

JUDGES - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
- b. Why did He record it for our study?
- c. What should it teach us today?

1. What picture of God would you have if you had only the book of Judges? Who do you think wrote this book which includes events scattered over 300 years?
2. Why would God's people carry on a practice of cutting off the big toes and thumbs of conquered kings? (Judges 1:6,7) We expect the heathen to be cruel, but shouldn't God's people "love their enemies?" (Matthew 5:43,44)
3. Was it right for the man of Bethel to betray his whole city to save himself?(Judges 1:22-26) Should God's people reward him for this? Compare Rahab.
4. What do you think of God's going back on His word? (Judges 2:1-5) Or did He? (Exodus 23:32,33; Deuteronomy 7:6,25; 12:30; 29:19; 22-28; 31:17-18; 34:12; Joshua 23:11-16)
5. Are the first two chapters of Judges plagiarized from the end of Joshua?
6. What happened to the next generation after Joshua that they "knew neither the Lord, nor what He had done for them" (Judges 2:10)? Is Judges 3:1-7 an answer?
7. What kind of relationship do you think existed between the Israelites and all the cities of Canaan that were not conquered but continued to exist among them? (Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:13,18; Compare 21:43-45; 23:10-16) How do you explain the statements that Jerusalem was conquered several times, but it was still ruled by the Jebusites? (Joshua 10:1-5,23; 12:10; 15:63; 18:28; Judges 1:27-34) How do you explain the differences between Judges 1:8 and 1:21? [There is a difference of readings in some ancient texts in Judges 1:18,19]
8. Why were some of the Israelite tribes so reluctant to move in and conquer their enemies if "any one of you can make a thousand men run away?" (Joshua 23:10; Compare Deuteronomy 32:30) How can you reconcile this with the statement that they were not able to conquer the people of the plain because of their iron chariots? (Judges 1:18,19; Compare Joshua 17:18) Couldn't they be driven out by "the forces of nature?" (Exodus 23:20-33)
9. What do the following passages teach us about God's anger and its results?

Deuteronomy 31:16-18: ¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses, "You will soon die, and after your death the people will become unfaithful to me and break the covenant that I made with them. They will abandon me and worship the pagan gods of the land they are about to enter. ¹⁷ When that happens, I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed. Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then they will realize that these things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them.¹⁸ And I will refuse to help them then, because they have done evil and worshiped other gods. (GNB)

Joshua 7:1-12: ¹The LORD's command to Israel not to take from Jericho anything that was to be destroyed was not obeyed...and so **the LORD was furious** with the Israelites... ¹¹ Israel has sinned! They have broken the agreement with me that I ordered them to keep...¹²This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They retreat from them because they themselves have now been condemned to destruction! **I will not stay with you any longer...**" (GNB)

Joshua 23:16: ¹⁶ "If you do not keep the covenant which the LORD your God commanded you to keep and if you serve and worship other gods, then in his anger he will punish you, and soon none of you will be left in this good land that he has given you." (GNB)

Judges 2:12-14: ¹² "They stopped worshiping the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God who had brought them out of Egypt, and they began to worship other gods, the gods of the peoples round them. They bowed down to them and **made the LORD angry**. ¹³They stopped worshiping the LORD and served the Baals and the

Astartes. ¹⁴And so **the LORD became furious** with Israel and **let raiders attack and rob them. He let enemies all around overpower them**, and the Israelites could no longer protect themselves.” (GNB)

Judges 2:19-23: ⁹But when the leader died, the people used to return to the old ways and behave worse than the previous generation. They would serve and worship other gods, and refused to give up their own evil ways. ²⁰Then **the LORD would become furious with Israel** and say, “This nation has broken the covenant that I commanded their ancestors to keep. Because they have not obeyed me, ²¹**I will no longer drive out any of the nations** that were still in the land when Joshua died. ²²I will use them to find out whether or not these Israelites will follow my ways, as their ancestors did.” ²³**So the LORD allowed those nations to remain in the land**; he did not give Joshua victory over them, nor did he drive them out soon after Joshua’s death. (GNB)

Judges 3:7-9: **7 The people of Israel forgot the LORD their God**; they sinned against him and worshiped the idols of Baal and Asherah. ⁸So **the LORD became angry with Israel** and **let King Cushan Rishathaim of Mesopotamia conquer them**, and he ruled over them for eight years. (GNB)

Judges 10:6-12: ⁶ Once again the Israelites sinned against the LORD by worshiping the Baals and the Astartes, as well as the gods of Syria, of Sidon, of Moab, of Ammon, and of Philistia. They abandoned the LORD and stopped worshiping him. ⁷So the LORD became angry with the Israelites, and let the Philistines and the Ammonites conquer them. (GNB)

10. Why do you think the Angel addressed Gideon as a “brave and mighty warrior” when he was secretly hiding in a wine press trying to thresh some wheat? Why do you think Gideon’s father had altars to Baal and Asherah (Judges 6:25)? Is the story of Gideon and his fleece a story of great faith (Judges 6:36-40) or very weak faith? Should we be asking for such signs today? Shouldn’t Gideon have put away his many wives and a concubine and his idols (Judges 8:27-31) before God blessed him? Why did God allow him to kill the people of Sukkoth and Penuel (Judges 8:5-17)?
11. Of what value is the story of Abimelech (Judges 9:1-57)? Why was it included?
12. How would you have responded if you had been Jephthah’s daughter? (Judges 11:31, 34-40) Don’t you think Jephthah’s promise was rash? Did God expect him to abide by it after he had made it?
13. What is implied by the angel’s response when Manoah asked for his name? (Judges 13:17,18) Do you think that Samson was actually led down to Timnah to choose a Philistine bride by the Lord? (Judges 14:3,4) Did God actually bless Samson to kill a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass? What do you think was Samson’s actual source of power? (Judges 15:15) What do you expect to happen when the Holy Spirit is poured out on us in our day?
14. Did God actually lead the people in those days to do things that He would later tell them He didn’t want them to do? What do we learn from the massive wars between the different tribes of Israel? (Judges 20:1-3,18,21,25)
15. Would it still be correct to think of this period as a “Theocracy” where God is the real ruler? If so what is implied by Judges 17:6 and 21:25? Who were supposed to be the religious leaders to keep them loyal to the true God? Does the story of Micah help us to understand what was going on? (Judges 17,18)
16. Why did God use precious space in the scripture to include the incredible story of the Levite and his concubine? (Judges 19-21) Are you glad that this story is included in the Bible? Does it increase your faith? Do you find any verses that say that God was happy about what was done?
17. The Bible is supposed to be an answer to Satan’s charges against God in the great controversy. Do the books of Joshua and Judges help very much? Is it clear from these two books exactly what God is trying to accomplish? Why didn’t God move in on a few occasions and clean up the mess? (Compare Habakkuk 1,2 and Micah 4:12) How would you compare the picture of God that you get out of these two books with the picture of God in the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses)?
18. Of all the people in the Bible (e.g., Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea) who could have been included in the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, why do you think so many people from the period of the judges are included? (Hebrews 11:32)
19. Would you agree with Hebrews 4:8? Did the people enter the kind of relationship of rest and peace that God wanted?

