

## CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH, Week 6

**The Intrinsic Significance of the Book of Judges and the Apostasy of Israel in the Worshipping of God**

Scripture Reading: Judg. 1:1; 2:1; 17:1-5; 18:1, 30-31; 2 Thes. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 1:3-21; 2:1, 15

Judges 1:1	And after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel inquired of Jehovah, saying, Who will go up for us first against the Canaanites, in order to fight against them?
Judges 2:1	Then the Angel of Jehovah went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And He said, I caused you to go up out from Egypt, and I brought you into the land that I swore to your fathers. And I said, <b>I will never break My covenant with you,</b>
Judges 17:1	Now there was a man from the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.
Judges 17:2	And he said to his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and spoke it in my hearing — look, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed of Jehovah be my son!
Judges 17:3	And he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother; and his mother said, I do consecrate the silver to Jehovah from my hand to my son to make a <b>sculptured idol and a molten image</b> . Now therefore I will return it to you.
Judges 17:4	And when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to the founder, who made them into a <b>sculptured idol and a molten image</b> . And it was in the house of Micah.
Judges 17:5	And the man Micah had a <b>house of gods</b> ; and he made an <b>ephod and teraphim</b> , and consecrated one of his sons to become his <b>priest</b> .
Judges 18:1	In those days there was no king in Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites <b>sought for themselves an inheritance to dwell in</b> , for unto that day the lot had not fallen for them on an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.
Judges 18:30	And the children of Dan <b>erected for themselves the sculptured idol</b> ; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons, became priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.
Judges 18:31	Thus they <b>set up the sculptured idol</b> that Micah had made the whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh.
2 Thessalonians 2:2	That you <b>be not quickly shaken in mind nor alarmed</b> , neither by a spirit nor by word nor by a letter as if by us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
2 Thessalonians 2:3	<b>Let no one deceive you in any way</b> , because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition,
2 Peter 1:3	Seeing that His divine power has <b>granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness</b> , through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,
2 Peter 1:4	Through which He has <b>granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises</b> that through these you might become <b>partakers of the divine nature</b> , having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
2 Peter 1:5	And for this very reason also, <b>adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue</b> ; and in virtue, knowledge;
2 Peter 1:6	<b>And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness;</b>
2 Peter 1:7	<b>And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.</b>
2 Peter 1:8	For these things, <b>existing in you and abounding, constitute you</b> neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2 Peter 1:9	For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being shortsighted, having forgotten the cleansing of his past sins.
2 Peter 1:10	Therefore, brothers, <b>be the more diligent to make your calling and selection firm</b> , for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble.
2 Peter 1:11	For in this way the <b>entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you</b> .
2 Peter 1:12	Therefore <b>I will be ready always to remind you concerning these things</b> , even though you know them and have been established in the present truth.
2 Peter 1:13	And I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, <b>to stir you up by a reminder</b> ,
2 Peter 1:14	Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.
2 Peter 1:15	Moreover I will also <b>be diligent that you may be able</b> , after my exodus, to <b>bring these things to mind</b> at all times.

- 2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we became eyewitnesses of that One's majesty**.
- 2 Peter 1:17 For **He received from God the Father honor and glory**, a voice such as this being borne to Him by the magnificent glory: **This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I delight**.
- 2 Peter 1:18 And this voice we heard being borne out of heaven while we were with Him in the holy mountain.
- 2 Peter 1:19 And **we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts**;
- 2 Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation;
- 2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but **men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit**.
- 2 Peter 2:1 But there arose also **false prophets** among the people, as also among you there will be **false teachers**, who will secretly bring in **destructive heresies**, even **denying** the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.
- 2 Peter 2:15 **Forsaking the straight way**, they have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the **wages of unrighteousness**

### Day 1

**Judges 1:1-2** And after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel inquired of Jehovah, saying, Who will go up for us first against the Canaanites, in order to fight against them? And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up. I have now given the land into his hand.

#### I. We need to know the intrinsic significance of the book of Judges:

- A. Israel's inquiring of Jehovah in Judges 1:1-20 describes the beautiful scene of Israel's **trusting in God**; this marvelous picture of oneness with the Lord, prefiguring the organic union of God with His people, is a continuation of the oneness in the book of Joshua when the people of Israel first entered into the good land as described in Joshua 6—Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 22:10; 23:9-10; 2 Sam. 2:1.
- B. According to the full scope of the Old Testament, at Mount Sinai **God married Israel**—Exo. 20:6, footnote 2:
  1. In His concept and desire, God wanted to be a Husband to Israel, and He wanted Israel to be a wife to Him, **living in the most intimate contact with Him in this marvelous marriage union**.
  2. In writing the books of history, Samuel put Judges after Joshua to show us the kind of life Israel lived toward her Husband.
  3. As unveiled in Judges, Israel did not have a heart to be the wife of Jehovah; rather, she **forsook** God as her Husband and went about as a **harlot after other gods and worshipped them**—2:11-13, 17; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6; cf. Jer. 11:13; Ezek. 16:25-26; Hosea 1:2; 2:2.
- C. After the account of Judah and Caleb in Judges 1:1-20, Israel's history as recorded in this book is full of the **rottenness and corruption of a harlot**:
  1. Whereas Joshua is the book of Israel's history full of marvelous victories over the inhabitants of Canaan in the presence of Jehovah, **Judges** is the book of Israel's history full of **miserable defeats** under their enemies in the **forsaking** of Jehovah.
  2. This is the intrinsic significance of the book of Judges.
- D. The content of Judges consists of the children of Israel **trusting** in God, **forsaking** God, being **defeated** by their enemies, **repenting** to God in their misery, being **delivered** through the judges, and again becoming **corrupted**; this became a cycle repeated seven times in Judges—1:1-2; 2:11—3:11.

### Day 2

To understand the significance of the book of Judges, we must realize that **God's heart's desire was to enter into a love relationship with His people**. God loves His people, and He both desires and expects that His people, as His wife, would love Him in return. The book of Judges, however, shows us that **God's people did not have a heart to love God**. Rather, they **forsook** the God who loved them. In so doing, they forsook their position as a loving wife. Indeed, they forsook God and **chose to put idols in His place**. It is because they forsook God as their Husband that God's people fell into such trouble and corruption.

The content of Judges consists of the children of Israel **trusting** in God, **forsaking** God, being **defeated** by their enemies, **repenting** to God in their misery, being **delivered** through the judges, and again becoming **corrupted**; this became a cycle repeated seven times in Judges. Does this cycle sound familiar? In reading the book of Judges, **we are reading our own history**. May the Lord use this book to speak to us and to shine His light over us. It does not matter how victorious we may be in our experiences with the Lord; we must never take that victorious condition for granted. We should always **seek to remain in close and intimate fellowship, contact, and love with the Lord**. (The Ministry of the Word, Vol. 25, No. 04: Crystallization-study of Joshua, Judges, Ruth)

**Judges 2:1** Then the Angel of Jehovah went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And He said, I caused you to go up out from Egypt, and I brought you into the land that I swore to your fathers. And I said, I will never break My covenant with you,

**Exodus 3:2** And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thornbush. And when he looked, there was the thornbush, burning with fire; but the thornbush was not consumed.

## II. Judges 2:1 speaks of the **Angel of Jehovah**—5:23; Num. 22:22:

- A. The Angel of Jehovah is **God Himself** in His Divine Trinity serving His elect as a Servant—cf. Heb. 1:14.
- B. The embodiment of the Triune God is Christ, and **Christ is the Angel of Jehovah**, who took care of Israel as Jehovah in action in the Old Testament—Exo. 3:2, footnote 1.
- C. For Christ to be the Angel of Jehovah means that God has **appointed and commissioned Himself** in His Divine Trinity to act in caring for His people.
- D. Because Israel did not act as a proper wife, the very Jehovah who was the Husband, the Head, and the King of Israel **became a Servant to His wife**:
  1. Jehovah came to her not as a Husband, Head, or King but as the **Angel of Jehovah**, who was sent by Jehovah—Zech. 2:9-11.
  2. Since Israel did not regard Jehovah as the Head, He became a Servant to serve her; His word to Israel in Judges 2:1-3 was not a rebuke or a command but the **admonition of a servant**.

### Day 3

**2 Peter 2:2** And many will follow their licentiousness, because of whom the way of the truth will be reviled.

**2 Peter 2:15** Forsaking the straight way, they have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness

## III. Judges 17 and 18 reveal the **apostasy of Israel in the worshipping of God**:

- A. Apostasy means to **leave the way of God** and to take another way to follow things other than God, and it is **to do things for the self** under the name of Jesus Christ and under the cloak of worshipping God—Acts 9:2; 18:26; 2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21; Jude 11; Judg. 18:30-31.
- B. “The man Micah had a house of gods; and he made an ephod and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons to become his priest”—17:5:
  1. The house of Micah as a **house of gods, with its idols** (as replacements of Christ), its **ephod** (representing the authority of God), and its **hired priest** (representing the clergy-laity system, vv. 7-13), portrays the apostate situation related to the worship of God among Christians today.
  2. Micah’s mother offered something to God, but her offering was **mixed with the leaven of idolatry** (vv. 1-4); the same mixture and apostate situation exists in Christianity.
  3. We may apply the picture of Micah’s “house of gods” (v. 5) to the situation of Christianity.
  4. Today’s Christianity has many “houses of Micah”; the Roman Catholic Church, the state churches, the denominations, and many of the independent groups are “houses of Micah,” **full of idols as replacements of Christ**.

Because Israel did not act as a proper wife, the very Jehovah who was the Husband, the Head, and the King of Israel became a **Servant to His wife**. God was the Husband, Head, and King to the children of Israel; yet this people **rejected** God and **forsook** Him. Therefore, God had to come to them not as the Husband whom they had **rejected**, nor as the Head whom they had also **renounced**, nor as the King whom they had **rebelled** against; instead, He came to them as a **Servant**. No matter what God’s people did, **God did not forsake His people**. How loving our God is toward us! We have rejected Him as our Husband and as our Head, but He still wants to win us over to Himself. He came personally to visit us as a Servant, and this Servant is the **Angel of Jehovah**. (The Ministry of the Word, Vol. 25, No. 04: Crystallization-study of Joshua, Judges, Ruth)

## Day 4 &amp; Day 5

<b>Deuteronomy 12:5</b>	But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.
<b>Deuteronomy 12:8</b>	You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each man doing all that is right in his own eyes;
<b>1 Corinthians 12:27</b>	Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
<b>1 Corinthians 12:12</b>	For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

- C. “The children of Dan erected for themselves the sculptured idol,” and they “set up the sculptured idol that Micah had made the whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh”—18:30-31:
1. The apostasy with Dan was the setting up of a **divisive center of worship**—17:9-10; 18:27-31; 1 Kings 12:26-31.
  2. Dan fought as a young lion to gain more land (signifying Christ), but after being successful and victorious, he became **proud, individualistic, and independent**—Deut. 33:22; Josh. 19:47; Judg. 18:27-31.
  3. What the Danites gained made them **proud and independent, unwilling to submit** to what the Lord had ordained—vv. 1-31; Deut. 12:5, 8:
    - a. Because Dan was successful, he became proud and individualistic; **he cared only for himself**, not for others—33:22; Judg. 18:27-31.
    - b. The source of Dan’s apostasy was in not caring for the other tribes; **not caring for other parts of the Body** is the source of apostasy.
  4. Nothing throughout the history of Israel was more sinful or more damaging to God’s people than Dan’s apostasy in setting up a **divisive center of worship**—Gen. 49:16-18; Deut. 33:22; Judg. 18:1, 30-31.
  5. Every divisive center is set up for someone’s self-interest; such a practice causes not only **division** but also **competition**—vv. 1, 13-31; Gen. 49:16-18; Deut. 33:22:
    - a. The tabernacle was in Shiloh, and the graven image was in Dan—Josh. 18:1.
    - b. “They set up the **sculptured idol**...the whole time that the house of God was in Shiloh”—Judg. 18:31; 1 Sam. 1:3.
  6. In the history of Christianity there have been many “Dans,” who were **not willing to submit** to others but **set up another center of worship**—Judg. 18:1, 13-31.
  7. The best way to be safeguarded from falling into apostasy is to **care for the entire Body and the Lord’s unique testimony in the Lord’s one work**—1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12, 27.

In the Lord’s recovery we are taking the Way. We are not in a movement; we are in the **Way**—the **straight way**, the **way of righteousness**, the **way of peace**, the **way of salvation**, the **way of God**, and the **way of the Lord**. As we are walking on this way, there is a risk that we might **veer off** or **deviate** from it. It does not take much to deviate. For example, a person who is walking may be disoriented from his destination by only five degrees, which may not seem like much, but after walking some distance, he may completely miss his destination.

We are living in the last part of this age. It will not be too long before the Lord appears. Apostasy is still present and is even more prevailing than it has ever been. If we fall from God’s hand, we can quickly and easily find ourselves veering off from the way that the Lord has ordained for us to take. I am burdened for our next generation. As many young ones are rising up, they must know clearly what this way is. They must also know the possible **apostasies** and **deviations** that may distract us. If we look to history, we can see that there has been apostasy not only among other Christians but even among us. We should not be so naïve as to think that simply because we meet in the local churches or were raised in the church life, we will grow and be fine by default. We may not be fine. There is a thing called apostasy revealed in the Word, and we need to be **deeply warned by it**. (The Ministry of the Word, Vol. 25, No. 04: Crystallization-study of Joshua, Judges, Ruth)

## Day 6

- 2 Peter 1:3** Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,
- 2 Peter 1:19** And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

- D. There is a strong prophecy in the Bible that before the Lord's coming back there will be a **great apostasy** among His people—2 Thes. 2:3:
1. The day of the Lord's coming will not come unless the apostasy comes first—vv. 2-3.
  2. This apostasy will be a **falling away from the straight way of God's economy** as revealed in the Scriptures—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9.
  3. Even today there is a tendency among some Christians to **leave** the straight way of the New Testament—2 Pet. 2:15.
- E. The background and burden of 2 Peter is apostasy—a **deviation from the right track of God's truth**—2:1:
1. The apostasy **distracted** the believers from the economy of God by leading them into the **human logic of puzzling philosophies**—Col. 2:8.
  2. The teachings of the apostates did not lead the believers to partake of the **tree of life, which gives life**, but to participate in the **tree of knowledge, which brings in death**—Gen. 2:9, 16-17; 2 Cor. 11:2-3, 12-15.
  3. The antidotes used by Peter in dealing with apostasy are the **provision of life and the revelation of truth**—2 Pet. 1:3-21:
    - a. In verses 3 through 11 Peter used the provision of the divine life for the proper Christian life to inoculate against the apostasy.
    - b. In verses 12 through 21 he used the revelation of the divine truth to inoculate against the heresy in the apostasy—2:1, footnote 3.
  4. Because today's Christianity is filled with apostasy, the Lord needs a recovery—the **recovery of life and truth**—John 1:4; 8:12; 10:10b; 14:6; Rev. 2:4, 15.
- F. Today, in a time of apostasy, we need to **testify the full revelation of the pure Word of God** and to **fight for the deeper truths revealed in the Word of God**, including:
1. The revelation concerning the **eternal economy of God**—Eph. 1:10; 3:9.
  2. The revelation concerning the **Divine Trinity**—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.
  3. The revelation concerning the **person and work of the all-inclusive Christ**—Col. 2:9, 16-17; 3:11.
  4. The revelation concerning the **consummated life-giving Spirit**—John 7:39; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 22:17.
  5. The revelation concerning the **eternal life of God**—John 3:15-16.
  6. The revelation concerning the **Body of Christ, which is the church of God**—Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; 10:32.

In verses 3 through 11 Peter used the provision of the divine life for the proper Christian life to inoculate against the apostasy. In verses 3 and 4 he says, "*Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which [183] relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue, through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.*" Praise the Lord for all the precious and exceedingly great promises that have been given to us! These promises enable us to **partake of the divine nature**. These promises are also the **provision of life for us to enjoy**. The virtue of the divine life becomes the divine energy with which we escape the corruption that is in the world. As a result, we become **partakers of the divine nature and enjoyers of the riches of what God is**. Eventually, the virtue of the divine nature causes the development of the divine life from one stage to another stage, that is, from faith all the way to love, as mentioned in verses 5 through 7.

Because today's Christianity is filled with **apostasy**, the Lord needs a recovery—the **recovery of life and truth**. We have the life by which we can partake of the divine nature. According to verse 19, we also "have the prophetic word made more firm, to which [we] do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in [our] hearts." **Life and truth are our safeguard and protection**. Life and truth have **protected and preserved us** throughout the one hundred years since Brother Nee was raised up. For the rest of my days or until the Lord returns, I will pray that the Lord will keep our next generation in this same way of life and truth, thereby preserving them from deviating into an apostate way. (The Ministry of the Word, Vol. 25, No. 04: Crystallization-study of Joshua, Judges, Ruth)