

WEEK 13 — THE LATER JUDGES

Date: perhaps roughly 1149-1064 BC

The Story: God continues to send judges to rescue Israel from its enemies. But even these judges are not always godly people. In fact, Israel descends into greater and greater disorder, epitomized by the final two stories in Judges (chapters 17-21), the last of which is one of the most horrific stories in the Bible. But there is hope! Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz in the book of Ruth stand as godly people in Israel. And Samuel himself (in 1 Samuel) grows to be a powerful prophet and leader of God's people. So this period in Israel's history reveals two starkly contrasting ways of life existing in Israel simultaneously: unfaithfulness and shocking sin in one, and refreshing godliness and courageous faithfulness in the other. Most of all, the God who blessed Abraham and loves Israel continues to demonstrate both sternness and patience toward his people.

* Kids' readings may not align with the daily full readings. Parents, see the content ratings on the back page.

MARCH 27 JUDGES 10-12

Today's reading tells about several judges but focuses most on Jephthah. Jephthah's story takes a horrific turn—because, tragically, Jephthah did not know God's laws well (particularly Leviticus 27, which might have let him redeem his daughter with a payment of money; and Leviticus 20, in which God strictly forbids child sacrifice, a practice affiliated with idolatry). This is the point of Jephthah's story: even Israel's greatest heroes, people of faith, failed to know and obey God's laws, leading to tragic ends.

Date: around perhaps roughly 1086-1055 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Judges 10-12

Kids' Reading*: Judges 13-14

MARCH 28 JUDGES 13-16

Today's reading covers the life of Israel's most famous judge, Samson. Admired for his supernatural strength, he is also a tragic figure, controlled by sensual impulses and a propensity for violence. Despite his flaws, Samson is used by God to "take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines" (13:5).

Date: perhaps roughly 1115-1055 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Judges 15-16

Kids' Reading*: Judges 16

MARCH 29 JUDGES 17-19

Today's reading relates some of the worst of Israel during the tumultuous period between its conquest of Canaan and the establishment of the kingship (coming in 1 Samuel). Judges ends with two stories of shocking evil in Israel. In chapters 17-18, small-scale idolatry grows into one tribe's violent destruction of an innocent city. Chapter 19 opens a story continued in chapters 20-21, in which horrendous behavior in the tribe of Benjamin—akin to Sodom's evil in Genesis 19—brings about the death of an innocent woman. These stories are flashbacks to earlier years: the first takes place in roughly the time of Jephthah, the second a couple of centuries earlier, only a generation or two after Israel settled in the promised land.

Date: perhaps roughly 1177 BC (Judges 17-18) • perhaps sometime between roughly 1380 and 1350 BC (Judges 19)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Judges 17-19

Kids' Reading*: Ruth 1

MARCH 30 JUDGES 20-21

Today's reading concludes the terrible story begun in Judges 19 as Israel responds to the wickedness of the Benjamites. Their response nearly wipes out the tribe of Benjamin, and further atrocities must be enacted in order to keep that tribe alive.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS — Summit View Church of Christ

Date: perhaps sometime between roughly 1380 and 1350 BC (Judges 20-21)

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Judges 20-21

Kids' Reading*: Ruth 2

MARCH 31 RUTH

Today's reading (the entire book of Ruth) is a short story of faith, kindness, and godliness in Israel, providing a refreshing contrast to the sin and turmoil of Judges. Around the time of the later judges, Naomi, widowed and without sons, returns to her hometown of Bethlehem with her loyal daughter-in-law, Ruth, a foreigner. As Ruth works selflessly to provide for her mother-in-law, a local farmer, Boaz, notices her kindness and honors her with kindness of his own. The result is blessing for all involved, and eventually for all Israel—for one of Ruth's descendants will become a great king of Israel.

Date: perhaps roughly 1100 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Ruth 1-2 • Ruth 4

Kids' Reading*: Ruth 3-4

APRIL 1 1 SAMUEL 1-2

Today's reading opens the book of 1 Samuel. 1 and 2 Samuel, like 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, were originally one book; these books were split into two parts to fit onto scrolls when translated from Hebrew into Greek around the 300s BC. 1 Samuel begins with the birth of Samuel, who will be a prophet and the last of the judges. His mother's devotion to God contrasts with the sins of the sons of the high priest, Eli, whose house (God says) will soon fall.

Date: perhaps roughly 1105-1090 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: 1 Samuel 1 • 1 Samuel 2:12-36

Kids' Reading*: 1 Samuel 1 • 1 Samuel 2:18-21

APRIL 2 1 SAMUEL 3-7

Today's reading tells about the beginning of Samuel's leadership of Israel. God brings the wickedness of Eli's sons to an end, producing a crisis involving the sacred ark of the covenant in the process. At the same time, though, he begins to speak through Samuel from Samuel's youth. Samuel, in contrast to Eli's sons, is faithful to God and leads Israel to renewed devotion to God and to victory over Israel's enemies.

Date: perhaps around roughly 1095 to sometime after about 1064 BC

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: 1 Samuel 3:1 to 7:2

Kids' Reading*: 1 Samuel 3 • 1 Samuel 7:3-17

Parents' Guide

PG preview for young children

Jud 11:1 (S), 20-22 (V), 32-33 (V)

Jud 12:1-6 (V)

Jud 14:5-6 (V), 19 (V)

Jud 15:4-5 (V), 8 (V), 15-16 (V), 18

(C)

Jud 16:1 (S), 21 (V), 24 (V), 30 (V)

Jud 18:25 (V), 27 (V)

Jud 20:13 (V), 20-21 (V), 25 (V),
31-48 (V)

Jud 21:5 (V), 10-12 (S, V), 20-23 (V)

Ruth 4:13 (S)

1 Sam 1:19 (S)

1 Sam 2:22 (S)

1 Sam 4:2 (V), 10-11 (V), 18 (V),
19-22 (T)

1 Sam 5:6 (T), 9-12 (T)

1 Sam 6:19 (V)

1 Sam 7:10-11 (V)

PG-13 preview for under age 13

Jud 15:6 (V)

R shocking, graphic, or disturbing

Jud 11:34-40 (V)

Jud 19:22-30 (S, T, V)

Jud 20:5-6 (S, T, V)

C = Circumcision
N = Nudity
S = Sexuality
T = Dark/Sensitive Themes
V = Violence