

LESSON FIVE

JUDGES

A. THE BOOK OF FAILURES:

The book of Judges is a book of failures followed in each case with divine deliverance. When Israel settled in Canaan it was a day of great promise. God had promised unusual blessing, stating that if the people followed Him faithfully, they would be "the head, and not the tail," and be "above only" and "not beneath" (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

In this book we have the account of a series of national calamities in which the enemies of Israel gained control of the land, and of the "judges" who were raised up to deliver God's people. The historical record given in this book shows the reason Israel did not receive the great blessings promised here. The main reason was that of disobedience. One of the key verses of Scripture which explains clearly why there were so many failures is repeated twice: *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).*

Throughout the book of Judges there is recorded a series of cycles which were all very similar. They followed mainly the following steps:

1. Lapse into idolatry;
2. Idolatry was followed by great immorality;
3. Judgment of God brought them under the servitude of other nations;
4. Judgment was followed by a cry of repentance;
5. In answer to their cry for help God sent them a deliverer;
6. They would remain faithful during the lifetime of the deliverer.

The main reasons for the failures and sins of Israel during this period of time may be summed up as follows:

1. FAILURE TO DRIVE THE CANAANITES FROM THE LAND:

Under Joshua important confederations from the north and south had been conquered. However, many Canaanites were left in the land. There were pockets of resistance which challenged Israel until the time of Saul. These Canaanites which were left in the land were the means of downfall to Israel. This was the main reason Israel lapsed again and again into idolatry.

2. LOST SENSE OF UNITY:

It became difficult to maintain a sense of unity. They still had a Theocratic government and the Tabernacle remained at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31). However, it soon became evident that each tribe was on its own.

3. MATERIAL PROSPERITY AND WORSHIP OF BAAL:

Baal was one of the gods of the Canaanites. He controlled rain and storm. The Israelites were attracted to this form of Idolatry for they wanted to prosper in their new agricultural way of life. We should carefully note these main reasons for failure in Israel for these same reasons may cause our defeat today.

B. THE TIME OF THE JUDGES:

The events of Judges were not chronological. The oppressions and deliverances were not successive, but occasionally while one part of the country was struggling for deliverance, the rest of the land had peace. Also, certain of the events overlapped in time. For example in Judges 10:7 it is implied that Jephthah, occupied with the Ammonites east of Jordan, and Samson, concerned with the Philistines on the west, were contemporary in activity. The sum of the time periods as given in Judges are:

Judges 3:8	Mesopotamian oppression	8 years
Judges 3:11	Othniel's deliverance	40 years
Judges 3:14	Moab oppression	18 years
Judges 3:30	Ehud's deliverance	80 years
Judges 4:3	Canaanite oppression	20 years
Judges 5:31	Deborah's deliverance	40 years
Judges 6:1	Midianite oppression	7 years
Judges 8:28	Gideon's deliverance	40 years
Judges 9:22	Abimelech's rule	3 years
Judges 10:2	Tola as judge	23 years
Judges 10:3	Jair as judge	22 years
Judges 10:8	Ammonite oppression	18 years
Judges 12:7	Jephthah's deliverance	6 years
Judges 12:9	Ibzan as judge	7 years
Judges 12:11	Elon as judge	10 years
Judges 12:14	Abdon as judge	8 years
Judges 13:1	Philistine oppression	40 years
Judges 15:20	Samson's exploits	<u>20 years</u>
	TOTAL	410 YEARS

It is necessary to reconcile this information with the following verse: *"And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel...he began to build the house of the Lord" (I Kings 6:1)*. This verse of Scripture states that there were 480 years between the Exodus and Solomon's fourth year. These years must include the following:

Wilderness period	40 years
Joshua's leadership possibly	16 years
Time between Samson and Saul possibly	5 years
Saul's reign	40 years
David's reign	40 years
Solomon's first four years	<u>4 years</u>
TOTAL	145 YEARS

A study of this information shows that there was an overlap of time in the events of Judges of 75 years. We may safely conclude that the actual length of time covered by the Judges was 335 years.

C. THE JUDGES:

The judges were twelve in number. They are listed as follows:

	<u>NAME</u>	<u>OPPRESSION</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
1.	Othniel	Mesopotamians	Judges 3:7-11
2.	Ehud	Moabites	Judges 3:12-30
3.	Shamgar		Judges 3:31
4.	Deborah with Barak	Canaanites	Judges 4 - 5
5.	Gideon	Midianites	Judges 6 - 8
6.	Tola		Judges 10:1-2
7.	Jair		Judges 10:3-5
8.	Jephthah	Ammonites	Judges 10:6 - 12:7
9.	Ibzan		Judges 12:8-10
10.	Elon		Judges 12:11-12
11.	Abdon		Judges 12:13-15
12.	Samson	Philistines	Judges 13 - 16

To this list sometimes are added Abimelech, Eli and Samuel. However, Abimelech was a renegade king during his three years of leadership and Eli and Samuel were high priest and prophet respectively.

D. THE SIX INVASIONS OR SERVITUDES:

Sometimes the whole country was not brought under the dominion of the enemy. On some occasions it was only the part that lay nearest to their respective territories that suffered from their attacks.

Here is a summary of the six servitudes:

1. The First Servitude: Mesopotamia - Judge, Othniel (Judges 3:5-9).
2. The Second Servitude: Moab - Judges, Ehud and Shamgar (Judges 3:12-31).
3. The Third Servitude: Jaban and Sisera - Judges, Deborah and Barak (Judges 4:1-23).
4. The Fourth Servitude: Midian - Judge, Gideon (Judges 6 & 7).
5. The Fifth Servitude: Philistines and Ammon - Judges, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (Judges 10 - 12).
6. The Sixth Servitude: Philistines - Judge, Samson (Judges 13 - 16).

E. INSECURITY OF THE EASTERN TRIBES:

The two and half tribes, which settled east of Jordan, were far more open to attack from the enemy than the other tribes. Apostasy from the true faith seemed to have broken out more frequently among them since they were closer to idolatrous neighbors. Because of this the suffered many chastisements and were the first to go into captivity.

LESSON FIVE

SELF HELP TEST

A. State clearly the three reasons why the book of Judges is a history of failures:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Name the twelve judges. Write these names from memory.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 7. |
| 2. | 8. |
| 3. | 9. |
| 4. | 10. |
| 5. | 11. |
| 6. | 12. |

C. Name the oppressor and the deliverer in each of the six servitudes:

	OPPRESSOR	DELIVERER
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____