The Book of Judges: The Big Picture

After the death of Joshua, the Hebrew nation had no central government. Each tribe had its own portion of Canaan, and they governed themselves. Now, the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle were moved from place to place among the tribes.

Although Israel had conquered the Land of Canaan, there were still communities of Canaanites living in places throughout the land. Israelites began adopting practices of these Canaanite communities and intermarrying with the unbelievers. Over time, they began to worship Canaanite gods instead of the Lord (Judges 3:5-7).

The Lord had promised His protection for an obedient Israel. During this time, the Israelites were taught over and over that when they turned away from God, He would stop protecting them and allow bad things to happen to them.

Repeating Cycle of the Book of Judges:

1. Safe with God: Israel follows God and prospers.
2. Forget: Israel begins to drift away from God more and more until the people begin to forget Him.
3. Hurt: The Lord allows the surrounding nations to conquer and persecute His people.
4. Help: The suffering people realize their mistake and ask God to save them.
5. Judge: The Lord sends a JUDGE to save the people.
6. Back to number one. The cycle repeats.

These heroic figures—judges—were blessed by God. Each judge did not “reign over” all of the people as a king would. Judges often only acted for the benefit of a few tribes. Some were military leaders (Gideon and Jephthah). Others were spiritual examples (Deborah), while others (like Samson) were symbols of God’s strength and power to the surrounding nations.

The last judge, Samuel, was promised to the Lord’s service by his mother even before he was conceived. He served under the priest Eli in the Tabernacle of the Lord. Samuel served in the transitional time between the judges and the time of the Kings (coming up next term). Samuel was a judge, a prophet, and a priest. He served God all of his life.

The story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, took place during the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1).

Use the review wheel to explain the cycle of the Judges.

Judges Song

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Judge	Scripture (Book of Judges)
Othniel	*3:7-11*
Ehud	*3:12-30*
Shamgar	*3:31*
Deborah	*chapters 4-5*
Gideon	*chapters 6-8*
Tola	*10:1-2*
Jair	*10:3-5*
Jephthah	*10:6-12:7*
Ibzan	*12:8-10*
Elon	*12:11-12*
Abdon	*12:13-15*
Samson	*chapters 13-16*
Samuel	*1 Samuel 1-25:1*

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