

**PANORAMA
PLUS** 5
Apostasy

name

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OUTLINE

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NOTE TO THE STUDENT!

This material is structured in outline form, yet it is complete enough that the student can gain maximum benefit from the lectures if the material is read beforehand. There is much to cover; the best learning experience combines the student's reading(s) and the lecture overview.

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The Training Center

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PREFACE

Panorama of the Bible traces the broad framework of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. It structures the Bible into twelve (12) movements that describe the flow of the Biblical history. The Panorama time line places key people, places, events, and dates into chronological order.

This study, Panorama Plus 5: Apostasy, is a further expansion of Movement 5 of Panorama of the Bible. The primary focus is upon the days of the judges, thus the Biblical books of Judges and Ruth are surveyed.

As always, it is the desire of the writer to lead eager students deeper into the flow of the Bible. May God be honored in the process.

Robert V. Cupp
The Training Center
Fall 2019

| PANORAMA: TWELVE MOVEMENTS | |
|---|--|
| <u>Movement</u> | <u>Biblical Books</u> |
| #1 Prologue | Genesis 1-11 |
| #2 Patriarchs | Genesis 12-50; Job |
| #3 Redemption and Wanderings | Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy |
| #4 Conquest | Joshua |
| #5 Apostasy | Judges, Ruth |
| #6 Kingship: United Monarchy | 1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11 (Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song of Solomon) |
| #7 Kingship: Divided Monarchy | 1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings (Prophets - selected) |
| #8 Exile | Daniel, Ezekiel (Jeremiah) |
| #9 Return from Exile and 400 Silent Years | Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) |
| #10 Life of Christ | Matthew, Mark, Luke, John |
| #11 Church Age | Acts and Epistles |
| #12 Final Consummation | Revelation (Daniel) |

SESSION 1

Overview and Sin Cycle

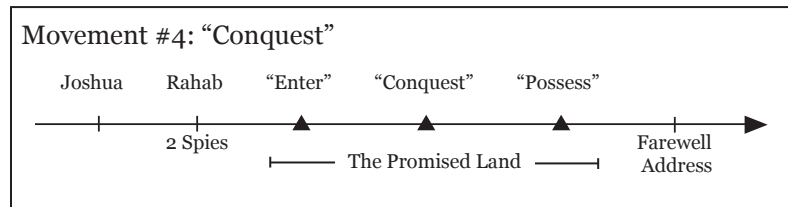
I. PRAYER/INTRODUCTION

II. PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE: MOVEMENTS 1-5

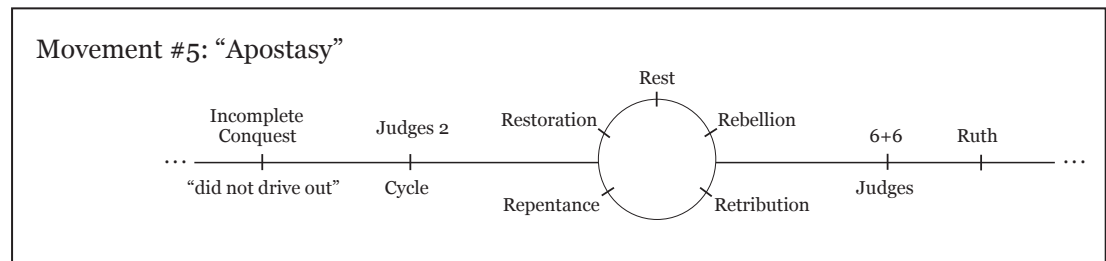
| PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Movements | Biblical Books |
| 1. "Prologue" | Genesis 1-11 |
| 2. "Patriarchs" | Genesis 12-50; Job |
| 3. "Redemption" "Wanderings" | Exodus; Leviticus Numbers; Deuteronomy |
| 4. "Conquest" | Joshua |
| 5. "Apostasy" | Judges; Ruth |

III. PANORAMA TIMELINE: MOVEMENTS 4 and 5

A. Movement 4: Conquest (Timeline)



B. Movement 5: Apostasy (Timeline)

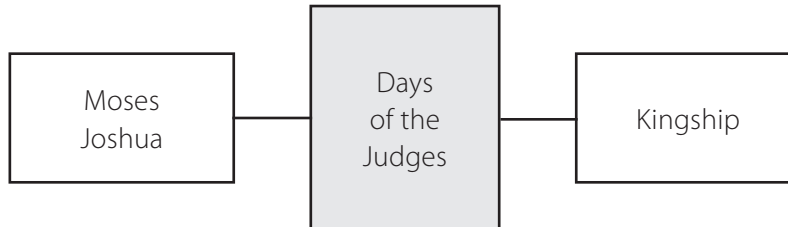


IV. HISTORICAL LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

| LEADERSHIP OF THE ISRAELITES | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Movement | Leader | Role | God |
| 2 | Abraham (Isaac) (Jacob/Israel) | Patriarchal Head of Clan | Under God's Direction |
| 2 | Twelve Tribes | Loose Confederation; Tribal Heads | Under Jacob's Direction (God?) |
| 3 | Moses | Deliverer; Law-Giver; National Leader | Under God's Direction |
| 4 | Joshua | Moses– Successor; National Leader | Under God's Direction |
| 5 | Twelve Tribes | No National Leader | Ignored God's Direction |

V. THE BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Historically: Transitional



B. Visually: Charted

| JUDGES | | |
|--|--|---|
| KEY THEME: "Defeat & Deliverance" | KEY PHRASE: "Did Evil" | KEY CONCEPT: "Sin Cycle" |
| Days of the Judges 1 3 | Deeds of the Judges 3 16 | Difficulties during the Judges 17 21 |
| Prologue | Body | Appendix |
| Sin Cycle (Judges 2) | 6 Major – 6 Minor | Idolatry/Civil War |

C. Distinctives: Book of Judges

1. "Judges" bridges the historical link from specific, appointed leaders (Moses, Joshua) to the later, future kings of Israel united (and Israel/Judah divided).
2. "Judges" chronicles the failure of the post-conquest generations to fully obey God and drive out the remaining Canaanites.
3. "Judges" graphically highlights the moral, spiritual, and political decline of the nation.
4. "Judges" contains the recurring phrase (or one similar), "did evil," to describe the cyclical, spiritual condition of the people; also occurring several times, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (cf. Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).
5. "Judges" contains the "sin cycle" concept which characterized the various tribes in those days.
6. "Judges" lists six (6) major judges and six (6) minor judges. The designation of major and minor refers to the amount of detail given in the Biblical text.
7. "Judges" highlights two important women (Deborah and Jael) through whom great victories were won.
8. All judges (except Othniel and Deborah) are "tainted" in some way.

VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (TIMELINE OUTLINE)

Refer to Movement #5 Timeline as diagrammed on page 5.
This section will amplify the basic timeline and the Biblical text.

A. Incomplete Conquest (Background)

1. Initial campaign completed (Central, Southern, Northern)

Joshua 21:43-45

*So the Lord gave to Israel all **the land** he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. ⁴⁴And the Lord gave them **rest** on every side, just as he had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the Lord helped them conquer all their enemies. ⁴⁵Not a single one of all the good promises the Lord had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true.*

2. Final conquest promised

Joshua 23:4-5

*I have allotted to you as your homeland all **the land** of the nations yet unconquered, as well as **the land** of those we have already conquered—from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵This **land** will be yours, for the Lord your God will himself drive out all the people living there now. You will take possession of their **land**, just as the Lord your God promised you.*

3. Sober warning issued (by Joshua)

Joshua 23:12-13

*“But if you turn away from him and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations remaining among you, and if you intermarry with them, ¹³then know for certain that the Lord your God will **no longer drive them out of your land**. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes, and you will vanish from this **good land** the Lord your God has given you.”*

Insight: Israel's Response

The back of unified Canaanite resistance had been broken. The campaign strategies to conquer the “promised land” had been successful. But, Israel must finish the job. Joshua had clearly warned the nation,

If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.

—Joshua 23:16

The book of Judges chronicles Israel's failure to drive out the remaining Canaanite inhabitants. The recurring phrase (or a similar one), “did not drive out” occurs in Judges 1:19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33. This failure introduces Movement #5: Apostasy.

B. Incomplete Conquest (Book of Judges Context)

1. The Situation Militarily (Judg 1)

While the tribes of Judah and Simeon experienced some initial success, they were unable to complete the task.

Judges 1:19

The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had chariots fitted with iron.

The Benjamites “failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem...” (1:21). Likewise, neither did Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulum, Asher, nor Naphtali drive out the remaining Canaanites (1:27-33).

2. The Situation Religiously (Judg 2)

Judges 2:1-4

*The **angel of the Lord** went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the*

land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, ²and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? ³And I have also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.'" ⁴When the **angel of the Lord** had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud...

3. The Situation Spiritually (Judg 3:1-6)

God determined to allow (for a time) certain nations to remain in the land for four distinct purposes:

a. To punish (discipline) Israel for their apostasy (2:3).

b. To test Israel's heart for obedience.

Judges 2:22

"I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their ancestors did."

Judges 3:4

They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands, which he had given their ancestors through Moses.

c. To harden a new generation for warfare.

Judges 3:2

(he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience)...

d. To preserve the land from complete warfare desolation.

Deuteronomy 7:22

The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.

C. Sin Cycle (of the Book of Judges)

1. Its setting described

a. During Joshua's leadership

Judges 2:6-7

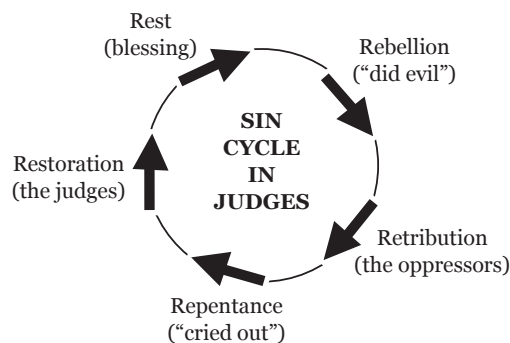
After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance. ⁷The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

b. After Joshua's leadership

Judges 2:10

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

2. Its description pictured



3. Its description summarized (Judg 2)

- Rest: the people are at "peace" (cf. 3:11).
- Rebellion: the people "did evil" (2:11).
- Retribution: God brings judgment, "handed them over" (2:14).
- Repentance: the people "cried out" in repentance (cf. 3:9).
- Restoration: God raised up "judges who saved" (2:16).
- Rest: the people once again at peace.

4. Its description narrated

Judges 2:11-16

*Then the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. ¹²**They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors**, who had brought them out of Egypt. They **followed and worshiped various gods** of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord's anger ¹³because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴In his anger against Israel the Lord **gave them into the hands of raiders** who plundered them. He **sold them** into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. ¹⁵Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress. ¹⁶**Then** (note: after repentance) the Lord raised up **judges, who saved** them out of the hands of these raiders.*

Insight:

Movement #4: Conquest ended on a high note. The covenant people had been brought to their "land of Abrahamic promise" (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18). They had vanquished their enemies. They had been instructed to complete the task of driving out the rest of the evil Canaanites. But, as we will see in Movement #5: Apostasy, even the new generation will fail and thus enter a time of uncertain inheritance and spiritual poverty.

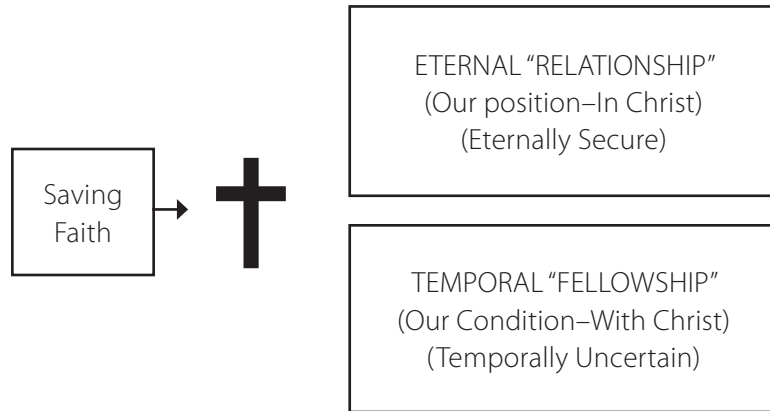
It was a low moment for the nation:

- 1) The passing of a great leader (2:6-9):
NO DIRECTION
- 2) The failure of a previous generation (2:10):
NO DISCIPLESHIP
- 3) The collapse of a new generation (2:11-19):
NO DISCIPLINE

D. Sin Cycle (New Testament Application)

The “sin cycle” of the Book of Judges foreshadows the New Testament experience of Christians. To understand the parallels, two important diagrams (and discussion) follow.

1. “The Believer’s Position in Christ”



a. Saving Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9

*For it is by grace you have been **saved**, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*

b. Cross

John 3:16-17

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to **save** the world through him.*

Colossians 1:19-20

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on **the cross**.*

c. Eternal "RELATIONSHIP"

At the moment of true, spiritual birth a new believer is "blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3). Over thirty specific spiritual operations upon the believer are accomplished, not the least of which are spiritual birth, regeneration, full forgiveness of sin, new standing as a child of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and more.

This new position is **eternally** secure:

- (1) It cannot be improved upon.
- (2) It is unaffected by sin.
- (3) It acknowledges Christ as Savior.
- (4) It provides for the believer: MY IDENTITY.

d. Temporal "FELLOWSHIP"

At the same moment (of spiritual birth) the true, spiritual believer enters into a moment-by-moment, day-to-day fellowship with God. This is the daily walk (conduct) of the believer.

Note the following supportive passages:

Ephesians 4:1

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you **to live a life worthy** of the calling you have received.*

Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 (applicable OT principle)

*So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³**Walk in obedience** to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.*

This new **experience** is temporally uncertain:

- (1) It can be improved upon.
- (2) It is affected by sin.
- (3) It acknowledges Christ as Lord.
- (4) It describes what I do daily: MY CONDUCT.

e. Effects of sin after conversion:

- (1) It cannot affect our POSITIONAL RELATIONSHIP.

John 10:27-29

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

- (2) It does affect our TEMPORAL FELLOWSHIP.

Sin breaks "fellowship" or moment-to-moment spiritual intimacy with God. It causes God to bring discipline upon the believer (not rejection of the believer nor loss of relationship-salvation).

Hebrews 12:4-11 (divine chastening)

*In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the **Lord's discipline**, and do not lose heart when **he rebukes you**, ⁶because the Lord **disciplines** the one he loves, and he **chastens** everyone he accepts as his son." ⁷Endure hardship as **discipline**; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not **disciplined** by their father? ⁸If you are not **disciplined**—and everyone undergoes **discipline**—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who **disciplined** us and we respected them for it.*

*How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰They **disciplined** us for a little while as they thought best; but God **disciplines** us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No **discipline** seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

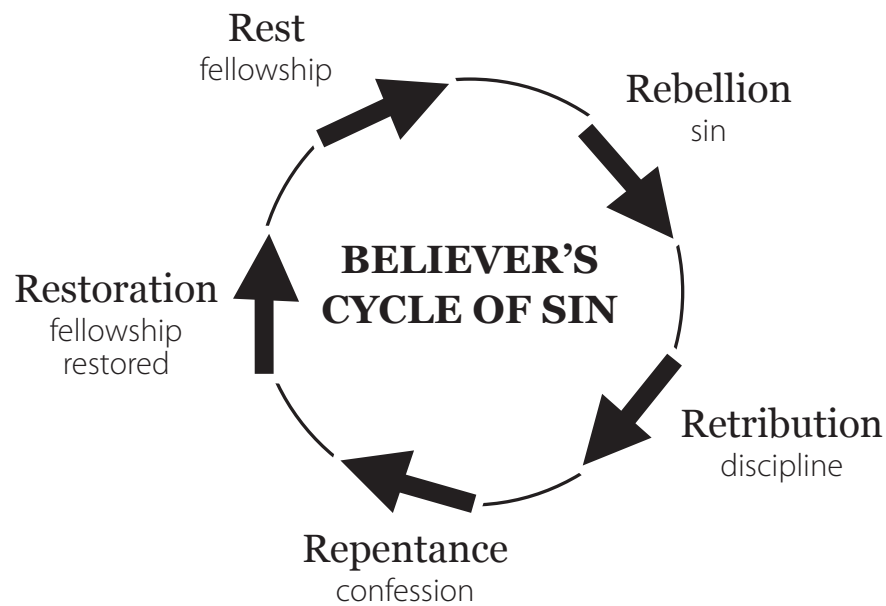
Since sin disrupts momentary fellowship with God, it must be dealt with quickly. The joys of walking with God are interrupted until the convicted believer repents (confesses the sin).

1 John 1:8-10

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹**If we confess our sins,** he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

2. "The Believer's Condition (walk) with Christ"

Since sin does affect our fellowship with God in Christ, to walk closely with God requires a consciousness of daily sin (or conviction of the Holy Spirit). The "sin cycle" describes this struggle.



Note that this diagram only describes the daily walk of the believer. From the position of rest (peace with God) and uninterrupted fellowship with God, the believer may sin (sins of commission or omission, sins of active rebellion or passive indifference to the things of God). In doing so, the intimacy of fellowship with the Lord is broken. If left unconfessed (unrepentant in attitude and act) the rebellion may bring God's judgment, i.e. His chastening hand. The reason for this discipline is to awaken the sinning believer to repentant confession (agreement) of one's personal sin. If repentant confession is accomplished, God restores the believer to unbroken, intimate fellowship with the Lord. The believer has returned to the place of rest and peace in the Lord.

VII. TAKEAWAYS

A. Transitional Period

Movement 5: Apostasy bridges from appointed leaders to the future kings. However, during the judges, national leadership is sadly lacking. The Biblical stories of Judges illustrate the need for godly leadership.

B. Finishing the Task

The Book of Judges clearly points to the failure of the Israelites following the victorious conquest of the promised land of Canaan (Movement 4: Conquest). The people were tasked by God through Joshua to finish the job of driving out the Canaanites. The subsequent failures and aftermath of the failure provide the theme for Judges.

C. Sin Cycle

The Book of Judges contains the repeated occurrence of the sin cycle as illustrated with the time of the individual judges. Further, this national sin cycle is a type (foreshadowing) of the New Testament believer's struggle with sin as well.

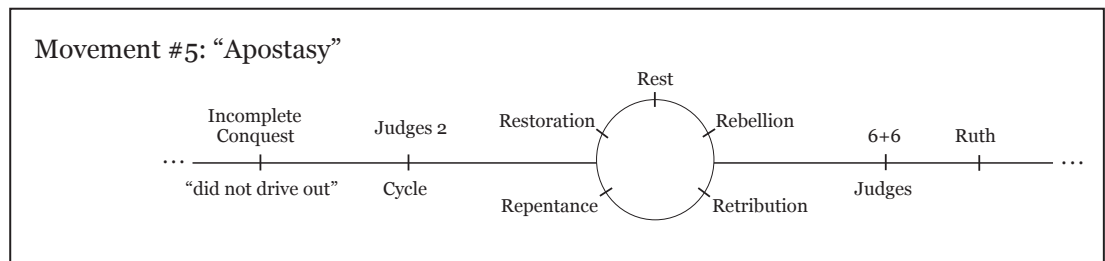
Session 2

DAYS OF THE JUDGES

I. PRAYER

II. REVIEW

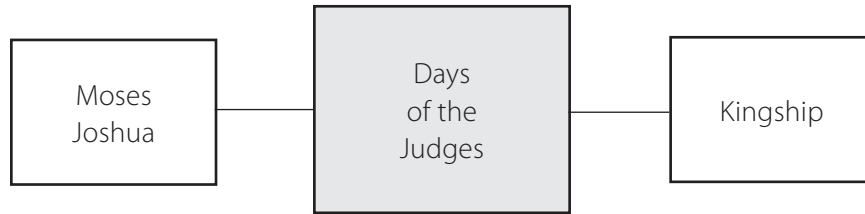
A. Movement 5: Apostasy (Timeline)



B. Book of Judges (Chart)

| JUDGES | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| KEY THEME: Defeat & Deliverance | KEY PHRASE: Did Evil | KEY CONCEPT: Sin Cycle |
| Days of the Judges | Deeds of the Judges | Difficulties during the Judges |
| 1 3 | 3 16 | 17 21 |
| Prologue | Body | Appendix |
| Sin Cycle (Judges) | 6 Major - 6 Minor | Idolatry/Civil War |

C. Book of Judges (Historical Transition)



III. MAJOR AND MINOR JUDGES

A. Oppressors and Judges of Israel

| THE OPPRESSORS & JUDGES OF ISRAEL | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--|------------|
| OPPRESSOR | KING | DATE | JUDGE | TRIBE | REF. NOTE |
| 1. Mesopotamia | Cushan-risha-thaim | 14th BC | Othniel | Judah | 3:7-11 |
| 2. Moab | Eglon | 14th-13th BC | Ehud | Benjamin | 3:12-30 |
| 3. Philistia | | ?-13th BC | Shamgar | | 3:31 |
| 4. Canaan | Jabin | 12th BC | Deborah | Ephraim | 4:1-5:31 |
| 5. Midian | Oreb Zeeb Zebah Zalmunna | 12th BC | Gideon | Manasseh | 6:1-8:35 |
| 6. Civil War of Abimelech | | 12th BC | | | 9:1-57 |
| 7. ? | | 12th BC | Tola | Issachar | 10:1-2 |
| 8. ? | | 12th BC | Jair | Gilead | 10:3-5 |
| 9. Ammon | | 12th-11th BC | Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon | Gilead Judah (??) Zebulun Ephraim | |
| 10. Philistia | | 12th-11th BC | Samson | Dan | 13:1-16:31 |

B. Designations of the Judges

1. Major Judges
 - a. Othniel
 - b. Ehud
 - c. Deborah/Barak
 - d. Gideon
 - e. Jephthah
 - f. Samson
2. Minor Judges
 - a. Shamgar
 - b. Tola
 - c. Jair
 - d. Ibzan
 - e. Elon
 - f. Abdon

C. Canaanite Religion

1. General description

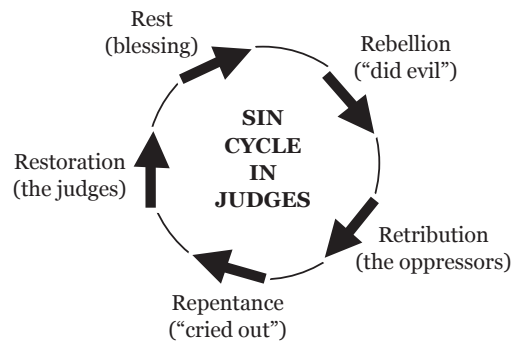
Eugene Merrill (**Kingdom of Priests**, 159) describes the Canaanite religion:

Essentially, the religion of Canaan was based on the assumption that the forces of nature are expressions of divine presence and activity and that the only way one could survive and prosper was to identify the gods responsible for each phenomenon, and by proper ritual, encourage them to bring to bear their respective powers. This is the mythological approach to reality. Ritual involves human enactments, particularly by cultic personnel such as priests, of the activity of the gods as described in the myths.
2. Major Canaanite deities
 - a. **El**: chief of the gods; impersonal, transcendent, powerful, detached, gullible (often seduced/victimized by other gods).
 - b. **Asherah**: wife of El, mother of the gods; goddess of fertility; goddess of the sea.
 - c. **Baal**: storm god, bringer of rain and fertility (cycle of seasons); powerful god who warred against others for supremacy; consorted with Asherah to bring fertility (highly sensual, perverse with cultic prostitution).
 - d. **Ashtoreth**: plural form is Ashtoroth; female fertility goddess; goddess of love and war; often associated with Baal.

- e. **Anath:** Baal's sister and wife, also a goddess of love and war.
3. The tempting attraction to Canaanite religion
 - a. The Israelites would have recognized that the fertility god, Baal, was worshiped to acquire a bountiful harvest. Although forbidden to worship a false god(s), yet in times of famine or poor harvest, the temptation to include Baal worship would be strong.
 - b. The Israelites who failed to drive out all the Canaanites of the land would come under their influences, culturally and religiously (cf. Judg 2-3). Rather than dismiss all Baal worship, the tendency would be to accept some elements and blend them into Israelite worship (a process called syncretic worship). This would be considered a serious sin before the Lord.

IV. SIN CYCLE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Viewed Pictorially



B. Assessed Critically

While the “sin cycle” seems to describe the spiritual breakdown of the tribes’ faithfulness and God’s disciplining action, a careful assessment of the major judges shows some variety in the Biblical narration.

Constable (**Notes on Judges**, 24) observes:

Certain formulaic expressions appear in 2:11-23 and then recur in the record of Israel's apostasy (3:7-16:31). However, as noted in the table below, they appear with less frequency as the narrative proceeds. Having established the pattern, the writer did not feel compelled to repeat these expressions as frequently since the reader learns to anticipate them as the narrative unfolds. The breakdown of these expressions is a rhetorical device that parallels and reflects the general moral and spiritual disintegration in Israel as a whole.

| Expression | Othniel | Ehud | Deborah | Gideon | Jephthah | Samson |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| The Israelites did evil (2:11-13). | 3:7 | 3:12 | 4:1 | 6:1 | 10:6 | 13:1 |
| Yahweh gave them over (2:14). | 3:8 | 3:12 | 4:2 | 6:1 | 10:7 | 13:1 |
| The Israelites cried out (2:15, 18). | 3:9 | 3:15 | 4:3 | 6:7 | 10:10 | |
| Yahweh raised up a deliverer (2:16, 18). | 3:9 | 3:15 | | | | |
| Yahweh gave the oppressor to the deliverer (2:18). | 3:10 | 3:28 | | | | |
| The land had rest. | 3:11 | 3:30 | | 5:31 | 8:28 | |

Nonetheless, the **“sin cycle”** was present throughout the Book of Judges whether or not each stage was specifically mentioned. The diagram (of the **“sin cycle”**) still applies (stated or not) to each situation.

V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (JUDGES 3-5)

A. Judgeship of Othniel (Judg 3:7-11)

1. The story of Othniel is a paradigm illustrating the “**sin cycle**.” Note the highlighted words that correspond to the “**sin cycle**” diagram (page 24).

Judges 3:7-11

*The Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs.*

*⁸The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he **sold them** into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.*

*⁹But when they **cried out** to the Lord, he raised up for them a **deliverer**, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who **saved them**. ¹⁰The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. ¹¹So the land had **peace** for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.*

2. Notes:
 - a. Othniel (of the tribe of Judah) was either Caleb’s younger brother, perhaps half-brother (or nephew - cp. 1 Chron 4:13; Josh 14:6).
 - b. Othniel was a recipient of divine enablement, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (3:10). Also, see Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29), Samson (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

Insight: The Kind of People the Judges Were:

They were not routine appointees who inherited their jobs. They were specially selected by God in an emergency. One may be sure, then, that they were not just ordinary people of the day...able to inspire, lead, plan military strategy and overcome obstacles...people of good judgment, capable of counseling, and able to show wisdom in the problems of society” (Wood, 161).

B. Judgeship of Ehud (3:12-30)

1. The story of Moabite oppression
 - a. The oppressors: Eglon of Moab with Ammonites and Amalekites (12)
 - b. The “sin cycle” (12-15^a)

Judges 3:12-15^a

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil the **Lord gave** Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. ¹³Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. ¹⁴The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years. ¹⁵Again the Israelites **cried out** to the Lord, and he gave them a **deliverer**—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite.*

2. The story of Ehud, the left-handed judge
 - a. Ehud before Eglon (king of Moab) the “first time”
 - b. Ehud before Eglon (king of Moab) the “second time”

Judges 3:15^b-18

The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab. ¹⁶Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. ¹⁷He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it.

Judges 3:19-23

But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, “Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you.” The king said to his attendants, “Leave us!” And they all left. ²⁰Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, “I have a message from God for you.” As the king rose from his seat, ²¹Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king’s belly. ²²Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the

fat closed in over it. ²³Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

c. Ehud before the Israelites - a call to battle

Judges 3:27-29

When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them. ²⁸“Follow me,” he ordered, “for the Lord has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands.” So they followed him down and took possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab; they allowed no one to cross over. ²⁹At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all vigorous and strong; not one escaped.

3. Observations and Notes

- a. Ehud was of the tribe of Benjamin (15); Moab and Ammon were descendants of Lot; Amalek was descended from Esau.
- b. The oppression of Eglon, king of the Moabites, lasted eighteen years. The cry of repentance before the Lord set in motion the deliverance through a God-appointed judge, Ehud (15).
- c. Benjamin means “son of the right hand,” ironic in the sense that many Benjamites were left-handed (20:16) and some even ambidextrous (1 Chron 12:2). Ehud was “left-handed” (or literally, “hindered in the right hand”).
- d. Ehud was initially welcomed in the king’s presence due to the tribute he brought (15, 18). Returning later, he claimed to have “a secret message” for Eglon.
- e. The dagger would have been about 18 inches long without a hilt, thus when violently thrust forward, it went through the king’s belly.
- f. Since the assassination took place in the “upper room” (rooftop), Ehud was able to lock the door and leave without detection.

- g. Following the defeat of the Moabites (“ten thousand” slain), the land had “peace” (rest) for eighty years, the longest period of peace in the times of the judges.

C. Judgeship of Shamgar (3:31)

1. Shamgar’s story is one verse only, thus the description as a “minor judge.”
2. Presumably the **“sin cycle”** was evident though without Biblical text for details (related to the cycle). Refer again to Constable’s Insight on page 25.

Judges 3:31

After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

D. Judgeship of Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)

1. Charted

The account of this deliverance is told first in narrative, then in poetic song. This structure mirrors that of the Red Sea prose (story) and poetry (song) as recorded in Exodus 14-15.

| DEBORAH AND BARAK | |
|--|--|
| Judges 4 | Judges 5 |
| Story | Song |
| Narrative | Poetry |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin Cycle • Oppressors: Jabin and Sisera • Deliverers: Deborah and Barak | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise (1-3) • Poetic epic (4-30) • Peace (31) |

2. Narrative story (Judg 4)

a. The sin of the Israelites (1-3)

Judges 4:1-3

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, **now that Ehud was dead** (place of “Rest” in the sin cycle). ²So the **Lord sold them** into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. ³Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they **cried to the Lord** for help.

(1) Jabin (which means “discerning,” perhaps a dynastic title) was king over Hazor and surrounding area. He oppressed Israel (in the northern regions) for twenty years.

(2) Sisera was his commander-in-chief; notably his army had “nine hundred iron chariots.” The Jewish historian, Josephus, attributed a large army (inflated numbers?) of 300,000 foot soldiers plus 10,000 horsemen.

b. The selection of a deliverer (4-10)

Judges 4:4-8

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading (or judging) Israel at that time. ⁵She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. ⁶She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. ⁷I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’” ⁸Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”

- (1) Deborah was one of three specified prophetesses in the Old Testament (also Miriam –Ex 15:20 and Huldah–2 Kgs 22:14). Further, the New Testament mentions Anna (Lk 2:36) and Philip’s four daughters (Acts 21:8-9) as prophetesses as well.

Not only was Deborah a prophetess (i.e. spokesperson for God), she also served as a judge (v. 4, “leading” in NIV could mean “judging”), in fact the only woman in the book to do so.

- (2) Barak was an accomplished general from the land of Naphtali (far north of Israel); when summoned by a prophetess (spokesperson for God), he obediently came to Deborah.
- (3) Barak’s refusal to comply without Deborah’s presence is surprising. Why does the general feel the need to have the prophetess go with him into battle?
 - (a) Perhaps this reluctance betrayed a personal timidity within Barak.
 - (b) Perhaps the general wanted full assurance of God’s enabling presence and desired the prophetess to go with him for certain victory.
 - (c) Perhaps Barak was counting on Deborah’s presence as a rallying point for the soldiers and a ready avenue to God if divine guidance or further knowledge was needed.
- (4) Deborah agrees to go but prophetically announces to the general, “But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman...” (4:9). At this point the reader should be thinking, “What woman? Deborah? Another?”

c. The strategy for victory (11-16)

- (1) The two opposing armies assemble at Mt. Tabor, the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley.
- (2) Deborah speaks prophetically from the Lord to Barak.

Judges 4:14-16

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. ¹⁵At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot. ¹⁶Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left.

d. The slaying of Sisera (17-24)

- (1) The woman, Jael (17-21)

Judges 4:17-21

Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. ²⁰"Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'" ²¹But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

- (2) The general, Barak (22)

When Barak arrives, Jael shows him the dead general of Jabin.

- (3) The aftermath, defeat of Jabin the king (23-24)
Jabin, the Canaanite king was “subdued” and
“destroyed.”

Insight: The Narrative of Deborah and Barak: Judges 4

Constable (**Notes on Judges**, 37) proposes a chiasmic structure for Judges 4. As with all chiasms, note the close, conceptual relationship of A to A', B to B', and so forth. The centerpiece of the chiasm is the main emphasis of the intentional structure.

Note the Judges 4 chiasm (as adapted from Constable):

- A Israelites oppressed (1-3)
- B Deborah, the prophetess, prominent (4-9)
- C Barak and Sisera assemble armies (10-13)
- D Yahweh gives victory (14^a)
- C' Barak and Sisera battle with armies (14^b-16)
- B' Jael, wife of Heber, prominent (17-22)
- A' Canaanites defeated (23-24)

The main emphasis (D) of this deliverance account is that Yahweh ensures the victory. This will also be demonstrated in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5).

3. Poetic Song (Judg 5)

Following the great victory, a theologically-driven song of praise was composed by Deborah (5:7) and sung by Deborah and Barak (5:1). This mirrors the occasion of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and momentous victory over the pursuing Egyptians (Ex 14). The subsequent song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15) retells the victory with rich theological insight. Note the same with Deborah's song.

a. The call to praise (1-5)

Judges 5:1-3

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: ² “When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves— praise the Lord!

³"Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song."

b. The poetic epic story (6-31^b)

(1) Background: the situation (6-8)

Judges 5:6-7

"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. ⁷Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel."

(2) Exhortation: sing praises (9-11)

Judges 5:10-11^a

"You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets and you who walk along the road, consider ¹¹the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the victories of the Lord, the victories of his villagers in Israel."

(3) Division: faithful and unfaithful (12-18)

Judges 5:12-13,15

"Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, Barak! Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.' ¹³The remnant of the nobles came down; the people of the Lord came down to me against the mighty... ¹⁵The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, sent under his command into the valley. In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart."

(4) Defeat: supernatural intervention (19-23)

Judges 5:20-21

"From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. ²¹The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong!"

(5) Finale: tale of two women (24-30)

(a) Jael (24-27)

Judges 5:24-26

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. ²⁵He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. ²⁶Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple.

(b) Sisera's mother (28-30)

Judges 5:28

"Through the window peered Sisera's mother; behind the lattice she cried out, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?'"

(6) Conclusion: theological prayer (31^a)

Judges 5:31^a

*"So may all your enemies perish, Lord! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its **strength.**"*

c. The aftermath of deliverance (31^b)

Judges 5:31^b

Then the land had peace forty years.

VI. TAKEAWAYS

A. Sin Cycle

As the Book of Judges will demonstrate time and again, to sin against the Lord is to invite His chastening hand. And once the disciplining process begins, the nation (the individual?) must humbly repent, confess, and cry out to God for His merciful restoration to blessing.

B. Othniel

While only five verses describe Othniel's judgeship (Judg 3:7-11), it is noteworthy that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him" (Judg 3:10). Believers need to always acknowledge that spiritual success is found in God's work by His Spirit in us, with us, and through us. As Jesus noted, "apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

C. Deborah

Deborah was a prophetess-judge. She demonstrates that God uses all people to the task He calls them to, irrespective of stature, social status, sex, race, so forth. She faithfully fulfilled her God-given tasks. Deborah reminds one of the "wife of noble character" from Proverbs 31 in this regard:

- Proverbs 31:26
She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- Proverbs 31:30-31
*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who **fears the Lord** is to be praised.
³¹ Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

D. Song of Deborah

The poetic psalm of Judges 5 reminds all believers that it is appropriate and important to render God praise for His mighty works in our lives.

SESSION 3

Days of the Judges – Part Two

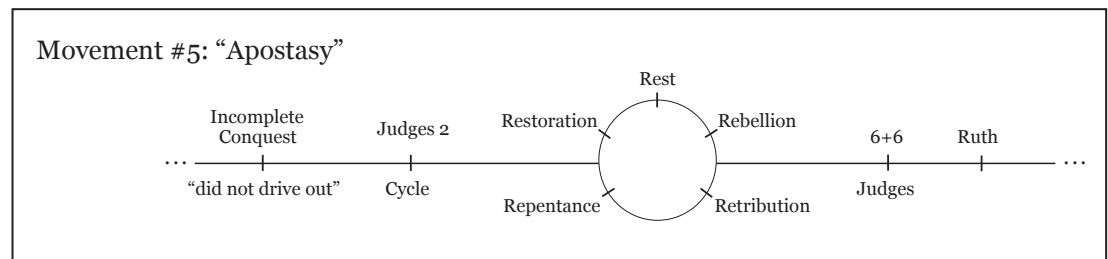
I. PRAYER

II. OVERVIEW OF JUDGES

A. Movements of Panorama of the Bible

| Panorama of the Bible | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Movement Number | Movement Title |
| 1 | Prologue |
| 2 | Patriarchs |
| 3 | Redemption/Wandering |
| 4 | Conquest |
| 5 | Apostasy |

B. Movement #5: Apostasy (Timeline)



III. MAJOR AND MINOR JUDGES (in Book of Judges)

A. Major Judges

1. OthnielSession 2 (Judges 3)
2. EhudSession 2 (Judges 3)
3. Deborah/BarakSession 2 (Judges 3)
4. GideonSession 3 (Judges 6-8)
5. JephthahSession 4 (Judges 9)
6. SamsonSession 4 (Judges 13-16)

B. Minor Judges

1. ShamgarSession 2 (Judges 3)
2. TolaSession 3 (Judges 10)
3. JairSession 3 (Judges 10)
4. IbzanSession 4 (Judges 12)
5. ElonSession 4 (Judges 12)
6. AbdonSession 4 (Judges 12)

IV. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (Judges 6-10)

A. Judgship of Gideon (Judg 6-8)

1. Recurrence of the "Sin Cycle"
 - a. Rest: "Then the land had peace for forty years" (5:31^b)
 - b. Rebellion: "Again the Israelites did evil..." (6:1^a)
 - c. Retribution: "he (God) gave them into the hands of the Midianites" (6:1^b)
 - d. Repentance: "Israelites... cried out to the Lord for help" (6:6)
 - e. Restoration:
 - (1) God "sent them a prophet" (6:8)
 - (2) Angel of the Lord came to Gideon (6:11-12)
 - f. Rest: "the land enjoyed peace forty years" (8:28)

2. Structure of the Story

a. Block (250) suggests a three-fold movement of Gideon’s story:

- (1) Judges 6:1-8:3... God’s Punishment and Deliverance of Israel
- (2) Judges 8:4-28... Gideon’s Punishment and Subjugation of Israel
- (3) Judges 8:29-9:57... Gideon’s Legacy

b. Chart of the Gideon story

| GIDEON | |
|--|---|
| Chapters 6-8 | Chapter 9 |
| Story of Gideon | Story of Abimelech |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin Cycle • Call of Gideon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambition (Abimelech) to be King (1-6) • Opposition by Jothan (7-21) • Opposition by Shechem (22-25) • Abimelech vs Gaal (26-41) • Abimelech vs Shechem and Thebez (42-51) • Death of Abimelech (52-57) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gideon’s army • Gideon’s victory | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gideon’s pursuit • Gideon’s ephod (snare) • Gideon’s death | |

3. Story of Gideon: Exposition (Judg 6:1-8:35)

a. “Sin Cycle” begins again.

Judges 6:1-6

*The Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he **gave them into the hands of the Midianites**. ²Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for*

themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.
³Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. ⁴They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁵They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. ⁶Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they **cried out** to the Lord for help.

- (1) The Israelites “did evil” and were subjugated seven years by the Midianites.
- (2) Midianites were nomadic descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen 25:1-2). They did not pursue land for settlement but only the produce of the fertile Valley of Jezreel (Esdraelon Plain). Thus, they were raiders who descended at harvest time like a “swarm of locusts.”
- (3) The Israelites “cried out” (repentance) to the Lord.

b. The LORD (YHWH) responds.

- (1) First: a prophet is sent (to the people).

Judges 6:7-10

*When the Israelites **cried out** to the Lord because of Midian, ⁸he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”*

- (2) Second: the angel of the Lord comes (to Gideon).

Judges 6:11

*The **angel of the Lord** came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.*

- c. The angel of the Lord calls to Gideon.

- (1) The angel addresses Gideon as a “mighty warrior” (6:12).

- (2) Gideon suggests that God has abandoned his people (6:13).

- (3) The angel (i.e. LORD) commissions Gideon (6:14-16).

- “Go in the strength you have.”
- “Save Israel out of Midian’s hand.”
- “I will be with you.”

- d. Gideon requests a sign.

Judges 6:17-18

*Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me **a sign** that it is really you talking to me. ¹⁸Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.”*

- (1) A sign requested

- (2) A meal prepared

- (3) A sacrifice consumed

- (4) A “mighty warrior” fearful

- (5) A reassurance he would not die

- e. Gideon responds to the fiery display.

*“Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the **angel of the Lord** face to face” (6:22^b).*

Judges 6:24-26

So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ²⁵That same night the Lord said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. ²⁶Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering."

Insight:

To truly be a "mighty warrior" and to be recognized as one of God's appointed judges, Gideon must remove the pagan worship which dominates his village. A true repentance and return to YHWH must be effected by a return to proper worship.

One writer observed:

- (1) Baal must go before Midian can go.
- (2) God's altar cannot be built up until Baal's altar is torn down.

Additionally,

- (3) Repentance/Confession always precedes Restoration.

- f. Gideon fearfully obeys God and destroys Baal's altar.

Judges 6:27

So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

- (1) Gideon destroyed the altar at night (27).
- (2) The townspeople (Abiezrites) confront Joash, Gideon's father (28-30).
- (3) Joash boldly defends his son with theological insight.

Judges 6:31-32

*But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." ³²So because Gideon broke down Baal's altar, they gave him the name **Jerub-Baal** that day, saying, "Let Baal contend with him."*

- g. Invading armies encamp in the Valley of Jezreel.
- h. Gideon summons tribes of Israel to come join him.

Judges 6:34-35

*Then the **Spirit of the Lord** came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. ³⁵He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.*

- i. Gideon requests a sign.

(1) First request

Judges 6:36-38

*Gideon said to God, "**If you** will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ³⁷**look**, I will place a wool **fleece** on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the **fleece** and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." ³⁸And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the **fleece** and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.*

(2) Second request

Judges 6:39-40

*Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the **fleece**, but this time make the **fleece** dry and let the ground be covered with dew." ⁴⁰That night God did so. Only the **fleece** was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.*

Insight: "Putting out a Fleece"

Gideon's faith was weak, but God graciously acceded to his further requests for confirmation. His lack of personal confidence, fearful nature, and weak faith might cause some to question God's choice. But Gideon's destiny is not tied to his abilities but to his availability to follow God's leadership (and subsequent instructions).

But what of this matter of "putting out a fleece"? The fact that God condescended to Gideon's request does not make this kind of request prescriptive (an action expected to be followed). As New Testament believers, we have the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, wise counsel, and prayer to determine our course. As Wiersbe notes, "'Putting out a fleece' is not only an evidence of our unbelief, but it's also an evidence of our pride. God has to do what I tell him to do before I'll do what he tells me to do!" (Quoted by Constable, 55)

- j. Gideon defeats the Midianites: an army assembled.

Judges 7:1-2^a

*Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ²The Lord said to Gideon, "**You have too many men.** I cannot deliver Midian into their hands,*

- a. From 32,000 to 10,000

As God had informed Gideon, "In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her" (7:2^b), the army was reduced in size. The fearful were released to return to their homes.

- b. From 10,000 to 300

Judges 7:5-6

So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those

who kneel down to drink.”⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

- (1) Three hundred fighting men have been identified.
 - (2) The Midianite army and support personnel number 135,000 (a large number being actual soldiers).
 - (3) The test of drinking separated the alert and fearless (note the first test); it pared the army of Gideon to an elite fighting force, agile and alert. But as the story unfolds, the victory was to be the Lord’s, not man’s.
- c. From 300 to Gideon and Purah, his servant
Gideon and his servant are instructed by God to go to the Midianite camp by stealth. Overhearing a conversation about a dream a Midianite had encouraged Gideon in the seemingly insurmountable task ahead. A wavering faith was again strengthened.
- k. Gideon defeats the Midianites: a strategy effected
Judges 7:15-21
*When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed **trumpets** and **empty jars** in the hands of all of them, with **torches** inside. ¹⁷“Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. ¹⁸When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’”¹⁹ Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They **blew their trumpets** and **broke the jars** that were in their hands.²⁰ The three companies blew the*

trumpets and smashed the jars. **Grasping the torches** in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" ²¹While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

- (1) The weapons: trumpets, jars, torches (swords)
- (2) The strategy: three companies of 100 men each encircling the resting, sleepy camp
- (3) The signal: trumpets, broken jars, torches (surrounding the camp)
- (4) The effect: pandemonium, Midianites killing Midianites in the confusion
- (5) The result: the Midianites flee in confusion and fear; the 300 pursue
- (6) The battle: See map, page 54.

l. Gideon calls for reinforcements

Judges 7:24-25

Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah." So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. ²⁵They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

m. Gideon and the aftermath of victory

- (1) Ephraim resents not being called to help; Gideon smooths over the controversy (8:1-3).
- (2) Gideon and the exhausted 300 continue the pursuit of the Midianite kings (Zebah and Zalmunna) (8:4-9).
 - (a) The officials of Succoth will not help.
 - (b) The officials of Peniel will not help.
- (3) The Midianite kings are captured and executed (8:10-21).

n. Gideon and his ephod

(1) He refuses kingship.

Judges 8:22-23

*The Israelites said to Gideon, “**Rule** over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” ²³But Gideon told them, “I will not **rule** over you, nor will my son **rule** over you. The Lord will **rule** over you.”*

(2) He requests earrings of gold.

Judges 8:26-27

The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks. ²⁷Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

(a) Ephods were vestments prescribed only for priests.

(b) This ephod became an object of worship.

Gideon who had torn down the altars of Baal now enables a new false shrine around the ephod. It is possible that Gideon wore it (like the High Priest).

o. Death of Gideon

(1) His accomplishment

Judges 8:28

Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon’s lifetime, the land had peace forty years.

(2) His lifestyle (patterned after pagan kings)

Judges 8:29-32

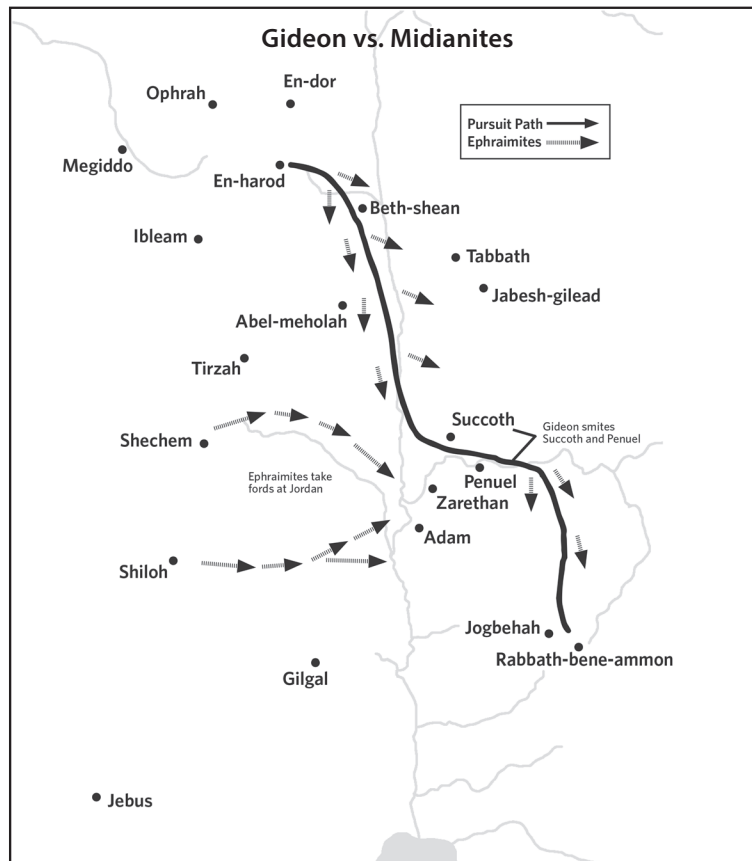
***Jerub-Baal** son of Joash went back home to live. ³⁰He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. ³¹His concubine, who lived in Shechem,*

also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek (or "Abimelech," some translations).³² Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

(3) His Legacy

Judges 8:33-35

No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god³⁴ and did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.³⁵ They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of **Jerub-Baal** (that is, **Gideon**) in spite of all the good things he had done for them.



(L. Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges*, 223)

B. The Story of Abimelech (Judg 9)

1. Ambition to be king (1-6)

Judges 9:1-2

Abimelek (or Abimelech) son of Jerub-Baal went to his mother's brothers in Shechem and said to them and to all his mother's clan,² "Ask all the citizens of Shechem, 'Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal's sons rule over you, or just one man?' Remember, I am your flesh and blood."

- a. Jerub-Baal (i.e. Gideon, 7:1) had refused the title of king (8:22-23) though he acted like a king.
- b. Jerub-Baal had seventy sons, many wives, great wealth. His lifestyle and demeanor mirrored that of many ancient Near Eastern monarchs.
- c. Jerub-Baal had at least one concubine (if not more); one resided at Shechem who bore him a son, Abimelech (Heb. "my father is king").
- d. Jerub-Baal's death caused a crisis of succession. Abimelech has ambitious plans (3-6).

(1) Abimelech hired "adventurers" (mercenaries) (4).

(2) Abimelech murdered all his brothers except for one, Jotham (5).

(3) Abimelech was crowned king (first time in recorded Biblical history) by the citizens of Shechem and Beth-Millo (6).

2. Opposition by Jothan (7-21)

a. Declared by a parable (7-15)

Judges 9:8-15

One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king.'⁹ "But the olive tree answered, 'Should I give up my oil, by which both gods and humans are honored, to hold sway over the trees?'¹⁰ "Next, the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and be our king.'¹¹ "But the fig tree replied, 'Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?'¹² "Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come and be our king.'¹³ "But the vine answered,

*'Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and humans, to hold sway over the trees?' ¹⁴"Finally all the trees said to the thornbush, 'Come and be our king.'
¹⁵"The thornbush said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!"*

- (1) "Olive, fig, and grapevine" represents productive (capable) people.
- (2) "Thornbush" represents Abimelech, an image to represent non-productive, harmful, dangerous, and destructive attributes.

b. Discussed after the parable (16-20)

Jothan questioned the motives and behavior of the people of Shechem and Beth-Millo. He further questioned the treatment of Jerub-Baal's family and murdered sons.

Judges 9:19-20

So have you acted honorably and in good faith toward Jerub-Baal and his family today? If you have, may Abimelek be your joy, and may you be his, too! ²⁰But if you have not, let fire come out from Abimelek and consume you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and let fire come out from you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and consume Abimelek!"

c. Departure of Jothan

Judges 9:21

Then Jotham fled, escaping to Beer, and he lived there because he was afraid of his brother Abimelek.

3. Opposition by Shechem

Judges 9:22-25

After Abimelek had governed Israel three years, ²³God stirred up animosity between Abimelek and the citizens of Shechem so that they acted treacherously against Abimelek. ²⁴God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal's seventy sons, the shedding of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelek and on the

citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers. ²⁵In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by, and this was reported to Abimelek.

- a. After three years great discontent arose against Abimelech (as Jothan had declared – cf. 9:19-20).
- b. God sent a “spirit of discontent” as an act of judgment on the crimes against the sons of Jerub-Baal.

4. Abimelech vs Gaal (26-41)

Judges 9:26

Now Gaal son of Ebed moved with his clan into Shechem, and its citizens put their confidence in him.

- a. Gaal and his brothers are opportunists who gain favor with the citizens of Shechem.
- b. Gaal takes advantage of the political instability to challenge Abimelech's leadership and particularly, Zebul, the governor of the city (27-29).

c. Zebul responds:

Judges 9:30-33

When Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, he was very angry. ³¹Under cover he sent messengers to Abimelek, saying, “Gaal son of Ebed and his clan have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you. ³²Now then, during the night you and your men should come and lie in wait in the fields. ³³In the morning at sunrise, advance against the city. When Gaal and his men come out against you, seize the opportunity to attack them.”

- d. Gaal and his men were ambushed by Abimelech (aided by Zebul) (36-38).
- e. Gaal and citizens of Shechem were decisively defeated by Abimelech.

Judges 9:39-41

So Gaal led out the citizens of Shechem and fought Abimelek. ⁴⁰Abimelek chased him all the way to the entrance of the gate, and many were killed as they fled.

⁴¹Then Abimelek stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his clan out of Shechem.

5. Abimelech vs Shechem and Thebez (42-51)

Abimelech and his soldiers exacted revenge on the people of Shechem, defeating them decisively and destroying the city of Shechem (42-45). Fleeing the destruction many Shechemites sought refuge in the temple of El-Berith, but Abimelech torched the tower and about a thousand men and women of Shechem died there (46-50).

Next, Abimelech went to nearby Thebez (who had apparently joined Shechem in the revolt against Abimelech). Abimelech besieged the city and captured it (50). The people fled to the safety of the city tower (51).

6. Death of Abimelech (52-57)

a. Described (historically)

Judges 9:52-55

*Abimelek went to the tower and attacked it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, ⁵³**a woman** dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. ⁵⁴Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can't say, '**A woman** killed him.'" So his servant ran him through, and he died. ⁵⁵When the Israelites saw that Abimelek was dead, they went home.*

b. Interpreted (theologically)

Judges 9:56-57

Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelek had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷God also made the people of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came on them.

C. The Judgship of Tola (10:1-2)

Judges 10:1-2

*After the time of Abimelek, a man of Issachar named **Tola** son of Puah, the son of Dodo, rose to save Israel. He lived in Shamir,*

in the hill country of Ephraim.²He led Israel twenty-three years; then he died, and was buried in Shamir.

1. Tola (Heb. “worm”) was a minor judge (few details, short narrative).
2. Tola was a contemporary of Abimelech.
3. Tola was of the tribe of Issachar (son of Puah, son of Dodo).
4. Tola “saved” or delivered Israel (hill country of Ephraim) though details are omitted. (Oppressor? Military feats? Sin cycle elements?).
5. Tola “led Israel twenty-three years.”
6. Tola was buried in Shamir (location unknown).

D. Judgship of Jair (10:3-5)

1. Jair (Heb. “he enlightens”) was also a minor judge (for listing, see III. Major and Minor Judges, page 38).
2. Jair was wealthy and prominent (“thirty sons” and “thirty donkeys” and “thirty towns”).
3. Jair was a Gileadite of the tribe of Manasseh.
4. Jair led Israel twenty-two years. No oppressors or military deliverance is recorded. However, due to the structure of Judges and the stories of other judges, it is presumed that some kind of deliverance did occur and Jair is accorded by the Biblical writer a place in the stories of the judges.
5. Jair was buried in Kamon in the territory of Manasseh southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

V. TAKEAWAYS

A. From the Story of Gideon

1. God uses whom He chooses.
Gideon was initially fearful and timid. Like Moses with his flimsy excuses to avoid God's calling, Gideon also needed confirming signs. God graciously provided for both men.

2. Worship encounters demand response.

When Gideon saw the fire consume the meal (virtually a food offering), he acknowledged the Lord's presence and feared for his life ("I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face"—6:22). So in response Gideon built an altar.

Note the parallel to Romans 12:1-2:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3. A minority with God is better than a majority without God.

The vast Midianite army was no match for God's army (Gideon and 300 men).

4. Humility can turn to arrogance.

Like King Saul (1 Sam 9:21), Gideon was initially quite humble. But later, though he denied the formal kingship, he arrogantly acted in the manner of ancient, Near-Eastern kings (multiplied gold, wives, wealth).

B. From the Story of Abimelech

1. Selfish ambition will lead to troubles.

Abimelech's thirst for power, for kingship led to the slaughter of his brothers.

2. Choosing leaders requires great care and discernment.

The people of Shechem rashly bowed before the intentions of Abimelech. The payment for their poor choices was deadly.

3. The law of the harvest is evident.

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

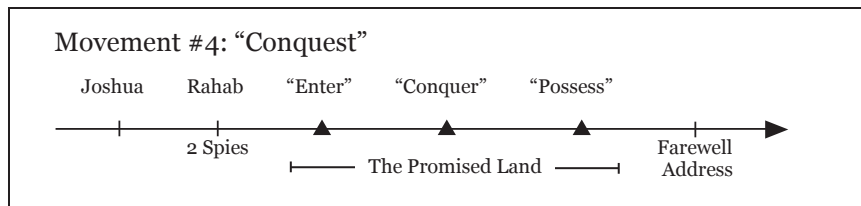
SESSION 4

Deeds of the Judges– Part Three

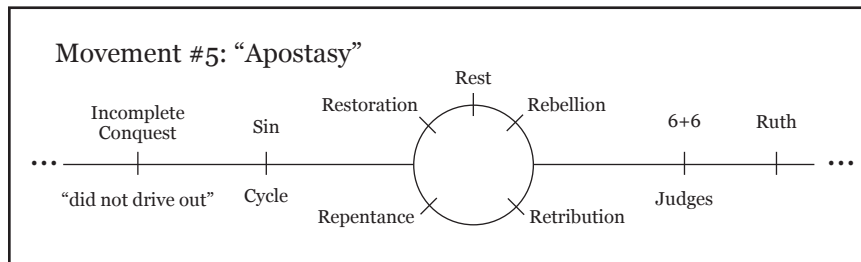
I. PRAYER/REVIEW

II. PANORAMA TIMELINES (Movements 4 and 5)

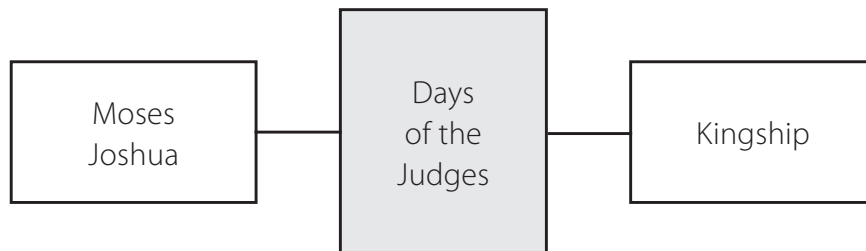
A. Movement #4: "Conquest"



B. Movement #5: "Apostasy"



III. HISTORICAL TRANSITION



IV. BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Charted

| JUDGES | | |
|--|--|---|
| KEY THEME: "Defeat & Deliverance" | KEY PHRASE: "Did Evil" | KEY CONCEPT: "Sin Cycle" |
| Days of the Judges 1 3 | Deeds of the Judges 3 16 | Difficulties during the Judges 17 21 |
| Prologue | Body | Appendix |
| Sin Cycle (Judges 2) | 6 Major - 6 Minor | Idolatry/Civil War |

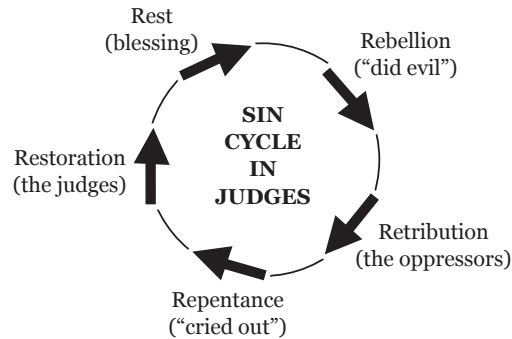
B. Major and Minor Judges: Listed

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Major Judges | 2. Minor Judges |
| • Othniel | • Shamgar |
| • Ehud | • Tola |
| • Deborah/Barak | • Jair |
| • Gideon | • Ibzan |
| • Jephthah | • Elon |
| • Samson | • Abdon |

V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT (Judges 10-13)

A. The Judgeship of Jephthah: Setting (Judg 10:6-16)

1. The "Sin Cycle"



2. Rest

This element of the sin cycle suggests that some part of Israel (tribe or tribes) was at peace, not at war. The text does not declare it in this story (Jephthah) but is rather assumed.

3. Rebellion

Judges 10:6-7^a

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, ⁷he became angry with them.*

Note that the **rebellion** of the Israelites is described in two important ways:

- a. They served other gods (idolatry).
- b. They forsook (abandoned, deserted) the Lord (YHWH).

This extended description of the people's apostasy is more elaborate than preceding cycles. This likely points to increasing degradation of Israel's religious life and the climax of the "Canaanization" of the Israelites.

Joshua's warning had predicted the disastrous effect of not driving out the Canaanites.

Joshua 23:6-13

*“Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸But you are to **hold fast to the Lord your God**, as you have until now. ⁹“The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹So be very careful to love the Lord your God. ¹²“But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³then you may be sure that the Lord your God **will no longer drive out** these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.”*

4. Retribution

Judges 10:7^b-9

*He **sold them** into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, ⁸who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they **oppressed** all the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites. ⁹The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim; Israel was in great distress.*

- a. Note that the text references God's anger, the first time this "emotion" (anthropopathism) has been mentioned since Othniel's deliverance (cf. 3:8). Conditions are getting steadily worse.
- b. Note also that two nations are mentioned as the oppressors: the Philistines and the Ammonites. The Philistine oppression will be elaborated with

the story of the next major judge, Samson. The Ammonites will be the presenting problem that Jephthah must challenge in the present narrative.

- c. Note that the primary location of this conflict is in the area of the Trans-Jordan, that is, east of the Jordan River (called the land of Gilead).

5. Repentance

Repentance must always precede restoration.

Commonly in the Book of Judges, the phrase **“cried out”** to the Lord supposes a heart of repentance. But in this sin-cycle story the repentance seems to be in two parts.

a. Initial confession

Judges 10:10

*Then the Israelites **cried out to the Lord**, “We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals.”*

One would expect that this confession (like so many others in the Book of Judges) would issue forth into Restoration. But at this deteriorating time of deepening apostasy, God replies:

Judges 10:11-14

The Lord replied, “When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹²the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands? ¹³But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. ¹⁴Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”

Compare God's anger here with that written in Deuteronomy 32:37-38:

He will say: “Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, ³⁸the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter!

- (1) God reminds the Israelites of this past faithfulness (Judg 10:11-12).

- (2) God points out that this present people has forsaken Him and practiced idolatry (10:13).
- (3) God seemingly rejects this initial confession as ritual not reality.

b. Intense confession (brokenness)

Judges 10:15-16^a

*But the Israelites said to the Lord, "**We have sinned.** Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." ¹⁶Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the Lord.*

- (1) The Israelites acknowledge (take ownership of) their grievous sin (15).
- (2) The Israelites humbly place themselves in God's hands that He might do what's best (15).
- (3) The Israelites plead again for deliverance (15).
- (4) The Israelites remove the false gods/false worship and resolve again to serve/worship YHWH.

Insight: Repentance

The basic theological idea or meaning of repentance is "turning away from." It carries the idea of traveling in one direction and turning to travel in another. It's a change of mind or disposition with accompanying action.

To repent of sin is to change one's mind about that sin (while changing one's actions/direction). Often it carries a sense of remorse.

The story of the Israelites in Judges 10 raises the practical questions:

- Is there a difference between casual (rote) confession–repentance and sincere brokenness–repentance?
- If so, is there an application for us today? (easy confession vs. broken confession)

6. Restoration

With the second brokenness-confession (10:15-16^a) stated, the Lord compassionately responds.

Judges 10:16^b

And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.

B. The Judgeship of Jephthah: Story (10:17-12:7)

1. A leadership vacuum (10:17-18)

Judges 10:17-18

When the Ammonites were called to arms and camped in Gilead, the Israelites assembled and camped at Mizpah.

¹⁸*The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Whoever will take the lead in attacking the Ammonites will be head over all who live in Gilead."*

2. A leader emerges (11:1-40)

a. The person: Jephthah (1-3)

(1) He was a mighty warrior (1).

(2) He was the son of a prostitute (2).

(3) He was rejected as a child (2).

(4) He settled in the land Tob (3).

(5) He led a band of "adventurers" (wild and reckless) (3).

b. The plea: come! (4-11)

Judges 11:4-8

Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel, ⁵the elders of Gilead went to get

Jephthah from the land of Tob. ⁶"Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites."

⁷*Jephthah said to them, "Didn't you hate me and drive me from my father's house? Why do you come to me*

now, when you're in trouble?" ⁸The elders of Gilead said to him, "Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead."

Note that in this case the Lord does not directly raise up the deliverer. The elders of Gilead are desperate, even to acknowledging that he (Jephthah) would then be their acknowledged head (chief) "commander."

Jephthah, however, is suspicious. He questions their sincerity. The elders respond:

Judges 11:10-11

The elders of Gilead replied, "The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say." ¹¹So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.

- (1) Jephthah will be the "head commander" to oppose the Ammonites.
- (2) The elders have sworn to this agreement: "The Lord is our witness" (10).
- (3) The agreement is solemnized at Mizpeh in the presence of Jephthah, the elders, and the assembled people (11).
- (4) But this raises a few critical questions:
 - (a) Where is God in this process?
 - (b) Will God accept Jephthah?
 - (c) Does Jephthah know the Lord?

c. The plan (12-28)

- (1) First round of negotiations (12-13)

Judges 11:12-13

Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king with the question: "What do you have against me that you have attacked my country?" ¹³The king of the Ammonites answered Jephthah's messengers, "When Israel came up out of Egypt, they took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, all the way to the Jordan. Now give it back peaceably."

- (a) Jephthah quickly enters into hard-nosed negotiations (tone and language like that of a king-peer to the Ammonite king).
 - (b) The king of the Ammonites appealed to long-past history of losing land and now taking it back. The king's history is inaccurate/skewed.
- (2) Second round of negotiations (14-28)
- (a) Jephthah corrects the Ammonite king's distorted history.
 - Israel did not take the land of the Ammonites (15).
 - Israel skirted around the land of Edom (16-17).
 - Israel passed around the land of Moab (18).
 - Israel defeated Sihon and the Amorites and captured their land (19-21).
 - (b) Jephthah concludes that if Israel drove out these people, then by what right do the Ammonites lay claim to this land (22-26).
 - (c) Jephthah concludes:

Judges 11:27
I have not wronged you, but you are doing me wrong by waging war against me. Let the Lord, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.
- (3) Ammonite king fails to respond (28)
- Judges 11:28
The king of Ammon, however, paid no attention to the message Jephthah sent him.

d. The promise (vow) (29-40)

(1) First: the empowering to lead (29)

Judges 11:29

*Then the **Spirit of the Lord** came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites.*

The empowering of Jephthah suggests that the Lord is behind the future deliverance. It may suggest that Jephthah is now the judge raised up by the Lord.

(2) Second: the making of a vow (30-40)

Judges 11:30-31

And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, ³¹whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

(3) Third: the victory won

Judges 11:32

Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands.

Insight: The rash (?) vow of Jephthah

Even as Jephthah had negotiated with his own people to be named chief commander, even as he had attempted to bargain with the king of the Ammonites, now Jephthah through his vow to the Lord attempts to bargain with God.

What is it that he will sacrifice (“whatever comes out of the door of my house”)? Herein lies the theological debate: was he expecting a person or perhaps an animal (an acceptable sacrifice)?

The fact is that his daughter came to greet him, an event that caused Jephthah to lament, “Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break” (11:35).

His daughter acknowledged that the vow must not be broken and requested time to grieve with her friends and bemoan the fact “I will never marry” (11:37). To not marry would mean no children and therefore no heirs for Jephthah (since his daughter was an only child).

So, what was the sacrifice? Did Jephthah offer as a vow the human sacrifice of his daughter? Or, did he “sacrifice” her to perpetual virginity (“never marry”) in lifelong tabernacle service (cf. Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)?

Scholars are divided as to what or whom was sacrificed.

What do you think?

3. A leader challenged (12:1-6)

a. The Ephraimites' complaint (1)

Judges 12:1

The Ephraimite forces were called out, and they crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, "Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We're going to burn down your house over your head."

b. Jephthah's reply (2-3)

Judges 12:2-3

Jephthah answered, "I and my people were engaged in a great struggle with the Ammonites, and although I called, you didn't save me out of their hands. ³When I saw that you wouldn't help, I took my life in my hands and crossed over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave me the victory over them. Now why have you come up today to fight me?"

c. Ensuing warfare (4-6)

The Gileadites (Jephthah) prevail over the Ephraimites.

4. A leader dies (12:7)

Judges 12:7

Jephthah led Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in a town in Gilead.

C. The Judships of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15)

1. Ibzan (8-10)

(a) He was a judge from Bethlehem (8).

(b) He had thirty sons and thirty daughters (9).

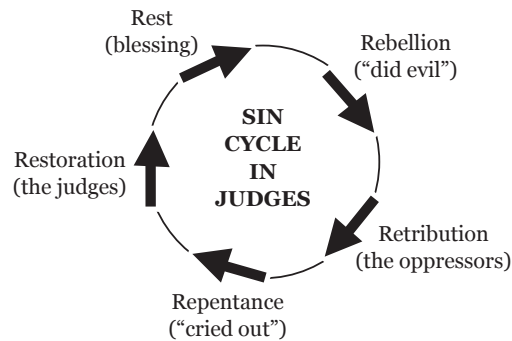
(c) He took daughters-in-law and sons-in-law from outside his clan (9).

(d) He led Israel for seven years, died, and was buried in Bethlehem (10).

2. Elon (11-12)
 - (a) He was a Zebulunite (11).
 - (b) He led Israel ten years (11).
 - (c) He died and was buried in Aijalon in the territory of Zebulun (12).
3. Abdon (13-15)
 - (a) He was a son of Hillel (from Pirathon) (13).
 - (b) He had forty sons and grandsons (who rode on seventy donkeys) (14).
 - (c) He led Israel eight years (14).
 - (d) He died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, the hill country of the Amalekites (15).

D. The Judgship of Samson: Introduced (Judg 13)

1. "Sin Cycle"



Judges 13:1

*Again the Israelites **did evil** in the eyes of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.*

- a. "Again": the repetitive nature of the days of the judges.
- b. "Did evil": Rebellion.
- c. "Delivered them": the Lord brings Retribution.
- d. "Forty years": the longest of all the oppressions in the Book of Judges.

2. Samson's story: charted

| SAMSON | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Chapter 13 | Chapter 14 | Chapter 15 | Chapter 16 |
| Birth of Samson | Marriage of Samson | Deeds of Samson | Downfall of Samson |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin Cycle • Miraculous birth • Nazarite vow • "Spirit of the Lord" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samson's demand • "Spirit of the Lord" • Riddles and rashness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philistine troubles • "Spirit of the Lord" • Judge for 20 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deception and Delilah • Nazarite vow broken • "Lord had left him" • Death |

E. The Judgship of Samson: Discussed (Judg 13-16)

1. Birth of Samson (13:2-24)
 - a. The supernatural circumstances (2-7)
 - (1) The barren wife of Manoah (2-3)

Judges 13:2-3

*A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. ³The **angel of the Lord** appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son."*

Insight (Constable quoting Wiersbe, 91)

“When God wants to do something really great in His world, He doesn't send an army but an angel.”

Barren women of Scripture who supernaturally conceive include Sarah (Abraham), Rebekah (Isaac), Rachel (Jacob), Hannah (Elkanah), Elizabeth (Zechariah) and Mary (conceived by the Holy Spirit). The wife of Manoah (name?) can be added to the list.

(2) The angelic instructions (4-5)

- For the mother: no wine or alcohol or unclean food.
- For the son: Nazarite restrictions from birth.

Insight: Nazarite vows

The instructions for Nazarite vows are found in Numbers 6:1-21. Either a man or a woman could bind themselves to the vow and as such would be separated (consecrated) unto God for particular service (for life or a period of time).

Probable examples of lifelong commitment to being a Nazarite include Samson (Judg 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15).

While under the vow the person abstained from wine or alcoholic drink. The hair was left uncut. The individual could not touch a dead body (or if done, undergo a ritual of purification and re-commitment to the vow). When released from the vow certain requirements were expected.

In essence the life of a Nazarite was one of separation and consecration unto the Lord. It was a life of special devotion.

(3) The encounter described to Manoah (6-7)

Manoah's wife described the "awesome" appearance of the unnamed angelic messenger. She related the news that the miraculously conceived boy would "be a Nazarite of God from birth until the day of his death" (7).

b. The prayer of Manoah (8-14)

(1) He asks God to send "the man" again (8).

(2) God sends "the man to the wife of Manoah who finds her husband (9-11).

(3) Manoah asks "the man" what should be "the rule for the boy's life and work?" (12).

(4) "The man" ("angel of the Lord") replies:

Judges 13:13-14

*The **angel of the Lord** answered, "Your wife must do all that I have told her. ¹⁴She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her."*

c. The identity of "the man" revealed (15-23)

(1) Manoah seeks to honor the man with a specially-prepared meal (15).

(2) The figure (unrecognized "angel of the Lord") suggests that the meal be made an offering to the Lord (16).

(3) Manoah asks the figure's name to honor him, only to be told the name is "beyond understanding" (17-18).

- The "angel of the Lord" is the pre-incarnate Christ.
- Isaiah describes the future Messiah's name (or, at least, His descriptors) as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).
- The New Testament speaks of the Messiah as bearing the name "Immanuel" (God with us) or "Jeshua" (God saves).

(4) Manoah prepares the meal (offering) as a sacrifice only to see the figure (“angel of the Lord”) ascend upward in the flames not to be seen again (19-20).

(5) Manoah has a moment of revelation (21-23).

Judges 13:21-23

*When the **angel of the Lord** did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the **angel of the Lord**.²² “We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!”²³ But his wife answered, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.”*

d. The boy is born (24-25)

Judges 13:24-25

*The woman gave birth to a boy and named him **Samson**. He grew and the Lord blessed him,²⁵ and the **Spirit of the Lord** began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

2. The marriage of Samson (14:1-20)

a. Samson demands a Philistine wife (1-4).

Judges 14:1-2

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman.² When he returned, he said to his father and mother, “I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.”

(1) Canaanite marriages were forbidden in Mosaic Law (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:13).

(2) Nonetheless, Samson per the customs of the day demands that his parents arrange the marriage.

(3) Samson’s parents are greatly disappointed, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among our people?” (3).

(4) Samson responds: “Get her for me” (3).

Insight:

The Nazarite young Samson shows no evidence of piety or devotion to God. He demands what was forbidden, to intermarry with the uncircumcised, oppressor Philistines.

Yet behind all the demands and disobedience, God is at work:

(His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.) (Judg 14:4)

God can even work through man's bad choices to accomplish His greater purposes.

- b. Samson (and his parents) arrange for the wedding (5)

Judges 14:5^a

Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother.

- (1) Samson has convinced (badgered?) his parents concerning the Philistine marriage.
- (2) The party departs to Timnah to complete arrangements (see 14:7: "he/Samson liked her").
- (3) Samson is separated from his parents on the journey—Samson will be alone when he faces the lion (14:5^b).

- c. Samson and his riddle (5^b-18)

- (1) On the way to Timnah to meet with his future, Philistine wife, Samson has an encounter with a lion.

Judges 14:5^b-6

As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him.

⁶*The **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done.*

(2) Later, in the return to Timnah to formally marry his Philistine bride, he turns aside and sees surprisingly (supernaturally?) that bees have made a hive and honey in the carcass of the lion (6-9).

- Samson eats some of the honey.
- Samson gives honey to his parents (without explanation).

(3) The Wedding Feast begins (10-11)

Judges 14:10-11

Now his father went down to see the woman. And there Samson held a feast, as was customary for young men. ¹¹When the people saw him, they chose thirty men to be his companions.

- Customarily a wedding feast would last a week, then the consummation of the marriage.
- Samson did not have attendants (groomsmen) so thirty Philistines were provided for him.
- These attendants were more like bodyguards (over Samson, the foreigner-groom) than companions.

(4) Samson proposes a riddle-contest (12-13)

Judges 14:12-13

"Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. ¹³If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes."

"Tell us your riddle," they said. "Let's hear it."

(5) Samson speaks the riddle (14)

Judges 14:14

He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." For three days they could not give the answer.

(6) The riddle is solved

- Three days passed and the thirty have no answer (14).
- On the fourth day the thirty enlist Samson's soon-to-be wife to assist them. She agrees and begins to wear down Samson's resolve through peevish whining and tears (15-17).
- On the seventh day Samson is worn down and tells his "fiancée" (note: the marriage will not be official until the seventh day and the consummation).
- The companions reveal the answer (to get the wagered reward of clothing).

Judges 14:18

Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle."

d. Samson's wedding story: summarized (19-20)

Judges 14:19-20

*Then the **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father's home. ²⁰And Samson's wife was given to one of his companions who had attended him at the feast.*

- (1) For the third time in his life the Holy Spirit works in/through Samson (cf. 13:25; 14:6, 19).
- (2) Samson is perhaps unwittingly accomplishing the role of judge to deliver the Israelites from Philistine oppression. His motives are mixed (if even that) but God is working nonetheless through him and his failings.
- (3) His passionate anger against the thirty companions of Timnah has translated into the death of thirty Philistines at Ashkelon.

(4) To top it off, Samson returns to Timnah to discover that his “fiancée” has been given to one of the thirty.

3. The vengeance of Samson (15:1-20)

a. The return to Timnah (1-8)

After his anger had cooled Samson returned with a bridal gift (“young goat”) to consummate the interrupted wedding feast. His father-in-law had given the “bride” to another and offered the younger sister. Samson now (as contrasted to before) believes he has the right to enact revenge. He burns up valuable Philistine fields.

Judges 15:6-8

When the Philistines asked, “Who did this?” they were told, “Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, because his wife was given to his companion.” So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death.

⁷Samson said to them, “Since you’ve acted like this, I swear that I won’t stop until I get my revenge on you.”

⁸He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam.

b. The pursuit to capture Samson (9-13)

(1) The Philistines enter the land of Judah (9),

(2) The Philistines only want Samson as their prisoner (10).

(3) The men of Judah choose to compromise with the life of Samson rather than fight for their freedom from the Philistines (11-13).

c. The power of Samson comes upon his enemies (14-17)

Judges 15:14-17

*As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The **Spirit of the Lord** came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands.*

¹⁵Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it

and struck down a thousand men. ¹⁶Then Samson said, "With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey's jawbone I have killed a thousand men." ¹⁷When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi.

d. The prayer of Samson, now a deliverer-judge (18-21)

Judges 15:18-19

Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord, "You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore, and it is still there in Lehi.

(1) Samson gives God the credit (18).

(2) Samson cries out for God's help (18-19).

(3) Samson will judge for seventeen years (21).

4. Samson and Delilah (16:1-22)

a. His immoral behavior at Gaza (1-3)

Instead of being the judge-deliverer of the oppressors, the Philistines, Samson engages in an inappropriate liaison with a prostitute.

b. His ill-advised affair in the Valley of Sorek (4-5)

Judges 16:4-5

Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. ⁵The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver."

c. His ill-fated interactions with Delilah (6-20)

Delilah was bribed to find the secret to Samson's power and strength. Thus, a cat-and-mouse episode began.

The following chart summarizes the affair (6-20).

| SAMSON AND DELILAH | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| The aim: To discover the secret of Samson's strength | | | |
| Episode Number | Samson's Revelation | Delilah's Action | Result |
| 1 (16:6-9) | Tie me with seven fresh thongs (bowstrings) | "Philistines are upon you" | Samson breaks the bonds ("You made a fool of me") |
| 2 (16:10-12) | Tie me securely with new (unused) ropes | "Philistines are upon you" | Samson snaps the ropes ("Fool of me... lying to me") |
| 3 (16:13-14) | Weave seven braids of my head... tighten with a pin to a loom | "Philistines are upon you" | Samson pulls up pin and loom (Don't love me... "made a fool of me"... Nagging day after day) |
| 4 (16:15-20) | Told her everything... shave my head (Nazarite) | Lulled Samson to sleep... cut his hair "Philistines are upon you" | "And his strength left him" "...the Lord had left him" |

d. The inglorious aftermath (21-22)

Judges 16:21-22

Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

²²But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

5. Death of Samson (16:23-31)

a. Rulers of the Philistines celebrate through sacrifice to Dagon the fall of Samson (23-24).

b. Rulers of the Philistines bring Samson to gloat over him (25).

Judges (16:25)

While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars...

c. Samson turns the tables upon the rulers of the Philistines (26-30).

Judges 16:28-30

Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." ²⁹Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, ³⁰Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

d. Burial of Samson (31)

Insight: Samson

Samson was a tragic figure with great promise at his birth, mostly a dismal failure in life with a brief personal revival at the end.

As a Nazarite, he consistently broke his vow: he drank wine (likely other alcoholic drink), he touched a dead carcass, and he allowed Delilah to cut his hair.

Further, he had the enabling Holy Spirit but seemingly little appreciation for it. He was lusty, selfish, rash, impious.

Yet, for all that, God chose to use him in spite of his weakness. Is there a lesson here for us all?

IV. TAKEAWAYS

A. From Jephthah

1. Selfish ambition can lead to disaster.

Philippians 2:3

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...

2. Rash vows are to be avoided.

Numbers 30:1-2

Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: ²When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Matthew 5:33-37

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

B. From Samson

At least three lessons can be learned from Samson's life. Note the following taken from Cupp, "Panorama of the Bible," 96:

1. Samson's life parallels the journey of Israel. Both were called to be holy/separated unto the Lord; both ignored God's clear command of purity.
2. Samson chased after foreign women; Israel chased after foreign gods.
3. Samson had the power of the Holy Spirit but lost it; Israel had the presence of Holy Spirit but neglected it.

SESSION 5

Difficulties During the Judges

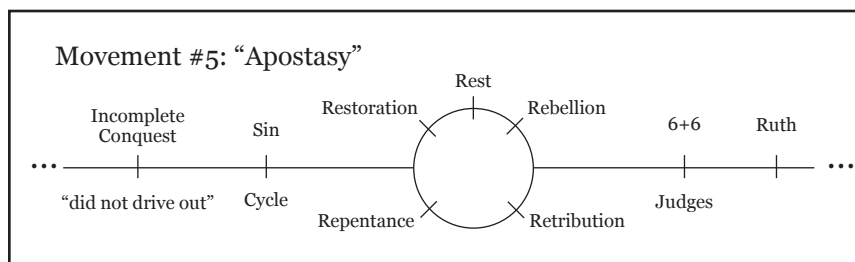
I. PRAYER

II. BOOK OF JUDGES

A. Charted

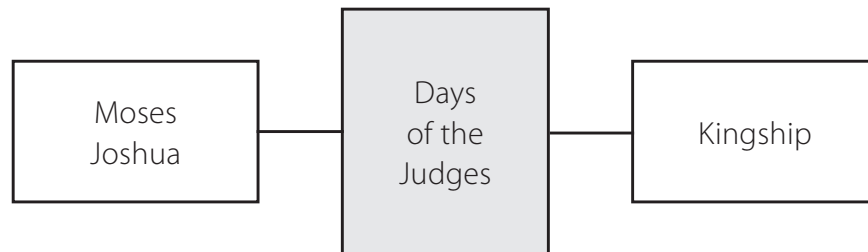
| JUDGES | | |
|--|--|--|
| KEY THEME: "Defeat and Deliverance" | KEY PHRASE: "Did Evil" | KEY CONCEPT: "Sin Cycle" |
| Days of the Judges 1 3 | Deeds of the Judges 3 16 | Difficulties during the Judges 17 21 |
| Prologue | Body | Appendix |
| Sin Cycle (Judges 2) | 6 Major - 6 Minor | Idolatry/Civil War |

B. Timeline (Movement 5: Apostasy)



III. DIFFICULTIES DURING THE JUDGES

A. Context of Judges



B. Appendix (Judg 17-21) Related to the Stories of the Judges (Judg 3-16)

1. Judges 17-21 forms additional, appended material (stories) that occurred during the time of the judges.
2. These stories are different from the “sin cycle” pattern of the six major and six minor judges of Judges 3-16 (cf. sin cycle pattern in Judg 2:10-19).
3. Chronologically these stories occur during the days of the judges but their inclusion at the end of the book seems to point further to the deterioration of religious and moral life.

Four key passages within this section summarize the problem and anticipate the future kingship period:

- a. Judges 17:6
In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.
- b. Judges 18:1
In those days Israel had no king. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking a place of their own where they might settle, because they had not yet come into an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.
- c. Judges 19:1
In those days Israel had no king. Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

- d. Judges 21:25
In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

C. The Bethlehem Trilogy

1. Micah, the Levite and the Danites (Judg 17-18)
2. The Levite, his concubine and the Benjamites (Judg 19-21)
3. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz (Book of Ruth)

IV. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT: JUDGES 17-18 (Micah, the Levite and the Danites)

A. Micah and the Levite (Judg 17:1-13)

1. Micah and his idols (1-6)
Judges 17:1-2
Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim² said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse—I have that silver with me; I took it." Then his mother said, "The Lord bless you, my son!"
 - a. Micah ("who is like the Lord?") is from the hill country of Ephraim (north of Dan, Benjamin, and Judah's original allotments).
 - b. Apparently he stole from his mother who "cursed" the unknown thief. Micah admits his guilt and his mother attempts to bless her son (to counteract her curse?)
 - c. Micah returned the large sum of money; his mother devoted the entire sum to have an idol crafted. This is problematic for two reasons:
 - (1) Worshiping idols was forbidden (Ex 20:4).
 - (2) Declaring to give all before the Lord (and yet giving only a smaller part) was deceitful and hypocritical (cf. Acts 5:1-11; Ananias and Sapphira).

Judges 17:5

Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some household gods and installed one of his sons as his priest.

- (a) The shrine was not permitted (Deut 12:1-14).
- (b) The ephod and idols were not permitted.
- (c) The installation of a son as a household priest was not permitted.
- (d) The attitude of the day of doing what was fit (right) in one's own eyes was not permitted.

2. Micah and the Levite (7-13)

Judges 17:7-8

A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah, ⁸left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim.

- a. The Levite was from Bethlehem (not a Levitical city; cf. Num 35:1-8; Josh 21:1-42).
- b. The Levite was apparently not an Aaronic priest (i.e. of the Levitical lineage of Aaron); the text does not describe him in this way.

Micah hires the Levite to be his household priest thinking that to do so would bring God's blessing (17:9-13).

B. The Levite and the Danites (Judg 18:1-31)

The sordid story begins with a reminder: "In those days Israel had no king" (18:1^a). The tribe of Dan had found it near impossible to drive out the Philistines from their appointed inheritance. On a scouting party to find new land to settle, five spies from Dan had a chance meeting with the "priest" in Micah's home.

Later, after discovering the land around Laish (Huleh basin north of the Sea of Galilee), the spies brought six hundred soldiers through the hill country of Ephraim where Micah's

home was located. They were in route militarily to the favorable land in the north.

The soldiers stole from Micah's home the carved image, the ephod, the other household gods, the cast idol, and finally persuaded the priest to also come with them. "Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" (18:19^b).

Micah and some hastily recruited Ephraimites pursued the Danites but prudently backed down from potential violence with the larger, stronger Danites.

This story illustrates at least four major failings (sins).

1. The Danites had no business leaving their original allotment. God had providentially controlled the process. Rather, the Danites should have trusted God and driven out the Canaanites from their God-appointed land.
2. Both Micah and the Danites were wrong to employ a Levite to become their personal priest and establish (though forbidden) their own place of worship.

Deuteronomy 12:1-7

These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. ²Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains, on the hills and under every spreading tree, where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. ³Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. ⁴You must not worship the Lord your God in their way. ⁵But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; ⁶there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. ⁷There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

3. Idols and non-prescribed, religious articles associated with false worship were strictly forbidden. Micah should not have established these in his home. The Danites should not have transferred these to the land in the north.

Exodus 20:4

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

4. Micah sinned against God by first establishing his son as a priest. Further, Micah sinned later in asking a Levite (not even an Aaronic priest) to serve as a family priest. The Danites sinned not only in stealing that which was not theirs to take but in perpetuating the false priesthood and false worship of the Levite. These sins were highly presumptive upon God to bless what He explicitly denied.

The Danites settled in the captured city (and area) of Laish. Their spiritual condition is at an extreme low.

Judges 18:28^b-31

The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there.²⁹ They named it Dan after their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel—though the city used to be called Laish.³⁰ There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land.³¹ They continued to use the idol Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.

V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT: JUDGES 19-21 (The Levite, the Concubine, and the Danites)

The second of the Bethlehem Trilogy was a story of intertribal civil war. This incident probably occurred early in the days of the Judges (note the reference to Phinehas, son of Eleazar—cf. Num 25:7, 11; Josh 22:13, 31 ff.), yet is placed here to show additional evidence of that which Joshua warned:

Joshua 23:9-13

“The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

¹²“But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

The failure to drive out the Canaanites led to ever-increasing Canaanite influences upon the people of God, the Israelites. This deterioration began early and ran throughout this period of time. This negative influence is sometimes called the “Canaanization of Israel.”

A. A Levite and His Concubine (Judg 19:1-30)

1. The setting (1^a): “In those days Israel had no king.”
2. The story (1^b-8)

Judges 19:1^b-4

*Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine **from Bethlehem** in Judah.*

²But she was unfaithful to him. She left him and went back to her parents’ home in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months, ³her husband went to her to persuade her to return. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her parents’ home, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him. ⁴His father-in-law, the woman’s father, prevailed on him to stay; so he remained with him three days, eating and drinking, and sleeping there.

- a. The Levite (of hill country of Ephraim) was not living in a Levitical city (first hint of something not quite right).
- b. The Levite took a concubine to be his wife (against the original standard – Gen 2:24). This also points to a moral laxness indicative of the times.
- c. The Levite and his concubine quarreled (or better, “she was unfaithful”). She had returned to her father’s house.
- d. The Levite attempted to persuade her to return home, a plan apparently endorsed by the concubine’s father.

3. The separation (9-15)

After four and one half days, the Levite, his concubine and his servant begin the journey home. Not wishing to stay in Jebus (later Jerusalem), they travel to Gibeah expecting a display of “oriental hospitality.” No such care was given. In fact, extreme sinfulness is on the horizon.

Judges 19:14-15

So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. ¹⁵There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them in for the night.

4. The sinful Gibeahites (16-30)

- a. The hospitable old man of Gibeah (16-21)

Judges 19:20-21

“You are welcome at my house,” the old man said. “Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square.” ²¹So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink.

- b. The sinful men of Gibeah (22-28)

Judges 19:22-24

While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, “Bring out the man who came

to your house so we can have sex with him.”²³The owner of the house went outside and said to them, “No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don’t do this outrageous thing.”²⁴Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But as for this man, don’t do such an outrageous thing.”

- (1) The story reminds one of the incident in Sodom (Gen 19:1-11). What characterized the Sodom-Canaanites of old has become the behavior of Israelites in Gibeah.
- (2) The old man felt a responsibility to protect his guest (custom of hospitality) and did so by offering his virgin daughter. But the offer itself is both revealing and unacceptable (intercourse outside of marriage; flagrant disregard of the protection of one’s daughter).
- (3) The sinful men refuse to listen.
- (4) The Levite pushes his concubine out the door into the hands of the evil mob.

Judges 19:25-26

But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go.²⁶At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.

- (5) The violence of that night led to the concubine’s death.

c. The surprising action of the Levite (29-30)

Judges 19:29-30

When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel.³⁰Everyone who saw it was saying to one another, “Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came

*up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something!
So speak up!"*

- (1) The Levite shows no emotion to her apparent death.
- (2) The Levite takes the body home.
- (3) The Levite cuts up the body into twelve parts, sending a part "into all the areas of Israel."
- (4) The Levite's action causes all to question, "Think about it! Consider it! Tell us what to do!"

Insight: Distasteful Threads in the Story: Note...

1. The Levite's desire for (marital) reconciliation compared to the Levite's casual discarding of her to evil men...
2. The Levite's apparent lack of emotion to the death of his concubine...
3. The sinful demands (unrestrained lust and depravity) of the rapist mob of Gibeah...
4. The bizarre action of cutting the body of the concubine into twelve parts...
5. The call to uncertain action (of the tribes) due to the sordid story.

B. Civil War in Israel (Judg 20:1-48)

The story continues. From a focus on despicable moral laxness (even degenerating morals) in Judges 19, the next chapter exposes the political disarray of the tribes.

1. The story of the Levite (1-7)

In response to the twelve body parts (19:29-30), Israelites from Dan to Beersheba (North to South, i.e. all Israel represented) assemble at Mizpah to hear firsthand the Levite's story.

Judges 20:2-3

The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of God's people, four hundred thousand men armed with swords. ³(The Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the Israelites said, "Tell us how this awful thing happened."

2. The reactions of the assembled (8-11)

In unity the Israelites determine to select by lots a provisional army to go to the Gibeathites (townspeople) within Benjamin (tribal allotment). This army "can give them what they deserve" (10).

3. The peaceful attempt of a settlement (12-13^a)

Judges 20:12-13^a

The tribes of Israel sent messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What about this awful crime that was committed among you? ¹³Now turn those wicked men of Gibeah over to us so that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel."

4. The response of Gibeah and the Tribe of Benjamin (13^b-16)

"But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites" (13^b). Instead, they mustered their soldiers for war.

5. The preparation for battle (17-18)

The Israelites vastly outnumber the Benjamites (over 15-1 odds). Israel inquires of the Lord at Bethel (the location of the Tabernacle, some 4-5 miles from Mizpah). Judah was to be the first tribe to fight against Benjamin.

6. The warfare (19-23)

a. First encounter (19-23)

Judges 20:19-23

The next morning the Israelites got up and pitched camp near Gibeah. ²⁰The Israelites went out to fight the Benjamites and took up battle positions against them at Gibeah. ²¹The Benjamites came out of Gibeah

and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelites on the battlefield that day.²² But the Israelites encouraged one another and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the first day.²³ The Israelites went up and wept before the Lord until evening, and they inquired of the Lord. They said, "Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites?" The Lord answered, "Go up against them."

b. Second encounter (24-28)

Judges 20:24-25

Then the Israelites drew near to Benjamin the second day.²⁵ This time, when the Benjamites came out from Gibeah to oppose them, they cut down another eighteen thousand Israelites, all of them armed with swords.

The defeat caused the Israelites to go to Bethel and weep before the Lord (26). Again they inquired of the Lord whether to go against their brothers (27-28). The answer was "Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands" (28).

c. Third encounter (29-48)

In the final engagement Israel set an ambush against Gibeah (29). Drawing the Gibeahites out of their city to pursue the initial attack of Israelites, the Israelite soldiers hidden in reserve there frontally assaulted Gibeah (31-34). This strategy mirrored that of Joshua and the Israelites in the conquering of Ai.

Judges 20:35-36

The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel, and on that day the Israelites struck down 25,100 Benjamites, all armed with swords.³⁶ Then the Benjamites saw that they were beaten. Now the men of Israel had given way before Benjamin, because they relied on the ambush they had set near Gibeah.

The routing of Gibeah and the Benjamite soldiers was brutal and decisive.

Judges 20:46-48

On that day twenty-five thousand Benjamite swordsmen fell, all of them valiant fighters.⁴⁷ But six hundred of them turned and fled into the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, where they stayed four months.⁴⁸ The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything else they found. All the towns they came across they set on fire.

C. Preservation of Benjamin (Judg 21:1-25)

1. Post-war sorrow for Benjamin (1-9)

Following the tribal civil war, the victorious Israelites realized that the tribe of Benjamin (their brothers) was nearly extinct (600 men remained; cf. 20:47).

Judges 21:2-3

The people went to Bethel, where they sat before God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly. ³“Lord, God of Israel,” they cried, “why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?”

All of the tribes were called to a solemn, required assembly during this war aftermath. However, it was later discovered that none from Jabesh Gilead were present (21:8-9).

2. Post-war anger against Jabesh Gilead (10-12)

Societal, tribal morality has reached an all-time low. Now, angered that Jabesh Gilead has failed to appear, the Israelites send fighting men for vengeance and to procure women for the depleted males of Benjamin (12).

3. Post-war proposal to Benjamin (13-24)

- a. The virgins of Jabesh Gilead (400) were offered to the men of Benjamin (600) (13-14).
- b. The shortage of women causes a further problem (15-18).

Judges 21:15-18

The people grieved for Benjamin, because the Lord had made a gap in the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶And the elders of the assembly said, "With the women of Benjamin destroyed, how shall we provide wives for the men who are left? ¹⁷The Benjamite survivors must have heirs," they said, "so that a tribe of Israel will not be wiped out. ¹⁸We can't give them our daughters as wives, since we Israelites have taken this oath: 'Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to a Benjamite.'"

- c. The "creative" solution included a "loophole" to allow Israelite women to be "carried" off from the annual celebration festival at Shiloh (perhaps the harvest feast of Tabernacles) (19-24).
 - (1) Technically, an oath had been given that no Israelite woman could be given to Benjamin (18).
 - (2) The young women of Jabesh Gilead were too few for the surviving Benjamites (400 women for 600 men).
 - (3) The men of Benjamin were to hide in the vineyards and when the celebration and dancing began, they could "rush from the vineyards" and each one could "seize a wife."
 - (4) Thus, when the fathers complained, the elders could plead the Benjamite case and point out that "technically" they had not given their daughters (thus breaking the oath) but that the daughters were taken.

Judges 21:23

So that is what the Benjamites did. While the young women were dancing, each man caught one and carried her off to be his wife. Then they returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the towns and settled in them.

- (5) The Biblical text does not indicate that God approved the subterfuge. In fact, God can permit while not endorsing man's plans and schemes.

Insight: Final verse of the Book of Judges

“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did what he saw fit”
(Judg 21:25).

VI. TAKEAWAYS

A. Appendix Stories (Judg 17-21)

1. In these added episodes we see the spiritual and moral decline of the Israelites.

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.

2. In these episodes we see how a lack of strong leadership for the whole Israelite nation has caused an imploding of ethical standards and unbridled revenge against one's brothers. In none of these appended stories was worship of Baal the primary cause. “The Israelites needed no judge or king to lead them into apostasy or battle. They did both on their own” (Constable, *Notes on Judges*, 137).

B. Major Sin Issues

1. Sexual sin was highlighted (cf. Levite's concubine, the mob at Gibeah).
2. Theft was reported (cf. Micah, the Danites).
3. The moral fabric of the tribes was disintegrating. It seems to parallel the New Testament listing of the “acts of sinful nature” or the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

4. Consideration for the value of human life was at a low point.

C. Sad Conclusion (to Judg 17-21)

Constable (*Notes on Judges*, 137) quotes Inrig for an apt conclusion:

“Judges 9-21 gives us the ugliest story in the Bible. The key to it is that, at every stage, men were acting on the basis of what was right in their own eyes. As far as the men of Gibeah were concerned, rape was all right. To the farmer and the Levite in the house, homosexual rape was unthinkable, but other rape was acceptable. The men of Benjamin thought it was right to overlook sin and to defend evil men. To Israel, revenge and retaliation would be justified, and to solve their problems about marriage for the Benjamites, the massacre of innocent people and kidnapping could be condoned.

“The interesting thing is that none of this had anything [?] to do with idolatry and Baal worship. It began with individuals ignoring the law of God, doing what was right in their own eyes, and it led a whole nation into moral collapse.”

SESSION 6

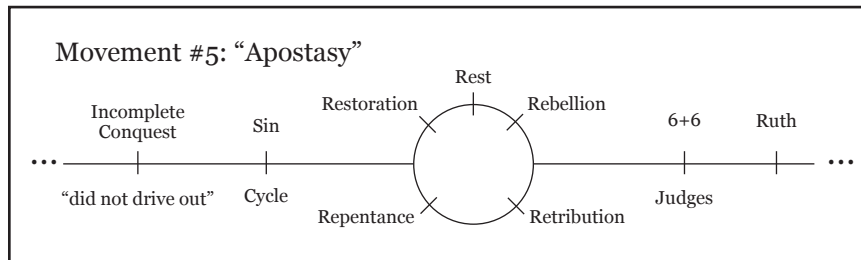
Ruth

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE: MOVEMENTS 1-5

| PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Movements | Biblical Books |
| 1. "Prologue" | Genesis 1-11 |
| 2. "Patriarchs" | Genesis 12-50; Job |
| 3. "Redemption" "Wanderings" | Exodus; Leviticus Numbers; Deuteronomy |
| 4. "Conquest" | Joshua |
| 5. "Apostasy" | Judges; Ruth |

III. MOVEMENT 5: APOSTASY (Timeline)



IV. THE BOOK OF RUTH

A. Charted

| BOOK OF RUTH | | | | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Chapter 1 | Chapter 2 | Chapter 3 | Chapter 4 |
| Key People | Naomi Accompanied by Ruth | Ruth Meets Boaz | Ruth Before Boaz | Boaz Marries Ruth |
| Locations | Moab to Bethlehem | Fields of Boaz | Threshing Floor | Town Gate |
| Theme | Predicament | Planning | | Provision |
| Closing | Epilogue: "Genealogy of King David" (4:13-22) | | | |

B. Contextualized

1. Chronology

The story of the Book of Ruth occurs chronologically during the time of the judges, "In the days when the judges ruled..." (Ru 1:1^a). No other time markers are provided in the text except that Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David (Ru 4:21-22; Matt 1:5). Working from David's birth (1040 BC) and anointing as king (at age 30 in 1010 BC), a reasonable date for Ruth's story would be in the vicinity of 1140 BC (though some might argue for around 1100 BC—see Constable, **Notes on Ruth**, 2). This could, then, make Ruth and Boaz contemporaries of Gideon, perhaps during the forty years of peace in his judgeship (Judg 8:28). The dating is conjecture, though, yet reasonable.

2. By Canon

The Book of Ruth was attached to the end of Judges in the Hebrew Bible ordering. Later it was placed in the Kethubim (“Writings”) section.

The Book of Ruth follows Judges in the English Bible arrangements for at least two good reasons:

- (a) The chronological time marker of Ruth 1:1 (“In the days when the judges ruled”) sets the stage for the saga.
- (b) The Appendix of Judges (Chapters 17-21) is thematically related to Ruth. Note the following “Insight.”

Insight: “The Bethlehem Trilogy”

This title has been applied to the three stories that have the geographical link of Bethlehem to each one.

1. Micah, the Levite (from Bethlehem), and the Danites (Judg 17-18).
2. The Levite (from Bethlehem), his concubine, and the Benjamites (Judg 19-21).
3. Ruth, Naomi, Boaz (Bethlehem).

C. Considered

1. As to “historical” purpose:
 - a. To provide an historical link from Perez to David (closing genealogy, Ru 4:18-22).
 - b. To provide background on the story of David’s great-grandmother, Ruth.
2. As to “theological” purpose:
 - a. To trace the ancestry of David back to Judah and Bethlehem (cf. Gen 49:10).
 - b. To present noteworthy individuals as models of sacrificial love.

Insight: Constable quoting NET Bible:

“The theological message of the Book of Ruth may be summarized as follows: God cares for needy people like Naomi and Ruth; he is their ally in the chaotic world. He richly rewards people like Ruth and Boaz who demonstrate sacrificial love and in so doing become his instruments in helping the needy. God’s rewards for those who sacrificially love others sometimes exceed their wildest imagination and transcend their lifetime.”

3. As to “Christological” purpose:
 - a. To provide the important historical, genealogical linkage to the Messiah-Jesus (cf. Matt 1:1-17; esp. vv. 1, 5-6).
 - b. To perhaps foreshadow the ministry of Kinsman-Redeemer to Christ, our Redeemer.

V. BOOK OF RUTH: CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

Often Biblical scholars have detected compositional strategies on how Biblical texts were carefully composed. Chiasms are the arranging of similar ideas in descending and ascending order. The form follows this format.

A
B
C (The main point of the chiasm)
B¹
A¹

Schwab (*Ruth: Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1309) proposes a helpful chiasmic overview to the Book of Ruth. See Appendix A, Chiasmic Structure of the Book of Ruth (page 132), for the full treatment. (Note the centerpiece of the chiasm for literary emphasis).

VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT: BOOK OF RUTH

A. Predicament (Ru 1:1-22)

1. Setting (1-2)

Ruth 1:1-2

*In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from **Bethlehem** in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ²The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.*

Note:

- a. The man and his family were from Bethlehem ("House of Bread"). This is the third of the Bethlehem Trilogy stories (Refer back to page 111.)
- b. The man, his wife, and two sons travel to Moab to escape a time of famine in the homeland ("House of Bread"). Although in earlier times Moab was Israel's enemy (cf. Judg 3:2-14), relations were now peaceful.
- c. The text does not approve or disapprove of the move. Nor does the text indicate that God moved Elimelech (or Elimelek—the names are interchangeable) to make the move. But nothing good (save Ruth herself) will come from this sojourn.

2. Situation (3-5)

Ruth 1:3-4^a

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴They married Moabite women...

- a. Elimelech ("My God is King"; cf. the final verse of Judg 21:25 – "In those days Israel had no king") dies.
- b. Naomi is widowed. The question in the mind of the reader is, "Who will take care of the family?" The answer would be, "The sons."
- c. Mahlon and Kilion marry Moabite women, but both sons die without children (5). The question arises

again with no answer. "Who will take care of Naomi and her two widowed daughters-in-law?"

3. Solution: Proposed (6-10)

Word reached Naomi that the famine had lifted for Bethlehem in the land of Judah. Preparations were made to return (6-7).

Ruth 1:8-10

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud ¹⁰and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

- a. Naomi blesses Orpah and Ruth and asks for God's loyalty – love and kindness (Heb "hesed") to be upon them.
- b. Naomi further wishes that each might find a husband and have "rest" (a peaceful, secure, normal life).
- c. Both young widows are deeply emotional and with anguish and tears state their intent to follow Naomi to her home, her people, her God (10).

4. Solution: Discussed (11-13)

Ruth 1:11-13

But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹²Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— ¹³would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

- a. Naomi recognizes that it is impossible for her to have sons for the daughters-in-law to marry. And even if such a thing were possible, how could they wait for the sons to grow up?

- b. Apparently Naomi has Levirate-type marriage in view.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6

If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

- c. Naomi concludes her bitter remorse, "It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me" (1:13).

5. The solution: settled (14-22)

- a. Orpah returns home (14-15)

Ruth 1:14-15

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵"Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

- b. Ruth refuses to leave Naomi (16-18)

Ruth 1:16-17

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

Note Ruth's determination:

- (1) I will go where you go.
- (2) I will stay where you stay.
- (3) Your people will be my people.
- (4) Your God ("Elohim") will be my God.
- (5) Where you die, I will die.
- (6) Where are buried, I will be buried.

Ruth1:18

When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

c. Naomi and Ruth travel to Bethlehem (19-22)

(1) The whole town was amazed to see Naomi and wondered if it was truly she.

(2) Naomi bitterly replied:

Ruth 1:20

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter."

- Naomi's name means "sweetness."
- Naomi's self-suggested new name should be "bitterness" (Mara).
- Naomi's belief is that the Lord (YHWH) has afflicted her.

Ruth 1:22

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

B. Planning (Judg 2:1-3:18)

1. Meeting of Boaz in the fields (2:1-23)

The previous chapter sets the stage for a divine appointment. Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem "as the barley harvest was beginning" (1:22).

a. Entering the fields (1-7)

(1) Gleaning and working in the fields (1-3)

Ruth 2:1-3

Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. ²And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

³So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

- (a) Boaz was “a man of standing” related to Elimelek.
- (b) Ruth proposed to Naomi a plan for gleaning grain, a practice permitted in Scripture:

Leviticus 19:9-10

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 23:22

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.”

- (c) Naomi agrees, Ruth leaves to glean, neither realizing that by God’s providence, Ruth would be soon gleaning in the fields of Boaz.

(2) Greeting and questioning by Boaz (4-7)

Boaz arrives at his fields and warmly, spiritually greets his harvesters (4). This further enhances the positiveness of this “man of standing.”

Ruth 2:5-7

Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?” ⁶The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.”

- (a) Boaz expresses interest in the stranger in his fields.
 - (b) The foreman identifies her as the Moabitess who came with Naomi. He further commends her for her hard work in the fields.
- b. Encountering Boaz (8-23)

(1) Goodness of Boaz (8-13)

Boaz addresses Ruth in a most kindly way.

Ruth 2:8-9

So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. ⁹Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

- (a) Boaz addresses her as "my daughter" (indicating both age differences and affection).
- (b) Boaz implores her to only glean in his fields.
- (c) Boaz promises protection ("men not to touch you") and provision (grain and water).

Ruth questions why Boaz should be so kind to "a foreigner." Boaz explains:

Ruth 2:11-12

Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹²May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

(2) Graciousness of Boaz (14-16)

Ruth replies graciously (2:13). Boaz further blesses her by inviting her to sit with his harvesters and eat (2:14).

After Ruth departs, Boaz instructs his men to treat Ruth with respect and leave choice grain for her to glean. (2:15-16).

(3) Gratitude of Ruth and Naomi (17-23)

Ruth 2:17-18

So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. ¹⁸She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

Naomi inquires of Ruth as to the identity of the gracious one who provided so much and so kindly (19).

Ruth replied that his name was Boaz.

Ruth 2:20

"The Lord bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers."

Insight: “Kinsman-Redeemer”

The NIV translates “kinsman-redeemer” while the ESV simply notes, “a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.”

The Hebrew participle (“go’el”) served as a technical term regarding Hebrew family law. The idea is one of a kinsman, a family relative, who is responsible for the well-being of a relative. The go’el could redeem property for an impoverished family member, buy that one out of slavery due to poverty, and other matters.

It appears that the Levirate responsibility of Deuteronomy 25:5-10 was also included as a part of “kinsman-redeemer concern.”

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

⁷However, if a man does not want to marry his brother’s wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, “My husband’s brother refuses to carry on his brother’s name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.”

⁸Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, “I do not want to marry her;” ⁹his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.” ¹⁰That man’s line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.

Note these traditions as they weave together in the Book of Ruth.

Ruth 2:21-23

Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'" ²²Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." ²³So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

2. Mission of Ruth at the threshing floor (Ru 3:1-18)

a. Advice from Naomi (1-5)

The counsel of Naomi has troubled many readers of this story. Naomi has decided to play matchmaker and find a home (lit. "find rest") for Ruth, that is, a suitable husband. Naomi's target is the relative, Boaz. Naomi's advice follows:

Ruth 3:2-4

Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

Note:

- (1) Boaz was a relative (who could perpetuate the lineage of Elimelek through sons and daughters with Ruth).
- (2) Boaz had favorably treated Ruth in the gleaning fields (over and above kindly assistance). He had expressed unusual interest in the "foreigner."
- (3) Ruth was instructed to prepare herself to be as pleasing as possible to Boaz. By uncovering his feet, she was symbolically presenting herself for marriage consideration and protection.

(4) Ruth was further instructed to listen to Boaz's reply, "He will tell you what to do" (4).

b. Action by Ruth (6-9)

Ruth agreed to Naomi's advice (5) and followed her instructions carefully (6). When Boaz had finished his eating and drinking and had settled down for sleep, Ruth "approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down" (7).

In the middle of the night Boaz awoke.

Ruth 3:9

"Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."

(1) Ruth replied that she is Boaz's servant (placing herself under his authority).

(2) Ruth requested that Boaz "spread the corner of your garment over me." The action could be seen as provocative with sexual innuendo. Better, however, these symbolic acts place Ruth in the position of "proposing" not "propositioning" Boaz.

(3) Ruth shares her rationale for the unexpected actions, "since you are a kinsman-redeemer." The invitation was clear. If Boaz had any interest in Ruth, she was placing herself under his authority to act, to pursue or not pursue.

c. Appreciation of Boaz (10-13)

Ruth 3:10-13

"The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹²Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he

wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

- d. Acknowledgment by Boaz (14-18)
 - (1) Boaz encouraged Ruth to leave quietly before morning light and keep secret the events of the night (14).
 - (2) Boaz filled Ruth's shawl with six measures of barley, then he left for town. Boaz is seen here as one who blesses and takes care of the woman (who will become his wife – Ruth 4).
 - (3) Ruth returns to Naomi and narrates the events of the night. Naomi replies, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today" (18).

C. Provision (Ru 4:1-12)

The final chapter brings the story to a climax. The destitute pair, Naomi and Ruth, have traveled to Bethlehem and providentially crossed paths with a relative of means and good reputation (Boaz). From Naomi's anguish, "the Lord's hand has gone out against me," (1:13) to the revelation that the Lord has blessed them (with the kindness of a possible kinsman-redeemer).

1. Discussion of close relatives (1-6)

While Boaz intends to wed Ruth, there is yet one potential kinsman-redeemer who is a closer relative (and thus, could exert that right).

 - a. The setting (1)

Ruth 4:1
Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

- (1) Boaz will waste no time.
- (2) Boaz arranged a meeting with the closer kin at the town gate, the place of commerce and legal matters.

b. The legal presentation (2-4)

Ruth 4:2-4

Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. ³Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said.

The meeting that Boaz has arranged (legally before ten elders) has one specific purpose. Is the closer relative ready to take on the kinsman-redeemer role? Since Naomi has no husband or sons, she has determined to sell the family land-inheritance. For the closer relative, this provides a way of expanding property rights.

So, the closer relative acts, "I will redeem it" (4).

c. The end of the proceedings (5-6)

Ruth 4:5-6

Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." ⁶At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

2. Decision of close relatives (called the kinsman-redeemer or go'el) (7-12)

a. The go'el speaks to Boaz (7-8)

Ruth 4:7-8

(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) ⁸So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.

b. Boaz replies to the go'el and witnesses (9-10)

Ruth 4:9-10

Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!"

c. The witnesses ratify the actions (11-12)

(1) The legal decision concerning the closer relative yielding his rights to Boaz is affirmed by elders and witnesses (11^a).

(2) The elders and witnesses bless Boaz and his intended, Ruth (11^b-12).

(a) May the Lord bless you with children (11^b).

(b) May you (Boaz) have high standing and fame in Bethlehem (11^c).

(c) May your family be like that of Perez (12).

Insight: Boaz/Ruth and Perez's parents, Judah/Tamar

Constable (**Notes on Ruth**, 33) notes:

The reference to Perez (v. 12) is also significant. There are many parallels between the story of Boaz and Ruth and the story of Perez's parents, Judah and Tamar (Gen 38). Ruth and Tamar were both foreigners who had married into Israel. The first husbands of both women died leaving them widows. Both women participated in levirate marriages. Tamar seduced Judah under cover of a disguise, but Ruth encouraged Boaz under the cover of night. When Judah and Tamar appeared before a public tribunal they were ashamed and condemned, but when Boaz and Ruth did so they received praise and blessing. In both cases the husbands were considerably older than the wives. Both women, however, bore sons in the Davidic messianic line, Ruth honorably and Tamar dishonorably. Tamar bore Perez, and Ruth bore Obed (lit. he who serves; v. 21). Obed lived up to his personality trait name by serving as Boaz and Ruth's son, and as Naomi's grandson.

D. Postlude (Ru 4:13-22)

1. The birth of a son (13-17)
 - a. Boaz marries Ruth (13^a)

Although marriage to a Moabitess was forbidden (Deut 23:3), Boaz "took Ruth and she became his wife." Apparently Ruth had in effect become a proselyte Jew ("your people will be my people and your God my God" – 1:16). And while the Deuteronomic law was clear, the Abrahamic Covenant was also clear, "and all peoples on earth (Gentiles) will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). The nation of Israel was always intended to be a missionary nation, "a kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:5-6). The Biblical text does not censure the union.

- b. Ruth conceives and gives birth to a son (13^b).
 - c. Naomi's predicament has now ended with the provision of a kinsman-redeemer (go'el) (14).

d. Naomi is pronounced a blessed woman

Ruth 4:15-17

He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”¹⁶Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

2. The genealogy of Perez (18-22)

The concluding genealogy traces the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz all the way to David, King of Israel.

Ruth 4:18-22

*This, then, is the family line of Perez:
Perez was the father of Hezron,
¹⁹Hezron the father of Ram,
Ram the father of Amminadab,
²⁰Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
²¹Salmon the father of Boaz,
Boaz the father of Obed,
²²Obed the father of Jesse,
and Jesse the father of David.*

Matthew 1:1, 5-6

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

*⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife...*

VII. TAKEAWAYS

A. From Ruth 1 (Predicament)

1. From the ashes of tragedy can come ultimate good.
The loss of husband and sons causes Naomi great grief and theological uncertainty. But God can even take harsh and bitter circumstances to accomplish His greater purposes.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

2. The character of Naomi and Ruth are praiseworthy.

Proverbs 11:3

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

Psalms 25:20-21

Guard my life and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. ²¹May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.

B. From Ruth 2-3 (Provision)

1. Ruth's kindness to Naomi and diligence to work is commendable.
The character of Ruth is on display in her affection for her mother-in-law and commitment to work hard to provide for the widowed duo.
2. Ruth's careful proposal (uncovering Boaz's feet and lying down) and Boaz's restraint in light of the action is remarkable. In what could have been a sexually-charged tension, both demonstrate restraint, propriety, purity, and honor.

C. From Ruth 4

1. God blesses the righteous (Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, Obed).
2. Ruth rises to fame through her actions and subsequent heritage. She becomes the great-grandmother of the future King David. He will be promised a descendant (Jesus, the Messiah King) who will rule over the everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:16).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

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