

JUDGES

- Named after the first "Judges of Israel," the heroic leaders whose deeds it records,
- Probably written by Samuel about 1080 B.C.
- Written in Canaan (later became Israel)
- Spans 325 years from the death of Joshua to the birth of Samuel,

-This era is often called "the dark ages" of Hebrew history (not dark ages between OT and NT)

Jdg 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

-A story of human disobedience and disaster, and repeated deliverance from God.

Setting:

Jdg 2:8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.

Jdg 2:9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

Jdg 2:10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

Of the 13 or 14 judges named, only 3 are well known:

- Deborah, Gideon and Samson

Deborah

-God tells her to send Barak to destroy the army of Sisera

-Barak says he will only do it if she goes with him

-she agrees but says because of this, the honor of bringing down Sisera will belong to a woman

-As they attack Sisera's army, Sisera flees on foot and hides in the tent of a woman named Jael

-He wraps himself up, lays on the floor and asks her to watch by the door

-But she had different plans:

Jdg 4:21 But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died.

Jdg 4:22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple.

-and thus, Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled

Gideon

-the first thing we think of when we hear the name "Gideon" is how God used him and a small army to destroy the huge army of the Midianites

But before that:

-an angel visits Gideon and calls him a Valiant Warrior before he did anything heroic

-just like Jesus did with Peter the first time He saw him

Joh 1:42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "**You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas** (*The Rock*)" (which is translated Peter).

-We often feel like we have nothing to offer

-we have never done anything great or changed anyone's lives

-we wonder if God even knows that we exist

-But God saw something inside lowly Gideon and the big mouthed fisherman

-He sees something in us too

-our time to shine may not have come yet...but be patient

Gideon's 300 Men

-God want Gideon to gather a fighting force to defeat the Midianites

-he gathers a force of 32,000 men

-God says that's too many

-if they win, they would become boastful

-tell all those who are afraid that they can go home

-22,000 people leave (10,000 remain)

-still too many

-take them to the river to drink

-300 of the 10,000 lapped water out of their hand to drink

-those are the ones the Lord wants

-stories have been told how God took the best of the best from the 32,000 men

-that these 300 are an elite fighting force not to be messed with

- that the 300 men were so vigilant while they drank that they brought their hand to their mouth so they could keep watch...
- I don't think so...
- God's concern was that the people would boast if they thought they did this in their own strength
- it is more likely that this was no elite fighting force
 - probably quite the opposite
 - middle aged, receding hairlines, bad eyesight, slightly overweight...
 - probably had to drink water from their hand because bending to drink was too difficult

1Co 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

1Co 1:28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

1Co 1:29 so that no man may boast before God.

Look how they defeat the enemy

- they sneak up with torches inside the empty pitchers
- blow trumpets, break the pitchers and shout for the Lord
- enemy gets confused, and is defeated
- when we find ourselves faced with the enemy, shouldn't we do the same thing?
 - don't run from the enemy
 - trust the voice of the Lord
 - stand our ground
 - let our light shine and watch the enemy flee

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

Mat 5:15 nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Mat 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Samson

- Most of us know his stories
 - man of incredible strength
 - in all the Sunday school stories from our youth
- he is an interesting man
 - almost get the picture that he was a spoiled child that never heard the word "no" from his parents
- His strength was supernatural

- Just like Gideon's army, I don't think Samson had the bulging muscles that we all picture in our minds
- the Spirit of the Lord gave him his strength
- His strength was not in his long hair

Jdg 16:16 It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.

Jdg 16:17 So he told her all *that was* in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any *other* man."

- by shaving his hair, his vow is broken
- even with all his flaws, Samson calls out to the Lord after they gouged out his eyes and chained him up
- then his strength returns and he brings down the coliseum

- no matter how many good or bad things we do in our lifetime, the most important thing is where our heart is when we die
- death seals us in the condition that we are in

Judges ends with a terrible civil war in Israel

-A Levite and his concubine camp on night in the land of Gibeah (land of the Benjamites)

-listen to the description of the Benjamites (keep in mind, this is one of the 12 tribes of Israel)

Jdg 19:22 While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows, surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have relations with him."

Jdg 19:23 Then the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not commit this act of folly."

Men of Sodom:

Gen 19:4 Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter;

Gen 19:5 and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."

Gen 19:6 But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him,

Gen 19:7 and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly."

- the Levite's concubine is abused all night and dies at his doorstep
- the Levite takes her, cuts her into 12 pieces and sends pieces to each territory of Israel

The remaining tribes discover the sin of the Benjamites and virtually wipe out the entire tribe

-special provisions have to be made just so the tribe of Benjamin doesn't go extinct

-no matter what background you come from, what your heritage is or how privileged you think you are, you are never beyond the discipline of the Lord

Jesus Types:

The entire book is about God's people being oppressed and God raising up someone to deliver them

Barley Loaf (Gideon spies on the enemy)

Jdg 7:12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

Jdg 7:13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat."

Jdg 7:14 His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

-the only reason I can think of that God would have used a dream of a loaf of bread destroying the camp of the enemy is to link it to Jesus

Joh 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."