The Book of Judges

Introduction

God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 12:1ff). Though the land was a gift from God (Deut. 3:18) Israel was commanded to “take possession of Canaan” (see Deut. 1:8, 21). Taking possession of Canaan meant bloody warfare that is described in some of the most gruesome language in the OT (see Ex. 34:10-17; Deut. 20:16-18). The book of Joshua covered this period of gruesome war known as the “Period of Conquest.” During this period of History Israel attempted to slaughter all that breathed among the Canaanites (see Josh. 6:21). Joshua, like Moses before him (see Deut. 2:34; 3:6), faithfully waged war against the Canaanites (Josh. 10:43). The book of Joshua states that he “left nothing undone” regarding the mashing of all that breathed (see Josh. 11:10-15). God had promised that as long as Israel would remain faithful to Him He would fight for them and no one would be able to stand in their way (Deut. 1:29-30). Israel, however, had failed the Lord on occasions. When the Gibeonites were saved God’s plan to exterminate the Canaanites was frustrated (Josh. 9:3ff). Furthermore, the two and one half tribes east of the Jordan (i.e., Gad, Reuben and Manasseh) did not comply with God’s will on this matter (Josh. 13:13). The tribes of Judah (see Josh. 15:63), Ephraim (Josh. 16:10), and the western half of Manasseh (Josh. 17:12) could not drive out the Canaanites either.

Joshua’s conviction and the lack of conviction on the part of the seven tribes of Israel named above is depicted at Josh. 18:3 where the man of God said, “How long are ye slack to go in to possess the land, which Jehovah, the God of your fathers, hath given you?” (Josh. 18:3). To be “slack” is to “not be lively or moving, sluggish, not busy, lacking in diligence; negligent... a period of little activity; lull” (AHD 1148). Israel had become complacent and negligent in regards to God’s commands to exterminate the Canaanites. The book of Joshua ends with Joshua going down in history as a man full of faith and well pleasing to God yet the Canaanites remained in the land. After Joshua’s death Israel was in need of a successor to Josuah, like he was to Moses, to take the reigns of God’s command to exterminate the Canaanites.

The book of Judges begins with God assigning the duty of exterminating the Canaanites to Judah (see Judges 1:1). After unsatisfactory and half hearted attempts to exterminate the Canaanites Jehovah’s angel appears before the people and pronounces his verdict: the Lord would no longer be with Israel in their battles (see Judges 2:1-5). Shortly after this statement we read, “there arose another generation after them that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel” (Judges 2:10). Again, we read, “And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and forgot Jehovah their God, and served the Baalim and the Asheroth” (Judges 3:7). God consequentially gives Israel over to the king of Mesopotamia to be their servants and so they served this foreign kingdom for eight years (Judges 3:8). At the end of these eight years Israel cried out to God for help and the Lord sent a judge, savior, or deliverer by the name of Othniel to save them. Such cycles of sin, servitude, sorrow, and deliverance happened twelve times over a period of 410 years known as the Period of the Judges (see chart below).

Date of Judges

The book of Judges falls under the seventh heading of OT History called “The Period of Judges.” The previous six periods are known as antediluvian, postdiluvian, patriarchal, bondage, period of wandering, and period of conquest. Dating Judges is not that difficult. If we add up all the years that Israel spent in servitude and had rest from their enemies we come up with 410 years (see chart on next page). The apostle Paul tells us that the years of Israel’s judges was 450 (Acts 13:19-20). If we add the forty years of Eli’s judgeship over Israel then we come to the 450 that Paul mentions (see I Sam. 4:18). The book of Joshua is dated at 1406 to 1400 BC (see introduction to Joshua study for the determination of those dates). The book of Judges would thereby be dated 1400 to 990 BC. God’s people were getting ever closer to the coming of the Christ and the forgiveness of man’s sins.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel’s Sin</th>
<th>Oppressing Nation</th>
<th>Years in servitude</th>
<th>God’s Judge</th>
<th>Years of rest from Enemies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil, served Baalim and the Ashteroth (Judges 3:7)</td>
<td>Mesopotamia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Othnel</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil (Judges 3:12)</td>
<td>Eglon, King of Moab</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Ehud</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philistines</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shamgar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil (Judges 4:1)</td>
<td>Jabin, King of Canaan</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil (Judges 6:1)</td>
<td>Midianites</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Gideon</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 years (Judges 9:22)</td>
<td>Abimelech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tola</td>
<td>23 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jair</td>
<td>22 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil, served Baalim and the Ashteroth, and the gods of</td>
<td>Philistines and Ammon</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Jephthah</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria, and the gods of Sidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah, and served him not (Judges 10:6).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ibzan</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elon</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdon</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did that which is evil (Judges 13:1)</td>
<td>Philistines</td>
<td>40 years</td>
<td>Samson</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons Learned from a study of Judges

There are six primary lessons to learn from a study of the book of Judges. **First**, we learn that with each generation comes the dire need to establish a proper attitude and approach to the word of God. The book of Judges brings out the fact that God’s people came to be complacent, forgetful, and downright disobedient through the process of time. Israel’s lack of spiritual interest is made manifest with each of the twelve cycles of sin revealed in the book of Judges. New generations served other deities and had forgotten God. Judges 18:30 reveals Moses’ grandson to be an idolater. Such information illustrates the need for each generation to be taught the word of God and to have a sense of conviction instilled within their hearts. No man will ride the coattail of his father or Grandfather into heaven (Rev. 20:13). While Moses was a very convicted and great man of God his grandson was not anything like him. Parent, and especially the father (see Eph. 6:1ff), are responsible for rearing their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and instilling a sense of spiritual interest within their child. God has created man with the innate desire to know and pursue truth; however, that desire must be nurtured else it fly away with the winds of worldliness (see Romans 2:12-16).

**Secondly**, we learn the value of conviction in relation to the salvation of men’s souls. The book of Judges reveals that there were, within each generation, men and women who were willing to stand up for what is right. Deborah displayed her conviction in her song at Judges 5. She praised the righteous and cursed the wicked (Judges 5:15, 23-27). Gideon tore down the altars of Baal and Asherah that Israel had constructed (Judges 6:25-28). Gideon, by faith in the strong arm of Jehovah, defeated the Midianites who numbered as the sand upon the sea shore with only three hundred men (Judges 7:7, 12, 19ff). Samson, the strong man of God, single-handedly killed many of the idolatrous Philistines and gave Israel peace for twenty years (Judges 16:31). These men and women were obedient to God’s laws because of their great faith (Heb. 11:1, 32ff). When we read of their convicted acts of faith in difficult days we gain confidence in our ability, by the help of the Lord, to stand firm against the arm of Satan that assaults us (Heb. 12:1ff; Eph. 6:10ff; Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11).

**Thirdly**, we learn that God was proving Israel by the Canaanites just as He proves us today (Judges 3:1-4). God proved Israel by physical blessings (Deut. 8:2-4), physical hardships (8:15-17), false prophets (see Deut. 13:1-4), and the ungodly influence of the Canaanites (Judges 3:1-4). The Lord continues to prove His people today with the same things (see I Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:1-8; I Pet. 1:6ff; I Jn. 4:1ff). Will we, with a spirit of conviction, hold true to God’s commandments all the days of our life?

**Fourthly**, we learn that God does not tolerate sin in His people. We find the statement, “**In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes,**” at Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1 and 21:25. God was to be king (see I Sam. 8:4ff) over a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). The laws that were to govern this kingdom were from God alone (Ex. 20:1ff). To do that which is right in one’s own eyes is to reject the authoritative word of God (Jude 1:5ff), to set oneself up as a god (II Thess. 2:1ff), to place the value of your opinions (Matt. 15:8-9; I Cor. 2:9; II Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:11-12) and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15; James 4:15-17) above revelation, and to permit your personal conviction to overshadow truth (Rom. 14 all). Solomon revealed the folly of man’s erroneous self perspective apart from truth (see Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 16:2; 21:2; 30:12). Jeremiah condemned God’s people for their self delusion of perceived righteousness (see Jer. 4:22; 7:24; 8:6-8). Every Christian is commanded to guard truth’s purity as the one standard separate from man’s opinions and religious ideas (II Tim. 1:12-13). God’s word is the standard that all man are to respect and give heed to (Dan. 5:27; Hos. 5:10-11; Amos 7:7-8; Matt. 7:21-24; Eph. 2:20; 4:1 etc.). My personal opinions (Matt. 15:8-9; I Cor. 2:9; II Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:11-12), conscience (James 4:14-15), and convictions (Rom. 14 all) are not the standards that measure my soul’s state before Jehovah God.

**Fifthly**, we are forced to deal with the question of why man sins. God had posed the question to Israel saying, “**But ye have not hearkened unto my voice: why have ye done this?**” (Judges 2:2). Israel also posed the question in relation to their sinful brethren the Benjaminites saying, “**O Jehovah, the God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel?**” (Judges 21:3) The word of God explains to man why it is that he chooses sin over righteousness. Men often sin because they lack fear and knowledge of God’s word (see Job 28:28). People sometimes have preconceived ideas as to what godliness and religious service is. Israel was told that Canaan was God’s gift to them; however, when they learned that they had a part in gaining His gift they erroneously concluded that God hated them (Deut. 1:27). Sometimes people do not comply with God’s will because they forget His commandments (see Deut. 4:9, 23; Jer. 3:21). People often do not comply with God’s will because they are drawn away from truth unto another doctrine.
People sin because they have no sense of shame (Jer. 6:15; Joel 2:12-14; II Cor. 7:10). Many sin because they are drawn away from righteousness by their worldly lusts (Jn. 12:43; James 1:13ff; I Jn. 2:15). People sin because they do not share God’s hatred for sin (see Deut. 7:26; Rom. 12:9). People sin because they value friends, family, or even the things of this world above the law of God (Matt. 10:36-38). The Christian ought to flee from sin and draw near to God (James 4:7-8).

Lastly, we learn of God’s mercy in the book of Judges (Psalms 116:5). At Judges 3:7 and 10:6 the Bible reveals the fact that Israel had participated in one of the greatest abominations to God; i.e., idolatry (see Ex. 20:3-4). Though this sin was a gross error and an indication of great spiritual sickness God eventually is merciful to them. Too many people today believe that their sins are too great for God to forgive (Jn. 8:1-11; I Cor. 6:9-11; I Jn. 1:9). Let us always remember that the only sin that God does not forgive one of is the sin man refuses to ask forgiveness of (see I Jn. 5:14-17).

The Book of Judges

Chapter 1

I. Israel’s Half hearted attempt to exterminate the Canaanites (1 all):
A. “And it came to pass after the death of Joshua, that the children of Israel asked of Jehovah, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them?” (1:1)
   1. Joshua had died at the age of 110 years old (Josh. 24:29). At the beginning of the book of Judges there has not been named a successor of Joshua’s to continue the campaign against the Canaanites. Israel asks the Lord who it would be that takes Joshua’s place in the war.
   2. The student of God’s word ought to have planted firmly in the mind that at this point of Israel’s existence their God ordained objective was to exterminate the Canaanites (a job that they have not completed yet / see introduction) (Duet. 20:16-18).
B. “And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and Jehovah delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they smote of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek; and they fought against him, and they smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their food under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there” (1:2-7).
   1. The Lord chooses Judah to continue Joshua’s campaign against the Canaanites. Judah had earlier been identified as the representation of Israel’s power and one whom his brethren looked up to (see Gen. 49:8-9).
   2. The location of Bezek (place of battle) is given in the map below. One may asks why Judah and Simeon went so far north into the land of Manasseh to defeat the Canaanites of their own land. Keil and Delitzsch explain saying, “The simplest explanation is, that when the tribes of Judah and Simeon prepared to make war upon the Canaanites in the possessions allotted to them, they were threatened or attacked by the forces of the Canaanites collected together by Adoni-bezek, so that they had first of all to turn their arms against this king before they could attack the Canaanites in their own tribe-land” (Keil and Delitzsch Vol. 2 pg. 185).
   3. 10,000 Canaanite men are killed and the king, Adonibezek, was captured. Israel cut off the thumbs and great toe of the king.
C. “And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the hill-country, and in the South, and in the lowland. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron (now the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-
arba); and they smote Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. And from thence he went against the
inhabitants of Debir. (Now the name of Debir beforetime was Kiriat-sepher.) And Caleb said, He
that smiteth Kiriat-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And
Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter
to wife. And it came to pass, when she came [unto him], that she moved him to ask of her father a
field: and she alighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? And she
said unto him, Give me a blessing; for that thou hast set me in the land of the South, give me also
springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. And the children of
the Kenite, Moses' brother-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah
into the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt with the people.
And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they smote the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath,
and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with
the border thereof, and Ashkelon with the border thereof, and Ekron with the border thereof. And
Jehovah was with Judah; and drove out the inhabitants of the hill-country; for he could not drive
out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron" (1:8-19).

1. Consider the map that illustrates the travels and warfare of Judah and Simeon.

2. The Lord had commanded Israel not to fear the Canaanites though they had chariots
(Deut. 20:1). Joshua had defeated a great army with chariots at Joshua 11:1-10. Judah and Simeon;
however, failed in this area.

D. “And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses had spoken: and he drove out thence the three sons of Anak.
And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell
with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. And the house of Joseph, they also went up against
Beth-el; and Jehovah was with them. And the house of Joseph sent to spy out Beth-el. (Now the name of the city
beforetime was Luz.) And the watchers saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will deal kindly with thee. And he
showed them the entrance into the city: and they smote the city with the edge of the sword: but they
let the man go and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city,
and called the name thereof Luz, which is the name thereof unto this day” (1:20-26).

1. Judah and Simeon failed to drive out the Canaanites in the valley due to their chariots of iron.
Benjamin could not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem.
2. Note that the inspired author of Judges records Israel’s victorious and not so victorious efforts to comply with God’s command to exterminate the Canaanites.

E. “And Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its towns, nor Taanach and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and its towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was waxed strong, that they put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out” (1:27-28).

1. Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, and now Manasseh have failed to comply completely with God’s ordained mission in Canaan. Manasseh left many of the Canaanites to inhabit their cities.

2. Rather than killing the Canaanites as God had commanded Israel, though strong and capable of doing so, they “put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out.” Slavery rather than slaughter was rank disobedience in the face of Jehovah.

F. “And Ephraim drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Zebulun drove not out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became subject to taskwork. Asher drove not out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Sidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob; but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. Naphtali drove not out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to taskwork. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill-country; for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley; but the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became subject to taskwork. And the border of the Amorites was from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward” (1:29-36)

1. Issachar, Gad, and Reuben are the only three not mentioned in the failure to exterminate the Canaanites. For the most part, Israel had miserably failed the Lord.

2. Dan is mentioned as having shamefully been forced out of their land into the hill country.

Chapter 2

I. Israel’s Sin is Divinely Exposed (2 all):

A. “And the angel of Jehovah came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you: and ye shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall break down their altars. But ye have not hearkened unto my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of Jehovah spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto Jehovah” (2:1-5).

1. The twelve tribes of Israel were guilty of “not hearkening unto my (God’s) voice.” Seeing that God had promised and blessed them with so much He asks, “Why have ye done this?”

2. The command was simple; i.e., take possession of Canaan... do not fear them... God was with them (see Deut. 1:21). Israel partially complied with God’s will yet overall they failed. Why didn’t Israel comply completely with God’s commands?

a. First, we note that partial obedience is not acceptable with God. The reason Joshua and Caleb were commended by God was that they had “wholly” followed God’s commands (see Deut. 1:36). Israel was recognized by God as “rebellious” (Deut. 1:26) and an “evil generation” (Deut. 1:35) because they did not wholly follow God’s commands.

b. Why do people transgress God’s laws? First, the book of Deuteronomy tells us that Israel failed God because they had preconceived ideas as to how God’s promises would work. When they found out that God’s gift of Canaan was not going to be handed over to them but that they were going to have to go to war they concluded that God must “hate us” (Deut. 1:27). When people today confuse their preconceived ideas of religion and the
church for God’s actual instructions they find themselves at odds with God. Moses wrote
at Deuteronomy 4:15ff saying, “for ye saw no manner of form on the day that Jehovah
spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and
make you a graven image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female…” (see also
Rom. 1:18-22; Matt. 15:7). Man is not at liberty to perform spiritual service or live by
one’s own imagination or standards.

c. Sometimes people do not comply with God’s laws because they forget them (see Jer. 3:21;
Deut. 4:9, 23). Such occurs in the lives of those who are disinterested in spiritual matters
and consequentially spend little time studying God’s word.

d. People often do not comply with God’s will because they are drawn away from truth
unto another doctrine (see Deut. 4:19; Gal. 1:6ff; 3:1).

e. Often people sin because they are simply not ashamed nor bothered by their unlawful
deeds (Jer. 6:15; Joel 2:12-14; II Cor. 7:10). James tells us that sin occurs in a man’s life
when he is drawn away by his own lust (see James 1:13ff). When my attitude does not
equal God’s view of sin I am destine to fail Him (see Deut. 7:26 [Devoted = forbidden];
Rom. 12:9).

B. “Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the children of Israel went every man unto his
inheritance to possess the land. And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the
days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that he had
wrought for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah, died, being a hundred and
ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnah-heres, in the hill-
country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. And also all that generation were
gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah,
nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel” (2:6-10).

1. Can one man make a difference in the lives of many? Joshua did and so did Moses (see Deut.
34:7-12). A man who holds to God’s word sets forth a great example. Elders, preachers,
deacons, and members in the church who faithfully serve the Lord are people who can make a
difference in the lives of brethren. They may make the difference in one’s life as to whether he
or she will obey God’s will or not.

2. After the death of Joshua Israel slowly drifted further and further from God and His laws.

C. “And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim;
and they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and
followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves
down unto them; and they provoked Jehovah to anger. And they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal
and the Ashtaroth” (2:11-13).

1. God had commanded Israel to remain free from the worship of false gods (see Ex. 20:3). Israel
was warned that if they did not exterminate the Canaanites then they would be susceptible to
the idolatrous practices of the people of the land (see Deut. 20:16-18). God’s warnings proved
to fall on deaf ears. Israel “forsook” (i.e., left in the lurch) God and “followed other gods.”
God had done much for Israel’s eternal welfare; however, Israel now sought after other gods.
Such a defiant act of ungratefulness moved Jehovah to great anger against Israel.

2. “Baal is the supreme male divinity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations, as Ashtoreth
was their supreme female divinity. Some suppose Baal to correspond to the sun and Ashtoreth
to the moon; others that Baal was Jupiter and Ashtoreth Venus” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary pp.
70).

D. “And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of
spoilers that despoiled them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that
they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of
Jehovah was against them for evil, as Jehovah had spoken, and as Jehovah had sworn unto them:
and they were sore distressed. And Jehovah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of
those that despoiled them. And yet they hearkened not unto their judges; for they played the harlot
after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way
wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of Jehovah; but they did not so. And
when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented Jehovah because of their groaning by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel; and he said, Because this nation have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations that Joshua left when he died; that by them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of Jehovah to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. So Jehovah left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua” (2:14-23).

1. A summary of the book of Judges is given. Israel’s stubborn disobedience led to God’s hand being against them. Enemies would overtake Israel and they would cry out to God for help. God would repent of his anger due to their groanings and send them a judge to deliver them. After the judge died Israel would sin again and once again fall prey to God’s anger. These cycles continued over and over. We learn from Israel’s cycles of sin, servitude, sorrow, and deliverance that God is merciful. We also learn that God will not tolerate sin in man’s life.

2. The author of Judges, by divine revelation, exposes why Joshua never cleared Canaan of the foreign people. God would permit many Canaanites to remain in order that He may “prove Israel.” Would Israel drive out their enemies due to their fear, love, and respect for God’s will or would they falter? Moses dealt with this subject at Deuteronomy 8:1-5. If man does not serve God when all is well how will he serve God when all is not well? Those who serve God in whatever their environment are the ones pleasing to God.

3. A thematic and timeless principle is presented by Moses when he instructs Israel to love God and walk in all His ways (see Deut. 19:9). Moses carefully established this principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 6:4; 10:12-13, 20; 11:1, 22). God proved Israel to see whether they truly loved Him and was willing to keep His commandments. The proving came in the form of physical hardships and false prophets (see Deut. 8:2; 13:3). The Lord continues to prove His people today with the same things (see I Pet. 1:6ff; I Jn. 4:1ff).

Lessons for Chapter 1 and 2

- Lesson on Bible Authority: Making slaves out of the Canaanites was a form of subjecting them to Israel; however, God did not command Israel to make slaves. God commanded Israel to exterminate the Canaanites (Deut. 20:16-18). When God commands man is not at liberty to do something similar to that command. God demands our obedience! (see lesson # 1; Bible Authority)

- God had commanded Israel to take possession of Canaan and not to fear their enemies (Deut. 1:21). Israel; however, failed God. Judges 1 and 2 reveal Israel’s half hearted efforts to comply with God’s will. Judah (Judges 1:19), Benjamin (Judges 1:21), Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun Asher, Naphtali, and Dan (Judges 1:27-36) all failed to exterminate the Canaanites from the land of promise. Their partial obedience was unacceptable to God (Judges 2:1-5). Partial obedience to God today is also unacceptable (see James 2:10). God demands man’s whole obedience (see Deut. 1:36).

- The value of having Godly leaders in the church: Joshua and Moses served as great influences to the people. Once they were both dead there arose another generation that knew not God (Judges 2:6-10). When a church has God fearing elders, preachers, and deacons the members will follow suit. Churches that have problems fail because they do not have men who will stand up and expose error by book, chapter, and verse preaching (Acts 20:27).

- Six reasons why people partially or all together disobey God (see study # 2; Why do people Sin):
  o People sometimes have preconceived ideas as to what godliness and religious service is. Israel was told that Canaan was God’s gift to them; however, when they learned that they had a part in this gaining His gift they erroneously concluded that God hated them (Deut. 1:27).
  o Sometimes people do not comply with God’s will because they forget His commandments (see Deut. 4:9, 23; Jer. 3:21).
People often do not comply with God’s will because they are drawn away from truth unto another doctrine (see Deut. 4:19; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:6ff; 3:1).

People often sin because they have no sense of shame (Jer. 6:15; Joel 2:12-14; II Cor. 7:10).

Many sin because they are drawn away from righteousness by their lusts (James 1:13ff).

People sin because they do not share God’s hatred for sin (see Deut. 7:26; Rom. 12:9).

Chapter 3

I. God sends His Spirit upon Othniel (the first Judge of Israel) (3:1-11):

A. “Now these are the nations which Jehovah left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as befores time knew nothing thereof: namely, the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entrance of Hamath. And they were left, to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which he commanded their fathers by Moses” (3:1-4).

1. Chapter 2 revealed the purpose of God not allowing Israel to completely rid Canaan of all the Gentiles. Israel did not comply with the Lord’s command to exterminate and possess Canaan and God thereby would not allow their half-hearted attempts (discussed in chapter 1 and 2) to be successful. The remaining Canaanites would be left by divine order so that God could “prove” His people (see Judges 2:20-22).

2. A timeless principle was taught by Moses when he instructs Israel to love God and walk in all His ways (see Deut. 19:9). Moses carefully established this principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 6:4; 10:12-13, 20; 11:1, 22). God proved Israel to see whether they truly loved Him and was willing to keep His commandments. This proving came in the form of physical blessings (Deut. 8:2-4), physical hardships (8:15-17), false prophets (see Deut. 13:1-4), and now the ungodly influence of the Canaanites (Judges 3:1-4). The Lord continues to prove His people today with the same things (see I Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:1-8; I Pet. 1:6ff; I Jn. 4:1ff). Those who give words of faith yet follow with no obedience are unacceptable to God (Jn. 3:36; James 2:17ff).

B. “And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons and served their gods. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and forgat Jehovah their God, and served the Baalim and the Asherot” (3:5-7)

1. The Lord had warned Israel that if they did not slay all that had breath in their nostrils within Canaan that they would be taught their ways and be ruined (Deut. 20:16-18).

2. Not only had Israel not destroyed all breathing flesh in Canaan but they took the Canaanites as wives and husbands. God had also expressly forbidden marriage with the Canaanites yet the rebellious Jews did not take His will serious (see Ex. 34:16).

3. To “forget Jehovah” is to leave off following God’s commands (see Deut. 8:11). Though God warned Israel against disobedience (Deut. 8:11), idolatry (Ex. 20:3-4), and marriage with the Canaanites (Ex. 34:16) they did these things anyway. Israel’s heart had been rebelliously hardened against God from the very beginnings of Moses’ involvement in their lives (cf. Deut. 9:24).

C. “Therefore the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised up a saviour to the children of Israel, who saved them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he judged Israel; and he went out to war, and Jehovah delivered Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died” (3:8-11).
1. Due to Israel’s disobedience, idolatry, and inner marriage with the Canaanites the Lord sold them into bondage to the Mesopotamians. Eight years would pass before Israel cried out unto Jehovah for help. Though Israel had sinned God did not give up on them. He heard their cries and sent a Savior by the name of Othniel.

2. **Othniel is the first judge over Israel.** Othniel receives the “Spirit of Jehovah.” To have the Spirit of Jehovah was to be endowed with divine revelation (cf. Numb. 11:26-30; 12:6-7) and apparent courage to stand against the foes of God. Othniel was a man that God delivered divine revelation to in relation to His laws and will for the people. God delivered Israel out of the hand of the Mesopotamians through the Spiritual guidance of Othniel. Israel experienced forty years of rest and peace and then Othniel dies.

3. We learn two valuable lessons from the judges of Israel. First, we learn that God loves His creation and is merciful to sinners. He has sent His Savior (Jesus) into the world to save man from their sin (Matt. 1:21). Those who call out to God for His mercy shall not be disappointed (Acts 2:21). Secondly, we learn that there are consequences to sinful actions. While God is patience and merciful to the sinner He will not be ever patient and merciful. His wrath will be unleashed upon those whose hearts are hardened against him to their dying day (see Rom. 2:4ff).

II. **God sends his Spirit upon Ehud and Shamgar (the second and third Judges of Israel) (3:12-31):**

A. “And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: and Jehovah strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and smote Israel, and they possessed the city of palm-trees. And the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised them up a saviour, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a man left-handed. And the children of Israel sent tribute by him unto Eglon the king of Moab” (3:12-15).

1. Forty years of peace led Israel to once again perform unlawful acts in the sight of the Lord. Though God was merciful He was not ever merciful. Sinful deeds cannot go unnoticed or swept under the carpet. The Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel so that they would know their deeds were unacceptable. Israel would come to a point in their lives where they forgot God and the Lord would have to give them a spiritual wake up call. Eighteen years would pass while Israel lived in sin.

2. Once again, Israel cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard their cries. Jehovah, being the merciful God He is, sent a savior to the people. **Ehud was the second Judge.** Ehud was a left-handed Benjamite. Being left handed is significant because it permitted Ehud to conceal a dagger on his left thigh without detection. The normal course of action was that men wore the dagger on the left leg because most everyone was right handed.

B. “And Ehud made him a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length; and he girded it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he offered the tribute unto Eglon king of Moab: now Eglon was a very fat man. And when he had made an end of offering the tribute, he sent away the people that bare the tribute. But he himself turned back from the quarrries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king. And he said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting by himself alone in the cool upper room. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his body: and the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, for he drew not the sword out of his body; and it came out behind. Then Ehud went forth into the porch, and shut the doors of the upper room upon him, and locked them” (3:16-23).

1. Ehud gains access to the king of Moab by bringing the tribute money. Ehud then tells the king that he has a “secret errand unto thee, O King.” Eglon, thinking this to be an interesting message, commanded all to leave the room. Once Ehud was alone with the king of Moab, he thrust his sword through the fat of Eglon and he died.

2. Ehud shuts the doors to the king and locks them.
C. “Now when he was gone out, his servants came; and they saw, and, behold, the doors of the upper room were locked; and they said, Surely he is covering his feet in the upper chamber. And they tarried till they were ashamed; and, behold, he opened not the doors of the upper room: therefore they took the key, and opened them, and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirah. And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the hill-country of Ephraim; and the children of Israel went down with him from the hill-country, and he before them. And he said unto them, Follow after me; for Jehovah hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites, and suffered not a man to pass over. And they smote of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, every lusty man, and every man of valor; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years” (3:24-30).

1. Ehud’s bold act resulted in Israel defeating the Moabites by killing 10,000 of their men.
2. Israel is released from Moab and they enjoy a span of 80 years of rest from enemies.

D. “And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who smote of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad: and he also saved Israel” (3:31).

1. Shamgar is the third judge to save Israel. No transgressions are mentioned regarding the sending of Shamgar; however, vs. 31 states that he saved Israel by killing 600 Philistines with an ox-goad.
2. An ox goad was a plowing instrument. It was “about eight feet long and six inches in circumference at the thick end. At the thin end they have a sharp point to drive the oxen, and at the other end a small hoe, to scrape off any dirt that may stick to the plough” (Keil and Delitzsch Vol. 2 pg. 218).

Lessons from Judges 3

- The first three Judges of Israel: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar.
- God proves Israel and He proves His people today (Judges 3:1-4): God proved Israel to see whether they truly loved Him and was willing to keep His commandments. God proved Israel by physical blessings (Deut. 8:2-4), physical hardships (8:15-17), false prophets (see Deut. 13:1-4), and the ungodly influence of the Canaanites (Judges 3:1-4). The Lord continues to prove His people today with the same things (see I Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:1-8; I Pet. 1:6ff; I Jn. 4:1ff) (see study # 3; God Proves the professed love of His Saints).
- There are always consequences to one’s sin (Judges 3:8): God’s anger was kindled against Israel because they forgot him when things were well. God will not be with the sinner today (Isa. 59:1-2; I Jn. 1:5-7). Those who walk in sin are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:3-5).
- God’s Mercy (Judges 3:15): God sent a savior to Israel when they cried out to Him for help. The grand lesson of Judges is that God desires man’s obedience and humility when he fails. Those who will humbly cry out to God for help will never be disappointed (see Acts 2:21). The Lord has sent one final savior, Jesus Christ, to save people from the consequences of their sins (Matt. 1:21). Though man is dead in sin they may be made alive through the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; 2:3-5, 8)

Chapter 4

I. Deborah is the fourth Judge of Israel: Battle against Jabin and Sisera of Canaan (4 all):

A. “And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, when Ehud was dead. And Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles” (4:1-2).

1. We are left to ponder the place of Shamgar after this statement. Ehud and Shamgar may have been contemporaries who carried out God’s work at the same time on behalf of Israel. Deborah seems to hint that Shamgar’s days were during her time (see Judges 5:6).
2. Israel enjoyed 80 years of peace after Ehud saved them from the Moabites (Judges 3:30). Such a lengthy time brought Israel back into the practices of the Canaanites. Due to Israel’s sin the Lord, “Sold them into the hand of Jabin King of Canaan.”

B. “And the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel” (4:3).
   1. Twenty years would pass from men’s lives before their “mighty oppression” by the Canaanites came to be more than they could bear.
   2. Jabin had 900 chariots of iron and enforced his will upon Israel to the point of causing them to cry out to Jehovah for help.

C. “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill-country of Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment” (4:4-5).
   1. Deborah is listed as the fourth judge of Israel. Not only was Deborah a judge in Israel but she was also known to be a “prophetess” who had a husband over her. God often used females to deliver His divine revelation (see Miriam {Ex. 15:20}, Huldah {II Kg. 22:14}, and Anna {Lk. 2:36}).
   2. Israel would line up for consultation over matters within their tribes much like they did to Moses before he delegated this authority.

D. “And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded, saying, Go and draw unto mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand” (4:6-7).
   1. The spirit of Jehovah was clearly upon Deborah as a prophetess and judge of Israel. Apparently, at some point in the past, God had commanded Barak to take 10,000 men to mount Tabor where God would draw out the Canaanites and destroy them.
   2. Deborah appears to be reminding Barak of this command. Why had they not followed this order? Apparently the crying of the people has caused Deborah to remind them of their help offered by God.

E. “And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for Jehovah will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh” (4:8-9).
   1. Barak knows that God is with Deborah. He has been presented a command, Go, draw out the Canaanites with their chariots of iron and God will take care of the rest. Barak; however, will not obey this command without the company of Deborah.
   2. Deborah agrees to go but only upon the stipulation that Barak receives no credit for the sure victory. The honor of such a battle will go to her, a woman. If Barak would have obeyed God’s commands without the aid and comfort of Deborah things would be different as far as who received the honor of the battle.

F. “And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him. Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, even from the children of Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far as the oak in Zaanannim, which is by Kedesh. And they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Haroseth of the Gentiles, unto the river Kishon” (4:10-13).
   1. Sisera is told of Barak’s men being gathered at mount Tabor.
   2. Sisera gathers his 900 chariots of iron and soldiers at the river Kishon.

G. “And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thy hand; is not Jehovah gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And Jehovah discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot, and fled away on his
feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; there was not a man left” (4:14-16).

1. Deborah tells Barak to move upon Sisera’s army because the Lord of Host has come upon them.

2. Barak obeyed the prophetess and Sisera was routed.

H. “Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And he turned in unto her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. And he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? That thou shalt say, No. Then Jael Heber’s wife took a tent-pin, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the pin into his temples, and it pierced through into the ground: for he was in a deep sleep; so he swooned and died” (4:17-21).

1. After Sisera’s army was routed he fled on foot to the house of Heber the Kenite. Heber was the very man who told Sisera where Barak and Israel had come.

2. Jael, Heber’s wife, apparently was home alone when Sisera arrives asking for shelter. Jael invites him in, gives him milk, and he falls asleep. Jael takes a tent spike and drives it through Sisera’s brain killing him in his sleep.

I. “And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And he came unto her; and, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the tent-pin was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan” (4:22-24).

1. Jabin and Sisera had mightily oppressed Israel for twenty years and now it ended by bloody warfare. Such a victory by Jehovah produced faith in Israel so that they “prevailed more and more against Jabin... until he was destroyed.”

2. Jabin would never again oppress the people of God. By God’s help Israel defeated a mighty foe.

Chapter 5

I. Deborah sings a song of praise to Jehovah (5 all):

A. “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, For that the people offered themselves willingly, Bless ye Jehovah. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto Jehovah; I will sing praise to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir, When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped, Yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked at the presence of Jehovah, Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, And the travellers walked through byways. The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased, Until that I Deborah arose, That I arose a mother in Israel” (5:1-7).

1. Deborah sings a song of praise to Jehovah due to the victory over Jabin and Sisera of Canaan.

2. Deborah gives us a picture of Israel before she came to judge as “a mother in Israel.”

   a. The main highways were unoccupied by Israelites due to a fear of their enemies.

   b. The men who ruled Israel ceased to uphold their positions “until I Deborah arose.”

   c. Chapters 4 and 5 seem to accentuate the shameful state that men had come during the days when God saved Israel by the hand of a woman (where were all the convicted and God fearing men?).

B. “They chose new gods; then was war in the gates; was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?” (5:8).
1. Judges 4:1 states, “Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, when Ehud was dead” yet does not tell us what their evil deeds were. Deborah reveals the sin of idolatry and cowardice among the Israelites. Remember, God had left many Canaanites in the land to prove Israel and they failed miserably (see Judges 3:1-4). The Canaanite gods Ashroth and Baal were served by Israel once again (see Judges 2:13). While God had commanded Israel to destroy their gods Israel accepted them in defiant rebellion (see Ex. 20:1-2; 34:13; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; Judges 2:2).

2. Deborah exposes the shame of Israel’s men by saying, “was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?” Israel had lost their faith and had forgotten God altogether in disobedience to his will (see Deut. 8:11). Due to their disobedience of cowardice God brought war to their gates and they fearfully gave in to the Canaanites.

C. “My heart is toward the governors of Israel, That offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye Jehovah. Tell of it, ye that ride on white asses, Ye that sit on rich carpets, And ye that walk by the way. Far from the noise of archers, in the places of drawing water, There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of Jehovah, Even the righteous acts of his rule in Israel. Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates” (5:9-11).

1. Israel was not completely overwhelmed with cowards. Deborah sings the praise of those who willingly went to the gate of war with Barak.

2. Deborah’s song is flowing with respect toward God and those who faithfully went to battle. Deborah, as we shall see, had no respect or kind words for those who were cowards.

D. “Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, utter a song: Arise, Barak, and lead away thy captives, thou son of Abinoam. Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people; Jehovah came down for me against the mighty. Out of Ephraim came down they whose root is in Amalek; After thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples; Out of Machir came down governors, And out of Zebulun they that handle the marshal's staff. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet. By the watercourses of Reuben There were great resolves of heart. Why sattest thou among the sheepfolds, To hear the pipings for the flocks? At the watercourses of Reuben There were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond the Jordan: And Dan, why did he remain in ships? Asher sat still at the haven of the sea, And abode by his creeks. Zebulun was a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death, And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field” (5:12-18).

1. Deborah is aroused to write a song of the events concerning Israel’s victory over Jabin.

2. There were men who showed, “great resolve of heart” (i.e., Barak, Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, Reuben, and Naphtali). Dan and Asher appeared to be passive. Zebulun and Naphtali are seen as most zealous in risking their lives.

3. Deborah praises God for the victory and praises these men for their faith.

E. “The kings came and fought; Then fought the kings of Canaan. In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo: They took no gain of money. From heaven fought the stars, From their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away; That ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, march on with strength. Then did the horsehoofs stamp By reason of the prancings, the prancings of their strong ones” (5:19-22).

1. Deborah reveals the manner in which Jehovah fought for Israel. God controlled the physical elements of the earth (i.e., stars [or great thunderstorms] and the river Kishon which swept away the Canaanites in a flood). With such great amounts of waters the Canaanite chariots of iron were rendered useless. Thirdly, it appears that some of the Canaanites were trampled by their own horses in the confusion of storms and flooding.

2. Due to the might of God being put on display conjoined with the valiant and faithful efforts of the brave Deborah proclaims, “O my soul, march on with strength.” No greater acts of influence can be exerted over another than one knowing the might of God and watching men follow His lead. Deborah could march forward because God is on her side.

F. “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah. Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, Because they came not to the help of Jehovah, To the help of Jehovah against the mighty” (5:23).
1. In contrast to Zebulun, Naphtali, Barak, Jael, and the faithful governors of Israel who offered themselves willingly (see Judges 5:24) are the inhabitants of Meroz. Note that Deborah has sung the praise of the valiant and now curses the cowards who lacked faith.

2. Meroz is “A village placed under a curse in the Son of Deborah for failing to aid the armies of the Lord in the battle against Jabin King of Canaan. The poet used the reprehensible inactivity of this people to set the heroic intervention of Jael in bold relief. It is generally supposed that the forces of Jabin fled past Meroz, an Israelite village, and that the inhabitants, who were in a position to block his path of retreat, were prevented by cowardice” (ISBE v. 3, pp. 327).

3. The angel of Jehovah said, “Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof.” Cowards and those who lack faith are never commended by God (see Rev. 21:8). Those who will not wage spiritual war against sin, Satan, and the wicked are doomed to being loathed and banned by God (see Eph. 6:10-18). God commands His saints to faithfully fight (1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 11:32-34). Those who will not are “cursed.” To “curse” = “to execrate; i.e., to declare to be hateful or abhorrent; denounce. To feel loathing for; abhor... to invoke a curse upon (to ban)” (Strong’s pp 17).

G. “Blessed above women shall Jael be, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; She brought him butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the tent-pin, And her right hand to the workmen's hammer; And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head; Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay; At her feet he bowed, he fell; Where he bowed, there he fell down dead” (5:24-27).

1. Jael stood in stark contrast to the cowards and unfaithful of Meroz.

2. Jael smote Sisera through his temples because he was an enemy of Jehovah God. God’s people ought to be so convicted today. Not that we would take the lives of the wicked but that we would not tolerate their wicked ways as they take liberties with God’s word and His people.

H. “Through the window she looked forth, and cried, The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, Yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil? A damsel, two damsels to every man; To Sisera a spoil of dyed garments, A spoil of dyed garments embroidered, Of dyed garments embroidered on both sides, on the necks of the spoil? So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah: But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years” (5:28-31).

1. Sisera delayed coming home because he was dead. His mother worried yet the wise ladies of Canaan told her that he is probably dividing the spoil of Israel. O how the expectations of the wicked are confounded and dashed in pieces by Jehovah!

2. Deborah concludes with powerful words of conviction saying, “So let all thine enemies perish O Jehovah.” Those who will fight against God’s sovereign design of man shall all meet the same perishing fate. So let it be.

3. Those; however, who “love the Lord” and make this manifest by their obedience shall “be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.” The apostle Peter said the faithful will be exalted with a crown of glory in due time (1 Pet. 5:4-6). Like the sun the saints of the Lord will have their day of glory.

Lessons Learned from Judges 4-5:

- **Man’s attitude toward sin and sinners:** Deborah reiterated an angelic curse upon the cowardly of Meroz (Judges 5:23). Furthermore, Deborah displayed her own mind toward the ungodly by saying, “So let all thine enemies perish O Jehovah” (Judges 5:31). God’s people are commanded in both the OT (see Deut. 13:8-9) and NT (see II Pet. 2:1ff) not to pity or spare false teachers and cowardly men. When Christians gain the convictions of Deborah there will be no codling, protecting, or hiding false teachers or the wicked. These wicked me shall be sought out, publicly identified, and rejected (II Tim. 2:16-18) (see study # 4; The Christian’s Attitude toward False Teachers and Sinners).
Note that Deborah praised the faithful (Judges 5:2, 31) and condemned the wicked (Judges 5:23, 31a). Deborah said “let ALL thine enemies perish, O Jehovah” (Judges 5:31). New Testament Christian ought to apply all God’s instructions regarding our disposition toward the wicked (see Rom. 16:17; II Thess. 3:6, 14-15).

Note also that the coward is abhorred by God (Judges 5:23; Rev. 21:8). The true child of God must ready himself to stand in the face of spiritual battles (Eph. 6:10-18).

The righteous indignation of Jael: Bible History reveals people of great conviction and righteous indignation (example: Phinehas / Numb. 25:6-9; David slays Goliath / I Sam. 17; Jesus removing the money exchangers from the temple / Jn. 2:13-17). Jael goes down in history as a woman who performed a God approved act of righteous indignation against Sisera (Judges 5:24-27). People often are confused about righteous indignation. They see the Christian as one who should love others and be compassionate yet fail to see that this love and compassion is driven by one’s genuine faith. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). To be meek is to be gentle, mild, kind, and forgiving. Both Jesus (Matt. 11:29) and Moses (Numb. 12:3) are said to be meek. The point is that the Christian can be meek and have a spirit of righteous indignation at the same time. Meekness is having a proper perspective of one’s life’s experience. I sin, I need God’s mercy, other sin, I must be patient with them. Righteous indignation is the act of one’s faith against those who mock at God’s laws (see study # 5; Righteous Indignation).

Judges to this point: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Deborah.

Chapter 6

I. Gideon Destroys the altars of Baal and Asherah (6:1-32):

A. “And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of Midian the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strongholds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east; they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents; they came in as locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number: and they came into the land to destroy it. And Israel was brought very low because of Midian; and the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah” (6:1-6).

1. Forty years passed with peace for the children yet they remained true to their cycles of apostasy and sinned against the Lord in such manners as to cause Jehovah to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. Midian is the next enemy that prevailed over the sinful house of Israel.

2. The oppression of Midian appears to be more stringent than all before them. Their oppression drove Israel to dwell in caves and various strongholds within the mountains. Their homes, farms, and livestock were largely left behind due to their fear. Seven years would pass while the hords of Midianites came upon the land of Canaan like locust for multitudes. Israel could stand the destruction of their land and way of life no longer and so they once again, “Cried unto Jehovah” for help. We ponder the question as to why man has to be brought so low before making changes in his life. Christians today may involve themselves in unauthorized acts yet until they are brought low by their sin they continue therein. The pain of being separated from God in sin must be felt for change to occur (see study # 6; Sin Separates a Man from God).

B. “And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah because of Midian, that Jehovah sent a prophet unto the children of Israel: and he said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am Jehovah your God; ye shall not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But ye have not hearkened unto my voice” (6:7-10).
1. Jehovah sends an unnamed prophet to reprove Israel for their wicked lives they had lived. God had mercifully cared for them, gave them the land of Canaan, and fought for them yet they continued to rebel against him. The book of Deuteronomy tells us why God continued to show mercy and offer his gifts to Israel even though they did not deserve them (see Deut. 9:1ff).

2. God had commanded Israel not to worship nor fear the gods of the Canaanites yet “ye have not hearkened unto my voice.” At least 206 years earlier (after the death of Joshua and just before the Judgeship of Ehud / see Judges 3:8, 11, 14, 30; 4:3; 5:31b) the Lord asked Israel, “Why have ye done this?” (i.e., worship the gods of Canaan) (See Judges 2:2). We discussed the “why” of Israel’s sinful decisions there attributing it to their preconceived ideas of spiritual service to God, forgetting God, they were drawn away from truth unto another doctrine by the wicked influences around them and their own lust, and lastly they had no shame about themselves when it came to their sin.

C. “And the angel of Jehovah came, and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him, and said unto him, Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, Oh, my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where are all his wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? But now Jehovah hath cast us off, and delivered us into the hand of Midian” (6:11-13).

1. The Lord looks into Gideon’s heart and sees something that we do not see. Gideon is one whom “Jehovah is with...” and a “mighty man of valor.”

2. Gideon seems to be ignorant of the people’s sin of idolatry, fear of other gods, and the consequences for such vile acts. Gideon was to learn that sin separates a man from Jehovah and this is why “Jehovah hath cast us off” (see study # 6).

D. “And Jehovah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh, Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And Jehovah said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, then show me a sign that it is thou that talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and lay it before thee. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of meal: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of Jehovah put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there went up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of Jehovah departed out of his sight. And Gideon saw that he was the angel of Jehovah; and Gideon said, Alas, O Lord Jehovah! forasmuch as I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face” (6:14-22).

1. Jehovah, through His angel, commanded Gideon to “Go... save Israel from the hand of Midian.” Gideon, like Moses before him, gave the Lord excuses as to why he was not the man for such a job. Gideon was poor and the least in my father’s house. The Lord tells him that these things matter not because He would be with Gideon. Through history some of God’s greatest servants have been those who did not think highly of themselves (see Moses / Ex. 4:10 and the Apostle Paul / I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8).

2. Gideon then asks for a sign that the Lord may show him to prove that it is truly the Lord who was speaking with him (Judges 6:17). The Lord causes fire to come out of a rock and consume the gift of flesh, unleavened cakes, and broth that Gideon had brought as a gift. Gideon is amazed and confesses that he as seen the angel of Jehovah face to face.

E. “And Jehovah said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto Jehovah, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. And it came to pass the same night, that Jehovah said unto him, Take thy father's bullock, even the second bullock seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father
hath, and cut down the Asherah that is by it; and build an altar unto Jehovah thy God upon the top of this stronghold, in the orderly manner, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-offering with the wood of the Asherah which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as Jehovah had spoken unto him: and it came to pass, because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, so that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built” (6:23-28).

1. Gideon has asked the Lord why He had cast away Israel and we see the answer here. Israel was involved in idolatry. The Lord commands Gideon to throw (cut) down the altar of Baal and Asherah that his own father had erected. The Lord further commands Gideon to build an altar on top of the place where the altars to the Baal and Asherah were and to offer a burnt offering to the Lord there.

2. Gideon obeys the Lord’s command and the next day the men of the city awaken to a torn down altar of Baal and Asherah and a new altar to Jehovah.

F. “And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die, because he hath broken down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the Asherah that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye contend for Baal? Or will ye save him? He that will contend for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him contend for himself, because one hath broken down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal contend against him, because he hath broken down his altar” (6:29-32).

1. Gideon’s first act of obedience to the Lord God Almighty was to break down the altars of Baal and Asherah. The men of the city now demand the life of Gideon.

2. Gideon’s father, Joash, tells the men to let Baal contend with Gideon “if he be a god.” Baal being nothing but a rock of course does nothing to Gideon.

3. It is interesting to note the various reactions to an act of conviction. Many demanded the life of Gideon because of his act of righteous indignation against idolatry.

II. Gideon calls the tribes of Israel to war against the Midianites (6:33-40):

A. “Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east assembled themselves together; and they passed over, and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered together after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; and they also were gathered together after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them” (6:33-35).

1. The “Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon” and he rouses up the armies of Israel to wage war against the Midianites.

2. Zebulun and Naphtali once again prove themselves a zealous people for the Lord (in addition to Manasseh and Asher).

B. “And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing-floor; if there be dew on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the ground, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast spoken. And it was so; for he rose up early on the morrow, and pressed the fleece together, and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be kindled against me, and I will speak but this once: let me make trial, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground” (6:36-40).

1. Gideon is ready to do the work of freeing Israel from the servitude and fear of the Midianites; however, he still lacks complete faith in God.

2. Gideon had earlier asked for a “sign” from God at Judges 6:17 and so does once again. Gideon wanted to be fully assured that God was with him because the Midianites, as locust and the
sand of the sea for number, had gathered in the valley of Jezreel against Israel (see Judges 7:12). The seriousness of the moment demanded Gideon’s confidence in God’s help.

3. Gideon tries God by asking him to permit a wool fleece to lay out all night and have the dew fall only on the fleece. God did so. Again, Gideon wanting to make sure that God would be with him, asks that God would make the dew fall upon the ground and not the fleece. Once again the Lord fulfills Gideon’s request.

Chapter 7

I. God chooses his Army to defeat the Midianites (7 all):

A. "Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and encamped beside the spring of Harod: and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand” (7:1-3).

1. A grand lesson that Israel was to have burned into their mind was that they had a need for God’s help. The Lord did not want to help Israel defeat the Midianites and then have them say, “We have prevailed over Midian... mine own hand hath saved me.”

2. To reduce the number of the men of war God tells Gideon to let all those who were afraid to fight to return home. Twenty two thousand men declared their fear and left. Ten thousand men remained. It must have been somewhat discouraging to the 10,000 remaining men to see two thirds of their army leave the battle scene yet they remained faithful.

B. "And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many: bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee: and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and Jehovah said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And Jehovah said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place” (7:4-7).

1. Ten thousand men were too many to save Israel. The Lorded wanted to make sure that Israel gave credit where the credit was due so that they may once again gain faith and the favor of Jehovah.

2. To reduce the army from 10,000 to 300 the Lord tells Gideon to watch the manner in which the men drank water. Those who lapped the water up like a dog (“putting their hand to their mouth”) was three hundred and the 9,700 others bowed down to the ground upon their knees to drink.

3. Those the Lord kept for the battle were the 300 that put their hands to their mouth to drink.

C. “So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley. And it came to pass the same night, that Jehovah said unto him, Arise, get thee down into the camp; for I have delivered it into thy hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Purah thy servant down to the camp: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thy hands be strengthened to go down into the camp. Then went he down with Purah his servant unto the outermost part of the armed men that were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man telling a dream unto his fellow: and he said, Behold, I dreamed a dream; and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came unto the tent,
and smote it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Israel, and said, Arise; for Jehovah hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian” (7:8-15).

1. The story of Gideon and the battle with the Midianites is one that reveals God assuring a man of His promises by proofs. Gideon has asked for a sign three times now. This time, the Lord does not wait for Gideon to ask for a sign He simply gives him one (i.e., hearing the Midianite tell another of a dream he had that revealed Gideon’s success against them).

2. Gideon is now fully assured of God’s help and impending victory over the Midianites. Likewise, Christians have been fully assured of God regarding our victory over the battle with Satan (see 1 Jn. 4:1ff; Eph. 6:10ff).

D. “And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For Jehovah and for Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put them to flight. And they blew the three hundred trumpets, and Jehovah set every man’s sword against his fellow, and against all the host; and the host fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. And the men of Israel were gathered together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after Midian. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill-country of Ephraim, saying, Come down against Midian, and take before them the waters, as far as Beth-barah, even the Jordan. So all the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and took the waters as far as Beth-barah, even the Jordan. And they took the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and they slew Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian: and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan” (7:16-25).

1. Fully assured that God would fight for Israel Gideon musters up the three hundred men. He divides them into three companies and surrounds the massive camp of Midianites and Amalakites. Gideon instructs the three hundred men to blow their trumpets and smash their pitchers. Upon blowing the trumpets and smashing the pitchers the Midianites go into a confused frenzy and begin killing each other with the sword.

2. Gideon and the Israelites pursue after the enemy and sleigh them with their two princes Oreb and Zeeb.

Chapter 8

I. Gideon appeases Ephraim and condemns the men of Succoth and Penuel (8:1-9):

A. “And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with Midian? And they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I now done in comparison with you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hand the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison with you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that” (8:1-3).

I. Gideon had not called upon his brethren from Ephraim to help with the battle against the Midianites.

20
2. Gideon very wisely tells his brethren that there is truly greater glory in coming in the end of the battle and capturing the greatest fish; i.e., the two princes of Midian, than to have gone through the whole campaign. This soft answer turned away the wrath of the Ephraimites.

B. "And Gideon came to the Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they are faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thine army? And Gideon said, Therefore when Jehovah hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them in like manner; and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower" (8:4-9).

1. Gideon and his three hundred men come to the men of Succoth and plead for bread due to their exhaustion and hunger. The men of Succoth reject them and so Gideon tells them that he will be back to tear their flesh.

2. Gideon and his three hundred men then come to Penuel and they too would not give Gideon and his men any food. Gideon, once again, told these men that he will return and tear down their tower.

II. Gideon does not rest until he has exterminated the Midianite Army with their Princes and Kings (8:10-35):

A. "Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the host of the children of the east; for there fell a hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host; for the host was secure. And Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and he pursued after them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host" (8:10-12).

1. The zeal of Gideon and his will to obey the voice of God is displayed as he relentlessly pursues the final Midianite forces. Once the man of God has been fully assured there is no stopping his acts of conviction.

2. With the same three hundred men Gideon finishes off the once great army of Midianites.

B. "And Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle from the ascent of Heres. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described for him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, seventy and seven men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom ye did taunt me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he brake down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city" (8:13-17).

1. Gideon, like Deborah, had no tolerance for those who did not support the cause of Jehovah God.

2. Gideon takes the elders of the city of Succoth (who taunted him) and tore their flesh with the briars of the field and broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of that city.

3. While some may view this as hypocritical of Gideon God did not. While Gideon was building his faith and assurance of God so should have all Israel. God gave Gideon four signs and four signs should have been enough for everyone. God will not go on giving signs to an unbelieving people. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matt. 12:39). The Lord has fulfilled the greatest signs of all in giving us His beloved Son and divine revelation.

C. "Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, the sons of my mother: as Jehovah liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword; for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise
thou, and fall upon us; for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescents that were on their camels' necks” (8:18-21).

1. Gideon asks the two kings of the Midianites about the character of the men they slew at Tabor (Gideon’s brethren). The two kings reply that they were as the sons of kings. Gideon then commands his first-born son to slay the two kings yet he was fearful because of his young age.

2. The Midianite kings then say to the young man, “Rise thou, and fall upon us; for as the man is, so is his strength.” Gideon then arose and killed them both.

D. “Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would make a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earring of his spoil. (For they had golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earring of his spoil. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescents, and the pendants, and the purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel played the harlot after it there; and it became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house” (8:22-27).

1. Gideon refuses the people’s request that he may rule over them saying, “Jehovah shall rule over you.”

2. Gideon makes a request of the people that they would give him one of the gold ear-rings of their spoil. The people gladly do so and Gideon uses the gold to make an ephod (a vest worn by priest) which he placed in the city of Ophrah. Unfortunately, “All Israel played the harlot after it there; and it became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.” Israel apparently treated the ephod as something holy which the Lord did not command and thereby what, no doubt, Gideon did by good intentions caused sin to be in that city.

E. “So Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, and they lifted up their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon. And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten; for he had many wives. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, and he called his name Abimelech. And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and played the harlot after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel” (8:28-35).

1. Gideon went on to have 70 sons through many wives and one son, Abimelech, through his concubine in Shechem.

2. Gideon lives to an old age, he dies, and Israel leaves Jehovah. Israel, once again, served “Baalim and made Baal-berith their god.”

Lessons Learned from Judges 6-8

- **Sin separates a man from God:** Gideon did not understand why God had “cast off” His people (Judges 6:13). The Lord has ever cast off those who sin against him (see Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 4:17-20). The nature of God is holy and in Him is no darkness whatsoever (1 Jn. 1:1ff). Those who approach God in fellowship can only do so in a holy and unblemished state (Lev. 11:44).

- Gideon asked the Lord for a sign to prove that God is with him at Judges 6:17, two more times at Judges 6:36-40, and God gives him a fourth sign at Judges 7:12-15. Judges chapters 6-8 tell a story of the development of Gideon’s faith. Gideon wanted to be fully assured that God was with him due to the serious battle that lie before Israel. Life and death was at stake and any mistake could cost a man his one life. The Child of God can be fully assured in our intense battle with Satan today. Spiritual life and death is at stake.
(see Eph. 2:1ff). Each generation must come to their own faith and realize that God is with us if only we would call upon him for help (Heb. 2:18). Let man be fully assured that God will meet our every need and we shall prevail against the greatest foe man as ever known and ever will know (Satan) (see 1 Jn. 4:4; Phil. 4:13; II Tim. 3:14; Rom. 4:21; Eph. 6:10ff). The life of Gideon is a story of faith and victory through the assurance of God’s help! (See study #7; Man’s Confidence in God)

- **Responding to acts of righteous indignation:** When Gideon tore down the altars of Baal and Asherah the men of the city said to his father, “Bring out thy son, that he may die, because he hath broken down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the Asherah that was by it” (Judges 6:30). How do you and I respond to acts of faith, conviction, and righteous indignation? Jesus said that men hated him because he exposed their sin (Jn. 7:7). The Lord told Ezekiel that people would give him mean looks as he preached words of condemnation against their sin (Ezek. 2:1-7). The Godly will have three basic reactions to authoritative acts of preaching and conviction. First, they will be intensely interested in hearing truth. Secondly, they will be motivated to higher acts of faith themselves. Lastly, they will make the proper changes in their lives, with a spirit of humility, recognizing the seriousness of the moment in relation to their eternal abode.

- The final lesson that we learn about is that each generation must come to their own faith: Judges 8:33 states, “And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and played the harlot after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God...” Another Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, and Gideon would need to arise and challenge the people’s sin and faith. Within each generation there are men and women who rise above the sin that is ever about man. These men and women of faith expose error, motivate their fellows to repent, perform acts of righteous indignation to stir up people’s faith, have no tolerance for wickedness, and demand authoritative living in all (good intro statement for this study). Our children and their children must come to their own faith (see study #8; Children and the Development of their Faith).

Chapter 9

I. Abimelech kills Gideon’s Seventy Sons and takes the Throne of Israel by Force (9:1-25):

A. “And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and spake with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are threescore and ten persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light fellows, who followed him” (9:1-4).

1. Abimelech was the son of Jerubbaal (i.e., Gideon) of the concubine in Shechem. A “concubine” is “a secondary wife (sometimes a mistress), usually of inferior legal and social status” (AHD 306).

2. Abimelech was apparently an ambitious and ruthless man of “inferior social status.” His desire to rule over Israel prevailed over a love of his flesh and blood brothers. He had none of his father’s characteristics in this area (see Judges 8:22-23).

3. The fact that Abimelech accepted money from the house of an idol and hires ruff and ungodly people to follow him indicates a lack of spiritual interest on his part.

4. Gideon’s developed faith was not inherited by Abimelech. Gideon’s promiscuity may be a partial reason for the bitter Abimelech’s disposition.

B. “And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left: for he hid himself” (9:5).

1. The vain and light fellows hired by Abimelech with the money of the idol Baal-berith do their dastardly work.
2. “Upon one stone” 69 sons of Gideon are killed. One by one they were slaughtered. Only one escaped, Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon.

C. “And all the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem. And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my new wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. Now therefore, if ye have dealt truly and uprightly, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands (for my father fought for you, and adventurers his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: and ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, three score and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother): if ye then have dealt truly and uprightly with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech” (9:6-20).

1. The “house of Millo” or Beth-Millo is “A quarter in Shechem associated with the armed forces of that city, perhaps to be understood as a civil defense center or barracks. It is not certain whether “the house of Millo” is identical with the Tower of Shechem, nor how both are related to the shrine of Baal-Berith. The three seem to be connected with the city’s considerable defense installations” (ISBE, v. 1, pp. 474).

2. Jotham, the only remaining son of Gideon, is known primarily for this fable. No doubt in much pain and grief the young man stands on top of Mount Gerizim and tells the men of Shechem this fable. Jotham speaks of the trees seeking a king and asking other honorable plant species to rule over them yet they refuse. The olive, fig, and vine all decline the opportunity to reign as king. The last plant asked is the bramble (i.e., a prickly plant or shrub of the genus Rubus, esp. the blackberry or the raspberry). Having worked among rubus during my forest land management days I can say by experience that though the fruit is sweet it is a most annoying plant. The thorns of the rubus seem to stick to your skin like Velcro and its purpose is to inflict pain upon all those who cross its path. The bramble accepts the job on condition of the trees coming among him to take shade and if they refused then he would send fire to burn the cedars. The interpretation of this fable is not given; however, it is apparent that the lowly and forceful sticker bush represents the worthless Abimelech and his taking the kingdom by force.

3. Jotham challenges the men of Shechem to think about what they have done. The sons of Gideon, the man who saved them from the massive army of the Midianites, have been murdered on one stone. What did Gideon do to deserve such treatment? If this was the right thing to do then let Shechem, the armored defense of Millo, and Abimelech rejoice. If not then the whole lot of them are to be cursed by being consumed with fire (see Judges 9:57).

D. “And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother. And Abimelech was prince over Israel three years. And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: that the violence done to the three score and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother, who slew them, and upon the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to slay his brethren. And the men of Shechem set liers-in-wait for him on the
tops of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech” (9:21-25).

1. Abimelech, having forced his way into the kingship of Israel, could not soar with the eagles while running with the turkeys. When one receives and gives violence into their lives it will not be long before violence finds them and slays them.

2. God providentially sends an “evil spirit” that provoked tension between Abimelech and his brethren of Shechem.

II. Gaal challenges Abimelech for the Kingdom (9:26-57):

E. “And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their trust in him. And they went out into the field, and gathered their vineyards, and trod the grapes, and held festival, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? And Zebul his officer? Serve ye the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: but why should we serve him? And would that this people were under my hand! Then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out” (9:26-29).

1. Gaal, like Abimelech, lusted after power and dominion over the people.

2. Gaal holds parties where the men would take turns curing Abimelech and question the king’s authority over them.

3. Gaal proudly boast that if the people would proclaim him king he would remove Abimelech. Then, with defiant words, Gaal issues a challenge to Abimelech and his army.

F. “And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech craftily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren are come to Shechem; and, behold, they constrain the city to take part against thee. Now therefore, up by night, thou and the people that are with thee, and lie in wait in the field: and it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and rush upon the city; and, behold, when he and the people that are with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion. And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies” (9:30-34).

1. The days after the death of Gideon were days of wicked men with no scruples or value for men’s lives. Abimelech, Gaal, and now Zebul (the ruler of the city of Shechem) have proved themselves untrustworthy and wicked.

2. Zebul does not tell Abimelech the whole truth of the matter. Gaal has not constrained the city to take part against Abimelech but he was politicking for such to take place. Zebul revs up the story to Abimelech so that the king would wage war against Gaal and appease his anger. Abimelech takes the bait hook, line, and sinker and heads for war.

G. “And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from the ambushment. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the tops of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men. And Gaal spake again and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and one company cometh by the way of the oak of Meonenim. Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, that thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? Is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out now, I pray, and fight with them” (9:35-38).

1. The next day Gaal and his men are at the entrance of the gate of the city and they see what appears to be a massive army coming down from the mountains. Zebul tells him that it is only the shadow of the mountain. Gaal continues to look and now determines that it is an ambush of men.

2. Zebul, no doubt with a gleam in his eye, turns to Gaal and said, “Where is now thy mouth that thou said, Who is Abimelech that we should serve him...”

H. “And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and there fell many wounded, even unto the entrance of the gate. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell
in Shechem. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field; and he looked, and, behold, the people came forth out of the city; And he rose up against them, and smote them. And Abimelech, and the companies that were with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city: and the two companies rushed upon all that were in the field, and smote them. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that were therein; and he beat down the city, and sowed it with salt” (9:39-45).

1. After fighting unsuccessfully with Abimelech Gaal retreats into the city of Shechem. Zebul, however, would not permit this and “drove out Gaal and his brethren.” When Gaal went back out of the city Abimelech and his men slew them.

2. Apparently the city of Shechem was divided as to whether to support Gaal or Abimelech. Abimelech rushes upon the city and fights against them all day eventually prevailing utterly destroying the city.

I. “And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard thereof, they entered into the stronghold of the house of Elberith. And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. And Abimelech got him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it up, and laid it on his shoulder: and he said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women” (9:46-49).

1. Abimelech gains intelligence that the remaining 1,000 people (men and women) had gathered themselves at the tower of Shechem. Abimelech cuts wood and encourages all with him to do the same that they may carry it to the tower and burn it with fire.

2. Upon arrival at the tower with their wood Abimelech sets the tower on fire and it burned the 1,000 men and women alive.

J. “Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut themselves in, and got them up to the roof of the tower. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and drew near unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armorbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and kill me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren; and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem did God requite upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal” (9:50-57).

1. Thebez was about 10 miles north of Shechem. Abimelech, determined to squash the rebellion, encamps against the people of the city, fought against it, and took it. The remaining citizens gathered themselves into the stronghold of their city tower as the inhabitants of Shechem had done. Abimelech intends to do the same thing that he had done to those at Shechem who fled to the tower, that is, burn it and the people alive.

2. As Abimelech approaches the tower to put wood and fire upon it a woman drops a millstone upon his head and crushes his skull. With his last words he commands his armor bearer to kill him with the sword so that “men say not of me, A woman slew me.”

3. Interestingly, once the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they left off the fighting and went to their homes. The word of God then states, “Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech (because he slew his seventy brothers) and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem.”

4. The word “requited” means “to make repayment or revenge” (AHD 1050). The old saying, “What comes around goes around” would apply to Abimelech’s life. No man that has ever lived will get away with sin. I find it odd that people have considered him the 6th judge of
Israel. I find no good reason, other than he actually ruled over a portion of Israel, to acknowledge him as a judge. Never did the spirit of Jehovah come upon him to deliver the people out of oppression. Never did Abimelech develop faith in God. Never did Abimelech turn to God for help. This was a wicked man from the beginnings of his historical record to the end. Indeed he was the bramble among the trees.

Lessons learned from Judges 9

- Abimelech, like Esau of old, lacked spiritual interest (see Gen. 25:33; Heb. 12:14-16). He took the kingdom by force, accepted money from the house of an idol, used the money to hire vain fellows to follow him, murdered his seventy brothers upon one rock, and burned 1000 men and women alive at Shechem. Those who lack spiritual interest care nothing about God, His laws, His church, or their brethren (see Rom. 8:5-10).
- God “requited” the wickedness of Abimelech (Judges 9:56). The word “requite” means “to make repayment or revenge.” While God is patient and longsuffering with the wicked He will not ever suffer their wickedness. When the wicked die they are subject to the wrath of God. The wages of a life of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). God will have the final vengeance upon the wicked. When man shows little to no spiritual interest through lust, covetousness, drunkenness, and or any of the works of the flesh (see Gal. 5:22) they must rest assured that God’s vengeance will be upon them (Heb. 10:26-31) (see study # 9; A Lack of Spiritual Interest).

Chapter 10

I. The Seventh and Eighth Judges of Israel (10:1-5):

A. “And after Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the hill-country of Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir” (10:1-2).
   1. Tola is the seventh judge of Israel (the previous six being: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, and Abimelech).
   2. Nothing is recorded of Tola’s judgeship over Israel other than it lasted 23 years.

B. “And after him arose Jair, the Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havvoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in Kamon” (10:3-5).
   1. Jair is recognized as the eighth judge of Israel. Once again, there is nothing revealed about his time as judge other than the fact that he had thirty sons.
   2. Jair judged Israel for 22 years.

II. Israel’s great sin and their humble approach to God (10:6-18):

A. “And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim, and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Sidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook Jehovah, and served him not. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the children of Ammon. And they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel that year: eighteen years oppressed they all the children of Israel that were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead” (10:6-8).
   1. Israel failed God’s test of their faith once again by accepting and worshipping the gods of the surrounding nations (i.e., the Baalim, Ashtaroth and the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and those of the Philistines) (see Josh. 2:20-23).
   2. God’s wrath was kindled against Israel due to their idolatrous practices. Eighteen years would pass with Israel being oppressed by the Philistines and the Ammonites.

B. “And the children of Ammon passed over the Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, saying, We have sinned against thee, even because we have forsaken
our God, and have served the Baalim. And Jehovah said unto the children of Israel, Did not I save you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Sidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried unto me, and I saved you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will save you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress” (10:9-14).

1. After being oppressed by the Philistines and Ammonites for eighteen years Israel cries out to God for help. They admit their error in serving Baal, the Asheroth, and the gods of the other nations. The Israel of this generation had to learn from the university of hard knocks that salvation is found in Jehovah God alone.

2. The Lord responds differently this time. Rather than giving them an immediate judge to save them He tells them that seeing they had forsaken Him and served other Gods, “Wherefore I will save you no more.” The Lord tells the crying peoples to go call to the gods they had put their trust in that they may save you (if indeed they be gods).

C. “And the children of Israel said unto Jehovah, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; only deliver us, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the foreign gods from among them, and served Jehovah; and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpah. And the people, the princes of Gilead, said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead” (10:15-18).

1. Israel cries aloud again and confesses, “We have sinned.” To manifest their repentant attitude they took their foreign gods and threw them away “and served Jehovah.”

2. The merciful and loving God could not bear to see His children suffer any more at the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites.

Chapter 11

I. Jephthah: The Ninth Judge of Israel (11):

A. “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another woman. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain fellows to Jephthah, and they went out with him” (11:1-3).

1. Gilead had a paid sexual encounter with a harlot (a prostitute [AHD 595]) that resulted in the birth of Jephthah.

2. Gilead also had a wife that bore him sons. When the boys grew up they drove out Jephthah because he did not share the same mother.

3. Jephthah is said to have been a mighty man of valor and one who ran with vain (or worthless and ungodly) fellows. Once again we find that the Word of God does not protect the real identities of great men’s past. These were real people who had real problems.

B. “And it came to pass after a while, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that, when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob; and they said unto Jephthah, Come and be our chief, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and drive me out of my father's house? And why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?” (11:4-7).

1. Jephthah’s reputation of being a mighty man of valor inclined the elders of Gilead to seek after his help when the children of Ammon made war with them.

2. Jephthah cannot believe that these elders, who had previously run him out of his own father’s house, are now coming to him to ask for his help during their time of distress.

C. “And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore are we turned again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight with the children of Ammon; and thou shalt be our head over all the
inhabitants of Gilead. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight with the children of Ammon, and Jehovah deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Jehovah shall be witness between us; surely according to thy word so will we do” (11:8-10).

1. The elders of Gilead request Jephthah to fight with Israel against Ammon and promise that if he will then he will be promoted to the head of Gilead.
2. Jephthah asks the elders again if this is true and they confirmed the promise.

D. “Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them: and Jephthah spake all his words before Jehovah in Mizpah. And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come unto me to fight against my land? And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when he came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon even unto the Jabbok, and unto the Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably” (11:11-13).

1. Jephthah sends messengers to the king of Ammon to asks why it is that they are come to war against Gilead.
2. The king of Ammon returns the dialogue to Jephthah saying that the reason for their war is that Israel had taken, by force, their land and now they want it back.

E. “And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon; and he said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah: Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon, but when they came up from Egypt, and Israel went through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh; then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land; but the king of Edom hearkened not. And in like manner he sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not: and Israel abode in Kadesh. Then they went through the wilderness, and went around the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and they encamped on the other side of the Arnon; but they came not within the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his border; but Sihon gathered all his people together, and encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And Jehovah, the God of Israel, delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. And they possessed all the border of the Amorites, from the Arnon even unto the Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto the Jordan. So now Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Jehovah our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess” (11:14-24).

1. Jephthah gives the king of Ammon a history lesson over what took place during the days that the Ammonites lost their land. Israel did not bring a fight to the people of Ammon but they brought it to Israel.
2. Jehovah God therefore dispossessed Ammon of their land. Jephthah then makes a memorable statement, “Wilt not thou possess that land which Chemosh thy god give thee to possess? So whomsoever Jehovah our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess.” Jephthah tells the king of Ammon that Jehovah God is greater than Chemosh and thereby they have no right to the land.

F. “And now art thou anything better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them? While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its towns, and in Aroer and its towns, and in all the cities that are along by the side of the Arnon, three hundred years: wherefore did ye not recover them within that time? I therefore have not sinned against thee, but thou dost me wrong to war against me: Jehovah, the Judge, be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him” (11:25-28).
1. Jephthah tells the king of Ammon that Israel has dwelt in this land for three hundred years now. Why is it that Ammon is just now wanting this land?

2. Jephthah concludes by saying that Israel had not sinned against Ammon but rather it is Ammon that is doing Gilead wrong by coming to war against a nation that was given a land by Jehovah God. Shall they fight against God’s sovereign rule?

G. “Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto Jehovah, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be Jehovah’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and Jehovah delivered them into his hand” (11:29-32).

1. The “Spirit of Jehovah” came over Jephthah in the same manner it came upon Othniel (Judges 3:8-11) and Gideon (Judges 6:33-35). To have the “Spirit of Jehovah” was to be endowed with divine revelation (cf. Numb. 11:26-30; 12:6-7) and apparent courage to stand against the foes of God.

2. Before going to war with the children of Ammon Jephthah makes a rash vow to God. Jephthah prays to God saying that if the Lord would deliver Ammon into his hand then he would offer, as a burnt offering, whatever came out of his house first to greet him upon return from the battle. The vow was rash in that Jephthah did not need to make such a vow. Gideon had asked for a sign to assure him that God was with him. Jephthah, rather than asking a sign, offers a gift to God for His favor in battle. God did not need Jephthah’s gift. God only wanted Israel’s obedience.

3. As the war was waged Jehovah delivered Ammon into his hands.

H. “And he smote them from Aroer until thou come to Minniath, even twenty cities, and unto Abelcheramim, with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house: and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back” (11:33-35).

1. Jephthah was not a man likened unto Abimelech. Jephthah was spiritually minded and prayed to God. Unfortunately, Jephthah’s prayer was a vow to God that proved to be heart wrenching. The first one to come out to meet Jephthah after returning from war was his only daughter. Who else did Jephthah think would come out (his wife or servants)? One must remember that Jephthah was a man who companioned with vain fellows and obviously lived a life contrary to God’s will before being asked to lead Israel. Jephthah, in order to secure victory against Ammon, was not beyond promising a human sacrifice to Jehovah for the victory as many heathen peoples did to the pagan god Moloch.

2. God had no where commanded Jephthah to do such a thing yet now that he promised it to God he was bound to keep his promise. The joy of his daughter dancing at the sight of her father coming home safely is quickly turned to heart wrenching tears. Jephthah, being a man of faith, will not go back on his promise to God.

I. “And she said unto him, My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto Jehovah; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee on thine enemies, even on the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may depart and go down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my companions. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew not man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year” (11:36-40).
1. The faith and love of Jephthah’s daughter causes even the casual reader to feel deep sorrow over the matter. Jephthah’s daughter is not even named yet she goes down in history as a young woman who loved God and loved her father.

2. Jephthah honors his only daughter’s request to spend two months “bewailing her virginity upon the mountains” with her friends. At the end of the two months she returns of her own free will and Jephthah offers her as a burnt offering unto Jehovah. No ram was caught in the thicket nor scape goat was offered. Jephthah’s daughter died never having known a man or having any children.

3. At the spur of the moment man may make rash vows to God yet how many times have these same men kept their promise? A great lesson to learn is that when man puts more upon himself than what God demands there can be nothing but heartaches and sorrows.

Chapter 12

I. Civil War Errupts between Ephraim and the Gileadites (12:1-7):

A. “And the men of Ephraim were gathered together, and passed northward; and they said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thy house upon the mountains because of the children of Ammon, and I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye saved me not out of their hand. And when I saw that ye saved me not, I put my life in my hand, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and Jehovah delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?” (12:1-3).

1. This part of the narrative indicates the closeness of Manasseh and Ephraim (brothers who apparently considered their lands as mutual ownership). At some point in the past Jephthah obviously requested Ephraim’s help in the war with Ammon yet Ephraim did not respond. Now, Ephraim claims to have been left out.

2. Jephthah rebukes his brethren for making such charges and exposes their error for not helping.

B. “Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim; and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye are fugitives of Ephraim, ye Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, and in the midst of Manasseh. And the Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites. And it was so, that, when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, Let me go over, the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, DglyphE[Ray then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth; for he could not frame to pronounce it right: then they laid hold on him, and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. And there fell at that time of Ephraim forty and two thousand” (12:4-6).

1. The battle between Ephraim and the men of Gilead (men who dwelt within Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben) took place with Ephraim being routed.

2. The Gileadites used pronunciation to determine Ephraimites from others.

C. “And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead” (12:7).

1. Jephthah dies after judging Israel six years.

2. Though Jephthah served Gilead revelation reveals him to be the judge over all Israel.

II. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon Judge Israel after Jephthah (12:8-15):

A. “And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel. And he had thirty sons; and thirty daughters he sent abroad, and thirty daughters he brought in from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. And Ibzan died, and was buried at Beth-lehem” (12:8-10).

1. Ibzan is recognized as the tenth judge to judge Israel after Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, and Jephthah.

2. Nothing is known of the saving work of Ibzan other than the fact that he had thirty sons and thirty daughters.

B. “And after him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. And Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun” (12:11-12).
1. **Elon** is the eleventh judge of Israel and there is not much of anything recorded about his saving work among the Israelites.

2. Elon judged Israel for ten years and then died.

C. “And after him **Abdon** the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty sons' sons, that rode on three score and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill-country of the Amalekites” (12:13-15).

1. **Abdon** is identified as the twelfth judge of Israel and once again there is not much recorded about his saving work in Israel.

2. After judging Israel for eight years Abdon died.

**Points to Ponder from Judges 10 – 12**

- **The mercy of God:** Judges 10:15-18 reveals the fact that Israel had participated in one of the greatest abominations to God; i.e., idolatry (see Ex. 20:3-4). Though this sin was grievous to God and was an indication of great spiritual sickness on their part God eventually is merciful to them. Too many people today believe that their sins are too great for God to forgive. Let us always remember that the only sin that God does not forgive one of is the sin he refuses to ask forgiveness of (see I Jn. 5:14-17).

- **The Christian’s Humility:** Israel’s repeated admission of their sins and willingness to get rid of the idols illustrated a spirit of humility (see Judges 10:10, 15-16). God’s mercy belonged to them only after they had displayed such a spirit. The same is true today. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of God” (Matt. 5:3). Those poor in spirit are those who have an humble disposition. The humble and contrite man is he who recognizes his error and is bothered by it to the point of feeling ashamed. This shameful and bothered approach to one’s sins is the “poor spirit” that God seeks out in those who would call themselves the saints of God (see Isa. 57:15; II Cor. 7:8-10).

- **Rash vows:** Why would Jephthah make a vow to offer whatever comes out of his house as a burnt offering if God would give him victory? No judge that had gained God’s favor before him had done such a thing. Why didn’t Jephthah just pray to God for victory or asks God for a sign as Gideon did? The answer is that Jephthah wanted the victory over the Amonites more than life itself and he saw this vow as a means to obtain his desires. The great lesson is that God’s favor bestowed upon man is never gained by my gifts to God but rather by my obedience to his will. I need not make rash vows or promises to God to obtain His favor I simply need to live a life of obedience. Sometimes we hear people saying, “I swear to God that this is so...” The Lord’s instruction to us regarding vows is that we would simply say yes and no and that our established integrity ought to be well enough (Matt. 5:33ff.).

**Chapter 13**

I. **Israel transgresses God’s will again and serves the Philistines 40 years (An Angel of God prophesies to Manoah’s wife regarding the birth of Sampson) (13 all):**

A. “And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah; and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head: and the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (13:1-5).

1. After the death of Abdon Israel once again falls into sin and out of favor with God. The Lord permits the Philistines to vex them for forty years. Forty years is a long time to be out of favor with God!
2. Revelation reveals the manner in which the next judge of Israel would come. An angel of the Lord appears to Manoah’s wife and instructs her that she will conceive a son. This child was to be sanctified from birth. Manoah’s wife is instructed not to drink any wine and neither was she to eat anything unclean because the child will be a Nazarite from birth. As a Nazarite, no razor was to come to his head (see Numbers 6:1-21). This Nazirite would be the next judge to save Israel from Philistine oppression.

B. “Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible; and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death. Then Manoah entreated Jehovah, and said, Oh, Lord, I pray thee, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and told her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: what shall be the ordering of the child, and how shall we do unto him?” (13:6-12).

1. Manoah’s wife told her husband all that the angel had told her about the son that she was to conceive that would save Israel from the Philistines.

2. Manoah reacts to the news by praying to God. His prayer was that the angel would come again and teach them more of what they are to do with this sanctified child. The Lord hears Manoah’s prayer and sends the angel once again that he may instruct them.

C. “And the angel of Jehovah said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; all that I commanded her let her observe. And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, I pray thee, let us detain thee, that we may make ready a kid for thee. And the angel of Jehovah said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wilt make ready a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto Jehovah. For Manoah knew not that he was the angel of Jehovah. And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, What is thy name, that, when thy words come to pass, we may do thee honor? And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful? So Manoah took the kid with the meal-offering, and offered it upon the rock unto Jehovah: and the angel did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar above the top of it: and Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of Jehovah did no more appear to Manoah or to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Jehovah. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If Jehovah were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meal-offering at our hand, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would at this time have told such things as these. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and Jehovah blessed him. And the Spirit of Jehovah began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol” (13:13-25).

1. The angel of Jehovah, once again, instructs Manoah’s wife not to drink from the vine nor eat anything unclean while she has the child within her.

2. Manoah attempts to detain the angel by offering him a meal yet the angel refuses the food.

3. Manoah then asks the angel for his name and the angel simply replies by saying, “it is wonderful.”

4. Once Manoah heard this he made a burnt offering unto the Lord and the angel “wondrously ascended in the flame of the altar into heaven.” Manoah and his wife fall to the ground in fear.
and awe and proclaim, “We have seen God.” Manoah and his wife now patiently await the birth of their son that has been divinely promised.

5. The son is eventually born and his parents name him Samson. Samson grows, God blesses him, and “the Spirit of Jehovah began to move him...”

6. Samson is unlike any judge that we have studied about to this point. He is one who has been divinely appointed from birth to save Israel from the Philistines.

Chapter 14

I. Samson’s Philistine Wife Deceives Him (14:1 all):

A. “And Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of Jehovah; for he sought an occasion against the Philistines.” (14:1-4).

1. The territory of the Philistines was located along the Mediterranean Sea west of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. The question as to whether or not Philistia was a part of Canaan that God prohibited His people of marrying is a difficult one. Joshua 13:1-3 infers that Philistia would be a part of Canaan that God intended Israel to take possession of. The problem with God providentially supplying a Philistine wife to Samson is that He had prohibited such actions at Deuteronomy 7:1-3. We know that Moses had married a Cushite woman yet this was not a woman of Canaan. The only explanation is that the marriage was providentially doomed before it began so that God may achieve His divine purpose of saving Israel from the Philistines.

2. The reading of Samson’s request for the Philistine woman seems to border spoiled brat characteristics. Yet once again, we read that this was “of Jehovah” and that the Lord was seeking “an occasion against the Philistines.”

B. “Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid; and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done” (14:5-6).

1. Here is an example of the Spirit of Jehovah coming upon one not to endow the individual with divine revelation (see Numbers 11:26ff) but rather to grant them extraordinary strength (see study # 10; The Sprit of Jehovah Upon Man).

2. Samson meets up with a young lion that came out against him and he ripped the animal apart with his bare hands. Surely Samson recognized something odd about this strength yet he chose to not tell his parents.

C. “And he went down, and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. And after a while he returned to take her; and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. And he took it into his hands, and went on, eating as he went; and he came to his father and mother, and gave unto them, and they did eat: but he told them not that he had taken the honey out of the body of the lion” (14:7-9).

1. Samson continues on his way to Timnah (a town of Judah that was very close to the Philistine border) to see the Philistine woman that he had fallen for.

2. After meeting with the woman Samson returns home confident that this is the woman for him and he sees the lion that he had killed. The body was filled with honey bees and honey. Samson takes the honey, eats it, and then gave some to his parents not telling them anything about the event.

D. “And his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast: for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, Let me now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can declare it unto
me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment; but if ye cannot declare it unto me, then shall ye give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth food, And out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days declare the riddle. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to impoverish us? Is it not so?"

1. Samson makes a great feast for the wedding and there presents a riddle to thirty Philistine men who had come to the feast. An agreement is made between Samson and the thirty men. If they can solve the riddle Samson would give them thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing if they can not then they will owe Samson.

2. Three days pass and the men have no idea what the meaning of the riddle was. They approach Samson’s wife and threaten her to find out the meaning of the riddle else they will burn her father’s house with fire.

E. “And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell thee? And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she pressed him sore; and she told the riddle to the children of her people. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, Ye had not found out my riddle. And the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and smote thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave the changes of raiment unto them that declared the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend” (14:15-20).

1. With the threats of burning her father’s house with fire before her Samson’s wife goes to work getting him to tell her the meaning of the riddle. Days go by with Samson’s wife nagging him, crying, and telling him how he doesn’t really love her because he has not told her everything. After days of heavy pressing Samson gives in and tells his wife the meaning of the riddle. Samson’s wife then tells the thirty men.

2. When the men tell Samson the meaning of the riddle he makes a memorable statement. Samson said, “If ye had not plowed with my heifer, Ye had not found out my riddle.” A man’s filed is his field as a man’s wife is his wife. No man belongs in the field of another man without trespassing and neither does another man belong talking with another man’s wife about things they have no business talking about without trespassing against him.

3. The “Spirit of Jehovah came upon Samson” once again and granted his great strength to go to the Philistine city Ashkelon where he killed thirty Philistine men and took their belongings and gave it to the thirty men that he had made the wager with. We must remember that God’s providential hand was in this entire event because “he sought an occasion against the Philistines” (see Judges 14:4). God was using Samson’s anger and vengeful spirit to accomplish His will as He had used the stubbornness and pride of Pharaoh’s heart when showing the world his power in Egypt (see Rom. 9:17).

4. Samson’s “anger was kindled” and would be made worse when he finds out that the woman’s father has given his Philistine wife to a friend. God will use the anger of Samson to destroy the Philistines.

Chapter 15

I. Samson takes out his anger on the Philistines (15 all):

A. “But it came to pass after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy
companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? Take her, I pray thee, instead of her. And Samson said unto them, This time shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I do them a mischief” (15:1-3).

1. After some time had passed Samson determines to see his wife. Samson’s anger toward his wife for telling the Philistines the meaning of the riddle had passed. Samson’s wife’s father; however, has in the meantime given the woman to another man because he thought Samson hated her.

2. Upon hearing that his wife has been given to another Samson said, “This time shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I do them a mischief.” Two things to note in this reply:
   a. First, Samson admits that his first tirade through Philistia was an error on his part.
   b. Secondly, his anger is once again kindled and he purposes to do the Philistines mischief. Samson is seeing red at this point.

B. “And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between every two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks and the standing grain, and also the oliveyards. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they said, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he hath taken his wife, and given her to his companion, And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire” (15:4-6).

1. Samson takes revenge upon the Philistine people as a whole for one man giving his wife away to another. Samson catches three hundred foxes, ties their tails together with fire, and releases them into the Philistine grain fields. The terrified foxes run throughout the fields and all is burned.

2. When the Philistines inquire as to who has done this deed it is told them that Samson did it because his wife had been taken away and given to another by the Timnite. The Philistines then, rather than going after Samson, go to his wife and her father’s house and burned the two alive (the father and Samson’s wife).

C. “And Samson said unto them, If ye do after this manner, surely I will be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam” (15:7-8).

1. Samson responds to the Philistines murdering his wife and father-in-law by words of vengeance. Samson reasoned that if the Philistines are so cruel as to do such a thing he will return their murderous work.

2. Samson single handedly “smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.” We are not told how many Philistines Samson killed but there must have been many for such a “great slaughter.”

D. “Then the Philistines went up, and encamped in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they said, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock” (15:9-13).

1. Though Samson sought to keep his strength a secret it was not so now. Three thousand men of Judah come to bind one man (he was indeed a “bad dude” and everyone knew it).

2. Samson permits the men of Judah to bind him based on one condition and that is that they would not kill him. They agreed and so bound him and delivered him to the Philistines.

3. Notice two important statements:
   a. The men of Judah have little to no faith in God nor His commandments. God had commanded that Philistia be taken by Israel and divided up among the twelve tribes (see
Josh. 13:1-7). At this date; however, the men of Judah say, “Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?” Judah’s doing the biding of the Philistines and making this remark indicates their fear and favor of Philistia over Jehovah God. Samson was not like minded with his brethren though.

b. Secondly, notice that the driving force with Samson is revenge. When the men of Judah asks him why he has taken the lives of so many Philistines he says, “As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.” While this may have a ring of ungodliness to us today it was not so in these early OT days. Moses wrote, “an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth... life for a life...” (see Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21). Interestingly, Jesus authoritatively changed this command while preaching the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:38-42). The kingdom of God today is spiritual rather than physical (see Rom. 14:17).

E. “When he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and the ropes that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands dropped from off his hands” (15:14).

1. This must have been a fearful sight. The three thousand men of Judah bring Samson bound in ropes to the Philistines. When they see Samson they shout out in a frenzy apparently desiring to see his blood flow upon the ground out of vengeance (see Judges 15:10).

2. While the Philistines are blood thirsty for revenge on Samson he too is anxious to meet them. “The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon” Samson and he throws off the ropes that held him. Two forces filled with vengeance are about to clash.

F. “And he found a fresh jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and smote a thousand men therewith. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men” (15:15-16).

1. Samson and the Philistines rush toward each other. Samson, being filled with the Spirit of God and strength, took the jawbone of an ass and killed 1,000 Philistines.

2. While Samson takes out his vengeance upon the Philistines, God is fulfilling his providential will regarding the Philistines rule over Israel (Remember Judges 13:5 where the angel of Jehovah said of Samson before he was born, “And he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”). Let us also remember that Jehovah’s providential hand has been involved in the initial marriage and death of Samson’s Philistine wife so that he would slay many Philistines and break their yoke over Israel (see Judges 14:4).

G. “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand; and that place was called Ramath-lehi. And he was sore athirst, and called on Jehovah, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised. But God clave the hollow place that is in Lehi, and there came water thereout: and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore the name thereof was called En-hakkore, which is in Lehi, unto this day. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years” (15:17-20).

1. After killing one thousand Philistines, Samson was very thirsty and called upon God that he might quench his thirst. Though Samson first states that, “I have smitten a thousand men” he now gives God the glory and credit for the great slaughter.

2. God granted the mighty man’s request and miraculously supplied him with water. Israel spent the next twenty years under the judgeship of Samson.

Lessons Learned from Judges 13-15

• The Providence of God: The word providence is defined as “care or preparation in advance; foresight.” God’s foresight in the demise of the Philistine yoke on Israel is depicted in these chapters. God sought an occasion against the Philistines to accomplish His will (see Judges 14:4). The occasion found its place in Samson’s doomed marriage with a Philistine woman. God used Samson’s intense anger and spirit of vengeance to accomplish His will much like He used the stubborness of Pharaoh to show forth His great might to the world (see Rom. 9:17) (see study # 11; Providence).
• **Revenge:** Samson’s anger and spirit of revenge is noted in Judges 15:7, 10-11. While revenge was once a lawful endeavor (see Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21) it is not so now. Jesus flexed his authority over the Mosaic Law by ending the law of vengeance and instituting the law of meekness (see Matt. 5:38-42). Revenge is useless today because God’s kingdom is spiritual rather than physical (Rom. 14:17). Though wicked men may harm us we are told to leave revenge up to God (Rom. 12:9; Heb. 10:30; II Thess. 1:4-10) (see study #12; Revenge).

• **Trust in marriage:** Samson’s wife violated their marital trust when she told the thirty Philistines the meaning of her husband’s riddle. Though she was threatened with death she should have told her husband everything that had taken place and let him handle it. No doubt Samson would have been willing to lay down his life for her like husbands today are told to do (see Eph. 5:25). When trust is violated in a marriage it is difficult, not impossible, to regain. The two must always remember that they are one flesh in the bond of marriage (Matt. 19:5) and are to love and trust each other (Eph. 5:22ff). Let no man (or woman) plow in the fields of another marital relationship (see Judges 14:18).

### Chapter 16

I. Samson’s Strength on Display to the Philistines (16:1-3):

A. “And Samson went to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, Let be till morning light, then we will kill him” (16:1-2).

1. How much time elapses between the end of chapter 15 and beginning of 16 is not revealed. Note the almost casual record of Samson’s fornication with a harlot. Once again, we take note that the word of God does not leave out the ugly parts of Bible character’s lives (we remember Samson’s vengeful tirade of murdering 30 Philistines and taking their belongings because he lost a bet).

2. Gaza was a Philistine town. It is clear that the Philistines continue to hold a very bitter taste in their mouth for Samson and will try to kill him at every opportunity they had. Surely Samson knows this yet he seems to have no fear whatsoever of these foes.

B. “And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron” (16:3).

1. Samson did not wait until the morning but rather gets up at midnight and goes to the gate of the city while apparently the waiting men had gone to sleep.

2. No doubt the gates of the city were shut and locked yet Samson, in a display of his divinely granted strength, pulled up the entire gate, with all its housing, and carries it to the top of a mountain near Hebron. Samson’s life reminds us of modern characters of fable such as Wild Bill Hicoek, Paul Bunyan, and John Henry.

II. Samson and Delilah (16:4-21):

A. “And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and with what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver” (16:4-5).

1. Samson picks some real winners to fall in love with. His first wife was easily persuaded to “entice” (Judges 14:15) the strong man of God as is Delilah.

2. Delilah’s enticement is much more heartless than Samson’s first wife. Samson’s first wife’s life and the life of her father was threatened while Delilah is simply bribed with money to do such a thing. Truly the “love money is the root of all kinds of evil” (see II Tim. 6:10).

B. “And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I become weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him
with them. Now she had liers-in-wait abiding in the inner chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a string of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known” (16:6-9).

1. Delilah goes to her wicked work out of greed and covetousness rather than love. She asks the strong man of God where the source of his strength lies and amazingly Samson does not argue with her but rather puts her to the test. Samson lies to her saying that his strength will be compromised if he is bound with “seven green withes that were never dried…” The “withes” were apparently bow strings that when green would be very strong. Samson permits Delilah to bind him with the seven ropes; however, when tested he easily breaks them.

2. Why did Samson continue to toy with Delilah? It may have been that he was blinded into a stupor of love and enamored by her beauty??? Samson should have been wise enough to see that she had something wicked up her sleeves.

C. “And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they only bind me with new ropes wherewith no work hath been done, then shall I become weak, and be as another man. So Delilah took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson. And the liers-in-wait were abiding in the inner chamber. And he brake them off his arms like a thread” (16:10-12).

1. Delilah accuses Samson of “mocking” her by lying about the source of his strength. Samson ought to have taken note of Delilah’s obsession with finding out the source of his strength yet he seems to be content to continue to play her game. Maybe he wanted to show off his strength to her???

2. Once again, Samson overcomes her attempts to bind him and is free.

D. “And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and plucked away the pin of the beam, and the web” (16:13-14).

1. Delilah, once again, accuses Samson of mocking her by telling her lies about his strength.

2. Samson continues to play her game. The third lie he tells Delilah is that the source of his strength can be harnessed by braiding seven locks of his hair. Delilah, of course, goes to work braiding his hair yet this too was not enough to bind his strength.

E. “And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, that his soul was vexed unto death. And he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon my head; for I have been a Nazirite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath told me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought the money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and shaved off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free. But he knew not that Jehovah was departed from him. And the Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house” (16:15-21).

1. Delilah, in a state of desperation, now turns to the universal great tool of the woman to get what she wants. When a woman doesn’t get what she wants she says, “You don’t love me” (see Judges 14:16). Such words vex a man’s inner will and eventually he gives in to the request.

2. Samson, after being sorely pressed by Delilah, tells her “all his heart.” Samson explains to her that if his head were to be shaved he would loose all his strength. Delilah knows that this is the truth, calls for a man to shave his head, and the Philistines come to him. Samson arises, as the
times before, yet this time his strength had gone (along with his God). The Philistines lay hold on Samson and gouge his eyes out. He is brought to Gaza and used as a slave to grind grain.

3. It is interesting to note that Delilah is no more mentioned from this point on in the word of God. She got what she wanted and was never heard from again.

4. Samson’s ignorance and trust in Delilah leads to his loosing favor with God (the Lord departed from him). Samson is rightfully viewed as foolish yet God’s providential will remains within our minds (see Judges 14:4). God has used the spirit of anger and vengeance in Samson to accomplish His will against the Philistines and he is not yet finished with His servant Samson.

III. Samson’s Last Stand (16:22-31):
A. “Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. And the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, who hath slain many of us” (16:22-24).

1. Samson’s foolishness had given way for the Philistines to boast of the greatness of their god Dagon. Samson is seen as a great man yet Dagon must be more powerful.

2. This is the first of many references to the Philistine god Dagon. “Dagon is generally represented as having the body or trunk of a fish, with a human head and hands, and as being the symbol of water and all the vivifying natural powers that take effect in warm countries through water” (New Unger’s Bible Dictionary pp. 487 / same source of picture).

3. To honor Dagon the Lord’s of the Philistines determine to make a sacrifice unto him in the presence of Samson.

B. “And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made sport before them. And they set him between the pillars: and Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house resteth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto Jehovah, and said, O Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years” (16:25-31).

1. The ignorance of the Philistines is amazing. They had found that Samson’s strength lie within his hair and, through neglect, permitted him to grow it back. They set him in a place where the strong man could do the most damage to all who were present to witness the sporting of Samson and sacrifice to Dagon (i.e., between two pillars that held up the entire stadium).

2. Samson makes his last request to God before he dies. Samson calls upon God to give him great strength one last time that “I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”

3. With a mighty push Samson brings down the entire stadium filled with Philistines and “the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life.”
4. Samson’s judgeship of Israel came to an end after twenty years. Note that at the end of chapter 15 the narrator reveals Samson’s 20 years of judging Israel and once again at the end of chapter 16.

**Lessons learned from the Life of Samson (Judges 13-16):**

- Samson’s good and bad virtues:
  - Samson had no fear of the enemy (Judges 15-16). Jesus displayed such a spirit as well (see Matt. 16:13-17). A fearless spirit will convict the world of their doom and perdition (see Phil. 1:27-28; 3:18-19). Samson also called upon the name of the Lord for water aid and one last bit of strength to destroy the Philistines.
  - Samson also had a bad side. Samson’s weakness seemed to be women and sensuality. Samson made a poor choice of women. First he chose a wife from the Philistines that disappointed him (Judges 14). Secondly, Samson chose a harlot (Judges 16:1ff). Lastly, Samson chose to fall for Delilah and is then destroyed. Samson also showed his flaws by murdering 30 men of the Philistines and taking what belonged to them to pay others that he had made a wager with. Samson’s own wickedness gave way to his own shame and the shame of God (see Judges 16:23-24).

**Chapter 17**

**Prelude to Study:**

After the death of Samson there are no more judges to discuss. Israel has no king at this time and they are without an authoritative figure (see Judges 17:6). The next two incidents discussed from Judges chapters 17-21 occur sometime during the days of the judges or shortly afterwards. The text introduces to us the beginnings of Jehovah worship through idols (see I Kings 12:25ff for Jeroboam’s sin). We are amazed when reading such words in light of our knowledge of God’s statements at Sinai regarding idols (see Ex. 20:4; Deut. 4:9-19). Let us recall that as you and I have the text before us and can read through a few thousand years at one setting these people in the text actually lived out their lives year by year. They had not only forgotten God’s laws but had put them away. While they clung to Jehovah by faith their actions did not make manifest their true desire to serve Him (Heb. 11:1ff). The theme of Judges appears to be that with each generation a new faith must be established within the mind by authoritative preaching and studying. God’s authoritative word had been long cast aside and man did “what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

I. **Micah and his neo-worship of Jehovah through Idols (17 all):**

A. “And there was a man of the hill-country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou didst utter a curse, and didst also speak it in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be my son of Jehovah. And he restored the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother; and his mother said, I verily dedicate the silver unto Jehovah from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. And when he restored the money unto his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and it was in the house of Micah” (17:1-4).

1. Micah, the Ephraimite, had apparently stolen 1,100 shekels of silver from his own mother for some unknown reason. When he had heard of her curse that she proclaimed he decided to admit that he had taken and give it back to her.

2. Micah’s mother was joyous over her son’s admission and restoration of the money and decided to take 200 pieces of silver and have a goldsmith make a “graven image and a molten image” that would be a representation of Jehovah.

3. Such introduction illustrates how far God’s people had gone from his authorized will.
B. “And the man Micah had a house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated
one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did
that which was right in his own eyes” (17:5-6).

1. Micah had a house of gods. He constructed an ephod and a teraphim (an image of a Semitic
household idol / AHD 1254). Micah made one of his sons (an Ephraimite) priest over his house
of gods. All such work came in the mind of Micah for he, and many others, “did that which
was right in his own eyes.”

2. Interestingly, we find the exact things occurring with Jeroboam, king of Israel, during the early
days of the divided kingdom (see I Kings 12:31, 33).

C. “And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite;
and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city, out of Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn
where he could find a place, and he came to the hill-country of Ephraim to the house of Micah, as
he journeyed. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite
of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him,
Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten pieces of silver by the
year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content
to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated
the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah,
Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest” (17:7-13).

1. Seems odd that so many people even today want so desperately to be accepted by God and to
find His good favor (i.e., grace); however, they just will not do what He has commanded.

2. A young Levite man comes to Micah’s house. Micah makes a proposal to the young Levite.
The agreement would be that Micah would pay the Levite 10 pieces of silver per year if he
would serve as a priest in his house. The Levite agrees and Micah is very excited. Micah
proclaims, “Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.”

a. Micah has completely disregarded God’s commands regarding making a lifeless image to
represent Jehovah God (see Deut. 4:9-19).

b. Though Micah has set aside God’s commandments he believes that God will be pleased
with him because he now has a Levite priest. While Micah has acknowledged God’s will
regarding the Levite priesthood he has rejected God’s will regarding idols. How can such a
one conclude that God will be pleased? James tells us that if we violate one part of the law
we have become guilty of it all (see James 2:10ff).

Chapter 18

I. The Danites conquer Laish and rename it Dan (18 all):
A. “In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an
inheritance to dwell in: for unto that day their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the
tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their whole number,
men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said
unto them, Go, search the land. And they came to the hill-country of Ephraim, unto the house of
Micah, and lodged there” (18:1-2).

1. Zorah and Eshtaol were Danite cities that lie due South of Ephraim. The Danites had at this
time been forced to dwell in the mountains by the Amorites (see Judges 1:34). Though God
had commanded Israel to exterminate the Canaanites, the Danites (and other tribes) shamefully
acted as cowards and retreated to the mountains.

2. The Danites travel into Ephraim to search out land that they may dwell in because they were
too week in faith to exterminate the Canaanites. Their cowardly travels take them over 100
miles to the north (out of Canaanite territory). The Canaanites had apparently struck terror into
the hearts of these men.

B. “When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite; and they
turned aside thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? And what doest thou in this
place? And what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus hath Micah dealt with me,
and he hath hired me, and I am become his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before Jehovah is your way wherein ye go” (18:3-6).

1. The five Danite men come to the house of Micah for rest and find a Levite. They are somewhat amazed to find a Levite in the country of Ephraim.

2. The Danites show their ignorance of God’s laws regarding idolatry in that not only do they accept the Levite as a priest in the house of idols but they ask council of him supposing that Jehovah will answer him.

C. “Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; for there was none in the land, possessing authority, that might put them to shame in anything, and they were far from the Sidonians, and had no dealings with any man. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? And they said, Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? Be not slothful to go and to enter in to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and the land is large; for God hath given it into your hand, a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth” (18:7-10).

1. Laish is far to the north. These five men would have had to travel through Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, and even Naphtali to get to this extreme northern territory that was apparently occupied by a colony of Sidonians.

2. The Danites return to their cities with good reports of the land far north that has not many fighting men and neither is their any cities close that may help in the event of a surprise attack. The Danites believe that “God hath given it into their hand.” Again we find faulty faith that is not based upon the Lord’s will. God had given the land south and west of Ephraim to Dan and commanded that they possess it. Dan; however, travels completely out of Canaan to find easier land to possess. Has God truly given the land to Dan?

3. The five spies proclaim, “Arise, and let us go up against them... we have seen the land... it is large... there is no want of anything... be not slothful...” Does this sound familiar? We read similar statements at Numbers 13:25 – 14:3 when Joshua and Caleb tried to convince Israel that Canaan was a good land and that they should take it. Why is it ok to be slothful in following God’s command regarding taking Canaan and not so with taking the land the people of Dan wanted? Their reasoning is faulty and not based upon the Lord’s will.

D. “And there set forth from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men girt with weapons of war. And they went up, and encamped in Kiriath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan, unto this day; behold, it is behind Kiriath-jearim. And they passed thence unto the hill-country of Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah. Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do. And they turned aside thither, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare. And the six hundred men girt with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men girt with weapons of war. And when these went into Micah's house, and fetched the graven image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image, the priest said unto them, What do ye? And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be priest unto the house of one man, or to be priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people” (18:11-20).

1. Six hundred men of war come out of Dan to the house of Micah and Micah’s priest. The children of Dan consider Micah’s idol, the ephod, and teraphim, and graven image of great importance in relation to Jehovah’s favor.
2. They request that the Levite priest go with them and be a priest and father over a whole tribe of people rather than one man (i.e., Micah). The ambitious priest agrees and together they take all of Micah’s idols and implements of worship.

E. “So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the goods before them. When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? And he said, ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more? and how then say ye unto me, What aileth thee? And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house” (18:21-26).

1. Dan leaves with the priests and goods from the house of Micah. Micah then pursues the Danites and overtakes them.

2. Micah request that the Danites give the idols and priests back; however, the Danites threaten him with death if he speaks more of the matter. Micah gives in and lets them go.

F. “And they took that which Micah had made, and the priest whom he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword; and they burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob. And they built the city, and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first. And the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set them up Micah's graven image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh” (18:27-31).

1. The Danites achieve their purpose. They travel over 100 miles north and take the city of Laish and rename it Dan.

2. The identity of the Levite priest is now revealed as Jonathan, grandson of Moses. We are made to gasps at such news yet again it proves that in each generation faith must be produced within the hearts of each man. We will not ride our father’s or grandfather’s coat-tail into heaven.

3. This neo-Jehovah worship with idols continued all the while that the house of God remained at Shiloh. Remember, Joshua and the whole congregation of Israel, had set up the tent of meeting in Shiloh as recorded at Joshua 18:1.

Lessons over Judges 17 x 18

- Unauthorized Worship: God had forbid idolatry in any form and had specifically named the Levites as priests. Micah violates both of these established principles by erecting idols for the Lord and naming his son, an Ephraimite, as priest. Furthermore, Micah had knowledge of God’s will for the priesthood and is happy when he does find a Levite to serve as priest in his house of idols. He erroneously concludes, “Now I know Jehovah will do me good…” ( Judges 17:13). Only a fool could be so deluded as to think that he could reject some of God’s laws and accept others and be received of God in good standing (see James 2:10ff).

Our worship to God is important to Him and must be done by His authoritative instruction (see Jn. 4:23-24). God has never accepted unauthorized worship at the hands of sinners (see Isa. 1:11ff; Jer. 6:20; Amos 4:4; 5:21-24). Those who do what seems right in their own eyes have no favor with the Lord (Judges 17:6; Col. 2:23; II Jn. 9-11).

- Each Generation must come to their own Faith: No man will ride the coattail of his father or Grandfather into heaven. While Moses was a very convicted and great man of God his grandson was not anything like him (see Judges 18:30). While each parent, and especially the father (see Eph. 6:1ff), is responsible for rearing their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord it is ultimately up to that child to accept and maintain authorized religious practices throughout their lives. Conviction must be instilled and nurtured.
within children early. The child will one day stand alone, apart from their parents, and they will have to take up the banner of the cross in all faithfulness.

- **Religious Confusion:** “It is estimated that more than 10,000 separate religions are being practiced in the world today. Within Christianity alone, there are said to be more than 30,000 different denominations” (World Religions; Annual Editions 03 / 04 pp. iv). Micah illustrates such confusion by setting up idols to worship God and by finding a Levite priest and concluding that God would now be pleased with him (see Judges 17:13). There is one Lord and only one prescribed way of serving Him (Eph. 4:1ff).

Chapter 19

I. The Filthiness of the Benjaminites (19 all):

A. “And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the farther side of the hill-country of Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. And his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there the space of four months. And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak kindly unto her, to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there” (19:1-4).

1. Sometime during the days of the judges, when there was no king in Israel, this event took place. A Levite man takes a concubine as a wife and she cheats on him. She leaves her Levite husband and goes home for four months. The Levite forgives her and comes to her father’s house to reclaim her.

2. A concubine was “a secondary or inferior wife...concubinage substantially appeared when Abraham took Hagar as a sort of wife, by whom Sarah hoped he would have children—to be reckoned, in some sense, as her own, and to take rank as proper members of the family (Gen. 16:1-3)...In Judges 19 the possessor of a concubine was called her “husband,” her father is called the “father-in-law,” and he the “son-in-law,” showing how nearly the concubine approached to the wife” (The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary pg. 251). “A concubine would generally be either (1) a Hebrew girl bought of her father; (2) a Gentile captive taken in war; (3) a foreign slave bought; or (4) a Canaanitish woman, bond or free. The rights of the first two were protected by the law, Ex. 21:7; Deut. 21:10-14; but the third was unrecognized and the fourth prohibited” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary pg. 122). “A female slave regarded as part of the Israelite family, generally designated as bearing children. She might be taken in debt or purchased from a poor Israelite family or taken captive in war (II Sam. 5:13)...In addition to providing offspring and sexual activity (Eccl. 2:8), concubines were responsible for care of the house (II Sam. 15:16; 16:21; 20:3). Although the concubine was a slave, it is not clear whether a woman’s maidservant, given to a man to provide male offspring (Gen. 16:1ff; 30:3; 31:9), was regarded as a concubine” (ISBE; Vol. 1; pg. 758).

B. “And it came to pass on the fourth day, that they arose early in the morning, and he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Strengthen thy heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward ye shall go your way. So they sat down, and did eat and drink, both of them together: and the damsel's father said unto the man, Be pleased, I pray thee, to tarry all night, and let thy heart be merry. And the man rose up to depart; but his father-in-law urged him, and he lodged there again. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart; and the damsel's father said, Strengthen thy heart, I pray thee, and tarry ye until the day declineth; and they did eat, both of them. And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day growtheth to an end, lodge here, that thy heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus (the same is Jerusalem): and there were with him a couple of asses saddled; his concubine also was with him.
When they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside into the city of a foreigner, that is not of the children of Israel; but we will pass over to Gibeah. And he said unto his servant, Come and let us draw near to one of these places: and we will lodge in Gibeah, or in Ramah. So they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them near to Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin” (19:5-14).

1. The Levites’ visit went well at his concubine’s father’s house. The concubine’s father was very hospitable and urged the Levite to remain for five days.

2. After taking their leave, the Levite and concubine come to Gibeah a city within the border of Benjamin. They could have gone to Jebus, a Jebusite city; however, the Levite would not go among strangers that were not Israelites.

C. “And they turned aside thither, to go in to lodge in Gibeah: and he went in, and sat him down in the street of the city; for there was no man that took them into his house to lodge. And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even: now the man was of the hill-country of Ephraim, and he sojourned in Gibeah; but the men of the place were Benjamites. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the wayfaring man in the street of the city; and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem-judah unto the farther side of the hill-country of Ephraim; and from thence am I, and I went to Beth-lehem-judah: and I am now going to the house of Jehovah; and there is no man that taketh me into his house. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man that is with thy servants: there is no want of anything. And the old man said, Peace be unto thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into his house, and gave the asses fodder; and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink” (19:15-21).

1. As the Levite traveled into Gibeah of Benjamin there was no one that acted hospitable to them and so they sat in the street with no where to go.

2. An older man from Ephraim came in from working in the field and invited them to stay with him.

D. “As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain base fellows, beset the house round about, beating at the door; and they spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thy house, that we may know him. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, I pray you, do not this folly: seeing that this man is come into my house, do not this folly. Behold, here is my daughter a virgin, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not any such folly” (19:22-24).

1. A series of unfortunate events at the hands of wicked men now occur to the Levite and his concubine. The Benjaminites come to the old man’s house demanding to “know” the Levite. The same Hebrew word is found in Leviticus 18:22ff and its Greek equivalent in Romans 1:27. The men of Benjamin wanted to have homosexual relations with the Levite. The old man; however, pleads with them not to do such a wicked act. He offers his own virgin daughter and the Levites concubine to satisfy their sexual lusts.

2. Why would a father be willing to give up his own daughters to an angry sexually aroused crowd? The event reminds us of a time when the two angels visited Sodom and Gomorrah that they may find ten righteous souls and save the cities. Once the angels come to Lot’s house in Sodom; however, the wicked men of the city demanded that they come out and have sex with them (see Gen. 19:1-8). Lot also offers his daughters to the lustful crowd of men rather than permitting them to violate his male guest. One explanation may be that there was an overall lower view of women under the Mosaic System. Under the Law of Christ there is no distinction in the eyes of God regarding men and women in His kingdom (see Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 3:7). The entire reading is difficult to fathom yet the ungodly have done worse crimes throughout history.

E. “But the men would not hearken to him: so the man laid hold on his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning; and when the
day began to spring, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell
down at the door of the man’s house where her lord was, till it was light. And her lord rose up in
the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way; and, behold, the
woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, with her hands upon the threshold.
And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going; but none answered: then he took her up upon the
ass; and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. And when he was come into his house, he
took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces,
and sent her throughout all the borders of Israel. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no
such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt
unto this day: consider it, take counsel, and speak” (19:25-30).

1. The story before us is graphic, base, and evil. These Benjaminites had crossed the line of
bad to down right nastiness and vicious inhuman sadistic cruel filthiness. The old man saw
their intent and threw the concubine to them to satisfy their dangerous lust. The Benjaminites
abuse the woman all night and in the morning release her just before she dies.

2. The Levite, her lord, arises in the morning to leave the base city and finds his dead concubine
on the porch. His heart must have been ripped out of his chest seeing that he obviously had
loving feelings for the woman. He takes the concubine to his home. The Levite then takes a
knife and cuts her into twelve pieces. Each of the twelve pieces of the woman are sent to the
twelve tribes of Israel. When the people of each tribe saw the twelfth part of the woman they
were horrified and could not believe what had taken place.

Chapter 20

I. Benjamin is nearly annihilated for protecting the Lewd Men (20 all):

A. “Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was assembled as one man, from
Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto Jehovah at Mizpah. And the chiefs of all the
people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God,
four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the
children of Israel were gone up to Mizpah.) And the children of Israel said, Tell us, how was this
wickedness brought to pass? And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was murdered,
answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.
And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about me by night; me they
thought to have slain, and my concubine they forced, and she is dead. And I took my concubine,
and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel; for they
have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. Behold, ye children of Israel, all of you, give here
your advice and counsel” (20:1-7).

1. The shocking manner in which the Levite cut his concubine in twelve pieces had its desired
effect. All Israel was roused at this filthy deed of the Benjaminites. Israel assembles as one
man at Mizpah to discuss the matter with the Levite (notice that no representative of Benjamin
is there).

2. The Israelitish chiefs ask the Levite to tell them what took place that awful day. The Levite
rehearses the events and then asks the advice of these chiefs seeing that these men of Benjamin
have “committed lewdness and folly in Israel.”

B. “And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we
any of us turn unto his house. But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah: we will go up
against it by lot; and we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a
hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victuals for the people, that
they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have
wrought in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.
And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this
that is come to pass among you? Now therefore deliver up the men, the base fellows, that are in
Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But Benjamin would not
hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel” (20:8-13).
1. All of Israel is charged and outraged at the act of these base men in Benjamin. They arise as one man in unity against this atrocious act of folly and demand that Benjamin hand over the base fellows who wrought this folly. Israel’s desire was to put the wicked men to death “that we may put away evil from Israel.” Benjamin; however, would not listen to their brethren.

2. Benjamin should have been just as appalled at the story they had heard regarding the wicked deed that took place; however, they are ready to protect these filthy men. Benjamin had lost its identity among God’s people and were not rather repulsed at sin as God had commanded (see Deut. 7:26). Benjamin goes so far as to protect these wicked men and are willing to die for them. Sometimes family is more important to men than God’s laws (see Matt. 10:36-38).

C. “And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. And the children of Benjamin were numbered on that day out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who were numbered seven hundred chosen men. Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss. And the men of Israel, besides Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war. And the children of Israel arose, and went up to Beth-el, and asked counsel of Jehovah: and they said, Who shall go up for us first to battle against the children of Benjamin? And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up first. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and set the battle in array against them at Gibeah.” (20:14-19).

1. It is important to note that God was with Israel and not Benjamin on this occasion. Israel consoles God and He tells Judah to go up against Benjamin first.

2. Benjamin is far outnumbered and the Lord is not on their side. To take up arms against the Lord and their brethren was a great sign of foolishness on their part. Their mind was far removed from the service of Jehovah.

D. “And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel set the battle in array against them at Gibeah. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites on that day twenty and two thousand men. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set the battle again in array in the place where they set themselves in array the first day. And the children of Israel went up and wept before Jehovah until even; and they asked of Jehovah, saying, Shall I yet go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And Jehovah said, Go up. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto Beth-el, and wept, and sat there before Jehovah that day until even; and they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before Jehovah. And the children of Israel asked of Jehovah (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And Jehovah said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver him into thy hand. And Israel set liers-in-wait against Gibeah round about” (20:20-29).

1. Israel has done nothing wrong. They have asked Benjamin to hand over the wicked men that they may be put to death and that their wickedness would be removed from Israel. Benjamin is in the wrong; however, Benjamin gets the better of Israel for two straight days of battle. Benjamin kills 40,000 Israelites.

2. Israel, after each of the two days of battle, confers with Jehovah as they weep unto him. One final time Israel consults with the Lord and He tells them that now He will deliver Benjamin into their hands.

E. “And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and set themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite and kill of the people, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to Beth-el, and the other to Gibeah, in the field, about thirty men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten.
down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them away from the city unto the highways. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and set themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers-in-wait of Israel brake forth out of their place, even out of Maareh-geba. And there came over against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore; but they knew not that evil was close upon them. And Jehovah smote Benjamin before Israel; and the children of Israel destroyed of Benjamin that day twenty and five thousand and a hundred men: all these drew the sword” (20:30-35).

1. Once again, on the third day of battle, Israel goes out against Benjamin. The men of Benjamin begin to once again defeat Israel. The Israelites flee to the highways and then ten thousand men enter the city of Gibeah and destroy the Benjaminites.

2. The book of Judges records, “And Jehovah smote Benjamin before Israel.” When the smoke of the battle cleared there were twenty five thousand men of Benjamin that had been killed (in all 65,000 Israelites lost their lives in this civil war).

F. “So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten; for the men of Israel gave place to Benjamin, because they trusted unto the liers-in-wait whom they had set against Gibeah. And the liers-in-wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers-in-wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers-in-wait was, that they should make a great cloud of smoke rise up out of the city. And the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons; for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle. But when the cloud began to arise up out of the city in a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them; and, behold, the whole of the city went up in smoke to heaven. And the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were dismayed; for they saw that evil was come upon them. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle followed hard after them; and they that came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst thereof. They inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trod them down at their resting-place, as far as over against Gibeah toward the sunrising. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valor. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men, and followed hard after them unto Gidom, and smote of them two thousand men. So that all who fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valor. But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men, and followed hard after them unto Gidom, and smote of them two thousand men. So that all who fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valor. But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon, and abode in the rock of Rimmon four months. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city, and the cattle, and all that they found: moreover all the cities which they found they set on fire” (20:36-48).

1. The sign for Israel was the smoke rising out of Gibeah. Once they saw this they moved on the offence against the men of Benjamin and soundly defeated them. Israel “trod them down.”

2. Once all the slaughter of war was over Israel turns upon the cities of Benjamin and destroys their cities, cattle, and burned them with fire.

Chapter 21

I. Benjamin saved from Extermination (21 all):

A. “Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. And the people came to Beth-el, and sat there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore. And they said, O Jehovah, the God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?” (21:1-3).

1. The timing of the events in these last chapters of Judges appears to be at a time when Israel was in good standing with God. The Lord hears their prayers and advises them.

2. Israel determines not to give any of their daughters to the perverted Benjaminites.

3. Israel asks Jehovah the question of the ages, “Why is this come to pass that one tribe be lacking in Israel?” Recall that the angel of Jehovah had earlier in our study asked Israel why they had not followed his commands to utterly destroy the Canaanites (see Judges 2:2). Why do men not
do what God commands? At Judges 2 we gave six reasons why people sin. We attribute two of those reasons here and add one more. First, Benjamin sinned because they were drawn away from righteousness by their lusts (James 1:13ff). Secondly, Benjamin sinned because they did not share God’s hatred for sin (see Deut. 7:26; Rom. 12:9). Lastly, Benjamin sinned because they loved their family relationships more than they loved God (see Matt. 10:36-38).

B. “And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up in the assembly unto Jehovah? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up unto Jehovah to Mizpah, saying, He shall surely be put to death. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day” (21:4-6).

1. Israel had risen as one man against Benjamin for their lewdness and folly (see Judges 20:1, 8).
2. Israel had recognized the importance of being united against wickedness. All those who did not share a hatred for sin against Jehovah were “cut off from Israel this day.” Likewise, all those who do not share a love of God and hatred for sin today must be withdrawn from lest they pervert the entire church of Jesus Christ. Paul said a little leaven will leaven the whole lump (I Cor. 5:6).

C. “How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by Jehovah that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up unto Jehovah to Mizpah? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. For when the people were numbered, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones. And this is the thing that ye shall do: ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had not known man by lying with him; and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan” (21:7-12).

1. Another group of people that did not share an equal hatred for the folly of Benjamin was the people of Jabesh-gilead.
2. Israel kills all the men, women who had been married, and children yet they find 400 virgins. These four hundred women would be given to Benjamin, out of an act of compassion, that they be not exterminated.

D. “And the whole congregation sent and spake to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace unto them. And Benjamin returned at that time; and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that Jehovah had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that are escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not blotted out from Israel. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters, for the children of Israel had sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. And they said, Behold, there is a feast of Jehovah from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. And they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch ye every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And there shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come to complain unto us, that we will say unto them, Grant them graciously unto us, because we took not for each man of them his wife in battle, neither did ye give them unto them, else would ye now be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they carried off: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and built the cities, and dwelt in them. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence.
every man to his inheritance. *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (21:13-25).

1. The six hundred men of Benjamin who had escaped the edge of the sword in the battle remained at the rock of Rimmon.
2. Israel is not of the mind to see the tribe of Benjamin be exterminated (the six hundred men were all that remained of Benjamin... everyone else; i.e., men, women, and children had been destroyed).
3. To resolve the problem of Benjamin’s potential extermination Israel destroys Jabesh-Gilead for not helping with the battle against the Benjaminites. There are four hundred virgins saved and all else are killed. These women were given to Benjamin; however, two hundred remained without a wife. The chiefs of Israel advise the Benjaminites to take by force women of Shiloh so that their vow may remain.
4. The book ends with the words, “*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*.”

**Lessons Learned from chapters 19-21**

- Brethren ought to prefer one another and expect the best from each other (Rom. 12:10-11). The traveling Levite expected the better of his brethren; however, received the worst of treatment (see Judges 19:11).
- NT places equal value upon men and women (Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 3:7).
- Our study began with the statement, “*In those days there was no king in Israel*” (Judges 19:1) and the book ends with the statement, “*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). We also saw these statements in previous chapters of our study (see Judges 17:6; 18:1). God was to be king (see I Sam. 8:4ff) over a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). The laws that were to govern this kingdom were from God alone (Ex. 20:1ff). To do that which is right in one’s own eyes is to reject the authoritative word of God (Jude 1:5ff), to set oneself up as a god (II Thess. 2:1ff), to place the value of your opinions (Matt. 15:8-9; I Cor. 2:9; II Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:11-12) and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15; James 4:15-17) above revelation, and to permit your personal conviction to overshadow truth (Rom. 14 all). Every Christian is commanded to guard truth’s purity as the one true standard separate from man’s opinions and religious ideas (II Tim. 1:12-13).
- Lastly, we are once again left to ponder why it is that man sins (see Judges 21:3 / see also Judges 2:2). At Judges 2:2 we gave six reasons for people sinning and here we add one more (i.e., people sin because they value friends, family, or even the things of this world above the law of God / see Matt. 10:36-38).