

Making Promises

Part 5: The Judges

Review

- Judges, were individual leaders the Lord raised up to save Israel from the hand of those who had harmed them.
- In the book of Judges, we see a cyclical pattern for more than three hundred years whereby the people forsake Yahweh for the gods of Canaan, Yahweh sends enemies against Israel both to punish it and to cause it to return to him, Israel repents, Yahweh raises up judges who deliver the nation and provide a period of peaceful leadership, and Israel lapses into apostasy, and the chain of events is repeated.
- The book of Judges is about leadership showing the tragic downward spiral of Israel's leaders and people. It's a sobering examination of the human condition that highlights the need for a deliverer.

Gideon (6:1-9:56)

- Gideon, a farmer, is slow to recognize and respond to **God's call** for him to lead Israel. He is ironically addressed as a "mighty man of valor" by the Angel of the Lord, and his story depicts him as anything but (**Judges 6:11-12**).
 - **Three miracles** are required to convince the reluctant Gideon (**Judges 6:36-40; 7:9-11, 13-15**), and when his obedience does come, it is not exactly courageous: he does tear down the Baal altar and the Asherah pole in his community as God commanded, but he does it at night (**Judges 6:25-27**).
 - Gideon earns the nickname **Jerub-baal**, "Let Baal contend with him" (**Judges 6:31-32**).
- After the great battle when Gideon's three hundred prevail over a far greater number through faithful obedience, Gideon seems to forget the whole point of the exercise (**Judges 7:2**) and calls up his **reserves**, an army of thirty-two thousand (**Judges 7:3, 24**).
 - A great victory once again erupts in factional rivalry and quarreling among the **tribes** and **clans** (**Judges 8:1-9**). Beyond the victory God had promised and given, Gideon pursues a personal vendetta (**Judges 8:10-21**).
- Gideon himself eventually succumbs to **false worship** that leads Israel astray

(*Judges 8:22–27*).

- After Gideon's death, Israel again does wrong (*Judges 8:33–35*) Instead of raising up another judge, **Abimelek**, Gideon's son by a concubine, attempts to seize power. God does not raise him up or call him to office.
- In spite of the good that Gideon did for Israel, his son becomes not a deliverer but an **oppressor**, not a servant to the nation but a murderer of Israelites and of his own family.

Jephthah

- The people, once again, turn to **idolatry**. They resume their worship of Baal, Ashtaroath, and Syian, Sidonian, Moabite, Ammonite, and Philistine gods (*Judges 10:6*).
 - When the **Ammonites** approach to fight Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim Israel cried out to God for help (*Judges 10:9-10*).
 - Their sin has provoked God to anger, so much so that he swears he will **not deliver them** (*Judges 10:13*). And yet he has committed himself to Israel so completely that he becomes frustrated by their suffering (*Judges 10:16*). Jephthah's rise is ambiguous since the people appoint him instead of God raising him up (*Judges 10:18; 11:6*).
 - In spite of God's absence in Jephthah's rise, he still gives Israel **victory** over its enemies (*Judges 11:21, 23*), and it is apparent the Lord is giving Jephthah **aid** (*Judges 11:29*).
 - Jephthah makes a **rash** and **redundant** vow, as if more were needed to secure the victory (*Judges 11:30-31, 34*).

Samson

- Samson is the last of the major judges. But he is a shadow of what a judge was supposed to be. He is **self-indulgent** and refuses to control his sexual appetite.
 - Samson's proclivity for foreign women has become metaphorical for **Israel itself**, unwilling to resist going whoring after the enticement of foreign gods (*Judges 2:17; 8:27, 33*).
 - Although, like Israel, he had been **set apart to God** from his birth (*Judges 13:5*), Samson would not fulfill his potential. Intermarriage with the Canaanites violated the command to drive them from the land (*Judges 3:5–6*).

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Judges 6:11–12	11 Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.”
Judges 6:36–40	36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, 37 behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” 40 And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.
Judges 7:9–11	9 That same night the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. 10 But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. 11 And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.
Judges 7:13–15	13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, “Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat.” 14 And his comrade answered, “This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.” 15 As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand.”
Judges 6:25–27	25 That night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.
Judges 6:31–32	31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.” 32 Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he broke down his altar.
Judges 7:2	The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”
Judges 7:3	Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.
Judges 7:24	Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.
Judges 8:22–27	22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” 23 Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” 24 And Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil.” (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 And they answered, “We will willingly give them.” And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars that were around the necks of their camels. 27 And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.
Judges 10:6	The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the Lord and did not serve him.

Judges 10:9–10	9 And the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed. 10 And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, "We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals."
Judges 10:13	Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will save you no more.
Judges 10:16	So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord, and he became impatient over the misery of Israel.
Judges 10:18	And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said one to another, "Who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."
Judges 11:6	And they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our leader, that we may fight against the Ammonites."
Judges 11:21	And the Lord, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country.
Judges 11:23	So then the Lord, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you to take possession of them?
Judges 11:29	Then the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.
Judges 11:30–31	30 And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, 31 then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."
Judges 11:34	Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter.
Judges 2:17	Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.
Judges 8:27	And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.
Judges 8:33	As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god.
Judges 13:5	for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines."
Judges 3:5–6	5 So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 6 And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.