

Episode #603 Judges Part 40 – Eli the Thirteenth (?) Judge

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. In Judges 21:25, we have a summary of the state of Israel during the book. Note the downside versus having a righteous human king and central government. However, note also the advantage over having a wicked human king and central government. All are free here to worship the LORD according to their consciences. The problem is that their consciences are corrupt! We too have great freedom in the dispensation of grace, and in many ways things are just as messy. What will we do? Will we walk worthy? (Ephesians 4:1)

III. Everything here is as Judges 21:25 says: all did what was right in their own eyes! Judges started with Israel failing to wipe out the wicked Canaanites, and ends with them all but succeeding at wiping out their own brother Benjamin! We might criticize this, but do we do the same? Do we follow what God really says He wants, or do we do what seems good to us? This is the great lesson of this last section of Judges!

IV. I Samuel: The Story of Judges Continues.

- A. Why are we still studying Judges, since we have finished the book?
- B. The book of judges ends with Judges 21. The story of the judges, however, takes up from Samson in Judges 16 (remember that Judges 17-21 went back in time to the days of the first judges) with Eli in I Samuel 1.
- C. The Judges Period of Israelite history includes two more prominent figures: Eli and Samuel. We might call these the thirteenth and fourteenth judges. But are they really?
- D. Remember the criteria for a judge listed back in the cycles of Judges in Judges 2:16-19: the judges delivered them out of the power of their enemies all his days. It was for this reason that, though Deborah judged Israel back in Judges 4:4, we argued that she did not meet the criteria for a judge. Yet what about Samson?
- E. Judges 13:5. Samson began to deliver Israel out of the power of the Philistines. But that means he only BEGAN to do the task of a judge! Thus, though he judged Israel, Judges 15:20, he does not fully meet the criteria for a judge! Samson maybe began the mission of the twelfth judge, but he never completed it!
- F. Thus the book of I Samuel begins with the mission of the twelfth judge never completed. Samson, for all his might and faith, never finished that mission. We are still looking for the last and, in many ways, the greatest of the judges to appear on the scene.
- G. We speculated that the book of Judges may have been completed by Samuel as the final author. The book of Samuel without a doubt is begun by Samuel as the first author, I Chronicles 29:29. Thus he takes up the history where Judges left off.
- H. We are not going to study the books of Samuel at this time. Yet we will consider the books far enough to complete our consideration of the record of the judges.
- I. Eli was the next judge of Israel after Samson, I Samuel 4:18. We will examine his judgeship and character and decide: did Eli fulfill the mission of the twelfth judge?

V. I Samuel 1:1-2:11. Introduction to Eli.

- A. I Samuel 1:1-11. Elkanah, Peninnah, and Hannah. A childless woman in Israel was shamed and had failed in her primary mission as a woman. She promises the LORD that her child will be a lifelong Nazirite if only He will give her a son.

B. I Samuel 1:12-14. Our first picture of Eli: a man who once was close to the LORD, but had been so worn down by the apostasy of the many around him that he can no longer tell the difference between an honest seeker after God and a drunk woman!

X. The book of Judges ends, but the story of the judges continues in I Samuel. Eli, the next judge after Samson, was also the high priest of Israel. He was a Godly man at first, but being around apostate Israelites for so long wore away at him until he could not recognize the difference between an honest seeker after God and a drunk woman! How does our life in an increasingly godless society wear away at us?