

JUDGES

Author: possibly Samuel

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The events of this book cover the turbulent period in Israel's history from the conquest of Canaan to the beginnings of the monarchy. Though the land was generally conquered and occupied under Joshua, many important Canaanite strongholds had been bypassed. After the death of Joshua, Israel was ruled by judges for over 300 years until the united monarchy was established. The era of the judges was a time of instability and moral depravity.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they united as one army to crush the inhabitants. Then, after the land was divided among the twelve tribes, each tribe was responsible for driving out the remaining enemy from its own territory. The book of Judges tells of Israel's failure to do that.

This is a story of man's sinfulness and God's mercy. It shows how obedience to God's law brings peace, freedom and prosperity, while disobedience brings oppression and death. Yet, the faithfulness of God's mercy in forgiving His penitent people is seen even in this period when "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25).

There is a cycle that is repeated seven times in this book. The cycle is: sin, servitude, sorrow, and salvation. In this cycle we see the people's evil ways bring about God's judgment through which He allows oppression and servitude. As time passes, the Israelites turn back to God and cry out for His help. His help comes in the form of a judge (deliverer, savior, hero). Some of the judges performed judicial functions, but they are more rightly described as deliverers. Their major role was the deliverance of Israel from foreign foes.

As it applies to us today, the book of Judges teaches that in order for our faith to survive, it must be practiced day by day. Our faith must penetrate every aspect of our lives. It must be taught to our children and passed on from one generation to the next. We see that we are never beyond God's mercy if we sincerely turn back to him.

Judges Outline

- I. The Deterioration of Israel and Failure to Complete the Conquest of Canaan (1:1-3:4)
 - A. The Failure to Complete the Conquest (1:1-36)
 - B. The Judgment of God for Not Completing the Conquest (2:1 – 3:4)
- II. The Deliverance of Israel During Seven Cycles (3:5 – 16:31)
 - A. The Southern Campaign: Judges Othniel, Ehud, & Shamgar (3:5-31)
 - B. The Northern Campaign: Judges Deborah and Barak (4:1 – 5:31)
 - C. The Central Campaign: Judges Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, & Jair (6:1-10:5)
 - D. The Eastern Campaign: The Judge Jephthah (10:6 – 12:7)
 - E. The Second Northern Campaign: Judges Ibzan, Elon, & Abdon (12:8-15)
 - F. The Western Campaign: The Judge Samson (13:1 – 16:31)
- III. The Depravity of Israel in Sinning Like the Canaanites (17:1 – 21:25)
 - A. The Failure of Israel through Idolatry (17:1 – 18:31)
 - B. The Failure of Israel through Immorality (19:1-30)
 - C. The Failure of Israel Through the War (20:1 – 21:25)