

Judges

Judges is the 7th book of the Old Testament

I. A few things about about Judges:

- A. **The book of Judges begins around 1050 years before Jesus.**
- B. The Twenty-One chapters of the book of Judges Covers nearly 350 years from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel the prophet
- C. In this stretch we are introduced to some of the most well-known and celebrated heroes of the Bible; Deborah, Gideon and Samson to name a few.

II. Who's the author? Tradition holds that the book of Judges was compiled and penned by the prophet Samuel.

- A. **Important to understand:** Judges is not a series of consecutive events along a time line involving specific individuals. Some of the events are overlapping, taking place at in different geographical locations. The book of Judges is not the definitive chronology of events over a span of 350 years....it is a divinely inspired **“selective” history of those 350 years that best communicate a crucial spiritual lesson**

III. Whats the lesson? the point of that story is to show us the disastrous nature of compromise and sin. The 350 years of history covered in this book is one of the darkest in Israel’s history

- IV. **Here's the key verse of the Book - Judges 21:25 (ESV)** ²⁵ **In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes** - This explains everything that's dark and broken about this book - when Israel was brought into the promise land, they had a king, an invisible one. God. He was leading and guiding and providing for every need that they had, but here in the book of judges we see a turning away from the kingship of God and a desire to rule over themselves...
- V. **Why is this book called judges?** - This book talks about 12 people raised up by God as **"judges"** from the time following the death of Joshua to the beginning of what is known as the monarchy period.
- A. We can't think of these **"judges"** as guys in black robes in a courtroom, presiding over legal decisions, bringing down a gavel. Neither were they a succession of leaders and rulers over the nation. They were individuals raised up by God at different times — dark and desperate times — to be **"deliverers,"** to **"rescue"** Israel
- VI. **WHY IS JUDGES SO IMPORTANT / RELEVANT TO US TODAY?** This book of Judges is an incredible wealth of truth that explains and gives light to why everything that is so wrecked...**Judges explains and exposes the issues with "relativism" and "existentialism."**
- A. **Relativism** — the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute - **Translation - You have your truth, and I'll have mine**
- B. **Existentialism** — Is a philosophical approach that emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will -

Transition - If I can find and love myself and then everything will be just fine

- C. **This book shows us** — “relativism” and “existentialism” are not new thing. They are nothing more than a re-birth of a 3,000-year-old philosophy that undid the nation of Israel and led them into one of the darkest periods of their history

THE FLOW OF THE BOOK — Judges divides into 3 sections

- A. **1. Judges 1-2** — The prologue The prologue of the book of Judges is in a sense the epilogue of the book of Joshua.
- B. **2. Judges 3-16** — The Story of the Judges 13 Judges, 12 of them raised up by God - We are not gonna look at all of them just the most prominent ones
- C. **3. Judges 17-21** — The Story of the People

Judges 1-2 The prologue

Judges 1:1–3 (ESV) ¹ After the death of Joshua, **the people of Israel inquired of the Lord**, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

Explain: This is the last time we read of the Israelites collectively seeking the Lord for guidance...but it’s so great because God responds!

² The Lord said, “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.” ³ And Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into the territory allotted to me, that we may fight against the Canaanites. And I likewise will go with you into the territory allotted to you.” So Simeon went with him.

Explain: So we could paraphrase the opening words of Judges as **“This is what happened after Joshua died!”** Joshua had led the nation collectively in great victories over the major enemies.

- A. In military terms, under the leadership of Joshua the Israelites had broken the back of the Canaanite armies. Of the 12 tribes of Israel, 9 1/2 of them were now in the land.
- B. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and 1/2 the tribe of Manasseh chose to settle on the east side of the Jordan — **putting distance between them and the people of God, in most importantly, distance between them and all that God had intended for them to have in the land. It was left to the individual tribes to go in by faith and claim the allotted inheritance.**

VII. Judah believed God’s promise and invited the tribe of Simeon to go to battle with them.

- A. The remainder of the first section of chapters follows the stories of the remaining 7 1/2 tribes as they attempt to possess the land that was allocated to them by God
- B. **Here’s the sad part:** What we discover is that they all failed to comply with the command of God to drive out the remnant of the Canaanites and possess the land completely
- C. **God made it very clear that they were to drive the Canaanite peoples out of the land because if they failed to do that those pagan cultures would eventually become the spiritual downfall of Israel**
- D. Deuteronomy 20:15–18 (ESV) ¹⁵ Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. ¹⁶ But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷ but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and

the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, ¹⁸ that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.

- E. DON'T MISS THIS** — The first 2 chapters are the story of how the remaining tribes failed to comply with that command of God. They made compromise after compromise

Look at these verses...

Judges 1:19 And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, **but he could not drive out the inhabitants** of the plain because they had chariots of iron.

Judges 1:21 But the people of Benjamin **did not drive out the Jebusites** who lived in Jerusalem, so the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.....

Judges 1:27 Manasseh **did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean** and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages, **for the Canaanites persisted in dwelling (NKJV -were determined to dwell) in that land.**

Explain: The first compromise was brought about because it was too much work.

- A. If you asked them why they compromised this time they would say, **“They’re determined to stay. We want them out, but they’re determined to stay.”** - What a graphic picture of compromise in the Christian life! **“I want this stuff out of my life (lust – pornography – pride), but it’s not easy, they’re dug in and holding their ground.”** So they compromised

Check out the effects of compromise!

Judges 1:28 When Israel grew strong, **they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely**

Explain: The second compromise was that was **“We can control it”** but what would eventually happen is that the servant would become the master

Judges 2:10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And **there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.**

Explain: As long as Joshua was alive and the leaders that served along side of Joshua were alive, living faith was passed on to the people. But when they died it was only a matter of time before there arose a generation that did not know the Lord.

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

- A. **A generation grew up that never saw their parents trust the Lord, love the Lord, or serve the Lord. As a result, a generation arose that didn't embrace the rule of God, the Word of God and the will of God; never went out and possessed all that God had for them!**

1. Here's a general principle:

- a) Our kids will value what they see us value
- b) If Your relationship with Jesus is the highest priority to you... theres a good chance it will be to them
- c) But you just do the “church” thing, then they will settle for the church thing, until they don't have to go at all

- B. **HERE'S THE POINT PARENTS** — You and I ought to know what this book has to say and we ought to be desperately dependent upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to live in such a way that our children will know the Lord and know about the work that he has done in our lives

Judges 2:11-13 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth

Explains: This introduces us to the cyclical pattern that we see 6 times in Judges.

1. Sin (Judges 2:1)
 2. Suffering (Judges 2:14)
 3. Supplication (Judges 2:18)
 4. Salvation (Judges 2:16)
- I. **1. Sin (Judges 2:1)** — They reject God.
 - II. **2. Suffering (Judges 2:14)** — The New Testament declares that the wages of sin is death. Sin always results in separation from God. They end up on their own, no match for their adversary that only wants to oppress them, rip them off and crush them. After some length of time (some times as long as 40 years) they figure out that they are far from the life God had for them.
 - III. **3. Supplication (Judges 2:18)** — In their suffering they cry out to God. Supplication always leads to

- IV. **4. Salvation (Judges 2:16)** — God raises up a Judge — a deliverer who rescues them from the consequences of their sin.
- A. **HERE'S THE POINT** — Supplication (joined with repentance) always leads to salvation because that is who our God is. The name of Jesus means God has become salvation!

2. Judges 3-16 — The Story of the Judges

2 things about these Judges before we start looking at them

- A. **They were a group of flawed and diverse individuals** - they ranged from great (**Gideon**) to seriously flawed (**Samson**) Women like **Deborah** and Men who would have been considered odd like **Ehud**... or just really Old like **Othniel**
1. When you read this book you will find that six of those divinely appointed judges are just given a passing mention (sometimes just a verse).
 2. But it shows us that their not a “**Prototype for the kind of person God will use**”
- B. **These stellar hero's were raised up in desperate time** - It was during the one of the darkest periods of time in the history of Israel that some of it's most stellar heroes were raised up!
1. **Here's the point:** God's still doing that today - He wants to raise up Men and Women

We find the first of these judges in Chapter 3

Judges 3

Othniel

Judges 3:7-9 7And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord **(SIN)**. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. 8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years **(Suffering)**. 9 But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord **(Supplication)**, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, **Othniel the son of Kenaz, (Salvation)**

Explain: The Holy Spirit gives us a real important bit of background concerning Othniel — **Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.**

- I. **This first judge was the younger brother of one of the most heroic men in the bible — Caleb.**
 - A. Caleb along with Joshua brought a good report back to Moses about Jericho...and then last week we read about Caleb at the ripe old age of 86 still filled with faith to slay giants of God
- II. **We can assume that Othniel was quite far along in his years... because at this point his Bro was about 92 years old**
 - A. **God's not done with older saints**
 1. You ministry might change, but your usefulness hasn't

Another judge is found later in chapter 3.

Ehud

Judges 3:12-14 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 13He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms. 14And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. 15 Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite,

Same cycle — Sin > Suffering > Supplication > Salvation

15Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, **a left-handed man.**

Explanation: This may seem like a small detail, but it is a key point.

- I. The whole story is built around Ehud being left-handed, which to the writer is a limitation. In Hebrew, being left-handed is described as “restricted in his right hand.” to some it was seen as odd, to other it may have been seen as a disability...but in Hebrew culture, the right hand of the side of Power
 - A. And think about this Ehud is a left-handed man from the tribe of Benjamin, a name that means “**son of my right hand.**”
 - B. Summery - Things are dark. EIGHTEEN YEARS of oppression! God hears the supplication of His rebellious people and He looks for a man to raise up — specifically a left-handed man.

- C. Ehud was responsible for bringing the tribute, the tax, to the coalition of the Ammonites and Amalekites who were oppressing Israel. But Ehud has a special gift to bring to the king.

Judges 3:16 So Ehud made a double-edged dagger that was about a footlong, and he strapped it to his right thigh, keeping it hidden under his clothing.

Explain: Before Ehud goes in to present the tax to the king they searched him. But they were used to searching right-handed men. That meant patting down the left leg — because that was where right-handed men kept their weapons. Ehud's sword was strapped to his right thigh! So he gets through to the king.

I love this —

Judges 3:20-22 NLT - Ehud walked over to Eglon, who was sitting alone in a cool upstairs room. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you!" As King Eglon rose from his seat, 21 Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled out the dagger strapped to his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly. 22 The dagger went so deep that the handle disappeared beneath the king's fat. 22 And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung came out

So here's the picture: Ehud escapes — he rallies the men of Israel and they route the Ammonites and the Amalekites and they had rest for 80 years!

- A. The book of Judges is really important because it teaches us that God uses unlikely people to rescue men and women from life without God.
- B. 1 Corinthians 1:26–28 (ESV) ²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God

chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

We're going to skip to the fourth judge

Judges 4 - 5 Deborah

Judges 4:1- 1And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died. 2And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for **twenty years**.

Explain: You would think that that segment of the cycle would have gotten shorter — but they actually get longer! 8 years to 18 years to 20 years!

Judges 4:4–6 (ESV) ⁴ Now Deborah, a **prophetess**, the wife of Lappidoth, was **judging** Israel at that time. ⁵ She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. ⁶ She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, “Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.

Explain: A few things to note here:

- I. **Note that God called a Woman** - The Holy Spirit wants us to know that when God is looking to do a work He's not just looking to men. Here we see that God raised up a woman to be one of the great heroes of the Bible.

- A. Deborah was BOTH **prophetess** and judge in **Israel**. I believe that ONLY Samuel is the only other person in the Bible to be both a **prophet** and a **judge** in Israel.
- II. **Note that she summons a man named Barak** - “Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘**Go**, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun
- A. There times to wait, but then there are times where the Lord will say “**Go**” in those cases we can’t just stand around and do nothing....we should go **Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)** ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**
- III. **Notice what she called to do** - Barak was commanded to go and recruit 10,000 men who have no metal weapons to fight against a guy named Cisera who had the Old Testament equivalent of 900 tanks! And their natural response would be - RIGHT!!
- A. **Barak said** — “**I’m not going unless you go**”(v.8) Before we jump to conclusions, when we get to Hebrews 11 God calls Barak a man of faith. We’re told in Judges 5 that there was not a shield or a spear among 40,000 Israelites...**I don’t think Barak was a wimp** — I think that he wanted to be able to tell his men that Deborah the prophetess was going to be right in the battle with them.
- B. **Deborah said** — “I’ll go with you. It was AT LEAST a week’s journey from Mt. Ephraim to Mt. Tabor. Judges 5 tells us that the highways in that day were OVER RUN with thieves and robbers. No one

wanted to travel them for fear of their lives! GUYS Deborah was a woman of great faith!!

1. Because of Deborah's influence and example we read in Judges 5 the Lord will record concerning these men from Zebulun and Naphtali that they risked their lives for the things of the Lord. Judges 5 tells us that that is what happens when leaders lead!

The Israelites had a radical victory on that day and Cisera was killed by a woman named Jael

Judges 4:21 Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness.

Judges 5 contains the Song of Deborah in which she exalts God for all that He did to deliver His people.

We will look at two more Judges and we're done.

Judges 6-8 - Gideon

Judges 6:1-2; 11-12 1The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds 3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey.

Explain: In Judges 6:1-10 we find the cycle again. This time they were oppressed by the Midianites for 7 years. The Midianites were so intimidating that the men of Israel became moles; moving out of the plains

into the hills, hiding in caves, holing up in dens, TOTALLY humiliated. And by Judges 6 they were TOTALLY impoverished.

11 Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, while his son **Gideon** was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

Explain: Gideon was HIDING. Wheat was always threshed on the high places, out in the open, so they could use the winds to separate the wheat from the chaff. The wine presses were in the low places, dark cool places. Gideon is hiding — but check out what the Lord calls him.

1. He was also an unlikely candidate to be used by God - He was the least in his father houses, and He was from the weakest clan (6:15-16)

12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.”

God sees who Gideon who will become if Gideon will respond to the Lord

- C. Gideon would eventually lead
- D. **Here’s the Picture:** That is how the Lord works because that’s what the Lord has to work with - He takes us as we are, and He sees greatness in us that we often can’t see
- E. That’s what he did with Peter — He called Peter “ROCK!” That would be Peter who would deny Jesus 3 times in the dark hours of the morning before Jesus was crucified. **But by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit Peter became a “pillar” of the church in the 1st century. SO God looks at Gideon and says, YOU are the hero!**

Judges 6:13 13 And Gideon said to him, “Please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?”

Sin...that's the answer

The last judge occupies the largest piece of real estate in this section — Samson.

We find Samson in —

Judges 13-16

A good title for the life of Samson **“He could have been, He should have been, but he never was”**

If you haven't really studied his life you probably think of him as a great guy who did great things for God. The problem is that Samson never did any great things for God. He was one of the most gifted men in the Bible — yet he used them on himself. Read his story and you find that he don't serve the Lord first and foremost. Every time he uses his great strength it was to get him self out of trouble that he brought upon himself by his own desires. Samson is the poster child for Proverbs 25:28

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls”(NKJV)

The story of Samson is a really important off ramp in the book of Judges because his life instructs us, reminds us, we should use our gifts for God; that God wants us to be set apart for Him; that God wants to work in us — not just through us.

- I. **Samson's life teaches us one other great truth and we learn it at the very end of his life.**
 - A. The man who was raised in a godly home, called and empowered to be a mighty deliverer ended up a humiliated slave of the arch nemesis of Israel the Philistines.

- B. His own lusts had left him literally blind, and bound. But God forgave Samson and restored his strength. He was willing to lose his own life to vanquish the Philistines — with his restored strength he pulled down the pillars of the temple of the philistine god Dagon, and the house fell upon the lords (of the Philistines) and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.
- C. **The end of Samson's life teaches us that on this side of eternity it is never too late to make a decision to serve the Lord.** He teaches us that our past does not have to define our present³.

Judges 17-21 — The Story of the People

Explain: This is an incredibly dark bit of Scripture. Again — These chapters are not a continuation of the narrative — they a collection of the sordid details of the moral chaos, compromise and sin taking place as a result of **Judges 21:25** — they contain the details of all that was happening in the nation at the front end of those 6 cycles — the details of the sin that led to the suffering. Those chapters are like an overlay on the middle section of the book (Judges 3-16).

- D. In the last section we have the account of prophets for hire. We read of hybrid religions being formed, syncretism. We read of Idolatry. We read of robbery. We read of heterosexual sexual sin. We read of homosexual sexual sin. We read of rape and murder. We read of civil war.
- E. ALL of those things were declaring the fact that **In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).**
- F. CLOSE
- G. **Where's Jesus in Judges?**

Tuesday, August 1, 2017

1. Jesus is the Angel of the Lord who appears to Gideon and calls him to ministry and to Samson's parents, promising them a son
2. But also in What happens to a nation when He's rejected