

# Read the Bible in a Year

Week 19 – October 10th, 2021

**Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 55-27*

John 5-8

**Readings in Class:**

Judges 11-21

Ruth 1-4

## **Introduction to Judges**

Judges is perhaps one of the most difficult books to read as it details how the people of God became no different than the Canaanites that they failed to drive from the land. Also because of the rather gruesome and disturbing nature of some of the events that are listed, especially at the end of the book.

Judges picks up right where Joshua finishes. Joshua dies and the Israelites have failed to fully drive out the inhabitants of the promised land. This includes a failure to destroy the altars to the false gods and idols. That quickly leads to the Israelites forgetting about God and turning to these false idols, the exact things they were warned would happen if they allowed the other nations to remain among them.

This begins the downward spiral of the people of Israel, which eventually ends with the Babylonian captivity and the loss of the promised land. A major theme is how sin leads to pain and downfall, but even in the midst of these tragedies, God is gracious and forgiving.

The book gets its name from the fact that this is the period of the Judges, the time between the conquest under Joshua and the first king Saul. Judges are simply temporary leaders who were used by God to save the people from oppressors. There is some debate how long this period lasted, with the best timetables being 200-300 years. Some of the Judges may have been regional and could have overlapped timewise with others.

## **A brief overview of Judges**

1. Prologue 1:1-3:6
  - a. Israel's Failure to take Promised Land 1:1-2:5
  - b. God's dealing with Israel's Spiritual Failure 2:6- 3:6
2. The Cycle of the Judges 3:7-16:31
  - a. Major Judge: Othniel 3:7-11
  - b. Major Judge: Ehud 3:12-30
  - c. Minor Judge: Shamgar 3:31
  - d. Major Judge Deborah 4-5
  - e. Major Judge Gideon 6-8
  - f. Anti-Judge: Abimelech as King 9
  - g. Minor Judge: Tola 10:1-2

- h. Minor Judge: Jair 10:3-5
- i. Major Judge: Jephthah 10:6-12:7
- j. Minor Judge: Ibzan 12:8-10
- k. Minor Judge: Elon 12:11-12
- l. Minor Judge: Abdon 12:13-15
- m. Major Judge: Samson 13-16
- 3. Two Epilogues: Israel is Israel no more
  - a. Dan's Apostasy 17-18
  - b. Civil War with Benjamin 19-21

### **The Cycle of the Judges**

For each of the Major Judges, listed above goes through a cycle of events that plays out. This cycle consists of 5 parts that go like this:

1. Israel Apostasies
2. God sends Oppressors
3. Israel Cries out to God
4. God sends a Judge to Deliver
5. The Land has Peace (Maybe)

The first Judge, Othniel, who is also in the book of Joshua, is written with this cycle in mind for us as readers to keep track of through each Judge.

### **Decent into Chaos**

When God gave the Israelites the Promised Land, he gave it to them warning them not to take up the practices of the people of the land which they thrust out. At the beginning of the book, we see that Israel does not drive the inhabitants out, and so they are left as a thorn in Israel's side and sadly they are lured into sin and adopt the same practices.

As each major Judge is introduced, they are less faithful than the ones before. They go from being Israelites to being foreigners who deliver Israel from the task masters. Things are so bad in Israel that no men are found to be capable leaders and Deborah has to step into the task and does what men won't do! Japheth is no different than a thug and even vows to sacrifice his daughter to the Lord! And Samson breaks all his oaths to God as a Nazarite.

Through this whole mess, however, God is seen as the one who will come through on his promises and will provide a rescue for his wayward people in the hopes that with each rescue, they will be drawn to Him. The hope as the downward cycle happens in Judges is that someone must break the chain. This is seen in the hope of a King.

### **Israel Had No King**

Having no king is what leads many of the problems in chapters 17-21. That very refrain is repeated multiple times. This section is gruesome and hard to read for its graphic and hard to understand moments but is written to illustrate how far the people of Israel have fallen (in fact mimicking Sodom and Gomorrah!). The answer will arrive finally in King David, who is a prototype of Christ. But what the people ultimately lack in these final chapters is God as their king. This is what the book of Ruth brings into fruition and how God works his promise in hard times: through Ruth comes the one who will rule the people of Israel after God's own heart.