



INTRODUCTION

- The Book of Judges is a continuation of the story of the Chosen People from the time of Joshua to the time of Samuel, the last Judge and the first of the great Prophets after Moses.
- This book is very different from that of Joshua as it relates the downward spiral of the Chosen People into sin, apostasy, idolatry and social chaos.
- Back in the Book of Exodus God saved His People from the sin, idolatry, and oppression of Egypt – which, as the superpower of the day, represented all that God’s People need to be freed from in order to live truly SPIRITUAL lives.
- But, as the Book of Judges progresses, it is made clear that they now need to be saved FROM THEMSELVES – as they are now their own worst enemies!
- The last call of Joshua before he died was that Israel should remain FAITHFUL to the one and only True God who made a Covenant with them... if they would LIVE this Covenant Relationship it would demonstrate to the other Nations who the True God, the Living God is...
- Yet the only one who remained faithful to the Covenant was God Himself! So this book is a testimony to God’s faithfulness to a rebellious people – so we will observe the Covenant relationship played out in so much of this testimony.

Authorship: No name is given but many believe that the author could be SAMUEL, the prophet. The events related in this book cover the time between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel as the next great unifying leader. However, this is the traditional view but not accepted generally among scholars.

The Name: “Judges” carries no reference to the office of Judges in modern courtrooms.

The name comes from the Hebrew word **SHOFET** = **a ruler**.

- The function of the Judge was **NOT** to determine justice according to Law (**our** idea) but **TO RESTORE RIGHTEOUSNESS** (i.e.) to right a wrong! So the idea is somehow connected to the **AVENGER** of **BLOOD**. The judge had to vindicate the injured party.

∴ The judge was seen as a **DELIVERER** of God’s People – who went to war against Israel’s enemies. So they were seen as “charismatic leaders” (cf 6:34; 11:29; 14:6,19) where the Spirit of the Lord gives a supernatural impulse so that the one who is called to take the leadership is enabled **to do** and say things beyond their natural capacities.
- The events in Book of Judges cover about 400 years of history, but because the stories are given one after the other, one gets the impression that they happen in a short period of time!
- Because the stories regard Israel’s fall from grace to the chastisements which followed, you might get the impression that the faith **was lost to everyone**... that was not the case **then – or now**, with general apostasy, immorality and sin in today’s world. There are **also** fervent believers... there is always a remnant.
- The Bible gives us 2 introductions to the Book of Judges – this usually points to several authors...
 - (A) **The Political Introduction:** Judges 1:1 → 2:5
Summary account of the settlement in Canaan
 - (B) **The Theological Introduction** Judges 2:6 → 3:6
This takes up after the death of Joshua and explains the **reasons why** we meet the tragic events of the rest of the Book and also **why Judges** were needed as **deliverers**.
- God had called Israel to be a **Holy** People – and **that** didn’t happen!
Chapter 2 shows Israel doing the opposite of what they were told to do.
They accept the Canaanites... adopted their religious practices – including child sacrifice.
- So, they reach a point where they are no different from the people God wanted to drive out of the land because of their immorality and evil practices.
 - this was absolute disobedience to God
 - this was a serious breaking of the Covenant with God, so God **had** to let them experience the **curses** of the Covenant when they refused its Blessings (Deut 28).
- We are shown the cycle of Israel’s sin and its consequences for themselves.
For example: We are shown a period of **SEVEN APOSTASIES**, SIX SERVITUDES plus a **Civil War!** in chaps 3-16!
 - 1) **First Servitude:** to **Mesopotamia:** the Judge Othniel delivers them: 3:5-9
 - 2) **Second Servitude:** to **Moab:** Judges Ehud and Shamgar deliver them: 3:12-31
 - 3) **Third Servitude:** to **Jabin & Sisera:** Judges Deborah and Barak deliver them 4:1-23
 - 4) **Fourth Servitude:** to **Midian:** Judge Gideon delivers them: 6-7
 - 5) **Civil War:** Judges Abimelech, Tola and Jair deliver them: 8:33-10:5
 - 6) **Fifth Servitude:** to **Philistines and Ammon:** Judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon delivers them: 11-12
 - 7) **Sixth Servitude:** to **Philistines** (again!) Judge Samson delivers them: 13-16

The Downward Spiral of Judges

Each cycle of sin, distress, crying out, and salvation leaves Israel in greater darkness.



Ⓝ This is followed by a period of confusion and anarchy: chaps 17-21

Conclusion: what we discover about humanity in Judges is depressing, but what we learn about **God** is wonderful. On the human side, it is a story of disobedience and disaster, but on the Divine side it is continued Love, Faithfulness and deliverance. The Book of Judges is a most remarkable history of the long-suffering of God towards His Chosen People. We see the most signal movements of His Justice and Mercy displayed almost on every page... and this is given to us as a **WARNING:** { none should **presume** for God is just
none should **despair** for God is merciful

The downward spiral of Judges

- The cumulative effect of repeated rebellion against God.
- The restoration point is lower each time.
- Sin leaves its mark which only righteous living can erase.



CHAPTER 1

Victory and Defeat in the Promised Land

vs 1 Now after the death of Joshua

- During the time of the Judges Israel lost the critical link in its great leadership. Moses was the **great** leader whom God used to deliver them from Egypt. Joshua was the next in line to take them into the Promised Land – but Joshua appointed **NO ONE** to follow him in leadership. Caleb would have been the obvious one – but he was **older** than Joshua.
- Because they now had no leader to guide the Nation as a whole, they were at a critical point where **all** the tribal leaders had to begin to trust God more than they had done before.
- The Book of Judges tells us about 4 times that **Israel had no King** on Earth. She only had God in Heaven – but this is not enough for **human** beings! They need an earthly leader to stand between themselves and God – as they acknowledged on Sinai with Moses: Ex 19:18-21
- **In those days there was no King in Israel, and every man did as he pleased.**
Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1 and 21:25

vs 1(b) **The Israelites consulted the Lord:** with Joshua gone the leaders of the 12 tribes have the responsibility to lead **as Joshua did** – by seeking God’s Word of guidance – this group were okay because in Josh 24:31 we are told that **Israel served the Lord throughout the life-time of Joshua AND the LIFETIME of those elders who outlived Joshua...** yet it didn’t occur to them to ask the Lord for a **new** leader!!

(NB) We will see a consistent pattern throughout Book of Judges that:

- (1) when Israel prayed the Lord listened and responded.
 - (2) when she asked for God’s guidance He gave the guidance they needed.
 - (3) when she **asked** for a deliverer, He **gave** them a deliverer.
 - (4) when she **asked** for Mercy, He showed Mercy to them over and over again.
- When they asked “which of us should go up against the Canaanites?”, the answer was **Judah**. Why would the lord choose Judah? Because this book is all about sin, people needing Redemption, the sending of a Redeemer or a Deliverer. So the true Deliverer, the final Deliverer was to come through the Tribe of Judah, and it was Jesus who came from the Tribe of Judah (the Messiah was to come from the Tribe of Judah) so Jesus was the one who overcame the spirit that was behind all apostasy and sin and rebellion and disobedience against God. So He dealt with Satan on the Cross; He is the true Deliverer. So the morality of any of these deliverers in the Book of Judges couldn’t possibly point to Jesus, its just the fact that they were deliverers.

3-7 Judah and Simeon defeat Bezek

- Since the territory of Simeon was **within** that of Judah, they joined forces and **won**.

Notice Seek the Lord in prayer... follow His guidance... obey His Word... unity in action

- this is the source of success **for** the Lord Himself is with us **then**:

Rom 8:31 **If God is with us, who can be against us?**

- The King of Bezek was Adoni-Bezek = Lord of **Light!** or **lightening** – with such a fearful name and yet God’s people – when obedient to Him – can overcome **any** enemy. The punishment for Adoni-Bezek was cruel but **he** had done the **same** thing to 70 kings!
- this punishment made him a worthless warrior.

Note at the time of the Roman Empire men who didn’t want to join the army cut off their **own** thumbs.

8-20 Judah's victories in the South – their own inheritance

- 1) Judah conquered Jerusalem... but the Jebusites got control again (see 1:21)
- it was finally conquered by King David about 400 years later! (2 Sam 5:6-10)
Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world – has been occupied continually for about 5,000 years!
- 2) Caleb's exploits in Hebron and the Negev (lowlands of South) are related again.

vs 19 Their excuse for **not** conquering the Philistine territory was the fact that the enemy had **CHARIOTS OF IRON!** **Nothing** stopped Joshua whose trust in God was wonderful.
cf Ex 14:7-29 Joshua 11:1-8 and 1 Kings 20:21

- They appear to have forgotten that God is Omnipotent! cf Gen 18:4 Jer 32:17
Their problem is reflected in Ps 20:7

**Some trust in chariots, and some in horses,
but we remember the Name (the Person) of the Lord, our God.**

What they show here is a lack of faith and trust in God... so they will be troubled by the Philistines for centuries! It will take King David to defeat them 400 years later.

Lesson: When we refuse to face and deal with a problem, it will torment us until we get the courage to drive our demons **out!**

vs 20: Caleb did what they refused to do. He drove out the Anakim from Hebron so Judah and Simeon are shown up by this contrast of faith and obedience to the Lord.

vs 21 Incomplete Victory and defeat for Benjamin

In Judges 1:8 the battle for Jerusalem took place, but it was incomplete so the Tribe of Benjamin tried **to live** with those they should have driven out – this has future consequences for Benjamin.

22-26 The **House of Joseph** (Ephraim and ½ Manasseh)

- This is unusual here. It was later Prophets who referred to these 2 tribes as **House** of Joseph.
- They used the same method as Joshua regarding Rahab and her family in Jos 3 and 6
- it was successful then and here also.

vs 22 - but the **REAL** success was due to the fact that **The Lord was with them.**

27-29 The House of Joseph **COMPROMISED** and didn't drive the Canaanites out.

Lesson: If we compromise with **worldly ways**, sin or self-will, we will be hounded by these and we will never **take full possession** of God's Will or Reign in our lives.

- **And** we only have ourselves to blame for it.
- These enemies will work continuously to draw us **AWAY** from true commitment and surrender to God's Will and will keep us **away** from true sanctity.

vs 30 **Tribe of Zebulun** also compromises

Each tribe bore responsibility to drive the Canaanites out from **THEIR OWN** Inheritance... so trouble looms ahead.

31-32 **Tribe of Asher** fails also! They decided to live **ALONGSIDE** the Canaanites

- this was even worse than Zebulun; the Asherites simply made a home for themselves among the Canaanites. ∴ Canaanites still hold the territory!

33 **Tribe of Naphtali** compromises also... it now looks like each tribe is imitating others in their disobedience to the Lord. "Everyone is doing it"

Ⓝ In Ex 23:29-30 and Deut 7:22-24 we read that God **KNEW** that they couldn't conquer the land all at once: He knew He would give it to them **LITTLE** by **LITTLE**. He knew they couldn't sustain continuous warfare, but that they **could** persevere until the Land **was theirs**.

Notice: Some tribes put Canaanites into **FORCED LABOUR**... their own experience of Egypt should have taught them that this experience would galvanize the Canaanites to rise up and conquer **THEM!**

34-36 Tribe of Dan fails also. The enemies pushed **Dan** into the mountains, which meant that **Dan** had no strength against them... faith and trust **weak**.

- St Paul tells us **to fight** our spiritual battles in Eph 6:10-20. We **must** not be passive with the enemy putting boundaries to our lives! For this is spiritual surrender!
- Leon Trotsky, the infamous Communist leader said **one correct** thing: "you may not be interested in war, but war (and evil, and the world) is interested **in you**".

Nota Bene: When Jesus fought sin, death and Hell for us on the Cross, He persevered to **complete victory** over the enemies. We, as part of His Body, the Church, must follow suit.

Matt 24:13 **He who perseveres to the end will be saved** – this means we have to continue the battle against the enemies until they are defeated.

