

Judges

Summary

The book of Judges outlines the cycle of sin, suffering, and redemption of God's people. Israel's behavior follows a cyclical pattern: God's people rebel and sin, God sends a judge (military and political) to deliver them, the people repent and follow God, and, once the judge dies, the people commit even greater evil. This cycle of judges eventually leads the people to ask for a permanent king in 1 Samuel, despite God's desire for His people to look to Him as their leader and king.

Author

No one knows for certain who wrote Judges, but tradition says it was the prophet Samuel. If Samuel is the author, he could have gathered some of the accounts from prophets such as Nathan and Gad because both were associated with King David's court.

Date

The date is unknown. It was likely written sometime around 1000 B.C., before the time of King David, but chapters 17-21 point to a time after King David had been effectively established.

Primary Characters

Deborah (Judges 4-5)

Gideon (Judges 6-8)

Abimelech (Judges 9-10)

Jephthah (Judges 11-12)

Samson (Judges 13-16)

Historical Moments

Failure to Complete the Conquest of Canaan (Judges 1)

The Death of Joshua (Judges 2)

Under Deborah, Israel Defeats Sisera (Judges 4)

Under Gideon, Israel Defeats the Midianites (Judges 7)

Jephthah Delivers Israel (Judges 11)

Birth of Samson (Judges 13)

Major Theological Themes

Sin Has Real Consequences - Every time the Israelites fell back into the sins of idolatry and apostasy, a conquering nation came and oppressed them. Sin can cause spiritual, physical, and mental oppression, which is why God is so serious about us straying from it. God desires for His people to follow Him and to avoid suffering the consequences of things that harm us.

God Is a Deliverer - The saving acts of God are clearly demonstrated through the provision of judges and through the military victories of Israel against their enemies. God cares about His people, and He wants to protect and deliver them from their enemies. When the Israelites cried out to God for mercy, He faithfully answered their call.

Lessons Learned from Judges

Leadership Is Important - The vacuum in leadership was felt every time a judge left the scene. It often took strong leaders with resolve to deliver the people; it was not simply something they could do by themselves. Despite their flaws, the men and women who led Israel during this time period exercised their God-given power to deliver the people.

Leaning On God at All Times - Just like the Israelites, we can have periods where we lean on God during a very difficult time. Often, once our situation gets better, we become more relaxed in our pursuit of God. Instead, we should use these experiences to help us continue in our faith and grow deeper. We must remember that God desires for us to follow Him at all times, not simply when things are hard or when we feel oppressed.

The Cycle of Sin - Satan knows our weak points, and he will attack us in the areas where we are most likely to fail. We must be prayerful, vigilant, and wise as we approach different situations in our lives so that we do not continually fall into the same traps.