

III. Supplementary comments of affairs of state at this time 17-21

- A. Micah and the Danites 17-18
- B. The Benjamite war 19-21

Judges, as you see, is a book of scattered incidents over a period of about 300 years of Hebrew history. There is no central character on the human scene and I suppose since the leadership is charismatically reared, the only full hero is God, himself. Judges is not a complete history of this time and seems to select those accounts that best accord with the redemptive purpose. While not complete it does follow a thematic idea: the religious and moral deterioration of Israel as well as the righteous acts of God in punishment and deliverance.

3. Some items you will want to study at greater length:

- the Gideon history as well as the Samson history
- the song of Deborah with some special attention to the actions of Jael.
- the application of the laws of the Pentateuch in the age of the Judges
- the character of leadership in the persons God chooses to execute His will.

And, in my haste, I failed to note under the general overview the service of Judges in the Classics. Samson seems to have been the most popular figure from the book of Judges to judge from the number of works concerning him. John Milton reconstructed the last days of his life in SAMSON AGONISTES which George Frederick Handel then used as the basis of his oratorio "Samson." Rubens (1577-1640) painted "Samson wrestle with the Lion", and Rembrandt portrayed most dramatically "The Blinding of Samson" in 1636.

So here is the account of how the children of Israel fared in the years after Joshua's death. It is not happy reading, exactly, but will give us a clear picture of the importance of obedience and yieldedness to the law of God.

D. A Survey Study of the books of Samuel (both of 'em)

1. An overview:

Although called by his name, the books of Samuel could not have been written by Samuel because his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25. His writing activity is mentioned in 1 Samuel 10:25, but this probably refers to his making a copy of the laws recorded in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. No one person could have written the entire book from personal experience since it covers a period of at least 100 years.

Some scholars claim there are as many as five sources in Samuel, each comprising a complete saga cycle (the Samuel cycle, the Ark cycle, etc.); others claim that the JEDP documents found in the Pentateuch are used in Samuel. Authorship is divided on the basis of alleged parallel accounts of the same event (for example, 1 Sam. 2:31-36 and 3:11-14), apparent discrepancies (1 Sam. 17:51 and 2 Sam. 21:19) and incongruities (1 Sam. 16:21 and 17:58). Explanation of these passages is not difficult, however, and they, therefore, pose no barrier to the book's trustworthiness as a historical document. (THE NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY: REVISED offers an excellent discussion of such passages.)