

Judges: More than a Judge

BibleWay

1. The Consequences of Compromise — Judges 2:10–13

“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you... they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.” — Numbers 33:55

- God commanded Israel to drive out the nations and tear down their altars.
- But Israel settled for less than full obedience. That compromise left rival worship in the land.
- What they tolerated eventually tempted them, and what tempted them eventually ruled them. Judges 2:11–13 shows Israel turning to other gods.
- Small compromises lead to slow drift over time. What seems minor at first can carry you far from God over time.
- The nations they failed to drive out became the very source of their oppression. Their compromises had consequences.

2. The Mercy of God Despite Failure — Judges 2:1–2, 16–19

“I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you.’” — Judges 2:1

- Judges 2:16–19 gives the cycle of the book: decline, deliverance, relapse, and deeper decline.
- The judges themselves reveal that God’s mercy is greater than the worthiness of the people He uses:
 - **Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, & Deborah** are comparatively strong. But even there, the violence of the age is already present. (*Judg. 3-5*).
 - **Gideon** is used by God, yet ends by making an idol from the spoils (*Judg. 8:24–27*).
 - **Jephthah** wins victory, yet shows a tragic distortion of God’s character in his vow (*Judg. 11:29–40*).
 - **Samson** begins with promise but ends in compromise, promiscuity, and mass destruction (*Judg. 13–16*).
- God’s use of flawed people does not mean He endorses their sin. It means His purposes are not stopped by human failure.

3. The Need for a Better Judge — Judges 17:6; 21:25

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” — Judges 21:25

- Judges ends on the lowest of low notes: grotesque, violent, and disturbing. The final chapters show a people and a leadership culture in total collapse.
- The point of the ending is not shock for shock’s sake. It is to show that these judges are not enough. Israel needs a king.

- But even the later kings of Israel will not finally solve the problem. Judges leaves us longing for Jesus.
 - Jesus is the **better Judge** — not flawed, compromised, or morally collapsing like the deliverers in Judges.
 - Jesus is the **great King** — the King who sets right what everyone doing “what is right in his own eyes” destroys.
 - Jesus is the **true Bridegroom** — unlike the horrifying husband at the end of Judges, He did not sacrifice His bride to save Himself; He gave Himself to save His bride.
-

“Judges” | Hebrew Shophetim meaning “Rulers” or “Deliverers.”

Author: Samuel (Traditionally) | Jewish tradition often attributes the book to Samuel, though it likely incorporates earlier tribal records and oral histories compiled into a unified narrative.

Date: Late 11th–Early 10th Century BC

Audience: The People of Israel

Purpose: Covenant Failure, Divine Mercy, and the Need for a Righteous King

Book Outline

1. Compromise (Judges 1–3)

After Joshua’s death, Israel fails to fully drive out the nations from the land. Their compromise leads to idolatry and spiritual drift. God raises judges to deliver them, establishing the cycle of sin, oppression, repentance, and rescue.

2. Chaos (Judges 4–16)

Israel repeatedly falls into rebellion, and God raises unlikely deliverers to rescue them—Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and others. Each cycle grows darker, revealing a nation slowly unraveling as faithfulness to God fades.

3. Collapse (Judges 17–21)

The final stories show the moral and spiritual breakdown of Israelite society—idolatry, corruption, and civil war. The book ends with the sobering refrain: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*