

Judges

"God's Servants for Troubled Times"

Background Information

Author: None is named, but _____ is usually given credit, since he lived so close in time to the events.

"Judges" can be translated "deliverers" or "saviors," which more accurately describes their role.

Israel's failure to completely drive out foreign, pagan people leads to the events of this book, just as God had said (Joshua 1:27-2:4).

Time Covered and Outlines

The book covers about 350 years, beginning with the completion of Joshua's conquest and ending just before the reign of _____ as priest and birth of Samuel. Several of the judges' lives overlap in time.

Outline #1: Overview in three parts

- I. Israel's Sin (1:1-3:6)
- II. The Cycles of the Judges (3:7-16:31)
- III. Examples of the Depravity of Sin (17-21)

Outline #2: Full Listing of Cycles

- I. Introduction (1-2)
- II. First cycle, ending with Othniel (3:1-11)
- III. Second cycle, ending with Ehud (3:12-21)
- IV. Third cycle, ending with Deborah (4:4-5:31)
- V. Fourth cycle, ending with Gideon (6-8)
- VI. The Abimelech conspiracy (9)
- VII. Fifth cycle, with Jephthah and minor judges (10-12)
- VIII. Sixth cycle, ending with Samson (13-16)
- IX. Appendix: Examples of Israel's sin (17-21)

The "Cycles" of Judges

1. Israel sins; departs from God's law.
2. God punishes the people through (usually) military action by a foreign nation. People are often enslaved.
3. Israel cries out to God for deliverance.
4. God raised up a judge to shake off the foreign oppression.

Major Themes

Deliverance
Apostasy
God's hand in history

God's Character in Judges

Righteous (5:11)

Wrathful (9:56)

Forgiving (each cycle)

Jesus in Judges

The theme of deliverance clearly is meant to show us the deliverance offered by Christ from the oppression of sin.

Key Words in Judges

"Judge" (Hebrew *shaphat*); "to deliver" 2:16; 2:18; 10:2, etc.

"Rest" (Hebrew *shaqat*); "tranquil" 3:11; 3:30; 5:31; 8:28; 18:7; 18:27

Elsewhere in the World...

The Chinese culture continues to flourish, and makes silk fabric widely enough for use in heavy trading.

Elsewhere in Scripture...

The book of Ruth indicates that the story occurs "in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1). Many scholars place this book, chronologically, between Judges chapters 8 and 9.

The Judges			
Judge (tribe)	Reference	Oppressor	Period of oppression / peace
1. Othniel (Judah)	3:1-11	Cushan-Rishathaim (Mesopotamia)	8 years / 40 years
2. Ehud (Benjamin)	3:12-4:1	Eglon (Moab); Ammonites; Amalekites	18 years / 80 years
3. Shamgar (not given; foreign?)	3:31; 5:6	Philistines	not given
4. Deborah (Ephraim)	4:1-5:31	Jabin (Canaanites); Sisera, commander	20 years / 40 years
5. Gideon (Manasseh)	6:1-8:32	Midianites; Amalikites; "people of the East"	7 years / 40 years
6. Abimelech (Manasseh)***	8:33-9:57	Civil war	ruled for 3 years
7. Tola (Issachar)	10:1-2	not given	Judged for 23 years
8. Jair (Gilead-Manasseh)	10:3-5	not given	Judged for 22 years
9. Jephthah (Gilead-Manasseh)	10:6-12:7	Philistines; Ammonites	18 years/ judged for 6 years
10. Ibzan (Judah?)	12:8-10	not given	Judged for 7 years
11. Elon (Zebulun)	12:11-12	not given	Judged for 10 years
12. Abdon (Ephraim)	12:13-15	not given	Judged for 8 years
13. Samson (Dan)	13:1-16:31	Philistines	40 years / judged for 20 years

***Abimelech is not technically a judge, but his biography dominates part of the book, so he is often listed along with the other 12. Also, Samuel and Eli are sometimes listed as judges, though their biographies are not recorded in this book.