

Books of The Bible

A Survey of Judges

Introduction

- 1) The book of Judges is remarkable on several fronts being one of the few books that deals with a transition. In this level, Acts and 1 Kings are the same.
 - a) It is seen to be a book of transition by the following:
 - i) Judges begins with, “Now after the death of Joshua” (Jud. 1:1), a statement which anticipates a change of human leadership. Not from the leadership of man to man but of man being the spokesman for God to the Lord being recognized as Leader when they asked, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first” (Jud. 1:1). Looking back at the book of Joshua, there was not only a change of leadership, that of man to man, for:
 1. Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses (Deut. 34:5)
 2. Joshua begins with, “Now after the death of Moses” (Josh. 1:1)
 3. The following verses record God’s communication to Joshua (ch. 1:2-9)
 4. Furthermore, there is recorded a change of geographical position from the wilderness into the promised land (Josh. 1:11)
 - ii) Judges is named for the official position of judgeship yet it is noticeable that while these men “delivered” Israel from their enemies, they are not called “Deliverers” but are designated “Judges”. It is evident as to why they were suitable to deliver the people because they had judged the character of the nations who were their enemies in their own hearts.
 - iii) It opens with the promise of victory which leads to the question, “Why did God not just give them the land instead of them having to fight for it?”
 - iv) While it is a book of pledged victory, yet due to the sinning of the people, it is a book of two other matters:
 - i) The failure of Israel to be a separate nation religiously from those around them and God’s ultimate judgment.
 - ii) The power, mercy and grace of God in providing for the unfaithful people a leader of restoration, or what perhaps we today would call it, a revival.
- 2) These persons (I say persons for judgeship was not exclusive with men see ch. 4:1) were called “Judges” for they “judged Israel” (Jud. 3:10; 4:14; 10:2-3; 12:7-9, 11, 13, 15; 15:20; 16:31). In most cases they delivered the people from their captors but not always. For instance, when Samson was born they were under the Philistines, when he died they were still subject to the Philistines.
- 3) Judges is a book of sadness and Israel is a shadow of what the local church is in many places:
 - a) There is the absence of God’s power and blessing on them that they once had.
 - b) Despite having received the blessing of God, they failed to fulfill His purposes.
 - c) The unity was broken:
 - i) There was a rejection of the commands of God.
- 4) Judges records the sorrow of God’s heart when His people turned against Him and sinned (ch. 10:16). It is heartbreaking to read how, despite the gracious deliverances of God due to their cries (ch. 3:15; 4:3; 6:6 etc.), yet in heart they were not changed. We read, “Yet they would not harken unto their judges” (ch. 2:17); “They returned, and corrupted themselves” (ch. 2:19); “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord” (ch. 2:11; 3:7; 4:1 6:1). Worshipping Baal and Astheroth was the outcome of the intermarrying of sons and daughters between Israel and the ungodly nations.
 - a) Despite the book bringing sorrow, it is also a book of gratitude to God who never leaves His people. What mighty victories were won by the power of God working through them (ch. 1:1-7; 18). However, when their faith failed, their energy failed, and the same is true of the local church. Israel, like the church of the Laodiceans, was blind to the dreadfulness of their indifference toward God.

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5) The history of Israel can be summarized in three words relating to “kingship”. They were:

- a) a “theocracy” when God was king
- b) a “monarchy” when Israelites were kings
- c) and finally a “dependency” when they were under foreign kings

The result of their constant sinning was the ultimate rejection of God as King (1 Sam. 8:5). Daniel and the gospels present the ultimate rejection not only of God as King but also Christ (Dan. 9:26; Jn. 19:15). Hebrews speaks of those who, have done “despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). We live in a world spirit which is determined to eradicate every iota of the Holy Trinity.

6) The book of Joshua tells of the children of Israel being brought to the border of the Promised Land which was to be their inheritance, and Joshua records their early conquests and failures. It is a book of taking and living in the good of their God given inheritance. We also have an inheritance, in fact we have two. Paul tells of one (Eph. 1:11-18) and Peter tells of the other one which is “reserved in Heaven” (1 Pet. 1:4). There will be no warfare in our reception and living in the good of the one in Heaven for it is all by grace. In Ephesians the inheritance is that which we can live in the good of now, and that includes spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:11-17). We are truly blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:4) but the actual possession and enjoyment of them demands spiritual warfare. The Israelites faced opposition and at times the failure to take possession of all that God had for them. The same is true of us. Just as Israel had enemies who refused to give up their possessions, so have we, namely the flesh and sin.

Author

Since there is no name given for the author of this book, and while there are those who by tradition name him as Samuel, we cannot be sure.

Date

In part, due to the fact that we do not know who the author or historian is, we cannot date the book precisely. However, if one were to count up the years from the time of the Exodus (it seems around 1400 B.C.), then the events were recorded around 1000 B.C.

Key Verses

In determining that which is the key verses is a matter of perspective. Having said such, it is my understanding that the following are the three main passages, rather key verses of the book:

- a) “Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groaning by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (ch. 2:16-19).
- b) “And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel” (ch. 10:15, 16).
- c) “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (ch. 21:25)

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Background

God had told Abraham that the children of Israel would be in affliction for four hundred years until the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Gen. 15:16). The work of executing God's judgment on the inhabitants of Canaan was due to their sin. They were a wicked ungodly people whose religions were utterly vile. Did Israel not understand that if they committed the same sins judgment would come on them?

Structure

It is easy at the first reading to be impressed by the circular spiritual attitude and sin against God with the resulting affliction by God in giving them over to their enemies and then God's gracious deliverance. John Phillips beautifully summarizes their history by the words, "Rebellion", "Retribution", "Repentance", and "Restoration". It is a hard lesson to learn, but forsaking God's word always ends in loss.

We are given the hint of the message of the book in the first chapter. Adoni Bezek had cut the great toes and thumbs off others then he had the same done to him. It is the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:8). Israel sowed what they viewed as liberation, to marry whom they would, to worship whom they wanted, and reaped the results of liberty becoming bondage under the discipline of God.

The book is divided into three main sections:

- 1) First Section: (ch. 1:1-2:7) A major lesson is that despite starting well and having the full backing of God, the people ended poorly. The problems were mental defeatism, apathy and compromise.
 - a) They could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley for they had chariots of iron (ch. 1:19)
 - b) The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites (ch. 1:21)
 - i) Neither did Manasseh drive out (and the same is said of Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali (ch. 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33", and Of Manasseh it is said, "They did not utterly drive them out" (ch. 1:28).
 - c) What they lost and failed to make their own geographically, we can do the same spiritually. This is why the church in its last days is marked by a lukewarm, compromising spirituality resulting in quasi spirituality, compromise, and the acceptance of the non-working of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Second Section: (ch. 2:8-3:6) Its main lesson is intellectual knowledge is not sufficient to keep one from sin. Applying this to ourselves there is the need to ask, "where did the children of Israel fail and how does that relate to us?" By a casual reading, they failed in that they "forsook the LORD" (ch. 2:12, 13; 10:6).
- 3) Third Section: (ch. 3:7-16:31) It records the seven great failures and captivities. They were taken captive by:
 - a) Chushanrishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia, and were under his servitude for eight years (ch. 3:8) but were delivered by God using Othniel (ch. 3:10).
 - b) The King of the Moabites, Ammonites and Amalekites, and were under his servitude for eighteen years (ch. 3:14) and were delivered by God using Ehud (ch. 3:28-30).
 - c) Jabin, King of Canaan, who subdued them for twenty years (ch. 4:2-3), after which they were delivered by God using Barak and Deborah (ch. 4:4, 6, 23-24).
 - d) The Midianites, who subdued them for seven years (ch. 6:1), after which they were delivered by Gideon (also called Jerubbaal ch. 7:1) (ch. 6:11)
 - e) Abimelech reigned over Israel for three years (ch. 9:22), after which there was a coup by the men of Shechem (ch. 9:1) and ultimately Abimelech was killed by an unnamed woman who dropped a piece of a millstone on his head and broke his skull (ch. 9:53).
 - f) The Philistines for forty years (ch. 13:1) but Samson, the judge, did not deliver them from the Philistines for there is no reference to him doing such. He died at a Philistine religious thanksgiving service to Dagon (ch. 16:23-30).

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- i) Note: The Ammonites came and made war with Israel, but Israel was not made captives by them (ch. 11:4; 32). The Lord used Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites and free them from the intended bondage (ch. 11:29, 33).

How Judges begins		How Judges ends		
<p><u>Question:</u> Who shall go up first against the Canaanites? (ch. 1:1)</p> <p><u>Double introduction:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sins of omission • Sins of commission 		<p><u>Question:</u> Who shall go up first against Benjamin? (ch. 20:18)</p> <p><u>Double conclusion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin of immorality • Sin of idolatry 		
	Covenant (ch. 2:1)		Covenant (ch. 20:27)	
	Weeping (ch. 2:4)		Weeping (ch. 21:2)	
	Bochim (ch. 2:5)		Bethel (ch. 21:19)	
Intermittent idolatry (ch. 2:11-13, 17, 19)				
	Judge/ Deliverer	Under servitude to / years	Secret of success / Tactic	N T counterpart
	Othniel (ch. 1:13)	They were not in captivity at this point but were beginning to take possession of the land (Herbron, Kirjath-arba) (ch. 1:10)	Not told what tactic he used but it was to have Achsah as his wife (ch. 1:13)	An affair of the heart (Rom. 10:9)
	Othniel (ch. 3:7-11)	Mesopotamia for 8 years and then had rest for 40 years (ch. 3:8)	Not told what tactic but the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (ch. 3:10)	
	Ehud (ch. 3:12-30)	Moabites for 18 years and then had rest for 80 years (ch. 3:12-14)	Kill the enemy at the fords (ch. 3:28)	Phil. (ch. 3:19)

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	Deborah, Barak, Jael (ch. 4:1-5:31)	Canaanites (ch. 4:2)	Skull pierced with a tent peg (ch. 4:21)	Led captivity captive (Eph.. 4:8)
	Gideon (ch. 6:1-32)	Midian (ch. 6:2)	Lamps in the pitchers, that is in earthen vessels (ch. 7:16)	2 Cor. 4:7
	Woman of Thebez (ch. 6:33-9:57). While she was not a judge she did deliver the people	A coup between The men of Shechem and Abimelech (ch. 9:23)	Skull crushed with a millstone (ch. 9:53)	2 Thess. 2:3
	Jephthah (ch. 10:6-12:15)	Ammonites (ch. 10:6)	Passages of Jordan (ch. 12:6)	“Bite and devour one another” (Gal. 5:15)
	Samson (ch. 13:1-16:31)	Philistines 40 years (ch. 13:1)	Secret of failure - his wives (ch. 14:1; 16:1, 4)	Col. 2:11
Micah's idolatry (ch. 17:1-18:31)				

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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