

Salvation in Judges Selected Texts

Introduction:

This past week we have been reading in the book of Judges; a fast-paced, sequential, condensed history of the time after Joshua's death and before kings began to rule the nation - approximately 350 years.

It is summed up in the last verse of the book, "*In those days there was no king in Israel*" (21:25).

[In theological terms, it's called amphictyony, a Greek term originally describing Greece's multiple kings ruling over a loose federation of city states, i.e., no single center of power].

That would be from 1670 to 2020. That's 106 years before the American Revolution. Think of trying to write American history from that date until now in 21 chapters. Judges ranks #21 on the list of words - 15,385. [Jeremiah is the longest at 33,002 and 3 John is the shortest at 219.

There are 12 charismatic, individualistic judges recorded in the book, but we most often think of Samson, Gideon and Deborah and Samuel.

If you are looking for its theme, you have to remember Moses's last words to the nation before they entered the Promised Land - "*Obey God.*" Judges is the tragic tale of Israel's 'total failure' to obey God. The nation, in effect, becomes Canaanite.

- 1-2 - Israel fails to drive out the Canaanites
- 3-16 - The corruption of the Judges and the nation's cyclical, downward spiral from holiness to unholiness
- 17-21 - Corruption of the people

21:25 - "*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*"

The individual stories are so important. We learn so much from each deliverer. But the overall story is also important.

First: A Pattern in the Book. Ch 2

There is a pattern in the book of Judges that occurs not only in this book but throughout the history of redemption. It's like a song's repeated refrain.

- a) Choose whom you will serve - Joshua 24:15

Joshua 24:18 - *...we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.*"

b) Incomplete obedience - 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33,

c) Active evil - 2:11-13

d) Chastisement - 2:14-15

God used the nations of their incomplete obedience to terrorize them.

e) Deliverance - 2:16

[Read about Ehud, the left-handed judge who killed the overweight king, Eglon of Moab while he sat in his 'roof chamber' in 3:15-25]

f) Disobedience - 2:17

g) Downward spiral - 2:18-19

- Revelation
- Relapse
- Reckoning
- Repentance
- Rescue

Second: Some Principles We Can Learn

a) God was, is and will always be 'holy'

The person who says, "*God will understand your sin*" doesn't understand God.

b) Incomplete obedience is disobedience

Samson is the poster Hebrew for dabbling in sin while trying to serve God

c) Sin has natural consequences

God calls us to forsake sin for our own good.

d) God calls us to love and forsake

Joshua 24:14 - Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

ILL – Masada’s cisterns. As Titus destroyed Jerusalem, 960 men, women and children fled to Masada, one of Herod the Great’s palaces south of Jerusalem and overlooking the Dead Sea. Many of you have been there. Some of you have walked up to its plateau, ¼ of a mile straight up. Masada boasts cisterns that can hold enormous amounts of water.

Jeremiah 2:13 - my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Ephesians 4:22 - ...put off your old self...and put on the new self...

e) Idols are everywhere.

It’s unpopular, even considered comical to talk about idols. But modern substitutes for God, functional saviors, are everywhere. What tree, what cistern promises you what only God can provide?

Although busyness often keeps us from thinking about idols, isolation will make them apparent.

- What are you trusting in?
- What can you not do without?
- What is gaining your attention?

f) Godly leadership is essential in the home, church and government.

For every video in the OT, there is a NT snapshot that encapsulates the truth in a single verse or paragraph.

2 Corinthians 5:6-7 - Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.

Third: Jesus is the Ultimate Deliverer

If you are looking for a warm and cozy read during your isolation, it isn’t the Book of Judges. It’s a bleak, dark, 21-chapter downward spiral of progressive deterioration marked by unfaithfulness, oppression, idolatry, murder, and apostasy. And contrary to what we were taught in Sunday school, even its “heroes” aren’t heroes.

Judges 6:11-16 - *Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. ¹²And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” ¹³And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But*

now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." ¹⁴ And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" ¹⁵ And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." ¹⁶ And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you."

You know the story. God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 22,000 to 300 [Many of you have stood at the spring of Harod (7:1) where this took place] and in the end, the Midianites killed themselves. Such is God's faithfulness.

Israel forsook God but God did not forsake them.

When the NT says, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hb 13:5) we immediately ask about the basis of that promise and we find the answer at the cross.

Mark 15:34 – "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

If Judges has any theme, it is how Israel needs a King. That's our story also, because everyone worships something. The question is, "*Can that something really save you?*"

God does not forsake us because Jesus was fully forsaken in our stead. To be redeemed means to be spared from divine forsakenness.

Salvation is so free to us that we often forget there is a penalty for it.

God looked forward to Calvary and remained faithful to Israel based on Jesus's work at Golgotha (Ro 3:25).

Everything he did in turning Israel over to their enemies was for their ultimate good.

False saviors cannot save. Over and over again, this phrase, "Salvation is of the Lord" is repeated until Jesus, whose name means, "God is salvation" appears to really save us.

Jesus is the ultimate and flawless, Gideon, Deborah and Samson.

We are promise breakers
God is the only promise keeper.

One final word:

John 10:17-18 - *I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*

The God who self-isolated from the Trinity, the God who exiled himself from heaven is your God and the God of your isolation and exile.

Community Groups:

- 1 - Give your CG members the opportunity to share their burdens and joys from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2 - What has been the most profitable about reading Judges?
- 3 - What has been most difficult about reading Judges?
- 4 - Who is your favorite Judge? Why?
- 5 - Who is your least favorite Judge? Why?
- 6 - What questions do you have from the various stories?
- 7 - What did Israel promise to do before entering the Promised Land?
- 8 - What did Israel specifically do to violate their promise?
- 9 - Review the pattern/cycle that occurs in Judges.
- 10 - How is incomplete obedience the same as disobedience?
- 11 - Talk about 'putting on' godliness and 'putting off' ungodliness.
- 12 - How do you practice that principle?
- 13 - What are modern idols?
- 14 - What disciplines do you use to protect yourself from idols?
- 15 - How does Jesus's exile from heaven ensure that the Father never forsakes us?
- 16 - How are you taking advantage of/not wasting your isolation to advance your own spirituality?
- 17 - How are you serving others?

