

# Judges

**MEANING:** Judges means “rulers,” “delivers,” or “saviors.”

**AUTHOR:** Although its authorship is uncertain, many believe Samuel to be the author.

**TIME WRITTEN:** Between 1043 B.C. (the beginning of Saul’s reign) and 1004 B.C. (David’s capture of Jerusalem.)

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 7th Book in the Bible
- 7th book in the Old Testament
- 2nd of 12 books of History
- 6 have preceded it. 59 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 21

**VERSES:** 658

**WORDS:** 18,976

**KEY WORD:** Cycles

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **Judges 2:20-21** - “Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, ‘Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died.’”
2. **Judges 21:25** - “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

**KEY CHAPTER:** Judges 2

1. Judges 2 is a miniature for the whole book as it records:
  - a. The transition of the godly to the ungodly generation.
  - b. The format of the cycles.
  - c. The purpose of God in not destroying the Canaanites.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT JUDGES:**

1. Following the death of Joshua, Israel plunged into a 350-year Dark Age.
2. The events covered in Judges range from about 1380 B.C. to 045 B.C. (335 years). However, the events of the Judges extends another thirty years since it includes the life of Samuel.
3. It appears that the ruler-ships of some of the judges overlap because not all of them ruled over the entire land.
4. Judges describes various cycles of apostasy, oppression, and deliverance in:
  - a. The southern region - Judges 3:7-31
  - b. The northern region - Judges 4:1 - 5:31

- c. The central region - Judges 6:1 - 10:5
  - d. The western region - Judges 13:1 - 16:31
5. Judges is a book about sin and its consequences.
  6. A descriptive statement of the period appears to be found in the very last verse of the book. **Judges 21:25** - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
  6. The cycle of Judges appears to be:
    - a. Rebellion → Sin
    - b. Retribution → Servitude
    - c. Repentance → Supplication
    - d. Restoration → Salvation
    - e. Rest → Silence
  7. In the Book of Judges, the oppressors of Israel include:
    - a. Mesopotamians
    - b. Moabites
    - c. Philistines
    - d. Canaanites
    - e. Midianites
    - f. Ammonites
  8. Including Samuel, there were seventeen judges. Among them are:
    - a. Othinel
    - b. Ehud
    - c. Shamgar
    - d. Deborah (with Barak)
    - e. Gideon
    - f. Abimelech
    - g. Tola
    - h. Jair
    - i. Jephthah
    - j. Ibzan
    - k. Elon
    - l. Abdon
    - J. Samson
    - k. Eli
    - l. Samuel
  9. Some six or seven periods of servitude.
    - a. 1st period of servitude was to Mesopotamia. Judges 3:5-9
      - The Judge was Othinel.
    - b. 2nd period of servitude was to Moab. Judges 3:5-9
      - The Judges were Ehud and Shamgar.
    - c. 3rd period of servitude was to Jaban and Sisera. Judges 4:1-13
      - The Judge was Deborah, assisted by Barak.
    - d. 4th period of servitude was to Midian. Judges 6-7
      - The Judge was Gideon
    - e. 5th period of servitude was to the Philistines and Ammon. Judges 10-12
      - The Judges were Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon.
    - f. 6th period of servitude was to the Philistines. Judges 13-16
      - The Judge was Samson
- Note: Abimelech, Tola, and Jair were Judges during the period of civil war. 8:33 - 10:5

10. After the death of Joshua and the generation of the conquest pass on, “Another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which he had done for Israel” **Judges 2:10**.
11. The Book of Judges can be divided into three areas:
  - a. Deterioration. 1:1 - 3:4
  - b. Deliverances. 3:5 - 16:31
  - c. Depravity. 17:1 - 21:25
12. Israel vacillates between obedience and apostasy as the people continue to learn from their mistakes.
13. The times of rest and peace are longer than the times of bondage.
14. First the Judges deliver the people; then they rule and administer justice.
15. Thirteen of the judges are mentioned in the Book of Judges. Four more are found in 1 Samuel.
  - a. Eli
  - b. Samuel
  - c. Joel
  - d. Abijah
16. The primary reasons for the failure of Israel during this period.
  - a. A lack of faith in God.
  - b. A lack of obedience to Him.
17. Compromise leads to conflict and chaos.
  - a. Israel does not drive out the inhabitants.
  - b. Instead of removing the moral cancer spread by the inhabitants of Canaan, they contract the disease.
  - c. Canaanite strongholds remained to be taken but the individual tribes. They did not do it.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGES

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Following the death of Joshua at the age of 110, Israel plunges into a 350 year Dark Age.
  1. After Joshua and the generation of the conquest pass on, “**Another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.**” (**2:10**).
  2. The Book of Judges:
    1. Opens with a description of Israel’s deterioration.
    2. Continues with seven cycles of oppression and deliverance.
    3. Concludes with two illustrations of Israel’s depravity.
- B. The Book of Judges has something to say to all the ages of man.
- C. The three D’s of Judges constitute the three divisions of the book.

1. Deterioration. (1:1 - 3:4)
2. Deliverances. (3:5 - 16:31)
3. Depravity. 17:1 - 21:25)

### **DETERIORATION.** (1:1 - 3:4)

- A. Judges begins with short-lived military successes after Joshua's death, but quickly turns to the repeated failure of all the tribes to drive out their enemies.
1. The people feel the lack of unified central leader, but the primary reasons for their failure are:
    - a. A lack of faith in God.
    - b. A lack of obedience to Him. (2:1-3)
  2. Compromise leads to conflict and chaos.
  3. Israel does not drive out the inhabitants. (1:27, 27, 29-30)
  4. Instead of removing the moral cancer spread by the inhabitants of Canaan, they contract the disease.
  5. The Canaanite gods literally become a snare to them. (2:3)
- B. **Judges 2:1-3** - "Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?  
Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"

### **DELIVERANCES.** (3:5 - 16:31)

- A. This section describes:
1. Seven apostasies (fallings away from God).
  2. Seven servitudes.
  3. Seven deliverances.
- B. Each of the seven cycles has five steps:
1. Sin
  2. Servitude
  3. Supplication
  4. Salvation
  5. Silence
- C. These five steps also can be described by five words beginning with the letter "R."
1. Rebellion.
  2. Retribution.
  3. Repentance.
  4. Restoration.

## 5. Rest

- D. These seven cycles connect together as a descending spiral of sin. **Judges 2:19** - “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. **They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.**”
1. Israel vacillates between obedience and apostasy as the people continually fail to learn from their mistakes.
  2. Apostasy grows, but the rebellion is not continual.
  3. The times of peace are longer than the times of bondage.
  4. The monotony of Israel’s sins can be contrasted with the creativity of God’s methods of deliverance.
- E. The judges are military and civil leaders during this period of loose confederacy.
1. Thirteen are mentioned in the Book of judges.
  2. Four more are found in 1 Samuel.
    - a. Eli
    - b. Samuel.
    - c. Joel.
    - d. Abijah

**DEPRAVITY.** (17:1 - 21:25)

- A. These chapters illustrate two major things during the period of the judges:
1. Religious apostasy. (17-18)
  2. Social and moral depravity. (19-21)
- B. Chapters 19-21 contain one of the worst tales of degradation in the Bible.
1. The failure of Israel through immorality. (19:1-30)
    - a. Personal immorality. (19:1-10)
    - b. Tribal immorality. (19:11-30)
  2. The failure of Israel through the war between the tribes. (20:1 - 21:25)
    - a. War between Israel and Dan. (20:1-48)
    - b. Failure of Israel after the war. (21:1-25)
      1. Israel’s foolish vow. (21:1-7)
      2. Men at Jabesh Gilead murdered. (21:8-15)
      3. Women of Shiloh kidnapped. (21:16-25)
- C. Judges closes with a key to understanding the period: **“Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25)**. This is not God’s standard for determining right or wrong.
- D. The people are not doing what is wrong in their own eyes, but what is “evil in the sight of the Lord.” (2:11)