

Judges Chapter 12 Part 2

Before proceeding with the rest of chapter 12, let us review the concept of Judges as described in the book of Judges. Chapter 2 explains their function from the Lord's perspective.

Judges 2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

The Lord. Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, the pre-existent Christ, 2nd person of the Trinity. The 2nd person of the Trinity acted in history. He acted from His character which included Righteousness and Lovingkindness.

Raised up. It means to raise up or to stand up. I suppose "appointed" might not be too far off the mark.

Judges. The concept of judge is broader than a judge in America today. Certainly a judge could decide in a case brought before him or her (like Deborah). But this verse clearly indicates that a judge, in the book of Judges, includes delivering or saving the sons of Israel from external military threats and occupiers. It is important to note, that in the narrative of Deborah/Barak, Deborah "was judging" while Barak, at least in part was "delivering."

Judges 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the

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commandments of the Lord; they did not do as their fathers.

Judges 2:18 When the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Again, as an emphasis, the text indicates that the purpose of these judges was to deliver the sons of Israel from their external enemies.

Moved to pity. Since there has been discussion in church about God's immutability, His unchanging character, a word is necessary here. God is indeed unchangeable. Yet, here we see God is "moved to pity." This would seem to indicate that God has emotion and changes His mind. However, this is an anthropopathism. It ascribes to God a human characteristic, like emotion, that He does not have, to help us understand God's actions in history.

Here is a general comment from Robby Dean on these judges (not including Shamgar):

"One of the points in terms of looking at this entire scheme (he is talking about the two judges preceding Jephthah and the three judges subsequent to him) is that these men are not raised up by God. Nothing is said about God raising these men up; nothing is said about their devotion to God; nothing is said about their spiritual life at all or their judgeships being related to God at all, but they do deliver Israel. So it de-emphasizes the spiritual aspect of these men while at the same time it emphasizes that God, in His providential care of Israel, is still raising up men who are providing some sort of protection and leadership for the nation, despite

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the fact that the nation is in full-blown apostasy and rebellion against God. So the emphasis throughout this section is on the faithfulness of God in delivering Israel and bringing about His plan despite the continuing and increasing reversionism of the nation. It is a testimony to God's grace.”

Yet there are a variety of ways the judges became judges.

Look at Othniel, the first judge mentioned in this book:

Judges 3:9 When the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother.

Interesting in that the Lord raised up a deliverer who then in the next verse judged Israel. The text specifically says the Lord/Yahweh (2nd person of the Trinity) raised up.

Judges 3:10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Now in this verse the 3rd person of the Trinity empowers Othniel to judge. The result was victory in battle.

There is a question to which I don’t have a clear answer, but which some might ask. Was there an “office” of judge and also a function of judge? In Judges 2:18 the Lord raised up judges (noun). That would suggest an office or position. However, most of the usages in the book of Judges are verbs indicating the function. Certainly a person who is a judge (noun) would judge (verb). But can a person judge without being in the office of

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judge? The prime example I look at is Deborah. She was a prophetess and was judging. Others are said to judge but never said to be appointed judge.

Judges 4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

Judges 4:5 She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Just a quick note. Last week I explained some facts from the Bible about the tribe of Ephraim. Now that we go back to previous passages, we encounter the land of the tribe of Ephraim. When I started this study, I kind of expected to hear more about the tribe of Judah. But I didn't. The emphasis on the tribe of Judah comes with king David and his sons.

Deborah was not a judge prophesying but a prophetess judging. In that male-dominated culture, you have to think that Deborah was a very wise person in order to be accepted by the men to decide judgments.

I say this because of the discussion by various pastors that there is the office of prophet and the gift of prophet.

Remember, Israel at this time had no king.

Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes. (This statement is placed early on in the first story after the death of Samuel.)

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Judges 18:1 In those days there was no king of Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel.

Judges 19:1 Now it came about in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, who took a concubine for himself from Bethlehem in Judah.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (This is the final verse in the book of Judges. It prepares us for 1st Samuel and king David.)

We have not yet encountered these verses in our study. Having no king gave the sons of Israel great freedom. Yet, because they did not recognize God as their king, they abandoned him and became like the unbelieving Canaanites, and even worse at the end of the book of Judges.

This week we will review the “minor” judges. As mentioned before, like minor prophets, they are not less important, there is just less text on them. And I have included one person, Shamgar, who was not a Hebrew and not said to be a judge.

Minor Judges:

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Shamgar 3:21

Tola 10:3-5

Jair 10:3-5

Ibzan 12:8-10

Elon 12:11-12

Abdon 12:13-15

Shamgar is the first person who has limited text dedicated to him. He is not said to judge or be a judge. But he is said to deliver/save Israel.

Judges 3:31 After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.

Let's summarize previously presented information on Shamgar

1. Shamgar is a "Hurrian" name. The present day Armenians are partly descendant from Hurrians. (source: Wikipedia).
2. The son of Anath. One possibility is that Shamgar was a soldier in Pharaoh's employ in the "Sons of Anath" military unit. (source: Robby Dean).
3. Shamgar is likely not a son of Israel. He is not associated with any tribe.
4. The question becomes, why is Shamgar included in the book of Judges? Perhaps there were no suitable candidates in the area to deliver Israel from the Philistines.
5. The book of Judges is preparation for a king. David will be God's choice for king. Saul was the people's choice. David is the one who pushed the Philistines back starting with the defeat of Goliath. That was done through "faith-rest."

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Judges 10:1 Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges 10:2 He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

After Abimelech died. Perhaps this contrasts the evil deeds of Abimelech with the saving work of Tola.

Tola is a man of the tribe of Issachar. Probably not a coincidence is that one of the sons of Issachar was named Tola. Hence, it is possible he was named after the original Tola.

From: <https://biblia.com/factbook/Tolaites>:

“The clan composed of the descendants of Tola, amounting to between 300 and 600 men (22 muster units; Num 26:23). Tola is one of four sons in the genealogies of Issachar (Gen 46:13; 1 Chr 7:1–2). The brothers of Tola were also clan leaders (Punites, Jashubites, and Shimronites).”

1 Chronicles 7:1 Now the sons of Issachar were four: Tola, Puah, Jashub and Shimron.

1 Chronicles 7:2 The sons of Tola were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam and Samuel, heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Tola were mighty men of valor in their generations; their number in the days of David was 22,600.

Mighty men of valor. This is high praise for fighting prowess. If the Tola in the book of Judges was a precursor to some of the warriors in

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David's day, then perhaps he was prepared, at least militarily, to deal with foreign threats.

Judges 10:3 After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years.

Judges 10:4 He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair to this day.

Judges 10:5 And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

Gileadite. We just finished studying Jephthah who was also a Gileadite. If Jair preceded Jephthah, then perhaps there was a recent role model for Jephthah to follow from his own clan.

It has been observed that having two judges prior to Jephthah with a total of 45 years of peace may have provided some stability. But with peace, the sons of Israel sank deeper into depravity. Jephthah only judged in Israel for six years.

Why would the writer of the book of Judges give us only information on this man's family and not on any specific accomplishments. Or is the fact that he had 30 sons his signature achievement in life? It could indicate blessing from God, or that he had many wives like Gideon. Or, if he occupied an office of judge, was he using it for his own gain?

Judges 12:8 Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him (Jephthah).

Judges 12:9 He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters whom he gave in marriage outside

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the family, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

Judges 12:10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem. Commentators say this is not the Bethlehem of David but a town further north. Here is Unger, “He was of Bethlehem, probably the Bethlehem of Zebulun (so Michaelis and Hezel), and not of Judah (as Josephus says). But, here is what Josephus said, “Now, when Jephtha was dead, Ibzan took the government, being of the tribe of Judah, and of the city of Bethlehem. He had sixty children, thirty of them sons, and the rest daughters; all whom he left alive behind him, giving the daughters in marriage to husbands, and taking wives for his sons. He did nothing worth recording, or deserved a memorial. So he died an old man, and was buried in his own country.”

Also note that there is no tribal association given for him.

Sons and daughters. Again, if this is a sign of prosperity, was it from the Lord, or by his own efforts. In the context of the book of Judges, it is possible he was using it for his own gain.

Judges 12:11 Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him; and he judged Israel ten years.

Judges 12:12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

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Here is Josephus again, “When Ibzan was dead after this manner, neither did Helon, who succeeded him in the government, and kept it ten years, do anything remarkable: he was of the tribe of Zebulun.”

Judges 12:13 Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him.

Judges 12:14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys; and he judged Israel eight years.

Judges 12:15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Josephus: “Abdon also, the son of Hillel, of the tribe of Ephraim, and born at the city Pirathon, was ordained their supreme governor after Helon. He is only recorded to have been happy in his children; for the public affairs were then so peaceable, and in such security, that neither did he perform any glorious action. He had forty sons, and by them left thirty grandchildren; and he marched in state with these seventy, who were all very skillful in riding horses; and he left them all alive after him. He did an old man and obtained a magnificent burial in Pirathon.”

So, it would seem that the minor judges were just little guys who did not do much. But their names are memorialized in the Bible. That makes them someone.

If they were little guys, who were the big guys?

What about Moses?

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Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

Does this mean that to be “great” one must be “humble?”

So what about David. Surely he was a great man, a man after God’s own heart?

1 Samuel 16:6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.”

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”

1 Samuel 16:9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.”

1 Samuel 16:10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.”

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1 Samuel 16:11 And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are these all the children?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep.” Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.”

So David was chosen. He was the youngest and he was left to tending the sheep. When his brothers went out to war, David, the youngest was left behind. He only went to the battle camp to deliver care packages to his brothers and favors for king Saul. Look at a prayer of David in 1 Chronicles 17:

1 Chronicles 17:16 Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far?

1 Chronicles 17:17 This was a small thing in Your eyes, O God; but You have spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the standard of a man of high degree, O Lord God.

1 Chronicles 17:18 What more can David still say to You concerning the honor bestowed on Your servant? For You know Your servant.

1 Chronicles 17:19 O Lord, for Your servant’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You

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have wrought all this greatness, to make known all these great things.

1 Chronicles 17:20 O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

This man had great humility before the Lord.

In the New Testament, what about Paul?

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Again, more humility.

2 Corinthians 12:7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

What made these men humble?

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

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Hebrews 11:39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

Hebrews 11:40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

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We see, then, that the key to being “great” in the Christian life is to have great humility, to see ourselves as small that Christ in us might empower us to serve God. The power in Jesus life was the Holy Spirit which resides in each of us today.

For the Christian today, we shouldn’t have “great” Christians. We each have our individual gifts and our individual missions assigned to us by God. We are empowered to accomplish these missions when we walk by faith.

Let us complete our study today by reading in your own Bibles 1 Corinthians chapter 12.