

Episode #510 Judges Introduction – The Rule of the Judges

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King.

Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. The history of Judges covers well over 300 years of Israel's history. Israel was in the land between the conquest and the captivity around a thousand years. Judges is the early history.

Consider that our own country's history is less than 300 years! (Unless we go back to the colonies.)

III. The judges were leaders.

A. God was Israel's true King. He proves this when He says to Pharaoh: "Let My people go!" They were His by covenant made with Abraham. This was furthered by the covenant at Sinai: He was their King from then on.

B. We have three branches of government: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. The judge, however, was the representative of God, Israel's King. As such, they could do any one of these functions.

C. The judges were very informal leaders. Israel was a collection of tribes, like in the early history of our nation. We were "the United States of America," and the real power was in the states, with only a small national government to deal with external affairs, otherwise only a weak overseer of the states. This is how Israel was. The main government was in the tribal governments, and even more importantly their local and city governments. Here was most of the power. Each city was like its own little city-state. Only in the case of war or some disturbance would they get together in a national convocation to deal with national problems. The judge, then, was mainly to represent the LORD, but most government business took place on a local basis.

D. A judge, then, was like a prophet with some governmental and army connections. The judge's influence on a day-to-day basis was much stronger on a local level than a national one. His national influence was strong only during times of crisis or war. This was like our early colonies, which largely ran themselves.

E. Through the judges we can learn something of the works and ways of God.

IV. The book: its place and author.

A. Our division of the Old Testament is into law, history, writings, and prophets. But there was no history section in the Hebrew Bible. They had law, prophets, and writings. The Judges are among the section called the "prophets."

B. Verse 1: Now = "And" in Hebrew. This connects this book back to Joshua, which also starts with "and." This connects these books together and shows they record a continuous history. This book takes up where Joshua left off.

C. Of course, they do not have the same author. Starting perhaps with Deuteronomy, there must be another author than Moses (since he died in Deuteronomy). Many of these history books probably had more than one author, passed from one writer to the next. Even Genesis probably.

D. Who wrote Judges? Not Joshua, since he dies early. The narrative is ongoing, and probably a final prophet put it all together. Best guess? Samuel. He started Samuel, which was written also with Nathan and Gad (I Chronicles 29:29).

E. Note when it says things continue "to this day." What day? Perhaps a later prophet adds a note. The prophets had inspiration, so could do this.

VI. The Judges were rulers under God, who represented Him and did His work over Israel. From this early period of Israel's history we learn about God and His works and ways with His people. Let us continue to see what we can learn about God from this historical book of Judges.