

YOU BE THE JUDGE

The Rise & Fall... and The Fall & Rise... of the Israelites



GULF SHORES

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Gulf Shores, AL

***BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE ON
THE BOOK OF JUDGES***

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

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This study guide was created by Ray Reynolds for the purpose of Sunday morning young adult Bible classes at the Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL). The material presented in this series will be gleaned from personal notes, the New King James Study Bible, Dr. Coy Roper, Gleason L. Archer, Irving L. Jenson, and various other sources.

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INTRODUCTION:

Author:

No author is named in the book of Judges but the author must have lived in close proximity to the events described in the book. The Jewish Talmud identifies Samuel as the author of Judges. Traditionally, both conservative Jews and Christians alike agree to his authorship. Samuel was not only a key prophet who lived at the time, but also the last of the judges. He could have summarized the pre-monarchy era and delivered this information to the Israelites (**I Samuel 10:25, Judges 21:25**).

Date:

The book seems to be written in the monarchy era of Israel, but early in that period of history. Some have suggested that the timing could be traced to the events before David's capture of Jerusalem around 1000-1010 BC (**II Samuel 5:6-7**). It is evident that the Jebusites still controlled the site (**Judges 1:21**) and the writer references a time before the kings ruled (**Judges 17:6, 18:1, 21:25**). Since Saul began his reign around 1050 BC (**I Samuel 13:1, Acts 13:21**) we can assume that is when Judges was written. Judges spans about 350 years from Joshua's conquest (1400 BC) until Samuel judged (1050 BC).

Theme:

This book bears the appropriate name "Judges" because it chronicles the leaders God gave to His people to preserve them against the threats of their enemies in the Promised Land (**Judges 2:16-19**). It is evident that Moses fulfilled the first role as a judge of Israel (**Exodus 18:13-26**) though it may not have been an official title. His successor was Joshua, the son of Nun, whose name is literally translated as savior (**Numbers 11:28, 27:18-20, Deuteronomy 31:7, 34:9**). The Hebrew title can also be translated as "deliverers" or "saviors" (**Deuteronomy 16:18, 17:9, 19:17**).

There are twelve judges that rise up before Samuel. They include: Othniel (**Judges 3:7-11**), Ehud (**Judges 3:12-30**), Shamgar (**Judges 3:31**), Deborah (**Judges 4:1-5:31**), Gideon (**Judges 6:11-8:35**), Abimelech (**Judges 9:1-57**), Tola (**Judges 10:1-2**), Jair (**Judges 10:3-5**), Jephthah (**Judges 11:1-12:7**), Ibzan (**Judges 12:8-10**), Elon (**Judges 12:11-12**), Abdon (**Judges 12:13-15**), and Samson (**Judges 13:1-16:31**). Eli and Samuel raised the count to fourteen, however, Samuel appointed his own two sons, Joel and Abijah, to judge Israel (**I Samuel 8:1-2**) raising the count to sixteen.

Audience:

Judges is the heartbreaking sequel to Joshua written for the Israelites. It is obvious that God Himself is the higher Judge (**Judge 11:27**), and should have been revered as the King of Israel (**Exodus 15:18, Malachi 1:14**), but the people rejected God as King and Judge. They went through cycles which can be summarized as: Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Restoration, and Reconciliation. In Joshua, the people were obedient to God, conquering the Land, and defeating their enemies. In Judges, they were disobedient, idolatrous, irreverent, and often overpowered by their enemies.

Literary Notes:

The book of Judges is written thematically rather than chronologically, although the stories are effectively told in an organized manner. The book seems to reconcile the rise and fall of Israel. It paints a clear picture for future generations to stay on track or suffer the consequences. It also shows the painful suffering that coincides with sinful compromise and/or poor leadership (**Judges 2:18-19, 21:25**).

One specific thing, that often gets overlooked, is how apostasy covered the whole land after the conquest. You can follow the degradation on a map in this order: southern (**Judges 3:7-31**), northern (**Judges 4:1-5:31**), central (**Judges 6:1-10:5**), eastern (**Judges 10:6-12:15**), and western (**Judges 13:1-16:31**). As the book concludes we can see the bizarre effects of sin (**Judges 17-21**) before it ends with these words: “*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” Its a sad commentary on the times.

Key Verses:

Judges 1:2-5, 1:10, 2:3, 2:11-12, 2:16-19, 3:4-5, 4:4, 5:6-8, 6:8-10, 7:9, 8:9-10, 9:10-11, 10:11-12, 10:15, 11:3, 11:12, 13:7, 13:15, 14:15, 16:17, 16:30, 17:6, 18:1, 19:20, 20:21, 21:25

Outline of the Book:

- I. *The Israelites Fail to Conquer Canaan (Judges 1:1-3:6)*
 - A. The Settled Land of Canaan (**Judges 1:1-21**)
 - B. The Unsettled Land of Canaan (**Judges 1:22-36**)
 - C. The Weeping in Bochim (**Judges 2:1-6**)
 - D. The Spiritual Decline After Joshua’s Death (**Judges 2:7-3:7**)

- II. *The Israelites Follow the Judges (Judges 3:7-16:31)*
 - A. Othniel (**Judges 3:7-11**)
 - B. Ehud (**Judges 3:12-30**)
 - C. Shamgar (**Judges 3:31**)
 - D. Deborah (**Judges 4:1-5:31**)
 - E. Gideon (**Judges 6:11-8:35**)
 - F. Abimelech (**Judges 9:1-57**)
 - G. Tola (**Judges 10:1-2**)
 - H. Jair (**Judges 10:3-5**)
 - I. Jephthah (**Judges 11:1-12:7**)
 - J. Ibzan (**Judges 12:8-10**)
 - K. Elon (**Judges 12:11-12**)
 - L. Abdon (**Judges 12:13-15**)
 - M. Samson (**Judges 13:1-16:31**)

- III. *The Israelites Forget God (Judges 17:121:25)*
 - A. The Idolatry of Micah (**Judges 17:1-13**)
 - B. The Migration of the Danites (**Judges 18:1-31**)
 - C. The War Against Benjamin (**Judges 19:1-20:48**)
 - D. The Deliverance of Benjamin (**Judges 21:1-25**)

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WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THE BOOK OF JUDGES?

Introduction: Over the next few weeks we are going to be studying the book of Judges. The book of Judges covers a period of time that includes everything from the death of Joshua, and his elders, to the rise of King Saul. The theme of the book of Judges might be “Doing what’s right in your own eyes.” Why bother reading these from books written so many years ago? They are still just as relevant as the day they were written! I am going to give you three reasons why you should read and study the book of Judges. Let’s study together...

Discussion:

I. THE BOOK OF JUDGES REVEALS THE ACTIONS OF GOD’S PEOPLE

- A. The thumb-less and toe-less King
- B. The man whose head was nailed to the floor
- C. The strongest man alive
- D. Good actions vs. bad actions

II. THE BOOK OF JUDGES REVEALS THE AUTHENTICITY OF GOD

- A. The failure to teach
- B. The tolerance of sin
- C. The problem of influence
- D. The lack of accountability

III. THE BOOK OF JUDGES REVEALS THE ATTITUDE OF GOD

- A. Their attitude toward sin
- B. Their attitude toward repentance
- C. Their attitude toward forgiveness
- D. Their attitude toward learning from their mistakes

Conclusion: As we study the book of Judges, I want you to notice some strange parallels between the Israelites and ourselves. Let’s be guarded and take into account the actions of God’s people, the authenticity of God, and then take notice of God’s attitude. It might help us to keep America on track, or more importantly our homes and the church. “So goes the home, so goes the nation!” How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson One = The Downward Spiral

Judges 1:1-2:10

Introduction: I want to remind you from our last study that the first part of Judges reflects the period of time among the darkest part of Israelite history. The first two chapters of the book of Judges really help us to find the basis for the trials that come in the following chapters. The people of God were on the edge of great blessings but they sold and forfeited God's favor. To understand the first chapter you really need to begin in **Judges 2:6-9**. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. A Great Commander (2:6-9)

- A. Joshua & the elders did great things (2:6-7)
- B. Joshua & the elders left a legacy (2:8-9)
- C. Unfortunately, their descendants did not carry on their example.
 - 1. This is what happens when we fail to teach our children.
 - 2. This is what happens when we tolerate sin.
 - 3. This is what happens when we allow evil to influence us.
 - 4. This is what happens when we do not take personal responsibility.
- D. The book of Joshua reveals that he did great living up to Moses' example.
 - 1. He was convicted that God's way was the best way. - Faithful
 - 2. He was convinced that God was always with them. - Knowledge/Wisdom
 - 3. He was confident that God would fight their battles. - Warrior

II. A Great Conquest (1:1-20)

- A. Context: After the Death of Joshua (1:1-3, 2:6-9)
 - 1. The era (1:1a)
 - 2. Their eagerness (1:1b-3)
 - 3. Their ease of forgetfulness (2:6-9)
- B. Contenders: Judah with Simeon (1:4-20)
 - 1. Uplands and Adoni-Bezek (1:4-7)
 - 2. Lowlands and Jerusalem (1:8-10, 21)
 - 3. Debir and Caleb's daughter (1:11-15)
 - 4. Kenite allies (1:16)
 - 5. Zepath (nee Hormah, 1:17-18)
 - 6. Summary (1:19-20)

III. A Great Compromise (1:21-36, 2:10)

- A. The Failure to Conquer by Benjamin (1:21)
- B. The Failure to Conquer by Joseph (1:22-29)
- C. The Failure to Conquer by Zebulun (1:30)
- D. The Failure to Conquer by Asher (1:31-32)
- E. The Failure to Conquer by Naphtali (1:33)
- F. The Failure to Conquer by Dan (1:34-36)
- G. Summary (2:10)

IV. A Great Conviction (2:1-5)

- A. The Messenger: The Angel of the Lord (2:1a)
- B. His Message (2:1b-3)
 - 1. God's faithfulness (2:1b)
 - a. Deliverance
 - b. Faithfulness
 - 2. Their Responsibility (2:2)
 - a. No co-habitation
 - b. No idolatry
 - 3. The consequences (2:3)
- C. The Sorrow (2:4-5)

Conclusion: At this point they had every chance to make things right. The placement of this final event at this strategic place in scripture is a revelation of things that are eminent among God's people in this story. They are given a good rebuke but refused to heed the commands of God. As we conclude our study we can clearly see that Judges 2:10 is not only a commentary on downward spiral of the Israelites, it is also an introduction to a new chapter in the history of God's people. The moral of the story might be to follow God with your whole heart because incomplete obedience is disobedience to God. Had the people done what God promised He would have stayed beside His people and fought their battles for them. The downward spiral comes so fast that the people just got used to the ride. It would take a generation to recover and get their footing again. How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Two = War, Peace, & Compromise

Judges 2:11-3:6

Introduction: Our last lesson on the book of Judges reflected an attitude of empathy toward God's enemies and revealed the downward spiral of the children of God. The people of God were on the edge of great blessings but they sold and forfeited God's favor. Now God has warned them again to do battle with His enemies. God calls for war! But the people of God look for peace and compromise instead. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. God Forsakes His People (2:11-13)

- A. Sinfulness of God's people
- B. Substitutes for gods
- C. Sacrifices to idols
- D. Suffering of God's people

II. God Disciplines His People (2:14-15)

- A. God's anger toward His people
- B. God's action against His people
- C. God's agreement with His people
- D. God's anticipation for His people

III. God Hears His People (2:16-19)

- A. Response from God
- B. Rescue from suffering
- C. Recognition of sin
- D. Refusal to change

IV. God Tests His People (2:20-23)

- A. God's grace is rejected
- B. God's enemies are rescued
- C. God's people are rebuked
- D. God's people could have been restored

V. God Abandons His People (3:1-6)

- A. God's people compromise with His enemies
- B. God's people live with His enemies
- C. God's people intermarry with His enemies
- D. God's people worship with His enemies

Conclusion: As we conclude, it is clear by **Judges 3:1-6** that God's people have completely forsaken Him. The Israelites refused to go to war and sought peace with God's enemies. They chose to marry and worship with these evil nations. People who have not learned to trust God will not worship Him or obey Him. We cannot forget to teach the next generation of Christians about the need to follow God's commands. How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Three = Get The Led Out!

Judges 3:7-4:3

Introduction: In our last few lessons on the book of Judges we have noted the downward spiral of the children of God and the danger of compromise with God's enemies. The Israelites needed leaders and fast! But they also needed people who were willing to be led! God decided to raise up some very interesting leaders, to say the least. I believe that sometimes the traits that make us different are the very traits that God desires to make us useful for His glory. As we study each of these Judges notice the characteristics of God's leaders and the repetitious cycle that followed despite their hard work and sacrifice. Safety is in sight for the people of God but will they forfeited God's favor again, or have they learned their lesson? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Othniel the Obedient (vs.7-11)

- A. Sin: Apostasy (v.7)
- B. Slavery: Cushan-rishathaim (v.8)
- C. Suffering: Cried to the Lord (v.9a)
- D. Salvation: Othniel's Victory (v.9b-10)
 - 1. His qualification
 - 2. His preparation
- E. Silence: 18 years (v.11)

II. Ehud the Eerie (vs.12-30)

- A. Sin: Evil in the Lord's Sight (v.12a)
- B. Slavery: Eglon of Moab (v.12b-14)
 - 1. The alliance
 - 2. The capitol
- C. Suffering (v.15a)
- D. Salvation: Ehud's Deception (v.15b-29)
 - 1. Eglon assassinated
 - 2. The army routed
- E. Silence: 80 years (v.30)

III. Shamgar the Scrappy (3:31, 4:1-3, 5:6)

- A. Suffering: War with Philistines (3:31, 5:6)
- B. Salvation (3:31)
 - 1. Shamgar kills 600 men with a sharp stick
 - 2. The son of Anath is powerful and mighty
- C. Sin: Evil in the Lord's Sight (4:1)
- D. Slavery: Jabin, Sisera(4:2)
- E. Silence: 20 years (4:3)

Conclusion: This last judge, Shamgar, may not be an Israelite. His name is not a Hebrew name and there is no tribal identity given to him. This shows a further degradation of the culture of the Israelites. It is also fitting that since it was hard to find strong male leadership inside of the Hebrew nation, the next leader will be a woman! It's important to note that every limitation is God's preparation. God does His best work with difficult situations and people. We have to be led. God chose interesting characters to lead His people. Would you criticize or follow? How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Four = When Men Won't, Women Will

Judges 4:4-5:31

Introduction: Leaders can come in all shapes and sizes and even sexes! In our last lesson we noted that the Israelites needed good leaders. God does not show favoritism toward those who were related to great leaders. It did not matter if they were left handed or right handed. It did not matter if they were as awkward or eloquent. The bottom line is that God demanded leadership. When Barak thought God was asking too much of him he forfeited a great honor. God allows a prophetess to rise up and lead the people of God. There is a great life lesson in this section of Scripture that teaches us someone must lead the people! Many of the judges of Israel were not what they expected, but they got the job done. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Israel's Character (4:1-3)

- A. Their defiance (v.1)
- B. Their defeat (v.2)
- C. Their depression (v.3)
- D. Their degradation (v.3)

II. Deborah's Calling (4:4-7, 5:7, 12-15)

- A. Her role (4:4-5)
- B. Her revelation (4:6-7)
- C. Her reliability (5:7)
- D. Her respect (5:12-15)

III. Barak's Contribution (4:8-10, 12-16)

- A. His stress (4:8-9)
- B. His scheme (4:10, 5:14-18)
- C. His success (4:12-16)
- D. His salvation (5:19-21)

IV. Jael's Conquest (4:11, 17-22)

- A. Sisera flees (4:17)
- B. Sisera fears (4:18)
- C. Sisera fooled (4:18-20, 5:24-25)
- D. Sisera falls (4:21-22, 5:26-30)

Conclusion: When God calls us He enables us to do great work. When we doubt God it is proof that we do not believe God. A lack of faith will lead to a lack of success. It is awesome that God used these women to deliver Israel. Thank God for good Christian women that will lead when the men have no spiritual backbone to provide leadership. If another woman had risen to the occasion we might not see the silence of 40 more years after Deborah (5:31). What man would take the challenge after Deborah? How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Five = The Very Least of These

Judges 6-8

Introduction: We have noted several times in our last few lessons that God chooses very interesting leaders for the leadership of His people. Gideon is no exception. Gideon challenges God and challenges God's people. Is it acceptable to seek a "sign" to confirm the will of God? What does Gideon's experience teach us? Will Gideon turn triumph into tragedy by violating one of God's most basic principles? Or will he become the valiant hero that Israel has been waiting for since the days of Joshua? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. The Apostasy of the Israelites (6:1-10)

- A. Sin: Evil in the Sight of the Lord (v.1a)
- B. Slavery: Midian's Seven Year Reign of Terror (vs.1b-6a)
 - 1. The Results (vs.1b-2)
 - 2. The Raids (vs.3-4)
 - 3. The Ruins (vs.5-6a)
- C. Sorrow: The Sons of Israel Cried to the Lord (v.6b-10)
 - 1. The Persecution (vs.6b-7)
 - 2. The Prophet (v.8)
 - 3. The Past (v.9)
 - 4. The Punishment (v.10)

II. The Salvation of the Israelites (6:11-7:25)

- A. Gideon's Calling (vs.11-12)
- B. Gideon's Conversation (vs.13-16)
 - 1. Is God with us?
 - 2. Is God sure I can deliver Israel?
- C. Gideon's Consecration (vs.17-24)
 - 1. The preparation (vs.17-19)
 - 2. The presentation (vs.20-21)
 - 3. The realization (vs.22-24)

- D. Gideon's Confirmation (vs.6:25-40)
 - 1. Returning to the Lord (vs.25-32)
 - a. Destroying Baal's altar (vs.25-27)
 - b. Daring Baal's followers (vs.28-32)
 - 2. Recruiting an army (vs.33-35)
 - a. Midian's eighth incursion (v.33)
 - b. Gideon's Spirit-empowered invitation (vs.34-35)
 - 3. Requesting proof (vs.36-40)
 - a. The desire for a sign
 - b. The grace of a sign
- E. Gideon's Conquests (vs.7:1-25)
 - 1. Trimming the Army (vs.1-8)
 - a. The practice
 - b. The principle
 - 2. Encouraging the Leader (vs.9-15)
 - 3. Confounding the Enemy (vs.16-25)
 - a. The strategy (vs.16-18)
 - b. The victory (vs.19-25)
 - (1) The rout (vs.19-22)
 - (2) The pursuit (vs.23-25)

III. The Fall of the Israelites (8:1-35)

- A. Gideon's Complaints (vs.1-3)
- B. Gideon's Competition (vs.4-14)
- C. Gideon's Condemnation (vs.15-21)
- D. Gideon's Compromise (vs.22-27)
- E. Gideon's Concession (vs.28-35)

Conclusion: After so much hope was offered to the people of God, they ended up right where they started. The text concludes by revealing the dangerous consequences of a leader's influence. Silence is seen during the 40 years of rest (vs.28), but we know from reading on that those years gave way to conspiracy and persecution. We need to remember that when God is our peace (**Romans 5:1**), then God is our power (**Romans 8:31**). When the will of God is clear we should obey Him without hesitation to the end. God reminds us that He will not share His glory. He is one God! He doesn't need to share the spotlight with anyone! He alone deserves the praise and the glory. How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Six = A Chip Off the Old Block

Judges 9:1-10:5

Introduction: The background to our text shows a generation of people that witnessed Gideon save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon was a man of faith and courage, but he was also foolish. When offered the crown, he flatly refused it with the stirring words, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you!" If his words were right, his heart was wrong. Guess who is leading the rebellion of God's people? It will be Gideon's own son, Abimelech! Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. The Linage of Gideon (9:1-6)

- A. Abimelech's Ambition (v.1)
- B. Abimelech's Aspiration (vs.2-3)
- C. Abimelech's Action (vs.4-5)
- D. Abimelech's Ascension (v.6)

II. The Legend of Jotham (9:7-21)

- A. Jotham Lives - A Momentous Mistake (vs.5, 7)
- B. Jotham Speaks - A Man With A Mouth (v.7)
- C. Jotham Preaches - Metaphors on the Mountain (vs.8-15)
- D. Jotham Challenges - A Moment of Magnitude (vs.16-21)

III. The Leadership of Abimelech (9:22-57)

- A. Abimelech's Reign (v.22)
- B. Abimelech's Rival (vs.23-37)
- C. Abimelech's Rout (vs.38-49)
- D. Abimelech's Ruin (vs.50-55)
- E. God's Rebuke (vs.56-57)

IV. The Leadership of Tola (10:1-2)

- A. The Example of Tola (v.1)
- B. The Experience of Tola (v.2)
- C. The Death of Tola (v.3)

V. The Leadership of Jair (10:3-5)

- A. The Calling of Jair (v.3)
- B. The Influence of Jair (v.4)
- C. The Death of Jair (v.4)

Conclusion: While the first part of our study looked grim, it ended on a positive note. Why? The heart of the lesson is that children follow the example of their father. Gideon set a good example most of the time but made some ignorant decisions. Those mistakes led to the punishment of his children and grandchildren. By the end of our lesson we can consider the examples of Tola and Jair, saviors sent by God who delivered His people from themselves. They followed their heavenly Father and all of the children of God benefited from that obedience. We must stop ruling ourselves (like Abimelech). We must stop complaining and whining and running (like Jotham). Instead, we must accept the Rule of God (like Tola and Jair). There is only one King of the Lord's people and that is the King of Kings! How will you apply what you have learned?

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Lesson Seven = Trouble At Home

Judges 10:6-12:15

Introduction: Why is it that the home has so much influence on the nation? In our last lesson we noticed that many times a father has more influence on his children than he could ever imagine. Unfortunately the days of great men leading as judges for several decades is over for now. The people were confused as to the difference between “godliness” and “spirituality.” The life of Jephthah is a tragic illustration of that great contrast. And the Judges that followed him didn’t improve things much. Let’s study together...

Discussion:

I. The Leniency of the Israelites (10:6-18)

- A. Sin: Evil in the Sight of the Lord (v.6).
- B. Slavery: Philistines and Ammon, 18 years (vs.7-9).
- C. Sorrow: The Sons of Israel Cried to the Lord (vs.10-18).

II. The Leadership of Jephthah (11:1-12:7)

- A. Jephthah’s Dysfunctional Family (11:1-3)
 - 1. His birth (v.1)
 - 2. His rejection (vs.2-3)
- B. Jephthah’s Definite Future (11:4-11)
 - 1. The appeal (vs.4-5)
 - 2. The negotiations (vs.6-11)
- C. Jephthah’s Defiant Foes (11:12-28)
 - 1. Ammon’s accusation (vs.12-13)
 - 2. Jephthah’s rebuttal (vs.13-27)
 - 3. Ammon’s rejection (v.28)
- D. Jephthah’s Dedicated Fury (11:29-33)
 - 1. His empowerment (v.29)
 - 2. His vow (vs.30-31)
 - 3. His victory (vs.32-33)

E. Jephthah's Disrespectful Foolishness (11:34-40)

1. The greeting (v.34)
2. The grieving (vs.35-38)
3. The offering (vs.39-40)

F. Jephthah's Dogmatic Followers (12:1-7)

1. The rebuke (vs.1-3)
2. The persecution (vs.4-6)
3. The death of Jephthah (v.7)

III. *The Leadership of Ibzan (12:8-10)*

- A. The Home of Ibzan (v.8)
- B. The Family of Ibzan (v.9)
- C. The Death of Ibzan (v.10)
 - Notice that he only served for seven years.

IV. *The Leadership of Elon (12:11-12)*

- A. The Work of Elon (v.11)
- B. The Death of Elon (v.12)
 - Notice that he only served for ten years.

V. *The Leadership of Abdon (12:13-15)*

- A. The Background of Abdon (v.13)
- B. The Children & Grandchildren of Abdon (v.14)
- C. The Death of Abdon (v.15)
 - Notice that he only served for eight years.

Conclusion: As a complete polar opposite from last week's study, the first part of our study looked positive and ended on a sad note. Why? The mistakes of fathers make tremendous impacts upon the nation. When our leaders cannot be trusted who can we trust? A spiritual person may choose his own god and do what is right in his own eyes; a godly person will worship the One God and does what is right in His eyes. How will you apply what you have learned?

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL)

Bible Class Study Guide on the Book of Judges

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

Lesson Eight = The Strongest Man Alive

Judges 13:1-16:31

Introduction: Many of the judges were separated early on as leaders among God's people. But Samson was special. The Bible reveals his miraculous birth and calling. Samson was separated to God from birth and fulfillment of God's purpose for their existence depended upon accepting that calling. How do you defeat the world's strongest human? Find his weakness. What was Samson's weakest point? Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. The Demise of the Israelites (13:1)

- A. Sin: The Sons of Israel Again Did Evil (v.1a, cf. 10:6).
- B. Slavery: The Philistines, 40 Years (v.1b).
- C. Sorrow: None (v.1b, cf. 15:11).

II. The Birth of Samson (13:2-25)

- A. The Angel's First Visit (vs.2-8)
 - 1. His target (vs.2)
 - 2. Her report (vs.6-7)
 - 3. Manoah's skepticism (vs.8)
- B. The Angel's Second Visit (vs.9-22)
 - 1. His reappearance (vs.9-14)
 - 2. His "Wonders" (vs.15-22)
- C. The Angel's Gift (vs.23-25)
 - 1. Their presence (vs.23)
 - 2. Their obedience (vs.24-25)
 - 3. The requirements (Numbers 6:1-8)
 - (a) Appetite (vs.4, 7, 14)
 - (b) Appearance (vs.5)
 - (c) Associations

III. The Rise of Samson (14:1-15:20)

- A. Samson's First Marriage (14:1-11)
 - 1. The Timnite love (vs.1-4)
 - 2. The lion and the honey (vs.5-11)
- B. Samson's Divorce (14:12-20)
 - 1. The broken riddle (vs.12-18)
 - 2. The disrupted wedding (vs.19-20)
- C. Samson's Enemies (15:1-20)
 - 1. The lost bride (vs.1-3)
 - 2. Torched crops (vs.4-8)
 - 3. A great slaughter (vs.9-20)

IV. The Fall of Samson (16:1-22)

- A. Samson's Lust (vs.1-22)
 - 1. The Gaza harlot (vs.1-3)
 - 2. The betrayal by Delilah (vs.4-16)
- B. Samson's Mistake (vs.17-20)
 - 1. The revelation (vs.17-18)
 - 2. The sorrow (vs.20)
- C. Samson's Imprisonment (vs.21-22)

V. The Death of Samson (16:23-31)

- A. Samson's Disgrace (vs.23-27)
- B. Samson's Revenge (vs.28-30)
- C. Samson's Burial (v.31)

Conclusion: There are so many lessons to learn from this story: (1) If we are separated to God, we will be different. (2) Samson, like Israel, was blinded by lust because he failed to understand the difference between lust and love. (3) It's never too late for God's people to repent, pray for God's presence, and allow God to have control. Unfortunately, the stories of valiance and heroics have come to an end in the book of Judges. How will you apply what you have learned?

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL)

Bible Class Study Guide on the Book of Judges

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

Lesson Nine = Spiritual Anarchy

Judges 17-18

Introduction: The days of the Judges have come to an end but the story is far from over. The death of Samson brings a new phase of religion to the Israelites. There is no spiritual leadership. Idolatry and spiritual anarchy takes off among the children of God. Instead of turning to God for deliverance they rely on their own strength and create their own system of religion. It is clear that the writer intends for the reader to see the tragedy of anarchy at the end of his book. These final stories show the depths of degradation. God's children would sink so low that even He would reject them. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Spiritual Anarchy in the Home (17:1-13)

A. An Immoral Son (vs.1-3)

- Stolen silver is applauded.
- He is dishonest and he is a thief.

B. An Immoral Mother (vs.4-6)

- The stolen silver becomes an idol and a statue.

C. An Immoral Priest (vs.7-13)

- The idolater hires a priest.
- The priest is willing to surrender any moral values.

II. Spiritual Anarchy in the Nation (18:1-31)

A. The Nation Needed A King (v.1, 17:6)

- The people were incomplete without a leader.

B. The Danites Needed A Homeland (vs.1-2)

- These people were totally lost!
- For years they had wandered without a place to call home.

C. The Danites Needed Wisdom (vs.3-10)

- Scouts from Dan meet the priest.
- They asked him for prayers and he gave them his opinion.

D. The Danites Needed A God (vs.11-21)

- 600 Danites headed off to war and went to Micah's house.
- They influenced the priest to go with them.
- Together they steal everything that belonged to Micah.

E. The Danites Needed A Victory (vs.22-31)

- Micah wanted his gods and his priest, but did not get them.
- Instead they were so excited they went on to Laish and fought.
- They destroyed this city and killed the innocent people there.

Conclusion: The children of God suppressed the truth in unrighteousness and experienced the wrath of God as a result. It is clear that spiritual anarchy has taken over among the nation of Israel. However, the story is not over and this will lead to moral anarchy before God steps in to take control. This is what happens when people turn their back on God and refuse to follow His Word. We must teach God's way to the next generation or things will get much worse! How will you apply what you have learned?

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL)

Bible Class Study Guide on the Book of Judges

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

Lesson Ten = Moral Anarchy

Judges 19-20

Introduction: The days of the Judges have come to an end and anarchy now reigns. As the book comes to an end we see the depths of degradation among the children of Israel. God's children have sunk so low that God has rejected them and they have decided to rule themselves. In our last lesson we noted the spiritual anarchy of the people. In this lesson we will see how that spiritual depravity led to moral anarchy in the nation. Let's study together...

Discussion:

I. Moral Anarchy Among God's Leaders (19:1-30)

A. The Immoral Levite (vs.1-2)

- This Levite man took a slave from Bethlehem.
- He forced her to become his concubine.
- She was unhappy and refused to stay ("played the whore" - KJV)
- Maybe she wasn't unfaithful to him sexually, just withdrawn.
- She ran away and headed back to her father's home.

B. The Respectful Father (vs.3-8)

- Clearly the man does not want his daughter to leave again.
- He loves his daughter and does not want her to be unhappy.
- He feeds these men and cares for them for five days.
- He gave them feasts, wine, gifts, etc.

C. The Dark Journey (vs.9-15)

- The Levite decided to leave even though they would have to travel at night.
- This was an ignorant decision, but he was determined to get his concubine.
- Why? He was clearly selfish. No one else could have her!

D. The Kind Old Man (vs.16-21)

- This old man wanted to help, but the people of Gibeah are not hospitable.
- The old man knew immediately that these visitors were in danger.
- He gives them a meal and they were enjoying the visit.
- Then the people of Gibeah came to the man's house.

E. The Wickedness of Israel (vs.22-26)

- Gibeah was full of wicked men that wanted the Levite for immoral purposes.
- The decision of the Levite is inhuman.
- This young woman crawls back to the house.

F. The Ignorance of Israel (vs.27-30)

- He is so inconsiderate and he basically drags this woman back to his house.
- She, of course, dies without medical assistance and he cuts her into 12 pieces.
- Then the Levite uses this tragedy to summon war.

II. *Moral Anarchy Among God's Children (20:1-48)*

A. The Testimony of the Levite (vs.1-7)

- Remember that the people just need any excuse to go to war.
- Look at the previous chapters (ignorance and revenge).
- Who put the slave in their midst? (v.25)
- Was she dead afterwards? No! He contributed to her death!
- He only told them half-truths to get them stirred up.
- All Israel was gathered for war and ready to fight.

B. The Bitterness of the Tribes (vs.8-11)

- The people swear not to return home until there has been revenge.
- They begin to divide up the men and plan their course of action.

C. The Request of the Tribes (vs.12-13)

- The tribes ask the Benjaminites to hand over the men of Gibeah.
- They want to put the men to death for their immoral actions.

D. The Resistance of the Benjaminites (vs.14-17).

- The tribe of Benjamin resists.
- They head for the city of Gibeah and gather for a fight.

E. The First Petition & The Ensuing Battle (vs.18-22)

- The first petition is given and God responds send Judah (big boys).
- 22,000 of their own men were killed!

F. The Second Petition & The Ensuing Battle (vs.23-25)

- The second petition is given and God responds: send everyone you got.
- 18,000 men were killed this time.

G. The Third Petition & The Ensuing Battle (vs.26-41)

- The third petition is given and God responds: I'll be with you this time.
- They had prayed, fasted, and gave offerings to receive God's blessing.
- They had the Ark and a well-respected priest to help with the petition.
- After killing about 30 men they chased the others away.
- 10,000 great leaders jumped them and killed 25,100 Benjaminites.

H. The Defeat of the Benjaminites (vs.42-48)

- Benjamin is ravaged.
 - Battle 1: Judah is defeated (vs.18-21).
 - Battle 2: All tribes are defeated (vs.22-25).
 - Battle 3: God grants victory (vs.26-48).
- When all was said and done God had His way with all of the tribes.

Conclusion: The children of God refused to listen to God until He was their last option. It is clear that spiritual anarchy and moral anarchy had taken over among the nation. When they humbly petitioned God to take control He did! What would have happened if they had trusted Him all along? He was their Judge and King! How will you apply what you have learned?

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL)

Bible Class Study Guide on the Book of Judges

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

Lesson Eleven = From Grace To Disgrace

Judges 21:1-25

Introduction: God's people seem to be absolutely disgraceful. No matter how badly they behave in the book of Judges, the next chapter seems to show them on an extended downward spiral. Can it get any worse? Will there ever be any hope for Israel? Keep in mind that God still has a lot of grace to offer His children. He still loves them. Let's study this last chapter together...

Discussion:

I. The Declaration of the Israelites (v.1)

- A. A rule of justice, morality, and prudence
- B. A rule made in anger and out of vengeance
- C. A rule of selfishness, bias, and ignorance

II. The Crisis of the Israelites (vs.2-5)

- A. Significance of their decision
- B. Consequences to their decision
- C. Penalties because of their decision

III. The Sorrow of the Israelites (vs.6-15)

- A. Worshipping without the tribe of Benjamin
- B. Grieving over their ignorant decisions
- C. Stealing the daughters of Jabesh-Gilead
- D. Reconciling with the men of Benjamin

IV. The Agenda of the Israelites (vs.16-24)

- A. The history of their fathers
- B. The oath of their leaders
- C. The future of the Benjaminites
 - They kidnapped the dancers of Shiloh
- D. The recognition of their God

V. The Fate of the Israelites (v.25)

- A. The Israelites did not have a king
- B. The Israelites did not have any morality

Conclusion: The last chapter in the book of Judges seems to end on a tragic note. We often anticipate a happy ending, but this is another book in the Bible that doesn't have one. In fact, the only light at the end of the tunnel is that you foresee them getting a king in Israel when it is clear that was not God's design. The book of Judges reveals that disobedience always brings judgment. We may not appreciate the discipline we receive from God, but it is obvious it is necessary to keep us on track (**Hebrews 12:6**). Another important lesson to learn is that God is faithful! He always will be faithful no matter how often we may be unfaithful. Next time, in our final lesson we will dissect this last verse of Judges. How will you apply what you have learned?

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL)

Bible Class Study Guide on the Book of Judges

Prepared by Ray Reynolds

Lesson Twelve = Who Made You The Judge?

Judges 21:25

Introduction: The final words of this book are as follows: “*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” It is a sad commentary on the state of the nation of Israel. The years of Moses’s leadership have been long forgotten. The mighty Joshua is only remembered as a myth. The judges would also be quickly forgotten. Instead of following God they choose idolatry and the path of their godless neighbors. Aren’t we in a similar situation in America? What can we learn? Let’s study together...

Discussion:

I. What Can We Learn From Israel's Wars? (1:1-2:5)

A. The Tribe of Judah (1:1-21)

1. The promise of initial victory (1:1-18)
2. The period of incomplete victory (1:19-21)
3. If we are unwilling to finish the job, why start in the first place?

B. The House of Joseph (1:22-2:5)

1. The promise of initial victory (1:22-26)
2. The period of incomplete victory (1:27-2:5)
3. If we are unwilling to stay on the course, why start in the first place?

II. What Can We Learn From Israel's Woes? (2:6-16:31)

A. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Mesopotamians (3:8-11)

- Even Othniel could not save them for long (**Judges 3:7-11**).

B. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites (3:12-30)

- Even Ehud could not save them for long (**Judges 3:12-30**).
- Even Shamgar could not save them for long (**Judges 3:31**).

C. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Canaanites (4)

- Even Deborah & Barak could not save them for long (**Judges 4:1-5:31**).

D. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Midianites (6-7)

- Even Gideon could not save them for long (**Judges 6:11-8:35**).

- E. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Ammonites (10:6-32)
 - Even Abimelech could not save them for long (**Judges 9:1-57**).
 - Even Tola could not save them for long (**Judges 10:1-2**).
 - Even Jair could not save them for long (**Judges 10:3-5**).
 - Even Jephthah could not save them for long (**Judges 11:1-12:7**).
 - Even Ibzan could not save them for long (**Judges 12:8-10**).
 - Even Elon could not save them for long (**Judges 12:11-12**).
 - Even Abdon could not save them for long (**Judges 12:13-15**).
- F. The Israelites Were Overtaken by the Philistines (13-16)
 - Even Samson could not save them for long (**Judges 13:1-16:31**).
- G. The Israelites Were Overtaken by Idolatry & Selfishness

III. What Can We Learn From Israel's Ways? (17-21)

- A. The Way of Religious Perversion (17)
- B. The Way of Spiritual Poverty (18)
- C. The Way of Social Perplexity (19)
- D. The Way of Physical Problems (20)
- E. The Way of Moral Pollution (21)
- F. The Way of Emotional Perception (21:25)

Conclusion: There are so many lessons to learn from the book of Judges. Above all else, there are two specific points that should be noted: (1) When people do what is right in their own eyes, there will be anarchy and disaster. (2) God is ready to extend His grace to those who are willing to faithfully trust in Him. We all know that God is still good, all the time! Let's pray that we are doing what is right in His eyes! What makes us think we can judge our own life? We need the goodness, mercy, and grace of God to guide us. How will you apply what you have learned?