

JUDGES: LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROLOGUE

(1:1-3:6)

INTRODUCTION:

Following the death of Joshua, the period of the Judges begins. These judges were not just like the judges put in place to assist Moses in the daily affairs of God's people (Exodus 18:13-27); but were foremost deliverers in war (Judges 2:16), periodically saving God's people from oppressive enemies while administering justice.

The period of these special judges occupies approximately 350 years of Israel's history. The Book of Judges bridges that gap of time between the various tribes living in the promised land following the conquest through Joshua, and the nation of Israel, being ruled by a king. The events occur during 1400 B.C. to 1000 B.C.

The Book of Judges sheds light upon a dark period of Israel's history when God, the invisible ruler, injects Himself in extraordinary ways to instruct a people who are determined "*to do that which is right in their own eyes*", and continually suffer for their short sightedness (Judges 21:25, 17:6, etc.).

I. TITLE AND AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

- A. The Book is titled, "Judges" because it covers the actions of the twelve judges revealed in the book. (Like in the New Testament book "Acts" – acts of the apostles).
- B. Jewish history attributes the Book to the work of Samuel.
 - 1. The author probably compiled the history from the times of Joshua (ex. Joshua 15; Judges 1:8-21), and the original cotemporary annals of the different tribes.
 - a. Details: Deborah's song (Judges 5); Jotham's fable (Judges 9); Jephthah's message to the king of Ammon (Judges 11); exact details of the parliament in Mizpah (Judges 20).
 - 2. By inspiration, the author is guided to include the details and add divine commentary.
 - 3. Samuel links the period of the Judges to the Kings (I Samuel 7:5-6; 10:1)
 - a. He judges Israel after death of Eli.
 - b. He anoints Saul – first King

II. TIME WHEN BOOK WRITTEN

- A. When Saul had become King: "*In those days there was no king in Israel*" (18:1, 19:1)
- B. Before David became King: Mentioning Jebusites dwelling in Jerusalem "*unto this day*" (Judges 1:21, I Chron. 11:5)

III. PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK

- A. The events included in the book are not to offer chronological continuity, but to emphasize the spiritual significance of the events.
- a. While there are twelve judges recorded in the Book, chronicling their time of service, only six are covered in comparatively lengthy detail.
 1. Othniel (3:7-11); Ehud (3:12-30); Deborah (with Barak); (4:1-5:31); Gideon (6:1-8:35); Jephthah (10:6-12:7); Samson (13:1-16:31)
 2. Abimelech's conspiracy (9:1-57)
 3. Shamgar (3:31); Tola (10:1-2); Jair (10:3-5); Ibzan (12:8-10); Elon (12:11-12); Abdon (12:13-15).
 - b. Each of the six major accounts begins with: "*And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah (the Lord)...*" (3:7, "again" 3:12, "again" 4:1; 6:1; "again" 10:6; "again" 13:1)
- B. The Book highlights a repeated cycle of Israel's perpetual spiritual decline and God's disciplinary action.
1. Sin (2:11-13)
 2. Suffering (2:14-15) - God delivers them into the hands of spoilers.
 3. Supplication - Cry to God (3:9, 10:10-16)
 4. Salvation - Deliverance (2:16) – Judges raised to deliver Israel from oppression.
 5. Then, the cycle repeats itself in the lives of the Israelites (2:17-19)
- C. The Book emphasizes the failure when God's people compromise with evil (1:27-25; 3:1-6)
1. Tribes did not drive out idolatrous inhabitants of the land.
 2. Angel sent to ask "why" they did not obey God, (God keeps his part of the covenant, why have they not theirs?). He then prophesies that the remaining nations will be a thorn in Israel's side, and their gods will be a snare unto them.
 3. Israel falls through intermarriage with nations and serving their gods.
- D. In the Prologue (1:1-3:6) the explanation of how Israel has come to such a spiritual-low before God is presented, and in the Epilogue (17:1 – 21:25) the illustration of how low they have fallen is emphasized.
1. After the death of Joshua and the elders of his generation, a new generation arises who knows not God, nor his works (Judges 2:10).
 2. Two sad cases in Israel emphasizing their spiritual decline:
 1. Micah's idol – His Levitical priest (17:1- 18:31)
 2. Levite and his concubine – Tribe of Benjamin almost wiped out (19:1- 21:24)

3. Book opens with Judah being selected by God to go and fight the heathen enemy and closes with Judah being selected by God to fight their brother Benjamin (Judge 1:2, 20:18)
4. God requites evil – He is no respecter of persons (Judges 1:6-7).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- I. Prologue (1:1-3:6)
- II. Instructive history of twelve judges
 - a. Othniel (3:7-11)
 - b. Ehud (3:12-30)
 - c. Shamgar (3:31)
 - d. Deborah (with Barak) (4:1-5:31)
 - e. Gideon (6:1-8:35)
 - f. Conspiracy of Abimelech (9:1-57)
 - g. Tola (10:1-2)
 - h. Jair (10:3-5)
 - i. Jephthah (10:6-12:7)
 - j. Ibzan (12:8-10)
 - k. Elon (12:11-12)
 - l. Abdon (12:13-15)
 - m. Samson (13:1-16:31)
- III. Epilogue (17:1-21:25)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. While the Book of Judges covers approximately 350 years of Israel's history, what do you see in the Book that leads to a proper conclusion that the purpose of the Book is not about chronology?
2. What is the theme of the Book of Judges?
3. How does the structure of the Book relate to this theme?
4. Is God involved in sending the evil upon his sinning people as well as the solution? What does this say about the grace of God?
5. What does the Book say to whether or not we should be concerned about making sure our young people are grounded in God's Word?
6. What lesson do we learn from the experience of Adonibezek?