**Maranatha Bible Church 2020**

**Equipping Hour: OT Historical Books**

**Weeks 2 & 3: Joshua – Judges – Ruth Part 2**

**The Book of Judges**

**The Book’s Name:** The book bears the fitting name “Judges,” which refers to unique leaders God gave to His people for preservation against their enemies (2:16–19). The Hebrew title means “deliverers” or “saviors,” as well as judges (cf. Deut. 16:18; 17:9; 19:17). Twelve such judges arose before Samuel; then Eli and Samuel raised the count to 14. God Himself is the higher Judge (11:27). Judges spans about 300 - 350 years from Joshua’s conquest (ca. 1398 B.C.) until Eli and Samuel judged prior to the establishment of the monarchy (ca. 1043B.C.).[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Author & Date:** No author is named in the book, but the Jewish Talmud identifies Samuel, a key prophet who lived at the time these events took place and could have personally summed up the era (cf. [1 Sam. 10:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Sam.%2010.25)). The time was earlier than David’s capture of Jerusalem ca. 1004 B.C. ([2 Sam. 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Sam.%205.6), [7](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Sam%205.7)) since Jebusites still controlled the site ([Judg. 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg.%201.21)). Also, the writer deals with a time before a king ruled (17:6; 18:1; 21:25). Since Saul began his reign ca. 1043 B.C., a time shortly after his rule began is probably when Judges was written.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Probable Timeline[[3]](#footnote-3):** A plausible reconstruction of the Exodus would be as follows:

1. 966 = 4th full year (actually into the fifth) of Solomon’s reign (971-931) when the Temple was begun
   1. +44 yrs = start of David’s reign (1010)
   2. +40 yrs = start of Saul’s reign (1050)
   3. +40 yrs = the time from Saul to Jephthah’s statement (1050-1090)
   4. +300 yrs = the time in the land (Jephthah’s statement) (1390)
   5. +16 yrs = Joshua’s leadership (1406)
   6. +40 yrs = wilderness wondering (1446)
2. *This matches*[*1 Kings 6:1*](javascript:%7b%7d)*where 966 + 480 = 1446* 
   1. +430 yrs = the time that Israel lived in Egypt before the Exodus ([Ex. 12:40](javascript:%7b%7d)) and therefore Jacob moved to Egypt in 1876 B.C.
   2. The beginning of the conquest of the land in 1406 B.C. 40 years after the Exodus (1446)
3. The Actual conquest lasted for seven years or until 1399 B.C.:
4. Caleb stated that he was forty years old when he went to spy out the land in [Joshua 15:7](javascript:%7b%7d)
5. The wilderness wanderings lasted 38 years (from that point) which brings Caleb’s age to 78 at the beginning of the conquest (40+38=78)
6. Caleb then stated that he was 89 years old at the end of the conquest ([Joshua 15:10](javascript:%7b%7d)). This is confirmed by Caleb’s statement that the Lord provided for grace to the people for 45 years since Kadesh Barnea (38 years of wandering plus seven years of Conquest)
7. Therefore, If the conquest begun in 1406 B.C. after the wanderings, and it was completed seven years later, then the book of Joshua could have been written any time after 1399 B.C.
8. Therefore, Judges lasts for 300 years from 1390-1090 when Saul began to reign.

**A Very Tentative Reconstruction is as Follows:**

1. Introduction and background (1:1--3:6) = 20 years
2. The Accounts of the Judges (3:7--16:31) = 260 years
3. The Epilogue on the Judges period = 20 years

**The message of Judges is summed up well in 2:11-23** “Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers. When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them. But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not." So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.”

1. Unbelief and idolatry kept the nation of Israel from fully grabbing hold of not only the physical land they were promised but also the spiritual presence of the Lord.
2. It is important to read Judges with the understanding of Joshua. God’s people started off well in the land as they followed Joshua into battle.
   1. It was only after the death of Joshua and a subsequent leadership vacuum that caused the nation of Israel to fall deeply into idolatry.
      1. God certainly chastened His people, but He never completely forsook them. He was faithful to preserve, hear, deliver and provide for them, but the temporary judges were insufficient to prevent the cycle from recurring.

**Theme & Purpose[[4]](#footnote-4):** Judges is a tragic sequel to Joshua. In Joshua, the people were obedient to God in conquering the Land. In Judges, they were disobedient, idolatrous, and often defeated. [Judges 1:1–3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg%201.1%E2%80%933.6) focuses on the closing days of the book of Joshua. [Judges 2:6–9](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg%202.6%E2%80%939) gives a review of Joshua’s death (cf. [Josh. 24:28–31](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Josh.%2024.28%E2%80%9331)). The account describes 7 distinct cycles of Israel’s drifting away from the Lord starting even before Joshua’s death, with a full departure into apostasy afterward.

1. **Five basic reasons are evident for these cycles of Israel’s moral and spiritual decline**:
   1. disobedience in failing to drive the Canaanites out of the Land ([Judg. 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg.%201.19), [21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg%201.21), [35](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Judg%201.35));
   2. idolatry (2:12);
   3. intermarriage with wicked Canaanites (3:5, 6);
   4. not heeding judges (2:17);
   5. turning away from God after the death of the judges (2:19).
2. **A four-part sequence repeatedly occurred in this phase of Israel’s history:**
   1. Israel’s departure from God;
   2. God’s chastisement in permitting military defeat and subjugation;
   3. Israel’s prayer pleading for deliverance;
   4. God raising up “judges,” either civil or military champions who led in shaking off the oppressors.
3. **Fourteen judges arose, six of them military judges.**
4. **Two men were of special significance for contrast in spiritual leadership**:
   1. Eli, judge and High-Priest (not a good example);
   2. Samuel, judge, priest, and prophet (a good example).

***Judges is thematic rather than chronological***; foremost among its themes is God’s power and covenant mercy in graciously delivering the Israelites from the consequences of their failures, which were suffered for sinful compromise (cf. 2:18, 19; 21:25). In 7 periods of sin to salvation, God compassionately delivered His people throughout the different geographical areas of tribal inheritances which He had earlier given through Joshua. The apostasy covered the whole land, as indicated by the fact that each area is specifically identified: southern (3:7–31); northern (4:1–5:31); central (6:1–10:5); eastern (10:6–12:15); and western (13:1–16:31).

His power to faithfully rescue shines against the dark backdrop of pitiful human compromise and sometimes bizarre twists of sin, as in the final summary (Judg. 17–21). The last verse (21:25) sums up the account: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

**Outline[[5]](#footnote-5):**

1. Introduction and Summary—The Disobedience of Israel (1:1–3:6)
   1. Incomplete Conquest over the Canaanites (1:1–36)
   2. The Decline and Judgment of Israel (2:1–3:6)
2. A Selected History of the Judges—The Deliverance of Israel (3:7–16:31)
   1. First Period: Othniel vs. Mesopotamians (3:7–11)
   2. Second Period: Ehud and Shamgar vs. Moabites (3:12–31)
   3. Third Period: Deborah vs. Canaanites (4:1–5:31)
   4. Fourth Period: Gideon vs. Midianites (6:1–8:32)
   5. Fifth Period : Tola and Jair vs. Abimelech’s Effects (8:33–10:5)
   6. Sixth Period: Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon vs. Philistines and Ammonites (10:6–12:15)
   7. Seventh Period: Samson vs. Philistines (13:1–16:31)
3. Epilogue—The Dereliction of Israel (17:1–21:25)
   1. The Idolatry of Micah and the Danites (17:1–18:31)
   2. The Crime at Gibeah and War Against Benjamin (19:1–21:25)

**The Role of a Judge**:

1. One who delivered the people
2. One who ruled in Israel before the time of deliverance (4:4)
3. One who ruled in Israel after the time of deliverance (8:28; 12:7)
4. He/she had several tasks (Dt 16:18; 25:1):
   1. To turn the people back from idolatry and thus restore the authority of the law
   2. To vindicate YHWH’s righteousness by proving that He always remained faithful to His covenant with His vassal
   3. Since YHWH was the King, He utilized the judge to effect His rulership over His vassal, Israel. The judge was invested with YHWH’s power and authority
   4. The judges did not function properly. YHWH faithfully delivers his people through weak judges.

**Cycles in Judges:**

Israel did not have a king and the people were doing whatever they deemed to be right. Israel never took full claim to the land which God promised. This was not because God was inept but because Israel was disobedient. It was always God’s heart to give Israel the land (Jud. 2:1).

Since Israel was disobedient in driving out the people of Canaan, God used these people to be ‘thorns’ in the side of Israel (Jud. 2:3). As Israel forsook God and worshiped the gods of the land, God brought judgment down upon them. He used the remaining inhabitants (Jud. 2:21-23) as His tools against Israel.

This was the continuing cycle throughout the book of Judges. The nation of Israel would turn away from God and begin to worship the idols and Baal’s of the nation’s surrounding them. They would forget about God and what He had done for them. They would become disobedient and fall into gross sin.

God would use their enemies to bring His judgment upon them. As the judgment came, so did the repentance from Israel. They realized what they had done and they wanted God to relent and forgive them. They made confessions to God (Jud. 10:10) and pleaded with God (Jud. 10:15) but always fell back in the same place. This is seen in the numerous times ‘Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord’ (Jud. 3:12; 4:1; 8:33; 10:6).

**Theological Significance of the Cycles:**

Even within the cycles of Israel’s disobedience, God raised up judges. These judges are best described as ‘leaders.’ They were needed for the transition between their ‘founding leaders’ of Moses and Joshua until the monarch was established.

These judges were chosen by God and they also were imparted with power to do the necessary task. God was showing His mercy and compassion on Israel even when stuck in their sin. This shows God’s faithfulness in spite of Israel’s constant sin and backsliding.

**Interpretive Challenges:**

1. **Is it acceptable to "lay out a fleece" before God in prayer?**
   1. The concept of “putting out a fleece” comes from the story of Gideon, a leader in Israel, in [Judges 6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg%206). When God directed him to gather the Israelite troops to defeat the Midianite invaders, Gideon wanted to be sure it was really God’s voice he was hearing and that he understood His directions.
      1. He asked God for a sign to prove that this was truly His will. So he put out a piece of wool overnight and asked God to make it wet while keeping the surrounding dirt dry. God graciously did as Gideon asked, and in the morning the fleece was wet enough to produce a bowl of water when it was wrung out.
   2. But Gideon’s faith was so weak that he asked God for another sign—this time to keep another fleece dry while making the surrounding dirt wet.
      1. Again, God complied, and Gideon was finally convinced that God meant what He said and that the nation of Israel would have the victory the angel of the Lord had promised in [Judges 6:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg%206.14-16).
      2. Putting out the fleeces was the second time Gideon had asked for a sign that God was really talking to him and would do what He said He would.
   3. There are a couple lessons for us in Gideon’s story.
      1. First, God is incredibly gracious with us, especially when our faith is weak.
      2. Second, those asking for signs are exhibiting a weak and immature faith that won’t be convinced by the signs anyway. Gideon had received more than enough information without the sign of the fleeces.
   4. As Christians, we have two powerful tools that Gideon lacked.
      1. First, we have the complete Word of God which God has assured us that His Word is all we need to be “thoroughly equipped” for anything and everything in life. We do not need experiential proof (signs, voices, miracles) to verify what He has already told us in His Word.
      2. Our second advantage over Gideon is that every Christian has the Holy Spirit, who is God Himself, residing in his heart to guide, direct, and encourage.
2. **How to view Jephthah’s vow and offering of his daughter (11:30–40);** 
   1. Verses 30-31 “Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”
   2. This section of Scripture has long confused scholars and readers alike.
   3. Some interpreters reason that Jephthah offered his daughter as a living sacrifice in perpetual virginity. With this idea, v. 31 is made to mean “shall be the LORD’s” or “I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” The view sees only perpetual virginity in vv. 37–40, and rejects his offering a human sacrifice as being against God’s revealed will (Dt 12:31). On the other hand, since he was 1) beyond the Jordan, 2) far from the tabernacle, 3) a hypocrite in religious devotion, 4) familiar with human sacrifice among other nations, 5) influenced by such superstition, and 6) wanting victory badly, he likely meant a burnt offering. The translation in v. 31 is “and,” not “or.” His act came in an era of bizarre things, even inconsistency by leaders whom God otherwise empowered (cf. Gideon in 8:27).[[6]](#footnote-6)
   4. Most conservative scholars hold a literal and direct meaning that he had to have sacrificed his daughter, just as the text says.
3. **How to resolve God’s sovereign will with His providential working in spite of human sin (cf. 14:4).**
   1. The Philistines were not among the 7 nations of Canaan which Israel was specifically forbidden to marry. Nonetheless Samson’s choice was seriously weak. Samson sins here, but God is sovereign and was able to turn the situation to please Him (v. 14). He was not at a loss, but used the opportunity to work against the wicked Philistines and provided gracious help to His people. He achieved destruction of these people, not by an army, but by the miraculous power of one man.

**Practical Application:** Disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey and suffer God’s displeasure and discipline. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God’s discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but “because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

The Book of Judges is a testament to God’s faithfulness. Even “if we are faithless, He will remain faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (1 Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9). “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

**The Book of Ruth**

**The book’s Name[[7]](#footnote-7):** Ancient versions and modern translations consistently entitle this book after Ruth the Moabitess heroine, who is mentioned by name twelve times (1:4 to 4:13). Only two OT books receive their names from women—Ruth and Esther. The OT does not again refer to Ruth, while the NT mentions her just once—in the context of Christ’s genealogy (Matt. 1:5; cf. 4:18–22). “Ruth” most likely comes from a Moabite and/or Hebrew word meaning “friendship.” Ruth arrived in Bethlehem as a foreigner (2:10), became a maidservant (2:13), married wealthy Boaz (4:13), and discovered herself in the physical lineage of Christ (Matt. 1:5).

**Author & Date[[8]](#footnote-8):** Jewish tradition credits Samuel as the author, which is plausible since he did not die (1 Sam. 25:1) until after he had anointed David as God’s chosen king (1 Sam. 16:6–13). However, neither internal features nor external testimony conclusively identifies the writer. This exquisite story most likely appeared shortly before or during David’s reign of Israel (1011–971 B.C.) since David is mentioned (4:17, 22) but not Solomon. Goethe reportedly labeled this piece of anonymous but unexcelled literature as “the loveliest, complete work on a small scale.” What Venus is to statuary and the Mona Lisa is to paintings, Ruth is to literature.

**Background and Setting:** Aside from Bethlehem (1:1), Moab (the perennial enemy of Israel which was east of the Dead Sea), stands as the only other mentioned geographic/national entity (1:1, 2). This country originated when Lot fathered Moab by an incestuous union with his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:37). Centuries later the Jews encountered opposition from Balak, king of Moab, through the prophet Balaam (Num. 22–25). For 18 years Moab oppressed Israel during the judges (3:12–30). Saul defeated the Moabites (1 Sam. 14:47) while David seemed to enjoy a peaceful relationship with them (1 Sam. 22:3, 4). Later, Moab again troubled Israel (2 Kin. 3:5–27; Ezra 9:1). Because of Moab’s idolatrous worship of Chemosh (1 Kin. 11:7, 33; 2 Kin. 23:13) and its opposition to Israel, God cursed Moab (Is. 15–16; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25:8–11; Amos 2:1–3).

The story of Ruth occurred in the days “when the judges ruled” Israel (1:1) ca. 1370 to 1041B.C. (Judg. 2:16–19) and thus bridges time from the judges to Israel’s monarchy. ***Ruth gleams like a beautiful pearl against a jet-black background as this story took place during some of the darkest times in Israel’s history***. God used “a famine in the land” of Judah (1:1) to set in motion this beautiful drama, although the famine does not receive mention in Judges which causes difficulty in dating the events of Ruth. However, by working backward in time from the well-known date of David’s reign (1011–971 B.C.), the time period of Ruth would most likely be during the judgeship of Jair, ca. 1126–1105 B.C. (Judg. 10:3–5).

Ruth covers about 11–12 years according to the following scenario: 1) 1:1–18, ten years in Moab (1:4); 2) 1:19–2:23, several months (mid-Apr. to mid-June) in Boaz’s field (1:22; 2:23); 3) 3:1–18, one day in Bethlehem and one night at the threshing floor; and 4) 4:1–22, about one year in Bethlehem.

**Outline**

1. Elimelech and Naomi’s Ruin in Moab (1:1–5)
2. Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem (1:6–22)
3. Boaz Receives Ruth in His Field (2:1–23)
4. Ruth’s Romance with Boaz (3:1–18)
5. Boaz Redeems Ruth (4:1–12)
6. God Rewards Boaz and Ruth with a Son (4:13–17)
7. David’s Right to the Throne of Judah (4:18–22)

**Historical and Theological Themes:** All 85 verses of Ruth have been accepted as canonical by the Jews. Along with Song of Solomon, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, Ruth stands with the OT books of the Megilloth or “five scrolls.” Rabbis read these books in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year—Ruth being read at Pentecost due to the harvest scenes of Ruth 2–3.

Genealogically, Ruth looks back almost 900 years to events in the time of Jacob (4:11) and forward about 100 years to the coming reign of David (4:17, 22). While Joshua and Judges emphasize the legacy of the nation and their land of promise, Ruth focuses on the lineage of David back to the Patriarchal era.

1. **At least seven major theological themes emerge in Ruth**.
   1. First, Ruth the Moabitess illustrates that God’s redemptive plan extended beyond the Jews to Gentiles (2:12).
   2. Second, Ruth demonstrates that women are co-heirs with men of God’s salvation grace (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7).
   3. Third, Ruth portrays the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10 (cf. 3:11).
   4. Fourth, Ruth describes God’s sovereign (1:6; 4:13) and providential care (2:3) of seemingly unimportant people at apparently insignificant times which later prove to be monumentally crucial to accomplishing God’s will.
   5. Fifth, Ruth along with Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Josh. 2) and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11–12) stand in the genealogy of the Messianic line (4:17, 22; cf. Matt. 1:5).
   6. Sixth, Boaz, as a type of Christ, becomes Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer (4:1–12).
      1. When a woman lost her husband it was the responsibility of the kinsman-redeemer to come and marry her. He would must be her closest related unmarried male relative. He would do this so the woman would not be destitute, the family line would say intact and the family fortune would remain.
      2. Just as Boaz was Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer, Jesus is seen as our ultimate kinsman-redeemer. We are in great need (Rom.3:23) and destitute without a covering. Ruth was unable to rescue herself, just as we too are unable (Isa. 64:6). When we were in our greatest need, Christ came (Rom. 5:8) to rescue us.
   7. Finally, David’s right (and thus Christ’s right) to the throne of Israel is traced back to Judah (4:18–22; cf. Gen. 49:8–12).
2. Eight times the character in the book spoke of God’s activity (1:13, 20-21 [four times]; 2:20; 4:12, 14). The Lord was regularly petitioned to answer prayers on their behalf.
3. Five times blessing from the Lord was invoked on behalf of the faithful people.
4. The sovereignty of our great God is clearly seen in the story of Ruth. He guided her every step of the way to become His child and fulfill His plan for her to become an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). Just as Naomi and Ruth trusted Him to provide for them, so should we.

1. <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB07/judges> 11/18/20 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-judges> 11/18/20 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB07/judges> 11/18/2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. MacArthur Study Bible [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB08> 11/28/2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-8)