





**BE WARNED**

DISTURBING and VIOLENT

TRAGIC TALE

ISRAEL BECOMES

CANAANITE

THE EMPLOYMENT OF GODS SPIRIT

≠

ENDORSEMENT OF HUMAN CHOICES

"JUDGES"

# JUDGES

ISRAEL'S TOTAL FAILURE

SO REMEMBER...

JOSHUA - OBEY THE COMMANDS OF THE TORAH!

PROMISED LAND

1-2

RAIP FISH

PRETTY GOOD

OKAY

3-16

BAD

WORSE

17-21

**1 CANAANITES**

MORAL CORRUPTION

PEOPLE

CHILD SABBAGE

JUDAH, BENJAMIN, ZEBULUN, MANASSEH, ASHER, NAFTALI, DAN, NISSABAN, ISACHAR

**2**

PEACE

SIN

OPPRESSION

REBELLION

DELIVERANCE

REPENTANCE

ISRAEL FAILS TO DRIVE OUT THE CANAANITES

**3a OTHNIEL**

**3b EHUD**

**4-5 DEBORAH**

ISRAEL

ISBAH

**6-9 GIDEON**

ONLY 300 MEN

ADONITES

ELLULU ISRAELITES

**10-12 JEPHTHAH**

what?

AMONITES

GOD DEPARTS THIS...

ISRAEL NO LONGER KNOWS THE COMMANDS OF THEIR OWN GOD.

**13-16 SAMSON**

#PROMISCUOUS

#VIOLENT

#ARROGANT

PHILISTINES

ISRAEL'S CORRUPTION OF ISRAEL'S JUDGES

**17-18**

MICAH

DAN

LAISH

"IN THOSE DAYS ISRAEL HAD NO KING AND EVERYONE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES."

19-21

VERY DISTURBING

(AND THAT'S THE POINT)

WARS

AND THAT'S THE POINT

WARS

AND THAT'S THE POINT

CORRUPTION OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

"Judges was a time of heroes, of daring rescues and mighty warriors, or merciless enemies and epic battles; a time of fear, a time of revenge, a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Or that's how the movie trailer would go. The book of Judges is certainly a dark and gruesome part of the Bible, in which Israel lurches from sin to judgement to salvation and back again with grim regularity. Yet it contains strong warnings and encouragements for us as Christians today."

Matthias Media

## Helpful Background

### Genesis

God made promises to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation [many descendants], and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

### Exodus/Leviticus

Moses has led the Israelites out of Egypt, and sets them up as a nation to enter the land promised to Abraham - a land "flowing with milk and honey" – by giving them the Law (that is the constitutional framework of what it means to be, and to live as, the People of God. This is formally known as the Pentateuch - the first 5 books of the Bible: Gen-Deut).

### Numbers/Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy means "second law"; 40 years after Moses had received the 10 commandments in Exodus 20, he is required to reissue them in Deuteronomy 5 to make sure God's people understood that this is what it meant to have God dwelling with them. Due to their disobedience in the interim, as they wandered in exile, the generation that escaped Egypt would die out before reaching the Promised Land. Joshua is commissioned by Moses to be "strong and courageous" and to lead the people. Israel is finally ready to enter the Promised Land.

### Joshua

Under Joshua's faithful leadership, and the command to "be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law", Israel seeks to take possession of the promised land. But, as we will see in the book of Judges, Israel demonstrates only half-hearted obedience. As a result, they are unable to completely conquer the lands they have been promised and their compromise leads to significant problems as we will see over the coming weeks.



## Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

### Week Study 1 God's People (Judges 1:1-2:5)

Have you ever been halfway through a difficult, lengthy task and felt tempted to give up before reaching the end – tempted to cash in what you've achieved rather than pressing on to finish the job?

*I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the Mediterranean Sea in the West. Joshua 1:3-4*

### Read Judges 1:1-18

What lands did Judah (& the Simeonites Conquer? (cf map)

How does God expect His people to live? (see Joshua 1:7-8)

Why might Judah have sought to partner with Simeon?

How does the tribe of Judah demonstrate 'imperfect faith'?

What do Caleb's offer (v12) and Aksah's request (v15) tell us about their heart's desires?

### Read Judges 1:19-36

What is odd about what we read in v19?

What does this tell us about Judah's commitment (sometimes referred to as "common, but faithless, sense")?

## *Read Judges 2:1-5*

What is God's commitment to his people? (v1)

Why did God's people disobey him? (v2)

What is God's response to his people's lack of faith? (v3)

How do the Israelites respond and what does this tell us about their hearts? (v4-5)

## *Implications*

How do we become better at following God's commands instead of our own 'common, sometimes faithless, sense'?

Can we without God?

What are the implications of the instructions found in Joshua 1:7-8 in light of our modern, often comfortable, busy lives?

What is the cure for 'imperfect faith'?

Where might we be excusing 'I won't' with 'I can't'?

## Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

### *Week Study 2 God is our Judge (Judges 2:6-3:6)*

What life lessons did your parents try to teach you? Did you listen? Why/why not?

### Read Judges 2:6-16

What happened between v7 (“the people served the Lord”) and v10 (a people who “neither knew the Lord nor what he had done for Israel”)?

What do you think the word ‘know’ (v10) means in this context?

The error of the generation of Israelites in Judges 1 is to be ‘half-hearted disciples’. What effect does this have on their children?

What do the Israelites do that provokes God to anger (Deut 5:7-8)?

How does the Israelites ‘imperfect faith’ in Judges 1 relate to the events in 2:14-15?

What do we learn of the character of God from v16?

### Read Judges 2:16-3:6

v17-19 describes a cycle that we will see throughout the book of Judges. Draw the cycle.

What does the word ‘prostituted’ (v17) tell us about the relationship between the Israelites and the false gods, or baals, they are serving?

What do we learn of the character of God from v18?

What does v19 tell us about the dangers of taking God’s forgiveness for granted? How does this compare to what we read in Romans 6:1-2?

## Implications

Do you find living among non-believers easy, hard or neither? Why?

What are the challenges in sharing the gospel with a new generation?

It has been said that, "The first generation believes the gospel, the second generation assumes the gospel, and the third generation denies the gospel." Do you agree?

What lessons can we learn from the Israelites' predicament and how might we try to apply these lessons in our own lives?

What are the false gods around us today? How do we stay faithful to God and not turn away to serve other "gods" (Phil 4:8-9, Col 3:1-4, Heb 3:1, 1 Pet 2:11- 12)?

Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

*Week Study 3 Expect the Unexpected – Othniel & Edud (Judges 3:7-31)*

Where have you struggled to learn an important lesson, and subsequently made the same mistake over and over again?

### The Cul-de-sac of Crazy in the book of Judges



### Read Judges 3:7-11

Who are the Israelites serving in v7-8?

What does it tell us about God and what's important to Him if He is prepared to "sell" His people into slavery?

How long did it take for God's oppressed people to cry out to God? Why do you think it took this long?

How did God save his people?

What happened when Othniel (whom we met in 1:12-15) died? (3:12)

### Read Judges 3:12-31

The 'City of Palms' was another name given to Jericho – a city captured by the Israelites through the strength of their faith in God (Joshua 6). What caused them to lose it?

How did:

- Israel disobey God?

- God judge Israel?
- God show mercy?
- Israel prevail?

## Implications

“The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD” will appear several times more in Judges. (2:11, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1)

What hope does Jesus’ death and resurrection give us when we consider our own tendency to sinfulness? (see 2 Peter 1:3-9)

What can we learn about the way God can use “foolish looking people”? (1Cor 1:26-27)

In what ways are you “left handed”? How could you use this better for God’s glory?

*Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)*

*Week Study 4 Willing Leadership – Deborah (Judges 4&5)*

Have you ever chosen to do something challenging, knowing you would be

unlikely to receive any recognition?

## Read Judges 4

What do we learn about the power held by Sisera (Jabin, king of Canaan's army commander) and how does he use it? (v1-3)

Why doesn't v7 encourage Barak?

What does v8 say about Barak's view of God and of Deborah?

What do we learn about Deborah (v4-9)?

Verse 9 implies that Barak's actions were dishonourable. Why?

What does Barak's fearless assault, even when he knows he will not have the ultimate victory over Sisera, tell us about his character?

Deborah is a leader, a prophet/messenger from God. This remains a ministry of women in the New Testament (Acts 2:17-18, 1 Cor 11:5, 14:29-33).

How are Jael's actions (v18-21) similar to the actions of Ehud (3:20-23)?

## Read Judges 5

Chapter 5 is a victory song that covers the events of the previous chapter. What does v4-5 teach us about God?

What is the significance of the event that happened at Mt Sinai and why is it being recalled in v5? (See Exodus 19:4-6)?

Why would Israel "not fight"? (v6-8)

After the rallying call and brave response of v10-15, 18, why did Reuben, Gilead (East Manasseh), Dan and Asher not fight? (15b-17)

How is v31 illustrated by v19-30? How is v31 fulfilled by Jesus? (Col 2:13-15)

## Implications

In what ways are we like Deborah, Barak and Jael?

What kinds of things can stop us from following God's word in our lives?

How can we stand firm when God calls us to fight the good fight?  
(Luke 9:59-62, 14:18-20 cf 1 Tim 6:11-12).

Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

*Week Study 5 Strength in Weakness – Gideon (Judges 6-8)*

Have you ever stepped out in faith, knowing that it would set you apart from others?

Read Judges 6 – The Perfection of Weakness

What was the outcome of this time of Israel doing "evil in the Lord's eyes"? (v1-6)

What was the response to the Israelites crying out to God? (v7-10) Why does God recall history rather than offer relief? How is this still an indication of God's grace?

What is Gideon's response to being told "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior"? (v12)

What is Gideon's response to being told "Go in the strength you have and save Israel"? (v14)

Who will do the fighting? (v16) (Ex 3:12; Deut 20:1; Josh 1:5)

How do these responses expose Gideon's faith and God's power? (2 Cor 12:9)

Why does Gideon ask "a sign"? (v17) How does God respond? (v17-24) How is this similar the 2 "fleece tests"? (v36-39 & v39-40)

What is Gideon's first task (v25) tell us about God's priorities? (Ex 20:3; Matt 6:24)

What is the response of the people? (v28-30)

What do we learn about the heart of Gideon's father in v31-32?

## Read Judges 7 - The Power of Faith

Why does God whittle down Gideon's army before sending him into battle? (v1-8)

In v9-22 the Midianites go from powerful marauders to fleeing in terror. What causes this reversal? Draw a picture of the scene.

Was this victory natural or supernatural? How do these two aspects work together?

## Read Judges 8 - The Danger of Success

What do the Ephraimites reveal about themselves in v1? (cf 6:15; 7:2)

In v4-9 how is Gideon expecting to be treated and how does he respond? (cf v19)

What is ominous about seeing jewellery collected to fashion an object? (v21- 27, Ex 32:2-4)?

In v23 Gideon knows not to set himself up as king but his actions betray him:

- Why does Gideon want his very own golden ephod? (Ex 28:1-14)
- Why did Gideon call his concubine son Abimelek, which means “my father is king”? (v31)

How does the ultimate judge differ from the Gideon, and all the judges? (Mark 10:45)

## Implications

How does Romans 8:28 help us to relate to God in times of trouble (cf Judges 6:13)?

Where has God whittled away areas of your life, only to then work powerfully through your weakness?

Where do we need to ask God to point us to Jesus so that we can trust Him more fully? (Mark 9:24)

In what ways are you being challenged to step out in faith, finding God’s strength and reassurance as you do so?

## Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

### *Week Study 6 Bad Leadership – Abimelek (Judges 9 – 10:5)*

What are some of the experiences you have had with bad leadership?

Read Judges 8:22-35

Becoming a Judge was a divine appointment for a time. In v22 Israel asks for a king. How is a king different from a Judge?

What are the dangers of having a king? (Deut 17:14-20 was written in anticipation that Israel would ask for a king, which happened in Judges 8:22 and in 1 Sam 8:5).

How many princes are there? Is Abimelek a prince? What is the significance of his name? (v30-31)

### Read Judges 9:1-21

What is the significance of Shechem (Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal)? (Judges 8:31, 9:6-7, Gen 12:1-7, Deut 11:29, 27:12-13, Josh 8:30-35)

Why did all the citizens of Shechem crown Abimelek king? (v6 cf 8:31, 9:3)

Why does Jotham make such a speech? (v7-20) [no wonder he needed a Beer v21]

### Read Judges 9:22-57

What happened in the fight and who won? (v22-49 cf v20)

Was it necessary for Abimelek to attack Thebez? What do you think his motives were? Who won? (v50-57)

### Read Judges 10:1-5

In the descriptions of the "minor judges" (Tola and Jair) there is no mention of a foreign enemy (cf 3:31 and all the "major judges" Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson). Could the author be suggesting that the main enemy was now within Israel? (cf 10:6)

### Implications

Where have we seen the murderous ambition for power in 9:5 reflected at other times in human history?

What is the type of leader God does and doesn't want?

How does Abimelek (positively and negatively) point to Jesus?

Who are our leaders (formally and informally) and how can we help them lead better?

Who do we lead and how can we lead them better?

Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

*Week Study 7 Unlikely Leadership – Jephthah (Judges 10:6 – 12:15)*

How do we know God is really on our side?

Read Judges 10:6-16 - Israel rejects God

Why does Israel end up “in great distress”? (v9)

Why does God say he “will no longer save” them? (v13)

Why could God “bear Israel’s misery no longer”? (v16)

**Read Judges 10:17-11:11 - Jephthah becomes the leader of his people (Gileadites)**

Gilead is the region east of the Jordan River that includes the tribes Dan and East Manasseh.

Why did the leaders of Gilead want someone to be “head over all who live in Gilead”? (v18)

Why did the elders of Gilead seek out Jephthah to be their commander? (v1- 6)

Was Jephthah a good choice? (v11b cf Heb 11:32-34)

**Read Judges 11:12-28 - Jephthah and Ammon on the brink of war**

How does Jephthah argue for his v27 conclusion?

Do you think it’s convincing?

**Read Judges 11:29-40 - Jephthah defeats Ammon at the cost of his daughter**

What is the work of the Spirit in v29?

In v30-31 Jephthah makes a vow which now dominates the rest of the story.

- Could Jephthah have intended to sacrifice an animal or is it clear that he intended a human sacrifice?
- Why do you think Jephthah made this vow? (cf 1 Sam 14:24-45)
- What would be God’s response? (Lev 20:2-5)

- Should Jephthah have fulfilled his vow? (Num 30:2, Lev 5:4-6, Ecc 5:1-7)
- How does God curse Jephthah? (v34, Ezek 5:17)

## Read Judges 12:1-7 - Jephthah defeats Ephraim

Ephraim is a leading tribe (west of Jordan). How legitimate is their complaint? (cf 8:1)

What does this civil war suggest about the state of God's people? Has Jephthah brought peace to God's people? (cf 2:18-19)

## Read Judges 12:8-15

Here are the last 3 of the 6 "minor judges" (3:31, 10:1-5). Despite Israel spiralling into sin, how do these verses suggest hope?

## Implications

In what ways does God provide leadership in unlikely places? (cf Jesus)

How careful should we be with making vows? (Ecc 5:4-5, cf God)

With Israel spiralling into sin, is there hope in yet another Judge? (John 5:22, 27, 9:39)

## Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

### *Week Study 8 One of many – Samson (Judges 13-16)*

Have you ever felt alone in standing up for something important?

## Read Judges 13 Samson's birth

How is Sampson's birth special?

How is it similar to both John the Baptist's and Jesus' birth? (Luke 1:5-2:21)

Who is the Angel of the Lord and how does this explain Manoah's reaction in v22? (cf 2:1, 4, 5:23, 6:11, 21, Ex 33:20)

What's a Nazarite vow? (13:4-7, Num 6)

Given Samson has such a special birth, and is the last Judge in the book, what are our expectations for him?

### Read Judges 14 - Samson's marriage

How did Samson pick a wife? (v1-4)

Should Samson have eaten the honey from the lion? (v5-9, Num 6:6)

What is the work of the Spirit in 13:25 & 14:6?

Is Samson's wife unfaithful? (v15-17, 19-20, 15:2)

### Read Judges 15 - Samson's revenge

In the past, Judges have led God's people in victory. Now Samson fights alone.

In what sense is Samson a great Judge? (v18)

How is Samson a bad judge?

How is v16 disturbing?

### Read Judges 16 Samson's weakness

It is commonly said that Delilah is Samson's wife or lover, but this is not stated in the text.

What were Samson's weaknesses?

How does Samson's hair and strength relate to his Nazarite vow? (v17)

Who is ultimately victorious? (v30)

## Implications

Is it better to describe Judges as “the cycles of judges” or as “the spiral of judges”?

Where are we most in danger of capitulating to worldliness? (James 4:4)

How does Heb 11:32-34 view Samson?

How can we be like Samson holding onto God’s hope in such a terrible situation? (16:28)

How does Samson point to Jesus? (Rom 5:19)

## Sermon Related Questions (See Handout)

### *Week Study 9 Without a King (Judges 17-21)*

*We are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” Romans 3:9-12*

Are humans fundamentally good or bad?

Why don’t we sin more than we do?

## Read Judges 17

What are Micah and his mother like, morally and religiously?

What did Micah make and what's so significant about an ephod? (v5, 8:27, Ex 28:1-14)

Why does Micah think God will be good to him now he has a priest? (v13)

## Read Judges 18

What were the Danites wanting? (cf 1:34)

Why did the Danites take the idol, the ephod and the household gods? (v18)

Why was the priest very pleased? (v20)

What had Micah really lost in v24?

## Read Judges 19:1-10

For the concubine to walk away from her husband, left her in a terribly shameful and precarious situation, without any rights.

It is often (mis)interpreted that the concubine's "unfaithfulness" (v2) was sexual misconduct. However, given

- her father received her back into the family home (v2)
- her estranged husband went to her family home, not to punish her but "to persuade her to return" (v3)
- her father actively encouraged reconciliation (v3-9)

implies that her unfaithfulness was separating from her husband, but the later part of the story suggests that there were good grounds for doing so.

## Read Judges 19:11-30

The Levite and his concubine knew the risk of staying in an “occupied city” (v11-12) so they moved onto a Jewish city. However even amongst God’s people it was a risk to offer protection, so no one took them in for the night (v15). An old man had compassion and took the travellers in (v20), but this did not stop the wicked men pounding on the door, seeking homosexual sex with the Levite (v22).

For some unfathomable reason, the old man offered his virgin daughter and the concubine (v24) to appease the wicked men. We can’t in any way contemplate such a trade-off. We feel soiled even reading it, but unbelievably, this is the second occurrence of it in the Bible! In Gen 19:1-13 the wickedness of Gentile Sodom deservedly receives God’s destruction. Here the same wicked and outrageous thing is done, but now by God’s very own people, who are all the more culpable.

The treatment of the concubine by her Levite husband and the wicked people (v25-28) and then the dividing up and posting out of her body (v29), leaves us so disgusted, as all 12 tribes cried out, “Such a thing has never been seen or done ... we must do something.” (v30).

## Read Judges 20

“This lewd and outrageous act” (v6) caused such outrage to the Israelites that it united them like never before (v11). In response, they decided that they needed to “purge the evil” of the wicked men in Gibeah (v13). However, the Benjamites living there closed ranks and would rather die defending their fellow wicked men, than giving them up. They fight their fellow Israelites (v13-45), until merely 600 Benjamite men were left from the entire tribe of Benjamin (v46-47).

## Read Judges 21

God has promised to bless Israel. However Israel consisted of the 12 tribes and now one of them (Benjamin) was on the brink of obliteration. Biological growth was paramount, but the fellow Israelites has sworn an oath that would not provide wives for them (v1). So without a “saviour-judge” to rescue them, they took on the matter of securing wives in utterly unholy ways (v2-23 cf Ex 19:5- 6).

## Judges 21:24-25

*At that time the Israelites left that place and went home to their tribes and clans,  
each to his own inheritance.  
In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*

## Final Reflections

What does this sordid picture of humanity tell us about our fallen nature? (21:25) Should we be scared of what we're like?

How easily we can lose our "gods" (18:24-25). For us, what things can rival God's place on the throne?

Given the history of the judges:

- Should we expect God to send another Judge? (10:13, 16)
- Could there ever be a judge good enough? (Heb 7:27)
- If there was a judge good enough, how would we expect humanity to treat him? (Jn 1:11)
- If a perfect judge did come, could sin be dealt with "once and for all"? (Heb 10:2-10)

*"The book of Judges is certainly a dark and gruesome part of the Bible, in which Israel lurches from sin to judgement to salvation and back again with grim regularity. Yet it contains strong warnings and encouragements for us as Christians today."*

(Matthias Media)

- How have you found this to be true?
- What has most stood out to you?
- How has Judges helped you to appreciate our Saviour's death all the more?

*"(Judges) is an outstanding witness to the truth that where sin increases, grace abounds all the more (Rom 5:20)."*  
(Michael Wilcock, Judges, 1992, p16)