

I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. **Joshua had led God's people in battle against the Canaanites and in this way God had given His people the land of Canaan**
1. **Before Joshua's death, he had warned the Israelites**
 - a. Do not forget the Lord, your God, and do not worship other gods
 - b. Continue the work which I have begun: conquer the rest of the land and drive out all the Canaanites. Do not make agreements with them.
 2. **But Israel was not faithful**
 - a. First, Israel did not drive out all the Canaanites. After a while, it became too difficult; they decided it was easier to live with the Canaanites.
 - b. Second, Israel intermarried with the Canaanites and even began to worship their gods.
 - c. Third, Israel did not teach her children about the great works of God, and so a generation arose in Israel (after Joshua died and all the men who knew Joshua died) who did not know God.
- B. **The book of Judges shows what happened when Israel was unfaithful to God, and how God dealt with them. There is a pattern.**
1. First, Israel sinned – they worshipped the idol gods (Baal) of the heathen. *Apostasy*.
 2. Second, God punished His people by sending enemies against them (some of the enemies were the Moabites, the Midianites and Philistines. These enemies made Israel's life miserable. *Chastisement*.
 3. Third, Israel cried to God to save them from their enemies and were sorry for their sins, turned away from the idols and worshipped God again. *Repentance*.
 4. Fourth, God sent a deliverer – a Judge – to save them from their enemies, and the people enjoyed peace for a time, and then fifth – the people sinned, and the whole cycle began again! *Salvation*.
- C. **There were fourteen Judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel. LEARN THEIR NAMES! *We do not have time to look at all the Judges in detail.***

II. EHUD

- A. **The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord and God caused the king of the Moabites to come against Israel (MAP: Moab is to the Southeast of Canaan)**
1. **The Moabites gathered a great army of Israel's enemies and set up their palace in Israel.**
 - a. The king of the Moabites was called Eglon and he was very fat. He built for himself a summer house in the city of Jericho.
 - b. Every year the people worked hard in their fields and at the end of the year they had to bring tribute (a kind of tax) to King Eglon. So, Israel worked and Moab took their money.
 - c. Israel became poor and miserable, and Moab became rich, and fat. This went on for 8 years.
 2. **But God gave Israel a judge called Ehud**
 - a. He was of the tribe of Benjamin and he was left-handed, and he made a special dagger, a sharp two-edged knife, and formed a plan to get rid of the Moabites.
 - b. When it was time to bring the tribute money to the Moabites, Ehud took the tribute.
 - c. But he had his dagger on his right thigh. Because most people are right-handed they carry their weapon on their left thigh, and so the king's guards did not find the dagger.
- B. **When Ehud gave the present to the king, he said, "I have a private message for you, O king" (Jud. 3:19).**
1. **He and the king went into the summer house and Ehud closed the door behind him.**
 - a. Then Ehud said to the king, "I have a message from God unto thee" (v. 20). And as the king stood up to hear the message, Ehud stabbed him in the belly with the dagger in his left hand.
 - b. The king was so fat that the dagger went into his belly, right through him, and the fat covered the blade and the edge of the dagger. The king fell dead to the ground.
 - c. Ehud left and closed the door behind the king. The servants did not know what had happened to their king, and they waited until they could wait no longer. They found him dead.
 2. **With the king dead, Ehud escaped and called Israel by blowing the trumpet.**
 - a. He told Israel that God had rescued them from the Moabites.
 - b. The army of Israel was able to kill the Moabites – 10,000 men died. There was peace 80 years

III. DEBORAH (and Barak)

- A. **Israel sinned again and this time God sold them into the hands of a greater enemy – Jabin, the king of the Canaanites and his captain, Sisera.**

1. **Jabin was so powerful that he had 900 chariots. Israel and the other nations could only fight on foot (imagine trying to fight on foot against a man with such mighty weapons).**
 - a. It was dangerous in those days to travel – people were too afraid and they stayed behind the walls of their villages and towns
 - b. And the people did not even have enough weapons to fight a war. This went on for 20 years.
 - c. The people of Israel cried to God to save them and God heard them.
 2. **God gave a woman to be their judge. She was Deborah, and she received a message from God.**
 - a. She went to a man called Barak and said to him, “God has called you to take 10,000 men and go fight against Jabin and He will give you victory over Jabin.”
 - b. Barak said that he would go but only if Deborah would go with. He had faith in God but he was afraid. Deborah said that she would go but God would give the glory of killing Sisera not to Barak but to a woman.
- B. The battle which seemed hopeless was a great victory for God’s people because God fought for Israel.**
1. **First, the battle took place by the river Kishon**
 - a. And God sent a great storm so that the river burst its banks and made the valley turn to mud so that the chariots of Jabin became useless.
 - b. The armies of Jabin ran away on foot and the Israelites followed them and killed them all.
 - c. But Sisera, the captain of the army, tried to flee from the battlefield and hid in the tent of a man called Heber. Heber was not at home but his wife Jael was.
 2. **[The death of Sisera] Jael invited Sisera into her tent**
 - a. Sisera was tired. He had been running for a long time, so Jael gave him a drink of warm milk, and Sisera fell asleep, thinking that he was safe. He was not safe because Jael loved the Lord and Sisera was the enemy of God’s people.
 - b. While Sisera was asleep, Jael took a tent peg and hammered it into his skull, killing him.
 - c. When Barak came chasing after Sisera, Jael came out. “I will show you the man you are looking for” And he was dead. A woman killed Sisera just as Deborah had said! The land rested 40 years.

IV. GIDEON

- A. After the days of Deborah and Barak, Israel sinned again, and this time the Midianites came against them.**
1. The Midianites were so fierce that the Israelites hid in the caves of the mountains, and the Midianites came around harvest time, like locusts, and destroyed the crops so that Israel became very poor.
 2. Israel cried to the Lord after seven years of oppression and the angel of God appeared to Gideon
 3. Gideon was beating out a small portion of grain in secret to hide it from the Midianites
- B. God told Gideon that He had chosen *him* to deliver Israel from their enemies.**
1. **Gideon was amazed by this so he asked God to give him a sign.**
 - a. He made a sacrifice for God of some bread loaves that he made out of the grain (and remember Gideon had almost no food), he laid them on a rock and fire came out of the rock.
 - b. Then Gideon asked for another sign: I will put a fleece on the ground and in the morning let there be dew only on the fleece and the ground dry. God did so. Then Gideon did the same thing again. This time, let there be dew on the ground and the fleece dry. God did so again.
 - c. Gideon blew his trumpet and called Israel to come to join his army.
 2. **But God said, if the army is too large the people will boast and say that they saved themselves.**
 - a. So, God said, “Tell the people that if anyone is afraid, let him go home. *22000 people went home* and there were 10,000 left. But God said, There are still too many.
 - b. Bring the men down to the river and make them drink. See how they drink. Some will kneel down to drink and some will lap the water with their tongues by cupping it in their hands to drink. Choose the ones who lap the water. And there were 300 men left.
 3. **[The battle] Gideon and his servant went down to the Midianites**
 - a. One Midianite soldier was talking to his friend. “I had a dream last night. I loaf of barley bread came tumbling into our camp and flattened our tents.” The other man said, “That’s a dream about Gideon! It means that God has given him victory over the Midianites!”
 - b. When Gideon heard this he knew that God would give victory!
 - c. But how did Gideon’s men fight? In the middle of the night the 300 men surrounded the camp of the Midianites. Each man had a trumpet, empty pitchers [jugs] and fire in the jugs. They blew their trumpets, smashed their pitchers and cried, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon” (Jud. 7:20).
 - d. The Midianites were so confused that they ran away screaming and even used their own swords against one another. Gideon gathered up the rest of the Israelites and chased after them. + *Rest 40 years*