

Bible Study Notes and Questions on the Book of Judges and the Book of Ruth

Overview of the Book of Judges

During the time of Joshua, the children of Israel had been blessed in seeing God at work. They had conquered much of the Promised Land in obedience to God and through trusting in his promises they had seen him move in power to defeat their enemies.

In contrast, sadly, after the death of Joshua and the elders that knew the works of God (**Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:7**), the children of Israel were disobedient to God (**Judges 2:11-19**). They became spiritually and morally depraved where “every man did *that which was right in his own eyes*” (**Judges 17:6; 21:25**). There was a time of great instability where the Lord handed his people over to their enemies (e.g. **Judges 2:14; 3:8,12-13; 4:2; 6:1:10:7**). Instead of consolidation to complete the conquest of the Promised Land the children of Israel had lost sight of God and worshipped idols such as Baal and Ashtaroath (**Judges 2:13**). They did not know the Lord nor the works which he had done for Israel (**Judges 2:10**). They polluted the land (**Jeremiah 2:7**).

However God was merciful having raised up judges who were deliverers of the children of Israel when they turned back to God. There was a cycle a number of times when the children of Israel had turned away from God (rejection, sin, disobedience); they were handed over to their enemies by the Lord (retribution, judgment); they cried out to God (repentance, supplication); a judge was raised up (restoration, deliverance) to set free the children of Israel from their enemies and then a time of peace (rest).

Regrettably, the children of Israel did evil again and again in the sight of the Lord after the judge was dead having returned to disobedience, rebellion against God, faithlessness and idolatry (**Judges 2:19**). The spiritual state of Israel throughout the period of the judges increasingly went in to decline with some examples shown of just how evil the children of Israel could be (**Judges chapters 17-21**). Even the judges were not necessarily morally upright men as seen in the case of Samson whom God did use despite his disobedience particularly in his relationship to a Philistine woman called Delilah (**Judges 16:4-20**). God had allowed some other nations to remain in the Promised Land to prove the children of Israel whether they really would hear and obey his commandments (**Judges 2:22; 3:1-4**).

No one knows for certain who wrote the book of Judges. One possible author could be Samuel, who proved to be a writer (**1 Samuel 10:25**) writing in the time of King Saul in view of the words written: “In those days *there was no king in Israel*” (**Judges 17:6; 21:25**).

Overview of the Book of Ruth

This book has provided some encouragement to what had happened during the time of the judges. Whilst the Book of Judges had recorded mass killing, rape, civil war and evil priests we have at this time of the judges a faithful Moabite woman called Ruth who was prepared to serve wholeheartedly the God of Israel.

Elimelech had taken his family to Moab where he died and after ten years his sons Mahlon and Chilion had also died being married to Moabite wives, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi, Elimelech’s wife, returned home to Bethlehem accompanied by her daughter-in-law, Ruth, who was determined to trust in the God of Israel, Naomi’s God (**Ruth 1:16-18**).

Ruth was able to find work in gleaning in a field that happened to belong to Boaz, a close relative to Elimelech. Boaz showed great respect to Ruth and encouraged her to continue gleaning in his field until the end of the barley and wheat harvest (**Ruth 2:23**).

Naomi showed Ruth how she could indicate to Boaz that she was interested in being married to him. In doing so at the threshing floor, Boaz saw Ruth’s desire to be his wife.

The next day Boaz fulfilled the kinsman’s part to take Ruth as his wife. Ruth gave birth to a son called Obed the grandfather of David, king of Israel. Ruth was part of the ancestry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Suggested Ways of attempting Bible Study on the Book of Judges and Ruth

The intention of these bible study notes and questions was not to give a lengthy exposition and interpretation of the relevant scriptures but to encourage everyone interested in reading through the entire Book of Judges and Ruth and to attempt to understand the text.

Time spent with others in small groups up to about twelve people who are keen to study the scriptures is of immense value where there is time to ask questions and to give views on the text. Such bible studies should be interactive i.e. dialogue between everyone present.

It is advisable where possible to have someone leading the bible study who can guide it possibly giving a short introduction up to fifteen minutes and adding questions to provoke discussion. Perhaps a bit of time at the end should be allowed to give a concluding summary to finish the study. If no one feels able to lead the group that meets, it is suggested that you read together the scriptures to study. Where it seems right, give a short time of up to about ten minutes for each person to think about the scriptures read before each person shares what the text means. Try to avoid just giving opinions but attempt to see what the Lord is revealing to you as a group during the bible study. Where a group has the majority of brethren with some degree of spiritual maturity there may be no need for one particular person to lead. In such a situation a group may take it in turns in deciding who should lead the bible study. Where it seems right, everyone involved in a group study could be given the scriptures to study beforehand allowing preparation for each person to come along to the next meeting ready to give a personal contribution to the study.

Starting a bible study with worship and prayer can be beneficial in stimulating study of the scriptures. Other resources such as an exhaustive concordance could well be of value in contributing to the bible study.

In the following questions below there may well be far too many for you to cover in a group study owing to the amount of time available. You may wish to be selective in the questions to study. The miscellaneous questions have been included to encourage more individual study but still possible for group study. May it be that in studying Judges and Ruth you will meet personally with their author, the Lord Himself.

Questions on the Book of Judges and the Book of Ruth

Section One: Judges 1:1-3:6

1:1-36: The children of Israel started off well with Judah continuing to have success in further victories over the Canaanites but they failed to drive out the lowland inhabitants who had chariots of iron. The other tribes also failed to drive out the Canaanites.

2:1-5: The Angel of the Lord rebuked the children of Israel for disobedience at Bochim (means weeping).

2:6-23: This is a summary of God's dealings with his people, Israel, when they rebelled against him. After the death of Joshua and that generation the children of Israel turned away from God to live amongst the other nations.

3:1-6: The nations left by the Lord to test Israel whether they will keep his laws.

Q.1) Show how the children of Israel had begun well after Joshua's death. See **1:1-20,22-26**.

Q.2) Why were the children of Israel disobedient to the Lord in not completing their task to fully possess the land? See **1:19,21,27-36**.

Q.3) Was it necessary for the "chariots of iron" to check the advance of the children of Israel? See **1:19** and compare **Deuteronomy 20:1-4; Joshua 17:16-18; Judges 4:13-15; Hebrews 11:30-34**.

Q.4) How did the children of Israel respond to the message from the Angel of the Lord in **2:1-3**? Is there evidence of repentance? See **2:4-5**.

Q.5) Show the apostasy of the children of Israel in **2:11-23** in turning away from God.

Q.6) Why did the Lord not drive out all the enemies of the children of Israel in Joshua's time? See **2:20-23; 3:1-4**.

Q.7) Show God's judgment and mercy on his people, Israel, in **2:14-23**.

Q.8) Read **2:7; 2:10; 3:6**. What can we learn from these verses of the importance of

A) Christian example in **2:7**. See also **Matthew 5:13**.

B) Christian teaching of the young people in **2:10**.

See also **Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6-7** and **Ephesians 6:4**.

C) Christian marriage in **3:6**. See also **1Corinthians 7:39** (last clause) and **2Corinthians 6:14**.

Section Two: Judges 3:7-5:31

The following judges were raised up by God to deliver the children of Israel from their enemies.

3:7-11: Othniel (tribe of Judah).

3:12-30: Ehud (tribe of Benjamin).

3:31: Shamgar (not known what tribe he came from).

4:1-24: Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lapidoth from Mount Ephraim.

5:1-31: Song of Deborah that gave praise to the Lord for Israel's deliverance from the Canaanites.

Q.1) What was known of Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar as judges? Show their qualities which enabled God to use them. See **3:7-31 & 5:6**.

Q.2) What is meant by "a message from" in **3:20**? Consider also **Ezekiel 21:1-17; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12**.

Q.3) Why was Barak unwilling to lead a campaign without Deborah being with him? Does this incident give insight into God's willingness to allow for human weakness? See **4:6-10 & Hebrews 11:32**. See also **Exodus 4:13-16; Jeremiah 1:6-8; 2Corinthians 3:5-6**.

Q.4) Who was really responsible for Israel's victory? See **4:15-17**. See also **Exodus 14:13; 2Samuel 8:6,14; 2Chronicles 20:15-17**.

Q.5) What do we know of Deborah? See **4:4-7,14; 5:1,12,15**.

Q.6) Read carefully **3:7-4:24** and show how God dealt with his people Israel in their disobedience to him and when they turned back to him. You may wish to show the cycle Israel goes through starting with disobedience in **3:7**.

Q.7) Did God show his approval of Jael's act of executing Sisera, captain of the Canaanite host, in view of her deed being seen as an abuse of Arab hospitality?

See **4:9,17-22; 5:24-27** and also **Jeremiah 23;29 & Luke 1:42**.

Q.8) What does the song of Deborah teach us in **5:1-31**?

Section Three: Judges Chapters 6, 7 & 8

Gideon was raised up by God to deliver the children of Israel from the Midianites.

Q.1) What happened to the children of Israel when they sinned against God? See **6:1-6**.

Q.2) Show the response of God to the children of Israel when they cried out to him in **6:7-10**.

Q.3) Study carefully **6:11-23**. Show how God called Gideon to deliver the Israelites and how he believed that he had met with God.

Q.4) What act of faith did Gideon make to show he stood for God? See **6:24-28**.

Q.5) How did Joash save his son Gideon from being put to death? See **6:29-32**.

Q.6) What further evidence do we have that Gideon was called of God in **6:33-35**.

Q.7) What was Gideon looking for from God when he put out a fleece? See **6:36-40**.

Q.8) Why did God show Gideon to only choose eventually 300 men to defeat the Midianites? See **7:1-8 & Hebrews 11:32**.

Q.9) Show the confidence Gideon had of complete victory over the Midianites compared to his attitude of hopelessness in **6:13 & 15**. See **7:9-23**.

Q.10) What aspects of Gideon's character were revealed in

A) Sending messengers to the men of Ephraim in **7:24-25**.

B) Dealing with the complaints of Ephraim in **8:1-3**.

C) Handling the lack of co-operation from the elders of Succoth and Peniel. See **8:4-9,14-17**.

D) Pursuing and capturing Zebah and Zalmunna. See **8:10-13 & 18-21**.

Q.11) Read carefully **8:22-32**. Is it true to say that Gideon showed some weaknesses in giving adequate leadership during a time of peace?

Q.12) What happened to the children of Israel after the death of Gideon? See **8:33-35**.

Q.13) Why was the ephod set up by Gideon as a snare to the children of Israel?

See **8:24-27**.

Section Four: Judges Chapters 9-12

Further Judges, not necessarily godly ones, rule in Israel.

9:1-57: The rise and fall of Abimelech (tribe of Manasseh).

10:1-2: Tola (tribe of Issachar).

10:3-5: Jair from Gilead (tribe of Manasseh).

10:6-18: Israel's disobedience led to further oppression from the Philistines and the people of Ammon.

11:1-33: Jephthah the Gileadite (tribe of Manasseh) led the children of Israel to victory over the people of Ammon.

11:34-40: Jephthah had to fulfil his vow (**11:31**) of putting his only daughter to death.

12:1-7: Jephthah has conflict with Ephraim.

12:8-10 Ibzan of Bethlehem (tribe of Judah or Zebulun).

12:11-12: Elon the Zebulunite (tribe of Zebulun).

12:13-15: Abdon, the Pirathonite (tribe of Ephraim).

Q.1) Can you see the consequences of Gideon's sin in his association with a woman from Shechem that bore him a son called Abimelech? See **8:31** and **9:1-6**.

Q.2) What was known about the city of Shechem? See **9:1-5** and **Genesis 34:1-31**.

Q.3) Show the sin of Abimelech and the men of Shechem. See **9:1-6**.

Q.4) What can we learn from the parable of Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, particularly in **9:8-21**?

Q.5) Show the curse that Jotham brings to Abimelech and the men of Shechem (**9:20**) and how the curse was fulfilled in **9:22-55**.

Q.6) Read carefully through **chapter 9**. What was known of Abimelech's character? Is it true to say that the bramble in Jotham's parable (**9:14-15**) represented Abimelech?

Q.7) What spiritual lessons can we learn from God's justice done on Abimelech and the men of Shechem in **9:56-57**? See also **Numbers 32:23**; **Matthew 26:52** and **Romans 12:19**.

Q.8) What was known about the judges, Tola and Jair? See **10:1-5**.

Q.9) Why did God refuse to deliver his people Israel from the Ammonites in **10:6-14**?

Q.10) What changed God's attitude towards his people Israel?

See **10:15-18** and **Psalms 106:43-47**.

Q.11) Why was Jephthah recognised as a leader? See **10:18** and **11:1-33**.

Q.12) Read carefully **11:1-12:7** and show if there is evidence that Jephthah was a man of God. See also **Hebrews 11:32**.

Q.13) Consider the validity of Jephthah's message to the people of Ammon in **11:12-28**.

Q.14) Read **11:30-40** that shows the vow of Jephthah. Do you think Jephthah was foolish to make such a vow and what does this passage teach us about making vows to God?

See also **Deuteronomy 23:21-23** and **Ecclesiastes 5:2-6**.

Q.15) Read again **11:34-40** and consider whether the evidence is there to show that Jephthah sacrificed his only daughter.

Q.16) Compare Jephthah's treatment of the men of Ephraim in **12:1-6** to that of Gideon in **8:1-3**. What is revealed about the men of Ephraim and Jephthah in **12:1-6**?

Q.17) What was known of the judges, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon? See **12:8-15**.

Section Five: Judges Chapters 13-16

13:1-25: The birth of Samson foretold to Manoah and his wife.

14:1-20: Samson was married to a Philistine wife.

15:1-20: Samson killed many Philistines including 1000 with a jawbone (**15:15-16**)

16:1-22: Samson was deceived by a Philistine woman called Delilah.

16:23-31: Samson's death along with a further 3000 Philistines killed.

Q.1) Show from the evidence in **13:1-25** that Samson had godly parents of faith.

Q.2) What do we know of Samson's Nazirite calling and how did it differ from the ordinary Nazirite vow? See **13:4-7,13-14** and also **Numbers 6:1-5,13-18**.

Q.3) What can we learn from Manoah in his concern to ask for guidance on the upbringing of the promised son? See **13:8-23**.

Q.4) Show how Samson had been disobedient to his calling as a Nazirite. Read **14:1-11**.

Section Five continued

- Q.5)** Is it true to say that Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman was unwise? See **14:1-20** and also **2Corinthians 6:14-18** and **1Thessalonians 5:22**.
- Q.6)** Is there evidence of the Lord using Samson to slay many of the Philistines? See **14:4,19** and **15:1-17**.
- Q.7)** What was the purpose of Samson's encounter with the young lion in **14:5-9**?
- Q.8)** Why did the men of Judah hand over Samson to the Philistines? See **15:9-13**.
- Q.9)** What lessons can we learn from God meeting Samson's need in **15:18-19**? See also **1Kings 17:4,9** and **Philippians 4:19**.
- Q.10)** Show Samson's weakness that caused him to sin against God. Read **16:1-21**.
- Q.11)** Read again **16:1-21**. Is it possible Samson could have avoided being captured by the Philistines?
- Q.12)** Show God's mercy to Samson. Is there evidence of repentance from Samson? See **16:22-30**.
- Q.13)** Is it possible Samson could have fulfilled much more in his life? Could he have lived longer if he had not asked to die with the Philistines? See **16:28-30**.
- Q.14)** How did the family of Samson show respect for him? See **16:31**.

Section Six Judges Chapters 17-21

These chapters show sadly the decline of the children of Israel morally and spiritually.

17:1-13: Micah established his own religion with a Levite for his priest.

18:1-31: Micah's encounter with the 600 men of the tribe of Dan who take his idols and his priest to settle in Laish renamed Dan.

19:1-30: The concubine of a Levite abused and killed by Benjamites in Gibeah.

20:1-48: The war between Israel and the tribe of Benjamin.

21:1-25: Wives were provided for the 600 surviving men of the tribe of Benjamin.

Q.1) Read carefully **17:1-13** and **18:1-31**.

A) Show the disobedience of Micah and his mother against God. See **17:1-13**.

B) In what way were the Danites disobedient to God? See **18:1-31**.

C) How did the Levite show that he had failed in his duties towards God?

See **17:7-13**; **18:1-31** See **Isaiah 61:8** and **Jeremiah 23:11**.

Q.2) Read **chapter 19**. Show the evidence of evil committed by

A) The Levite from Ephraim. See **19:1-30**. **B)** The concubine. See **19:1-3**.

C) The father of the concubine. See **19:4-10**. **D)** The old man who gave hospitality to the Levite and his concubine. See **19:14-24**. **E)** The Benjamites of Gibeah. See **19:22-28**.

Q.3) Read **17:6**; **18:1**; **19:1** & **21:25**. What do these verses suggest when the Book of Judges was written?

Q.4) Why did the Levite not want to stop in Jebus? See **19:11-12**.

Q.5) Give reasons why the Levite dismembered his concubine's body. See **19:29-30**.

Q.6) What effect did the sin of the men of Gibeah have upon the children of Israel? See **19:30** & **20:1-13** particularly **20:1,8,11**.

Q.7) Why did the children of Benjamin refuse to deliver the evil men of Gibeah to the tribes of Israel to be put to death? See **20:13-16**.

Q.8) Show that it was the Lord's will for the eleven tribes of Israel to defeat the Benjamites. Can you give reasons why they were defeated twice before they were victorious.

Read **20:17-48**.

Q.9) What evidence do we have that this defeat of the Benjamites was in the early days of the judges? See **20:27-28**.

Q.10) Show that the request of the children of Israel was reasonable to put to death only the men responsible for the crime at Gibeah. See **20:13**.

See also **Numbers 35:29-34** & **Deuteronomy 17:6-7**.

Q.11) How did the men of Israel provide wives for the 600 surviving Benjamites in view of the vow they had made not to give their own daughters to the tribe of Benjamin? Read **21:1-25**.

Q.12) Why was Jabesh-gilead destroyed? See **21:5,8-12** and also **5:15-17,23**.

Q.13) Show the evidence of compassion from the men of Israel towards the surviving men of the tribe of Benjamin. See **21:1-7**.

Section Seven: The Book of Ruth

- Q.1)** Do you think it was a mistake for Elimelech to take his family to Moab? See **1:1-5**. See also **Deuteronomy 23:3-6**.
- Q.2)** Why did Naomi want Ruth and Orpah to remain in Moab? See **1:6-14**.
- Q.3)** Why was Ruth so determined to go with Naomi to Bethlehem in Judah? See **1:14-19**.
- Q.4)** What is meant by gleaning? See **2:1-3,15-19** and **Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19**.
- Q.5)** Why was Boaz pleased to have Ruth glean in his fields? See **2:4-17**.
- Q.6)** Why did Naomi encourage Ruth to keep gleaning in the fields of Boaz until the end of the barley and wheat harvest? See **2:19-23**.
- Q.7)** How did Naomi show Ruth to convince Boaz to take her as his wife? See **3:1-10**.
- Q.8)** What is meant by the kinsman's part in **3:13**? Read **3:11-13 & 4:3-10**. See also **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**.
- Q.9)** Read **4:13-22** carefully and show the significance of mentioning the generations. See also **Genesis 49:10; 1Chronicles 2:3-12; Matthew 1:1-17**.
- Q.10)** What do we know of Naomi's spiritual condition in view of the reaction of the city of Bethlehem when she returned? See **1:19-22**.
- Q.11)** Why did the kinsman nearer than Boaz refuse to take Ruth for his wife? See **4:6** and **Deuteronomy 23:3-6**.

Miscellaneous Questions on the Book of Judges

- Q.1)** Show the evidence of prophecy in the Book of Judges. See the following passages: **1:1-8; 2:1-3,20-23; 4:1-24; 6:11-24; 7:1-25; 11:9-11,29-40; 13:1-5,24-25; 15:20; 16:21-31**. Can you say that all these prophecies were fulfilled?
- Q.2)** Write the names of the judges and anything else that is known about them. You may find it helpful to make a table of the information.
- Q.3)** What is known of who God is in the Book of Judges? See **1:2,4,19; 2:14-23; 3:1-4,8-15,28; 4:2,6-7,15; 5:2-5; 6:23-24**.
- Q.4)** Show the way the children of Israel declined spiritually and morally throughout the Book of Judges. Study **1:19-33; 2:1-3,11-20; 3:5-7,12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:33; 9:2-5,56; 13:1; 16:4-22; 17:5-6; 18:11-31; 19:22-30; 21:25**.
- Q.5)** Write down the names of other characters in the Book of Judges that were not judges including the names of the enemies of Israel. What is known of these characters?
- Q.6)** Who is the Angel of the Lord? Can you show that he is Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate appearance and that he is God, the second person of the Trinity? See **6:1-23; 13:3-23**. It is helpful to refer to other scriptures in **Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-12,15-18; 31:11-13; 48:15-16; Exodus 3:2-6; 13:21; 14:19-20; Joshua 5:13-15**.
- Q.7)** What lessons can we learn when the children of Israel sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord. See **3:8,12-14; 4:1-3; 6:1-6; 10:6-9; 13:1**.
- Q.8)** Look carefully in **chapters 6,7& 8** and study the character of Gideon. Show how his life changed in becoming a man of God. Are there any weaknesses in his character? See **Hebrews 11:32-34**.
- Q.9)** Show the work of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Judges. See **3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14**. See also **1Samuel 10:6,10; 11:6; 16:13**.
- Q.10)** Is there evidence in the Book of Judges of what is happening to the priesthood during the time of the judges?
- Q.11)** Study the character of Samson showing his strengths and weaknesses. Read carefully **chapters 13-16**. See also **Hebrews 11:32**.
- Q.12)** Look carefully at **17:6 & 21:25**. Do these verses sum up what was happening to Israel spiritually, morally and politically during the time of the judges? Show the evidence of lawlessness in **chapters 17-21**. See also **Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25**.

Miscellaneous Questions on the Book of Ruth

- Q.1)** Make notes on the characters of **A) Ruth** See also **Luke 9:23,57-62; 14:25-33.**
B) Naomi. **C) Boaz.** What lessons can we learn spiritually by the choices these characters made and in how they teach us to follow Jesus Christ?
- Q.2)** Show from the Book of Ruth when it could have been written and the possible author of the book? See **1:1** and **4:17-22.**
- Q.3)** Read carefully through the entire Book of Ruth. Can you see how God is at work in this book? See **1:16-17; 2:11-12,20; 3:10-13; 4:9-15.**
- Q.4)** Is it true to consider Boaz as a type of Christ and Ruth as a type of the Church?
- Q.5)** In reading the Book of Ruth is there evidence of this book being a true story of love?
- Q.6)** What does the Book of Ruth tell us of who God is?
- Q.7)** If you have the resources available, look up the meaning of all the names in the Book of Ruth. Can you see any spiritual significance in the names?

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