

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

## Judges 3:12-30

"God Amidst The Gamut"

My wife and I often marvel at the sovereignty of God and His miraculous ability to have blessed us and bore fruit through us through the years despite corrupt leaders, imploding churches, and falling spiritual debris all around us. Yes, we bear the scars of the scorned and vengeful. But we are still here today, standing on the Rock of His Word, trusting Him for every next step. Hallelujah! We have simply stayed the course and kept our eyes on Jesus, the Head of the Body the church (Colossians 1:18).

One of the criticisms of the unbelieving world toward God is that He doesn't appear to be addressing—nor has He ever addressed, they say—the rampant evil in the world. However, God's Word is replete with the miraculous moves of Yahweh amidst and despite the evil that humankind manifests. God truly works amidst the gamut of sin as the result of our human fallenness. He even works amidst the inevitable consequences of our sin and disobedience. And be encouraged Jesus follower that our just God will one day soon right every wrong, avenge every injustice, and reward every faithful, persevering saint in Christ.

Jesus explains in Matthew 13:24-30 why God doesn't wipe out all evil in our present day:

### **Matthew 13:24-30**

*Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

In other words, by faith we must believe His Word, that in His day of judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) He will divinely divide the good and the evil ones from all the earth and exact justice to each based on what that person did with His Son Jesus (1 John 5:12).

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: When you are sharing your faith with unbelievers, do you find yourself falling short of complete answers to their questions about God? What questions might you want to study out the answers to?

\*STUDY POINT: Write out six to twelve questions about God and the Bible that you know you need deeper knowledge to answer. In this way, not only are you beginning to better prepare yourself in the area of apologetics, but you will be eternally encouraged as you learn more about God for yourself! Beside each God/Bible question, write out the Scripture

verse or passage that best answers the question. Take the time to memorize your responses and the corresponding proof texts. This will be time well spent!

Hallelujah! And for those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, Lord and Leader, and have held fast to Him through the fiery trials of life, persevering to the end?

**James 1:12**

*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

**Revelation 14:12-13**

*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

In today's lesson, watch and take courage, hope, and amazement as God works amidst a violent time in Israel's history and demonstrates His grace, mercy, justice, and love through a gamut of unlikely circumstances and people.

**Judges 3:12-14**

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and because they did this evil the LORD gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel. Getting the Ammonites and Amalekites to join him, Eglon came and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the City of Palms. The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years.

Folks, they are back at it! No sooner has Othniel died—and accomplished a forty year reprieve from enemy interference for Israel—than they return to worshipping foreign idols and resuming alliances with once sworn enemies. Without the light of a moral and political leader, darkness again prevails in the promised land and in the hearts of God's children. As the Israelites go round and round this D-O-R-D cycle repeatedly, note how each successive return to evil is worst than the last. Such is the manifesting and multiplication of sin in us all (see Matthew 12:43-45). Hence, God installs a heavy and hideous king to exact discipline to His kids. The Lord empowers King Eglon of Moab to regain his ancestral lands from the Israelites. Teaming up with the Ammonites and Amalekites, he then subdues the eastern tribes and launches a surprise attack on western Canaan. Establishing fortifications near Jericho, he then settles in the conquered territory, ruling for eighteen years by divine allowance. Divine allowance—yes, this was all God! Interesting to note that the Eglon and the Moabites, as well as the Ammonites and Amalekites, were neighbouring rival states—with historical ties to the Israelites. The emergence of these rivalries likely stemmed from border tensions sparked by Israelite expansion. The ever-hostile Amalekites and their alliance with Eglon's Moabite force now posed a significant threat to Israel. Their fear and crying out to God (Judges 3:15) were well-warranted! First on King Eglon's military agenda was the "City of Palms" referring to Jericho, a strategic oasis north of the Dead Sea. Jericho was pivotal for controlling access to the Judean wilderness and the routes into the central hill country (see Judges 1:16).

## **Judges 3:15**

Again the Israelites cried out to the LORD, and he gave them a deliverer—Ehud, a left-handed man, the son of Gera the Benjamite. The Israelites sent him with tribute to Eglon king of Moab.

Enter Ehud, God's purposeful choice to deliver Israel from years of cruel subjugation. In Ehud's time, being left-handed was uncommon and valued for its strategic advantage. The Benjaminites, known for their left-handed prowess, were skilled in combat tactics that caught off guard their right-handed opponents. Dear one following Christ, allow this story to encourage you—allow God to use your uniqueness (there's only one of you!)—to fulfill His plans.

Okay, so we know God works through unlikely vessels. But I want to show you how He works amidst the gamut of possible narratives. This is a truly riveting and humorous—if not brutal and graphic—story of spiritual rescue you won't soon forget! I will read the verses in succession so you catch the flow of the narrative:

## **Judges 3:16-25**

Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it. But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, "Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you." The king said to his attendants, "Leave us!" And they all left. Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, "I have a message from God for you." As the king rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it. Then Ehud went out to the porch; he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, "He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the palace." They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them. There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead.

Let's pause here for a moment. This calls for a wow! Amazingly, God raises up a left-handed man concealing a homemade dagger on his right side so as not to be detected by King Eglon's men! Ehud here no doubt reluctantly and angrily brings the yearly tribute of myriad agricultural goods and gifts to honour the rotund king. After sending his helpers away, Ehud travels to the Moabite boundary line in Gilgal where he encounters the Moabite god—idols. Whatever murderous ambitions Ehud had previously while he was fashioning his sharp dagger were further incensed by his view of these ornate stone statues. He returns to revisit the king, now on a mission from God. His request to see the king, to deliver a message from God, is met with the king's curiosity. The king motions his men to leave the room, so he can hear this special message from God through Ehud. When the king stands, Ehud grabs and cross swipes his dagger with his left hand and plunges it into the King's big belly. That's the message from God! Judges 3:22 provides a graphic, Hollywood-like picture of the swift end of King Eglon. Ehud's escape is James

Bond slick and clean, while Eglon's men tarry outside locked doors, waiting for their dead leader to finish his bathroom duties! The story is nothing if not ridiculous—yet God's Holy Scripture, and it's true! There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead. Hmm.

The ways of victorious Yahweh continue with this next narrative:

### **Judges 3:26-29**

While they waited, Ehud got away. He passed by the stone images and escaped to Seirah. When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them. "Follow me," he ordered, "for the LORD has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands." So they followed him down and took possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab; they allowed no one to cross over. At that time they struck down about ten thousand Moabites, all vigorous and strong; not one escaped.

Continuing in the powerful anointing of God, Ehud escapes back to Seirah—likely near the idols by Gilgal, north of Jericho—and he rallies the Israelites to attack the Moabite garrison. In Judges 3:28 we observe how controlling the fords of the Jordan River, as Ehud did, was crucial for hindering enemy movements between Canaan and Transjordan. Ten thousand vigorous and strong Moabites defeated through the anointed leadership of a left-handed man!

**\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** Now that you have heard today's passage as one complete narrative, did this story strike you as a fable or fiction with its graphic detail and powerful pace? Now, remind yourself that this narrative was actual history recorded by through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost!

**\*STUDY POINT:** As a fun personal study, find three other passages in the Old Testament that read like a Hollywood action/thriller. Write out the text and as you do, imagine in your mind the events within the narrative playing out in your mind. Again, marvel that these events actually took place, but this time write down all of the God movements within the stories. Be inspired and be amazed!

And finally today, this verse:

### **Judges 3:30**

That day Moab was made subject to Israel, and the land had peace for eighty years.

Eighty years was the longest period of peace Israel would experience in the time of the Judges. Much trial and tribulation—eighteen years under King Eglon—would be redeemed now and Israel once again would be the recipients of God's matchless love and grace. He would fulfill His covenant to His children, even through the gamut of brutal consequences and circumstances.

This record of the Judges is a blessing. We can glean so much hope, knowing that God is steadfastly good, gracious and able to deliver us. Even amidst the gamut of our self-made troubles.

I leave you with these verses today:

**Joel 2:25-27**

*And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.*

~ Reverend Darren McClelland