

This lesson provides an overview of the book of Judges that will be helpful to keep in mind as we begin diving in verse by verse. Understanding the overarching themes will help us properly interpret the individual pieces that comprise the whole.

### What is a Judge?

- Not the common American perception of robes, gavels, and benches.
- “To Judge” – to govern, administer, or exercise leadership
- The title, “Moshia” is applied to several judges, which means “deliverer, liberator”
- They seemed to lead in internal affairs and to deliver in external affairs – not all functioned in the same way (e.g. Deborah vs. Samson)
- One commentator suggested the book should be called, “The Book of Tribal Rulers”

### What is the Time Period of the Judges?

- See *Judges 1:1* and *21:5* - from the death of Joshua to the coronation of a king (the books of Judges, Ruth, and a portion of 1 Samuel)
- This book covers from the events surrounding the death of Joshua the death of Samson. The rule of some judges is thought to overlap to a degree. The entire book covers a period of around 350 years.

### What is the Scenario of Judges?

- The land was generally subdued by the conquest of Joshua (they were able to settle in the land and have a general peace) but there remained strongholds of Canaanites that had to be conquered or they would cause problems down the road.  
**This is where we start to see the spiritual application of the book of Judges. It can apply to us individually or collectively as a church.**
  - See *Romans 6:12-19*. You were freed from slavery to sin, don’t be enslaved again
  - See *1 Corinthians 6:6-8*. Purge out the old leaven (representative of sin) in the church because it will contaminate everyone if it is allowed to remain.

### What is Israel’s Identity in Judges?

- They seem to be a loose confederacy of tribes, under which there were clans and households.
- They are only called a “nation” once (see *Judges 2:20*)
- The tribes didn’t always participate in warfare when invited, but would complain and cause problems if they weren’t
- Things tended to be handled locally rather than nationally
- A sense of national identity still remained. In *Judges 21*, they lamented because the Tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed and therefore they sought to build it back up so as not to lose a tribe from Israel.

### What is the Theme of Judges?

Read *Judges 2* in its entirety. Here we see the cycle of the book of Judges: Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, and Rescue.

- Rebellion (see *Judges 2:11-13*).
- Retribution (see *Judges 2:14-15*).
- Repentance (see *Judges 2:18*).
- Rescue (see *Judges 2:16, 18*).

The Judges were “charismatic” leaders, meaning they were gifted by God for a task.

- An overall theme of degradation. See *Judges 2:16-23*.
  - Their obedience was contingent upon the presence of their leader.
  - From a generation that was committed to God (see *Joshua 24:16-18*) to a generation that committed the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah (see *Judges 19:22-26*) and protected those who did so (see *Judges 20:12-13*). Sound familiar?
  - From cooperation in battle against their enemies (see *Judges 1:3*) to cooperating to all but wipe out one of their own tribes (see *Judges 20*)
  - From God fighting their battles for them, to God testing them by allowing the inhabitants to remain in the land
  - The quality of Israel’s leaders degraded from the days of Joshua to Barak (weak men), to Gideon (unstable men), to Samson (morally reprehensible men). **The leaders were a reflection of the people.**

### Who Ruled over Israel?

- See *Judges 8:22-23*. Gideon rejected becoming a king, instead declaring that the Lord was to be their ruler. Yet, Israel still did not submit to the Lordship of God (see *Judges 21:25*) only to the human judge... while they lived.
- The Lord remained available to them at all times. See *Judges 1:1*, and *20:18, 23, 27-28*.
- They people didn’t want to be ruled over by God, but by a man. See *1 Samuel 8:7*.  
**It wasn’t just a matter of the fact that they couldn’t see God; it was that they didn’t like Him. Consider what mankind did when He came in the flesh.... we crucified Him.**