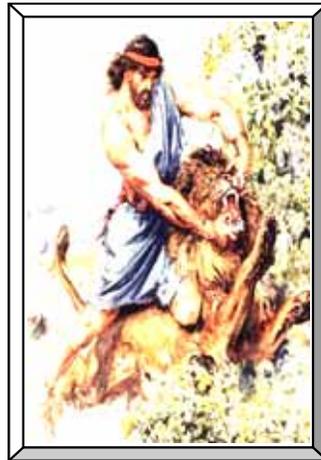
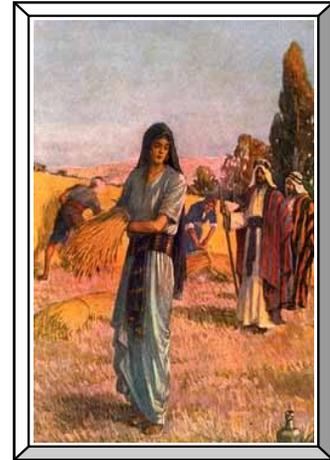


Judg. 7:20



Judg. 14:6



Ruth 2:3

In The Days When The Judges Ruled

Biblical Studies From
The Books Of Judges & Ruth

Prepared By Jeff Smith

In The Days When The Judges Ruled

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Lesson 1 – General Introduction

Brief Overview

Consider the following famous quotes:

"Status quo is Latin for the mess we've gotten ourselves into." [Ronald Reagan]

"Insanity is doing the same thing over & over again and expecting different results." [Albert Einstein]

"Those who don't know the past are doomed to repeat its mistakes." [Edmund Burke]

Students of history and present-day "people watchers" can easily see the truthfulness of these quotations. Without much trouble, each of us could think of examples where individuals, families, or even entire societies proved these statements true. There is no better Biblical illustration of this tragedy than in the O.T. period we know as **The Judges**.

On more than one occasion, the Scripture reveals a speaker reviewing O.T. Israel's history, and the review was anything but flattering.

- Moses in the plains of Moab (**Deut. 1:6-46**)
- Stephen in Jerusalem (**Acts 7:2-53**)
- Paul in Antioch Pisidia (**Acts 13:16-41**)
 - in his address, Paul mentioned that God had given Israel judges (**v. 20**)
 - this indicates the days of the judges was a time period where Israel didn't do her best

Historically, the period of the judges falls between the years of conquest led by Joshua and the kingdom years of Saul, David, & Solomon. Consider the following table that shows how long this period is generally considered to be. *[The dates used are only approximates.]*

Exodus from Egypt	1447 B.C.
Entrance into Canaan	1407 B.C.
The Judges	1407 – 1051 B.C.
Reign of Saul	1051 – 1011 B.C.
Reign of David	1011 – 971 B.C.
Reign of Solomon	971 – 931 B.C.
The Divided Kingdom	931 B.C.

Paul exhorts in **1 Cor. 10:1-11** for us to avoid the mistakes made by Israel. Similarly, we need to study Israel's failures in this time period so as to not repeat her blunders (**Rom. 15:4**).

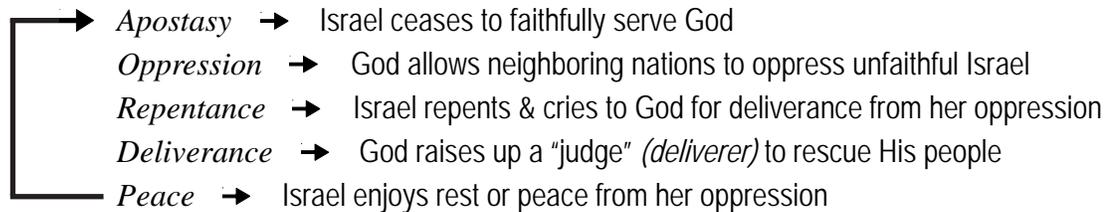
In The Days When The Judges Ruled

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The Book Of Judges

Cycle

The book chronicles a sad & disappointing "cycle" of Israel's unfaithfulness. When studying this book, one has to wonder why she kept committing the same sins over & over again when she knew how it had previously turned out. This "cycle" has often been described with terms like the following:



This period in Israel's history was certainly not one of her brightest...maybe even her worst. Throughout these stories, one reads of violence, immorality, and false religion. The only commendable aspect is God. As bad as Israel's unfaithfulness was, God faithfulness and repeated willingness to take His people back certainly displays His patience & mercy (2 Pet. 3:9).

Characters

The term "judge" may give the wrong impression about these servants of God. They certainly do not fit our modern-day idea of people in black robes on benches hearing & deciding legal cases. There is evidence that some such "judging" did occur (4:4-5). However, a more accurate view would be to see them as "deliverers" (3:9, 15). Samson, arguably the most well-known judge, functioned more as a powerful "deliverer" or "rescuer" than he did in rendering judgment on various issues.



How many "judges?" The list varies from writer to writer. In our studies, we will examine 13...yet, only 12 will actually be "judges." Abimelech was never called a "judge." He was a selfish man driven by unscrupulous ambition to achieve power and lead Israel. God never was with him, He did not raise him up as a "judge," nor did He instruct him to act as he did. However, He did use him in His opposition against the men of Shechem for their violence done to the sons of Gideon (9:5).

Two other servants can rightfully be placed on the list of "judges"...Eli (1 Sam. 4:18) and Samuel (1 Sam. 7:15-17). That makes for a total of 14 actual "judges." Because their stories occur outside this book, we will not be studying them.

Authorship & Date Of Writing

The author is unknown. Tradition credits Samuel for writing this book. This may be the best choice of authors, but the Scripture does not offer any evidence for this assertion.

There is some information in the book that might help us know when it was approximately written.

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We can say it was written after the death of Joshua (2:7-9). Most likely, it was written during the reign of David. We conclude this because of the reference to the city of Jebus (*Jerusalem*) in 1:21. The city was still in the possession of the Jebusites until David finally conquered it during his reign (2 Sam. 5:6-10).

Lessons Learned

- ◆ It illustrates the consequences of disobeying God
 - Failing to drive out all the Canaanites (Josh. 23:2-13)
 - Every man doing what he wanted rather than what God commanded
 - Wholesale idolatry which led to oppression from their enemies

- ◆ It emphasizes the grace & mercy of a forgiving God
 - When undeserving people cry out in genuine repentance, God hears

Basic Outline

- 1) An introduction to the time period (1:1 – 3:6)
- 2) The history of the 12 judges & 1 self-appointed leader (3:7 – 16:31)
- 3) Two appendices that re-emphasize Israel's sad state of spiritual affairs (17:1 – 21:25)

The book is not arranged chronologically. Information found in the appendices clearly took place early on in the time period (20:28; Josh. 22:30).

The Book Of Ruth

General Characteristic

As dark & depressing as are the stories of the judges, Ruth's story is just the opposite...it is refreshing and encouraging. As bad as it got in Israel, there was still hope for faithfulness to be found. Spiritual character found in people like Ruth & Boaz indicate one can still be faithful to God even when everyone else around you has "sold out." Still more compelling is the fact that Ruth was not an Israelite. This young Moabitess found the religion of Jehovah, and she showed more interest in God and devotion to His will than did His covenant people.

We believe the story takes place early in the period of the judges because of the inference of Boaz's mother Rahab (Mt. 1:5). If this is the same Rahab as the one in Josh. 2 [*we believe it is*], then it could not be very far into the 350+ year period...perhaps during the days of Othniel or Ehud. Enough time would have passed for Boaz to be born after Rahab came to live with the Hebrews during Joshua's time and her marriage to Salmon.

Ruth is one of only 2 Biblical books bearing a woman's name. **Esther** is the other one.

In The Days When The Judges Ruled

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A "Love Story"

Some view this short book in this way. Though not its real purpose, that really is not a bad way to view it. Notice the different ways "love" is presented in the book:

- 1) **Family love** → the love Ruth had for Naomi
Families would do well to show the same devotion to one another as Ruth showed to her mother-in-law (2:2, 11, 17-18).
- 2) **Marital love** → the love Boaz had for Ruth
Dating couples would make wiser choices if they followed the careful example set by Boaz and Ruth (3:10-15).
- 3) **Spiritual love** → the love Ruth had for God
Children of God would be stronger and more faithful if they considered the words by which Ruth said she would live (1:16).

Authorship & Date Of Writing

The author is unknown. Again, tradition credits Samuel for writing it, but the Scripture is silent on the identity of the author.

As far as the date, we think what is recorded in 4:18-22 might give an indication. The beginning of David's lineage appears to be the main purpose for this book being written. Therefore, we conclude it was during David's reign that the author wrote this short story.

Basic Outline

- 1) Naomi & Ruth (1:1-22)
- 2) Ruth Meets Boaz...Gleans In His Field (2:1-23)
- 3) Boaz Agrees To Redeem Ruth (3:1-18)
- 4) Boaz Marries Ruth (4:1-22)