

Part 5: Here Comes the Judge



Samson and the Lion



Background Notes

PURPOSE: To present the long awaited re-entry of God's people into their promised land led by Joshua and then established by the Judges.

AUTHOR: Largely the work of the Deuteronomist. (See Part 1)

DATE: Joshua invades Canaan around 1200 BC.

STYLE: The stories of Joshua and the Judges are truly legendary, with epics like the mighty Samson. Works of poetry are alluded to in Joshua's battles. While the book of Joshua presents the conquest of Canaan in three military sweeps, the book of Judges depicts a more difficult and piecemeal entry which would not reach completion until the later monarchy.



Opening Quotes

“But they put all the human beings to the sword till they had destroyed them completely; they did not leave a living soul.” Jos 6:21

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, stop over Aijalon Valley!” Jos 10:12

“Decide today whom you will serve. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Jos 24:15

“They chased him, caught him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes.” Jg 1:6

“Ehud took the sword...and thrust it into Eglon's belly...” Jg 3:20

“Jael quietly took a hammer and a tent peg, and killed him by driving the peg right through his temple and into the ground.” Jg 4:21

“He went to his father's house and killed his seventy brothers on one stone.” Jg 9:5

“Delilah said to Samson, ‘If someone wanted to tie you up making you helpless, how could he do it?’” Jg 16:6

“In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did as he saw fit.” Jg 21:25

the BIG PICTURE		← : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		→ : key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods	Plot	Other books related to period		stories in each period	
BC	THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov, Ecc, Songs	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to Exiles)	
538	THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 5: Here Comes the Judge



Just as the parting of the Red Sea started the Israelites' forty year desert journey, the Jordan River parted at the end of their journey to let them finally enter Canaan, their promised land! The people would no longer need manna from the sky for they could now eat from the yield of the land. It was a great day when they celebrated their first Passover in Canaan! Moses' successor Joshua made a call to all of Israel to choose between the gods of Canaan and the Lord Yahweh, for the time had come to claim the land he promised.

Because the land promised to God's people was inhabited by worshippers of false gods with their abominable practices, God had Israel pronounce a *curse of destruction* on the cities of Canaan – the cities were to be completely destroyed, everyone was to be killed, the buildings were to be burned, and all of the booty was to be kept for the sanctuary. Failure to fully carry out the curse of destruction by even one man would mean punishment for the whole people of Israel, whom God intended for himself as a whole.

The conquest of Canaan by Joshua is told in epic style, with three military sweeps. First came central Canaan. Blowing their ram horns and sounding the battle cry, the Israelites made the walls of Jericho tumble, allowing them to take the city. The next city, Ai, took them two efforts after someone failed to carry out the curse of destruction and kept some of the booty for himself. Joshua had him stoned, and Israel moved on to southern Canaan. A poem commemorates the victorious day when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in Gibeon long enough for the Israelites to destroy the Amorites in the region. News of the Israelites' victory spread north, which they took next, staying true to the curse of destruction.

Once settled, Joshua designated certain cities for the levitical priests and others as cities of refuge for criminals. He then tried centralizing worship around one temple, but conceded altars on both sides of the Jordan for the Israelites settling on either side. He then held a meeting in the central city of Shechem, addressing all of Israel, now made of **twelve tribes** in all, named after the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). Joshua called them to recognize the wonders God had done for them from the time of Abraham to their Promised Land. He reminded them to renounce the false gods of Canaan and keep the law of Moses.

According to the Book of Judges, Yahweh first instructed the southern tribes of Judah and Simeon to attack the Canaanites living there. The Israelites carried out the curse of destruction, claiming most of southern Canaan, but the Israelites in northern Canaan had a tougher time against Canaanites who had iron chariots! Not only did the Canaanites hold their ground, but the Israelites even began settling in with

them, something Yahweh had expressly forbidden. For the next few generations, Israel would repeat the same cycle of events: first, God would grant them victory over the Canaanites; second, they would get comfortable, betray Yahweh and worship the Canaanite gods; third, God would punish Israel, allowing the Canaanites to defeat them; and fourth, Israel would cry to God for help, and God would raise from the people **judges**, strong leaders to fight the Canaanites and reclaim the land. After a judge would die, Israel would revert to worshipping the false gods, and the cycle would begin again.

One of the oldest written parts of the Bible is a poem commemorating the story of the prophetess Deborah who called the warrior Barak to be a judge of Israel. Cicera, commander of the Canaanites, fled from Barak by hiding in the tent of an Israelite woman who then killed him in his sleep.

In order to demonstrate that it was Yahweh who granted victory to Israel, the angel of Yahweh told another judge, **Gideon**, to reduce his army from over thirty thousand to three hundred men. Though greatly outnumbered, Gideon led the Israelites to victory. (Later one of his sons, Abimilech, would kill his other sons in a treacherous, failed attempt to make himself the first king of Israel.)

But perhaps the most famous judge of all was **Samson**, a man strong enough to tear lions apart. Israel had again abandoned Yahweh, and the enemies of Israel this time were the mighty Philistines. Despite God's warnings about foreign women, Samson married a Philistine woman! After a bunch of Philistines took her and gave her to his best man, Samson sent a bunch of foxes with torches tied in their tails running through the fields of the Philistines, burning all their crops. When the Philistines came to get him, he slaughtered a thousand of them with the jawbone of a donkey. And then came his one weakness: Delilah! The Philistines paid her to find out the secret of Samson's strength. She nagged Samson until he told her that it was his long hair. She lulled him to sleep, cut his hair, and the Philistines took him prisoner, gouging his eyes out. One day after his hair had grown back they led him into a stadium to perform feats of strength. He got a firm grasp on two of the pillars and pulled them apart, bringing down the whole stadium, killing himself heroically, taking many of the Philistines.

After a civil war nearly tore the tribe of Benjamin from the rest of Israel over the rape of a concubine, the book of Judges summed up in practical terms why it was that Israel had such a hard time securing the Promised Land: "In those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did as he saw fit." 



Defending the Faith: Religious Wars

"The curse of destruction; the Crusades; the Inquisition; the Spanish Conquest; Protestants fighting Catholics in Ireland... Religion, with Christianity at the forefront, has done so much killing, violating the fifth commandment, proving the Church to be the biggest hypocrite in the world. Wasn't Christ a pacifist?"

The question fails to mention the French Reign of Terror, the Nazi Holocaust, the Communist Regime, and other abominable slaughters that have killed more in the name of *suppressing* religion than promoting it! And these all took place more recently than the religious wars, except perhaps for the fighting in northern Ireland, which is not even religious anymore. What the media calls a fight between "Catholics" and "Protestants" is in reality between Irish Republicans and British Loyalists over land, not over doctrine!

As for the fifth commandment, it does not condemn just killing, but *murder*. Killing someone in self-defense, or in defense of someone else, is not murder.

But were the Popes justified in the Crusades or the Inquisitions? It is hard to say, for they were different times. The Crusades that degenerated into the unholy wars began as an attempt to take *back* the Holy Land from the Muslims who had taken it. And as hard as the Inquisition is to believe today, *back then* it wasn't socially unacceptable to torture or kill a heretic in order to save his soul or protect society. Revisionist history also turns thousands of deaths into millions, overlooking the researched fact that secular persecutions *outside* the Church, (Protestant-led witch-hunts) were as cruel and more numerous than the Inquisition.

As for the Spanish conquest, this was also during different times, when wiping out the abomination of *child sacrifice* was blended with so much killing for territory. For a balanced picture we cannot overlook the Church's missionaries – many of them martyrs – protecting the natives, defending their dignity, evangelizing, and educating them.

So is the Catholic Church guilty of condoning all the killing? Insofar as as her members have may have violate very Gospel she proclaims *as we understand it today*, perhaps the answer is yes. But now that the Church has *publicly* asked forgiveness for the sins of her past, the question becomes, can we forgive the imperfections of the Church "militant", a pilgrim Church somehow united to the perfect Church "triumphant" in heaven?

What about Christ's attitude towards war? Before assuming he was against war under any circumstances, consider that he used a Roman centurion as an example of unparalleled faith, never condemning that he was a soldier. And the Jesus who overturned tables and drove traders out of the Temple with a whipcord is not quite the meek and humble pacifist some of us picture! By the same token, our Prince of Peace was no military messiah! Though "turn the other cheek" is parabolic (he does defend himself *verbally* in Jn 18:22 when struck in the face), his self-defense is still non-violent.

When he said that "those who live by the sword shall die by the sword", was he stating the immorality or the futility of war? Could American slavery, German Nazism and Russian Communism have ended without war? Is there a time for peace, and a time to fight for it? The Church has followed the Gospel as best as humanly possible, fighting at times, refusing to fight at others, and apologizing for any failure to uphold the Gospel. Today she practically stands alone in defending the dignity of every human life in a culture of death which has by far claimed *more* lives than any previous culture.



Expressing the Faith: The Hypocrite Song

A song by Eli reminding us that we are all bound to be hypocrites until perfected in heaven by Christ.

*I've been quick to point a finger
at the things I find outrageous.
Well, I wonder who I'll point at
when I read my life on pages.
When I play my final number,
it really won't take long
to realize I sang a hypocrite song*

***Oh ly-dee-dye, Oh ly-dee-dee
I thank the Lord that there's heaven
full of hypocrites like me!
So tell the angels to get ready
for it may not be too long
until I come to sing my hypocrite song***

*I preach about redemption
as I look you in the face,
then I'm convinced I must be dying,
when it's just something that I ate.
Well it's Jesus who gives mercy,
that makes a weak man strong
so he can stand and sing his hypocrite song! (chorus)*

*I can't wait to meet my Savior and look him in the face,
shake his hand and plainly thank him
for forgiving my mistakes
and for helping me remember
that even when I'm right I'm wrong,
then we'll rejoice and sing the hypocrite song! (chorus)*

➤ **Next time: "3 Kings and a Lady"** ➤