Judges

INFORMATION

When the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land for the first time, they did not have kings. The Lord was their King. It was only later when the people wickedly sought an earthly king that Israel's line of kings began. Prior to that, however, there were judges. God established that Israel's judges would be individuals that would oversee the people of Israel and handle any disputes that arose between the people. See Deuteronomy 25, verse 1:

> If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

The basic instruction for judges was to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. God knew that men could not be trusted with the task of choosing their own judges. Therefore, God appointed judges for the people and used those men and women to free his people from their enemies. These individuals were not chosen by God to oppress his people, but to liberate them from evil. See Judges 2, verse 18:

> And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: …

The Bible lists 18 individuals who were judges over Israel. These were: Joshua, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel, Joel and Abiah. A few of these individuals should be familiar to us as their story is recorded in the Bible for all to know.

WHAT IT MEANS TO OUR FAMILY

Sometimes we perceive authority as a punishment or a negative thing, but God does not intend it to be that way. The types of authority that we are most familiar with are those of parents, teachers, employers and the government. All are prone to wickedness, but we can be assured that the Lord raises up good judges. "Raises up judges" means that he selects them, teaches them, guides them and causes them to stand out. This is evidence of God's intention to help and protect us. The Bible tells us that "…all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Let us not look at individuals in authority as something to despise. Instead, we should pray that God would raise them up or replace them with righteous individuals.

Relevant Passages

Matthew 22:19-21
Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Romans 13:1-7
Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Titus 3:1-2
Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Hebrews 13:17
Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.