

Judges

Original Historical Setting

Author: Traditionally Samuel

Date: Possibly around 1050 B.C.

Audience: Israelite nation living in its own land

Occasion: Judges is perhaps an answer to the national question first asked by Gideon, “If the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?”

Timeline:

~1380 B.C. – Joshua dies

~1370 B.C. – Othniel

~1100 B.C. – Samson

~1050 B.C. – Saul anointed king

World Events that occur simultaneously

1380 B.C. – First canal built uniting the Nile and Red Sea

1361 B.C. – King Tut reigns

1300 B.C. – China introduces books

Genre/Literary style

A narrative with a long prologue and epilogue.

Features and Structure

- Judges is noted for its long explanatory prologue and epilogue. Between the two is listed cycles of sin, oppression, repentance and deliverance.
 - 1) **Ch 1-3:6** Prologue
 - 2) **Ch 3:7-16** Cycles of oppression and deliverance
 - 3) **Ch 17-21** Epilogue
- The prologue lays the foundation for the repeated cycles that follow. Then following the cycles, the epilogue gives two horrible examples of how morally degenerate life was in the days of the judges.

Key text(s)

6:37 – I shall put out a fleece

16:19 – Samson’s hair is cut

21:25 – Everyone did what was right in his own eyes

What to look for

- Note the cycles of sin that happen over and over again of forgetting God, oppression, calling out to God in repentance, deliverance and peace.
- Notice how each of these cycles is introduced with “So Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD” and concludes with “So the land had rest...”
- Count both the major and minor judges and see if you see significance in the number.

Interesting facts

- Although we call them judges (from the title in the Septuagint), the Jews call them “ruler heroes,” which happens to be the Hebrew title of the book.
- Most of the judges were not legal experts but military leaders whom God chose to lead regional campaigns against enemies—except Samson who was a one-man army.
- The phrase, “missed it by a hair” could possibly come from Judges. The tribe of Benjamin had 700 left-handed warriors who could “sling a stone at a hair’s *breadth* and not miss.” **20:16**
- Judges 9:8-15 is the oldest parable in the Bible.
- When Ehud reached for the “message” to give to King Eglon, the king wasn’t immediately suspicious since Ehud was reaching for his right hip with his left hand—the typical place for a message to be carried. However, Ehud, being one of the left-handed Benjamites, carried his dagger on this hip and surprised the king (as well as himself when he lost his dagger in the king’s fat rolls.)

Memory Verse: Judges 21:25