

Old Testament Survey

Judges 1-21

Bibliography

McGee, J. Vernon. *Judges: Thru The Bible Commentary Series-The Prophets*.
Tennessee:
Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1991.

Ryrie, Charles: *Ryrie Study Bible: Expanded Edition*. Chicago: The Moody Bible
Institute of Chicago, 1995.

Tucker, Kent: *Share Your Faith Ministries*, California.

“Scriptures taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright ©
1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman
Foundation. Used by permission.”

Introduction

- The book of Judges was written from about 1380 B.C. to 1050 B.C. This would have been from the death of Joshua to the Coronation of King David. Israel was a loose **confederation** of states during this time. There was no one ruler over the entire land. The Judges of this period were men chosen by God to initiate military and civil rule. The Judges did not always rule over all the tribes nor did they rule in consecutive order, since some judges ruled simultaneously.
- The entirety of Palestine did not come under Israeli subjugation during Joshua's leadership. The individual tribes were to finish the conquest within their **borders** after Joshua's death.
- It is suggested by Bible scholars that Judges was written by Samuel. It is also possible that Samuel wrote only portions of the book.
- The book of Judges characterizes a time during Israel's history of constant **rebellion** against God. As the people turned their backs on God, they would be punished. As the people repented and turned back to God, he forgave them and prospered them. Chapter 21:25 sums up the character of Israel during the time of the Judges.

The Political and Spiritual background of the Judges-Chapters 1-3:6

- Israel inquired of the Lord (probably using the Urim and Thummim) as to what tribe should go first to begin the conquest of the **remaining** territory. Judah and Simeon were chosen. The tribe of Simeon was within the tribe of Judah.
- Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, conquered Hebron and was given it as an inheritance as promised by Joshua (Joshua 14:12-15). The hill country of Hebron, formally known as Kiriath-arba, was the land of the Anakim, the **giants** that frightened the spies sent by Moses.
- The tribe of Benjamin **did not** drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem (1:21). We will see the tribe of Benjamin become very wicked and deceived due to the heathen people of the land. God had commanded the heathen tribes within the Promised Land to be completely destroyed. The house of Joseph (Ephraim) went up against Bethel. As the spies came upon the city, they saw a man coming out of

- the city. They asked that he show them the entrance to the city. The spies promised the man and his family **safety**. After Ephraim had conquered the city, the man went and built a city among the Hittites and named it Luz. Little did the spies know this man would become a snare to Israel.
- The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh **did not** drive out all the Canaanites living within their territories. Neither did Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan drive out the inhabitants from their lands.
 - Chapter 2:7-11 gives us an insight to the behavior of Israel immediately after the death of Joshua. Vs. 16-23 gives a brief history during the time of the Judges.
 - Judges 3:1-2 show how God, in His divine wisdom, used the **sins** of Israel to prepare them for war. It is amazing how God will use one who has a repentant heart. He can turn our mistakes and sins into something good, useful for His purpose and kingdom.

History of the Period during the Judges-Ch. 3:7-Chapter 16

- The following chapters give accounts of the **twelve** judges who ruled in the land of Israel from 1380 B.C. to 1050 B.C. The judges were:
 - Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson.
- Because of their rebellion, God allowed the Moabites to defeat Israel. Israel cried to the Lord and the Lord **delivered** Israel under the hand of Ehud. Israel killed about ten thousand Moabites, all being very strong warriors.
- Another judge, Shamgar struck down six hundred Philistines with a **spear**.
- Deborah, a prophetess, summoned Barak to defeat the Canaanites. Barak did not want to go unless Deborah went with him. Because of his unbelief a woman received the glory of killing Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite army.
- Again, Israel turned against the Lord and He caused the tribe of Midian to overtake Israel. They **cried** unto the Lord and the Lord commissioned Gideon, from the tribe of Manasseh, to pursue Midian. Gideon asked for a sign. The angel of the Lord caused fire to consume Gideon's offering and then vanished from his sight. The spirit of the Lord descended upon Gideon (6:34). Gideon asked God for another sign that God would deliver Israel from Midian. He put out a fleece two different times. God used only **300** of Gideon's men to subdue the army of Midian. At the time of battle, God caused confusion among the Midianites and they slew each other.
- Israel wanted Gideon to rule over them. Gideon stated that neither he nor his son would rule but the **Lord** would rule over Israel (8:23). Gideon asked that Israel give him a gold earring from each of the warriors. He made the gold into an ephod. Israel, however, turned it into an abomination to the Lord and it became a **snare** to Gideon. Time and again we see how what seems to be a small deviance from God' law turn into a major snare against the people.
- Judges chapter 13:1 states how Israel again did **evil** in the sight of the Lord. The Lord raised up a man named Samson. He was to be a **Nazarite** (13:5; see also Numbers 6:1-8). This was to be a lifelong vow and Samson was never to cut his hair.
- Samson disobeyed the Lord:

- Samson took a Philistine wife
- Samson touched a carcass which was a **violation** of the law (14:8-9).
- Samson caught three hundred foxes, tied their tails together with torches and set them running through the Philistine fields. Samson killed a **thousand** men with the jawbone of a donkey. This was a defiance to God's laws since the Israelites were not to touch a carcass.
- Samson took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them up out of the ground and carried them for **38** miles (16:1-3).
- Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman named **Delilah**. She eventually enticed him to give away the secret of his power. Samson's power resided with His hair. The Philistines shaved his head as he was sleeping, subdued him, and gouged out his eyes. Judges 16:28 gives us insight to Samson's **repentance**. God used him one last time to slay the Philistines. It is interesting to note that Samson is listed among the **heroes** of faith in Hebrews 11:32.

Israel's Life During the Judges-Chapters 17-21

- Judges 19-21 give a description of the Benjamite War.
- A Levite from the land of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. As the man was staying in the land of Benjamin, the men of the town tried to sexually molest him. Without success, they raped his concubine all night and left her for dead. Because of this sin, the tribes of Israel went to **war** against the tribe of Benjamin and defeated it. Israel was sorrowful, however, since a tribe of Israel would now be missing. To keep the tribe of Benjamin from becoming extinct, they arranged wives for the remaining men of Benjamin.

Summary

The book of Judges is a constant reminder of how disobedience to God's law will ultimately bring destruction to our lives. The book of Judges also demonstrates a powerful display of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Each time the people repented and turned from their sins, God honored and restored them. God will always forgive us and restore us to a right relationship with Him. Though God may not erase the effects of our sins, he will restore us to a right fellowship with Him and will work powerfully in our lives.