow Israel to make this false start toward monarchy?
2. You can see that the people are still stuck in the time of the judges – looking back, but not looking ahead. How can you tell this by their motivation in seeking a king, and the kind of leader they chose to rule over them?
3. Allowing Saul to be king accomplished two things, both of them in line with God’s promises. First, it established the institution of the monarchy, as Jacob had prophesied in Genesis 49.8-11 and Moses had promised in Deuteronomy 17.14-20. Second, it asserted the primacy of God’s Word over outward appearances. Israel wanted a king, but they didn’t want the *kind* of king God had promised. They had to learn that their own preferences were not to be relied on, but only God’s Word. Nevertheless, how can you see that God’s grace was at work in Israel, in spite of their rejecting Him as King over them (1 Sam. 8.7; 10.19)?
4. What do you make of the incident of God’s Spirit coming upon Saul (1 Sam. 10.9-13)? This, in a sense, is a kind of foreshadowing of Israel’s entire history under the monarchy. God anoints a king, and provides him with His Spirit *so long as he remains in the company of the prophets*. Is there a lesson in this for how God’s covenant people today ought to think about civil government (Rom. 13.1-4)?
5. Meditate on 1 Samuel 11.12-15. How can you see that God is using Saul, for all his shortcomings, to begin turning the people back toward His primary covenantal themes?

Summary

Saul represents a start toward monarchy for Israel. God began to establish a king in Israel at the point of the people’s sense of their need – for a strong political and military ruler. At the same time, He began to develop the role of the prophet in Israel, and thus to turn the hearts of His people back to His Word. God often works gradually to bring His promises to fruition among His people. What can we learn from the *coming* of Israel’s kingdom to guide us in thinking about the coming of *God’s Kingdom* in our day?

Closing Prayer

Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.
For great *is* Your mercy toward me,
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
O God, the proud have risen against me,
And a mob of violent *men* have sought my life,
And have not set You before them.

The Heart of God: Judges through 1 Samuel

But You, O Lord, *are* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.
Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!

Psalm 86.11-16

7 End of the (New) Beginning

Read and meditate on 1 Samuel 15, 16, 18, 28, and 31.

Saul led the people of Israel out of the starting-gate toward monarchy, but he was not the man to bring them to the first full expression of His Kingdom. From Saul we learn about the *faithfulness* of God, even amid the *faithlessness* of His people. And that's the story of God's covenant.

For reflection

1. Saul was not a man of God's Word. He was a king who believed in God, but not one who trusted Him. How can you see that in these chapters?
2. God had to let Saul become king in order to remind the people of His Word to them *about* kings. Instead of being a man committed to God's Word, Saul became a man committed to Saul. Nevertheless, he had proved the value of Israel's having a king – just not him. How can we see in God's choice of David that God continues to be faithful to His people even when they are not keeping faith with Him?
3. Meditate on 1 Samuel 16.7. What is God looking for in His leaders and His people? What does this mean?
4. How can you see, at the end of Saul's life, that taking God's Word lightly and seeking great things for yourself can only lead to bad endings?
5. So, at the end of 1 Samuel, we seem to be back to Judges 21 – except for one thing. What's that? God has been faithfully at work in the background preparing for the deliverance of His people. Even as Israel's *political* hopes die on the battlefield, her *spiritual* hopes are being revived in the person of David. How does this counsel God's people today as we seek from Him mercy and grace to help in our time of need?

Summary

Saul's demise marks the end of the first phase of this new stage of Israel's covenant relationship with God. It was inevitable that this should end as it did; but it was also inevitable that God's covenant and promises should not fail. What do we learn from 1 Samuel about the kinds of leaders God uses in bringing His people more fully into His covenant and promises?

Closing Prayer

O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry
Against the prayer of Your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in great measure.
You have made us a strife to our neighbors,
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

Psalm 80.4-7

For reflection or discussion

1. How would you summarize the basic problem facing the people of Israel during the book of Judges?
2. The stories of Ruth and Hannah provide transitions, reminding us of the grace of God in the midst of tumultuous times. They also serve to refocus readers on the unifying threads of God's covenant – His glory, His people, His redeeming grace. Explain.
3. In what ways can you see Judges through 1 Samuel looking back to previous periods of God's covenant? How can you see them pointing forward to more of the unfolding of God's covenant yet to come?
4. The tribe of Judah begins to emerge as central to God's plan in Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel. This will remain a focus of the rest of the Old Testament. What do we see about Judah in these books to guide our thinking about the role of this tribe in God's covenant?
5. What to you are the most important lessons to emerge from this period of the Old Testament?

Glory to Glory

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word *to* the way we live for His glory in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What have you encountered *of* God's glory in our reading and meditations in this week's studies? That is, how has He shown Himself *to* you more clearly?

How do you expect this *experience* of God's glory to help you *live more consistently for* His glory in the daily details of your life?

What have you learned about yourself from this week's study to help you in knowing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom? To equip you for serving Christ in your [Personal Mission Field](#)?

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Thank you.