

THE BOOK OF
JUDGES

June, August, & September.



INTRODUCTION

Judges is all about the grace of God. God offers his grace to people who do not deserve it, do not seek it, and don't appreciate it once they get it. In spite of all the ways God forgives, God helps, God delivers, God sends his people good leaders, in the end nothing can overcome their tendency to selfishness, and pride, and rebellion. Judges shows us our sin, shows us our need for a saviour, and shows us that salvation has got to be by grace.

After Joshua led God's people into the Promised Land he reminded them that they were to be faithful to their covenant promises to God by obeying his words. By doing so, they would show the whole world what God was like. The book of Joshua ends with Israel's enthusiastic agreement to do this. The book of Judges begins with the death of Joshua, and tells of Israel's complete and utter failure to do what they had promised they would.

The name of the book comes from the type of leaders Israel had. Before Israel had kings, they were governed by Judges. These judges were not courtroom judges, but more like regional military leaders.

The book of Judges comes with a warning: it's very disturbing and violent. It tells a tragic tale of Israel's corruption and evil, and how they end up no different than the world around them that doesn't know God. It's quite shocking, and that's the point. It shows how desperately Israel needs a better leader, a righteous king, so as to be saved from themselves.

The structure of the book of Judges

- Judges 1.1-3.6
 - Israel fails to drive the Canaanites and their false gods out of the land, and the Canaanites become a snare to them, turning them away from the true God.
- Judges 3.7-16.31
 - God graciously sends Judges to save Israel. But these Judges are deeply flawed, and go from bad to worse.
- Judges 17.1-21.25
 - The final section shows how ungodly and horrifically evil Israel has become, following their poor start to it's natural conclusion—a dismal end.

In this Zoom version, each study is broken up into three *Study Sections* and one final *Zoom Time* section. The *Zoom Time* section provides a shorter bible study experience so as to help those groups who are finding time constraints more critical over Zoom. The *Study Sections* are intended to be done throughout the week in readiness for the group discussion.

STUDY 1

JUDGES 1.1-2.5

STUDY SECTION

Read Judges 1.1-27

How successful is Israel's campaign? Why?

How do the words of Adoni-bezek (1.7) help us see why all this is happening? Check out Deuteronomy 9.4-5 for background.

For reflection

Which characters showed they trusted in God in this section? How is their trust a model for us?

Read Judges 1.28-36

Israel's success seems to continue. So why is the author so keen to point out what Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan did not do?

Why do you think these tribes did not drive out the Canaanites?

For reflection

Do you ever find yourself taking the easy path, rather than obeying God? Why?

Read Judges 2.1-5

What does God remind Israel they were not to do (2.2)?

What is God's assessment of Israel's start in the Promised Land?

For reflection

What 'gods' of our culture compete for a place in our hearts, and become thorns or snares?

ZOOM TIME

Read Judges 1.1-2.5

1. What danger has Israel put themselves in by not driving the Canaanites out of the land?

2. What is the comfort of God's words in 2.1? How is this comfort evident in the way God deals with us today?

3. God is a gracious, promise-keeping, saving God. How does knowing this motivate us to be whole-hearted in obedience of him?

JUDGES 2.6-3.6

STUDY 2

STUDY SECTION

Read Judges 2.6-15

How is the second generation's behaviour different to Joshua's generation? What makes the difference?

What stirs up God's anger in this section?

For reflection

What has God done for us? What helpful things can we do in order to make sure we don't forget what God has done?

Read Judges 2.16-23

List God's actions. What attitudes are behind them? List Israel's actions. What attitudes are behind them?

The pattern described here repeats itself throughout the book of Judges. Draw a picture of this pattern.

For reflection

How is God's patient mercy and grace displayed here? How have you experienced patient mercy and grace from God?

Read Judges 3.1-6

What sour note does this section of Judges end on?

In what ways is God's judgement also a mercy to Israel here?

For reflection

This passage clearly points to the problems caused by human hearts. Where does it hint that the solution might be found?

ZOOM TIME

Read Judges 2.6-3.6

1. What are the attitudes and actions of Israel that are on display here?
2. How does God act in response to Israel's actions?
3. Read Romans 5.6-11. How does Jesus break the pattern of Judges?

STUDY 3

JUDGES 3.7-31

STUDY SECTION

Read Judges 3.7-11

Remember back to the last study, and the pattern of the book of Judges. Does this first episode play out 'according to script'?

What do you make of the way this episode ends (verse 11)? Is it an ideal end?

For reflection

In what ways is Othniel like Jesus? In what ways is he different?

Read Judges 3.12-31

What surprising details are included here? Why do you think they are included?

What disturbing details are included here? Why do you think they are included?

What differences are there in the way Ehud saves Israel, compared to Othniel?

What do you think of Ehud—a hero, a cowardly assassin, a comedic ruffian, or something else?

For reflection

How should we respond to the different ways God achieves his purposes?

What does it tell us about God, that he is willing and able to use people like Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar to save his people?

ZOOM TIME

Read Judges 3.7-31

1. What kind of people does God use to save Israel?
2. Judges 3.15 literally says Ehud, “couldn’t use his right hand”. He probably had a disability, meaning he was perceived as weak and an outcast. How does this fact about Ehud point us to Jesus?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1.18-31. What is comforting about the way God works to bring salvation?

STUDY 4
JUDGES 4-5

STUDY SECTION

Read Judges 4.1-10

What does Deborah ask Barak to do?

What do you think of Barak's response? Why do you think he responds this way?

For reflection

How are you responding to God's call to faithfully live for him?

Read Judges 4.11-24

Does the story play out according to Deborah's prediction?

Who ends up with the honour and glory?

For reflection

Read Hebrews 11.32-40. What "better" thing do we have that Barak didn't?

Read Judges 5

What has brought about the need for this war against Israel's enemies (notice 5.7-8)?

What acts are attributed to Deborah, Barak, and Jael? What acts are attributed to God?

For reflection

How has God been victorious over sin, Satan, and death in your life? Do you praise him for it?

ZOOM TIME

Read Judges 4-5

1. Who gets the honour and glory for saving Israel in this episode?
2. How has God saved you? Who has he used to bring you to him?
3. How can we give honour and glory to Christ Jesus who has saved us?