**Daily Reading of Judges**

**Introduction**

The first few judges that God chose for his people tended to be weak men, so that the people would trust in God rather than in the man. Othniel did seem to be a strong man, but after that there is Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite. The word “left-handed” in Hebrew implies that somehow his right hand was crippled. His victory was possible only because he seemed so powerless against a powerful king. Then there is Barak, the judge that was so frightened that he hid behind Deborah’s skirts. And finally there is Gideon, who had to have about half a dozen signs from God before he had the courage to do what God called him to do.

But the godless society prevalent among the Israelites started to impact their choice of leaders. Gradually Gideon thinks of himself as a strong man, taking on some of the trappings of a king with dozens of wives. The Israelites chose Gideon’s son Abimelek, a man strong enough to murder his 70 brothers. Then there was Jephthah, a gang leader that the Israelites called upon to lead them.

Finally God gave the Israelites the kind of leader they were choosing for themselves, a strong leader who was spiritually weak.

It is frightening to see that pattern seem to appear in our own society today. Strong men, immoral men, are accepted and idolized in real life and on the screen. May we read the account of the Judges with the prayer on our lips, “Lord, help us be salt and light to our society that you might use us to turn the people around us back to you.”

**Don’t Stop at Judges**

After reading the Book of Judges, go on and read Ruth to see that faith is still preserved even in a godless society. Then notice that in 1 Samuel 1, a new name is used for God: “The LORD Almighty,” literally “the LORD of Hosts.” The LORD of the angel armies stepped in and brought God’s people back to him in the time of King David. May he work that miracle among us and through us. Amen.

**Judges 1 – June 4**

God had foretold to Abraham in Genesis 15 that his descendants would drive out the Amorite tribes, but not immediately, “because the sins of the Amorites was not yet reached its full measure” (Genesis 15:16). Under Moses, God commanded the Israelites to drive out these tribes. But already in this first chapter of Judges, we see God’s people failing to trust God’s ability to give them the victory.

**Judges 2 – June 5**

The cycle of the book of Judges is explained. The Israelites to evil. God sends an invading nation to oppress the Israelites. The Israelites cry out to the LORD. He sends them a judge or deliverer. They are faithful for a time, and then fall away.

As you read the book of Judges, it is evident that a judge was often a military leader and also an arbiter in disputes.

**Judges 3 – June 6**

Othniel is probably one of the few strong leaders, both physically and spiritually. The first few judges tend to be weak men that God uses. The battle is not won by the strength of the leader, but by trusting in the strength of our God.

Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite is the second judge. The Hebrew word for left-handed says that he was “lacking in his right hand.” Perhaps his right hand was crippled. It was his apparent weakness that made Eglon think he had nothing to fear from Ehud. God uses a handicapped hero to rescue his people.

**Judges 4 – June 7**

Barak is another weak judge who hides behind the skirts of Deborah. Yet God gives the Israelites victory.

**Judges 5 – June 8**

In Deborah’s Song you get a glimpse of the division that is present among the tribes of Israel. Not all responded equally.

**Judges 6 – June 9**

God’s choice of Gideon is another choice of a “weak” candidate to lead the people so that their trust might be in the Lord and not in man.

**Judges 7 – June 10**

The LORD gives Gideon a great victory.

**Judges 8 – June 11**

Again we see division among the tribes and at the end of the chapter, we see Gideon beginning to take on the trappings of a king – wealth and many wives. He even calls one of his sons Abimelek which means “My father is king.”

**Judges 9 – June 12**

The Israelites choose Abimelek, a strong man, to be their king. They ignore his spiritual weakness.

**Judges 10 – June 13**

The Jephthah account begins with the Israelites again unfaithful to the LORD.

**Judges 11 – June 14**

The people of Gilead (east of the Jordan River) choose a gang-leader named Jephthah to rescue him. It seems they were looking for a strong military leader, but not a strong spiritual leader.

**Judges 12 – June 15**

Jephthah’s time ends not only with the sacrifice of his daughter at the end of the previous chapter, but in another civil war among the Israelites.

**Judges 13 – June 16**

The birth of Samson is announced. He is a Nazarite from birth. Read about the Nazarite vow in Numbers 6.

**Judges 14 – June 17**

God uses a strong man with an incredible weakness to begin his rescue from the Philistines. This is a war that will continue through the judgeship of Eli and Samuel and through the reign of King Saul.

**Judges 15 – June 18**

Samson’s strength fails to bring unity to God’s people. They are willing to betray him to the Philistines rather than fight with him.

**Judges 16 – June 19**

Samson’s weakness becomes so great it leads to his downfall. A strong word of warning to us all.

**Judges 17 – June 21**

Judges ends with two “addendums” that show the wickedness of God’s people. Treasure God’s amazing grace that he did not completely reject them but in his faithful love kept the nation alive so that the Savior might be born of them. Notice the village of Bethlehem plays a prominent part in these two addendums and in Ruth which takes place during this same time.

**Judges 18 – June 22**

There is no king and everyone did as he saw fit. Here we see an entire tribe fall into idolatry.

**Judges 19 – June 23**

A horrible story of the spiritual depravity of God’s people… rape and murder.

**Judges 20 – June 24**

More civil war. A tribe is nearly wiped out.

**Judges 21 – June 25**

When a nation is spiritually bankrupt, people go to extreme lengths to fulfill the “letter of the law.”

**Ruth – June 26**

God preserves faith even in a godless society.

**1 Samuel 1 – June 27 and beyond**

The LORD of Hosts is able to bring a nation back to himself. May he work that miracle among us also. Amen.