

Introduction to Israel's Judges

I. Continuation of Israel's History

After conquering Palestine (Canaan), the Israelites had settled into the promised land. The people had been free from slavery in Egypt for two **generations**. Moses had been their leader when God brought them out of slavery in Egypt. Before Moses died, God instructed him to name Joshua as the next leader (Numbers 27:18-19). It was Joshua who led the people into the land God had promised them. When Joshua died, the people no longer had a leader and did not know who would replace him. For a while, the people concentrated on settling into their new homeland.

However, the people of God had not obeyed His clear instructions about taking over the land promised. God had instructed His people through Moses, saying, *...you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them* (Deuteronomy 7:2). He also said on another occasion, *And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place* (Deuteronomy 12:3). God explained that if they did not obey Him, they would be tempted to worship the false gods of the people living there. Sons and daughters would end up marrying the foreigners, and the false gods would ruin their love and worship of the only true God (Exodus 34:11-17).

In the book of Judges, you will see three things happen again and again. The people of Israel will:

1. fail to keep God's commandments
2. suffer the consequences of their sin
3. cry out to God for mercy

Each time, God will provide a "judge" to rise up and deliver the people from their enemies.

II. Date

The Book of Judges continues to tell the story of Israel's history and covers a period of roughly four-hundred years. (Compare 1 Kings 6:1 with Acts 13:20). Most scholars believe that Judges covers a period from about 1400 B.C. to 1050 B.C. During this time, a cycle developed that would be repeated at least seven times. A cycle is a series of events repeated in the same order. For instance, your mom tells you to clean your room; you half way clean your room but leave a sandwich under your bed; your room gets messy and the sandwich smells; You cry to mom for help; she finds the sandwich and makes your room smell great again...for a while. Before you know it, your room is messy again, you half way clean it but leave a half eaten pizza in your closet...and so on! The cycle which the people of Israel went through looked like this:



Just as the USA is made up of many states, Israel was made up of twelve tribes¹. Different tribes went through this cycle, although not necessarily at the same time. Thirteen judges are named, but only eleven judges have stories included in the book.

III. Contemporary History

The Bronze Age was gradually giving way to the Iron Age. In Egypt, Amenhotep IV ruled. He changed his name to Akhenaten and

¹ In the book of Joshua, the land is divided into twelve separate areas to fulfill the promises God gave to the forefathers, Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 13:15), Isaac (Genesis 26:2-4), and Jacob (Genesis 28:14).

enforced the worship of only one god, Aten. (Perhaps he was influenced by the writings of the Hebrews or by the power of the Hebrew God, as seen in the plagues on Egypt.) He was the husband to one wife, the beautiful Nefertiti. Many paintings and statues of the couple have been found portraying them as happy and loving. He closed temples and made priests stop performing rituals to former gods. However, once Akhenaten died, the Egyptian people rebelled and went back to worshipping all the old gods of Egypt. Not only that, they erased Amenhotep's name from all the monuments he built and took him out of all their records. King Tutankhamen was the next ruler, followed by Ramses II. He was the last great King of Egypt. During his reign Egypt had a brief period of glory, but it was short lived. Ultimately, Egypt was dominated by foreigners for the two thousand years which followed.

The Hittites took advantage of the power gap in Egypt and built an empire north of Israel. They are known to have developed and improved a method of purifying iron to make it stronger. Their weapons could cut through the former bronze weapons as if they were made of wood. Approximately 100 years ago, skeptical scholars strongly denied the existence of the Hittites. Then, archaeological discoveries were made and, once again, the Bible was "verified." The Bible is true (2 Timothy 3:16) and will continue to be proven accurate through every age.

IV. Theme and Key Phrases

The key phrase of Judges is *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (17:6, 21:25). It is a description of the Israelites throughout all the land. The book emphasizes the people's desire for a consistent leadership. The "judges" were deliverers (saviors) who would govern for a time. But, none of the thirteen judges established a permanent government.

The major theme in Judges is God's power and mercy to His chosen people. Time and time again, He graciously delivers His people from the consequences of their sin.

V. Author

The writer is not identified in the book of Judges. Scholars believe that Samuel is the most likely author. He was the last of the judges, and, as the prophet who anointed the first two kings, he introduced the monarchy (total rule by one person). The author points out four different times that *In those days there was no king in Israel* (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). This suggests the author is writing during a time when Israel is ruled by a king.

VI. Purpose of Judges

Judges records a time of spiritual and **moral** failure by the chosen people of God. They had the Law of Moses but had no one to enforce the keeping of the law. The book demonstrates man's sinful nature (man's will to break God's law). Many people believe that if someone is a 'good' person, then he/she will not go to Hell. However, the Bible teaches that it is impossible for man to do good apart from God (Psalm 14:1-3). When God created the universe and all that is in it, He defined good. He is its source. Even man's kindest action imaginable is motivated by sin. For instance, many people make donations to charities. They may even do it in secret, and that can seem as if they are not trying to impress others. But, the root of the action, deep down, is to make themselves feel better. At the source, the best action is still rooted in man's selfishness and pride.

Even though men are sinful and weak, God provides deliverance to His people. In this book, His deliverance is in the form of judges. They are not judges in the sense of court rooms, robes, and gavels. Most of these judges are similar to generals making strategic war moves. As the book continues, the people and the judges become more **immoral**. However, God does not change. God is faithful every time the people cry out to Him. God delivers the people from bondage to freedom, not some of the time, but every time.

Therefore, the book of Judges has two obvious purposes: 1) to show man's failure, and 2) to

show God's faithfulness to His people. But there are also other purposes that are less obvious. For instance, the book prepares the way for the monarchy. The people will eventually demand to have a king (so they can be like the foreigners who have kings), and God will provide. Arguably the best purpose of the book of Judges is that it gives a **foreshadow** of Jesus, the future Messiah (Savior). Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's ultimate Deliverer. Matthew 1:21 says that Jesus came to save (deliver) His people from their sins. If not for Jesus, we would be lost in our sins.

Outline of the Book of Judges

- I. Transition after Joshua - Judges 1-2
- II. The Seven Cycles of Deliverance - Judges 3-16
- III. Tragedy of Anarchy - Judges 17-21

Applications

The book of Judges is very applicable to our lives today. Before you are tempted to look down on the people of Israel, take a look around you. Like them, we live in a culture of idolatry. You only need to turn on the radio to verify this. One singer after another praises either money, sex, or themselves. Like Israel, we demand freedom but refuse to take responsibility for our actions. We believe we deserve the best. We spend money wastefully and thoughtlessly. God's law is being replaced with man's law. More and more laws are being approved which are completely opposite of what the Bible teaches. We are not shocked by violence because it has become so common. The list goes on and on.

Historian Alexis de Tocqueville said, "History is a gallery of pictures in which there are few originals and many copies." We would like to believe that we are clever and unlike any other society before us. But, we are just like the children of Israel. We make ourselves comfortable among idolatry. We blend in to society far too easily. In Romans 12:2, Paul says to *not be **conformed** to this world.*

As you study the book of Judges, commit to think about your behaviors. Evaluate if you put your will before God's will. Do you struggle with addiction to particular sins such as teasing siblings, making fun of others, watching inappropriate television shows? Do you enjoy teasing your siblings? Do you truly struggle against sins that have a strong hold on you and pray to God to deliver you? Bad habits, bad attitudes, and weaknesses plague us all. Will you cry to God for the deliverance which is made possible by Jesus Christ? Will you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Savior and yield to His authority in your heart and life? †

Prayer

God, thank you for your word that is a light unto my path. Open my eyes to see and my mind to understand what the book of Judges can teach me about who You are and who I am. Lead me to wisdom that comes from above. I desire to glorify you in my life.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:2 *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

Vocabulary

generation - a group of individuals born and living at the same time

moral - right behavior; good

immoral - not concerned with the rules of right conduct or the difference between right and wrong

foreshadow - to give a hint or suggestion beforehand of someone or something that is to come

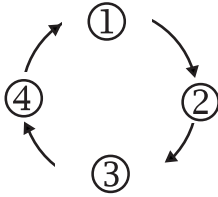
conform - to be similar or identical; to act in agreement

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 1

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. From page one of the notes, list the events in the cycle developed by the Israelites in the book of Judges.



- ① _____ ② _____
③ _____ ④ _____

2. What is a key phrase found in the Book of Judges?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 1:1-3 with Numbers 33:50-56.

3. a. What question did the Israelites ask the Lord?

- b. Which tribe did the Lord choose and what did He say about the battle?

4. How was the land divided between the tribes? (See Numbers 33:54, Numbers 34:13, and Joshua 18:10.)

5. Who were the first tribes to go fight for their allotted territory? Circle the correct answer.

Judah and Simeon

Simon and Alvin

Simeon and Levi

DAY THREE: Read Judges 1:4-15.

6. a. Fill in the blanks. Then Judah went up and _____ delivered the _____ and _____ into their hand and they killed _____ men at Bezek.

- b. List all you learn about Adoni-Bezek.

c. What fact about Adoni-Bezek impressed you the most? Why?

7. a. List the rest of Judah's conquests in verses 8-10.

b. Write the names of the cities in 7.a. which you can locate on the map.

8. a. What prize did Caleb offer to a warrior that conquered Kirjath Sepher?

b. What did Achsah ask her father for as a blessing?

c. Do you think this was a wise request? Why or why not?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 1:16-26.

9. a. Circle the names of five (5) more cities that Judah took, along with his brother, Simeon. Find as many as you can on the map.

Zephath Hormah Gaza Bethel Ashkelon Tyre Ekron

b. What do you know about this area today? Ask an adult if you need help.

10. a. Why was the tribe of Judah successful according to verse 19?

b. Why was the tribe of Judah unable to drive out the people of the lowlands in verse 19?

c. Compare verse 19 to Joshua 17:16-18. What do you think the reason was for Judah's failure?

11. a. What portion of land was given to Caleb?

b. Why did he receive this land? See also Numbers 14:24 and Joshua 14:6-15.

12. Mark each statement below T (true) or F (false). Correct the false statements and give the verse where you found the correction.

- a. T or F vs._____ The tribe of Benjamin drove the Jebusites out of Jerusalem.
- b. T or F vs._____ The tribe of Joseph went up against New York.
- c. T or F vs._____ The Lord was with Joseph.
- d. T or F vs._____ A man from Bethel showed the spies of Joseph the entrance to the city.
- e. T or F vs._____ The spies struck the man with the edge of the sword.
- f. T or F vs._____ The man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city named Luz.

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 1:27-36.

13. a. Name the tribes which did not drive out the Canaanites.

b. What did they do instead? Give two phrases which describe what they did and list the verses where you find the phrases.

14. What do you learn about the Amorites in verses 34-36?

15. a. What had been God's warning to the Israelites concerning the Canaanites and other inhabitants of the land? See Numbers 33:55-56.

b. How can you apply this to your life? See 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 6:17.

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 1

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

- | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------|
| 1. | moral | | right | | good | | bad |
| 2. | foreshadow | | glimpse | | preview | | previous |
| 3. | conform | | make the
same | | make
different | | disagree |

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
conformed	not concerned with the rules of right conduct or the difference between right and wrong
foreshadow	a group of individuals born and living at the same time
generation	right behavior; good
immoral	to be shaped or changed so that you are similar or identical; to act in agreement
moral	to give a hint or suggestion beforehand of someone or something that is to come

DAY FIVE: Wordsearch: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.

Find the hidden words left, right, forward, backward, and diagonally. Each letter is used only once.

L A L B P Y K C S B Y E Q C O
 A I L X G P Z J W R Y D X B A
 R Q H J S E V H W A W O J V L
 O Y C H N R N E L E Q U H S Y
 M L Z C T K E E O K F N W O Q
 H E V I A U U E R O K F H V G
 M I G N H J G Q R A Y O H X L
 C M R K D C S E C V T L T M A
 X J O L X V S F O U H I W S R
 L V U Q Z H U G N H F Q O Q O
 S H M Z A H E K F S X C N N M
 Z N K D P A P Q O V Z D W S M
 U U O I M G D D R P T O K I I
 T W W S C W P K M K Z L R O T
 R O J H I D F C C J F J W R U

conformed**foreshadow****generation****immoral****moral**

ANSWER KEY

L	A	L	B	P	Y	K	C	S	B	Y	E	Q	C	O
A	I	L	X	G	P	Z	J	W	R	Y	D	X	B	A
R	Q	H	J	S	E	V	H	W	A	W	O	J	V	L
O	Y	C	H	N	R	N	E	L	E	O	U	H	S	Y
M	L	Z	C	T	K	E	E	O	K	F	N	W	O	Q
H	E	V	I	A	U	U	E	R	O	K	F	H	V	G
M	I	G	N	H	J	G	O	R	A	Y	O	H	X	L
C	M	R	K	D	C	S	E	C	V	T	L	T	M	A
X	J	O	L	X	V	S	F	O	U	H	I	W	S	R
L	V	U	Q	Z	H	U	G	N	H	F	Q	O	Q	O
S	H	M	Z	A	H	E	K	F	S	X	C	N	N	M
Z	N	K	D	P	A	P	Q	O	V	Z	D	W	S	M
U	U	O	I	M	G	D	D	R	P	T	O	K	I	I
T	W	W	S	C	W	P	K	M	K	Z	L	R	O	T
R	O	J	H	I	D	F	C	C	J	F	J	W	R	U