

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### JUDGES

Now let us move to the book of Judges which probably refers to the time of 1425 BC. The book of Judges graphically portrays the character of the Lord in His dealings with the children of Israel. In righteousness, the Lord punished them for their sin; but in His love and mercy, He delivered them in response to their penitent cry. Though the judges are called the deliverers or saviors of the people, God ultimately is their Savior. Jesus is the true Judge of the living and the dead.

**PS 75:7**

**7 BUT GOD IS THE JUDGE: HE PUTTETH DOWN ONE, AND SETTETH UP ANOTHER.**

He is a just God and a Savior.

**ISA 45:21**

**21 TELL YE, AND BRING THEM NEAR; YEA, LET THEM TAKE COUNSEL TOGETHER: WHO HATH DECLARED THIS FROM ANCIENT TIME? WHO HATH TOLD IT FROM THAT TIME? HAVE NOT I THE LORD? AND THERE IS NO GOD ELSE BESIDE ME; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR; THERE IS NONE BESIDE ME.**

Humankind's need of a divine deliverer or savior is emphasized in the Book of Judges.

Throughout history, God's people have sinned. God as the Lord of history has always delivered His people from oppression when they repented and turned their hearts toward Him. In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, Jesus Christ as our Deliverer, our Savior, to redeem us from the bondage of sin and death. Our Lord is a righteous Judge.

**2 TIM 4:8**

**8 HENCEFORTH THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, SHALL GIVE ME AT THAT DAY: AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING.**

One day He will judge the world in righteous.

**ACTS 17:31**

**31 BECAUSE HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY, IN THE WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.**

Judges gets its name from the men who ruled Israel during the period from Joshua to Samuel. Some judges were godly people; some were not. The purposes of the book of

Judges are: (1) to bridge in some manner the historical gap between the death of Joshua and the inauguration of a king, (2) to show the moral and political degradation of a people who neglected their religious heritage and compromised their faith with the surrounding paganism, and (3) to show the need of the people for the unity and leadership by a strong central government ideally headed up by God Himself. God's will was for Him to be the King of Israel.

The introduction gives a description of the state of the conquest of Canaan when Joshua died. It is a record of incomplete success. The less desirable hill country had been taken, but the fertile plains and the cities were still largely in the hands of the Canaanites. This is not a contradiction to the book of Joshua. It is one thing for the Hebrew armies to sweep through the land; it was quite another for the individuals and tribes of the Hebrews to dispossess the Canaanites from the land and settle there. This latter they failed to do. This failure meant that the Hebrews lived as neighbors with the pagan Canaanites, often participating in ungodly activities.

The judges were military deliverers, who led the people of Israel to freedom against their enemies. There were several judges over the years. Here is a list of some of them:

1. Othniel
2. Ehud--Central Palestine and Transjordan
3. Shamgar-Palestine plain
4. Deborah and Barak--Central Palestine and Galilee
5. Gideon-Central Palestine and Transjordan
6. Abimelech--Central Palestine. Abimelech is considered by many as merely an outlaw and not a judge.
7. Tola--Central Palestine
8. Jair-- Trans Jordan
9. Jephthah-- Trans jordan
10. Ibzan-- Southern Palestine
11. Elon--riorthern Palestine
12. Abdon--Central Palestine
13. Samson--Philistine plain

The judges are listed in chapters 2:11-16:31.

The events recorded in chapters 17-21 took place during the rule of the judges. These stories describe life during this turbulent near-pagan period, and give a frank and unvarnished description of the brutality and paganism with which the Israelites were contaminated because of their close association with pagan Canaanite neighbors.

The Levite in Chapters 17 and 18 was a priest who could follow his religious practice anywhere. He was hired as a family chaplain and soothsayer, and his presence was certain to bring "good luck". He evidently functioned with idols and was quite willing to change situations if the change involved a better salary. All of this is in direct contrast to the divine command concerning the priesthood in the Mosaic law.

The migration of the Danites was necessitated by failure to capture the territory assigned to them. They then traveled to a northern valley, remote and defenseless, captured it and settled there. Thus originated the northern Dan.

**The story of the Levite's concubine in chapter 19 casts a light on the brutality and beastliness of the times and introduces the war of the tribes against the Benjamites. This shows that the Israelites not only had external enemies, but they were so depraved that several intertribal wars took place during this particular period of time.**

**Israel was not really a nation; at very best it was a very loose confederation of tribes around a central sanctuary, the tabernacle at Shiloh. The book of Judges has been called the struggle between faith and culture. Faith lost. The key verse of this book sums up the whole story.**

**JUDGES 17:6**

**6 IN THOSE DAYS THERE WAS NO KING IN ISRAEL, BUT EVERY MAN DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES.**