

Structure of Judges

Prologue 1:1-3:6

- Political decline (1:1-2:5)
 - The Israelites are supposed to occupy the land, but fail to drive the people out
 - The angel of the LORD confronts Israel about their lack of obedience and the consequences
 - The stage is set for the downward spiral

- Religious decline (2:6-3:6)
 - The Israelites did what was evil by abandoning Yahweh and worshipping foreign gods
 - Yahweh gave the Israelites over to their enemies as punishment
 - Yahweh sends a deliverer to save Israel

Structure of Judges

Character stories 3:7-16:31

- Othniel (3:7-11)
 - Prototype judge
- Ehud (3:12-30)
 - The cripple who delivers
- Deborah, Barak, Jael (4:1-5:31)
 - Who's the judge?
- Minor Judges (3:31; 10:1-5; 12:8-15)
 - Kings in the making
- Gideon (6:1-8:35)
 - Focal point of the book
 - Israel's failure to accept Yahweh as king
- Abimelech (9:1-57)
 - His name means "my father is king"
- Jephthah (11:1-12:7)
 - Yahweh is not manipulated
- Samson (13:1-16:31)
 - The worst of the worst

Structure of Judges

Epilogue 17:1-21:25

- Religious decline (17:1-18:31)
 - The tribe of Dan and a Levite form their own religion
 - There is now no distinction between Israel and the people of the land
 - Yahweh is now relegated as another god of the land

- Political decline (19:1-21:25)
 - The concubine story is an atrocity that happens within Israel among Israelites
 - The result of the concubine story is the tribe Benjamin being nearly wiped out
 - Israel is now fighting itself instead of the people of the land

Background Scriptures

Background scriptures

- Deuteronomy
 - Consequences for disobedience (Deut. 6:10-14,19; 7:1-5,16,22; 8:1-20; 9:4-21; 12:2-3,8,29-32; 28:1-68)
 - Characteristics of a king (Deut. 17:14-20)

- Joshua
 - The difference between conquering and occupying (Josh. 11:23; 13:1; 23:2-5)

- Israel's Idolatry
 - Egyptian gods, Canaanite gods, Beyond the River gods, Yahweh as a little god

Foreground Scriptures

Foreground scriptures

- Ruth
 - Book immediately follows Judges with connections
 - Redemption comes through a foreign woman (correct paradigm)
- 1st Samuel
 - Samuel and Samson connection
 - Israel demands a king and gets one
- Israel's Idolatry continued
 - Israel's kings and the great Exile

What role does Judges play in telling the greater story of the Bible?

How does Judges fit into the scripture around it?

Overarching Themes

Themes

- Idolatry
 - God warned Israel about idolatry before entering the promised land; what factors seduced the Israelites into deeper levels of idolatry?

- Flawed judge
 - The quality of the judges reduces significantly throughout the book, yet God's will is always accomplished. What does this teach the reader about God's sovereignty?

- Satirized kingship
 - Given the depiction of foreign kingship in the scripture, what conclusion is the reader supposed to reach about foreign kingship?

- Women
 - Women play a prominent role in Judges; what does their depiction in Judges tell the reader about the role of men?

- Unity
 - Israel fights against its enemies in the beginning, but by the end it is fighting itself. How does the pattern of the downward spiral make sense of this reversal?

Characteristics of the themes

- Typically go from bad to worse
- Assimilation with the people of the land
- Trust in God moves towards Trust in man
- Sex is a driving force
- Chaos continually increases
- God is sovereign through it all

Secondary Themes

- The tribe of Benjamin
 - Benjamin is cast in a negative light to discredit Saul's kingship
- South to North
 - The more northward the scripture goes the worse all the themes become
 - The result is the tribe of Dan forming their own religion outside of their allotted territory
- Intertextual connections
 - Many of the stories connect together through word usage and similar patterns
- Chronology and history in the Bible
 - The Bible is a theology book

Next Time...

The downward spiral will start next session

Read:

- Prologue 1:1-3:6

Think about:

- Political decline (people to people interactions)
- Religious decline (people to God interactions)
- How does Judges 2:10 inform us about the importance of parenting?