

JUDGES OF THE THEOCRACY (Series on the life of Gideon, Lesson #01)

Before we begin our study on the Life of Gideon, we need to study the period of biblical history known as the Judges.

Our lesson text comes from Paul's sermon at the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. Paul used the biblical time line through the Exodus, Conquest, Judges, and King David to Jesus Christ, the Savior.

"From the offspring of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." (Acts 13: 23)

Therefore the Judges was an important period in biblical history related to the First Coming of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world – "for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:42)

The English word for Judges is derived from the Latin word Judicium. The Latin word was derived from the LXX Greek word kritai. The LXX Greek word was derived from the Hebrew word shophetim. Some scholars believe that the Hebrew word was derived from an old Canaanite word for magistrate.

We are interested in the Hebrew word shophetim () as it is used in the book of the Judges. "Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them." (Judges 2:16)

The title of Judge was given to selectively appointed national leaders for deliverance of Israel from oppression by neighboring nations.

They were selected by the supreme Judge of the Theocracy, the Lord God of Israel. "I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the Lord, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon." (Judges 11:27/ Judge Jephthah)

This lesson will study FIVE aspects of the Judges of the Theocracy.
--

1. It takes the following three OT books to cover the period of the Judges: Judges; Ruth; and 1 Samuel 1-12 (Othniel/ Judges 3:9 to Samuel/ 1 Sam.7:15).

The location of the Book of Judges is between Joshua and Ruth in the English Bible. It is located in the historical section.

However it is located in the prophetic section of the Hebrew Bible following Joshua. "The Jews were not mistaken when they counted the Book of Judges among the prophets. It is prophesy, more than history, because it exhibits and enforces the permanent lessons of the righteousness and justice and lovingkindness of God." (ISBE, pg.1775)

"But **Gideon** said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.'" (Judges 8:23)

2. The Book of Judges can be divided into the following three parts.

- First part is chs.1-2. It deals with Joshua's conquest and occupation of the Promised Land.

- Second part is chs.3-16. It deals with the Judges and oppressions by neighboring nations.
- Third part is chs.17-21. It is an appendix dealing with the time and events prior to time of Judges. “Probably because the narrative was understood to presuppose the same condition and to have reference to the same period of time.” (ISBE, pg.1772)

The period of the Judges serves as an important historical messianic link between the period of the Conquest and the period of the Monarchy (Acts 13:20-23/ read).

3. The dating of the period of the Judges of the Theocracy is 1366 – 1050 BC (King Saul).

It covered roughly 300 years. “While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, in Araer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, **three hundred years**, why did you not recover them within that time? (Judges 11:26) Judge Jephthah

The period of the Theocracy (God’s government rule of Israel) was from the Exodus until the Monarch (Saul). Theocracy operated on a system of divine laws instituted at Mt.Sinai by Moses (Acts 7:53; Heb.9: 19-20; 10:9-10; Matt.22: 37-40). Codex I was kept in the Ark of Covenant (Deut.9:9-11; Heb.9:4-5) along with the Book of the Law (Deut./ 2 Kings 22:8; Deut.31:24-27). The word Theocracy was coined by Josephus.

4. The period of the Judges was a time of spiritual darkness and divine discipline and deliverance because of the apostasy of evil (Judges 2:10-23) read.

“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers (second generation of Exodus / Joshua) and there arose another generation (generation of the Judges) after them who **did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.**” (Judges 2:10)

This tells us that as the divine agency for God in the world, they neglected their responsibility as custodians of God’s word and evangelism.

It was a period of anti-Christ thinking – “Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baals, and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.” (Judges 2:11-12)

5. The stability of the priest-nation of Israel under the Theocracy government depended on believers faithfulness to God and His word (Deut.4-5; 4:23-40) (Judges 2:10-3:7).

The Book of Judges gives five reasons for Israel’s divine testing as a divine agency.

- The land of Canaan possessed superior military weapons and fortifications to challenge Israel’s faith in God (1:19-21) iron chariots and (7:12) camels.
- Israel’s involvement in a history of reverse process reversionism (2:10-15; 8:3-35).
- God tested Israel’s faithfulness to faith cycle of God’s word (2:20-23).
- God wanted to teach Israel the art of warfare (3:1-2).
- The alliance among Israel’s enemy was another challenge of Israel’s faith-rest (3:5; 7:12).