

# Don't Judge Me, Lead Me: The Book Of Judges

## Judges 6:1-10

Worship God Alone!

The first commandment given by God is, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* (Exodus 20:3 KJV). Jesus reaffirmed this as the greatest commandment, saying, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"* (Matthew 22:37 KJV). As we reach the closing chapters of the Bible, this eternal truth is echoed once more in Revelation:

*The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll." I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!" (Revelation 22:6-9 NIV).*

Even in Revelation, a book of Heavenly end times prophecy and worship, we witness an elderly John, the recipient of these awesome visions, bowing down to a mere Angel! He is promptly and mercifully rebuked by the Angel who tells him that he is to worship God alone. God may certainly excuse John's misstep, given the epic nature of the narrative unfolding around him, and the fact that it was John who God chose to receive and write down these inspired words in Revelation. For the rest of us, angel worship may be the least of our worries. Human history betrays this awful disposition of humankind—to worship anything and anyone other than the one true living God. Romans 1:18-32 sheds more light on how idolatry happened in the human heart:

*"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for*

*their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:18-32 NIV).*

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Observing today's news headlines, how do you see the above passage from Romans playing itself out in horrifying detail. Let these thoughts lead you to a place of fervent prayer to God.

\*STUDY POINT: Conduct a personal Bible Study, writing down in two columns Scriptural parallels between Israel's continual rebellion against God in Judges 1-6, and current events in our world today. Take the time necessary to study this out and draw conclusions as they become clear to you.

If we define idol worship according to the Bible, we might say it refers to the act of revering or worshiping anything other than the one true God. It involves placing created things—whether physical objects, people, or ideas—above God in one's life. The Bible consistently condemns idol worship as a grave sin, as it leads people away from the worship of God and into spiritual corruption. Our world today then—filled with idol worship—is in big trouble with God! Has there ever been a more desperate need for the Gospel to go forth than in our day, right now? (See Matthew 28:16-20; Matthew 9:37-38).

In today's lesson we witness through inspired Scripture in Judges 6:1-10 how God judges Israel yet again for their sin of idolatry. Perhaps we should take heed of history here and understand that as long-suffering and merciful as our God is—through Jesus and through His cross—the day is coming when God must call to account all sin, including idolatry, in those who have chosen not to worship Him alone.

*"The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites" (Judges 6:1 NIV).*

In this passage, we can see how the author is explaining that God is using the enemy to discipline His children—in this case the Midianites. We in our human impatience would have given up on the Israelites a long time before this fourth cycle of Israel's DORD (Disobedience, Oppression, Repentance, Deliverance). But God's covenantal love and forgiveness means that when his children cry out to Him—regardless of their motives—He is there to rescue them. I know, it's hard to wrap our minds around God's grace and mercy. Perhaps we should let this truth sink in:

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 KJV).*

*“Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds” (Judges 6:2 NIV).*

The Midianites teamed up with the Amalekites and other nomadic tribes to create a massive, far-reaching throng of camel-riding plunderers—disorganized but formidable in their numbers and their reckless thievery of all the Israelites’ food harvest and means of sustenance. The Israelites indeed sought shelter in “mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds” because even their homes in distant settled areas were not safe against bandits and their tireless, domesticated camels.

*“Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys” (Judges 6:3-4 NIV).*

This was the strategy of the Midianites: WATCH as the Israelites plant their crops in the early spring, around the time of the rainy season. This would have been during the months of March to April. Then WAIT until the harvest would typically occur several months later, around May to June (for the early grain harvests like barley) and June to July (for later crops such as wheat). The Midianites, along with the Amalekites and other eastern peoples, would wait until the crops were ready for harvest and then swarm into the land to steal the produce. This would leave the Israelites without food and in a state of desperation.

*“They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it” (Judges 6:5 NIV).*

This verse recalls a passage in Habakkuk 1 in which the prophet recounts his vision from God of hordes upon hordes of battle ready, “terrible and dreadful” Chaldeans (see Habakkuk 1:5-11) invading the land, used of God as a mighty rod of discipline against His disobedient children. The scenario of scores of camels would have been shocking to the Israelites. This may have been the first use of the long-legged animal in a military raid. However, it was more the number of camels and their ability to reach the very periphery of the land that was scary to the Israelites—more so than their latent ferocious nature!

*“Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help” (Judges 6:6 NIV).*

This effective tactic of starving the enemy certainly has been employed countless times in ancient and modern-day war strategy. God knew what measure of discipline it would take to cause his hard-hearted children to break and finally cry out to Him!

*“When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.” (Judges 6:7-10 NIV)*

In Judges 6:8, we encounter the first unnamed prophet in the biblical narrative. This prophet plays a crucial role as a covenant defender, reminding the Israelites of their exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Unlike prophets in the Ancient Near East who often delivered messages about proper worship and loyalty to their gods, this prophet's message sharply focuses on the necessity of worshiping Yahweh alone.

So this Prophet Who Shall Remain Nameless makes clear that this message he brings could only have come from God Himself. Read, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:" (Judges 6:8). God reminds his hurting, crying children of His past goodness and His past warnings not to worship the gods of the Amorites. At this critical point in the text, we have to catch the grieving heart of God here as He says to His spank weary kids:

"But you have not listened to me."

These are the words of a parent grieving over the disobedience of their child, knowing also how grievous the punishment would be to that child.

\*STUDY POINT: Imagine for a moment that you could eradicate all the evils mentioned in today's passage by preaching God's Word to these people—and they listened! What twelve verses or passages in the New Testament would you preach? Sure, have fun with this!

Worship, then, is our humble response of gratitude to God, for all that He has done for us through His Son Jesus (John 3:16). How we need to cultivate a deep desire to know God. Scripture assures us that if we thirst for Him, He will satisfy our souls: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6 KJV).

Do you long for a deeper, more transformative worship experience? Start by confessing any sins that may be hindering your fellowship with God, for "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9 KJV). Then, earnestly seek God and ask Him to ignite within you an unquenchable thirst for His presence. As you meditate on how God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures, pray for fresh revelation of His glory in your life.

When God opens your eyes to see Him anew, your heart will naturally overflow with worship. For as the psalmist declares, "*O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*" (Psalm 34:8 KJV). Let this be the anthem of your soul, that worship becomes not just an act, but the very essence of your life.

Worship God alone!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland