

## 4. Judges through 1 Samuel: Grace in the Midst of Disobedience and Turmoil

The period of the judges, spanning some 320 years of Israel's history, shows us the consequences of rebelling against God's Covenant. God had promised to be faithful to His Word, even when that meant that He would have to respond to His people in judgement. Yet, when they returned to Him, He was ready to forgive and renew. In many ways a time of testing, this period of the judges gives us a good look at the faithfulness of God to His Covenant Word and at the continuing development of the unifying threads of Scripture.

**4.1 Read Judges 1-3.** In this period, as the settlement of then nation was being concluded, a new pattern of government for the people of God began to be employed.

**4.11** Summarize the content of this section. Can you see any way in which the unifying threads of revelation are being emphasized?

**4.12** In what ways did Israel compromise her relationship with God? How did their compromise affect their well-being as a people?

**4.13** In what we see God doing in this section, how is He remaining faithful to His Covenant promises?

**4.14** Which of the unifying threads of revelation would idolatry particularly offend? Why? To what did idolatry invariably lead during this period?

**4.2 Read Judges 6-8.** The work of Gideon gives us a close look at how God called, prepared, and used the judges to further His purposes among His people.

**4.21** Summarize the content of this section. What initial insights do you gain concerning the unifying threads of revelation or the Covenant of God?

**4.22** In what ways can we see God sovereignly working to perform the promises of His Covenant in Gideon's calling and work?

**4.23** How can you see God at work bringing glory to Himself even as He provides for His people through Gideon's work?

**4.24** How would you describe the spiritual condition of God's people near the end of the period of Gideon's rule (cf. 8.22-35)? Why do you suppose this was the case, and what does it tell us about the people of God?

**4.3 Read Judges 19-21.** In this section we get a look at the depths of depravity in which the people of God could fall.

**4.31** Summarize the content of this section. Which of the unifying threads of revelation seem most to be in view?

**4.32** How did the situation described in chapter 19 affect the nation (see especially 19.30)?

**4.33** Observe the role played by Judah (20.18) in this episode. Given the larger framework of God's redemptive and revelational plan, should we ascribe any significance to this?

**4.34** After this decisive battle, how is it apparent that Israel is keenly aware of its need to preserve its identity as a people? Why do you suppose this is so?

**4.4 Read the book of Ruth.** Here, during the period of the judges, we can see how God's faithfulness was extended to faithful individuals, even as the rest of the nation was experiencing His judgement.

**4.41** Summarize the content of this book. Which of the unifying threads of revelation seem to be in focus?

**4.42** Can you see in God's blessing to Ruth any fulfillment of His Covenant? What do we learn from this story about God's plan to create a people for Himself?

**4.43** In two instances - gleaning and the law of levirate - we see Ruth being cared for by an aspect of the Law of God. What does this suggest to us about the purpose of God's Law?

**4.44** What role does Boaz play in this story? How does his fulfilling the requirements of the Law of God benefit Ruth? Does his being from the tribe of Judah have any significance for the unifying threads of revelation?

**4.5 Read 1 Samuel 1-3.** In this section, near the end of the period of judges, we see the people of God entering into a period of transition in their relationship with the Lord.

**4.51** Summarize the content of this section. Can you gain any initial insights into the unifying threads of revelation?

**4.52** How does God's dealings with Hannah recall previous similar dealings in His Covenantal relationship with His people?

**4.53** In what ways does Hannah's song reveal her own consciousness of the unifying threads of revelation?

**4.54** How do we see the abiding strength of God's Covenant plan in the birth and calling of Samuel?

**4.6 Read 1 Samuel 8-11.** Israel takes on a new identity, borrowed from the nations around her, in this section.

**4.61** Summarize the content of these chapters. In what ways do the unifying threads of revelation come into focus?

**4.62** To what are the leaders of God's people looking for their security in this section? Are they compromising His Covenant?

**4.63** How does God both condescend to the weakness of His people yet keep His Covenant plan in place at the same time?

**4.64** What was Israel's motivation in seeking a king? Is this how the Covenant people ought to work out their unique identity among the peoples of the earth?

**4.65** In what way did God signal His willingness to accept Saul, so long as he remained faithful to the Lord?

**4.7 Read 1 Samuel 15, 16, 18, 28, 31.** The end of Saul's reign teaches us about the consequences of faithlessness and the hope of the faithfulness of the Lord.

**4.71** Summarize the content of these readings. Which of the unifying threads of revelation seem to be in focus? In what ways?

**4.72** Why was Saul considered unfit to rule?

**4.73** Look at God's warning to Samuel in 16.7. What does this suggest about the nature of God's relationship with His people?

**4.74** What conclusions about being God's Covenant people should the nation have drawn from the separate fortunes of Saul and David?

**Final exercise: *Judges through 1 Samuel***

During the period we have been studying, what means did God use to show the nation that He was displeased with them? How did He restore them to His favor? What do we learn from this about the nature of God's Covenant relationship with His people? What do we learn about the glory of God as revealed in His sovereignty over the nations?