

Introduction to the Book of Judges

The Fabric of Scripture



Philippians 2:14

Verse 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

Verse 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God **above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

Verse 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Overview (Chisholm)

“Some readers of the Bible shy away from the book of Judges. After all, it’s filled with violence and doesn’t seem very spiritually uplifting. If Hollywood were to do a movie of the book, it would probably get an X rating for its scenes of mutilation, child sacrifice, and gang rape, not to mention the bloodshed that appears on almost every page. But the book is in the Bible for a good reason. It illustrates how corrupt human nature really is and how far a society can fall when it turns its back on God and his moral standards. On a more positive note, in the midst of the moral chaos depicted in the book, we see a God who is patient and compassionate as he disciplines and preserves his covenant people.”

[Chisholm, p13 (Preface) (Department chair of OT Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary)]

Overview (Baxter)

“Would that we might erase from the tablets of Israel’s history the many dark doings and sad happenings which make up the bulk of this seventh book of the canon! But alas, the sin of Israel is written “with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond.” Though Israel wash herself “with nitre” and take “much soap,” yet is her iniquity here marked for all time and for all to see. Says Jehovah, long afterwards, through His prophet Jeremiah: “I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination” (Jer. li. 7). As we cannot obliterate the tragic record, let us be quick to learn from it; for although it is such a pathetic anticlimax to the book of Joshua, it is nevertheless one of the richest books of Scripture in the salutary lessons and examples which it contains.”

[J. Sidlow Baxter, “Explore the Book”]

Overview (Dean)

“Judges is a book that is rarely taught in any church. This is a tragedy because it is a book for our times. What is impressive about this book is the theme. The last verse in Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Judges was in many ways the dark ages of Israel's history: they rejected the authority of God, they rejected the authority of Scripture, and in its place they substituted their own authority. In other words, instead of looking to God and His Word for absolutes and structuring all their thought under that umbrella they looked to the community, to one another, to themselves as the source of absolute right and wrong. So there was a culture that was drenched in moral relativism. It shouldn't take too long to figure out what the application is and how it relates to our culture in the twentieth century today.”

[R. Dean, Judges lesson 1]

Why Study the Book of Judges?

- Witness the Depravity of Man
- Witness God's Lovingkindness in Action
- Witness the Struggle Between Faith and Idolatry
- Witness the Similarities to the USA
- Apply Lessons from History to the USA

Faith Heroes in Judges

- Gideon
- Barak
- Samson
- Jephthah

Hebrews 11:32-33 “And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith...”

Hebrews 11:39-40 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

Introductory Information

- Date of Writing
- Historical Context
- Meaning in History
- Issue of Time
- Outline
- Terminology

Date of Writing

- **Author** was likely Samuel
 - Not Stated but likely Samuel (Robbie Dean)
 - Jewish Tradition including Talmud opinion said Samuel was the author [Constable]
- **Time** of Writing Between 1051 and 1004 B.C.
 - “In those days there was no king” suggests that at the time of the writing there was a king. Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1
 - Likely during the reign of Saul before David’s conquest of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (Judges 1:21 “But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.”) (Dean)

Historical Context

1440 Exodus out of Egypt (Moses)

1400 Entrance into the Land (Joshua)

1370 Death of Joshua / Beginning of Judges

1050 End of Judges

1051 Saul as King

[The exact dates vary among commentators. These dates came from Herman Mattox' Prophets and Kings chart]

Meaning in History

- The Bible shows that history is going somewhere.

“In the following discussion the term “philosophy of history” is used to mean a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning.”

[Lowith, Karl, “Meaning in History”]

The Bible tells us where history is going.

Chronology versus History

- Chronology is a Record of Events
 - History is a Record of Events with Analysis
- [Dean]

Judges is a History Book

- Judges is the first real history book that was ever written.
[Dean, Judges lesson1]

“Judges is really the first book that gives us a philosophy of history, not just a record of events. It portrays man as he is. We see all his sinfulness, his carnality, all of his negative aspects. It is to display in Israel's history the causation, which is their negative volition. It is grounded in the cursing and blessing chapters of Deuteronomy. Judges is the outworking of the cursing aspect of the Deuteronomic law, the Mosaic law, on Israel because of their failure to maintain the covenant and to walk in obedience to God. This displays a view of history that has as its force the concept of progress. As a Christian we can look at history as something that is progressing and is moving toward an ultimate goal which is the culmination of God's plan and purposes in history.”

[Dean, Judges lesson1]



A Great Danger in History

- Pastors sometimes teach that you are in great danger after a great success.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Historical Examples of Danger

- After David's Successes, Solomon goes into apostasy
- After Joshua's Successes, Israel goes into apostasy
- After WWII, the USA has gone into apostasy

Characteristics of a Nation

- Common Descent
- Common Language
- Territory
- Political Entity
- Customs and Traditions
- Religion

[Potter, p8]

Nation Characteristics

- Land
 - Body of Law or Constitution
- [Dean, Lesson 1]

Kingship [Dean]

1. Human government and the authority of human government is established in the covenant with Noah in Genesis chapter nine.
2. In Israel its government took the specific form of a theocracy.
3. Under this theocratic government which was established by God in the Mosaic law Israel was given a code of freedom
4. Under the Mosaic law Israel has the right to possess property, to enjoy the blessings of that property, to benefit and to profit in business transactions, unhindered by an overpowering government.
5. Freedom includes authority and respect for authority.
6. Absence of a despotic monarchy in Israel not only meant a high degree of personal freedom but it stood out in the ancient world as a unique and powerful witness to Yahweh.
7. Under this environment of freedom Israel could achieve spiritual success which would bring them material blessing, military victory, and agricultural bounty as a testimony to the grace and power of the one true God. Remember our ability for success is directly related to our potential for failure.
8. Failure to follow the divine mandates in Israel led to the cultural decline where Israel resembled their pagan neighbors and there was no discernable difference in the way they thought or acted.
9. Only Bible doctrine provides a framework to maintain the proper balance between freedom and authority.

Historical Israelite Government

“In contrast with the neighboring peoples, who were constituted as monarchies or city-states ruled over by local kings or princes, the nation of Israel was at best little more than a loose confederation of tribes, fond of their freedom, and yet bound together in a manner unique in the ancient world by a common loyalty to the Sinai Covenant.”

[R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, p691]

Definition of amphictyony

An association of neighboring states in ancient Greece to defend a common religious center [Merriam Webster (on-line)]
[<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/amphictyony>]

Historic Amphictyony

“Albright has pointed out that, like Greek and Italic amphictyonies of a rather later period, the Hebrew social structure of the Judges era consisted of a federation of distinct tribes grouped around a central sanctuary, which exercised a strong cohesive function by unifying the tribes in matters of religion and politics, as well as in other respects.”

[R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, p691

Problems in Scripture

- There are various perceived problems with Scripture.
- Sometimes, there are texts, that on the surface appear to conflict.
- However, there are explanations.
- For instance, there are apparent conflicts in the dates between Kings and Chronicles. They have been explained.
- There is another issue in the book of Judges

The Problem of Time

“Since 1 Kings 6:1 states that the period between the Exodus from Egypt and Solomon’s fourth regnal year (966 B.C.) lasted 480 years, the chronological scheme presented by Judges is problematic. In addition to the 410 years of Judges, we must also take into account the wilderness wanderings, the conquest, the remaining years of Joshua and his contemporaries prior to the oppression of Cushan-Rishathaim, the judgeships of Eli and Samuel, the career of Saul, and the reign of David. When all the figures are tallied up, the total number of years, which probably exceeds six hundred, is beyond what 1 Kings 6:1 allows. [Chisholm, p 35]

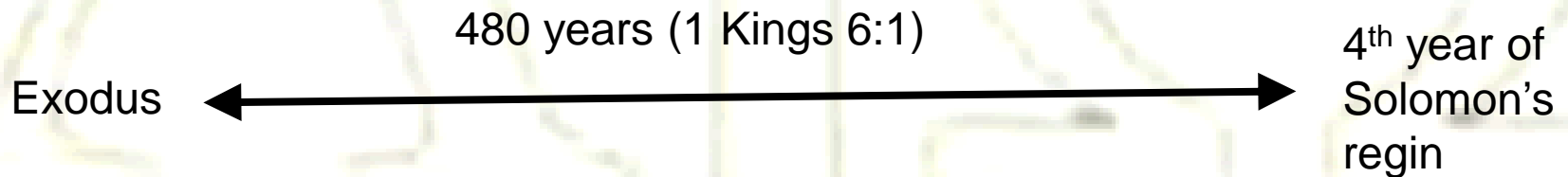
[The original suggestion from Chisholm can be found in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS) volume 52/2]

The “410” Years per Chisholm

3:8	Cushan-Rishathaim oppresses Israel	8 years
3:11	Land rests after deliverance	40 years
3:14	Moab oppresses Israel	18 years
3:30	Land rests after deliverance	80 years
4:3	Sisera oppresses Israel	20 years
5:31	Land rests after deliverance	40 years
6:1	Midian oppresses Israel	7 years
8:28	Land rests after deliverance	40 years
9:22	Abimelech rules after Jotham’s curse	3 years
10:2	Tola leads Israel	23 years
10:3	Jair leads Israel	22 years
10:7–8	Philistines and Ammon oppress Israel	18 years
12:7	Jephthah leads Israel	6 years
12:9	Ibzan leads Israel	7 years
12:11	Elon leads Israel	10 years
12:14	Abdon leads Israel	8 years
13:1	Philistines oppress Israel	40 years
15:20	Samson leads Israel	20 years
	Total years	410 years

Panorama of Judges

- The "judgeships" (rulership tenures) of some of the individual judges apparently overlapped. Some ruled in one area of Israel at the same time that one or more others ruled elsewhere, in some cases. [Constable]



Periods of Oppression

- There are two periods of oppression. When we read Judges we read that there are eight different judges, eight different cycles of disobedience and discipline and deliverance when God brings a judge, and then the people go back to it again, and again it just continues to deteriorate in these cycles. It seems on a surface reading that they take place one after the other. But if we study this carefully they don't happen that way. One oppression may come in from the east and another one from the west so that they happen at roughly the same time or they were overlapping.
- Dean, Judges lesson 1



Chisholm's Chronological Scheme

Panel 1 (Judges 3:8-5:31)

Start Verse	Event	Years B.C.
3:8	Cushan-Rishathaim oppresses Israel	1336–1328
3:11	Land rests after deliverance	1328–1288
3:14	Moab oppresses Israel	1288–1270
3:30	Land rests after deliverance	1270–1190
4:3	Sisera oppresses Israel	1190–1170
5:31	Land rests after deliverance	1170–1130



Chisholm's Chronological Scheme

Panel 1 (Judges 3:8-5:31)

Start

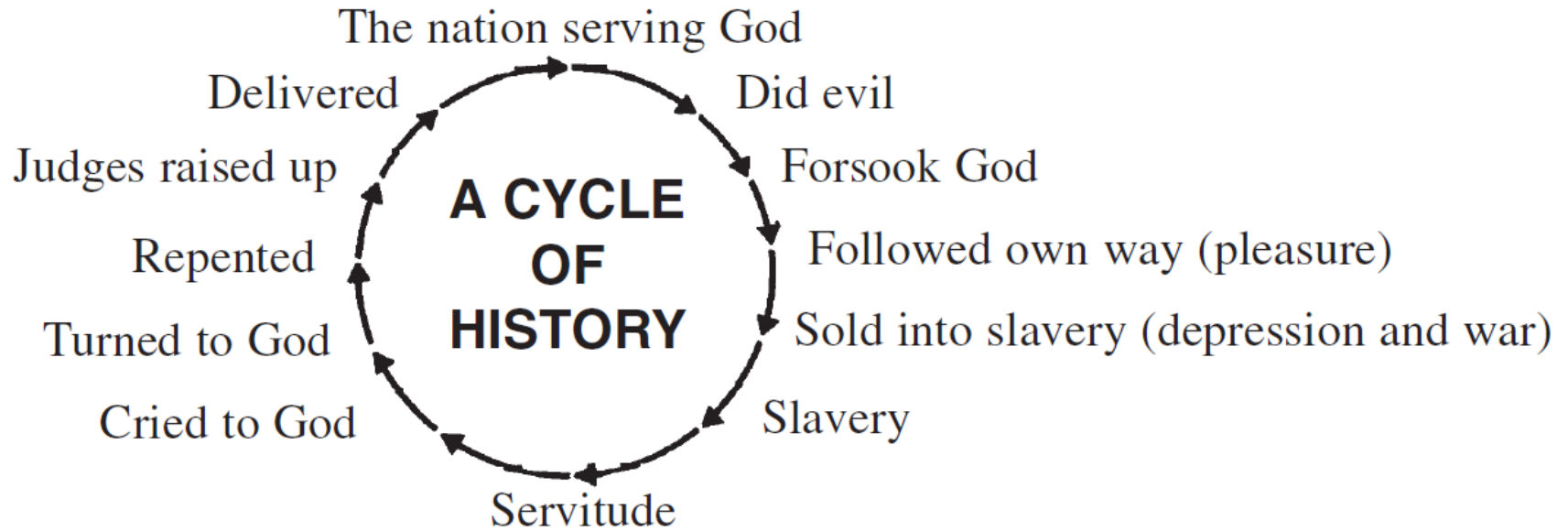
Verse	Event	Years B.C.
6:1	Midian oppresses Israel	1334–1327
8:28	Land rests after deliverance	1327–1287
9:22	Abimelech rules after Jotham's curse	1287–1284
10:2	Tola leads Israel	1284–1261
10:3	Jair leads Israel	1261–1239
10:7–8	Philistines and Ammon oppress Israel	1239–1221
12:7	Jephthah leads Israel	1221–1215
12:9	Ibzan leads Israel	1215–1208
12:11	Elon leads Israel	1208–1198
12:14	Abdon leads Israel	1198–1190
13:1	Philistines oppress Israel	1190–1150
15:20	Samson leads Israel	1150–1130

Outline

- Judges 1:1 – 3:6 The reason for Israel's apostasy
- Judges 3:7 – 16:31 The record of Israel's apostasy
- Judges 17:1 – 21:25 The results of Israel's apostasy

[Constable, Dean follows a similar outline]

Repeated Cycles



J. Vernon McGee, https://ttb.org/docs/default-source/notes-outlines/no7_joshua-judges-ruth.pdf?sfvrsn=82791c16_2

Cycles of Judges (Ryrie)



Terminology

- Judge – Hebrew Shaphat
 - Judge
 - Deliverer/Military Leader
 - Not a king
- Gave – Hebrew Natan
 - God gives in grace
- "Pagan" is a term to describe anyone, no matter how wonderful they are, whose thought system is not based on the Scriptures. [Dean]

God's Instructions - 1

Deuteronomy 7:2 and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

Utterly destroy = “Piel” is intensive

God's Instructions - 2

- Deuteronomy 20:16-17 “Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizite, the Hittite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you...”

Joshua versus Judges

Book of Joshua

- Victory
- Freedom
- Faith
- Progress
- Spiritual Vision
- Fidelity to the Lord
- Joy
- Strength
- Sense of Unity
- Sin Judged

Book of Judges

- Defeat
- Servitude
- Unbelief
- Declension
- Earthly emphasis
- Apostasy from the Lord
- Sorrow
- Weakness
- Declension, Anarchy
- Sin Lightly Regarded

Unger's Bible Handbook, p169

Repeated Repetitions Reveal

1. Hebrew word NATAN (give) is used 78 times in the Book of Judges
2. Repeated narrative:
Joshua 15:16-19 -> Judges 1:12-15
3. Repeated Phrase “In those days there was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).
4. Repeated Cycles: See J. Vernon McGee’s chart



High Frequency Words

Chapter 1

10x Sons (of)

10x Judah

10x Not

12x Take Possession

14x Canaanite

27x Dwell

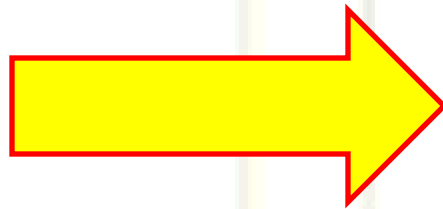
God Gives Grace

Hebrew

NATAN

נָתַן

Genesis 1:1 "I have given you..."



Greek

Didomi

δίδωμι

John 3:16 "...He gave

Bibliography

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