



A Course

*In*

**JUDGES, STUDIES  
IN**

Prepared by the  
Committee on Religious Education  
of the  
**American Bible College**

Pineland, Florida 33945

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# JUDGES, STUDIES IN

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The basis of this study is taken from Dr. David H. Sorenson's commentary, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, 2<sup>ND</sup> Edition 2007, which can be purchased at Northstar Ministries, 1820 W. Morgan St., Duluth, MN., or by phone 218/726/0209. Dr. Sorenson is not only one of the most premier Bible scholars among Independent Baptists, but he is also a godly pastor to be emulated. His commentaries are fundamental, scholarly and reasonably priced. Hence, the reader is encouraged to purchase his works.

The American Bible College believes in the verbal, plenary, infallible and preserved inspiration of the Word of God. However, authors will sometimes quote various translations, Hebrew renderings and often use their own translations. Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that the A. B. C. is correcting God's Word.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Judges ten times.

It is our desire that this study will be spiritually enlightening and rewarding as you understand Judges' history and doctrines as applicable to the Old Testament and relevant to the local New Testament Church. All additional references will be footnoted and bracketed.

Respectfully your servant in Christ Jesus,

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

# FOREWORD

## APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THIS BOOK

JUDGES is one of the most profound worshipful Old Testament books. A lifetime of study would be too short to master it. The thoughts are deep, and the student who is not willing to do prolonged and patient thinking ought not to undertake the book. Each phrase and each verse is of value, and to get at the meat of this book it must be carefully broken down and analyzed into its component parts. Each phrase must be studied for itself and then in its relation to the other parts. Analysis is not enough. We must synthesize each phrase to see Judges as a whole.

### *Suggestions for Study*

As we undertake this study in Judges, our primary effort should be to familiarize ourselves with the text itself. This we may do through careful reading and rereading. Following Dr. James M. Gray in his book, *How to Master the English Bible*, we suggest the following five rules for this reading:

- (1) Read the whole book at one time, ignoring chapter and verse divisions.
- (2) Read it continuously, right through at a single sitting, without break or interruption.
- (3) Read it repeatedly, over and over again; not twice, but ten or fifteen times.
- (4) Read it independently, without consulting other people's interpretations until you have direct contact and immediate acquaintance with the book itself.
- (5) Read it prayerfully, seeking your interpretation from the Holy Ghost who is present in the subject matter and also in the heart of the devout reader.

Reading is our First step, but mere reading is not study. Having read the book, we should study it carefully and purposefully, closing the book from time to time to summarize our study. We will use as our guide in this study the comments of various recognized Bible scholars. Additional books should be consulted where available, and a comparative study made of the different interpretations.

### *Some Values to Be Sought*

Closely connected with our purpose in reading and with the problems that we face are the values that we seek. First, we want a working knowledge of the *content* of the book of Judges. Then, we want to know the *aims* and *purport* of the Holy Ghost through Moses' writing. Finally, we want to lay hold of the *message* of the book both for its original writing and its present century readers. The final test of value will be not how much of the texts we have mastered, but how much Christ has mastered our lives through this *Studies in Judges*.

## ISRAEL'S JUDGES AS LISTED IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Judge and Tribe	High-lights Events in the Judge's Lives	Israel's Enemies	Length of Oppression	Period of Pease	Bible References
<p><b>1. Othniel</b> (Judah) Son of Kenza, a Gentile Kenizzite convert of the Exodus generation and younger brother of Caleb</p>	<p>Othniel was the nephew and son-in-law of Caleb, and the son of Kenaz, Gentile Kenizzite converts who joined the tribe of Judah. In the conquest of Canaan, Othniel captured Debir. He became the first warrior-Judge of Israel and delivered Israel from the oppression of the Edomites. His family is listed among the clans of Judah.</p>	<p>Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia</p>	<p>8 Years</p>	<p>40 years</p>	<p><u>Josh 15:13-17;</u> <u>Judg 1:9-21;</u> <u>3:1-11;</u> <u>1Chron 4:13</u></p>
<p><b>2. Ehud</b> (Benjamin) Son of Gera</p>	<p>Ehud was a left-handed Benjaminite who personally killed Eglon king of Moab and ended Moabite domination of Israel.</p>	<p>Eglon king of Moab, Ammonites and Amalekites</p>	<p>18 years</p>	<p>80 years</p>	<p><u>Judg 3:12-30</u></p>
<p><b>3. Shamgar</b> (tribe ?) His name is not Hebrew. Son of Anath</p>	<p>He killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad. A contemporary of the Judge Deborah: the "Song of Deborah refers to "in the days of Shamgar ben Anath" (<u>Judg 5:6</u>); possibly the son of a mixed marriage.</p>	<p>Philistines</p>	<p>Not given</p>	<p>Not given</p>	<p><u>Judg 3:31-5:6</u></p>
<p><b>4. Deborah/Barak</b> (Deborah = Ephraim and Barak = Naphtali)</p>	<p>Deborah the wife of Lappidoth was a prophetess and a judge. Deborah and her general, Barak (Naphtali), defeated Sisera, the general of the army of Canaanite King Jabin of Hazor at the Battle of Kishon near Mt Tabor. The Song of Deborah ( <u>Judg chapter 15</u>) recounts the great victory. Barak is listed among the "Heroes of the Faith" in <u>Heb 11:32</u>.</p>	<p>Jabin, Canaanite king of Hazor Sisera, general and vassal of Jabin; may have been a Hittite</p>	<p>20 years</p>	<p>40 years</p>	<p><u>Judg 4:1-5:31;</u> <u>1 Sam 12:11;</u> <u>Heb 11:32</u></p>

<p><b>5. Gideon</b> (Manasseh) Son of Joash of Abiezer</p>	<p>The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon at Ophrah. Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal. Seeking confirmation of God's will, Gideon put out a fleece twice for a sign. On God's command he reduced the size of his army from 32,000 to 300 and successfully routed the Midianite army. He took revenge on the men of Succoth and Penuel for not giving his army bread. He killed the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna in revenge for the killing of his brothers at the battle of Mt. Tabor. Later, he made a gold ephod that led the people into idolatry. Mentioned among the "heroes of the faith" in <u>Heb 11:32</u>.</p>	<p>Midianites  Amalekites "People of the East"</p>	<p>7 years</p>	<p>40 years</p>	<p><u>Jud 6:1-8:32</u> <u>Heb 11:32</u></p>
<p><b>6. Tola</b> (Issachar) Son of Puah; grandson of Dodo</p>	<p>Tola was probably from one of the leading clans of Issachar (<u>Gen 46:13</u>; <u>Num 26:23</u>) but lived at Shamir in the territory of Ephraim.</p>			<p>He judged Israel 23 years</p>	<p><u>Judg 10:1, 2</u></p>
<p><b>7. Jair</b> (Gilead-Manasseh)</p>	<p>Jair may have been a descendant of the same Jair who distinguished himself during the days of Moses and Joshua (see <u>Num 32:41</u>; <u>Dt 3:14</u>; <u>Josh 13:30</u>; <u>1 Kng 4:13</u>; <u>1Chr 2:21</u>). He had 30 sons who were itinerant judges.</p>			<p>22 years</p>	<p><u>Judg 10:3-5</u></p>
<p><b>8. Jephthah</b> (Gilead-Manasseh in Transjordan) Son of Gilead by a harlot (<u>Judges 11:1</u>)</p>	<p>Jephthah was the son of Gilead by a harlot and was driven away by his half-brothers. The elders of Gilead brought him back and made him their chief at Mizpah. Jephthah refused to give up Gilead to the Ammonites. He fought the Ammonites and conquered some 20 cities. The swearing of a foolish vow cost him his daughter's life. He initiated a civil war with the Israelite tribe of Ephraim. Mentioned among the "heroes of the faith" in <u>Heb 11:32</u>.</p>	<p>Philistines  Ammonites  Civil war with the tribe of Ephraim</p>	<p>18 years (<u>Judges 10:8</u>)</p>	<p>6 years</p>	<p><u>Judg 10:6-12:7</u>; <u>Heb 11:32</u></p>
<p><b>9. Ibzan</b> (Judah)</p>	<p>Ibzan was a socially prominent man who had 30 sons and 30</p>			<p>7 years</p>	<p><u>Josh 19:15</u> <u>Judg 12:8-10</u></p>

	daughters for whom he arranged marriages. Jewish tradition identifies him with Boaz of Bethlehem-Judah.				
10. <b>Elon</b> (Zebulun)	He was buried at Aijalon in Zebulun.			10 years	<u>Judg</u> <u>12:11, 12</u>
11. <b>Abdon</b> (Ephraim) Son of Hillel	Abdon, the son of Hillel was a man of wealth and prominence. He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons. He was a native of Pirathon (near Shechem) and was buried there.			8 years	<u>Judg</u> <u>12:13-15</u>
12. <b>Samson</b> (Dan) Son of Manoah	An angel announced Samson's birth. He was consecrated as a Nazarete from birth ( <u>Num chapter 6</u> ). He had a fatal fondness for Philistine women. Samson was a man of immense strength: he killed a lion with his hands; he killed 30 Philistines at Ashkelon, and a "thousand" with a jawbone of an ass. Other amazing deeds included using 300 foxes to burn the gain fields of the Philistines and carrying off the city gate of Gaza. Samson was conquered by a Philistine girl, Delilah, who discovered that his uncut hair was the source of his strength. He was blinded and imprisoned at Gaza. He called out to God who allowed his strength to return. He pulled down the Temple of Dagon killing himself and about 3,000 Philistines. Mentioned among the "heroes of the faith" in <u>Heb 11:32</u> .	Philistines	40 years	20 years	<u>Judg 13:1-</u> <u>16:31;</u> <u>Heb 11:32</u>

— Abimelech was a son of Gideon, not a judge, who assumed power over Manasseh and brought about a civil war within the tribes of Israel (Judg 8:33-57). The Prophet Samuel and his sons are listed as the last "judges" of Israel before the age of the United Monarchy (1 Sam 7:15-17; 8:1-2; Heb 11:32-40).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Michal Hunt, Agape on the Internet



# ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

**I. Title and Order.** — In the original Hebrew, as well as in all the translations, this book bears the name of Judges (⊕⊗⊘⊙⊚⊛⊜⊝⊞⊟⊠⊡⊢⊣⊤⊥⊦⊧⊨⊩⊪⊫⊬⊭⊮⊯⊰⊱⊲⊳⊴⊵⊶⊷⊸⊹⊺⊻⊼⊽⊾⊿, Sept. ⓄⓅⓆⓇⓈⓉⓊⓋⓌⓍⓎⓏⓐⓑⓓⓔⓕⓖⓗⓙⓛⓞⓟⓠⓡⓢⓣⓤⓥⓦⓧⓨⓩ⓪⓫⓬⓭⓮⓯⓰⓱⓲⓳⓴⓵⓶⓷⓸⓹⓺⓻⓼⓽⓾⓿, Vulgate *liber Judicum*), and this name has obviously been given to it because chiefly relating the transactions connected with the deliverance and government of Israel by the men who bear this title in the Hebrew polity. The period of history contained in this book, however, reaches from Joshua to Eli, and is thus more extensive than the time of the judges. A considerable portion of it also makes no mention of them, though belonging to their time. The Book of Ruth was originally a part of this book, but about the middle of the 5th century after Christ it was placed in the Hebrew copies immediately after the Song of Solomon. In the Septuagint, it has preserved its original position, but as a separate book. The chronological relation of these books corresponds with the order in which they are arranged, namely, after the Book of Joshua. ...

**II. Contents.** — The book may most properly be divided into three parts, the middle one of which alone is in strictly chronological order.

1. *The Introduction* (Judges 1-3:6), containing preliminary information on certain points requisite to be known, or else general statements which give a key to the course of the history properly so called, and to the writer's mode of presenting it. The first chapter is chiefly geographical, containing a statement of what the several tribes had done or failed to do the second chapter, together with the opening verses of the third, are predominantly moral and reflective; or, otherwise the first gives the political relations of Israel to the Canaanites, and the second gives the religious relation of Israel to the Lord. This part may therefore be subdivided into two sections, as follows:

a. Judges 1-2:5, which may be considered as a first introduction, giving a summary of the results of the war carried on against the Canaanites by the several tribes on the west of Jordan after Joshua's death, and forming a continuation of Joshua 12. It is placed first, as in the most natural position. It tells us that the people did not obey the command to expel the people of the land, and contains the reproof of them by a prophet.

b. Judges 2:6-3:6. This is a second introduction, standing in nearer relation to the following history. It

informs us that the people fell into idolatry after the death of Joshua and his generation, and that they were punished for it by being unable to drive out the remnant of the inhabitants of the land, and by falling under the hand of oppressors. A parenthesis occurs (Judges 2:16-19) of the highest importance, as giving a key to the following portion. It is a summary view of the history: the people fall into idolatry; they are then oppressed by a foreign power; upon their repentance they are delivered by a judge, after whose death they relapse into idolatry.

2. *Body of the History* (Judges 3:7-chap. 16). The words "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord," which had already been used in Judges 2:11, are employed to introduce the history of the twelve judges comprised in this book [Eli, Samuel and his sons are not recorded in Judges]. An account of six of these [twelve] is given at greater or less length. The account of the remaining seven is very short, and merely attached to the longer narratives. These narratives are as follows:

(1) The deliverance of Israel by Othniel, Judges 3:7-11.

(2) The history of Ehud and (in v. 31) that of Shamgar, Judges 3:12-31.

(3) The deliverance by Deborah and Barak, ch. 4-5.

(4) The whole passage in 6-10:5. The history of Gideon and his son Abimelech [not a judge] is contained in chap. 1-9, and followed by the notice of Tola (Judges 10:1, 2) and Jair (Judges 10:3, 5). This is the only case in which the history of a judge is continued by that of his children. But the exception is one which illustrates the lesson taught by the whole book. Gideon's sin in making the ephod is punished by the destruction of his family by Abimelech, with the help of the men of Shechem, who, in their turn, become the instruments of each other's punishment. In addition to this, the short reign of Abimelech would seem to be recorded as being an unauthorized anticipation of the kingly government of later times.

(5) Judges 10:6-ch. 12. The history of Jephthah (10:6-12:7), to which is added the mention of Ibzan (12, 8-10), Elon (11, 12), Abdon (13-15).

(6) The history of Samson, consisting of twelve exploits, and forming three groups connected with his love of three Philistine women, Judges 13:16. We may observe in general on this portion of the book that it is

almost entirely a history of the wars of deliverance: there are no sacerdotal allusions in it; the tribe of Judah is not alluded to after the time of Othniel; and the greater part of the judges belong to the northern half of the kingdom.

A closer inspection, however, discloses a more interior, and therefore truer arrangement of this, the main part of the book, and one better calculated to bring out the theocratic government of God, which, as we have seen in the preceding article; was the cardinal idea of the office known as that of "the Judges." Moses had been commissioned by the Angel of the Covenant, who went before the people in all their marches (Exodus 3:1-6; 13:21; 14:19, etc.), and to fit him for his office. Moses was filled with the Spirit of the Lord, which was given to him in a measure apparently not given to any mere man after him [up until the time of the New Testament]. But the Spirit; which was communicated in a certain degree to men for various tasks in connection with the Church and people, was especially communicated from Moses, in whom the fullness resided (fullness such as was possible under the Old Testament dispensation), to who was called to be his successor (Numbers 11:17, 25; 27:16, 18, 20). Agreeably to this the true grouping of the events in the time of the judges must be looked for in connection with the coming forth of the Angel of the Covenant, and the corresponding mission of the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of his instruments. (No arguing is needed to establish our translation, "an angel of the Lord" [Judges 2:1; 6:11]; "an angel of God" [Judges 13:6, 9, 13]. The only possible rendering is, "the Angel of the Lord," "the Angel of God [the pre-incarnate Christ];" and this is amply confirmed by the attributes of Godhead which appear in the narratives.) Yet, while we notice these epochs of special manifestation, we must remember that God was always present with his people, at the head of their government, and working in a more ordinary manner in calling out agents for preserving and recovering the visible [Old Testament] Church and holy nation. Besides, there was the standing method of consulting Him by Urim and Thummim, through the high priest; and there was His way of extraordinarily addressing the people by prophets; of both of these there are recorded instances in this book, although the prophetic agency is rare and feeble till the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1, 19-21), with whom the succession of prophets began (Acts 3:24).

Now the appearance of the Angel of the Lord. and the mission of the Spirit in a special manner is four times noticed in the body of the history, and nowhere else, except in the poetical allusion in Judges 5:23.

(1.) The Angel of Jehovah went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and reproached the people for neglecting His

work of redemption; threatening to help them no more; yet in reality, by the utterance of this threat, suggesting that His free grace would help them, as in fact they immediately gained a victory over their own sinful selves (Judges 2:15). The outward victory over oppressors was soon gained by Othniel (Judges 3:10) when "the Spirit of the Lord came," literally was, "upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war."

(2.) The Angel of the Lord came and gave a mission to Gideon to deliver Israel (Judges 6:11, etc.), and to fit him for it (ver. 34), "the Spirit of the Lord came upon," literally clothed, "Gideon, and he blew the trumpet."

(3.) A passage (Judges 10:10-16) is so similar to the account of the Angel at Bochim that we do not know how to avoid the impression that it is the Angel himself who speaks in that immediate manner which is peculiar to this book; certainly there is no hint of any prophet in the case, and a message like this from the Urim and Thummim is nowhere on record in Scripture. The closing words that, after having refused to "save" them (not merely "deliver," as in our version) on the repentance of the people, "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," suggest the same interpretation, in the light of the commentary (Isaiah 63:8, 9): "So he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them." Upon this, Jephthah was called to lead the people; and as on the two earlier occasions (Judges 11:29), "The Spirit of the Lord came," literally was, "upon Jephthah."

(4.) The Angel of the Lord appeared to the parents of Samson, announcing the birth of their son, who was to begin to "deliver," or rather "save," Israel (Judges 13:3-23). This, occurs with the usual correspondence (ver. 24, 25), "The child grew, and the Lord blessed him; and the Spirit of the Lord, began to move him at times;" while of him alone, as one peculiarly chosen by the Lord and given to him from his birth, it is said repeatedly afterwards, that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him."

This arrangement suggests the four periods of history. ... The appearance of the angel of the Lord and the mission of the Spirit, however, belong not to the very commencement of the period, but rather to the continuance or close of a term of sin and disgrace. Perhaps in Gideon and Jephthah's cases the appearance of the angel and the mission of the Spirit were almost contemporaneous; but in the first case and in the last there must have been some distance of time between them, not now ascertainable, but possibly amounting to several years, and determined in each case by the particulars of the crisis which demanded these manifestations.

*END OF SAMPLE*

