

Judges Period: From the Conquest to the Kings *Judges 1:1-21:25*

In our chronology Israel has come into the land promised to Abraham and his heirs. Joshua has led them after the death of Moses to conquer this land. The next period of Israel's history is the period of the Judges. This could be called the dark ages of Israel. They entered into a cycle of history that lead them in a spiral.

The approach that used here to study the Judges Period is to first identify the oppressor. Next we will look at the Judge that God raised up and the major events, if any, of the judges life.

One important point we need to establish is these Judges did not rule over the entire nation of Israel. Most times they only brought deliverance to a portion of Israel, one or several tribes, at a time which was under bondage. Therefore the overlapping of the timeline of the judges is not only accepted but expected.

I offer the following outline for our Judges.

- I- Incomplete Obedience: *Jud 1:1-2:5.***
- II- The Period of the Judges: *Jud 2:6-16:3.***
- III- Pictures of the Times: *Jud 17:1-21:25.***

I-Incomplete Obedience: *Jud 1:1-2:5.*

God gave instruction to the Israelites to completely wipe out the pagan nations and their ungodly practices of immorality and religion when they entered the Promised Land. They failed greatly at this task and it caused them heartaches until they were taken into captivity hundreds of years later.

1:1-4 shows the lack of faith that the Israelites had toward God. They ask

God who will go fight the Cannanites. God says Judah and then Judah ask Simeon for help.

In **1:5-20** we see the incomplete obedience of Judah. While Judah enjoyed several victories they did not complete the job God gave them. **1:21** records the failure of Benjamin and **1:22-36** records the failure of the other tribes. "Failure to exterminate this morally debauched people was Israel's grand act of disobedience and the reason for her apostasies and defeats in the era of the Judges." (*Ungers Bible Dictionary*, p. 170)

II- The Period of the Judges: *Jud 2:6-16:3.*

The Judges of Israel not only judged in a judicial sense but also were the military leaders and administrators. The Judges form a link between the rule of Moses and Joshua and the coming of the kings of Israel.

2:11-19 gives us the cycle of the period of Judges. Refer to **EXTRA STEPS E**. Because of their sin an oppressor would bring them under bondage. God would hear their cry and raise up a judge. After the judge died the people would again return to their wicked ways and God would allow them to come under bondage again. This cycle continued for around 350 years.

The following is a list of the judges and the scripture portion pertaining to that particular judge with major events of their judgeship Please refer to **STEPS IN TIME II**. We will study these in chronological order as much as possible.

a- Othniel **3:5-11** The first Judge of Israel was raised up after Israel had

been under oppression of Mesopotamia for 8 years. Othniel was both nephew and son in law of Caleb. He defeated the King of Mesopotamia and brought peace for 40 years.

b- Ehud **3:12-30** The next judge God raised up was Ehud in response to the Moabites oppression of 18 years. Ehud was a left-handed man from the tribe of Benjamin. Ehud brought the tax money to the Moabite capital and secured an audience with the fat king of Moab named Eglon claiming he had a message from God. **3:16-23** records that he then stabbed Eglon with an 18" double-edged dagger. He then raised an army and killed 10,000 Moabites and gave 80 years of rest.

c- Shamgar **3:31** The next judge was raised up due to the Philistine oppression of unknown time. Shamgar killed 600 Philistine with an ox goad.

d- Deborah **4:1-5:31** I chose to include Deborah and not Barak as the judge here because of Barak's cowardice. The Canaanites and King Jabal were the oppressors at this time. Jabal's general Sisera had 900 chariots and a huge army. Deborah told Barak to raise up 10,000 men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Barak would not go into battle however unless Deborah went with him. Because of this God did not allow Barak to have the pleasure of victory. God delivered Sisera into the hands of a woman name Jael who drove a tent peg through his temple killing him. **(4:17-21) Judges 5** records a song of praise by Deborah and Barak.

e- Gideon **6:1-8:35** The Midianites oppress Israel for 7 years and God raised up a man named Gideon. Gideon was threshing wheat in a grape press to hide it from the Midianites when the Angel of the Lord

appeared to him. He proceeded to "lay out the fleece" to determine God's will. **(6:36-40)** He starts into battle with 32,000 troops and God told him to send all home who are afraid and wanted to go. 10,000 went home. God next trims the army from 22,000 to only 300. The enemy had 135,000 troops. Gideon positions his men around the camp with a torch covered with a jar and a trumpet. They broke the jar, blew the trumpet and shouted, **"the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."** God caused the army of the Midianites to panic and they were completely routed. The nation of Israel wanted to make Gideon king over them but he refuses.

f- Abimelech **9:1-57** Abimelech was a son of Gideon. Many do not include him as a judge. Remember that the people wanted to make Gideon king. Abimelech assumes this position of King out of God's plan. He however did not rule over Israel. He was a vile and mean man who only was out for his own interest. This was a dark three years for Israel.

g- Tola **10:-1-2** God chose to not record the oppressor that Tola was raised up in response to. We only know he was from the tribe of Issachar and judged for 23 years.

h- Jair **10:3-5** Not much is mentioned also about Jair. He had 30 sons who apparently controlled 30 cities. He judged for 22 years.

i- Eli **I Sam 1:1-4:18** *The Reese Chronological Bible* gives the dates of Eli from 1134-1094 B.C. This places him here in the timeline. Eli was a priest who also held the office of Judge. He was the one who raised Samson when Hannah gave him to the Lord. Eli however failed in raising his own sons

who defiled the office of priest. (see **I Sam 2:12ff**)

j- Jephthah **11:1-12:7** Ammon oppressed Israel for 18 years and God raised up Jephthah to deliver Israel. Jephthah was the son of a harlot. (**11:1-11**) Jephthah is best known not for his exploits on the battlefield but his foolish vow. **11:10-31** records that he promised to give the first thing that comes out of his house upon his return from victory if God would give the victory. The first thing turned out to be his daughter. (**11:34-35**)

k- Samson **13:1-16:31** After 40 years of oppression at the hands of the Philistines God raised up Samson to judge Israel. He was raised a Nazarite. His hair was not cut. This was the source of his great strength. He however is a man who allows his lust for beautiful women to rule his life. He kill 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass due to a woman. He fall in love with a woman named Delilah and is betrayed into the hands of the Philistines who put out his eyes, shave and enslave him. His supernatural power from God returns however and he pulls down the temple and kills many Philistines in his death. .

l- Ibzan **12:8-10** Of the final three judges God chose not to include much in the scriptures about their judgeship. It is said of Ibzan that He was from Bethlehem, judged for 7 years. He had 30 sons and brought in foreign wives for them.

m- Elon **12:11-12** He was from the tribe of Zebulun and judged for 10 years.

n- Abdon **12:13-15** Had forty sons and judged 8 years.

I realize that till this point I have not mentioned Samuel who is

considered the last Judge of Israel by many. I will discuss Samuel in a future step. We will see that Samuel is a transitional figure who was not only the last judge but also the first prophet. He served as priest also.

III- Pictures of the Times: 17:1-21:25.

There are three events recorded in the last chapter of Judges that give us a vivid picture of life in Israel during these dark days. Many see these events as occurring very early in the period of the judges. These together show us the religious, moral and political corruption of Israel.

17:1-13 records an event with a man named Micah and his idolatry. He makes a shrine of silver and sets up his son as priest. He persuades a Levite to become priest of his shrine. **18:1-31** The tribe of Dan steals the shrine and the priest as they migrate north. The priest did not object to it because it benefited him personally.

19:1-21:25 records a civil war that almost wiped out the tribe of Benjamin. A Levite went to Bethlehem to bring back his wife and would not stop at any of the cities of the enemies of Israel but journey to the city of Gibeah a city of the Benjaminites. While there some men wanted the man to come out so they could, "**know him.**" Remember Sodom was destroyed for such wickedness. The man did not come out but sent his wife out and they repeatedly raped and killed her. He then cuts her into 11 piece and sent a piece of her to the other 11 tribes. They meet and declare war upon Benjamin when they would not turn over the men who did this. All the women and children and all but 600 men of Benjamin are destroyed. **20:47.**

STEP 9

The other 11 tribes had made a covenant not to even give wives to the Benjaminites men. They however took wives from Jabesh-gilead, which had not been in the covenant, and future disaster was averted.

Application to Life:

- 1- God is interested in the day to day walk of His people and not just in the major events.
- 2-Incomplete obedience always leads to disaster.
- 3- God is still interested in being the deliver of His people even though they fail if they will repent.
- 4- God used ordinary men and women to deliver.
- 5- Man without God guiding his life is capable of just about anything.

Review of Session:

- 1- What was the reason that Israel had so much trouble in the Promised Land?

- 2- Who do you consider to be the greatest judge of Israel and why?

- 3- What event stands out in you mind during this period? _____

- 4- What do you feel is the greatest spiritual lesson God taught you from the book of Judges? _____

Personal Notes:
