

## 1. AUTHOR

Q. What do you know about the colourful book of Judges?

May well have been written by the prophet Samuel, according to Jewish tradition<sup>1</sup>.

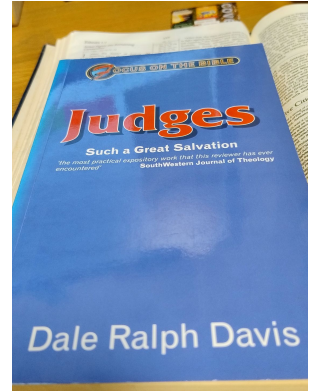
The name 'Judges' comes from such verses as:

- *Judges 2:16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.*

Judges relates the history of Israel from around 1375 – 1050 BC. Together with Ruth, Judges prepares the way for the first proper kings of all Israel, Saul and David.

## 2. ONE KEY THEME – 'THE NEED FOR A GODLY KING' 21:25

The key verse is probably the final one in the book, but note Dale Ralph Davis' chosen title for his commentary (15:18 ESV).



## 3. A KEY VERSE?

- *Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. ESV*

## 4. KEY GROUPS OF PEOPLE

1. 6 major judges (imperfect 'types' of Christ as saviour from enemies)
2. 6 minor judges (ditto)
3. Israel, the idolatrous people of God
4. Enemies
5. The LORD.

## 5. TEXTUAL STRUCTURE OF JUDGES

THE BOOK OF JUDGES				
1:1-2:5	Introduction A: <sup>2</sup>	Israel's failure to purge the land of the idolatrous		
2:6-3:6	Introduction B:	The LORD'S cyclic chastisement of his idolatrous people		
3:7-15:16:31	J U D G E S	<b>6 MAJOR JUDGES</b>	<b>6 MINOR JUDGES</b>	<b>MAIN ENEMY</b>
3:7-11		<i>Othniel</i>		<i>Aram Naharaim</i>
3:12-31		<i>Ehud</i>	<i>Shamgar</i>	<i>Moab</i>
4-5		<i>Deborah</i>		<i>Canaan</i>
6-8		<i>Gideon</i>		<i>Midian</i>
9		Bad King? <i>Abimelech</i> ? <sup>3</sup>		
10:1-12:7		<i>Jephthah</i>	<i>Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon</i>	<i>Ammon</i>
13-16		<i>Samson</i>		<i>Philistia</i>
17-18	Appendix A: <sup>4</sup> Religious Decline	<i>Micah and his idols etc.; The Danites and their priest</i>		
19-21	Appendix B: <sup>4</sup> Moral Decline	<i>A Levite and his concubine; The Benjamites nearly destroyed</i>		

1 Babylonian Talmud, c. 200+ AD.

2 With two introductions, *Joshua* appears to die twice!

3 King over just *Shechem* (9:16), *Abimelech* (= 'My Dad is king') illustrates what kind of king is not needed by Israel. Gideon was his father (Judges 8:32).

4 The extent of the decline is illustrated in the two appendices.

## 6. GREAT EVENTS

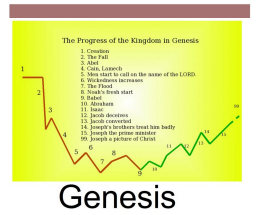
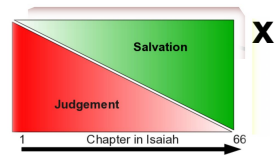
- 1:1 (and 2:8!) *Joshua* dies.
- Many repulsive events, e.g. *Ehud*, *Sisera* (4:21), gang rape (19:25), a man of faith (Hebrews 11:32) using a prostitute (16), pieces of dead *concubine* posted to the 12 tribes (19:29), near genocide of *Benjamites* (20), mass forced marriage (21).
  - *Judges 3:20-22* And Ehud came to him [King Eglon of Moab] as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat. <sup>21</sup> And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. <sup>22</sup> And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the excrement came out. [Yuck!]
- Cyclically:
  - Sin
  - Chastisement
  - Repentance?
  - Salvation
  - Peace for a while



## 7. ONE SHAPE – CYCLICAL DECLINE

The cyclical religious and moral decline cannot be seen from the table above, but most, if not all, books have some sort of shape →

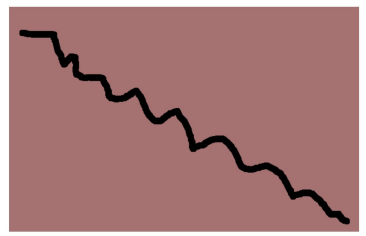
Theology	Practice
1 2 3	4 5 6
Ephesians	



Q. What shape is the book of Judges?

- *Judges 2:18-19* Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. ... <sup>19</sup> But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

A. Things get morally and spiritually worse and worse with only brief improvements when the LORD took pity on them and gave them another judge.



In the end, we get the case of Samson: Not only were the people ungodly – so was the judge himself (Samson)! In the Samson narrative, we see God chastising not so much the nation but Samson himself.

The final 5 chapters after Samson are 2 appendices of horrors that show how bad things got.

**Major lesson:** We do not want to be in the same 'shape' as Judges, as individuals, families, or as a church!

## 8. JUDGES PREPARES THE WAY FOR THE 'DAVIDIC COVENANT'

Although the Old Covenant remained in force until Jesus, Judges narrates its eventual failure well before then, with the people repeatedly ignoring God's perfect law in favour of idolatry, immorality etc. (similar to Hebrews 8:7-9).

What was needed was a king, and not one like *Abimelech*, a godly king over all all Israel.

## 9. JESUS IN JUDGES?

Q. Where is Jesus in Judges? A. Everywhere.

- Every *judge* is a saviour, like Jesus.
- Every *judge* is merely a fallen human and sinful, unlike Jesus.
- The *angel of the LORD* appears 4(ish)<sup>5</sup> times in Judges 1-13; he is probably the pre-incarnate Christ, and also demonstrably divine.

## 10. AND NOWADAYS?

Q. In what ways are things much better nowadays in God's kingdom?

Q. i.e. Do we have(?) ...

A KING	THE HOLY SPIRIT	THE BIBLE	NO WAR TO FIGHT	NO ENEMIES
NO SIN	CHASTISEMENTS	TESTS & TRIALS	CHILDREN TO BRING UP	_____

- *Revelation 1:5a ... Jesus Christ, who is ... the ruler of the kings of the earth. NIV*
- *Romans 8:3-4 For God ... condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ESV*
- *Judges 3:1b-2 that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. <sup>2</sup> It was only in order that the [subsequent] generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war[fare] to those who had not known it before. ESV*
- *1 Timothy 6:11-12 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. ESV*
- *1 Corinthians 15:25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ESV*
- *1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ESV*
- *Hebrews 12:6cd For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." ESV (quoting Proverbs 3:11-12)*

<sup>5</sup> The appearance in Judges 5:23 may not count since it is in *Deborah's song*.

- Judges 2:21-22 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, <sup>22</sup> in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.” ESV
- 1 Peter 1:6b-7 ... you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ESV
- Judges 3:5-6 So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>6</sup> And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. ESV
- Judges 2:10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. ESV

## 11. HOMEWORK: READ JUDGES

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