

Overview of Judges

Key Thought: The book of Judges shows Israel's downward spiral in cycles of sin, judgment, cry for help, deliverance and back into sin. The book shows the consequences of seeking our own way instead of following after God.

Book Name: The book name is consistent with the type of leaders, Judges, in all traditions. The Judges were regional or territorial leaders and did not govern the entire nation. As such, some of the times of the Judges and the oppressions overlap.

Author: Unknown (some speculate Samuel)

Key Passages: Judges 17:6 In those days *there* was no king in Israel; everyone did *what* was right in his own eyes. (cf. 21:25)

Judges 2:7-10 7 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel...

Judges 10:16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

Basic Outline of Judges

- I. Background to the Judges (chapters 1-2)
- II. Deliverance by Various Judges (chapters 3-16)
- III. The depth of the spiral (17-21)
 - a. Religious Failure (Micah's Idol, 17:1-18:31)
 - b. Moral Failure (Gibeah's sin, 19:1-21:25)

Judge	Reference	Enemy	Length	Key Events/Thoughts
Othniel	3:7-11	Mesopotamia	40	<i>Caleb's nephew/son-in-law. Intermarriage and idolatry rampant. Israel forgot God & became servants</i>
Ehud	3:12-30	Moab	80	<i>Left Handed (looked down upon), but raised up by the Lord (3:15)</i>
Shamgar	3:31	Philistines	Unk.	<i>Not much info. (it's only 1 verse!) Mighty Warrior</i>
Deborah	4:1-5:31	Canaanites	40	<i>Major Judge-only woman. She had a good attitude toward her position. Barak her general lacked confidence.</i>
Gideon	6:1-8:35	Midainites	40	<i>Major Judge-Called while in hiding. Known for the fleece and for victory with only 300 men.</i>
Abimelech	9:1-57			<i>Self-appointed (not a judge per se). Killed his family. Opposed by God (v. 23), Killed by a woman (v. 53)</i>
Tola	10:1-2		23	<i>"He arose" not much else.</i>
Jair	10:3-5		22	<i>Known for 30 sons with 30 donkeys – well off for the time.</i>
Jephthah	10:6-12:7	Ammonites	6	<i>Major Judge – son of a concubine, rejected by his people until they had a need. Known for his "vow."</i>
Ibzan	12:8-10		7	<i>30 sons & 30 daughters</i>
Elon	12:11-12		10	<i>Zebulonite</i>
Abdon	12:13-15		8	<i>30 guys with 70 donkeys</i>
Sampson	13:1-16:31	Philistines	20	<i>Major Judge-known for physical strength. Was a Nazarite, but was prone to compromise.</i>

Overview of Judges

Questions:

1. What insight does Judges 1:21 and 1:27-36 give to the problem encountered in the book of Judges? What challenge does this give to us today?
2. In Judges 1:7-10 we get some insight into how long it took for Israel to fall away. How do you think we can avoid similar problems within our own families?
3. Read Judges 2:11-23 how would you classify the actions and responses of God, Israel, and the Judges. Consider also the description in 10:6-16.

God

The Nation of Israel

The Judges

4. The four major judges in the book are: Deborah, Gideon, Jephtha, and Sampson. What strengths and weaknesses do you see in each of these Judges. What does this tell us about the people God can and does use? (All are in Heb. 11:32, although Barak is listed and not Deborah).
5. Deborah is the only female Judge recorded in the book of Judges. What does 4:4-9 tell you about her leadership?
6. Gideon is probably my favorite of the stories in Judges. There are a number of lessons in Gideon that we can apply. Consider the following items:
 - a. How does God see Gideon when the “Angele of the Lord” appears to him while he is threshing wheat in the hidden confines of a wine press (6:12)?
 - b. What significance do you see in God’s instructions to Gideon in v. 25 ff. and the way he carries it out?
 - c. How do you relate to the story of the fleece (6:36)
 - d. Why did God reduce the number of soldiers to 300? (chapter 7) How would that make you feel?
 - e. In chapter 8, Gideon has problems after the victory. How does this reflect real life today?
7. Jephthah is generally known for his “vow” in 11:31-32. How do you understand Jephthah’s vow (cf Heb 11:32)