



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## Old Testament Survey

### Lesson 15 – The Decline of Israel in the Time of the Judges (Judges)

#### JUDGES

The book of Judges outlines the history of Israel from the death of Joshua in about 1393 BC to the death of Samson in 1051 BC. During this time the Israelites grew tired of the holy war God wanted them to fight against the Canaanites. They began to make compromises with these heathen and intermarry with them. They sometimes even worshiped their idols. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness to the LORD God, God did not give Israel continual victory over its enemies. In fact, God sometimes let the enemies overcome Israel. But whenever the Israelites again remembered God and asked Him for help, He sent them judges (saviors or deliverers) who freed them from their enemies. This cycle of unfaithfulness, God's judgment, prayer to God, and God's deliverance kept on repeating during the time of the judges.

The first two chapters of Judges give a general picture of this period of time. Chapters 3 through 16 present more detailed accounts of six of Israel's judges. Chapters 17-21 are a double appendix. They describe events which actually happened at the beginning of this period: the false worship of Micah and of the tribe of Dan, and the war of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin.

Read as much of the book of Judges as you can and read the notes below. If you have questions, ask them.

#### Judges 1 – *The Progress of the Tribes in the War of Extermination*

Judah, Simeon, and the Kenites make conquests in the South Country (vv. 1-20).

The other tribes make some conquests but fall far short of the goal (vv. 21-36).

#### Judges 2 – *The Message of the Angel of the LORD (the pre-incarnate JESUS) at Bochim*

The Angel rebukes the unfaithfulness of the Israelites (vv. 1-5).

**"You have not obeyed My voice... Therefore I said, 'I will not drive them out.'"** (v. \_\_\_\_\_)

The account of Joshua's death and burial (vv. 6-10).

The pattern of the history of the judges and the pattern of all history (vv. 11-23).

1. They forsook the LORD God of their fathers.
2. God allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemies.
3. In their distress they called on the LORD to help them.
4. The LORD raised up judges to deliver them from their enemies.
5. When the judge was dead, they returned to their idolatry and unfaithfulness.

#### Judges 3 – *The Stories of Othniel and Ehud*

The nations that remained as snares (vv. 1-6) – **"The children of Israel...served their gods"** (vv. \_\_\_\_\_)

**Othniel** of Judah delivers Israel from Cushan-Rishathaim of Mesopotamia (vv. 7-11).

**Ehud** of Benjamin delivers Israel from Eglon of Moab (vv. 12-30).

Ehud put his left-handed dagger into Eglon's fat belly in secret.

**Shamgar** delivers Israel from the Philistines with an ox goad (v. 31).

#### Judges 4-5 – The Story of Deborah and Barak

**Deborah** and **Barak** of the northern tribes deliver Israel from Jabin and Sisera of Hazor (4:1-16).

The Kenite woman Jael pounds a tent peg into Sisera's temple (4:17-24).

The victory song of Deborah and Barak (5:1-31).

#### Judges 6-9 – The Story of Gideon

The Angel of the LORD (**JESUS**) calls **Gideon** to deliver Israel from the Midianites (6:1-24).

Gideon breaks the altar of Baal and receives the sign of the fleece of wool (6:25-40).

God gives Gideon and his 300 men a great victory over Midian with trumpets and pitchers (7:1-25).

Gideon punishes Succoth and Penuel for refusing help (8:1-21).

The Midianite leaders were Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunna.

Gideon refuses to be a king and sets up false worship at his home (8:22-35).

Gideon's son Abimelech sets himself up as king and meets a terrible end (9:1-57).

#### Judges 10 – The Oppression of the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Israel's Repentance

God sends two deliverers: **Tola** of Issachar and **Jair** of Gad (vv. 1-5).

God uses the Ammonites and the Philistines to punish His idolatrous people (vv. 6-9).

God threatens to deliver His people no more (vv. 10-14).

**"Go...to the gods you have chosen; let them deliver you"** (v. \_\_\_\_)

Israel repents and puts away their foreign gods (vv. 15-18).

#### Judges 11-12 – The Story of Jephthah and His Successors

The tribe of Gad chooses **Jephthah** to be its leader (11:1-11).

Jephthah delivers a message to the Ammonites (11:12-28).

God gives Jephthah victory over the Ammonites (11:29-33).

Jephthah fulfills his rash vow and offers his daughter as a burnt offering (11:34-40).

Jephthah and Gad wage war against Ephraim (12:1-7).

The Ephraimites were unable to pronounce "Shibboleth".

God sends three more deliverers: **Ibzan**, **Elon**, and **Abdon** (12:8-15).

#### Judges 13-16 – The Story of Samson

The Angel of the LORD (**JESUS**) promises a Nazarite warrior (**Samson**) to Manoah and his wife (13:1-25).

Samson's Philistine wife gives him opportunity to kill 30 Philistines (14:1-20).

Samson wins great victories over the Philistines through his great strength (15:1-20).

He used the torches between the fox tails and the jawbone of a donkey.

Delilah betrays Samson into the hands of the Philistines (16:1-20).

She cut his long hair, which was part of his Nazarite vow.

Samson kills more in his death than in his life (16:21-31).

Judges 17-18 – *The First Appendix: The False Worship of Micah and the Tribe of Dan*

**“There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes”** (17:\_\_\_)

Note: Some of the Danites moved from their inheritance to the northern city called Dan.

Judges 19-21 – *The Second Appendix: Israel’s War against the Tribe of Benjamin*

Because of the wickedness of Gibeah, almost all of Benjamin was wiped out.

### **Approximate Dates for the Judges**

Oppression by Cushan-Rishathaim (1383-1375 BC)

Othniel and rest in Israel (1375-1336)

Oppression by Eglon of Moab (1336-1319)

Ehud and rest in Israel (1319-1240)

Oppression by Jabin of Hazor (1260-1240)

Deborah and rest in Israel (1240-1201)

Oppression by the Midianites (1201-1194)

Gideon and rest in Israel (1194-1155)

Abimelech, Tola, and Jair (1155-1107)

The priesthood of Eli (1109-1069)

Oppression by the Ammonites (1107-1089)

Jephthah and rest in the east (1089-1083)

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon as judges (1083-1058)

Oppression by the Philistines (1089-1049)

The deeds of Samson (1071-1051)

The loss of the Ark of the Covenant (1069)

Samuel as prophet and judge (1069-1025)

Victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer (1049)

### **The Amarna Letters**

The Canaanites were subject to the Egyptian Pharaohs during most of this history. That is why the Canaanites appealed to Egypt for help against these Hebrews when the children of Israel carried on their war of conquest against them. Some letters written by the governor of Jerusalem to Pharaoh Akhnaton (1387-1366) have been found. In one of the letters the governor says: “The Habiru (Hebrews) plunder all lands of the king. If the archers are not here this year, then the lands of the king, my lord, are lost.”

## Questions

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1. What is the difference between the time of Joshua and the time of the judges?
2. Why did the Lord refuse to drive out all the enemies of the Israelites?
3. How did God deliver His people from their enemies over and over again?
4. List some of the moral weaknesses you found among the judges.
5. How did Gideon's father protect him from those who wanted to punish him?
6. What does Gideon's victory with 300 men teach us about God?
7. What is the only good way to respond to God's threats to abandon His people?
8. Why was Jephthah justified in fighting against the Ammonites?
9. What turned Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites into a sad occasion?
10. In what form did Jesus appear to Samson's parents?
11. What was the secret of Samson's strength?
12. What moral flaw in Samson led to most of his troubles?
13. What do the two appendices teach us about life under the judges?