

WEEK THIRTEEN INTRODUCTION

Judges is the wild west of Bible books. Some of the most memorable Bible characters appear in this book. Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and Jephthah pop in vivid stories marked by triumphant highs and catastrophic lows. Between these familiar characters the astounding treachery of idolatry etches tragedy across the people of Israel. Rather than seeing the land of Canaan gradually become Israelized, the book of Judges demonstrates what commentator Daniel Block dubs the “Canaanization of the Nation of Israel.” The downward spiral of Israel culminates in some of the most tragic passages in all of the Bible. By chapter 21 it seems that Israel barely grasps the title “God’s chosen people.”

Ruth’s four chapters hold an episode of hope and redemption amid the almost collapse of Israel under the judges. Among other beautiful truths, this short book teaches that God works redemption in the lives of actual people, even as the wider society seems to be falling apart. Ruth affirms the significant character of the *kinsman redeemer* in Boaz.

KEY SCRIPTURE

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

– Judges 17:6; 21:25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Twice in Judges the author states, *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* (17:6; 21:25) Name 5 instances in your reading of Judges where this statement proves true. Are there any areas of *your* life where you are doing what is right in your own eyes? Look at our world today, how is this principle at work?

How does God demonstrate His commitment to the covenant He made with Israel in Judges 2:1-5 (consider Deut. 28:25)? How did Israel *abandon the LORD* (2:12-13)? What is the role of the judge in 2:16-23?

Who are the two groups in Judges 5:2? What do the two groups *do* that leads to victory? What application can you draw? What happens when leaders lead and the people voluntarily follow? Who has God called you to lead? Who has God called you to follow? Do you do both joyfully and voluntarily?

Summarize the life of Gideon in a few sentences. Where does his story begin? What does he do? How does the Lord reveal Himself to Gideon? What does Gideon name the altar and why? Why only 300 men? How would you characterize the latter days of Gideon's life?

Was Jephthah the first choice of the elders of Gilead? What was the nature of the dispute between Gilead and the Ammonites? Why is this conflict with Gilead in particular? Where is their land inheritance? How does Jephthah's vow demonstrate the influence of Canaanite cultic religion rather than the Lord and His word? What voices and stories in our world today influence us more than God's word? Think of some examples where Christians use phrases or respond according to the spirit of the age rather than the Spirit of God.

How would you outline the story of Ruth? Is Ruth an Israelite? What, then, is the significance of her extraordinary loyalty to Naomi in Ruth 1:16-17? What is Ruth doing when Boaz notices her? What does this signify about the financial condition of Naomi and Ruth and widows in general in the ancient world? How do the actions of Boaz in Ruth 2 provide for and protect Naomi and Ruth? Who are most vulnerable around you/us? Read James 1:27. How might you/we provide and protect for the most vulnerable?

How does Boaz in his action and redeeming work point ahead to our *eternal* Redeemer, Jesus Christ? Ephesians 1:7 states, *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace.* How does Jesus in His redemption (buying us back) provide for and protect us?

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

“Then he said to them, ‘Look at me and do likewise...do as I do.’ -**Judges 7:17**

Who are you influencing and leading? You might not think you lead, but someone is looking to you. How are you leading them toward Christ and His image? What *intentional* steps can you take to lead by word and example? Be faithful where *and* when God has you.