

Journey Into God's Word



Judges 1-21

Ecclesiastes 1-12

Romans 1-8

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”(Romans 6:23)

Dear Co-Workers,

Sin is not just a 3-letter word that relates to the spiritual. Sin will poison and destroy not only the lives of individuals, but even nations as well. Judges is a book that illustrates the destructiveness of sin. It's a fact that sin always has consequences with suffering following. Sin is rebelliousness against the will of God with everyone doing “as he saw fit.”(Judges 17:6)

In Judges we see that sin caused the children of Israel to end up suffering at the hand of oppressive forces. The suffering grew until they cried out to God for help. Then God would send a judge to deliver them. As time passed, they would once again fall into sin and the cycle repeats itself. In each of the following 12 references in Judges, you will see a judge mentioned. Please look up the reference cited and then write down the judge who is described and the acts for which he or she is remembered.

- #1. Judges 3:7-11
- #2. Judges 3:12-30
- #3. Judges 3:31
- #4. Judges 4 and 5
- #5. Judges 6-8
- #6. Judges 10:1,2
- #7. Judges 10:3-5
- #8. Judges 10:6-12:7
- #9. Judges 12:8-10
- #10. Judges 12:11,12
- #11. Judges 12:13-15

#12. Judges 13-16

What events transpired in Judges 19-21, which clearly demonstrate that “the wages of sin is death?”

If Judges is the book about sin and its consequences, then Romans is the book about sin and its cure. Paul in the book of Romans declares, “just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”(Romans 5:12) Sin, mankind’s rebelliousness against God, infected all of creation. “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”(Romans 8:20, 21) This recreation or new creation process is possible because, “when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man; through for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”(Romans 5:6,7,8) Now study what God has done about sin. After reading Romans 6:2-4,6 please explain how we can be certain that sin’s power is broken. Please read carefully Roman 6:5,11 and describe the new nature that God has provided for us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result of this, we can now commit ourselves to obey Jesus in perfect freedom. Please describe this freedom according to Romans 6:12-14,16.

As Romans 7 describes, the struggles with sin continues, but thank God, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”(Romans 8:1)

Why does Paul say we should not be ashamed of the Gospel? (Romans 1:16) In order to experience this “power of God for Salvation” we must receive it by faith. “Just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”(Romans 1:17) This faith is not a work on our part but a gift given by God (Eph. 2:8). It is God’s grace, which saves us. Through the faith He gives us, we are able to “cross over from death to life.”(John 5:24) Now we need to accept: “the gift of God” which “is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”(Romans 6:23) by allowing Him to plant the seed of faith within us. “For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”(Romans 3:28) “Therefore, the promise comes by faith.”(Romans 4:16) “Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by

faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,” How does this knowledge help us “rejoice in our suffering” according to Romans 5:4,5?

One man thought he could overcome hard times if he just had enough wisdom, wealth, and women. After he got old and experienced a life of fame and fortune, look at Solomon’s conclusions in the book of Ecclesiastes, “utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”(Ecc. 1:2) “I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”(Ecclesiastes 1:14) “So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”(Ecc. 2:17) Wow! A person could sure get depressed approaching life in this way! Yet from time to time I have people tell me “what difference does all this work I’m doing, make anyway?” Even Solomon admits though, “That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere Him.”(Ecc. 3:13,14) What do you think the meaning of life is? Did you notice what Solomon says about the hope of eternity in Ecclesiastes 3:11? Some people make their lives even more frustrating by continually walking away from their commitments. What does Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 say about following through on your vows and commitments? Remember, “anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! (Ecc. 9:4) “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”(Ecc. 9:10) What does Solomon say is “conclusion of the matter” concerning the meaning of life? (See Ecc. 12:13,14)

Even though Solomon came to the conclusion that one was to “fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13), we see in I Kings 11 that Solomon did not follow his own advice. After reading I King 11, please note in what ways Solomon sinned against God and what was the result of those sins. “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”(Romans 8:5-8) What do you think Paul means by “sinful nature”?

Please put this sentence into your own words. “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God.”(Romans 8:6) Now lets turn back to Judges 13-16 and take a closer look at the life of Samson. How does Samson, by letting his sinful nature control his life, contribute to his death? Even though Samson wasted much of his life how did God still use him? As you look at the lives of Solomon and Samson and study Romans 8:5-8 what lessons are there for you? “We have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”(Romans 8:12-14) To be led by the Spirit of God means that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that eternal life comes through Him. (1John 5:5) When you are led by the Spirit of God, you produce the fruits of the Spirit and “crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”(Gal. 5:22-24) How does Romans 8:26, 27 describe that if we are led by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help us overcome our daily problems and develop a powerful prayer life? “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of son ship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”(Romans 8:15-17) Grasping this fact, that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, is absolutely essential if we are going to overcome our hurts from the past and move forward to be the leaders Christ is calling us to be. Go to Judges 12:7 and take a look at the life of Jephthah. Here was a man that had been driven out of town by his half-brothers because his mother was a prostitute and he was an illegitimate child. “So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a group of adventures gathered round him and followed him.”(Judges 11:3) Jephthah, even though he had been mistreated, refused to hate. As a result, when those who had run him out of town found themselves under attack, they came to Jephthah for help and he responded positively. Study the rest of Judges 11 and note how Jephthah found his identify and security in God and how God granted Jephthah a great victory. Also note the tragedy resulting form Jephthah’s rash vow. In the book of Judges and throughout Scripture we see how God can use imperfect people like you and me to do great things for him. We must, though, trust in God and be willing to “share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”(Romans 8:17)

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons,

the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is not hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have we wait for it patiently.”(Romans 8:22-25) In what ways does Romans 8:28 help you to hold on to this hope and faith even when you can’t see the answer to your problems? Are you saying you feel overwhelmed at this time? Then read carefully and meditate on Romans 8:31-39. What seven questions does Paul ask and how does he answer these questions? Note particularly how he describes the love of God in answer to his 6th question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Are you “convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord?”(Romans 8:38, 39) Once you are convinced of this fact like Paul was, you will be transformed like never before. At that moment, through the certainty of the love of God, the Holy Spirit will be able to do a work in you far beyond your greatest expectations. That is my prayer for you today.

Pleas join me this week as we read the book of Ruth (chapters 1-4), the Song of Songs (chapters 1-8 also known as the Song of Solomon) and Romans (chapters 9-16). I know for some of you this journey may seem long and difficult but don’t give up. Remember, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”(1Cor.15.58) God loves you and has a plan for your life. “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.”(Romans 5:2-5)

Yours in Christ service,

Larry Rice