

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 12: Judges & Ruth, *Settling the Land*

Welcome to Week 12 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters. And I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

This week, we'll be reading the Bible's seventh and eighth books. The books of Judges and Ruth. Judges is a weird, fascinating time to read about. And Ruth, the first really tiny book of the Bible that we'll be reading fits into the middle of the time of Judges, but stands apart beautifully from it. So let's take a look at these two books. First of all, the book of Judges will outline a transition period after they've taken the land, but by before they get a full time King. Instead, during the season they're led by a group of people called the judges. But they're not like anybody that we would call a judge today, three of the most famous judges are Deborah, Gideon and Samson, which we'll be reading about this week.

This is also where we'll be introduced to the people who will become a long term thorn in Israel side, the people known as the Philistines, will see a couple other villains in this story as well. But the Philistines get their first introduction. This week, the Philistines lived in a small section of land along the east coast of Israel in the southwest corner of the promised land. And they were a seagoing people. And they were a fierce people. Again, will it be introduced to them this week, and we'll hear a lot more about them in the coming weeks.

But we will end this week, not with the Philistines not with the judges. But with the book of Ruth. It is by far one of my favorite books. It is a short, beautiful gem of a story that you're going to be grateful to get to, after you spend the week in the strange and interesting and fascinating but weird Book of Judges.

So let's take a look at what we'll be reading this week. First of all, in Judges chapters one through three, we'll be looking at the first three judges. And before we get there, the book begins with a fascinating verse judges one one says this. After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, who of us is to go up first to fight against the Canaanites. This is an interesting verse. And here's why. For the first time, the Hebrews do not have a clear leader. They had Abraham than Isaac, Then Jacob, then Joseph, then the pharaohs for hundreds of years, then Moses and then Joshua. But now it says it's not a single person who comes in as God. It's the Israelites collectively, who asked God.

So what does that look like? Who's actually doing the asking? What likely this is now the enacting of the whole system that God put in place for them in the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Levites, the priests, this is like the the priests and Levites, coming to the tabernacle at the designated time, one priest at the specific time that he's allowed to do so comes and talks to God, who is in presence over the Ark of the Covenant. And even without a designated individual human leader, God guides them clearly. But as always, they respond with a mixture of both obedience and disobedience. The question they asked here is also interesting,

who is to go up first, to fight against the Canaanites? They're not asking which individual will go up, but which tribe and God tells them send this tribe in first. So they're asking God even about military strategy, in the taking of the land as they ought to do. They then have a mixture, as I said, of obedience and disobedience until very quickly into this book. In chapter two verses one through three through three, God actually has to send them an angel to tell them okay, because of your disobedience, you're in trouble already. They keep this obeying over and over again.

So finally, in Judges, we see the first three judges that come in the first three chapters, Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar. And as you read what these judges do, you're going to see that the judges in this book are more like tribal generals than they are like kings, or than they are like people that today we would call judges judge a judge is the term they use then, but it's really like a tribal general, someone who leads them into battle against their enemies. Then in Judges four through five, we meet the first of the three most well known judges we meet Deborah. The Bible says she's not just a judge, she is also a prophetess and a judge mean someone who would lead the nation and bring them into battle. But a prophet is someone who hears directly from God and declares God's word to the people. So in addition to leading them into battle, Deborah is also anointed to speak God's Word and God's truth to them, which she does. After a great victory. She then in chapter five sings one of the Bible's great songs, I encourage you to read it slowly and closely. It is a beautiful passage of scripture.

We then move from Deborah as the judge to Gideon as the judge. And Gideon gets three chapters. Judges six, seven, and eight. And Gideon is one of the favorite characters for pastors to preach about. Because there's so much great stuff in his story, so many lessons, we can learn from how he was called to how his army is selected, to this weird vision about a loaf of bread to a very weird but successful battle plan that God gives him. So take note of all the fascinating stuff that happens in his life in three chapters, Judges six through eight, one spot to note, near the end of his time with them, he is the first person ever to be asked by the Hebrews to serve as their king. You'll see it in chapter eight, verses 22 and 23.

But you'll also notice that he refuses very strongly by saying this, I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you, the Lord will rule over you. Three really important things in this short verse. One, he says, I'm not going to be your king, I'm not going to rule over you. Secondly, my son won't, we'll tell you why that matters in a moment. But instead, he said, basically, God is going to be your king. Now, what is it? Why does it matter that he says my son won't roll over you? Because right away in chapter nine, we're gonna see that his son doesn't agree with Dad. Doesn't agree with God. Also, before we get to chapter nine, you'll see this is not the last time they'll ask for a king. We'll see everything changed in a few weeks when they asked for a king again. Anyway, there'll be a few weeks from now.

In the meantime, when we do get to judges nine, this is where Gideon son decides getting his dad was wrong, that he does in fact, want to be king. Now, this is confusing because in the Bible, people are often known by several names we've already seen Abraham's name to change to Abram. We've also seen Jacob's name change to Israel. But we've also seen that even after his name changes Israel, he's still referred to Jacob occasionally. These are not all

that difficult to go back and forth, because Jacob and Israel are both well known names. However, Gideon, which is the name we always refer to him as was also known as Jarub Bael. And in up until chapter nine, he's referred to mostly as Gideon. But in chapter nine, he's referred to almost entirely as Jarub Bael. So it's really easy when we get to chapter nine to look at it and go, Okay, Jarub Bael's son wants to be king. You go, oh, there's some guy out there named Jarub Bael who has a son. No, this is Gideon's son who wants to be king. After Gideon and chapter eight has directly said, I'm not going to be your king. My son isn't going to be your king. God's going to be your king. So take note of who is actually doing what in chapter nine. Don't let the name changes confuse you.

We then move to chapters 10, 11 and 12. We have several more judges. Some get just a verse. But Jephthah gets most of the time in those chapters. And then we get to the last of the three really well known judges in Judges 13, 14, 15 and 16. A full four chapters on Samson, yeah, one of the strangest characters and one of the strangest story arcs in all of the Bible. He's a guy who stays strong as long as his hair stays long. First of all, how weird is that? Right? And then he falls in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. And a couple times, she obviously is trying to trap him. And obviously trying to get him to reveal his strengths so she can trap him. I mean, when you read the story, you'll see it's like, you don't have to be smart. You just have to be not spectacularly stupid to see that Delilah is out to get you dude. But somehow he just keeps giving in and this in fact, every time I read the story, I think Samson may be Exhibit A for the old phrase sin makes you stupid. Cuz, man oh man, you just read this and you just shake your head go Samson. Really? How could you be so dumb.

So you'll see that this week as well. It's fascinating. And then the book of Judges ends with chapter 17 through 21. As we see their constant turning to sin causes them eventually to turn on each other. But thankfully, that's not where this week's reading ends. Yes, that's where judges ends. But we will finish this week's reading not at the end of the book of Judges, but by reading the book of Ruth. Again, one of the great, one of the shortest, but one of the most pivotal and most beautiful stories in all of the Bible. Book of Ruth starts by telling you that it happens during the time of the previous book during the time of the book of Judges, this is important for us to understand, because even during this strange, crazy time of the book of Judges, there are a few good people and God uses those people.

Ruth is from Moab. This is one of the lands that God had actually cursed. Because when the Hebrews were wandering in the desert, the Moabites wouldn't help them. We read about that already. But I'll read it to you again. In Deuteronomy 23, verses three and four. God said this no Ammonite or Moabite, and Ruth is from the land of Moab, or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the 10th generation. Why? For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt. And they hired Balem, remember the guy with a talking donkey. They're the ones who hired Balem, the son of Beyer from Paythor in Aramnahraam to pronounce a curse on you. So this is going all the way back to that talking donkey story. Ruth is from the country that put a curse on the people instead of helping the people. And so a curse has been put on her country for the 10 to the 10th generation. And yet God says, I'm going to use you anyway, because you're serving me.

See, it's one of the great pictures in the Bible, the Book of Ruth is that God sees us on the basis of our faith, not on the basis of our ethnicity, not on the basis of our background, not on the basis of our gender, not on the on any other basis. He sees us through our faith only. And then when you get to the end of Ruth, don't skip the short genealogy at the end. It's very short, just a couple of verses. Note the last person in Ruth's genealogy. It's David, David, of course will come come along soon. And David, along with Abraham and Moses, really become really are going to be the three most pivotal important people in the entire Old Testament.

So by the end of this week, we're going to hear David's name for the first time and get ready for a whole lot more of him in the weeks and months to come. So as we close this out, the definitive verse in the book of Judges, is Judges chapter 17, verse six, which says, In those days, Israel had no king. Everyone did as they saw fit, or another transition says, Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. So this book of Judges shows us what happens when we do what we think is right. Instead of asking God, what he says is right. And the reason for that is, God has a perspective that we don't have. God has a greater wisdom than we have. God has more love, even for us than we have for ourselves. God has the experience God has the power God has, God has everything we don't have. And when God says, Listen, guys, I know what's going on. You think it's right, because you're from your limited perspective, this direction looks right. But I'm telling you right now, that direction is bad. Go here instead, if we have the understanding the wisdom to listen to the God who loves us and knows us and has the wisdom, things will go better. Judges is a great example of that.

It also shows us that even in dark times, and the time of judges, in my head, every time I read the time of judges, it feels to me like judges is to the Old Testament, what the dark ages have been to the last 2000 years of world history. They're the dark ages of the Old Testament, there are dark times, but the time of judges is like, mysteriously dark and strange. Even in those dark times. God has people and that's what the last book that we'll read this week, is all about the book of Ruth is a picture of a bright, awesome, beautiful light in the middle of a very dark time, that even in those difficult times. God plants seeds for the future. That's what he's doing here. And that's what he'll do in our lives, even through difficult seasons. If we'll give him the chance, if we'll obey if we'll listen. If we'll act in obedience to God, even with a bad history like Ruth had with her nation. God has a bright future. You're going to love this week, so much to read so many lessons to learn. I hope you enjoy it, and I hope to see you next week.

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