

JUDGES (Teacher's Edition)

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AUTHOR-

Because of what most theologians believe as to the author and how this book came to us, this is a great time to remind us all of one aspect of the divine inspiration of the Bible, as we learned many lessons ago. *The inspiration of the Bible means that there was a strong, conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give expression to the truth.* Holy men of God, qualified by the infusion of the breath of God, wrote in obedience to the divine command, and were kept from all error, whether they revealed truths which they did not know before or recorded truths already familiar. *In a certain sense, and in respect to some parts of Scripture, the authors were (humanly speaking) left to choose their own words in relating divine truth. The Holy Spirit employed all the faculties of the writer. He guided the writer to choose what narrative, state papers, imperial decrees, genealogies or historical matters he might find necessary for the recording of the divine message of salvation.*

Like the authors of several other historical books of the Old Testament, the author of Judges is unknown. Early Jewish scholars believed Samuel, Israel's first prophet, who anointed Saul as the nation's first king, wrote the book. But this is impossible to determine from evidence presented by the book itself. At least we know that the unknown writer was a contemporary of Samuel. The author is preeminently a preacher of righteousness to his fellow-countrymen, and to this aim all other elements in the book are secondary. In his narrative he sets down the whole truth, so far as it has become known to him through tradition or written document, however shameful it may be to his nation. This inspired author carefully selected oral and written sources to provide a history of Israel with theological import.

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

The internal evidence gives us a clue about the probable date when it was written. The writer reminds us, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25). Also, the declaration that "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin to this day" (1:21) points to a time before David conquered the city (2Samuel 5:6, 7). These statements tell us the book was written after the events described in Judges, probably during the days of King Saul or King David, about 1050 to 1000 B.C.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

The book of Judges covers a chaotic period in Israel's history from about 1375-1050 B.C. The aim of the book is not to give a continuous history of the period between Joshua and Samuel, but to illustrate in particular deliverances the divine principle of dealing with Israel laid down in Judges 2:16-19. Hence, the book is written thematically, not chronologically (16-21 actually precedes 3-15). The introduction to Judges (1:1-3:6) describes the period after Joshua's death as a time of instability and moral depravity. Without a strong religious leader like Joshua to give them clear direction, the people of Israel fell into the worship of

false gods. To punish the people, God delivered them into the hands of enemy nations. In their distress the people repented and cried out to God for help, and God answered their pleas by sending a "judge" or deliverer. In each instance after a period of **faithfulness and security**, the people once again forgot God, renewing the cycle of unfaithfulness all over again. This theme of **sin-punishment-repentance-deliverance** runs **seven** times throughout the book, it is introduced by the refrain, "The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord" (4:1).

In reference to the judges themselves, God raised up and **Spirit-empowered** both military and civic types to bring deliverance. Six individuals- Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson- whose roles as deliverers is related in some detail are classified as the "**major**" judges. The six other judges who are briefly mentioned- Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon- are referred to as the "**minor**" judges. The thirteenth person, Abimelech, is supplemental to the story of Gideon.

A thing to note as well is that the book of Judges has basically three purposes: 1) historical, 2) theological, 3) spiritual. *Historically*, the book is a tie between the **conquest of Canaan** and the **monarchy**. *Theologically*, the book solidifies what we learned regarding the Law in the first six books: **obedience** brings peace, blessing and life; disobedience brings **curse, oppression and death**. *Spiritually*, the book shows God's **faithfulness** to His covenant. Whenever the people repented and turned from their evil, the Lord forgave them and anointed leaders to deliver them.

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF JUDGES (THE BASIC THEME)-

The book of Judges aims to demonstrate that **defection from God** incurs severe punishment and servitude. Indeed, this book is prophecy, more than history, because it exhibits and enforces the permanent lessons of the righteousness and justice and loving-kindness of God. Only by **TURNING BACK to God**, NOT JUST BY SAYING YOU ARE SORRY, can **restoration** be enjoyed. Thus the judges were charismatic leaders, raised up by God to deliver His people. Only by heeding their Spirit-directed message and following them in deliverance against their enemies could restoration be accomplished. By divine power and Spirit-anointed leadership they delivered the people from enemy oppression. Having accomplished this, they ruled over them and administered government in the name of Israel's God.

This **Spirit-qualifying** work is an overlooked theme, but one that continues from our studies of the Pentateuch. The Angel of the Lord, the Son of God, appeared to Moses at his call, and then the Spirit of God **qualified him** (Ex 3:1-6; 13:21). In Judges the divine Angel appears **four times**, the Spirit following to qualify the judge for delivering Israel: (1) Judges 2:1-5; 3:10; (2) Judges 6:11,34; (3) Judges 10:10-16, compare Isaiah 63:8-9; Judges 11:29; (4) Judges 13:3-25. We see this pattern in Jesus' words to His disciples and the book of Acts: we should go

nowhere until we are clothed with power from on high. Our need of Pentecost is to qualify us for ministry!

Judges also speaks of man's need for an eternal deliverer or a savior. The deliverance of the human judges was always temporary, partial, and imperfect. Some of the judges themselves were flawed and misdirected. The book points forward to Jesus Christ, the great Judge (Ps 110:6), who is King and Savior of His people- and who is sinless and without flaw.

One reason this book is enjoyed by many, outside the fact it has some of the most well-known Bible stories in it, is that it is such a reflection of ourselves and the state of the Kingdom. The book so well illustrates the disastrous consequences of breaking fellowship with God through idolatrous worship. Sin separates from God! God 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 to Him the Lord faithfully responds to us by forgiving, bringing deliverance, and restoring fellowship with us. The Lord is our Judge- our Deliverer. He is able to do impossible things. Just as He sent men and women empowered and anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring deliverance to those bound by sin and despair, so He will send us to do the same to the truly penitent. This brings up one last point. The point the author of Judges made in recording the stories of Samson and Jephthah (yes, he did sacrifice his daughter and no, God did not condone it) is that the period of the judges was a time of such religious and political chaos that even the best of God's servants were seriously flawed. God used them, but did not condone their behavior. The possession of inspired gifts did not always ensure the right use of them, just as the miraculous gifts at Corinth were abused (1 Cor 14). God may use people mightily, but he will also punish them and bring them to a point of repentance- e.g. Samson. Our gifts and anointing may help others get to heaven, but only our Godly character will get us there.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

I really wanted to use the expression "oh no, here we go again", but that is a phrase, not a word. No matter which way you say it I think the key word relates to the repetitive process of sin-punishment-repentance-deliverance that happens seven times in the book. Therefore, for me the key word is: CYCLES.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

I think many would arrive at the same conclusion I did regarding key verses and chapters because of the nature of this book. For me the key verse, repeated in two places would be either: Judges 17:6 or Judges 21:25. The key chapter seems to me to be: Judges 2. The reason for this is that this chapter is basically the summary of the entire book. In fact, you could consider it a miniature of the whole- as if the whole storyline is set up, and the in depth examples follow in the subsequent chapters.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- ✓ Jesus is manifested in the raising up of deliverers to set people free from bondage
- ✓ The Angel of the Lord speaking and appearing: in Judges 2, to Gideon, Samson's parents, etc.
- ✓ References to the need of a King for order and obedience manifest the purpose of having our King of kings
- ✓ One special reference to Jesus is when the Angel of the Lord tells Samson's parents His name in 13:8: Wonderful (that's what the text says). It is directly related to Isaiah 9:6, the great messianic text!

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK-

- ✓ God spoke to them by His Spirit
- ✓ The Holy Spirit is directly mentioned as coming upon the various judges empowering them for their duty
- ✓ The prophetess Deborah prophesied by the gift of prophecy of the Spirit
- ✓ This may be a stretch, but isn't the He manifested in the way Gideon and his men defeated the Midianites (7:19-21)? Broken people filled with fire defeat the enemy!

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Judges 3:1, 2

The Christian life gives no place for complacency- we must continually fight. We should always be gaining new ground though personal growth and soul winning.

Judges 8:22-27

Glorying in past spiritual triumphs leads to idolatrous worship of the past. This leads to death.

Judges 5:8

When we abandon Jesus, there is nothing but war in our life and city. And we are powerless to do a thing!

Judges 17 & 18

We abandon our role of bringing people the true knowledge of God for the same reason the Levite did- money, clothes and food. Reject the values of this world! We are here for God to get people saved!

Judges 19:25-28

This horrible story points out one thing: people are dying with their hands on the threshold of God's kingdom. They are close to it every time they pass by us. We should be looking and need to lead them in.

The Period of the Judges (1375–1050 B.C.)

Judge and Tribe	Scripture References	Major Events	Oppressors	Period of Oppression	Period of Rest
(1) Othniel (Judah) Son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb	Judges 1:11–15; 3:1–11 Joshua 15:16–19; 1Chr. 4:13	(1) Othniel was the nephew of Caleb (3:11) and became his son-in-law after the capture of Kirjath Sepher (1:12, 13). (2) Defeated Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (3:10).	Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (3:8)	8 years (3:8)	40 years (3:11)
(2) Ehud (Benjamin) Son of Gera	Judges 3:12–14:1	(1) Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite, personally slew Eglon, the fat king of Moab (3:21, 22). (2) Led in the slaying of 10,000 Moabites (3:29)	Eglon, king of Moab (3:12) Ammonites (3:13) Amalekites (3:13)	18 years (3:14)	80 years (3:30)
(3) Shamgar (Perhaps foreign) Son of Anath	Judges 3:31; 5:6	(1) Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad (3:31).	Philistines (3:31)	Not Given	Not Given
(4) Deborah (Ephraim) and Barak (Naphtali) Son of Abraham	Judges 4:1–5:31; Heb. 11:32	(1) Deborah, a prophetess and judge, was the wife of Lapidoth (4:4; 5:7). (2) Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera (with his 900 iron chariots) at the Battle of Kishon (4:13-16). (3) Sisera killed by Jael, the wife of Heber, with a tent peg (4:21). (4) The Song of Deborah (Chapter 5) recounts the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera. (5) Barak is listed among the "Heroes of the Faith" in Heb. 11:32.	Jabin, king of Canaan (4:2); Sisera was the commander of his army (4:2)	20 years (4:3)	40 years (5:31)
(5) Gideon (Manasseh) Son of Joash the Abierzrite Also called: Jerubbaal (6:32; 7:1); Jerubbesheth (2 Sam. 11:21)	Judges 6:1–8:32; Heb. 11:32	(1) The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon at Ophrah as he was beating out wheat in the winepress (6:11-18). (2) Gideon's offering consumed by fire (6:19–24). (3) Gideon's destroyed the altar of Baal by night (6:25-27). (4) Gideon "put out the fleece" twice for a "sign" (6:36–40). (5) Gideon reduced his army from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300 (7:2-8); he routed the Midianites with trumpets, pitchers, and torches (7:16–22). (6) Oreb and Zeeb killed by the Ephraimites (7:24-8:3). (7) Gideon took revenge on the men of Succoth and Penuel for not giving his army bread (8:5–9, 14-17). (8) Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna (Midianite kings) in revenge for the death of his brothers at Tabor (8:18–21). (9) Gideon made a gold ephod which led the people into idolatry (8:24-27).	Midianites (6:1, 3, 33; 7:12) Amalekites (6:3, 33; 7:12) "People of the East" (6:3, 33; 7:12)	7 years (6:1)	40 years (8:28)

(6) Abimelech (Manasseh) Son of Gideon by a concubine	Judges 8:33–9:57 2 Sam. 11:21	(1) Abimelech slew all his half brothers (70) except Jotham, the youngest (9:5). (2) Abimelech defeated Gaal, who conspired against him (9:26-41). (3) Abimelech captured Shechem and razed the city (9:42–49). (4) At Thebez a woman threw a millstone which hit Abimelech on the head; Abimelech then had his armor bearer kill him with a sword (9:50-54).	Civil War		Abimelech ruled over Israel 3 years (9:22).
(7) Tola (Issachar) Son of Puah	Judges 10:1, 2	(1) Tola was probably from one of the leading families of Issachar (cf. Gen. 46:13; Num. 26:23).	Not Given	Not Given	Judged Israel 23 years (10:2)
(8) Jair (Gilead-Manasseh)	Judges 10:3–5	(1) Jair was probably a descendant of the Jair who distinguished himself during the days of Moses and Joshua. (2) Jair had 30 sons who were itinerant judges (10:4).	Not Given	Not Given	Judged Israel 22 years (10:3)
(9) Jephthah (Gilead-Manasseh) Son of Gilead by a harlot (11:1)	Judges 10:6–12:7; Heb. 11:32	(1) Jephthah was the son of Gilead by a harlot (11:1); he was driven off by his vengeful half brothers and fled to the land of Tob (11:2, 3). (2) Elders of Gilead brought Jephthah back and made him their chief at Mizpah (11:4-11). (3) Jephthah sent a message to the King of Ammon saying that the Israelites had been in possession of Gilead for 300 years—too long for the Ammonites to challenge their right to it (11:26). (4) Jephthah subdued the Ammonites, conquering some 20 cities (11:32, 33). (5) Jephthah devoted his daughter to the service of the Lord for the rest of her life, in fulfillment of his foolish vow. (6) Jephthah defeated the Ephraimites, who were offended because they had not been asked to join in the battle against the Ammonites (12:1–6).	Philistines (10:7) Ammonites (10:7) Civil war with the Ephraimites (12:4)	18 years (10:8)	Judged Israel 6 years (12:7)
(10) Ibzan (Judah or Zebulun) (Bethlehem-Zebulun; cf. Josh. 19:15)	Judges 12:8–10	(1) Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters, for whom he arranged marriages; this indicates his wealth and social prominence (12:9). (2) A Jewish tradition identifies Ibzan with Boaz of Bethlehem-Judah.	Not Given	Not Given	Judged Israel 7 years (12:9)
(11) Elon (Zebulun)	Judges 12:11, 12	(1) The only information given concerning Elon is that he was buried at the Aijalon in Zebulun, distinguishing it from the better-known Aijalon in Danite territory.	Not Given	Not Given	Judged Israel 10 years (12:11)

<p>(12) Abdon (Ephraim, 12:15) Son of Hillel</p>	<p>Judges. 12:13–15</p>	<p>(1) The wealth and prominence of Abdon is revealed by the fact that he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who all rode on mounts (12:14). (2) Abdon was a native of Pirathon and was later buried there (12:13, 15).</p>	<p>Not Given</p>	<p>Not Given</p>	<p>Judged Israel 8 years (12:14)</p>
<p>(13) Samson (Dan, 13:2) Son of Manoah</p>	<p>Judges 13:1–16:31; Heb. 11:32</p>	<p>(1) Samson's birth was announced by the Angel of the Lord; he was consecrated a Nazirite from birth (Chapter 13). (2) Samson slew a lion barehanded (14) (3) Samson slew 30 Philistines at Ashkelon (14:19). (4) Samson caught 300 foxes, tied them in pairs with a torch between their tails, and turned them into the grain fields of the Philistines (15:1-8). (5) Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass (15:14–19). (6) Samson carried off the gate of Gaza (16:1–3). (7) Samson was conquered by Delilah, blinded, and imprisoned at Gaza (16:4–22). (8) Samson pulled down the Temple of Dagon, killing himself and about 3,000 Philistines (16:23–31).</p>	<p>Philistines (13:1)</p>	<p>40 years (13:1)</p>	<p>Judged Israel 20 years (15:20; 16:31)</p>