



**Forum Terrace Church of Christ**  
**2024 Summer Bible Series**  
**Saturday, August 10**

Adult Workbook By Daniel R. Vess



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## Early Judges & Deborah, The Lady Judge

**Text: Judges 2:10-19 - 4:1-5:31**

One of the greatest sins against your fellow man in the opinion of today's society is to judge them. The most popular verse seems to be Matthew 7:1. This is where Jesus says "*Judge not that you be not judged.*" However, in the very context of this statement is the command to judge but without hypocrisy.

Yet, there was a period of time in the history of Israel when judges were not just popular with the people but prayerfully sought and divinely given. These men and a woman were more than trusted sources of guidance but governing and leading the people back to God. Some were involved as military leaders and subduing Israel's enemies. In this way the judges served as saviors and deliverers.

In Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25 the readers of this book of God are reminded this was a period without a king and twice it is added: "*every man did what was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 17:6, 21:25). People need government. God sets up and brings down nations and has never encouraged anarchy even in times of evil governments.

Historically the book of Judges gives us a picture of what happens when the people are left without God appointed guides. The pattern of this period is seen throughout the near 400 years of this period of the Judges. First, the people lose their judge or leader (as in the case of Joshua). Next, they turn to idols and sin against God. Third, God judges them by sending an enemy nation(s) to oppress them. Fourth, the people cry out to God for deliverance. God responds by sending a judge to deliver the people from their enemies. This is followed by a period of peace. And finally, the judge dies and the cycle starts all over again. The American philosopher George Santayana is credited with the observation. "He who does not learn from history is condemned to repeat it." Therefore we have history cycling through judges. Let's take a closer look at the pattern.

### **Rest**

- **Failure of a New Generation**

When running a relay race a baton is passed from one runner to the next. If a certain team drops the baton, the race most likely is lost. Why do some generations reject the righteousness of the previous one? The answer may be as simple as the failure to pass along the baton of faith and devotion from one generation to the next. The generation under Joshua continued to conquer most of the promise land. The people experienced a period of peace and rest. "*So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel*" (Judges 2:7). "*When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel*" (Judges 2:10).

When Israel was fighting uphill to take the strongholds in Canaan, they were strong and faithful. Once they started to take it easy and coast downhill, they lost control and fell into idolatry. Delighting in the blessings of the Promise Land they soon forgot God who put them there in the first place.

- **Failure to Finish the Job**

The failure to completely drive out the pagans from the land resulted in these wicked neighbors becoming stumbling blocks (Jug. 1:21-2:5). Because they did not obey God by finishing the job, He said, "*I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you*" (Judges 2:3). When men morally and spiritually stop moving forward, they tend to drift backward. Serving God is like flying an airplane, if you stop, you drop.

- **Failure to Remember God's Deliverance**

As the years went by and the past generations began to die they forgot how God delivered them from Egypt, the wilderness, and the inhabitants of the land. They soon forgot the deliverance by a previous judge. *"Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side"* (Judges 8:34). Never forget the one who saved you.

## Rebellion

- ◆ **Evil Companions**

Next, came what can be called the "Canaanization of Israel". Their evil neighbors corrupted their good morals (1 Cor. 15:33) and led them to conform to the pagan world (Rom. 12:1-2). *"They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths"* (2:13). This was often initiated by inter-marrying with these forbidden nations. *"And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods"* (Judges 3:6).

- ◆ **A Progressively Permissive Society**

When the Israelites followed the Baals they adopted the pagan standards of immorality. Without the discipline of the Law of Moses a progressively permissive generation will emerge in short order. In Judges the people will be conquered by the very people they were to conquer. With each passing generation it would become harder and harder to tell the Israelites apart from the Canaanites.

## Retribution

- ▶ **God Warned Them**

Over and over God warned them of the dangers of conforming to the idolatry of the world. He said, *"you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice"* (Judges 2:2b). You can choose to listen and obey or you will be rebuked and punished.

- ▶ **God Left Them**

Because they left God for false gods, God left them. *"And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies"* (Judges 2:14). God had been their Defender and was now their Disciplinarian.

- ▶ **God Disciplined Them**

In Judges chapter three idolatrous Israel was punished by an invasion from Mesopotamia, and oppressed for eight years. They would effectively lose the land by running into the hills. The blessings of the land were plundered, their homes pillaged, and their wives and children often enslaved.

- ▶ **God Their Enemy**

The outcome of Israel's compromise was the shocking reality that their real enemy became God Himself. However, they started the enmity with God. Man will start fight with God and God will always be the one who finishes them.

## Repentance

When the people repented *"the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them"* (Judges 2:18b). Their "groaning" showed that the punishment had done its work. True repentance involves godly sorrow with the sinner turning away from his evil ways and turning back to God.

## Rescuer

In time we find God raising judges to deliver His people from oppression. For example, there was *Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel"* (Judges 3:31). In addition to Shamgar as judge there was Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, and finally Samuel. No two of them were alike. These judges were raised up indiscriminately from different tribes. They belonged to different ranks, and were of different occupations. One of them was a woman. They were chosen by God not the people. The book of Hebrews claims some of them as heroes of "faith".

## **Restoration**

Although Israel would lose control of the Promise Land by their sins, the Judge would deliver them from oppression and the land would return to their control and use. This period of oppression was akin to being exiled in their own land by fleeing to the mountains or caves or even ships.

## **Revival & Rest**

By God's deliverance and the judge's guidance, Israel is led back to a life of fellowship with Him. First, Caleb's younger brother, Othniel, delivered Israel from Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia after eight years of oppression giving them rest for forty years (Judges 3:11). Then "*Israel again did evil*" so God sent Eglon king of Moab to oppress them for eighteen years. God sent Ehud to kill Eglon and then came eighty years of rest. "*After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel. When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord*" (Judges 3:31;4:1). Returning back to God and enjoying peace would only last a generation or two.

## **Recycle**

Judges 2:16-19 serves as a summary of the next four centuries of the reoccurring historical pattern of Israel. The recycle restarted with death of the Judge. "*And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way*" (Judges 2:19). As is the old saying: "When the cat's away, the mice play." They returned to the idols once more.

## **Applications: How Can I Break the Cycle**

What can be done to break such a cycle of rest, ruin, and rescue? First, teach the next generation to know God. Remember, God has no grandchildren. The church is always one generation away from apostasy. Israel failed to remove Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. This only led to evil companions corrupting righteous habits. So remove all sin as far away as possible (see Matthew 5:29-30). Next, one must keep in mind true repentance must begin in the heart resulting in a change of direction. Finally, trust not in your own understanding and strength to save you. It is by the will and power of God one is punished for sin and it is by our personal failures that we are enslaved to sin. So, trust in God's power to deliver. Gideon teaches us this lesson.

## **Deborah: The Lady Judge**

After many years of peace and at the death of the judge Ehud, Israel turns back to idols. This time God raises up an enemy in their own backyard to oppress them. It is Jabin, King of Hazor. Jabin appears to be a dynastic name like Abimelech of the Philistines or Ben-Hadad of Damascus. Hazor was ten miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Jabin sent out the commander of his army, Sisera from Harosheth Haggoyim. It was ten miles north and west of Megiddo. Sisera had nine hundred iron chariots at his command. These were the ancient tanks of which Israel had none. They did not even have a spear or shield among 40,000 in Israel. Israel was sore oppressed and turned to God after twenty years. God has a judge in Israel: Deborah. She summons Barak from Kedesh in Naphtali. He is to gather an army of ten thousand at Mount Tabor to meet the Canaanites. When the armies are gathered God sends a storm and a torrent of flood waters down the Kishon. Barak attacks down the mountain and destroys all the army of Sisera. Sisera leaves his mud-stuck chariot to flee on foot. He comes to the house of Heber, a Kenite who has made peace with King Jabin. The wife of Heber, Jael, tells Sisera to come in and rest. Feeling safe in an ally's home, Sisera comes in and lays down while Jael gives him a jug of milk and a blanket. After he falls fast asleep, she takes a tent peg and hammer and drives the peg through his temple killing the Canaanite commander. By the time Barak arrives Sisera is already dead. Killed according to the prophecy of Deborah by a woman. The Israelite general, Barak, is robbed of the

glory of putting the enemy of God's people to death. After this King Jabin's kingdom is destroyed and the Israelites have peace for forty years.

#### ■ **Deborah, The Judge**

Little is known about the background of Deborah. She is indeed called a judge by the same Hebrew term (*sapat*) which is applied to all the other judges. Like other judges she did more than just deliver Israel from oppressors. Under a palm tree she met the people resolving disputes. This palm tree was located between Ramah in Benjamin and Bethel on border between Benjamin and Ephraim. Samuel was from Ramah and traveled a circuit from this home base to judge the people. However Deborah has the people travel to her. Keep in mind that judges did not run for the office or get elected by the people. God chose them.

#### ■ **Deborah, The Lady**

Joshua, Caleb, Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar had been strong leaders for Israel in the past. Deborah is a bit of an anomaly. She is a woman. Why? Is it because God wanted to prove that a woman can do anything a man can in support a feminism. Today's idea of an ideal woman is that she can out drink, out smoke, out cuss and fornicate most man. Some claim that she was just extraordinary in superior mental, spiritual and even physical abilities. However, there is nothing in the text to support any of this.

The context does seem to indicate there was a lack of men of faith and courageous leadership. Barak has to be called to do what God apparently had commanded of him. Deborah though is not commanding him, God is. He is to gather ten thousand troops from Zebulun and Naphtali to gather at Mount Tabor. He refuses to go unless Deborah goes with him. This was not part of the plan but she agrees. Critical of his request she warns *"I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman"* (Judges 4:9). The fact that some men do not step up from other tribes (Judges 5:16-17) and there is not a spear or shield among forty thousand Israelites indicates this lack of male courage and leadership is widespread at this time (Judges 5:8). God even uses Jael, a woman of great wisdom and courage to kill Sisera. God chooses two women to be His deliverers, because the men of Israel shamefully lack the faith and courage to go up against 900 iron chariots.

#### ■ **Deborah, The Motivator**

When no one was stepping up to the task, God found Deborah to arouse the nation out of despair and stir up Barak to go out and fight. In the great Hebrew Hall of Faith, the writer says, *"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets"* (Hebrews 11:32). What about Deborah? Why mention Barak? There would have been no mention of Barak's faith, if it had not been for the encouragement of Deborah. She called him and reminded him of God's command, she went to the battle field with him, she called him to get up and attack. She shared in the hazards and boosted the morale of the soldiers. She was not the general but she was the motivator.

#### ■ **Deborah, The Wife**

Being a judge of Israel and a wife might seem in conflict with 1 Peter 3:5: *"in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands."* Deborah was the wife of Lapidoth. Nothing is said of him. But there is no reason for some to assume he was a hen-pecked weak man who let Deborah wear the pants in the family. He was not just a weak man married to a strong woman. Deborah could judge and be in subjection to him at the same time. Her husband could have been in a great source of encouragement, support, and love and still have been the head of his home.

#### ■ **Deborah, The Mother**

Deborah could have called herself in the psalm many things like a Judge, prophetess, psalmist, etc. But she refers to herself as one of the *"mothers in Israel"*. Being a judge did not interfere with her being a wife and mother. She exulted motherhood before Israel in song. A lesson many women need to hear today.



■ **Deborah, The Prophetess**

She is not just a judge but a prophetess. She is not the only woman called upon to be a mouth piece for God. A few other women were chosen by God to speak His message, such as, Miriam (Ex. 15:20); Haldah (2 Kings 22:14); Isaiah's wife (Is. 8:3); Noadiah (Neh. 6:14); Anna (Luke 2:36-38) and Philip's virgin daughters (Acts 21:9).

■ **Deborah, The Psalmist**

In addition to being a judge and prophetess Deborah is a singer and composer of at least one psalm. Judges 5 is considered by some scholars to be one of the most excellent examples of ancient Hebrew poetry. It begins and ends with the call to praise and glorify God. And recounts the victory of God over the oppressors of his people using Barak, Jael and herself.

**Application:**

The Old Testament stories like this one was written for our learning today. Several things stand out for our personal application. Deborah stands out as a great leader in a time when Israel was devoid of leadership among men. There are other women like Deborah in the Old Testament. However, Jezebel and later her daughter, Athaliah, demonstrate how much of a wicked influence a woman can be upon a nation. Deborah proves that women have merit in serving God.

Deborah means "the bee". She was busy as a bee motivating others to courageous faith and giving the enemy a fatal sting. When others fail this woman was willing to be used by God to stand strong in her faith. Women may not have been chosen for leadership in the home or church, but they are not without courage and faith and positive influence. Using their strengths they can encourage men who are lacking. Strong women can make for strong men.

Deborah led others to serve God. Barak would not have been bold enough without her presence. She was able to team up with him like Priscilla did with her husband to teach Apollos (Acts 18:24-26).

**Questions:**

1. What attitude prevailed during the time of the judges when there was no king?
2. What three failures resulted in the rebellion of the people against God?
3. What is the "Canaanization of Israel"?
4. What four things did God do to Israel when they rebelled?
5. How is an attitude of repentance demonstrated by Israel?

6. What types of diversity existed between the different judges?

7. Fill in the cycling pattern during the time of the Judges in the diagram below.

8. What happened in Israel when a judge died?

9. Who was Jabin and Sisera?

10. What did Sisera have by way of weapons? What did Israel lack in weapons?



11. What role did the storm play in the destruction of Sisera's army?

12. Who killed Sisera and how?

13. Why do you think a woman is chosen at his time to be judge?

14. How does the judge Debeorah serve as a motivator?

15. What effect would being a judge have on Deborah being a wife and a mother?
16. List from the Bible the women the who were prophetesses for God.
17. True False Judges 5 is considered by some scholars to be one of the most excellent examples of ancient Hebrew poetry.
18. Name a couple of women in the Bible who were an influence for evil when they were in power.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. How can we break the cycle of sin, rebellion, and repentance in our lives?
2. If male leadership is lacking can able women step up and take control of the headship of the family or be elders in the church just like Debroah became a judge? Explain.

**Homework:** As a woman of faith and courage put courage into men. As a man be encouraged by these spiritually-minded women.

## Gideon: The Reluctant Judge

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Text: Judges 6-8

While in first grade a couple of well-dressed men came to our class and handed out to each student these small New Testament Bibles with the Psalms. The little Bibles were known as Gideon Bibles and the men who passed them out were called "Gideons". This non-profit endeavor was founded by a group of spiritually-minded business men who distributed Bibles not just to schools, but hotel and hospital rooms, to the armed forces, etc. Why the name "Gideon"? He was not a professional prophet or judge or statesman or military leader when God called him. He was just a humble farmer doing his business during difficult times.

Gideon was the fifth recorded judge of Israel. All that we know of the life and faith of Gideon is found in Judg. 6 - 8. Gideon is also remembered favorably in 1 Samuel 12:11 and Hebrews 11:32.

After the time of Deborah the cycle continues after forty years of rest. *"the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years"* (Judges 6:1). The oppression was so great that the Israelites lived in caves and in the mountains. The Amalekites also came and would leave them with nothing. Impoverished and fearful of the great number of their enemies *"the children of Israel cried out to the Lord"* (6:6).

God first sends a unnamed prophet to remind Israel that God had rescued them from Egyptian bondage and speak of God's encouragement: *"I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell"* (6:10). However, they did not obey God's voice.

- **Call of Gideon**

God sent an angel to call Gideon at the hidden threshing floor in a winepress. He is called a *"mighty man of valor."* Gideon recounts what has happened and the lack of miraculous deliverance from God. The Lord tells him that it is he, Gideon, who will be the deliverer. Gideon is reluctant and humbly claims, *"O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house"* (6:15). Gideon sees himself as just a farmer with no civil military ambitions. He falsely believes that God must only use extraordinary people.

Gideon requests a sign to prove God is calling him. He is reluctant to accept his divine commission without a sign. He prepares a sacrifice of meat and unleavened bread on a rock which was consumed by fire. He was assured and built an altar to God calling it *"The -Lord-Is-Peace"*.

- **Destruction of Baal**

Gideon was not sent out immediately against the Midianites. God had him start by destroying the local pagan altar of his father. He tore down the Baal altar and Asherah pole beside it that his own father had built. He was reluctant to do it by day, so he did it at night with ten of his father's servants.

When the men of the city learned of it they came to kill Gideon. His father, Joash, saved his son by pointing out that if Baal is a god he can deal with Gideon himself. From that time Joash *"called him Jerubbaal, saying, 'Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar'"* (6:32).

- **Call to Arms**

When the Midianites invaded again and set up in the valley of Jezreel, Gideon blew a trumpet and sent messengers to gather an army. These men of Israel came from the tribes of Manaasah, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali.

- **Gideon Seeks Reassurance**

Once more Gideon is reluctant to move without a special sign from God to reassure him. So he places a fleece of wool on the ground. Next morning Gideon gets up, the ground is dry as a bone but the fleece is sopping wet. Still unsure, Gideon asked God not to be angry but to test once more with the fleece. He asked God to reverse the order the next night making the fleece dry and the ground wet. These signs were about reassurance.

- **Recruiting an Army**

On Mount Gilboa Gideon had assembled an army of 32,000 men. God had him send those who were fearful home. This makes little sense since the Midianite army numbered 135,000. God explained why Gideon had too many soldiers. "Lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me'" (7:2). So by dismissing the Fearful there were only 15,000 men left. Fear among soldiers can be contagious. Men who were not battle tested could start a panic and flee the battle field before the fight even gets started. Gideon may have been left with a smaller number of men but not necessarily a weaker army.

Again God tells Gideon that he still has too many men. He is already down to ten thousand men to Midian's 135,000. God designs a water drinking test. Their camp was beside the spring of Harrod, The fountain of Harod, or "trembling," apparently so called from the confessed terror which thinned his army. The word 'is afraid,' in verse three comes from the same root in the Hebrew. Those who brought the water up to their mouths and lapped it up like a dog were separated to Gideon from those who got down on their knees to suck up the water. The suckers were sent home and the lappers stayed to fight. Now Gideon has just three hundred men.

The chosen few are now outnumbered four hundred and fifty to one. God has picked His army and He has never lost a battle.

- **Reassurance of Victory**

Gideon had already had the sign of the fleece and the dew. God tells him to go down the valley and fight. But if he needs an additional encouragement, he is to take his servant, Phurah, and go down to the area where the Midianites were camped. Being reluctant he goes down to the camp. In the darkness they sneaked close enough to hear two Midianites talking. One Midianite tells another about a dream. He had seen a loaf of barley bread come tumbling into the camp to crush at tent. This was the commander's tent, the army's headquarters. The other Midianite was quick to interpret the dream. The barley loaf represented Gideon. The destruction of the headquarters was their victory over Midian. A small loaf could not turn over a tent, so Gideon knew God would be with him.

No doubt God had sent the dream and given the other man the interpretation. Several times God has sent dreams to pagans, such as, to Pharaoh and his two officers, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife.

- **Arming the Recruits**

Each man of Gideon's three hundred had a trumpet, a torch, which he probably lighted at the campfire before he covered with a clay jar to hide it till the proper moment. They would have no hand free to carry a weapon. Trumpets, like bugles of the US Cavalry, were used to signal the attack of a large body of men. Normally a battalion would have just one bugler. So three hundred trumpets represented about three hundred battalions. The small army would win the day by deception and intimidation. The bursting of the jars created a loud sound and a great flash of light surrounding the camp. The Midianites were confused in the middle of the night and fought each other to the death. The Lord's victory came because of the Lord's weapons, strategy, and hand picked men.

- **Complete Victory**

The timing was set for the middle of the night when the Midianites were fast asleep. The terror of the sudden awakening cause men to stumble out of their tents blurry eyed and confused. The men previously dismissed were called up by messengers sent by Gideon. These thousands of Israelites joined the pursuit of the Midianites.

Gideon called upon the tribe of Ephraim to join in. They captured and killed two of the Midianite kings. The remaining fifteen thousand Midianites crossed the Jordan and Gideon's men caught up to them and defeated the remainder of their forces capturing and killing two more of their kings.

- **Gideon as Judge, Only**

So impressed was Israel that they wanted to make Gideon a king. But Gideon said to them, *"I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you"* (8:23). Gideon would remain a Judge and God would be King.

### **Application:**

#### ▶ **Victory with Assurances**

Gideon was not the only servant of God to have questions before entering into service. Abraham asked "How will I father a nation when I haven't fathered a son?" Moses asked "How can I confront Pharaoh when I don't speak well?" Mary asked "How can I have a son, when I'm still a virgin?" God has given us assurances of victory. *"Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10).

#### ▶ **Victory Through God**

In one of the Star Wars movies the droid C3PO says "The odds of successfully navigating an asteroid field are million to one." Hans Solo, the starships pilot, barks back, "Never tell me the odds." When God is on our side we do not need to be told the odds. "One person and God make a majority" Actually, God is a majority without anyone else. The US Marine Corps wants "a few good men." God can take this world with a few good laborers. God does not need a bigger army with the best weapons to win the victory. Consider the words of Jonathan to his young armor bearer when they were outnumbered by the Philistines. *"Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few"* (1 Sam. 14:6). In the eyes of the faithless the odds were against David defeating Goliath. When Elisha the prophet was surrounded by the host of the Syrian army at Dothan, he told his servant *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* And Elisha prayed, and said, *'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.'* Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. *And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"* (2 Kings 5:16,17).

When it comes to God's battle with evil, strength is not in numbers. New Testament Christians are outnumbered today. Our strength is found in the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) and in book, chapter and verse preaching. We cannot secure the victory and save ourselves. Like Gideon we must depend upon God completely.

#### ▶ **Victory with God's Armor**

God seems to use unorthodox methods to accomplish His Will in just about every situation. For Moses it was a rod. With David it was a sling and five smooth stones. Ravens were employed to feed Elijah. Dipping seven times in the river Jordan cleansed Naaman of his leprosy. Jesus was born in a manger by a virgin and raised by a carpenter in Nazareth. Paul wrote, *"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are"* (1 Cor. 1:27,28). Today, God gives us His armor to defeat the enemy (Eph. 6:10f).

#### ▶ **Victory Through God's Glory**

Although going from a farmer to a King is not a bad career move, Gideon was not going to have any part of it. He knew that God was king over Israel and he was not about to try to replace a theocracy with a monarchy. Once a wood pecker was hammering away on a giant redwood tree. Suddenly a lightning bolt struck the tree. The bird died thinking he had split it all the way to the ground, catching it on fire. God's soldiers are to fight for God's glory, not their own.

#### ▶ **Victory via Courage and Commitment**

God did not inform Gideon of the details of His strategy all at once. He passed the information along on a need to know basis when God's timing was right. This helps to teach the servant of God to *"walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Cor. 5:7). If God had told Gideon everything up front it would not of have helped him overcome his fear and redundancy.

God's plan in sending the fearful men home was wise. Fear can paralyze men and keep them from following God's plan. Many times God reassures his servants by commanding "Do Not Be Afraid"

or "Do Not Fear." Jesus said, *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to kill both soul and body in Hell"* (Matt 10:28). Commitment to God is not the absence of fear; it is the courage to obey God even when we are afraid.

God was able to work with Gideon and teach him the importance of full compliance with the Divine plans. God is not so interested in our pedigree or our skills or our courage. He wants men who will completely trust and obey.

In Borneo in 1964, the Elite Troops of Nepal were known as Gurkhas. In combat, they had earned a reputation as tenacious and fearless soldiers. They are probably most famous for the long forward sweeping knife that bears their name. During hostilities with the Indonesians, these brave, elite troops were asked if they would be willing to jump from airplanes into combat. After discussing the plan with his leaders, the Gurkha commander agreed to the airborne operation, with three requests. 1) They requested the planes fly slower than normal. 2) The Gurkhas requested a swampy area near their target as a drop zone. 3) Finally, with much hesitation the commander asked if it were possible for the planes to fly no higher than 100 feet. Here's the problem that posed the officers in charge of the Airborne Operation. 1) The planes already slow down to 90knots for jumps, if they go much slower they couldn't stay in the air. 2) Water on drop zones are considered hazardous. A swamp would be definitely be a place to avoid. 3) Finally, the officer explained that the parachutes would not have time to open at 100 feet. To that the Gurkhas replied, "Oh, you didn't mention parachutes before!"

By trusting in God, Gideon was able to surround and destroy an army that was four hundred fifty times as bigger than his.

### **Questions:**

1. How long had God delivered Israel into the hand of Midian?
2. Where was Gideon and what was he doing when God called him?
3. What excuses does Gideon give?
4. What sign does God give reluctant Gideon?
5. What did Gideon tear down? Why did he do it at night?
6. How did Gideon's father defend him?

7. What two signs involving a fleece of wool does God give to reassure Gideon?
  
8. What size army did Gideon gather? What was it too large?
  
9. How did God reduce Gideon's army? What was the final number of men Gideon had? What was the ratio of Israelites soldiers to the Mideianites?
  
10. Before the battle what did God use to once more reassure a reluctant Gideon to attack the Midianites?
  
11. What "weapons" did Gideon's army carry?
  
12. How did Gideon achieve complete victory?
  
13. Why did Gideon reject Israel's offer to make him king?
  
14. Give other illustrations from the Bible showing that God does not need great numbers to defeat His and our enemies?
  
15. Give other examples of God employing unusual things and means to accomplish victory?
  
16. Why was it a wise move to send those men home who were fearful?





# Samson: The He-Man with a She Problem

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## Text: Judges 13-16

Henry Ward Beecher once said, "The strength of a man consists in finding out the way God is going, and going that way." If Samson could only have learned this sooner in his life. God gave him a recipe for superhuman strength, but he failed to see God as the ultimate source of his strength until the last day of his life. In our study of his life we will see the how God made this strong man, how he lost his strength and then how he regained it.

### Making the Strong Man

#### ◆ God Decreed Beginning

Samson's mother was barren. Ancient Hebrew women lived with no greater stigma than barrenness. An angel was sent to announce that she was to have a child. Like John the baptizer and Jesus of Nazareth, Samson's birth was divinely announced. He was to be a Judge a deliverer of Israel. As seems to be the case in so many instances God did not seek to deliver Israel in any ordinary way.

#### ◆ God Commissioned Task

Samson was born in very troublesome times. He was born during a crisis in history, great political, social and moral upheaval. The purpose of Samson's life, "*..He shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines*" (13:5)

#### ◆ God Selected Vows

God ordained Samson to be a Nazirite: a person who was separated or dedicated to God, either for a specified period of time or for life (Num. 6). This vow required strict adherence to three disciplines. First, he watched his diet very closely. He neither drank alcoholic beverages nor ate certain foods. Second, he never went near the dead. Whether a cadaver or carcass, he never went near a dead animal or a dead human. Third, he never cut his hair. It was neatly arranged in seven locks and bound to the head. Surely, throughout his early years, his parents must have drilled these disciplines into his head. Later, in life he would break all of these aspects of the Nazirite vow.

#### ◆ Godly Parents

A rather common, ordinary family of godly parents. Samson's name means "sunshine" or "sunny". He loved a good joke. He had a keen sense of humor. Manoah was a godly Jew surrounded by godless Jews in the tribe of Dan, most of whom had begun to live like the Philistines (13:8). "*Lord, reveal to me how to rear my son. Help me know the right steps to take.*" (13:9-10). Manoah's wife was told she herself was to drink no wine nor "*eat any unclean thing*" during her pregnancy (13:4,5). Many today take alcohol, drugs, and even have abortions. Samson's mother was to take care of him even before he was born. Doing a good job of training children and teens provides no airtight promise that they're going to turn out exactly right. Nothing thrills us more than to know that our children are walking in the truth and nothing hurts us more than to realize they're not. All these favorable circumstances were not sufficient to guarantee Samson's spirituality.

#### ◆ God Ordained Type

The similarities between Israel's savior from the Philistines and mankind's Savior from sin are not coincidental. Both Samson and Jesus had miracles involved in their birth. Both had their births announced by an angel, first to the mother then to the father. Both had common parents. Both were

prophesied to deliver their people. The Philistines afflicted Israel for forty years, Satan tempted Jesus for forty days. Samson had specific restrictions, Christ never sinned. Surely, the antitype, Christ, is superior to the type, Samson.

## Breaking the Strong Man

A grocer was busy serving customers, but he noticed a small boy standing near an open box of sweet biscuits. "Now, then, my lad", said the grocer, "what are you up to?" "Nothing." "Nothing? Well, it looks as if you were trying to take a biscuit." "No, mister. I'm trying hard not to."

Samson was the strongest man in the Bible. However, he had many temptations. Samson did not try hard not to give into the temptations.

The lust of the eyes appear to be a definite problem for the Strong man (14:1-3,7). His first four recorded words were "I saw a woman". Nothing is said of her character, he saw only physical appearance. He thought to please self. There is not a word in this passage regarding her character.

This lustful, passionate drive that he does not attempt to restrain - neither now nor later (14:1,2). This turns out to be the story of his life. He lost sight of his true objective. So, instead of delivering the Israel from the Philistines he goes cruising from girls down the trail to Timnath. Samson's focusing on the wrong objectives proved to be his downfall. First, he focused on physical appearance and little else. Second, he focused on pleasing himself and no one else.

Furthermore, he failed to consider his parent's insight. In spite of the fact that he was born of godly parents, he never conquered his tendency toward lust, flying in the face of a safe spiritual education given him in his youth by his parents. *"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck"* (Pr. 1:8,9).

When faced with a lion as he travel, Samson used his strength to kill it. On a return visit he finds that a bee hive had been built into its carcass. He eats, honey from the lion's carcass. This violated His Nazirite vow. He had to touch the dead lion to get the honey. He parties with Philistines thus breaking his vow even more. First, Samson gives into the lust of the eyes and now the lust of the flesh.

His fraternization with the enemy plays a role in his downfall. It would appear that he fails to see his mission was against Philistines not for them. At a party he is posing riddles to Philistines (14:10-14).

The Philistines threaten to burn Samson's girlfriends home if she does not obtain the answer to the riddle for them (14:16,17).

So, she began to turn all of the wiles of womanhood upon him, and said he did not love her. One of Samson's problems was the kind of women he loved. He gave her and riddle's answer. She betrayed him by giving it to the Philistines. Regardless, he has made a bargain, and he's going to stick by it. All because of his poor choice in a life time mate.

Later, we find this He-man having more women problems. After Samson's wife died he did not heed the previous advice of his parents and take a wife from among Israel. Instead, more lust (15:20-16:1,4). Note, Samson's connection with a prostitute in Gaza (16:1-3). Then he turns right around and locates yet another woman down in the valley of Sorek (16:4). To Samson, leisure was synonymous with lust. This weakness is duplicated in the lives of other important Biblical characters: David, Solomon. Samson's body was strong enough to crush his enemies, but his spirit was weak enough to allow a wicked women to lead him astray. *"For you were bought at a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (I Cor. 6:20). Sex problem? Paul informs you to learn to control your body, keeping it pure. Samson was a He-man with a She-weakness.

Later, Samson hooks up with Delilah. Her fellow Philistine's employ her to find the secret of Samson's strength. Remember, Samson didn't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger but just like any other Jewish male of that day. Notice how Samson plays chicken with temptation (16:7-21). Proudful man seems predisposed to overestimate his personal judgments and talents and to underrate the risks in a situation. Playboy Samson must have thought, "Well, that'll be a lot of fun. I'll play their game" (16:7; 10,11). Playing these games always seem to weaken a man, not strengthen him. The world says that

a playboy lifestyle will make you strong. "By being exposed to temptations, by getting up close to lust, you learn you can handle those temptations." So, Samson shows us that such a lifestyle really weakens us.

When Delilah fails to find the source of his strength she keep pleading with him and he keeps playing his little game (16:13,14). Delilah knew the power of persistence; therefore, she determined to try again and again. The day-by-day nagging was too much for him. How different was Joseph! (Gen. 39:7-12). She starts to play with his hair, the sacred secret of his strength (16:15). Finally, Samson poured it all out; he told her everything (16:17). Why is it that Samson despite Delilah's continual deception, still entrusted to her the secret of his strength? What was the secret of Samson's defeat? Simply this: He didn't choose to say NO to temptation.

Samson has fallen victim to the lures of the Devil because of his love for this world. *"For all that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world"* (1 Jn. 2:16). He has already given into the lust of the eyes and flesh, now he gives into the pride of life.

Samson seems to have toyed with his identity as a servant of God, and a Nazirite in particular. He appears to have forgotten that his strength was for God's will, not sideshows and frivolous displays. You will recall, in contrast, that Jesus refused to lower Himself to such, even when tempted directly by the Devil (Mt. 4:3).

During his preoccupation with the lustful desires, he didn't even know the Lord had departed from him (16:20). He gave up his secret. Delilah cut his hair. Thus, when the Philistines come into capture him he acts with self-sufficiency. Paul warns of such overconfidence. *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12).

Consider the consequences of Samson's self-indulgence.

- Self-confidence: *"I will go out"* (16:20).
  - Self-ignorance: *"He wist not"* (16:20).
  - Self-weakness: *"the Philistines laid hold on him"* (21).
  - Self-darkness: *"they put out his eyes"* (21). His eyes would never wander again.
  - Self-degradation: *"They bound him with fetters"* (21).
  - Self-bondage: *"They bound him with fetter"* (21).
  - Self-drudgery: *"He did grind in the prison-house"* (21). "Wages of temptation in six tragic words: Sin blinds, sin binds, sin grinds."
  - Self-humiliation: *"Call for Samson, that he may make us sport"* (26,27).
- Samson was a He-man with a ME problem.

The strong man has fallen. Not because his enemies were stronger than his God given strength, but because he lacked self-control. It happened to him according to the proverb: *"His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray"* (Prov. 5:22,23).

## **Rejuvenating the Strong Man**

Samson's failure makes his God appear powerless. The Philistines are having a big religious holiday because they believed Dagon had allowed them victory over Samson. Dagon was the national male idol of the Philistines, so called from "dag", a fish. Both the male and female idols seem to have resembled a human down to the waist, and a fish below the waist.

When the Philistines captured Samson's they believed that Dagon was surely victorious over the God of Israel. As Alexander Maclearn wrote: "The worst consequences of the fall of a servant of God is that it gives occasion for God's enemies to blaspheme, and reflects discredit on Him, as if He were vanquished, Samson's capture is Dagon's glory..."

- **God His Strength**

His real strength was not his hair but consecration to God. Of course, God placed a condition upon this strength - no razor was to cut his hair. When his hair grew back only then could he possess this God-given strength. Like Paul He learned that when he was weak, then he was really strong by the grace and power of God. *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Cor. 12:10).

- **Faith His Eyes**

When blinded, he probably saw more clearly than he did when he possessed his sight and his freedom. He saw God, not Philistine women. He prayed to God instead of playing riddles with the Philistines. Samson always believed in the existence of God. Yet, he lives like there was not God, until he lost everything, but God.

- **God His Savior**

In His providence God was able to cause ultimate good to come from Samson's unfortunate obsession. Although God used this man to aid Israel in His overall scheme of things, let no one decide that God approved of Samson's loose living. God's will for Samson before he was born was to be his instrument to avenge and overthrow the Philistine yoke from off His people. God's will has become Samson's prayer. His victory is found in realizing who his Savior is and who are his enemies. It could be said that God used Samson and his hunger for vengeance to punish the Philistines, even as He later used the Assyrians and the Babylonians to chasten Israel.

## Summary

Samson's infamy shows that even the God-aided heroes of the Bible were not bigger than life, but were, in fact, individuals with whom we can readily identify. Samson became a victim of the very ones he was supposed to conquer. He was strong enough to withstand anything but temptation. Separated as a Nazirite, but tampered with evil associations. Spirit-possessed, but yielded to carnal appetites. Courageous in battle, but childish in attitude. Mighty in physical strength, but weak in resisting temptation. A noble beginning, but a sad end.

Despite all his failures Samson does serve as a positive example in some ways. We all have been given a great power over all our spiritual enemies. The power of Choice. No matter how powerful and numerous they are we can always say no and they can never make us say yes. Furthermore, when we do fall into sin we can turn to God in prayer once more for strength.

### Questions:

1. What other births in the Bible were announced in by an angel? Why?
2. What was Samson commissioned to do?
3. What is a Nazirite and what does it involve?
4. Note some very positive attributes and attitudes of Samson's parents. Where did they go wrong when he was older?

5. Compare the similarities between Samson and Christ.
  
6. What role did Samson's lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh play in his downfall?
  
7. What answers did Samson give to Delilah about the source of his strength? In what ways did he sin in doing this?
  
8. Contrast how Joseph handled Potiphar's Wife with how Samson dealt with Delilah.
  
9. Illustrate from the text where Samson has a problem with the pride of life.
  
10. What effect did Samson's failure have on God's enemies?
  
11. At what point did Samson regain his strength?
  
12. What all did Samson lose because of his unfaithfulness? What did he gain when he lost everything?
  
13. What greater power did Samson have from God that was more powerful than his great physical strength?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Explain ways Christians can hinder their work for the Lord by fraternizing with the wicked?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does God give us strength today? What sort of things should Christians avoid to maintain their spiritual strength?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In what ways can a New Testament Christian of today relate to the struggles of Samson?

**Homework:** Be strong enough to control yourself.

# Samuel: The Last Judge

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**Text: 1 Samuel 1 - 8; 13; 15; 16; 25:1**

The tenure of Samuel as Judge marks both the end of an era and the transition from Judges to Kings as God's leaders of Israel. A time when the government of Israel moved from a theocracy to a monarchy. Samuel was not just the last judge of Israel (1 Samuel 7:2-4). He was also a priest (2:18-19) and a prophet (3:20). God gave "*judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet*" (Acts 13:20). Samuel is listed in the Hebrew Hall of Faith. "*And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets*" (Heb. 11:32).

1 Samuel opens with the struggles of Samuel's mother, Hannah. She was married to Elkanah a Levite living the territory of Ephraim. Hannah is barren. In Israel's culture of the time being able to bear children and be a mother was very important. Although Elkanah loved Hannah, he decided to remedy the situation by taking Peninnah as a second wife. She was not barren. And Hannah suffered rivalry and abuse from Peninnah because Elkanah showed favoritism to Hannah. Hannah prayed to God and he blessed her with a son, Samuel. He was conceived by the miraculous power of God as a sign he would be a special child.

## **Dedicated to God's Service**

Hannah had promised God to dedicate her firstborn son to the Lord. At Shiloh where the Tabernacle was located with Elkanah she dedicated Samuel to the Lord (1:25-28, 2:11). This took place when he was about three years of age having been weaned by this point. He was also to be a Nazirite his entire life. Hannah prayed, "*I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head*" (1:11). This vow required him never to cut his hair but to bind it up in seven locks, to abstain from any product of the grape vine whether it be grapes, juice, wine, raisins, etc. and to avoid contact with a dead body. Two other men are known to have been life long Nazirites: John the Immerser and Samson.

Hannah and her husband went yearly to the sacrifice, and each year she brought him a little robe that she had made. They would give it to Samuel as he grew. God rewarded the faithfulness of Hannah with five other children (1 Sam. 2:21).

## **Listening to God's Call**

One night Samuel heard his name called. He ran to Eli who told him to go back to bed since he had not called for Samuel. After the third call for Samuel Eli realized it was God who called. And told Samuel how to respond. When the fourth call came, Samuel answered God, "*Speak, for your servant hears*" (3:9). He consulted someone wiser on what he was to do. He sought to humbly serve God. This was the beginning of Samuel's close relationship with God and his continual listening to God's voice.

On the Mount of Transfiguration God told Jesus' *disciples* "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*" (Matt. 17:5). Today, God desires all Christians to listen His Son. "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*" (Heb. 1:1-2).

## **Growing in God's Favor**

Samuel would be raised in the Tabernacle by the judge and High Priest, Eli. As he grew he would



listen to Eli and become dedicated to serving God faithfully from an early age. Three times the Bible informs of us Samuel's progress. *"And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the Lord" (2:21). "And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men" ( 2:26). "So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord. Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (3:19-21).* His growth reminds one of how young *"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).*

Samuel would develop into a faithful servant of God all the days of his life. He knew God and served Him in the days of his youth. Samuel would not be able to argue: "I am too young" or "I don't know enough."

Samuel was a child prodigy, under the supervision of Eli. However, Eli's own sons as priests Hophni and Phinehas *"did not know the Lord."* They became prodigals in abusing their position.

### **Proclaiming God's Word**

Although Moses was a great prophet and the judge Deborah also served as one for God, 1 Samuel 3:1 tells us that *"the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision."* The age of the prophets of God seems to have begun with that of Samuel. Peter said, *"Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days" (Acts 3:24).*

Samuel is called a prophet and a seer (Acts 13:20; 1 Sam. 3:24).

On the night God first spoke to Samuel, he was given a prophecy for Eli. Eli's line of high priests would end due to tragedy. The reason is Eli did not control his sons when he knew they were behaving wickedly. The sons of Eli would take the ark into battle against the Philistines. They would be killed and the ark captured.

God's word of prophecy would be fulfilled as Samuel proclaimed it. *"So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord" (3:19-20).*

Christians should remain steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). God's spokesmen must *"preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2).*

### **Obeying God's Commandments**

Samuel remained obedient to God by listening to God's High Priest, Eli (3:1-9). When Samuel was rejected as Judge when Israel demanded a King, Samuel defended himself as being faithful all his life.

*Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you...and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you." And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand." Then he said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they answered, "He is witness"(12:1-5).*

Later during the reign of Josiah another witness is given to the faithful obedience of Samuel. *"There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah*

and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 35:18).

### **Sacrificing as God’s Priest**

Saul had waited seven days for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice to God before his battle with the Philistines. Saul could not wait and offered the sacrifice himself. Samuel shows up and *“said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever’”* (13:13). This verse implies that Samuel alone, not the King, had the right to sacrifice. How could Samuel offer sacrifices? He was a Levite, however, priests offered sacrifices. Samuel was not of the priestly lineage through Aaron. First, Samuel was raised as an adopted son of the High Priest, Eli. Therefore, he was of the family of priest. Second, other men who were not of the lineage of Aaron are called upon God to make sacrifices during the time of the Law of Moses. Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh, was told to make an offering to God (Judges 6:25-26). Elijah, of the tribe of Gad, made an offering as well (1 Kings 18:30-33). God seems to make exceptions to his own Laws for certain judges and prophets.

### **Rebuking God’s Children**

Samuel constantly admonished Israel to follow God (7:3-12:14-16, 12:20-25). At times he would have to rebuke the people. Before defeating the Philistines Samuel warned, *“If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines”* (7:3).

When King Saul failed to destroy the Amalekites including their king, Saul argued with Samuel, *“I have obeyed the voice of the Lord”* (15:20). Samuel rebukes the king by explaining the true value of genuine obedience to God. *“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king”* (15:22-23). Samuel then demonstrates genuine and total obedience when he *“hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal”* (15:33).

*“As obedient children”* (1 Peter 1:14) *“we must obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). Jesus said to His disciples, *“if you love me, you will keep my commandments”* (John 14:15).

### **Interceding for God’s People**

Samuel was one of the great prayer-warriors for God. He often interceded for Israel with God. *“Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you’”* (7:5). After Samuel has rebuked and judged the people at Mizpah, they said, *“we have sinned against the Lord”* (7:6). Then the Philistines attacked. *“So the children of Israel said to Samuel, ‘Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines’”* And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him” (7:8-9). In answer to his prayer *“the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”* (7:13).

Later, Samuel rebuked Israel for demanding a king. *“And all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves’”* (12:19). Samuel responded to their request, *“moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way”* (12:23).

When King Saul disobeyed God in regard to the destruction of the Amalikes, God told Samuel, *“I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments’* And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night” (15:11). Samuel’s had the heart of a true intercessor.

Samuel is compared to Moses as one of the great intercessions who had the ear of God for the people he served. Jeremiah said, *“Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!”* (Jeremiah 15:1).

### **Defending God’s Theocracy**

It was prophesied through Moses in Deuteronomy that one day Israel would have a king. However, they demanded a certain kind of king. They told Samuel they wanted *“a king to judge us like all the nations”* (8:5). *“The thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ So Samuel prayed to the Lord”* (8:6). One of the reasons Israel demanded a king was that the sons of Samuel, Joel and Abijah ( 8:2), were just as wicked as Eli’s sons had been. They would not tolerate Samuel’s sons becoming judges after his death. Like Eli, Samuel had failed to rebuke his own sons of their sins. Fathers must be accountable properly raising their children (Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:7). However, even the most perfect parent can produce prodigals. The real issue was Samuel knew about the sins of his sons and did nothing. Remember, fathers, do not become so involved in serving God that you neglect duties to your children.

Samuel felt a personal rejection by the people. He had served them well and faithfully all the days of his long life. He had a personal investment in Israel’s future and now might wonder if all that had been a waste of time. Such a leader might feel unappreciated. God comforted Samuel *“heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them”* (8:7).

At the coronation of King Saul, Samuel rebuked Israel once more for demanding a King. *“Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king for yourselves”* (12:17). Samuel warned them of the problem with a king. *“He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day”* (8:17-18). Samuel was very disappointed in what Saul became (15:32-35). After this all the days of Samuel’s life he would never meet with Saul.

### **Anointing God’s King**

Samuel would be called upon God not only to anoint Saul (10:1) but later to anoint David to be king of Israel (16:13). Samuel would become a royal adviser to Saul. However, after he continued to disobey God, Samuel was sent time and again to rebuke the king. Finally Samuel stopped coming to Saul. *“Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him”* (15:25).

When looking at David Samuel was not impressed with him as a choice to be king God told Samuel, *“Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”* (16:7). David would turn out to be a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) and the righteous standard by which all future kings would be measured.

Samuel starting serving God early and continued faithfully all the days of his long life. *“Samuel died an old man and “all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah”* ( 25:1). But this is not the end of Samuel. He lived on after death and was sent back from the dead to prophecy to King Saul one last time. This time he foretells of the end of King Saul (28:3-19). So ends the time of God’s judges and the reign of the first king of Israel.

### **Questions:**

1. Other than a judge what three roles did Samuel serve?

2. Why was Hannah unhappy?
3. What did Hannah promise God if he blessed her with a child?
4. What is a Nazarite?
5. How did Samuel respond to God's calling?
6. How is the growth of young Samuel compared to that of young Jesus?
7. What was Samuel's first prophecy?
8. What was God's witness in 1 Samuel 12:1-5 of Samuel's obedience and faithful service?
9. Why did Samuel have a right to sacrifice since he was not born in the lineage of Aaron?
10. Why did Samuel rebuke Israel in 1 Samuel 7:3?
11. How did Samuel demonstrate genuine obedience to King Saul in 1 Samuel 15?
12. True False Failure to intercede for others is a sin.
13. To whom is Samuel's intercessions compared?
14. What kind of king did the people want? How did Samuel respond to this request?

15. Why did they reject Samuel's sons as judges?
16. What comforting words did God give Samuel when Israel rejected him?
17. Why did Samuel not see king material in young David and God did?
18. What was the last prophecy of Samuel?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. How did both Eli and Samuel fail as parents? What effect did this have on their ability to continue as judges? Why?
2. Why is it a sin to fail to intercede for others in prayer?

**Homework:** Start early serving the Lord and faithfully obey him all the days of your life.

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## Judges of Israel

Judge	Bible Reference	Tribe	Unique Feature	Oppressor	Years of Oppressed	Years of Peace
<b>Othinel</b>	Jdg. 3:9-11	Judah	Caleb's nephew	Mesopotamians	8	40
<b>Ehud</b>	Jdg. 3:15-30	Benjamin	left handed	Moabites/Ammorites	18	80
<b>Shamgar</b>	Jdg. 3:31	Judah	ox goad weapon	Philistines		
<b>Deborah</b>	Jdg. 4:1-5:31	Ephraim	woman/prophetess	Canaanites	20	40
<b>Gideon</b>	Jdg. 6:1-8:35	Manasseh	Only 300 men	Midianites, Amalekites	7	40
<b>Abimelech</b>	Jdg. 9:1-57	Manasseh	Killed 70 brothers		3	
<b>Tola</b>	Jdg. 10:1-2	Issachar	son of Dodo			23
<b>Jair</b>	Jdg. 10:3-5	Manasseh	30 sons			22
<b>Jephthah</b>	Jdg. 11:1-12:7	Manasseh	vowed daughter	Ammonites		6
<b>Izban</b>	Jdg. 12:8-10	Judah	30 sons & daughters			7
<b>Elon</b>	Jdg. 12:11-12	Zebulun				10
<b>Abdon</b>	Jdg. 12:13-15	Ephraim	40 sons			8
<b>Samson</b>	Jdg. 13:2-16:31	Dan	Strength/Nazarite	Philistines	40	20
<b>Eli</b>	1 Sam. 1:1-4:18	Levi	High Priest	Philistines		40
<b>Samuel</b>	1 Sam. 3 - 25:1	Ephraim	Prophet/Priest	Philistines	20	36

*“After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet” – Acts 13:20*



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1 Samuel: Samuel, Saul & David  
2 Samuel: The Kingship of David  
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2 Kings: Termination of Two Kingdoms  
Ezra (8 lessons)  
Nehemiah  
Esther  
Job  
The Psalms: Part One  
Ecclesiastes: Traveling on the Treadmill of Life  
Song of Songs (8 lessons)  
Isaiah 1: The Assyrian Period, chapters 1-35  
Isaiah 2: Interlude & the Babylonian Period, chapters 36-66  
Survey of the Minor Prophets  
The Minor Prophets 1: Obadiah, Joel & Jonah  
The Minor Prophets 2: Amos & Micah  
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The Minor Prophets 4: Zephaniah, Nahum & Habakkuk  
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Matthew 11-20  
Matthew 21-28  
Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5  
Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6 & 7  
Romans 9 - 16  
1 Corinthians 1 - 10:13  
1 Corinthians 10:14 - 16:24  
2 Corinthians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
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