

Book of Judges

Synopsis



Introduction

Book No	7
Name	Judges
Written By	Samuel
Testament	Old
Category	History
Date Written	Approx. 1043 - 1004 BC
Place Written	Canaan
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	To show that God's judgment against sin is certain, and his forgiveness of sin and restoration to relationship are just as certain for those who repent
History Covered	1220 - 1050 BC
Chapters	21
Verses	618
Key Verse	In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes (17:6)
Key People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Othniel ❖ Ehud ❖ Deborah ❖ Gideon ❖ Abimelech ❖ Jephthah ❖ Samson

	❖ Delilah
Key Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bokim ❖ Jericho ❖ Hazor ❖ Hill of moreh ❖ Shechem ❖ Land of ammon ❖ Timnah ❖ Valley of sorek ❖ Gaza ❖ Hill country of Ephraim ❖ Dan ❖ Gibeah ❖ Mizpah

Purpose of the Book

The Book of Judges illustrates the disastrous consequences of breaking fellowship with God through idolatrous worship. Sin separates from God. The Lord requires commitment from His people. When we commit sin, the Lord in His love chastises us until we come to full repentance. When we cry out to Him, the Lord faithfully responds to us. He forgives us, brings deliverance to us, and restores fellowship with us.

The purpose of the Book of Judges is threefold: 1) historical, 2) theological, and 3) spiritual. Historically, the book describes the events that transpired during a specific period in Israel's history and provides a link between the conquest of Canaan and the monarchy. Theologically, the book underscores the principle established in the Law that obedience to the Law brings peace and life, and disobedience brings oppression and death. Spiritually, the book serves to show the faithfulness of the Lord to His covenant. Whenever His people repented and turned from their evil ways, the Lord always forgave them and raised up Spirit-empowered leaders to deliver them from their oppressors.

The main body of the book (3:7—16:31) illustrates this recurring pattern within Israel's early history. The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord (apostasy); the Lord

delivered them into the hands of enemies (oppression); the people of Israel cried out to the Lord (repentance); and in response to their cry, the Lord raised up deliverers whom He empowered with His Spirit (deliverance).

Simply stated, the reason for this rapid decline was sin—individual and corporate. The first step away from God was incomplete obedience (1:11–2:5); the Israelites refused to eliminate the enemy completely from the land. This led to intermarriage and idolatry (2:6–3:7) and everyone doing “whatever seemed right” (17:6).

Two stories are appended to the Book of Judges (17:1–21:25) in the form of an epilogue. The purpose of these appendices is not to establish an end to the period of the judges but to depict the religious and moral corruption that existed during this period. The first story illustrates the corruption in Israel’s religion. The second story in the epilogue illustrates Israel’s moral corruption by relating the unfortunate experience of a Levite at Gibeah in Benjamin and the ensuing Benjamite War.

As you read the book of Judges, take a good look at these heroes from Jewish history. Take note of their dependence on God and obedience to his commands. Observe Israel’s repeated downward spiral into sin, refusing to learn from history and living only for the moment. But most of all, stand in awe of God’s mercy as he delivers his people over and over again.

Overview

- ❖ 7th book of the BIBLE, Old Testament and 2nd of 12 Historical books
- ❖ The Book of Judges covers the period between Joshua’s death and the rise of the monarchy
- ❖ These judges whom the Lord chose and anointed with His Spirit were military and civil leaders.
- ❖ The book of Judges spans a period of over 325 years, recording six successive periods of oppression and deliverance, and the careers of 12 deliverers.
- ❖ Their captors included the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Philistines, Canaanites, Midianites, and Ammonites.
- ❖ 7 apostasies . . . 7 servitudes . . . 7 deliverances.
- ❖ The cycle of Judges appears to be:
 - Rebellion - Sin
 - Retribution - Servitude

Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

The activity of the Spirit of the Lord in the Book of Judges is clearly portrayed in the charismatic leadership of the period. The following heroic deeds of Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson are attributed to the Spirit of the Lord:

1. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel (3:10) and enabled him to deliver the Israelites from the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia.
2. Through the personal presence of the Spirit of the Lord, Gideon (6:34) delivered God's people from the oppression of the Midianites. Literally, the Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon. The Spirit empowered this divinely appointed leader and acted through him to accomplish the Lord's saving act on behalf of His people.
3. The Spirit of the Lord equipped Jephthah (11:29) with leadership skills in his military pursuit against the Ammonites. Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites was the Lord's act of deliverance on behalf of Israel.
4. The Spirit of the Lord empowered Samson to perform extraordinary deeds. He began to stir Samson (13:25). The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him on several occasions. He tore a lion apart with his bare hands (14:6). At one time he killed thirty Philistines (14:19) and at another time he freed himself from ropes that bound his hands and killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (15:14, 15).

The same Holy Spirit who enabled these deliverers to do exploits and fulfill the Lord's plans and purposes is at work today. He desires to move upon His people so that they too can do impossible things. The Lord wants to bring deliverance to His people, and He is looking for consecrated men and women whom He can empower with His Holy Spirit.

Mega Themes of Judges

DECLINE/COMPROMISE

Whenever a judge died, the people faced decline and failure because they compromised their high spiritual purpose in many ways. They abandoned their mission to drive all the people out of the land, and they adopted the customs of the people living around them.

Society has many rewards to offer those who compromise their faith: wealth, acceptance, recognition, power, and influence. When God gives us a mission, it must

not be polluted by a desire for approval from society. We must keep our eyes on Christ, who is our Judge and Deliverer.

DECAY/APOSTASY

Israel's moral downfall had its roots in the fierce independence that each tribe cherished. It led to everyone doing whatever seemed good in his own eyes. There was no unity in government or in worship. Law and order broke down. Finally, idol worship and man-made religion led to the complete abandoning of faith in God.

We can expect decay when we value anything more highly than God. If we value our own independence more than dedication to God, we have placed an idol in our hearts. Soon our lives become temples to that god. We must constantly regard God's first claim on our lives and all our desires.

DEFEAT/OPPRESSION

God used evil oppressors to punish the Israelites for their sin, to bring them to the point of repentance, and to test their allegiance to him.

Rebellion against God leads to disaster. God may use defeat to bring wandering hearts back to him. When all else is stripped away, we recognize the importance of serving only him.

REPENTANCE

Decline, decay, and defeat caused the people to cry out to God for help. They vowed to turn from idolatry and to turn to God for mercy and deliverance. When they repented, God delivered them.

Idolatry gains a foothold in our hearts when we make anything more important than God. We must identify modern idols in our hearts, renounce them, and turn to God for his love and mercy.

DELIVERANCE/HEROES

Because Israel repented, God raised up heroes to deliver his people from their path of sin and the oppression it brought. He used many kinds of people to accomplish this purpose by filling them with his Holy Spirit.

God's Holy Spirit is available to all people. Anyone who is dedicated to God can be used for his service. Real heroes recognize the futility of human effort without God's guidance and power.

Life Lessons in Judges

Truth	Lesson
<p>Growing in Godliness</p> <p>God's grace is revealed repeatedly in Judges as He raises up deliverers for His people. God chooses the weak, the fearful, and the imperfect, fills them with His Spirit and uses them mightily for His glory. This great message of hope assures us that God can use us for His glory, too!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ God is able to use those who are fearful and believe themselves to be weak. For it is not the strength of the person but the strength, power, and presence of the Spirit of God that accomplishes His purposes through them. ❖ God is the Redeemer and is able to use those who have been otherwise cast off by society. Though Jephthah was the son of a harlot and had been driven away by his own people, God raised him up and used him to deliver Israel. ❖ Believe that God is a Redeemer and that He can and will use you. ❖ Believe that GOD strengthens those HE calls and commissions. ❖ Trust in the promise of HIS abiding presence ❖ Heed GOD's warning. ❖ Do not continue to rely upon your fleshly wisdom and ability lest GOD limit you to those resources rather than releasing HIS wisdom and power through you
<p>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</p> <p>Praise and thanksgiving will flow when we recognize that the Lord, not we ourselves, will accomplish our victory and our deliverance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sing a song of praise for the mighty acts that the Lord has performed on behalf of His people. ❖ Tell others what He has done!

<p>Pursuing Holiness</p> <p>When Israel turned from the Lord, they were oppressed, impoverished, enslaved, and plundered by their enemies. When they turned back to Him, they experienced deliverance, restoration, freedom, and victory. God calls to us today to pursue Him and to walk in His ways, to realize His purpose and blessing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mentor the next generation to know and trust God. Teach them of His marvelous works so that they might grow up to serve and follow Him faithfully. ❖ Turn to the Lord, confessing your sin to Him because He will forgive you. His grace, compassion, and love are deeper than we can comprehend. He longs to deliver and restore us.
<p>The Walk of Faith</p> <p>Trials and obstacles in our lives can require different responses, depending on their cause and/or purpose. If the cause is sin, we need to turn from the sin and receive forgiveness. If the purpose is to strengthen us and to instruct us in the ways of spiritual warfare, we need to embrace the trials and learn the lessons God is graciously teaching us with open hearts and willing spirits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognize that present calamity may be a result of sin. Ask the Lord to convict you of any sin in your life. Confess what He shows you, and receive His forgiveness. Pray for deliverance from the problem and for complete restoration. Remember, God gave His only Son to redeem you. ❖ Pray for wisdom (James 1:5) to know if the test you are facing is from the Lord. God allows tests for the purpose of taking us to deeper levels of maturity and strength (James 1:2–4). Tests can also teach us about spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18). ❖ Accept adversity and welcome opposition. Believe that GOD will use them to train you in obedience and strengthen you in spiritual warfare ❖ Avoid relying upon men due to a lack of confidence in GOD's presence. Faith in GOD honors HIM and results in your receiving what HE intends for you

<p>Keys to wise living</p> <p>Wisdom is knowing how to apply what you know to be true. Therefore wisdom demands that you ascertain the LORD's direction for your life. Also judges warns against assuming that all leadings are true. Self righteousness and religious sentiment can be a source of serious deception</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Test and confirm any sense of divine leading ❖ Refuse to move impulsively ❖ Be certain of GOD's direction. It results in greater confidence ❖ Know that GOD rejects any idolatry regardless how religious or sincere one's sentiment may be ❖ Be wary of religious deception
<p>Steps to dealing with sin</p> <p>Sin presents a constant struggle with which we must deal or risk downfall. When we resist sin we often feel the battle is over only to be tempted by the same sin again and again. Sin never goes away and so we must constantly be on guard against it. However even when we are overcome with sin we have hope. GOD always gives another chance to turn from sin and back to HIM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that sin not dealt with radically and ruthlessly ultimately weakens and may cause downfall ❖ Persist for victory in your struggle against sin ❖ Guard against the seductions of the world and the flesh ❖ Understand that compromise will eventually weaken and wear you out giving the evil one an occasion to overpower you ❖ Repent quickly when overcome by sin ❖ Be confident that GOD is faithful to honor all truly heartfelt repentance
<p>Lessons for leaders</p> <p>Good leadership is a key to the triumph of GOD's purposes. Judges underlines the need for godly leaders who speak with prophetic anointed voices. When there is a lack of such leadership among GOD's people the people lead</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Know that lack of godly leadership will cause GOD's people to become worldly and incur GOD's judgement ❖ Strive to become godly in your leadership ❖ Pursue a prophetic dimension in your ministry

unrestrained lives guided by their own opinions rather than GOD's WORD and godly wisdom	
<p>Steps in developing humility</p> <p>Judges stresses that humility is acknowledging that any good or righteous acts we accomplish result from GOD's working through us. We often think of humility as a weak self abasement when in fact it is a bold confidence in a faithful GOD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that GOD's spiritual victory does not depend upon natural strength or ability ❖ Rely totally upon GOD's enablement and strength ❖ Refuse to build any monuments to your successes or victories. Know that they will likely become an occasion of stumbling for yourself and others

Praise Points in Judges

- ❖ HIS provision of good leadership (2:16);
- ❖ HIS grace and compassion toward us (2:18; 10:15-16);
- ❖ HIS spirit, who empowers and delivers us (3:10);
- ❖ HIS dominion over evil (5:31);
- ❖ HIS patience with our lack of faith (6:39-40);
- ❖ Strength, which comes from him and not from human might (7:7);
- ❖ HIS attentiveness to the prayers of his servants (13:8-9); and
- ❖ HIS willingness to accomplish his desires through imperfect people (16:28-30).

Worship Insights in Judges

Again and again the newly formed Israelite community broke trust with God. Lacking strong, central leadership, the people "did whatever seemed right in their own eyes" (21:25) and followed the gods of the people living among them. And time and again the Lord reached out to them in grace, raising up a leader who brought them back to God (3:9, 15; 4:3; 10:10-16).

From the dark stories of Judges we learn that God's faithfulness is infinitely greater than our unfaithfulness. Though it may seem at times that human beings have a limitless capacity for evil, we see in the book of Judges a God who has not given up on

us. When we turn to the Lord in the midst of our failure, we find his heart already turned toward us, waiting to show mercy.

Judges confirms that idolatrous worship spreads its poison quickly and effectively. And each time the Israelites were lured by the worship of false gods, their hearts were captured by them (2:12, 17, 19). This idolatry is dangerous, because inevitably the hearts of worshipers become attached to the god they worship, and they will sacrifice anything for it. Our society bears the truth of this principle. Many worship at the feet of pleasure and power and often become completely obsessed with acquiring things, despite the damage this may cause. Instead, let us choose to worship the Lord and give our heart to him.

- ❖ God is greatly displeased with unfaithfulness (2:1-4).
- ❖ Our devotion to God must not be compromised by rival affections (2:12-15).
- ❖ Hardship refines worship and exposes lukewarm commitment to God (2:22).
- ❖ Song and music are gifts that should be used to celebrate God's deeds (5:1-31).
- ❖ God calls us to challenge the false gods of this world (6:28).
- ❖ Religious symbols and objects can become a trap if they do not point us to God (8:27).
- ❖ The Lord will not bless improper, selfishly motivated worship (17:10-13).

An Outline of Judges

I. The Incomplete Conquest: Jdg. 1:1-2:5

- A. Poised for Advance: [Jdg_1:1](#)
- B. Samples of Success: [Jdg_1:2-18](#), [Jdg_1:22-26](#)
- C. Roots of Failure: [Jdg_1:19-21](#), [Jdg_1:27-36](#)
- D. The Verdict of the Lord: [Jdg_2:1-5](#)

II. Uncovering the Meaning of the Book: Jdg. 2:6-3:6

- A. The Peril of the Second Generation: [Jdg_2:6-10](#)
- B. The Downward Spiral: [Jdg_2:11-19](#)
- C. The Mercy of Judgment: [Jdg. 2:20-3:6](#)

III. Patterns of Unpredictability: [Jdg_3:7-31](#)

- A. Othniel: The Man for the Job: [Jdg_3:7-11](#)
- B. Ehud: One of God's "Irregulars": [Jdg_3:12-30](#)

C. Shamgar: A Rank Outsider: [Jdg_3:31](#)

IV. A Famous Victory: [Jdg. 4:1-5:31](#)

A. A Desperate Situation: [Jdg_4:1-3](#); [Jdg_5:6-12](#)

B. Deborah: A Remarkable Woman: [Jdg_4:4-7](#); [Jdg_5:7](#)

C. Barak: A Hesitant Man: [Jdg_4:8-9](#), [Jdg_4:22](#)

D. A Divided Nation: [Jdg_4:10](#); [Jdg_5:13-18](#)

E. A Miraculous Intervention: [Jdg_4:11-16](#); [Jdg_5:19-23](#)

F. An Unexpected End: [Jdg_4:17-24](#)

G. A Challenging Contrast: [Jdg_5:1-5](#), [Jdg_5:31](#)

V. Gideon: In God's Base Camp: [Jdg_6:1-32](#)

A. God Chastises: [Jdg_6:1-6](#)

B. God Convicts: [Jdg_6:7-10](#)

C. God Conscripts: [Jdg_6:11-16](#)

D. God Confirms: [Jdg_6:17-24](#)

E. God Challenges: [Jdg_6:25-32](#)

VI. Gideon: Proving God: [Jdg. 6:33-7:8](#)

A. The Transforming Factor: [Jdg_6:33-35](#)

B. The Confirming Factor: [Jdg_6:36-40](#)

C. The Reduction Factor: [Jdg_7:1-8](#)

VII. Gideon: Divine Strategy: [Jdg_7:9-25](#)

A. From Fear to Faith: [Jdg_7:9-14](#)

B. From Faith to Fulfillment: [Jdg_7:15-25](#)

VIII. Gideon: The Tests of Success: [Jdg_8:1-35](#)

A. The Test of Criticism: [Jdg_8:1-3](#)

B. The Test of Noncooperation: [Jdg_8:4-21](#)

C. The Test of Personal Popularity: [Jdg_8:22-27](#)

D. The Test of Retirement: [Jdg_8:28-35](#)

IX. The Power that Corrupts: [Jdg_9:1-57](#)

A. Powerful Arrogance: [Jdg_9:1-6](#)

B. Prophetic Insight: [Jdg_9:7-21](#)

C. Rampant Evil: [Jdg_9:22-49](#)

D. Covenant Discipline: [Jdg_9:50-57](#)

X. Sin's Dead End: [Jdg_10:1-18](#)

A. Sin Restrained: [Jdg_10:1-5](#)

B. Sin Resurgent: [Jdg_10:6-9](#)

C. Sin Rebuked: [Jdg_10:10-14](#)

D. Sin Rejected: [Jdg_10:15-18](#)

XI. Learning from God's Providence: [Jdg_11:1-28](#)

A. In the Early Circumstances of Jephthah's Life: [Jdg_11:1-3](#)

B. In the Wise Negotiation of Gilead's Elders: [Jdg_11:4-11](#)

C. In the Sovereign Control of Israel's History: [Jdg_11:12-28](#)

XII. The Enemy Within: [Jdg_11:29-12:15](#)

A. Overactive Doubt Brings Tragedy: [Jdg_11:29-40](#)

B. Inactive Criticism Brings Tragedy: [Jdg_12:1-7](#)

C. Divinely Active Faithfulness Brings Stability: [Jdg_12:8-15](#)

XIII. Samson: God Intervenes: [Jdg_13:1-25](#)

A. On God's Terms: [Jdg_13:1-7](#)

B. In God's Time: [Jdg_13:8-16](#)

C. Through God's Truth: [Jdg_13:17-25](#)

XIV. Samson: God Overrides: [Jdg_14:1-20](#)

A. Through Apparently Bizarre Behavior: [Jdg_14:1-4](#)

B. By Empowering with His Spirit: [Jdg_14:5-9](#)

C. In Transcending Human Weakness: [Jdg_14:10-20](#)

XV. Samson: God Empowers: [Jdg_15:1-20](#)

A. Revenge on God's Enemies: [Jdg_15:1-8](#)

B. Rejection by God's People: [Jdg_15:9-17](#)

C. Recognition Through God's Provision: [Jdg_15:18-20](#)

XVI. Samson: God Judges: [Jdg_16:1-31](#)

A. Strength and Moral Weakness: [Jdg_16:1-3](#)

B. Strength and Personal Vulnerability: [Jdg_16:4-17](#)

C. Strength and Fatal Presumption: [Jdg_16:18-21](#)

D. Strength and Divine Retribution: [Jdg_16:22-31](#)

XVII. Beware of False Gods: Jdg. 17:1-18:31

A. The Marks of False Religion: [Jdg_17:1-13](#)

B. The Motivation to False Religion: [Jdg_18:1-31](#)

XVIII. The Infection of Godlessness: Jdg. 19:1-20:11

A. Sexual Immorality: [Jdg_19:1-25](#)

B. Personal Violence: [Jdg_19:24-29](#)

C. Moral Paralysis: Jdg. 19:30-20:11

XIX. The Purging of Evil: Jdg. 20:12-21:25

A. No Recognition of Guilt: [Jdg_20:12-17](#)

B. No Restriction on Revenge: [Jdg_20:18-48](#)

C. No Respect for Human Life: [Jdg_21:1-24](#)

D. No Reverence for God: [Jdg_21:25](#)