

Judges: There Was No King in Israel

Author

The author of Judges was never identified in the book. Therefore the author is unknown. The general opinion is that Samuel may have compiled the works of the all the judges of Israel and put them into one book.

Date

We are not given a specific date, but the events from the passing of Joshua, until the time of the kings, spans 335 years (1380 – 1045 B.C.) and this gives us a very precise time for the judges. In the book of Acts of the Apostles, the Apostle Paul estimates the time of the judges to be 450 years. The difference is easily explained as Paul was considering all the times of the judges and he may have been looking at all the time of the judges, not concurrently (some judges ran consecutively others overlapped).

Background

Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt and bondage. As they prepared to enter the land promised by God, a new successor was named. He was Joshua. Joshua's main duty was to conquer the land. While many battles were fought, the land was never totally conquered as some tribes did not dispose the inhabitants of the land and instead comingled with them.

The Book of Judges is a sequel to the Book of Joshua. But instead of the glories of the conquering of the land we find the people disobedient, idolatrous and defeated. Throughout this book is the theme, "There was no king in Israel...the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

An interesting note, the Book of Ruth was originally part of The Judges. In 450 A.D. it was separated and placed after the Song of Solomon.

Purpose

The Judges describes the space between the conquest of the Promised Land and the rise of the kings of Israel. This book bridges the gap, chronologically from the Pentateuch to the time of Samuel.

The book derives its title from the main characters, the Judges, although it is much more than a list of appointed arbiters. The Judges were "deliverers" of the warring nations that constantly attacked Israel, preserving the nation. It is a history from Joshua to Samson.

The Judges is a book of war.

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Outline

- I. The Roots of Israel's Apostasy (1:1–3:6)
 - A. Prelude to apostasy: incomplete conquests (1:1–2:5)
 - 1. Initial battles and the seeds of apostasy (1:1–21)
 - 2. Incomplete conquests portending apostasy (1:22–36)
 - 3. The angel of the Lord and Israel's apostasy (2:1–5)
 - B. The unfolding and consequences of apostasy (2:6–3:6)
 - 1. Joshua's death and the coming apostasy (2:6–10)
 - 2. The recurring pattern of Israel's apostasy, God's grace, and God's anger (2:11–23)
 - 3. The testing of Israel (3:1–6)
- II. The Downward Spiral of Israel's Apostasy (3:7–16:31)
 - A. Othniel (3:7–11)
 - B. Ehud (3:12–30)
 - C. Shamgar (3:31)
 - D. Deborah (4:1–5:31)
 - 1. Victory over the Canaanites (4:1–24)
 - 2. Deborah and Barak's victory song (5:1–31)
 - E. Gideon (6:1–8:35)
 - 1. Continuing apostasy (6:1–10)
 - 2. Gideon's call (6:11–40)
 - 3. Gideon's first battle (7:1–8:3)
 - 4. Gideon's second battle (8:4–21)
 - 5. Gideon's apostasy (8:22–28)
 - 6. Gideon, father of Abimelech (8:29–32)
 - 7. Continuing apostasy (8:33–35)
 - F. Abimelech, apostate "king" (9:1–57)
 - 1. Abimelech's sordid rise (9:1–6)
 - 2. Indictment of Abimelech: Jotham's fable (9:7–21)
 - 3. Abimelech's violent reign and end (9:22–55)
 - 4. Final verdict on Abimelech (9:56–57)
 - 5. Tola (10:1–2)
 - 6. Jair (10:3–5)
 - G. Jephthah (10:6–12:7)
 - 1. Apostasy and distress (10:6–18)
 - 2. Introduction to Jephthah (11:1–3)
 - 3. Jephthah's commissioning (11:4–11)
 - 4. Diplomatic discussions (11:12–28)
 - 5. Victory and Jephthah's foolish vow (11:29–40)
 - 6. Jephthah's conflict with Ephraim (12:1–7)
 - 7. Ibzan (12:8–10)
 - 8. Elon (12:11–12)
 - 9. Abdon (12:13–15)
 - H. Samson (13:1–16:31)
 - 1. The birth of Samson (13:1–25)
 - 2. Samson and the Philistines, part 1 (14:1–15:20)
 - 3. Samson and the Philistines, part 2 (16:1–31)
- III. The Depths of Israel's Apostasy (17:1–21:25)
 - A. Religious corruption (17:1–18:31)

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1. Religious corruption of a household (17:1–6)
 2. Religious corruption of a Levite (17:7–13)
 3. Religious corruption of a tribe (18:1–31)
- B. Moral and social corruption (19:1–21:24)
1. Moral outrage at Gibeah (19:1–30)
 2. Civil war (20:1–48)
 3. Chaotic aftermath (21:1–24)
- C. Final verdict (21:25)¹

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¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 437–438). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.