

Judges Notes

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Introduction:

Judges covers the history of the nation of Israel from the time of Joshua death until the time of Samuel and the kings of Israel; a period of approx. 340-400 years. (Acts 13; 1 Kings 6:1)

- Many believe that Samuel compiled the accounts that form the book of Judges.

Main Theme:

What happens when the people of God leave the Lord in the land of promise?

- Judges 21:25 – “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Also in Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1.)
- Judges 2:11 – “Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.”
- Galatians 3:1-3 – “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”
- Colossians 2:6 – “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

God’s Grace:

God’s empowering of a deliverer (a “judge” can also be translated “deliverer, redeemer, or savior”) by coming upon him/her by the Holy Spirit to lead God’s people out of bondage.

(Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14)

- God uses ordinary men and women to bring revival to His people.
- The OT “age of the Spirit” continues in 1 Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6; 16:13.
- A constantly flowing fresh filling of the Spirit is the remedy to keep us from trying to complete in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit.

The pattern of the book of Judges is that Israel turns to idols, and then God sends an oppressor. After which Israel repents and God raises up a deliverer who leads Israel to freedom and eventual idolatry once again.

- There are 13 judges through the book that turn Israel’s heart back to the Lord.

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “after the death of Joshua” – This is very similar to the book of Joshua which began after the death of Moses.

- They are probably working at Shiloh here. (Josh. 18:1)
- “Who shall be first to go up” – Each tribe is to be possessing their own land. At this point, there seems to be a great deal of uncertainty in Israel.
- “asked the Lord” – At least they are seeking the Lord at this point.
- Josephus says they went to Eliezar who sought the Lord through the Urim and Thummim.

1:3 – “Simeon went with him” – God told Judah to go. He didn’t instruct for Simeon to go with them.

- There is no condemnation here, but the beginning of disobedience and lack of trust in the Lord.

1:5 – “Adoni-Bezek” – means “lord of fire, or lord of lightning.”

- “Bezek” – In 1 Sam. 11:8 it says Saul “numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.”

- 1:6 – “cut off his thumbs and big toes” – God commanded Israel to completely wipe out their enemies. It seems they are keeping Adoni-Bezek around as a trophy.
- 1:7 – “So God has repaid me” – Adoni-Bezek recognizes God’s justice in the process of sowing and reaping.
- The three principles of sowing and reaping: 1. One always reaps of the same kind after which is sown, 2. One always reaps later, and 3. One always reaps more than is sown.
- 1:8 – “fought against Jerusalem” – This is recounting an episode from Joshua 15:63. (See also Josh. 10:3.)
- They take Jerusalem, but fail to clean out all of the Jebusites. (Judges 1:21) Israel did not permanently take control of the city until David captured it in 2 Sam. 5:6-10 (c. 1000 BC).
- 1:11 – “Debir” – means “sanctuary.”
- 1:12 – “Then Caleb said” – This account was also given in Josh. 15:13-19.
- “Kirjath Sepher” – means “the walled city of Sepher.”
 - “to him I will give my daughter Achsah” – Caleb looks for someone for his daughter who will be a warrior for his God.
- 1:13 – “Othniel” – Othniel will be the first Judge of Israel. (Judges 3:7-11)
- “Caleb’s younger brother” – Caleb was the son of Jephunnah.
- 1:14 – “she said to him” – It seems that she asks her father for the springs rather than Othniel.
- 1:16 – “the Kenite” – The Kenites were descended from Moses’ brother-in-law, Hobab, and took their inheritance with Israel. (Num. 10:29,32; Judges 4:11)
- “City of Palms” – This is Jericho.
- 1:17 – “Hormah” – means “destruction.”
- 1:19 – “they could not drive out the mountaineers” – Judah couldn’t drive them out, but God could if they would walk closely with Him.
- “chariots of iron” – Israel has defeated chariots before. (Josh. 11)
 - Judah is without a leader and is lacking faith overall.
- 1:20 – “Hebron” – means “association, or fellowship.”
- 1:21 – “to this day” – This seems to be referring to the days of Samuel who many think wrote or compiled this book.
- 1:22 – “Bethel” – This seems to be an example of how Israel was to take full possession of the land, one city at a time.

- 1:24 – “please show us the entrance” – There is no mention of prayer or seeking the Lord through the priesthood, only a compromise with a Canaanite of the land.
- The “Lord was with them” (v. 22), but they are beginning to turn from Him. God is never the first to turn away!
 - “the entrance to the city” – Many cities had a secret passageway to get to the city’s water supply outside the walls.
- 1:26 – “called its name Luz” – This man builds another city and calls it after the name of the city taken by Israel.
- By refusing to live with Israel, as Rahab had done after the fall of Jericho, he seems to be communicating his displeasure at the way Luz was taken by Israel through his help.
- 1:27 – “Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land” – The story here given reveals that whereas the work began in earnest, it gradually weakened.
- If the land truly flowed with milk and honey, then the Canaanites had more reason to fight to stay in the land. The enemy knows where true value lies in this world and he is willing to fight for that too. It will be in these important arenas where the battle will be fiercest.
- 1:28 – “put the Canaanites under tribute” – This is an ungodly compromise. Israel is entering into covenants (Judges 2:2) with the Canaanites. Israel is moving from conquest to compromise.
- They would rather take money from them than to completely obey the Lord.
 - How many times do we fail to obey because we do not understand why? But it cannot be faith if we understand.
- 1:32 – “the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites” – Lit. “the Asherites dwelt in the bowels (midst) of the Canaanites.”
- From here, the pattern degenerates. Israel goes from driving out all the Canaanites, to allowing them to live among the tribes, and then to the tribes settling to live among the Canaanites.
- 1:33 – “Beth Shemesh” – means “house of the sun(-god).”
- “Beth Anath” – means “house of the (goddess) Anath.”
 - “they dwelt among the Canaanites” – This becomes contagious. The tribes see the temporary gain of compromise and follow suit.
 - To stand against the Canaanites at this point would be to stand alone from their brethren.
- 1:34 – “the Amorites forced Dan into the mountains” – The progression of compromise leaves the enemy with the victory over God’s people and now Dan is left without freedom.
- Dan will eventually go north to settle in Laish. (Judges 18)
- 1:35 – “Aijalon” – This is a shame. They had had such a great and miraculous victory there in Joshua’s day. (Josh. 10)
- “Joseph prevailed” – If God had prevailed, the Canaanites would have been completely driven out.

Chapter 2:

2:1 – “the Angel of the Lord...I swore to your fathers” – This is a Christophony; an OT appearance of Jesus Christ.

- The Theophany also appears in Judges as “the unnamed prophet” in 6:8-10 and “the Word of the Lord” in 10:11-14.
- “Gilgal” – This is the place of consecration where Israel was circumcised and observed the Passover after first coming into the land. (Josh. 5)
 - God goes after them. After all He has done for them and they still turned away, yet He pursues them. God always initiates.
- “Bochim” – means “weeping.”
- “I will never break My covenant” – God has kept His promises to the people, but they have failed in their part of the covenant. God always keeps His part of the covenant.

2:2 – “you have not obeyed My voice” – God warned them ahead of time about this sin.

2:3 – “their gods shall be a snare to you” – That is what they wanted, so He gave them over to themselves and the consequences of their decisions. (Num. 33:55)

- There is a progression in the punishment against Israel. (Judges 2:3; 6:9-10; 10:13-14)

2:4 – “to all the children of Israel” – God is speaking to the congregation all at once or He is moving through the congregation swiftly for all to hear.

- “wept” – They were sorrowful, but not repentant.
 - Our weeping can actually get in the way of repentance when we feel God is appeased by our weeping and yet we continue on without changing our behavior.

2:5 – “they sacrificed” – There is something sincere going on in their hearts as they turn to the substitutionary sacrifice.

2:6 – “Joshua had dismissed the people” – True repentance shows itself in obedience.

- God’s kindness leads us to repentance. (Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10)

2:10 – “did not know the Lord” – No doubt, they knew about the Lord. They heard the stories and saw evidence of God all through the promised land, but they hadn’t met Him personally for themselves. They had religion without relationship.

- They turn from God while in the promised land. The testings of the wilderness have a way of building faith in us, and this generation was without those testings.
- “know” – This word is also translated “acknowledge” in Prov. 3:6.

2:11-23 – This is the prolog of the book of Judges. This section lays out the pattern for this book.

2:11 – “did evil in the sight of the Lord” – This is repeated in Judges 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1; and 10:6.

- “evil” – NT believers are instructed to “be simple concerning evil.” (Rom. 16:19)

2:13 – “Baal” – means “lord.” Ashtoreth was the female consort of Baal, and both were to be the god and goddess of fertility in nature, procreation, and human intellect.

- Whatever is lord of our life is our god. Jehovah is Savior and Lord!
- People worship nature because they want to worship their intellect and don’t want to be held accountable.
- “the Ashtoreths” – These were in effect ancient pornography.

- 2:14 – “the anger of the Lord” – God desires to rule in love, but He will rule by discipline if necessary. Either way, He will rule.
- “He delivered them into” – This is much like the “He gave them over” of Romans 1.
- 2:15 – “greatly distressed” – This is what happens when they turn away from the Lord.
- 2:16 – “the Lord raised up judges” – This is God’s mercy. When God can no longer be Lord of the whole group, He will then look for one to work through in the group.
- “So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall...” (Ezek. 22:30)
 - “delivered them” – God sustained Israel. He had a plan for them that included David, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.
- 2:18 – “the Lord was with the judge” – This explains the source of power with the judges God raised up. They were able to lead Israel in dramatic acts of deliverance because the Lord was with them, not because the judge was necessarily great or powerful in themselves.
- 2:23 – “the Lord left those nations” – The Lord left a remnant of the Canaanites in the land.
- There is something more important to the Lord for them than that all their enemies would be removed. The Lord was more concerned about their hearts and their relationship with Him rather than their personal comfort.

Chapter 3:

- 3:1 – “test Israel” – The Hebrew word carries the sense of “proving.” God doesn’t test us to learn something about us, but to reveal to us what He already knows to be true about us.
- God brings and/or allows difficult things into our lives to teach us something about ourselves and to turn us to Him.
 - In the NT, Jesus would rather have His disciples in the storm, than on the land in safety with the wrong conception of who He is (John 6). God gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh” to continually humble him so that he wouldn’t exalt in his experiences (2 Cor. 12:7).
- 3:2 – “taught to know war” – This is to walk in faith and obedience to the Lord so He can give the supernatural victory. It wasn’t in them developing warfare abilities, but in them learning dependence on the Lord.
- 3:3 – “lords” – The Hebrew for “lords” is related to the word “tyrant” and is used only of Philistine rulers.
- 3:4 – “obey the commandments of the Lord” – Being taught to know war (v. 2) is equal to learning obedience, for Israel always won when it was obedient to the Lord.
- 3:5-6 – There is a process here: They “dwelt among the Canaanites” (v. 5), then “they took their daughters to be their wives” (v. 6), and then “they served their gods” (v. 6).
- 3:7 – “forgot” – Lit. “to mislay, or to set aside.” (See also Deut. 4:9.) Other things became more important.
- 3:8 – “Cushan-Rishathaim” – means “doubly evil, or doubly wicked Cushan.”
- “eight years” – This speaks to the stubbornness of Israel. It didn’t have to take 8 years.

- 3:9 – “When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer” – When the people cried out to the Lord, God raised up a man to lead a work.
- “Othniel” – means “the power of God, or the Lord is might.”
 - Othniel is likely about 85 years old. He has fought for his own land, conquered the enemy, taken a godly wife and a great inheritance. He had every right to want to retire, but something else stirs him to action.
- 3:10 – “Spirit of the Lord came upon him” – This is the first mention of the Spirit coming upon an individual in the Bible. (See also Num. 11:25-29.) It is only the baptism of the Holy Spirit that made Othniel different from the enemy and even from his own people.
- This is the OT parallel to the NT experience of the filling of the Spirit described in Acts 1:8.
 - This experience of the Holy Spirit is described in different ways at different times; for Jephthah it is said that He “came upon,” for Gideon was said to be “clothed,” and Samson was “troubled” and “mightily.”
 - The OT saints didn’t have the privilege of knowing the Spirit as an indwelling Spirit. The coming upon of the Spirit is what David speaks of in Ps. 51:11.
 - “He went to war” – If the Spirit of the Lord comes upon you, He will empower you to serve God on behalf of those around you. The Spirit will not allow you to be content in the midst of trouble, but will drive you to fight selflessly.
 - Never underestimate the good that one person can do who is filled with the Spirit of God and obedient to the will of God.
- 3:11 – “the land had rest for forty years” – At this point, the time of peace and rest is greater than the time of oppression and struggle.
- 3:12 – “the Lord strengthened Eglon” – It is a sad commentary when God is forced to raise up an Eglon to trouble His own people before they would repent.
- 3:13 – “Ammon and Amalek” – Eglon brings together two perennial enemies of Israel.
- “City of Palms” – That is Jericho (Deut. 34:3). The city where they once saw a miraculous victory from the Lord is now given over to the enemy because of their sin.
 - Eglon didn’t rebuild the city which was cursed (Josh. 6:26), but somehow uses it as a headquarters.
- 3:14 – “eighteen years” – They are slower to turn this time than the previous time. (v. 8)
- 3:15 – “Benjamite” – Benjamin means “son of my right hand.”
- “a left-handed man” – The Hebrew implies he was “wounded in his right hand.” Being left handed was considered a curse in those days. But Benjamin was known for it men who could fight with their left hand. (Judges 20:16; 1 Chron. 12:2)
 - In Latin, ‘sinister’ was left-handed and ‘dexterous’ was right-handed.
- 3:16 – “cubit” – A cubit measured 18 inches.
- “on his right thigh” – Swords were always drawn across the body. For right-handed people, their swords were typically on their left hip. Ehud hides his sword on his right thigh where they would be less likely to check.
 - God uses Ehud’s apparent weakness to his advantage for victory.

- 3:17 – “the tribute” – This seems to refer to the tax money imposed on Israel by Eglon.
- The tribute of that day was typically paid in grain, not in coinage.
 - “a very fat man” – Jon Courson quotes a commentary that says Eglon’s waist was about 400 inches around.
- 3:18 – “the Lord was moved to pity” – God’s grace makes Him vulnerable to feelings of pity and compassion.
- 3:19 – “stone images that were at Gilgal” – Gilgal used to hold a very special place in the national life of Israel. It was at one time a place of consecration and dedication, but is now defiled by idols.
- 3:20 – “cool private chamber” – This was a room built on the roof of the house enclosed in lattice.
- 3:21 – “Ehud reached with his left hand” – Eglon seems to be unsuspecting of Ehud’s left hand.
- 3:22 – “did not draw the dagger out” – Ehud lost his sword.
- “the dagger” – The dagger is a picture of the power of the Word of God. (Heb. 4:12) The dirt is forced out when the sword of the Spirit is thrust in.
 - The question with the Word is not how many times you have gone through the Word, but how many times the Word has gone through you.
 - The change for Israel must be internal, not circumstantial. They had all the external evidence, but they needed the internal change.
- 3:24 – “attending to his needs” – They thought he was going to the bathroom.
- 3:27 – “he blew the trumpet” – Evidently, the trumpet is a pre-arranged signal.
- 3:28 – “Follow me” – Ehud rallies men from an oppressed and/or apathetic state.
- “seized the fords of the Jordan” – They cut off Eglon and his troops from the rest of Moab and kill those who had oppressed in Israel.
- 3:29 – “ten thousand men” – This means there were at least 10,000 Moabites that had invaded and occupied the land of Israel.
- 3:30 – “rest for eighty years” – This is the longest period of rest for Israel in the book of Judges.
- 3:31 – “After him” – The Hebrew seems to imply Shamgar immediately follows Ehud.
- “Shamgar” – means “destroyer.” But it isn’t a Hebrew word. His father, Anath, is named after a Canaanite god. (Judges 1:33) Evidently, he came from an Israelite family that left the God of Israel in favor of the gods of Canaan.
 - “the Philistines” – The days of Shamgar are described in Judges 5:6. It seems as if Shamgar rises up on the spur of the moment. He may have been working when the Philistines came.
 - “ox goad” – A 7-8 foot pole with a metal point on one end with which to prod the oxen and a metal blade on the other end to scrape the dirt off the plow.
 - Shamgar is without a resume, a college degree, without credentials, and without godly parentage, but he is willing to use what has been placed in his hands to fight for the deliverance of God’s people.

Chapter 4:

The scene of Judges 4 shifts from the south of Israel to the north.

4:2 – “the Lord sold them” – This is approximately 200 years after the exodus from Egypt. Now God is putting them back into bondage.

- “Jabin” – It seems to be a title of the king of Hazor in that part of Canaan.
 - Joshua had defeated a Jabin at Hazor about 100 years previous. (Josh. 11:1,11)
- “Canaan” – This is the first oppression that comes from enemies within the land.
 - In Deut. 20, Israel was commanded to remove the Canaanites from Canaan. Their failure to fulfill that command leads to this current conflict.
- “Sisera” – means “to bind with chains.”

4:3 – “900 chariots” – Josephus says that in the battle of Joshua 11, the Canaanites had 20,000 chariots and yet Israel won. Now they are oppressed by 900.

4:4 – “Deborah” – means “bee.”

- “prophetess” – She was one who spoke forth for God. (1 Cor. 11:5)
 - Deborah, the only judge also said to be a prophet/prophetess, is one of 9 prophetesses mentioned in the Bible: Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip’s four daughters (Acts 21:9).
 - Deborah serves as a prophet and judge. The only other person that seems to take these positions is Samuel (the final judge and first prophet).
 - Deborah also seems to serve as a military advisor and psalmist.
- “Lapidoth” – means “torches, or lamps.”

4:6 – “she sent and called for Barak” – Deborah is submitting under the authority God has established for the defense of Israel. God will always test to see if we will submit to the authority He has placed over us.

- It takes both Deborahs and Baraks to accomplish what the Lord desires to accomplish.
- “called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali” – From Kedesh in Naphtali to Ramah/Bethel (where Deborah was stationed) was a journey of about 1 week.
- “Barak” – means “lightening.”
- “Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded” – She is simply confirming the word of God.

4:7 – “against you I will deploy Sisera” – God is speaking here.

4:8 – “if you will go with me” – Barak seems to be afraid, but he is mentioned for his faith in Heb. 11:32. It may also be that Barak is recognizing Deborah’s authority and does not want to venture into this without her support. Or it could be that Barak trusted more in Deborah’s relationship with God than with his own relationship with God.

- This is without substantial weapons for the army (Judges 5:8). Barak and all who were with him showed real courage and trust in God to go out against Sisera and his army.

4:9 – “into the hand of a woman” – Deborah is prophesying. No doubt, Barak thinks she is speaking of herself. But she foresees and is speaking of Jael.

4:11 – “Heber” – means “crossed over.”

- “the Kenites” – They had allied with Israel because of their relationship with Moses (Num. 10:29; Judges 1:16), but now seem to be siding with the Canaanites.
- God is using Heber to “deploy Sisera” (v. 7) against the Israelites.

4:12 – “Mount Tabor” – This is a mountain located in the Valley of Jezreel/Meggido standing 1,300 ft. above the valley floor.

- It is good strategy to head to the mountains when fighting chariots on foot.

4:13 – “River Kishon” – Today the Kishon River is a little, stringy river. But even as recently as 100 years ago, sailboats would come in the Kishon from the Mediterranean. No doubt, in Barak’s time it was a substantial river, especially at flood stage.

4:15 – “the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand” – God used nature to go against the Canaanites. (Judges 5:4-5,20-21)

- Josephus said that God sent a violent storm of hail into the faces of those driving the chariots to rout, disable, and drive them back.

4:17 – “Jael” – means “mountain goat,” and comes from the root meaning “to ascend, or to be valuable.”

- “peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite” – Apparently, Jael doesn’t recognize that pact for herself. Her faith may oppose the decision to ally with those opposed to the Israelites.

4:18 – “into the tent” – The custom was for men to be excluded from the women’s tent. To enter into this part of the tent was punishable by death. Nobody would think to look for him there.

4:19 – “jug of milk” – This is called “leben.” It is a wineskin of curdled milk served as a sign of hospitality.

4:20 – “if any man comes and inquires of you” – By this time, Jael must realize that Sisera has been defeated and is running to save his life.

4:21 – “tent peg” – A spike, 12-18 inches long, used for setting up the tent.

- Setting up and tearing down the tent was women’s work in that nomadic culture.
- “he died” – This flies in the face of the code of hospitality of the Bedouin culture. It could be considered by some to be a high form of treachery.
- Jael pins Sisera to the ground with one swing of the hammer.

4:22 – “I will show you the man you must seek” – Barak sees Deborah’s prophecy come true.

Chapter 5:

5:1 – “Deborah” – Deborah seems to have written this psalm. (v. 7)

- Almost all scholars are agreed that this is one of the most beautiful pieces of Hebrew poetry ever written.

5:2 – “When leaders lead” – It is important for leaders to lead; not suppression or dictating, but true leadership.

- In the NT, the Laodicean church is characterized by the role of the people. (Rev. 3:14-22)
- “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” (Prov. 29:25)
- “people willingly offer themselves” – This is with no hope of victory or success.
- The faith of the people to stand up and fight is one of the main themes of this psalm.

5:6 – “the byways” – These were the passageways of the mountains. They would use these more difficult paths to remain hidden from the violent oppressors in their land.

5:7 – “village life ceased” – There were no more little towns without walls. The people had to retreat into walled cities for protection.

- “a mother in Israel” – Deborah sees herself as a mother first and a judge second.
- Deborah seems surprised or amazed at all this.
- David, at the end of his life, saw himself as the “sweet psalmist of Israel.” (2 Sam. 23:1)

5:8 – “not a shield or spear” – The problem greater than a lack of weapons was the lack of the fear of God.

- Part of the problem with being oppressed was the removal of their weapons.

5:11 – “recount the righteous acts of the Lord” – When people give their hearts to the Lord, they will again sit and talk about God’s mighty acts.

5:14 – “Machir” – This is from the ½ tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan. (Deut. 3:15)

5:16 – “great searchings of heart” – Reuben thought about getting involved, but stayed put.

- There is such a thing as the paralysis of analysis; big dreamers who do nothing.

5:18 – “jeopardized their lives” – They put their lives on the line while others refused to go.

- It is often the faith of the few that leads to the work getting done.
- God takes note of who fights for the people of God and who refuses to get into the action.

5:20 – “from the heavens” – This is speaking of God’s intervention in the battle with the use of nature.

- “stars” – This is either speaking of angels or of some natural forces.

- 5:23 – “curse” – A curse is placed on those unwilling to get involved. It is the curse of not doing anything.
- “Meroz” – The NIV Study Bible says that Meroz was in Naphtali. But there is no real evidence and it seems Meroz has passed off the scene without a trace. The curse seems to have worked so well that we never hear about the city again.
 - Damian Kyle notes that Meroz was only 15 miles from the battle.
 - “did not come to the help of the Lord” – They are noting the people’s refusal to serve the Lord, not their refusal to join Deborah and Barak.
 - It is not that God needs help to see something done, but He gives us the opportunity to join Him in the work. And it is in participating with God in the work where we will see His heart most clearly.
- 5:24 – “Blessed is she among women in tents” – Jael destroyed Sisera (whose name means “to bind with chains”) in her tent. The picture is to not let anything dwell with us that will bind us. We need to nail it down and put it out. This tent is temporary; we need to clean it up in light of eternity.
- 5:26 – “pierced his head” – Lit. “shattered his head.”
- 5:27 – “dead” – Lit. “destroyed.”
- 5:30 – “dividing the spoil” – This is the usual celebration after a typical victory of Sisera.
- 5:31 – “like the sun” – Believers will shine like the stars in the kingdom on the Father. (Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43) That is eternal and what we should build our lives around.
- One of the lessons from the life of Deborah is that one person can make a difference in the life of a nation. (Ezek. 22:30 – “I looked for a man...”)
 - Another lesson of the life of Deborah is that no woman is limited by the unbelief of the men in the positions of authority in her life. Obedience to the Lord need never be limited by the disobedience of those around us. The lesson of Deborah’s life is not one of usurping authority...but of making the most with what God has given you.

Chapter 6:

This is the 4th apostasy and the 4th servitude of Judges.

- It has been about 200 years from Othniel to the end of Deborah and Barak.
 - Gideon has 100 verses devoted to him, compared to 96 for Samson, and he is marked by 1 Cor. 1:26-31. He is the “weak thing” to “put to shame the things which are mighty.”
- 6:1 – “Midian” – means “strife.”
- It has only been a little over 200 years since Midian was previously defeated by Israel. (Num. 31)
 - The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:20), but later became perpetual enemies of Israel.
 - “seven years” – It takes them 7 years to turn back to the Lord.
 - It has only been about 50 years since Deborah and Barak delivered Israel.

- 6:2 – “dens...caves” – The people of Israel cannot even live in their own cities. Instead of driving out the Canaanites, they are being driven out. They are then driving the animals out of their homes and taking them.
- Midian couldn’t occupy Israel, but they could take what they wanted when they wanted it.
 - The heart that departs from God is lost, not only to that which is good, but to that which is great.
- 6:3 – “Amalekites” – These are descendants of Esau.
- 6:4 – “unto Gaza” – With the Midianites coming from the east, Gaza would signify the whole breadth of the land.
- 6:5 – “camels” – This is the earliest OT reference to the use of mounted camels in warfare.
- 6:6 – “Israel was greatly impoverished” – This is always the result of doing “evil in the sight of the Lord.” (v. 1) When Israel walked with the Lord, they reaped what others sowed (Josh. 24:13; Ps. 105:44), but now that God has forsaken them others reap what they sow.
- God had promised that Israel would eat what they did not sow and live in houses they did not build (Josh. 24:13). Now it is turned on them.
- 6:7 – “Israel cried out to the Lord” – This is what you do when the enemy steals the harvest.
- 6:8 – “the Lord sent a prophet” – God is looking for repentance, not just crying.
- “a prophet” – We are not even given his name. God has His people in all times at all places.
- 6:10 – “you have not obeyed My voice” – The real problem in Israel is not Midian, but their own hearts.
- 6:11 – “the Angel” – This is a Christophany (v. 16). Again, God initiates and condescends.
- “and sat” – Israel is going crazy, the world is out of control, and God sits. The craziness of our world doesn’t knock God off His throne.
 - Jesus predicted our crazy days. (Matt. 24)
 - “Ophrah” – means “dusty.”
 - “Gideon” – means “hewer, or one who cuts down (ie. a good soldier).”
 - This is an example of the calling and preparation of a man of God to leadership.
 - “the winepress” – This was an enclosed area where Gideon could hide the wheat. Typically, wheat was threshed on the hilltops so that the wind could blow the chaff away. But with the Midianites coming to take the harvest, Gideon takes a less efficient and more hidden place to do this work.
 - God calls Gideon, like Moses, David, Elisha, and others, out of the ordinary business of life.
- 6:12 – “the Lord is” – This is a definitive statement. It is not, “the Lord might be.”
- “a mighty man of valor” – Lit. “a great warrior to go to war.”
 - God sees this in Gideon, although Gideon doesn’t yet see it in himself. He is the God that “calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” (Rom. 4:17)

- 6:13 – “my lord” – (Heb. “adonai”) This most likely is a way of saying “sir.” Gideon doesn’t know this is God yet.
- “if the Lord is with us” – (Heb. “Yahweh”) This is the name of the covenant-keeping God.
 - “where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about” – Gideon heard about the great works of God in the past, yet he wondered why he did not see the same great works in his day.
 - “the Lord has forsaken us” – It seems as if Gideon is accusing God.
 - We must be careful not to blame God for the consequences of our own sinful actions.
- 6:14 – the Lord turned to him” – What must the Lord’s countenance look like here?
- “Go in this might of yours” – God’s calling is God’s enabling.
- 6:15 – “my Lord” – (Heb. “Adonai”) It may be that Gideon recognizes this Angel as God at this time.
- “I...my...I...my...” – Gideon is focused on himself. There is no question that he is not able to do this.
 - “my father’s house” – Gideon comes from an idolatrous family. But God didn’t call his family, He called Gideon.
- 6:16 – “I will be with you” – God’s assurance to Gideon was not to build up his self-confidence, but to assure him that God was indeed with him.
- Fellowship with God is the highest priority and empowering for ministry.
 - “you shall defeat the Midianites” – No more details are given.
- 6:17 – “show me a sign” – Gideon is finding this a little hard to believe.
- 6:18 – “my offering” – Gideon is presenting a “meat offering” before the Lord.
- 6:19 – “Gideon went in and prepared a young goat” – Gideon seems to mimicking Abraham from Genesis 18.
- 6:21 – “the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight” – Lit. “the Angel of the Lord removed Himself from his eyes.” God is still there. It is just that Gideon cannot see Him now.
- 6:22 – “Gideon perceived” – He is finally getting it now.
- “I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face” – Gideon thinks he is going to die. God told Moses that no man could see His face and live. (Exod. 33:20)
- 6:23 – “Then the Lord said to him” – Gideon cannot see God, but the voice comes nonetheless.
- “you shall not die” – God called Gideon to deliver Israel and Gideon is afraid he is going to die. God wouldn’t call him to this and then kill him right away.
- 6:24 – “Gideon built an altar” – Something ministers to the heart of Gideon. He remembers the death of an innocent substitute and that is enough for his peace.
- “The-Lord-is-Peace” – This statement is made immediately preceding a very large battle.
- 6:25 – “bull of seven years old” – This is a full-grown bull.
- “the altar of Baal” – In Gideon’s community, Baal was worshipped right alongside of Yahweh. God calls Gideon to start the work of deliverance at home,

- 6:26 – “in the proper arrangement” – Gideon is to restore substitutionary sacrifice to his family and within Israel.
- It isn’t enough to tear down. We must also restore and rebuild.
 - “burnt sacrifice” – This is a sacrifice of consecration and is presented right in the middle of these idolatrous practices and this idolatrous family.
 - Gideon has had a genuine, life-changing experience of God Himself. He has gone from believing in God to actually meeting God for himself. This is what every NT believer needs.
- 6:27 – “Gideon took ten men” – The Canaanite altars were so big that Gideon cannot take it down by himself in one night.
- “he feared” – Gideon is obedient, but he is not walking in faith. Gideon has already lost his peace. (v. 24)
 - God’s servants must first take care of their own home. God will not use a man to redeem Israel who doesn’t have his own life and home in order.
 - “by night” – It would be rather tough to coordinate 10 men to cut down idols and prepare offerings at night.
- 6:29 – “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing” – Someone told on Gideon.
- 6:30 – “that he may die” – This is mixed up. The idolatrous were to die in Israel and here they want to kill him for removing idols. (Deut. 13:6-9)
- Woe unto the nation that calls right, wrong and wrong, right. (Isa. 5:20)
- 6:31 – “Joash said to all” – Evidently, Joash is coming under conviction. Now he is defending Gideon.
- “let him plead for himself” – Have we ever tried to defend God?
- 6:32 – “Jerubbaal” – means “let Baal plead his own case, or the one who challenges Baal.”
- 6:33 – “Then all the Midianites and Amalekites...gathered together” – It seems they have heard about Gideon and come in opposition to him.
- “the Midianites” – Judges 8:10 tells us there were at least 135,000 fighting men from Midian.
- 6:34 – “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon” – Lit. “the Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon.” (1 Chron. 12:18; 2 Chron. 24:20) God is preparing Gideon for service.
- We need the Spirit-filled life to gush out of our inmost being. And through Judges, it is only one person in the midst of an idolatrous people filled with the Spirit and changing the course of the nation.
 - God is going to go against over 130,000 of the enemy with one man filled by His Spirit.
 - “blew the trumpet” – On short notice, Gideon is able to gather 32,000 men to follow him into battle.
- 6:35 – “Asher” – God is extending grace to those who refused to fight previously. (Judges 5:7)
- “Zebulun, and Naphtali” – These are the northern tribes.
 - “they came up to meet them” – 32,000 men gather to Gideon. (Judges 7:3)
- 6:36 – “If you will save Israel by my hand” – This thing is escalating, so Gideon wants more confirmation from God.
- Gideon is not seeking God for His will, but for His affirmation.
 - “as You have said” – Gideon has God’s word, but that isn’t enough for him.

6:37 – “a fleece of wool on the threshing floor” – Discerning the will of God.

- “then I shall know” – An Angel of God wasn’t enough, but wet wool would be convincing.
 - God is gracious to speak in the language of the sheep. He will use fleeces if necessary.
 - But He is also faithful to mature us into full grown children knowing and doing the will of God. He would much rather direct our paths by a “word behind you” (Isa. 30:21) or He will “put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Heb. 8:10; Jer. 31:31-34). It is better to follow God based on His leading than based on our circumstances.
 - The Word of God will teach us to hear the voice of God. NT believers don’t need a fleece; they have the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the example of Jesus and the apostles. We cannot ever place spiritual experience on the same level as the Word of God.

Chapter 7:

7:1 – “Harod” – means “terror, or afraid.”

7:2 – “too many” – God is not just concerned with success/victory. He wants to grant success in a way that would reflect His glory and person.

- 32,000 Israelites versus 135,000 Midianites: 4 to 1 odds.
- “claim glory for itself” – This is pride. They would’ve taken this victory to themselves, even at these odds.
- “against Me” – To take glory to ourselves is to steal it away from God.

7:3 – “fearful and afraid” – The Law of Moses sent the fearful home to keep them from infecting the rest of the army with fear. (Deut. 20:8)

- The same 22,000 that would’ve taken the glory from God in victory are also the ones to flee in fear when given the chance. Fear and pride go together.
- “twenty-two thousand of the people returned” – Two-thirds of the army fled.
- “ten thousand remained” – This is now 13½ to 1 odds.
 - Barak had victory over the Canaanites with 10,000 men. (Judges 4:10)

7:4 – “I will test them for you there” – They don’t know they are being tested.

- God often tests us in the daily/routine things of life. And it is in the normal, mundane things of life where our real life shine...“in the mean streets” as Oswald Chambers calls it.
- In this weeding out process: the first group left on their own while the second group were sent away. The first group had their eyes on the Midianites and were afraid. The second group had their eyes on the water and were distracted. Neither group had their eyes on the Lord.
- “The thought is disturbing, but it may well be true, that the composition of God’s army to fight Satan’s hosts in any day is really little different. How many Christians are so fearful of the enemy that they are of no real use in this warfare, and how many of the remainder are so self-centered, rather than God-centered, that they find little place for effective ministry.” (Wood, as quoted in David Guzik’s notes)

- 7:7 – “By the three hundred men...I will save you” – God loves to do a lot with a little. He doesn’t need big numbers. He is only looking for the few who are ready and willing.
- It is essential for us to simply be busy about the things God has called us to and forget about head-counting, for it is often in the “lack” where God will get the glory. God did more with the 11 disciples remaining in the upper room after His crucifixion than He did with the 5,000 men He fed on the hillside with 5 loaves and 2 fishes.
 - Less than 1% of the original 32,000 ended up following Gideon to the battlefield. The army had 32,000 men, but only 300 soldiers.
 - God will give these men victory! “There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.” (1 Sam. 14:6)
 - “I will save you” – “If you can explain what is going on in your ministry, then God didn’t do it” – Dr. Bob Cook.
 - “The fearful and trembling man God cannot use...The trouble today is that the fearful and trembling man insists upon remaining in the army. A decrease that sifts the ranks of the church of men who fear and tremble is a great, a gracious, and a glorious gain” – G. Campbell Morgan.
- 7:8 – “sent away all the men” – “These are people who spend unnecessary time with necessary things” – G. Campbell Morgan.
- These men are living first for the kingdom of God, watching and prepared for warfare. They were seeking God’s work above their own comfort and were willing to trim down their lives to walk with God spiritually.
 - God tests these men with water and water is a necessary thing. The water isn’t sinful, but God is testing how they will use this necessary thing.
 - “three hundred men” – They have now come to 450 to 1 odds.
 - The 450 to 1 odds are the same odds Elijah dealt with when confronting Baal at Mount Carmel.
- 7:10 – “afraid” – Gideon sees 135,000 men stand before his 300 soldiers. Who wouldn’t be a little afraid?
- God seems to do the greatest things in the darkest hours.
- 7:13 – “barley” – The least of all the grains (2 Kings 7:1), usually used as food for livestock, pictures Israel in their poverty and Gideon in his weakness.
- 7:14 – “nothing else but the sword of Gideon” – God is setting up the Midianites with dreams and rumors. God is always confirming Gideon’s faith through the dream and interpretation of these Midianites.
- The enemies of God are more scared of us than we are of them. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against us.” (Matt. 16:18)
- 7:15 – “worshipped” – Lit. “to bow before a king.” Gideon surrenders to God’s plan.
- Gideon worships at this dream, but not at God’s Word and presence. At least He is worshipping.
- 7:17 – “look at me” – Gideon is setting the lead and leading by example; not just in word, but also in deed.
- 7:18 – “the sword of the Lord” – The only sword really involved in this battle is the Lord’s.

- 7:19 – “middle watch” – This is between 10pm and midnight.
- One watch just went to sleep and the next watch is just starting.
 - There are no lights or TV’s. The army is awakening with the horns and lights of Gideon’s army.
- 7:22 – “every man’s sword against his companion” – The Midianites turn on one another leaving 120,000 soldiers dead.
- “fled to Beth Acacia” – They are running to cross the Jordan River.
- 7:23 – “the men of Israel gathered together” – God’s grace allows these men back to fight.
- Paul noted God’s restoration of John Mark in 2 Tim. 4:11.
- 7:25 – “Oreb” – means “raven.”
- “Zeeb” – means “wolf.”

Chapter 8:

The battle with the Midianites of chapters 7 and 8 all seems to happen in one night.

- 8:1 – “Ephraim” – Ephraim was known as a tribe of size, strength, and influence.
- “not calling us” – The trumpet of Judges 6:34 sounded for Ephraim too.
 - Because of the success, Ephraim is jealous of Gideon and his army. But this is God’s work, His victory, and He chose the servants He wanted in this task. Their complaint need be with God.
 - God could’ve burnt up Midian like Sodom and Gomorrah. But this isn’t just about killing Midianites. It is a testimony of God’s faithfulness in the midst of hardship.
 - “they reprimanded him” – The men of Ephraim are complaining against Gideon and dividing the forces in the middle of an unfinished battle.
 - The Midianites couldn’t touch Gideon, but his fellow Israelites could. If Satan cannot get you from without, he will try to divide us from within.
- 8:2 – “Abiezer” – means “my (divine) Father is helper, or my (divine) Father is strong.”
- Abiezer is Gideon’s clan.
- 8:3 – “what was I able to do in comparison with you” – Gideon is very gracious. “A soft answer turns away wrath.” (Prov. 15:1)
- Those know not how to value God’s acceptance that know not how to despise the reproach and contempt of men.
 - “their anger toward him subsided” – Their anger subsides when they get the credit they think they deserve.
 - The next time Ephraim does this, they will not be answered so gently. (Judges 12:1) It is better to learn our lessons with a soft answer.
- 8:4 – “the three hundred men” – It seems that Gideon hasn’t lost a man in battle yet.
- “exhausted but still in pursuit” – Gideon still (only) has 300 men going after 15,000 Midianites. And his men are weary.
 - When you step into the flow of something God is doing, you don’t want to give up.
 - Jesus’ yoke is easy and His burden light. (Matt. 11:30)

8:6,8 – “Succoth...Penuel” – Both towns are in the tribe of Dan.

8:10 – “Karkor” – means “a plain.”

8:11 – “the camp felt secure” – Midian is resting. They feel they have gotten far enough away to be out of trouble.

8:16 – “taught the men of Succoth” – Gideon whipped the leaders of Succoth with thorns or dragged them through thorn bushes.

- It is unsure whether Gideon was right in doing this. The victory wasn’t his and neither may have been the right to punish those unwilling to help his men.

8:17 – “killed the men of the city” – It may be that the men of Penuel offered resistance to Gideon and that would be why he killed them.

8:18 – “Tabor” – We aren’t given the details here. But it seems that at some point when Midian camped in the Valley of Jezreel that they raided and killed the men of Tabor.

- “as you are...the son of a king” – Are they being sarcastic or trying to appease Gideon?

8:19 – “sons of my mother” – Gideon now takes on the role of the avenger of blood.

8:20 – “kill them” – They had shown no mercy, so Gideon planned to repay them in like manner.

8:21 – “crescent ornaments” – These were the moon shaped pendants designed around their worship of the moon god.

- Allah is the ancient name for the moon god. He later became the sole god of the Muslim religion.

8:22 – “you have delivered us” – God reduced the army to 300 men and still the people want to give the glory to a man. Gideon didn’t deliver them, God did.

- Many times in after a success or victory, one of two things happens: 1. others try to blame you for not including them in the victory or 2. others try to credit you with the victory itself.
- “That is the true attitude of all those whom God raised up to lead and deliver His people. Their leadership must ever stop short of sovereignty. Their business is never that of superseding the Divine rule; but of interpreting it, and of leading the people to the recognition of it, and submission to it. This is true, not only of kings, but also of priests, prophets, and preachers.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

8:23 – “the Lord shall rule over you” – God has convinced Gideon that Gideon had nothing to do with this victory. So Gideon won’t take this to himself. He points the people to the Lord and away from himself.

- Israel was to function as a theocracy. Shepherding ministries aren’t appropriate in the church either. (Mark 10; 1 Cor. 1; 1 Pet. 5; Rev. 2)
- In Deut. 17, God warns leaders about three areas: pride, money, and women. Gideon stands strong in the first area, but slips in the other two.

8:24 – “give me the earrings” – Gideon’s humanity is shining through.

- It is often easier to experience victory than it is to use it wisely.

8:26 – “one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold” – This is between 40-70lbs.

8:27 – “made it into an ephod” – Gideon is creating a memorial. He is giving into the temptation of setting up something tangible to worship which will eventually take the place of God.

- Gideon was told to tear down his family’s idols before any of this victory took place. Now he is going back to idolatry.
- “ephod” – This is either a vest like the high priest’s or a statue of a person wearing an ephod.
- “played the harlot” – This always speaks of idolatrous practices in the Bible. God sees idolatry as spiritual adultery.
- “it became a snare” – Gideon’s need for tangible evidence of God’s word (6:17-24; 6:36-40; 7:9-14) leads to idolatry. A monument to a past victory causes people to forsake the present work and relationship with the God. (v. 33-35)
 - The snares of the leader: power, women, and money. Gideon fell in two areas.
 - Midian’s earrings were of more danger to Gideon than were their swords.

8:30 – “he had many wives” – Gideon refused to be the king, but ended up acting like one.

- Gideon stumbles as he finished his course. (Ps. 139; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7)
- Gideon is failing. The Scripture is honest. God never hides the sin of His people.
- God only uses imperfect humans, because that is all there is.

8:31 – “his concubine” – Gideon had concubines in addition to his many wives.

- “Abimelech” – means “my (divine) Father is king.”
 - Abimelech is a title for the Canaanite kings Abraham and Isaac dealt with.

8:32 – “at a good old age” – This is a phrase used elsewhere only of Abraham (Gen. 15:15; 25:8) and David (1 Chron. 29:28).

8:33 – “as soon as Gideon was dead” – Even with Gideon’s imperfection, he was still a major influence for good in Israel until he death.

- “the children of Israel again played the harlot” – Gideon didn’t effect a very significant or internal change.
- “Baal-Berith” – means “Baal of the covenant, or the covenant Baal.”
 - The worship of Baal-Berith, as performed at Shechem according to Judges 9:46, was an imitation of the worship of Jehovah, an adulteration of that worship in which Baal was put in the place of Jehovah.

8:24 – “Israel did not remember the Lord” – They were relating to God through Gideon and had not established their own personal relationships with God. Therefore, when Gideon dies, they soon leave off the ways of God.

Chapter 9:

9:1 – “Abimelech...went to Shechem” – He is setting himself up as the ruler.

- Abimelech is the picture of selfish ambition and self-promotion taking to himself something that God has not given him.
- Gideon had turned down the offer for him and his children to be kings in Israel. (Judges 8:22-23)
- “Shechem” – This is the place Joshua had earlier reaffirmed Israel’s covenant with the Lord. (Josh. 24:14-27)

- 9:2 – “better for you” – Abimelech is appealing to their self-seeking desires rather than to what is right or what God desires. (I’ll feed you if you elect me.)
- 9:4 – “silver from the temple of Baal-Berith” – Gideon’s own sons have turned with the rest of the nation to Baal-Berith. (Judges 8:33) Now Abimelech is using the money from the worship of this foreign god to kill Gideon’s sons.
- This is where Gideon’s own failures with idolatry and women lead.
 - “Abimelech hired” – He is gathering a following with money.
- 9:5 – “killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal” – This is a public, mass execution.
- 9:6 – “they went and made Abimelech king” – Abimelech is using the people for his own self-advancement.
- Are we using the ministry to build up the people, or are we using the people to build up our ministry? Jesus won’t have us be self-serving in serving others.
 - The people of Israel and Shechem are imitating the practice of the surrounding Canaanites. God had not instituted kingship in Israel at this time. Israel was to be a theocracy.
 - “the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem” – This is where Joshua had solemnly placed a copy of the law of God. (Josh. 24:26) The law was right there, but Israel refused to heed it.
- 9:7 – “Mount Gerizim” – This is a mountain 800-1000 ft. above the valley and is the location where the blessings were pronounced when Israel came into the land with Joshua. (Josh. 8:30-35)
- 9:8 – “the trees once went forth to anoint a king” – The trees are a picture of Israel constantly clamoring for a king while the judges and others of character are refusing to be their king.
- 9:9,11,13 – “should I cease” – The one that would’ve been good to rule over the people was already busy about God’s work in a fruitful way.
- The men that were most deserving were least desiring. “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy...” (2 Cor. 1:24)
- 9:15 – “the bramble” – A leadership vacuum is never naturally filled with a good leader. It is often the case that the one who most wants the authority is the one who should most not have the authority.
- “In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)
 - “devour the cedars of Lebanon” – This is a prophecy of Abimelech’s destruction of the people of Shechem. (v. 42-49)
- 9:18 – “killed his seventy sons” – This is how the people of Israel repaid Gideon for his defense of the people against the Midianites.
- 9:23 – “God sent a spirit of ill will” – It is interesting that this is the source of their division.
- “spirit” – The Hebrew for “spirit” is often used to describe an attitude of disposition.
 - “men of Shechem dealt treacherously” – A nation/church/marriage built on rebellion will most often end in rebellion. A man who comes to power through violence will commonly turn in violence against those who helped him come to power.
 - Whatever evil we use for our benefit will one day be evil against us.

- 9:25 – “set men in ambush” – The men of Shechem are cutting down travel, trade, and tribute that would have come to Abimelech.
- 9:27 – “gathered grapes from their vineyards” – This is late-June or early-July.
 - “made merry” – This is a typical Canaanite party.
- 9:28 – “Hamor” – He was the Canaanite ruler of Shechem in Jacob’s time. (Gen. 33:19; 34:2; Josh. 24:32)
- 9:29 – “I would remove Abimelech” – Gaal is drunk. These are his beer muscles. He is calling Abimelech out to battle.
- 9:36 – “But Zebul said to him” – It seems Gaal is suffering from a hangover which allows Zebul to talk him out of what he is seeing.
- 9:45 – “demolished the city” – Shechem would not be rebuilt until the time of Jeroboam I, nearly 200 years later. (1 Kings 12:25)
- 9:46 – “they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith” – The men of Shechem, who paid Abimelech’s assassins to kill Gideon’s sons with money from the treasury of Baal-Berith, are now hiding in the temple of Baal-Berith.
- 9:49 – “set the stronghold on fire” – This is exactly as Jotham had prophesied.
- 9:53 – “a certain woman” – We don’t get her name. After all Abimelech has done in battle, now he is killed by a woman hiding away in a stronghold of a city.
 - “upper millstone” – The upper, revolving stone of a mill was circular, with a hole in the center. Abimelech was killed by a woman using a domestic implement. (See also Judges 4:21)
 - The small millstone, used to grind grain by hand, averaged 10-14 inches long and weighed 5 pounds or more.
 - The just hand of God upon Abimelech saw to kill a man with a stone who had previously killed his brothers on a stone.
- 9:54 – “lest men say of me” – The irony of this statement is revealed as God puts this account in the Bible so nobody forgets. (2 Sam. 11:21)
- 9:56 – “God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech” – This is the end, the peril of ambition.
- 9:56-57 – “God repaid...God returned” – The process of sowing and reaping includes three aspects:
 1. we reap of the same kind of what is sown, 2. we always reap later, and 3. we reap more than we sow.

Chapter 10:

- 10:1 – “After Abimelech” – This sets the context for Tola. He is entering into a work with a nation bordering on civil war.
 - “Tola” – means “worm.” It is also translated “scarlet” in Isa. 1:18.
 - “Puah” – means “splendor.”
 - “Dodo” – means “loving.”

- 10:2 – “twenty-three years” – Tola judges longer than Samson, but we don’t get any details.
- 10:3 – “Jair” – We don’t get any details of Jair’s time of service either.
- Jair is the 7th judge.
- 10:4 – “thirty sons...thirty donkeys...thirty towns” – Jair seems to be using his position for the advancement of his own family.
- 10:6 – “they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him” – They are deliberately turning their back on the Lord in favor of all the foreign gods around them. This is rebellion to a greater degree than anything we have seen in Judges to this point.
- “did not serve Him” – The only god they wouldn’t serve was the true God.
- 10:7 – “the Philistines” – This is setting the stage for Samson.
- “of Ammon” – This is setting the stage for Jephthah.
- 10:8 – “oppressed” – Lit. “crushed.”
- “the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan” – These are the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the ½-tribe of Manasseh which settled outside the promised land. Those who stayed outside the promised land get attacked first.
- 10:14 – “go and cry out to the gods” – God is giving them over. These are the consequences. Israel wanted to worship Dagon, so God gave them over to the people who worship Dagon to teach them of the cruelty and bloodshed of that god.
- “Nevertheless they will be his servants, that they may distinguish My service from the service of the kingdoms of the nations.” (2 Chron. 12:8)
 - Joe Focht tells the story of a farmer that tied a dead chicken around a dog’s neck to keep that dog from killing the chickens. By the time that chicken was done rotting around that dog’s neck, that dog never wanted to touch a chicken again.
- 10:16 – “put away” – Lit. “utterly destroyed.”
- “put away the foreign gods” – They didn’t just confess, they repented. Real repentance looks like something; it brings about a real change.
 - “His soul could no longer endure the misery” – Their pain and grief touches the heart of God. And God never sorrows selfishly. He is sorrowing because of their pain.
 - God is not aloof and detached. He is acquainted with our grief.
 - God responds to true repentance.
- 10:17 – “Mizpah” – means “watchtower.”
- 10:18 – “Who is the man?” – They are looking for a leader.
- God uses leaders. His normal means of operating is to raise up a man, and through that man to do a great work.
 - No leader could be found initially, because a people always get the leaders they deserve. In his book, “Profiles in Courage,” John F. Kennedy wrote, “We, the people, are the boss, and we will get the kind of political leadership, be it good or bad, that we demand and deserve.” If a leader ruins us, we need to look at ourselves first.

Chapter 11:

11:1 – “Jephthah” – He is listed in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11:32.

- “mighty man of valor” – This is God’s opinion of Jephthah, despite the fact that the people around him are relating to him based on his heritage.
 - Despite being born of a Canaanite prostitute, Jephthah’s heart has turned to the Lord and the promised land.
- “mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot” – Jephthah’s character has superseded his position in life resulting from his family relations.
 - Being born of a harlot was not of his choosing and not in his control.

11:3 – “Jephthah fled” – Jephthah’s brothers are chasing away a future judge of Israel. They are judging him based on externals and end up sending out a man of great ability and character.

- God did not consider Abimelech disqualified for a wrong for which he was not responsible.
- God often humbles those He designs to exalt. So also with Joseph, Moses, and David, the three most eminent of the shepherds of Israel, were also thrust out by men, before they were called of God to their great offices.
- It may have been these hardships that pushed Jephthah to the Lord and prepared him for the work God will use him to do in the future. God will use the greatest hardships as His best training tools.
- Disappointment is a mandatory course in discipleship with the Lord, often coming from those close to us. If we can love our brothers through the pain and not become bitter, it can produce in us a strength that God wants for us.
- “Tob” – This is located in modern-day Syria.
 - The men of Tob were later allied with the Ammonites against David. (2 Sam. 10:6-8)
- “worthless men” – Lit. “to make empty.” This phrase refers to idle people looking for something to do.
- “worthless men banded together” – This is much like David who had discontented men come to him at Adullam. (1 Sam. 22:1-5)

11:6 – “Come and be our commander” – The people of Israel now turn to Jephthah in their hardship.

11:7 – “Did you not hate me?” – Jephthah confronts them with their wrong, as Joseph did in Genesis 50:20 – “you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”

11:9 – “If you take me” – Jephthah has a hard time believing them.

- “back home” – Jephthah’s heart never left the promised land. (v. 12 – “my land”)

11:11 – “Jephthah went with the elders” – He is going to help those who at one point hurt him.

- Jephthah is a strong man who knows his God and knows His Word.

11:12 – “my land” – Jephthah is taking possession of the promised land for himself.

11:13 – “Israel took away my land” – This may be referencing Ehud’s defeat of the confederacy of Moab, Ammon, and Amalek in Judges 3.

- Israel was instructed not to take land from the Moabites and the Ammonites. (Deut. 2:9)

11:14 – “Jephthah again sent messengers” – He tries diplomacy before going to war.

- Jephthah knows and recounts the Biblical account very well.

- 11:21 – “land of the Amorites” – Israel took the land from the Amorites, not the Ammonites. It is now Israel’s land and it never was the Ammonites’ land.
- 11:24 – “whatever Chemosh your god gives you” – Jephthah did not see this battle as primarily between two armies, but between the God of Israel and the false god of Ammon.
- “Chemosh” – The reference to Chemosh, the chief deity of the Moabites, indicates either that at this time the king of Ammon also ruled Moab or that there was a military confederacy of the two peoples. (Judges 3:13)
- 11:26 – “why did you not recover them within that time” – Israel has been in the land for over 300 years and Ammon hasn’t come for any land in that time.
- 11:27 – “the Lord, the Judge” – In the book of Judges, now we hear of the ultimate Judge.
- 11:28 – “However” – Sometimes you do your best and a war breaks out anyway.
- 11:29 – “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah” – This is the distinguishing mark in the life of a man that brings success to his service.
- He is the third of the four people this phrase is spoken of in Judges. (Othniel – 3:10; Gideon – 6:34; Jephthah – 11:29; Samson – 13:25; 14:6; 15:14)
- 11:30 – “If You will indeed deliver” – Jephthah is no longer relating to the Lord strictly based on His grace. He is doubting God’s deliverance, yet God raised him up as a judge in Israel to do this.
- 11:31 – “whatever comes out of the doors of my house” – The tribal Bedouins take the sheep into the tent with them at night.
- “and I will offer it up” – This could also be translated “or I will offer...”
 - This was an unnecessary vow. The victory doesn’t come because of the vow. (Eccl. 5:1-6)
- 11:34 – “his daughter, coming out to meet him” – Apparently, she didn’t hear of the vow.
- Who was Jephthah expecting?
 - How many men have sacrificed their children for success in ministry?
- 11:35 – “I cannot go back on it” – “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?...He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” (Ps. 15:1,4)
- “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it.” (Eccles. 5:4)
- 11:36 – “do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth” – She goes willingly, much like Jesus Christ, to fulfill her father’s vow. Her character and purity speak highly of her and Jephthah.
- In a time when there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes, yet this young woman has remained a virgin and respects her father’s relationship to the Lord.
 - Jephthah is real, not perfect. And he has raised his daughter in a home that is sincere, not perfect. Godly sincerity seems to go a long way in the raising of godly children.

11:39 – “he carried out his vow” – It seems like Jephthah executed her, but this goes against Biblical instruction. Children were redeemable under the Law (Lev. 27:1-8) and child sacrifice was forbidden.

- She might have been devoted to the service of the Lord at the tabernacle as one of the “women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” (Exod. 38:8; 1 Sam. 22:2)
- “she knew no man” – Jephthah will not have any grandchildren.
- It doesn’t say that she was a burnt sacrifice. She may have remained alive in the mountains or serving at the tabernacle in her virginity and away from her family.

Chapter 12:

12:1 – “did not call us to go with you” – Ephraim did this to Gideon too. (Judges 8:1)

- Ephraim didn’t learn their lesson at a soft answer, so they will receive a much harsher response. God will continue to increase the publicity and strength of the rebukes until we learn the lesson.
- It seems that Ephraim is more concerned with getting the credit than with seeing a job done.
- “burn your house down on you with fire” – They are not only threatening Jephthah, but they are involving his family now too.

12:2 – “Jephthah said to them” – He again tries diplomacy. (Judges 11:14) It fails again.

- “I called you” – Jephthah, like Gideon, called for any who wanted to join him in the fight.
- “you did not deliver” – Jephthah is calling Ephraim cowardly. Ephraim won’t fight the enemy; they only hassle those who are busy in the battle.

12:4 – “fought against Ephraim” – Jephthah isn’t as gentle as was Gideon.

- “Gileadites are fugitives” – The Scriptures give us the idea that the men of Gilead are rather rough and tough mountain men.

12:6 – “Shibboleth” – means “river, or stream.”

- “42,000 Ephraimites” – Jephthah shows no mercy to the men of Ephraim.

12:8-15 – “After him” – There seems to be about 25 years of residual peace after the passing of Jephthah.

12:8 – “Bethlehem” – This is probably the Bethlehem in western Zebulun. (Josh. 19:15)

12:9 – “from elsewhere” – Intermingling in marriage of nations and of tribes were both prohibited in the Law. We are not sure exactly what Ibzan is doing.

- The character of the judges may be deteriorating. Samson is next.

Chapter 13:

Judges 13 comes about 10 years before the birth of Samuel. At the time of Samson's birth, Eli would have been the High Priest of Israel.

- It may be that Hannah's prayer for the birth of Samuel was in response to what she heard God had done for Manoah and his wife.

13:1 – "Philistines" – Seafaring Europeans originally from the island of Crete and now inhabiting the area currently called the Gaza Strip. They were a perennial enemy of Israel.

- Rome called Israel, Palestine, after they drove Israel out of their land as a reproach to the Jew. Therefore, all Jews born in Israel since 1948 have "Palestinian" on their birth certificate. The word, Palestine, comes from Philistine.
- "forty years" – This introduces the longest period of oppression that God sent to His people.

13:2 – "Zorah" – Located 14 miles west of Jerusalem in the tribe of Dan.

- This town became the point of departure for the Danite migration northward. (Judges 18:2,8,11)
- "his wife" – We don't get her name.
- "barren" – It was a reproach in that culture to be childless and even served as grounds for divorce. It seems to speak to Manoah's character that he remains with her.
- "had no children" – That was by God's design. He is preparing them for a deeper work.

13:3 – "the Angel of the Lord" – This is a theophany; a Christophany.

13:4 – "therefore, please be careful not to drink wine" – God is asking for their consecration.

13:5 – "Nazirite" – "Nazir" means "separated ones." It is also translated "crown" in Ps. 89:39.

- The real power in this vow was in the consecration that was symbolized by the external acts of the Nazirite vow. Numbers 6 defines the parameters of the Nazirite. It was a vow of consecration for a limited time and marked by not cutting the hair, not touching a dead body, and refraining from anything used in making alcoholic drinks.
 - A person will not rise for long above their devotional life.
- Jesus was a Nazarene, not a Nazirite. But Jesus was everything that a Nazirite symbolized.
- "from the womb" – God knows Samson before he is even conceived.
- "begin" – He doesn't finish the work. Samuel and David will complete the advance against the Philistines.
- Is it okay for us to be the ones to simply begin the work, like David did in preparation for the Temple, without ever having to see it completed?

13:8 – "Manoah prayed to the Lord" – Manoah, in faith, seeks the Lord for himself.

- "teach us what we shall do for the child" – Manoah is asking God to help and direct him in the raising of his son (as all parents should do).
- Prov. 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

13:14 – "nor may she drink wine" – She is to take on the Nazirite vow for a time.

13:15 – "we will prepare a young goat for you" – They want to prepare a meal for the Angel like Abraham did in Mamre. (Gen. 18:1-8)

13:18 – “it is wonderful” – Isa. 9:6 says that His name shall be called, “Wonderful.”

13:21 – “then Manoah knew” – He finally gets it.

13:23 – “nor would He have told us such things” – She has things in better perspective than does Manoah. God has promised to give them a son; they cannot die just now.

- The mind of faith prevails – through the woman.

13:24 – “Samson” – means “shining as the sun.”

- “the Lord blessed him” – Samson is the only judge this is said of.
 - The entire childhood of Samson is recounted in these two verses. (v. 24-25)
 - Samson has such great potential. He was raised in a godly household that had a history of remarkable spiritual experiences and raised him in a consecrated manner. He was separated by God and blessed by God. The Spirit of the Lord moved strong upon him at a young age. And still Samson will choose to make a waste of much of his potential.

13:25 – “the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him” – The idea of this phrase is “the Spirit of the Lord began to beat regularly and pound upon him.”

- This is the source of Samson’s strength...not his muscles or his hair.
- Samson is the 4th of 4 people this is spoken of in Judges. The “baptism,” “filling,” or “coming upon” of the Spirit is a work of the Spirit that is taught throughout the Bible. (The NT adds the additional work of “indwelling.”)
- “Mahaneh Dan” – This is 8 miles north of Jerusalem toward Tel Aviv in the area of Dan.

Chapter 14:

14:1 – “Samson went down” – These three words accurately sum up the life of Samson.

- Samson will judge Israel for twenty years, but we will only see glimpses of his reign (and most of them will be bad).

14:2 – “I have seen a woman” – These are the first recorded words of Samson and prove to be his downfall.

- “of the daughters of the Philistines” – The NT commands us to not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2 Cor. 6:14; see also Deut. 7:3-4)
- “get her for me as wife” – The parents would have to arrange the marriage and pay the dowry.

14:3 – “uncircumcised” – This is making alluding to the Philistines being outside the covenant of God.

- “she pleases me well” – Lit. “for this is right in my eyes.”
 - Samson is really no different in heart from the rest of the nation where “there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)
 - Samson bases everything in his life on the natural. He chooses his wife based entirely on how she looks.
 - Samson’s own choices make him out to be a blind clown by the end of his life. That is the end of choosing “for this is right in my eyes.”
 - Wives need to understand their ability to win their husbands through their eye-gate. 1 Pet. 3:1 says that husbands “without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.”

14:4 – “it was of the Lord” – God is using Samson’s evil for good.

- 14:5 – “to Timnah” – Now Samson is mingling among the Philistines. (They don’t need to come to him to lead him astray; he is going to them.)
- “vineyards” – Samson, as a Nazirite, was not to be in the vineyards.
 - “a young lion came roaring against him” – Was this to serve as a warning to Samson as to what would happen among the Philistines?
- 14:6 – “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him” – His strength is supernaturally granted. It may have nothing to do with physical muscles at all. Samson could have physically looked like every other Jewish man of that region.
- “he tore the lion apart” – This is the first mention of Samson’s strength. It seems that even Samson is surprised by this.
- 14:8 – “After some time” – It seems that several months have passed. There has been time enough for bees to build a honeycomb in the lion’s carcass.
- “he turned aside to see the carcass” – It may be that Samson is looking for the dead lion out of amazement, reminding him of what was hard for even him to believe.
- 14:9 – “his father and mother, he gave some to them” – Samson gives them honey from the dead lion without telling them where it came from, because he knows they would not approve of it.
- Samson is playing fast and loose with the anointing of God.
 - “out of the carcass of the lion” – Samson is breaking the second law of the Nazirite in touching this dead carcass.
 - This is a parable of Samson’s life: He will reach into any old dead thing to take out for himself whatever is sweet.
 - Prov. 9:17 – “Stolen water is sweet.”
- 14:10 – “feast” – Lit. “a drinking party.” Samson is breaking the rule that prohibited wine.
- 14:11 – “they brought thirty companions to be with him” – Samson was a very lonely figure. He has no best man and no Israelites at his wedding. They have to provide foreign strangers to attend him at his wedding.
- 14:12 – “let me pose a riddle to you” – Samson may have been a bit drunk here.
- “thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing” – This is a total of thirty sets of inner and outer garments. It would have been very expensive.
- 14:15 – “entice” – The Hebrew indicates the idea of “being vulnerable, or simple.”
- 14:16 – “You only hate me!” – This is the “you-don’t-love-me” manipulation technique.
- And this is the honeymoon. Think Samson is having second thoughts?
- 14:17 – “he told her” – Samson gives into her nagging.
- He is strong enough to stand up to the Philistines, but not strong enough to withstand the nagging of a woman.
- 14:18 – “my heifer” – He is speaking about his wife here.

14:19 – “he went down to Ashkelon” – This is a 20 mile journey from Timnah.

- “gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle” – It seems the clothes would have been bloody from him killing the men to take their clothes.
- “went back up to his father’s house” – Samson has not yet become the man to carry this anointing of God. He is selfish and childish, yet God will refine him through trials to bring self-sacrifice from him suitable to the Spirit upon him.
- Samson’s selfishness will cost him dearly, as it will also cost his parents and this Philistine woman and her father.

14:20 – “Samson’s wife was given to his companion” – One who had just threatened to burn her and her father house with fire.

Chapter 15:

Samson is a picture of power without consecration, of blessing without character. He could conquer the Philistines, but he couldn’t conquer his own lust. His life is one of great potential and still greater disappointment.

15:1 – “After a while” – Chronologically, this seems to fall 4-5 years before Eli’s sons take the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines, after which Eli dies and the ark is taken. That would make Samuel just a young boy at this time.

- It may be that the Philistines victory over Israel and the ark comes on the heels of Samson’s burning their fields.

15:3 – “I shall be blameless” – There is no hint of repentance in Samson. He chooses to take care of these things by himself.

- “blameless regarding the Philistines” – That would only be because they are even worse than him.

15:4 – “caught three hundred foxes” – We get no further details.

- “foxes” – The Hebrew word may refer to foxes or jackals, both of which are still found in modern Israel.

15:5 – “burned up both the shocks and the standing grain” – For an agrarian society, this is like destroying a city.

- Dagon was the god of grain. This situation might explain why the Philistines would take the ark into the temple of Dagon after their victory over the Israelites.

15:6 – “burned her and her father with fire” – The very thing she feared, and sought by sin to avoid (Judges 14:15), came upon her. She and her father’s house were burned with fire, and her countrymen, whom she sought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband, brought this evil upon her.

15:8 – “hip and thigh” – This is a metaphor for hand-to-hand combat.

- “dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam” – We are not told how long he was there. Somewhere in the midst of this, Samson judges Israel for 20 years.

15:11 – “three thousand men of Judah” – The only time we see the men of Israel rally around Samson is when they want to deliver him to the Philistines.

- For them to send 3,000 men to take one man shows the respect they have for Samson’s strength.
- “the Philistines rule over us” – This is a sad testimony in itself. The men of Judah are submissive to the Philistines. This was not to be at all.

15:14 – “shouting against him” – They are celebrating their victory over Samson.

- “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him” – It is not just that Samson is strengthened by the Spirit, but that the Spirit comes upon him and will not let go until the task is completed.
 - The power and move of the Spirit is to move us, not so that we can move anybody else.
- “burned” – This can also be translated “melted.”

15:15 – “fresh jawbone” – Lit. “moist jawbone.” We are not told that the animal was dead when Samson took this jawbone.

15:16 – “I have slain” – He seems to be taking the credit of this to himself.

15:17 – “Ramath Lehi” – means “jawbone heights.”

15:18 – “he became very thirsty” – Even the big and powerful will die without water. Mighty Samson was still dependant on the Lord.

- God can, and will, use anything to remind us of our dependence on Him.
- “he cried out to the Lord” – This is the first of Samson’s two prayers, and seems to be more of a complaint than a request. (16:18)
 - Samson has no accountability, no friends, and nobody to pray for him. There are no lone rangers in the kingdom of God. Make friends with not only those who call themselves Christians, but those who live it; those who draw the line between the Spirit and the flesh.
 - Satan loves to get us alone. Some examples in Scripture are Eve in the Garden of Eden, David at the time when kings go out to war, and Peter warming himself by the enemies’ fire.
 - We never see Samson offer a sacrifice or go to the tabernacle or meet with Eli. It is easy to live in the Christian rut, and even to be used greatly by God, and yet still miss the Lord and His sacrifice in the midst of it all.

15:19 – “So God” – He is gracious to answer anyway.

- God’s ministry to Samson is enough to motivate him to defend Israel for 20 years and get him mentioned in the “Hall of Faith” in Heb. 11. Yet, despite Samson’s spring of life (his “living water,” so to speak) and despite God’s faithfulness and mercy, Samson will still choose to go down to Gaza and sin with a harlot. (Judges 16:1)
- It is not enough to simply suppress our sin and let it live deep inside. We need to be honest about what it is (1 John 1:9) and crucify it. What might Samson have been if he had never compromised?
- God has not lifted the Spirit from Samson, yet he is walking away from the Lord. But because of God’s grace, the Lord continues to anoint Samson for service. This is the time for Samson to repent, but Samson misinterprets God’s longsuffering with approval and continues on in the path of rebellion until all is wasted.
- “En Hakkore” – means “the well of him who cried.”

Chapter 16:

- 16:1 – “Gaza” – This was the main city of the five cities of the Philistines. The temple of Dagon was in Gaza. (v. 23-26)
- Gaza was a beach city and seems to have some of the same vices there that would be in our beach cities.
 - Samson is deliberately putting himself into the middle of trouble and temptation.
 - “harlot” – Part of the Philistine idolatrous worship included temple prostitutes.
- 16:3 – “arose at midnight” – Was this conviction or did Samson hear of their plans?
- “the gate of the city” – Often the seats for the elders and benches for the judges were built into the wall around the gate of the city. These gates likely weighed between 1,000 and 4,000 pounds.
 - Evidently, those stationed at the gate are sleeping as Samson comes along unexpectedly.
 - This is just show off stuff.
 - There is no mention of the Spirit here. But God clearly permits this act of deliverance, despite his sin with the prostitute.
 - “the hill that faces Hebron” – This is either 4½ or 37 miles away.
- 16:4 – “he loved a woman” – The only time this is said of Samson.
- The sincerity of his love for her doesn’t make this more noble, but more sad.
 - “Valley of Sorek” – This is the valley of “the choice red grapes.” Samson, as a Nazirite, wasn’t to take anything from the vine and shouldn’t have been there to begin with.
 - Sorek was a border-town and seems to struggle with some of the same things our border-towns struggle with.
 - “Delilah” – means “to make poor, or impoverish.”
- 16:5 – “the lords of the Philistines came up to her” – They cannot get him with a frontal assault, so they try a more subtle attack.
- “Entice him” – This could also be translated “lure him.”
 - Proverbs talks a lot about the danger of being lured or enticed by an unfaithful woman.
 - “eleven hundred pieces of silver” – Apparently, this is Delilah’s weakness. Samson struggled with women, she struggled with money.
- 16:6 – “to afflict you” – She gets right to business. Her request is absurd.
- Samson has played with sin so long that he is blind to this very apparent attack on him.
- 16:7 – “Samson said to her” – Samson plays with this request.
- Delilah’s will take whatever we are willing to give to them and attempt to turn it on us to impoverish us.
 - “like any other man” – This is the tragedy of Samson. With all his potential, he will still be caught by a Delilah. (v. 7,11,17)
 - It is only the Spirit that keeps us from being like every other man.
 - A dark part of the anti-Christ’s system is that it reduces human life to a number. God doesn’t deal with us as any other man; He deals with us as individuals.
- 16:8 – “seven fresh bowstrings” – There was a Hittite regiment that indoctrinated their soldiers with seven green bowstrings.
- “she bound him” – Was he sleeping that she could do this to him?

- 16:10 – “you have mocked me” – This takes guts to blame this on Samson.
- 16:13 – “the seven locks of my head” – Now he mentions his hair. He is getting closer to the truth.
- Spiritual blindness happens in increments as we become desensitized.
- 16:14 – “she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom” – She take what he gives to her again.
- Delilah is touching the sacred.
- 16:16 – “she pestered him daily” – Delilah nags him to death.
- Sin and the flesh can wear you out. It is persistent if not crucified.
- 16:17 – “Nazirite” – means “separated” and was the secret to his strength.
- “I shall become weak” – It doesn’t seem that Samson really believes this. After his head is shaven, he will try to “go out as before” (v. 20). He acts like the strength is his and not a result of his vow of consecration before the Lord.
- 16:19 – “she began to torment him” – Samson is getting harassed and beat up by a woman.
- “shave off the seven locks” – The Nazirite vow ended with the cutting of the hair. Samson’s strength wasn’t in his hair, but this was the last vestige of his consecration.
 - All the other signs of the Nazirite were outside the body (the dead bodies and the grapes), but the hair is connected with the person.
- 16:20 – “I will go out as before” – “The story is one to fill the soul with holy fear. The possibility of going on with an attempt to do the work of God after God has withdrawn Himself, is an appalling one.” (G. Campbell Morgan)
- “he did not know that the Lord had departed from him” – God had allowed the anointing to remain on Samson for a time, despite Samson’s immorality and forsaking of the Nazirite vow. But this is his final disobedience.
 - “For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” (Rom. 11:29)
 - That means the Spirit’s power in Samson wasn’t like electricity. It was rather quite subtle.
 - “the Lord had departed” – God told Asa through the prophet that “God will always be with you, as you remain with Him.” (2 Chron. 15:2)
- 16:21 – “put out his eyes” – Lit. “bore his eyes out of their sockets.”
- His sin was the “lust of the eyes” (“he saw a harlot in Gaza and went in unto her” – v. 1) and now his punishment starts with his eyes.
 - Sin is...blinding, binding, and grinding.
 - “Gaza” – Samson was led to Gaza, the place where he had displayed great strength. (v. 1-3)
 - “bronze” – Brass is a symbol of judgment through the Bible.
 - “grinder in the prison” – These years of grinding in the prison will be the process of restoration and preparation to handle his anointing.
 - The job of a grinder was usually given to an ox. Samson has been reduced to the level of a dumb animal.

16:22 – “the hair of his head began to grow again” – This is God’s grace.

- It seems that for the first time, the growth of Samson’s hair corresponds the change in his heart.
- Forgiveness from sin is immediate (in Christ). But restoration from sin is gradual (as Samson’s hair) and sometime incomplete (as Samson’s eyes).
- There is a process to our restoration just as there is a process to our sin. Old patterns of sin must be unlearned before new patterns of life will be learned. Samson didn’t get taken all in one day, and he will not be restored in one day either.

16:23 – “Dagon” – The half-man, half-fish god of the Philistines.

- “Our god has delivered” – The disobedience of the people of God causes the enemies of God to blaspheme Him.
- The Philistines would celebrate the capture of Samson as a victory over Israel and their God, because 8-10 years earlier Eli’s sons took the ark and got it captured. But God eventually got the victory over Dagon and the Philistines by striking them with hemorrhoids and other things. Now they must feel that the tide is turning in their favor.

16:25 – “their hearts were merry” – That is likely with wine.

16:26 – “Let me feel the pillars” – This is the first time Samson depended on another human being. No doubt, he learned that while grinding in the prison.

16:27 – “men and women on the roof” – In this century, archeologists have uncovered Philistine temples that were long and narrow and where the worshippers worshipped from the roof.

16:28 – “Samson called to the Lord” – This is Samson’s second recorded prayer and this one seems to be sincere.

- “O Lord God” – The Hebrew is Lit. “my Adonai Jehovah.”
- “remember me” – This is like David asking for God to return the Holy Spirit to him in Ps. 51.
- “O God” – The Hebrew is “Elohim.”
 - Samson is finally and fully recognizing that his strength comes from God.
- “take vengeance on the Philistines” – This is not suicide, but martyrdom. He is finally avenged and gets the victory over the Philistines.
 - Samson finishes his life under God’s unction; filled with His Spirit. His life culminates, not as well as it could have, but by God’s grace, with one final victory.

16:31 – “his brothers and all his father’s household” – Samson’s parents are most likely dead by now.

- The Philistines must be in awe and rendered powerless as they allow Samson’s family to take his body out of there.

Chapter 17:

The 2 accounts in the final 5 chapters of Judges serve as an appendix to the book and picture of the culture at the time of the judges. Chronologically, it seems these events happened much earlier in the book of Judges. Chapters 17-18 give a picture of the religious and idolatrous state of Israel. Chapters 19-21 demonstrate the social and civil disintegration of Israel.

- The only 2 Levites of Judges are found in these last 5 chapters.

17:1 – “Micah” – means “who is like the Lord.”

- 17:2 – “May you be blessed by the Lord” – Micah is stealing and his mother is blessing. This is not right.
- 17:3 – “the Lord” – Lit. “Yahweh.”
- She is making these idols and calling them Yahweh, like Aaron did with the golden calf in Exod. 32.
 - In the midst of all this idolatry, she seems to justify it all with this God-talk.
- 17:4 – “shekels” – This might be more properly “measures.”
- “two hundred shekels of silver” – This is estimated at around \$3,000-4,000 in today’s economy.
- 17:5 – “household idols” – (Heb. “teraphim”) This is the family religion, with no sense of the presence of Yahweh.
- 17:6 – “there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” – This is the theme of Judges, repeated often in Ch. 17-21.
- Selfism always leads to anarchy.
 - “no king in Israel” – There was no unifying leadership and no central government.
 - Up to this point, Moses and Joshua both served the roles of moral and political leadership.
 - There was, in fact, a king in Israel; they had the Lord for their King. But since Israel rejected God as King, they were without any good and effective leadership.
 - “right in his own eyes” – That is instead of doing what is in accord with the Word of God.
- 17:7 – “a young man” – Jonathan is his name. (Judges 18:30)
- “Bethlehem” – That is not a Levitical city.
 - “Levite” – Not all the Levites were priests, but all were to serve the priests in some capacity.
- 17:8 – “wherever he could find a place” – He is a hireling, a priest looking for a job.
- 17:10 – “father” – This is a spiritual title.
- “I will give you” – The Levite sells his calling to serve the Lord for room, board, clothes, and a small stipend.
 - This man’s life and ministry is reduced to a mere good luck charm.
- 17:12 – “Micah consecrated the Levite” – Only the High Priest was to consecrate a Levite.
- “the young man became his priest” – Micah probably removed his son. (v. 5)
- 17:13 – “the Lord will be good to me” – They assume they will be blessed because of their religious activity, despite ignoring God’s written Word and His leading.
- They are trying to use God for their own personal gain.
 - And this is coming just a short time after Joshua brought them into the land and gave them commands to follow God. (Josh. 24)

Chapter 18:

- 18:1 – “seeking an inheritance” – An inheritance was given to them, but they didn’t possess it.
- 18:4 – “He has hired me” – The Levite has no shame in being hired by Micah and there is no indication that he has ever sought the Lord for direction.

- 18:6 – “Go in peace” – Nobody ever hires a priest who tells them bad news.
- It wasn’t God’s will at all for them to look for their own inheritance.
 - God predicted Dan’s land would be in the north. He saw Dan’s apostasy and refusal to accept their lot. Dan was not content to subdue the lot that fell out to them and bring as much fruit out of it as possible.
 - Anytime we take for ourselves that which God has not given to us, it is idolatry.
 - “the presence of the Lord be with you” – But they are now in disobedience, leaving their allotment.
- 18:7 – “Laish” – Located about 100 miles from Zorah and Eshtaol, the city was called “Leshem” in Josh. 19:42 and is called Tel-Dan today. The spring which is the major supplier of the Jordan River is located here.
- “they dwelt safely” – Those of Laish were content and isolated from those around them.
 - “Sidonians” – They were Phoenicians.
- 18:9 – “we have seen the land” – Everything is chosen by the natural eye.
- 18:10 – “God has given” – That is wrong. They are taking it for themselves.
- There is no lack of religious talk from these idolatrous and rebellious people.
- 18:17 – “took the carved image” – They are stealing Micah’s gods and his priest.
- If someone can steal your gods, you have the wrong gods. If you have to protect your gods, instead of your gods protecting you, you have the wrong gods.
 - What kind of priest would be content to serve in this kind of environment, where the people you are ministering to give as much place to their idols than to the God you claim to serve?
- 18:20 – “the priest’s heart was glad” – The priest is for sale. He moves simply because the new group is larger and is offering more money.
- The problem with hiring a hireling is that someone else will eventually make a better offer.
 - If our hearts are bent to anything other than God and obedience to His Word, Satan will find that thing and offer it to us and we will run given the chance.
- 18:21 – “the goods in front of them” – They are establishing a rear guard, because they expect Micah and friends to track them down.
- 18:24 – “taken away my gods” – We often don’t realize how much we have depended on something until it has been taken away.
- “what more do I have?” – This is the emptiness of idolatry.
 - If there is any thing, ideal, or circumstance that would keep us from complete obedience if it didn’t turn out the way we desired, we are in idolatry.
- 18:25 – “angry men fall upon you” – Dan has 600 men with swords, so Micah backs off.
- 18:26 – “too strong for him” – When everyone does what is right in their own eyes, it sets up a society where “might makes right.”

- 18:29 – “Dan” – Jeroboam set up idols in Dan and Bethel. (1 Kings 12:28-29) Dan eventually became a center for idolatry.
- Jeroboam’s altar has been excavated at Dan as a mute testimony of Israel’s idolatry at this point in history.
 - Dan and the north of Israel will fall first when the Assyrians invade the land.
- 18:30 – “Manasseh” – Most scholars agree that the Hebrew refers to Moses. It seems that an ancient scribe, in an attempt to save embarrassment for Moses’ family, changed Moses’ name to Manasseh.
- It may be that in only two generations from Moses, his family abandoned their lot to serve idols. And Moses was given a good lot in Israel.
- 18:31 – “Shiloh” – The tabernacle was located in Ephraim, as was Micah’s home.
- Shiloh sits in a valley. In the middle of Shiloh sits a plateau with the remnants of the tabernacles wall on it. On the mountains all around that plateau are the shards of pottery in which the people would’ve eaten their sacrifices while in view of the tabernacle.
 - “the house of God was in Shiloh” – Dan was lush and fertile, but only contained idols. Shiloh was rocky and barren, but it was the place of God’s presence.

Chapter 19:

- 19:1 – “concubine” – This Levite is living in adultery with someone who is not his wife. Levites were not to have concubines.
- 19:2 – “played the harlot” – She left him and became a prostitute.
- 19:3 – “her husband arose and went after her” – He seems to love her and goes after her.
- 19:12 – “not of the children of Israel” – They would have been safer with the unbelieving Canaanites than with the rebellious within the congregation of God’s people.
- 19:14 – “Gibeah” – This city is located just north of Jerusalem.
- 19:15 – “no one would take them into his house” – In that culture, hospitality was sacred. It was expected of someone to bring them in and protect them.
- 19:18 – “going to the house of the Lord” – He is travelling toward Shiloh.
- 19:20 – “let all your needs be my responsibility” – It was an insult in that culture to leave a stranger without food and shelter.

19:22 – “perverted men” – The Hebrew for this expression refers to the morally depraved. Elsewhere the expression is associated with idolatry (Deut. 13:13), drunkenness (1 Sam. 1:16), and rebellion (1 Sam. 2:12).

- “beat on the door” – The grammar indicates that they gradually increased the intensity in beating the door.
- “that we may know him” – This is speaking of homosexual relations, just like at Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - This is how it degenerates when each one does as it is right in their own eyes.
 - Our culture is not so different as we too have cast off the absolutes of Scripture. Jesus said the world would one day be as it was in the days of Lot. (Luke 17:28) We too frequently see Sodomites parading the streets and demanding their way.

19:23 – “my brethren” – He is calling these wicked Benjamites his brothers.

- “this man has come into my house” – The Levite is under the man’s hospitality and protection, but what about the woman?

19:29 – “limb by limb” – Lit. “with her bones.” This is a Levitical phrase for cutting up the sacrifices. This young man has been trained to do this.

- The Levite is trying to shock the nation back to its senses. This will start a civil war!
- This is the backdrop of Ruth, Samuel, and David. God will once again bring life out of this nation.
- “throughout all the territory of Israel” – A part of this woman’s body would even go to the Benjamites.

19:30 – “Consider it” – He is calling them to think about how their nation has degenerated.

Chapter 20:

20:1 – “Mizpah” – The city is located just north of Gibeah and near to Shiloh.

20:5 – “they ravished my concubine” – This is not the whole truth. He gave his concubine to them.

20:6 – “lewdness and outrage” – This could describe the Levite’s actions too.

20:13 – “we may put them to death” – The men of Israel are full of sin themselves and haven’t yet asked forgiveness for their sin. Yet, they immediately want to kill Gibeah for doing much the same things that they have done.

- Our sin always looks worse on someone else, and how we love to take it out on them.
- They will suffer 40,030 casualties for their haste.
- “the children of Benjamin would not listen” – The problem is that they are defending what is wrong.
 - They will suffer 25,100 casualties for taking this position.
 - Isaiah speaks of a generation even among the people of God that call right, wrong and wrong, right.

20:16 – “left-handed” – This probably means that they were trained to fight with both hands.

- “sling a stone” – A sling-stone, weighing one pound or more, could be hurled at 90-100 mph.
 - These are the guns of the day. These guys are sharp-shooters.
- “miss” – In other contexts, the Hebrew for this verb is translated “to sin.”

- 20:17 – “four hundred thousand men” – The men of Israel outnumber the men of Benjamin by a total of 400,000 to 26,000.
- 20:18 – “the house of God” – Bethel or Shiloh? Bethel means “the house of God.” (v. 26)
- “Which of us shall go” – They are going to God with their minds already made up. They don’t ask Him if they should go at all, only who should go. And God made it evident, as He had commanded before (Judges 1:2) that whenever they go out to war, Judah is to go first.
 - They are not right before God, yet they are still seeking His direction. It doesn’t work like that.
- 20:22 – “encouraged themselves” – They are not encouraged by the Lord, but by themselves. They are still trusting in their own strength.
- 20:23 – “Go up against him” – God is making it clear that this is a battle that must be fought. But the men of Israel still aren’t straight before God. He is not sending them to battle to lose, but in battle it will be revealed that there is still more for them to confess and repent of.
- When God wants to remove a cancer, He doesn’t use an infected scalpel.
 - The men of Israel are doing something right, but they are trying to do it their own way.
- 20:25 – “eighteen thousand more” – This makes for a total of 40,000 men lost in two days of fighting. That is one-tenth of their army.
- God would teach us hereby not to think it strange if a good cause should suffer defeat for a while, nor to judge of the merits of it by the success of it.
- 20:26 – “they sat there before the Lord” – This is where God wanted them to be in the first place.
- “they fasted” – They are now mourning and repented their own sin.
 - “offered burnt offerings” – Sin is cleansed through the death of an innocent substitute (even in a culture like this one).
- 20:27 – “the ark of the covenant” – This is the only mention of the ark in the book of Judges.
- 20:28 – “Phinehas the son of Eleazar” – This would date this account to relatively early in the book of Judges. (Num. 25:7-11)
- “I will deliver them into your hand” – Now that their hearts are right before God, He can bring victory through them.
 - “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chron. 7:14)
- 20:29 – “Israel set men in ambush” – Like at the victorious battle at Ai, God is turning their previous failures into victory.
- 20:31 – “about thirty men of Israel” – They suffer casualties in this battle too.
- Are we willing to suffer casualties to win a war to regain ground?
- 20:35 – “the Lord defeated Benjamin” – This is now the Lord’s battle.
- It is only by faith and patience will we inherit the promises of God. (Heb. 6:12)
- 20:45 – “the rock of Rimmon” – This served as a defensible fortress.

20:47 – “six hundred men” – Benjamin was counted at 45,600 in Numbers 26:41.

20:48 – “against the children of Benjamin” – The men of Israel turned back to destroy the women, children, livestock, and cities of the Benjamites.

Chapter 21:

21:1 – “Mizpah” – This is where they first met. (Judges 20:1)

- “None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin” – This vow comes on the heels of Benjamin defended those who raped and murdered the Levite’s concubine.

21:3 – “one tribe missing in Israel” – Benjamin would pass off the scene altogether if they do not get some women.

- Why would they turn to help those who had killed them and those whom they had killed?

21:4 – “built an altar” – This is while the tabernacle and altar are in Shiloh.

- This altar is built in self-righteousness.

21:7 – “what shall we do for wives?” – They are looking for loopholes now.

- They are covering one stupidity with another.

21:8 – “no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead” – Nobody from the tribe of Jabesh Gilead joined the rest of Israel to fight against the men of Benjamin and Gibeah.

21:12 – “four hundred young virgins” – They are treating these fellow Israelites the same way Moses told them to deal with the Midianites who had led them into fornication and idolatry. (Num. 31:17-18)

- “brought them to the camp at Shiloh” – They have the guts to come back to Shiloh where the presence of God was.
- “in the land of Canaan” – This phrase emphasizes the fact that the women were brought across the Jordan from the east.

21:14 – “they gave them the women” – Now instead of fighting with the Benjamites, they take them a gift of wives.

- “not found enough” – They are 200 women short.

21:19 – “feast of the Lord” – This may be the annual Feast of Tabernacles.

21:21 – “every man catch a wife for himself” – They vowed not to give their wives to Benjamin, but they seem to think it okay for them to allow Benjamin to steal a few wives for themselves.

21:22 – “when their fathers or brothers come to us” – This is the “it is easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission” policy.

21:23 – “they took enough wives” – They steal their wives from their brethren.

21:25 – “no king” – Israel was ultimately to be a theocracy. God always wanted to rule Israel, whether through a prophet, like Moses, or a king, like David.

- “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” – This is how convoluted and messed up it has gotten.
- There will be a day when there will be a king ruling in Israel. (Psalm 2) That is the day we are all looking for.