

St Annes Ryde  
ANGELICAN CHURCH



**CGS 12**  
**Term 1 2008**

# Judges:

the good, the bad & the ugly



**Bible based Discussion Material**

**prepared by Greg Burke and linked to sermons  
preached at St Anne's Ryde Anglican Church**

**Discussion 1            Trouble ahead**  
**Judges 1:1-2:5        ( Sermon 3rd Feb 08)**

1. How would you answer someone who says *“The Old Testament God is violent, vindictive and capricious. He is so biased toward Israel that he violates the most basic standards of decency to give them what he promises.”* Before you answer you might like to consider Gen15:12-20, Deut 7:1-11 and Deut 9:4-6

2. How would you bring this conversation to focus on Jesus?

3. How does Jesus' ministry -

i. Show that the “God of the Old Testament” and the “God of the New Testament” are one and the same?

How does God’s actions in Jesus profoundly answer the criticism of Q1?

4. In the light of the passages above, why do you think it was important that Israel totally destroy the people of the land.? What temptations do you think will flow if they fail to do this?

5. List the “compromises” the various tribes of Israel make in their conquest of the land recorded in Judges 1. List the temptations to compromise, you face as you live for Jesus.

6. Discuss your reaction to this statement: *“contemporary western church members who vicariously and avidly gorge themselves on violence via television and cinema have forfeited any right to throw the first stone at the biblical conquest”* D R Davis commentary on Judges p.16

**Discussion 2            Generation degeneration**  
**Judges 2:6-3:11        (Sermon 10th Feb 08)**

1. What features of human sin does the “cycle” in Judges 2:10-19 illustrate? The cycle is

Israel Sins → God punished Israel through her enemies → Israel repents and calls on God to save → God raises a Judge to lead and deliver Israel → Israel enjoys peace and blessing → Israel sins

2. Some people prefer to call sin “failure”.

Why do you think this is a more acceptable “label”?

What does it imply.?

3. What features of God's character does his treatment of Israel in Judges 2:10-19 illustrate?
4. Read 1 Cor 10:1-14. How does Israel's history serve as a lesson to us? What lessons should we learn from the Judges "Cycle"?
5. How would you reply to a Christian person who says "*Temptation was too great for me - I had no choice, and gave in to sin.*"? How does 1 Cor 10:12-14 inform your response?
6. Are you aware of a 'cycle of sin' in your own life? What hope do we have of breaking this cycle?
7. What facets of the character of God revealed in the early chapters of Judges would surprise most Australians?

**Discussion 3. Ehud: the left handed saviour**  
**Judges 3:12-30 (Sermon 17th Feb 08)**

1. The account of Ehud is full of "black humour" - read it in Judges 3:12-30 and list the elements of this humour.
2. What characteristics does Ehud have that make him an unlikely saviour? What does this teach us about God and how he uses "unlikely" people to achieve his purposes? Can you think of any New Testament and modern examples?
3. In what ways is Jesus an "unlikely saviour".?
4. Read 1 Cor 1:18-31. In what ways does this passage show that Jesus is an unlikely saviour? How does this affect the way you speak about Jesus to friends who are not yet Christian? How does the Christian gospel undercut human pride and self-reliance?
5. In what ways does this account in Judges 3 indicate that Ehad will be unable to deal with the deepest problems Israel faces? What are these problems. (see Chapter 4:1)

**Discussion 4. Deborah: singing salvation's song**  
**Judges 4 & 5 (Sermon 24th Feb 08)**

1. Deborah is unusual in Judges because of her dual role - as both prophet and judge. In what way does she combine these roles in this account?
2. What do you think is the obvious surprise about Deborah's role as a Judge in a "patriarchal" society?
3. What is wrong with Barak's response in verse 8?
4. If this account ended at 4:16 what would be lost?
5. What features in the story of the Judges we have looked at so far emphasise God's initiative in salvation.? What part does Israel play? What part do the Judges play?
6. How does the song of Deborah (Ch 5) celebrate the victory as God's victory?  
How do verses 4 - 5 paint God's actions?  
How does verse 8 portray God's judgement and its cause?
7. For further discussion: A song is a poem. There are other significant songs of celebration in the Bible - can you think of some? Can a poem be "true" and if so in what sense?

**Discussion 5. Gideon: Strength perfected in weakness**  
**Judges 6:1-8:21 (Sermon 2nd Mar 08)**

1. How do Christians often apply the story of Gideon and his fleece? Do you think this is valid? Why/why not?
2. List the features/characteristics/actions of Gideon in this account that are either positive or negative models for us to follow.
3. How is God's patience illustrated as he deals with Gideon in 6:11-24 ?
4. What is so insulting in what Gideon is ordered to do to the Baal and Asherah (idols) of his father in 6:25-26?  
How does the reaction of the people in 6:30 compare with Israel's treatment of God in 6:10?

**5.** Why do you think God grants Gideon's requests in 6:36-40? Why does God reduce the number of soldiers fighting with Gideon (7:1-6) ?

**6.** How would you describe Gideon's "changed nature" in chapter 8? What could account for this?

**7.** What are Gideon's greatest strengths and weaknesses? How are they demonstrated in 8:22-27?

**8.** What is the relationship between God's word in scripture and God's guidance in your life? To what extent should a Christian give priority to the Bible in matters of guidance?

**Discussion 6 Jephthah: An unlikely saviour  
Judges 10:6-12:7 (Sermon 9th Mar 08)**

**1.** What aspects of God's character are revealed in 10:6-16?

**2.** How does our sin affect God? (refer to Eph 4:30). How would our understanding of God be altered if he were **unaffected** by our sin? What Biblical images of God do the Bible writers use that show he is affected by sin?

**3.** How do Jephthah's family circumstances show that he too is an unlikely saviour? (11:1-3)

**4.** How does Jephthah answer the charge that Israel "stole" the land of the Ammonites (v12-27)? What do you think of this answer?

**5.** Why do you think Jephthah makes his vow in 11:30-31? Is this wise or foolish? Give your reasons.

**6.** The conflict with Ephraim in 12:1-7 reminds us of the conflict at the end of Gideon's story. What do these conflicts tell us about Israel's viability long term? What problems do they have? Do you think a king will solve these problems?

**Discussion 7 Samson: Vengeance is mine**  
**Judges 13-16 (Sermon 16th Mar 08)**

1. Read Judges 13-16 - as you do, list the character traits of Samson. How do these contribute to his success and his downfall?
2. Considering the list of Judges we have looked at - how would you characterise the “progression” of characters from Ehud to Samson?
3. How would you describe Israel's “progress”? What uncertainty does this raise about Israel's future?
4. What features of the Account of Samson are different from the accounts of the other Judges? In particular:
  - a) What is unique about the way Samson achieves his victory over Israel's enemies?
  - b) What element in the “sin, judgement, repentance, deliverance cycle” is missing here? What does this imply?
5. How do the Philistines, interpret their capture of Samson (16:23-24)? What irony does this reveal?

**Discussion 8 Give me that old time religion**  
**Judges 17-18 (Sermon 30th Mar 08)**

1. Read Judges 17. What authority underlies Micah's “religion”?
2. What do you think makes idolatry so attractive to Israel? What makes it attractive for 21st century people. What types of idolatry are we in danger of?
3. Why do you think Paul equates greed and idolatry (Colossians 3:5 cf. Luke 12:15) ?
4. What differences are there between the battles fought under the leadership of the Judges and the conquest of Laish by the Danites (Ch 18)?
5. To what extent do you think “everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25) is an accurate description of Micah and the Danites in Chapters 17-18? What about modern people? How adequate in this phrase as a definition of human sinful nature?

**Discussion 9**                      **Contains SVL: everyone did as they saw fit**  
**Judges 19-21**                      **(Sermon 6th April 08)**

1. Why do you think Idol worship is often linked to sexual immorality?
2. What light does Paul throw on this question in Romans 1:18-32 ?
3. How does the narrative of Judges 19-21 illustrate this passage from Romans?
4. In what way does the account of chapter 19 show that Israel has stooped to an all time low in her conduct? What is ironic about 19:11-15 ?
5. Why do you think God allows the two defeats of the Israelite armies before their eventual victory against Gibeah (Ch 20:18-28) ?
6. How do these chapters illustrate the dangers of arguments that claim "the end justifies the means"? Can you think of some examples from recent history when this approach has undermined a good cause?