

Judges

- I. This study is meant to be a light treatment of the Book of Judges.
- II. Preliminary observations.
 - A. This book deals with a 450 year period after the conquest of Canaan. **ACT 13:17-20**.
 1. An addition of the years of the different judges' seasons does come to 450 years.
 2. The KJV is accurate in its historical analysis in **ACT 13:19-20**.
 3. Some modern versions corrupt the actual history to make it appear that it took 450 years to conquer Canaan, after which God gave the Judges.
 - a. Eg. "He overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet." (ACT 13:19-20 in the New International Version).
 - b. It actually took less than seven years to conquer Canaan. See this by comparing Caleb's age when he first saw Canaan before the wandering period and his age at the time when Canaan was being divided up under conquest. **JOS 14:7-10**.
 - c. The NIV is a broken narrative and scripture cannot be broken (**JOH 10:35**), nor have anything perverted (distorted, misapplied) in it (**PRO 8:8**), nor have contradictions (**2PE 1:20-21**). Therefore, the NIV is not scripture, not inspired prophecy.
 - B. These judges are of special distinction from the judges that were to be appointed for the court system under Moses' Law. **EXO 18:13-27; DEUT 17:9**.
 - C. These judges were called *saviours* and are therefore plain examples of the truth of *temporal* salvation. **NEH 9:27 c/w 2KI 13:5**.
 1. Scripture commonly speaks of God saving people in a temporal or natural sense. **EXO 14:30; 2CH 32:22**.
 2. Understanding this helps us to better divide the word of truth concerning salvation: not every salvation is the eternal salvation which God alone works by Jesus Christ for sinners. **ACT 2:40; 1CO 15:1-2; 1TI 4:16**.
 - D. There is a concentration of the names of some of these judges in the roll call of faith. **HEB 11:32**.
 1. Those judges/saviours were flawed (some seriously) men of faith, yet not forgotten by God.
 2. Let this be a comfort when our own faith is colored with spots of the old man and weakness.
 3. Also, some "...out of weakness were made strong..." (**HEB 11:34**). Downturns and weaknesses in our faith can be put behind us if we are converted out of negative postures. **LUK 22:31-32; 2TI 4:11; PHM 1:10-12**.
 - E. Samuel was at the end of this line of special judges who exercised special rule and leadership and he appointed his sons as judges. **1SAM 7:15; 8:1**.
 - F. These judges admirably directed and saved Israel in their faithful exercise but the people demanded the false perception of security from a king other than God. **1SAM 8:4-7**.
 1. God rules, judges and saves His church by the words of King Jesus as He delivered them to us via His apostles' writings. **1JO 4:6**.
 2. Making commentators, church fathers, church confessions, popes, come-lately "prophets," academic accommodators, etc. to determine our creed and conduct is little different than Israel demanding a king like the nations.

- G. Ruth lived during the time of the Judges. **RUTH 1:1.**
- H. This book shows a pattern of highs and lows in which Israel fared well for a season after a judge delivered them but then afterwards fell back into bad old habits which led to their overthrow and great trouble. **JDG 2:11-19.**
 - 1. This should remind us that we need some type of magistracy to put us to shame as needed (c/w **JDG 18:7**), and a church without a devoted preacher, or who neglect regular consultation with the words of the heavenly king given in the scriptures, or who forsake the assembling of themselves together for service and preaching, are very likely to drift back to the shore of their former bondage (or worse).
 - 2. Not every church is an ant-church. **PRO 6:6-8 c/w PHIL 2:12.**
 - 3. Sometimes it doesn't take very long for a church to drift when the minister must be on other business. **GAL 1:6.**
 - 4. Bugs can keep it together without a king. **PRO 30:27.**
 - 5. NOTE: Unlike those judges who died leaving a vacuum (**JDG 2:19**) our Judge is very much alive to judge His churches. **REV 1:17-18; 2:1.**
 - a. Men stray into folly when they think they are not being actively judged. **EZE 8:12.**
 - b. Avoid the mentality of **2PE 3:3-4; ECC 8:11.**
- I. The character of this period is summed up in **JDG 21:25.**
 - 1. Contrast this with **DEUT 12:8.**
 - 2. Again, we can assume no such mentality as **JDG 21:25** because there is a Living King now over "...the Israel of God" (**GAL 6:16**).
 - a. Those who do not think the church presently has a king are missing a saving truth that could keep them from the snares of false prophets and from subjugation to spiritual powers that deceptively conquer their minds and influence their policies.
 - b. True religion is not left up to individual taste but rather the things which Jesus has commanded. **MAT 28:19-20.**

III. **Judges 1.**

- A. Joshua had died without appointing a successor but at least the children of Israel were yet willing to proceed with Canaan's conquest and sought God's direction. **vs. 1-3.**
 - 1. This was proper protocol. **NUM 27:21.**
 - 2. A lack of inquiry of God had earlier been costly. **JOS 9:14.**
 - 3. A church's efforts in evangelism should likewise be according to the commands and guidelines of Scripture.
 - a. We should go to God about men when considering going to men about God.
 - b. There are some fields that might be assumed to be white unto harvest but the time may not be according to the Spirit. Is there a reasonably plain call? **ACT 16:6-10.**
 - 4. Judah was chosen to go first, even as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ, first engaged the powers of darkness and overcame them and so animates us to be "...more than conquerors through him that loved us" (**ROM 8:37**).
 - 5. The great tribe of Judah asking Simeon to join him may remind us that in the church the more feeble members are necessary. **1CO 12:21-22.**
 - 6. It may be that faithful Caleb (of Judah, **NUM 13:6**) was still vigorous and participated in the action, perhaps even in a leadership role. **JOS 14:11 c/w JDG 1:19-20.**
- B. The venture was successful. **vs. 4-8.**

1. Though victory was in hand, they didn't let Adonibezek escape. This is wisdom useful to us in fighting against the lusts of the flesh. Unaddressed lusts can infect character and gain strongholds. **JAM 1:14-16 c/w GAL 5:9; ROM 7:23.**
 2. The treatment of Adonibezek is curious.
 - a. A charge of cruelty might be levelled against Judah but the cutting off of his thumbs and great toes was not far akin from the law of Israel's justice system which demanded equal retribution (**DEU 19:21**) and Adonibezek basically acknowledged the justice of the matter.
 - b. Their charge from God was to utterly destroy the devoted nations and make no covenant with them or show mercy to them. **DEU 7:1-2.**
 - c. NOTE: to win against sin it must be mortified, not just hobbled (a making provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts). **COL 3:5-10; ROM 13:14.**
 3. In overcoming Adonibezek, Judah had essentially also overcome seventy other kings under his mastery. Sometimes overcoming the main weakness is the path to victory over lesser issues. **JAM 3:2.**
 4. NOTE: The Canaanites were not living in peaceful harmony with one another before the conquerors got there. This is a common false assumption about the pagan lands that were overcome by Christian-influenced civilization.
 5. **v. 8** seems to refer to earlier action against Jerusalem in Joshua's time.
- C. **vs. 9-20** further set forth the ventures of Judah and Simeon. They were very successful but consider **v. 19.**
1. The last phrase, "...because they had chariots of iron" is not a valid reason but their excuse. They should have been operating under the divine promise of **v. 2.**
 2. The enemy had chariots of iron but God has chariots of fire. **PSA 68:17; 2KI 2:11.**
 3. The Egyptians' chariots were rendered useless by God. **EXO 14:25.**
 4. The more recent victory in Joshua's day should have inspired them. **JOS 11:4-9.**
 5. Distrust in God's promises and power is not uncommonly a partner with willing compromise and complacency in our battles.
 - a. Battle-fatigue or the cares of this world crowd out the effect of the word. **LUK 8:14; 2TI 4:3-4.**
 - b. There is no dart of the enemy that applied faith cannot resist and overcome. **EPH 6:16; 1PE 5:8-9 c/w 1CO 10:13.**
 - c. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (**GAL 5:7**).
- D. The rest of this chapter presents various quasi-conquests of the tribes of Israel over the Canaanites.
1. The Jebusites (**v. 21**) were never fully overcome until David (**1CH 11:4-8**). Some powers are especially problematic. **MAT 17:21.**
 2. The lingering Canaanites that were not driven out were made tributaries: they no longer had absolute mastery.
 3. In our warfare against sin, we will not have complete victory until our vile bodies are changed: the lusts of the old nature will have to be kept under power until they are eliminated. **ROM 7:21-25; 1CO 9:27 c/w PHIL 3:20-21.**
 - a. For now, we continue the resistance effort and occupy until Christ comes. **LUK 19:13.**
 - b. The elements of our nature can at least now be made serviceable to us as long as we have power over them (and not vice-versa). **1CO 6:12; ROM 6:12.**
- E. "The conquest of Canaan was very partial. Israel dwelled among the ancient inhabitants of

the land, much as the Normans did among the Anglo-Saxons, whom they found in England; and the mixture of the two peoples was the beginning of moral degeneracy and decline in the chosen race. Wherever there was the old-time faith in God, as in the case of Caleb, the land was cleared of the Canaanite; but where God was *out*, the Canaanite was *in*.

So it is in the life of the soul. It is intended that the whole should be yielded to Christ, that no evil passion should reign, that no besetting sin should enthrall. But how often Christian people give up the fight! They say that the old Adam is too strong for them, and settle down to a joint-occupation. Let us not yield to reasoning like this! The Lion of Judah can break every chain. By faith in Him we can be more than conquerors! The Holy Spirit strives with the flesh, so that we may not do as otherwise we would. Only give Him the right of way! Sin shall not reign in your mortal body!”

(F.B. Meyer Commentary on JDG 1:16 – 2:5)

IV. **Judges 2.**

- A. This chapter consists of three sections:
 - 1. **vs. 1-5** deal with a relatively current corruption.
 - 2. **vs. 6-10** is a summary review of events following Joshua’s death.
 - 3. **vs. 11-23** is a general historical overview of the time of Judges and of idolatry.
- B. The angel from Gilgal reproved the whole nation in his message. **v. 4.**
 - 1. This angel may have been the LORD Himself inasmuch as he said, “...I made you to go up out of Egypt...” (**v. 1**). God had spoken to Joshua at Gilgal, and near there appeared to him as the captain of the LORD’s host. **JOS 5:9-10, 13-15.**
 - 2. They were reminded that God would never break his covenant with them. **v. 1.**
 - a. This was a two-party mutually-binding covenant which required their obedience. **EXO 19:5; LEV 26:14-39.**
 - b. When God would turn them over to oppressors, it was not because He broke the covenant. They did. **DEU 31:16-17.**
 - c. Their breach justified God’s breach with no fault to Himself. **c/w NUM 14:34.**
 - d. We should recognize and be thankful that our eternal salvation rests not on our compliant faithfulness which fails but on God’s faithfulness. **ROM 3:3-4 c/w 2TI 2:13, 17-19 c/w 1PE 1:3-5.**
 - 3. They had made league with unbelieving idolaters and their tokens, a problem that has ever plagued the church. **1CO 10:20-22; 2CO 6:14-18.**
 - 4. Because they had chosen the false peace of compromise over the prescribed duty of victorious expulsion, God justly let the Canaanites abide to trouble Israel. **v. 3.**
 - a. Canaanite gods/religion ensnared Israel to do as Canaanites. **NUM 33:55-56 c/w PSA 106:34-36.**
 - b. This should remind us to personally make no peace with our sins lest God turn us over to them in judgment. **ROM 1:24-26; 2TH 2:10-12.**
 - 5. The rebuke produced the desired result of humility (although short-lived). **vs. 4-5 c/w 2CO 7:10; JAM 4:9.**
- C. Compare **JDG 2:6-10** with **JOS 24:21-31.**
 - 1. In his closing days, Joshua oversaw Israel’s binding of themselves by covenant to always serve the LORD.
 - 2. Joshua added that covenant to the book of the law of God (**JOS 24:26**) which thing must have been done under divine direction in view of **DEU 4:2.**
 - 3. The great stone set up by the sanctuary would stand as a witness to their own sworn

- promise to ever serve the LORD. **JOS 24:26.**
- a. This underscores the solemnity of sworn allegiance to God.
c/w **LUK 9:62; 14:26-33.**
 - b. Every time saints assemble for worship, they should ponder that they made a promise to Jesus Christ to not forsake Him. **HEB 10:25-27.**
 - c. The book of the law itself was a witness against them. **DEU 31:26.**
 - d. We also have multiple witnesses against us to warn us of sin and judge us when we sin: Scripture, the Spirit of Christ within us, conscience.
4. With this closing word, Joshua could with clear conscience say that he was pure from the blood of all men, having clearly informed them of their duty.
c/w **ACT 20:26-27.**
 5. “And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua...” (**JDG 2:7**). This is not to say that they were flawless but at least their religious service was to the one true God.
 6. Another generation arose “...which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (v. **10**).
 - a. This underscores the challenge of generational continuity of true religion, especially where the precepts of true religion are not impressed upon the next generation who enjoy the current fruits of true religion but have no appreciation of the former great cost and great deliverance.
DEU 6:4-12 c/w PSA 78:1-8.
 - b. With the conquest of the land of milk and honey came great prosperity and Israel would become like the Laodicean church of **REV 3:17**.
 - c. “Everything in the world can be endured, except continual prosperity.”
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)
- D. **vs. 11-23** set forth Israel’s ugly decline into idolatry via their indulgence of their idolatrous neighbors whose carnal religion catered to human lust.
1. They forsook the LORD for Baal and Ashtaroth (v. **13**), male and female deities of the Canaanites and Phoenicians.
 - a. This form of dualism was widespread throughout the world, assuming there must be male-female deities as there are male-female in all life on earth.
 - b. These deities were deemed to be moved by sympathetic magic through the idolatrous customs of their adherents which tended towards gross licentiousness in imitation of father sun’s fertilizing light and heat upon mother earth.
 2. They provoked God to anger and He delivered them into the hand of their oppressors until His “nevertheless” moment (v. **16**) gave them relief according to His mercy and His name’s sake, not their righteousness.
c/w **PSA 106:7-8, 13, 21, 43-45.**
 3. “After Joshua's death, little was done for a long time against the Canaanites: Israel indulged them, and grew familiar with them, and therefore God would not drive them out any more, Jdg 2:21. If they will have such inmates as these among them, let them take them, and see what will come of it. God chose their delusions, Isa 66:4. Thus men cherish and indulge their own corrupt appetites and passions, and, instead of mortifying them, make provision for them, and therefore God justly leaves them to themselves under the power of their sins, which will be their ruin. *So shall their doom be; they themselves have decided it.* These remnants of the Canaanites were left to prove Israel (Jdg 2:22), *whether they would keep the way of the Lord or not*; not that God might know them, but that they might know

themselves. It was to try, (1.) Whether they could resist the temptations to idolatry which the Canaanites would lay before them. God had told them they could not, Deu 7:4. But they thought they could. “Well,” said God, “I will try you;” and, upon trial, it was found that the tempters' charms were far too strong for them. God has told us how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts are, but we are not willing to believe it till by making bold with temptation we find it too true by sad experience. (2.) Whether they would make a good use of the vexations which the remaining natives would give them, and the many troubles they would occasion them, and would thereby be convinced of sin and humbled for it, reformed, and driven to God and their duty, whether by continual alarms from them they would be kept in awe and made afraid of provoking God.” (Matthew Henry Commentary)

V. **Judges 3.**

- A. This chapter begins the details of the repetitive roller-coaster pattern of sin, bondage, crying, deliverance, rest and return to corruption. We see here three judges/saviors: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar.
- B. The closing verses of **JDG 2:20-23** are here given more details (**vs. 1-4**), a typical pattern of God’s communications to us in Scripture, adding line to line, here a little, there a little. **ISA 28:10.**
 1. It is specified that a purpose of God here “...was to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof” (**v. 2**).
 2. As Christians, we are at constant war with the devil, the flesh and the world. We are fools to think otherwise. **EPH 6:10-18.**
 3. We are best equipped to fight the battle with knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ. **EPH 4:11-15.**
 - a. God’s people may be destroyed through lack of knowledge (**HOS 4:6**), lack of knowledge about our salvation and its power based on God’s promises, lack of knowledge about sin and its auxiliaries, lack of knowledge of doctrinal truth which sets Satan’s lies in sharp relief, etc.
 - b. The unlearned and unstable are easier prey. **2PE 3:16.**
 - c. The first and most important step is accepting God’s word as God’s word. **1TH 2:13.**
 - d. Truth can not only make us free (**JOH 8:32**) but keep us free. We should not be overcome because of ignorance of Satan’s devices (**2CO 2:11**) which are plainly exposed in the Scriptures. Overcoming him and his allies is directly owing to familiarity with and implementation of God’s word. **1JO 2:14.**
 - e. Fight the good fight of faith by knowledge, strategy and implementation. Know the truth about Christ and Satan’s devices, devise a strategy for avoiding risk and/or fighting lies with truth, and DO. This is faith in action. **JAM 1:21-22.**
 4. Churches need the occasional hiccup to hone their spiritual senses and “separate the men from the boys.” **MAT 18:7; 1CO 11:19.**
 - a. Handled properly, these hiccups can be both sanitizing and instructive.
 - b. Handled improperly, or not handled at all, is a certain path to the withdrawal of God from the program or the arousing of His wrath. **JOS 7:11-13; REV 2:4-5.**
 5. NOTE: the choicest and brightest of God’s people may well be hobbled by something which God leaves in them as a reminder of their place in His program.

GEN 32:24-32; 2CO 12:7-9.

6. NOTE ALSO: Those lusts and sins which we are not thoroughly disgusted with in ourselves (and we are indifferent to them as long as they are not exposed) can easily become our masters and undo us, and they that are the servants of lusts have ever so many masters. DO NOT assume that a spiritual/moral weakness you struggle with is greater than the power of Christ in you to overcome it or at least bear it strongly until the day of full deliverance. **1CO 10:13; 1JO 5:3-4.**
7. The five lords of the Philistines were later the *golden emerod club* (**1SAM 6:16-17**) an example of stupid, superstitious ignoramuses running a land (or a megachurch).
- C. “And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites...” (**vs. 5-11**).
 1. This wording sounds as if Israel was the one living by permission: this is not the attitude of conquest!
 2. Christ has fitted us with His Spirit and given us His word for victory. Do not let the fact of your native wretchedness with which you have to live con you into thinking that you through Christ are not the master of your personal realm. Be a “can do” believer. **PHIL 4:13 c/w ROM 7:21-25.**
 3. Their mingled relationships with the remnant of the devoted nations which were supposed to be “off-limits” to them did not help them in their weakness but rather facilitated their further fall to where God became their enemy. **PSA 106:34-42.**
 4. Israel was auctioned off to Chushan-rishathaim (*Cush of double-wickedness*). **v. 8.**
 - a. It took them eight years to cry to God whereas it took them eighteen years to cry to God later (**v. 14**). Life under Chushan-rishathaim was rough.
 - b. Stubborn sin will drag punishment out to ridiculous extremes. **PSA 78:34.**
 5. God in mercy raised up Othniel who had earlier shown himself valiant. **JDG 1:12-13.**
 - a. Othniel was not only a good warrior but a good leader. The land had rest for forty years while he lived. **v. 11.**
 - b. But then...
- D. After Othniel’s death, they sinned themselves again into oppression. **vs. 12-30.**
 1. God then did not just raise up an oppressor, He strengthened him against Israel. **v. 12.**
 - a. Moab had been earlier “off-limits” to Israel (**DEUT 2:9**) but was now empowered to punish Israel.
 - b. This reminds me of a saint who by scriptural instruction knows that he cannot impose law upon someone else’s liberty (such as wine consumption) but then himself ends up being overcome by the very liberty he was to permit.
 2. Eglon means “calf-like” and in this case a fatted calf. **v. 17.**
 3. Moab got Ammon and Amalek on his side and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken (**ECC 4:12**) so Israel was oppressed for eighteen years before they finally cried unto the Lord. **vs. 14-15.**
- E. God raised up Ehud of Benjamin, a left-handed man from a tribe that had no shortage of left-handers. **vs. 15-30 c/w JDG 20:16.**
 1. This left-hander became God’s right-hand man. c/w **PSA 80:17**
 2. Ehud’s tactics of deception were justified by God and the mission, and what he did he did with all his might, *heartily as unto the Lord*. **ECC 9:10; COL 3:23.**
 3. In a cautious sense, we may be justified in “deceiving” a gainsayer by letting his own foolish argument hang himself out to dry, sometimes publicly, in hopes that he will see the error of his ways. **2TI 3:7-9; 1CO 15:12-13, 29.**

4. Two of the components of Christian victory are boldness and confidence, like Ehud had. **ACT 4:13; PHIL 1:6.**
 5. Ehud's forwardness and boldness inspired others. **vs. 27-29 c/w PHIL 1:14.**
 6. Some of the most inspiring moments of Christian experience occur when saints see a brother standing against great pressure.
 7. The land rested for eighty years, a notably long season. Would to God that every saint upon conversion would hold fast in the rest of Jesus Christ for that long or more. **PSA 71:17-18.**
- F. Shamgar had but one tool/weapon and he used it effectively (**v. 31**). One faithful man with a Bible which pricks the heart can get great victories without seminaries, computers, denominations, etc.

V. **Judges 4-5.**

- A. These chapters set forth the next degeneration and oppression of Israel, against which a remarkable female judge (Deborah) and a remarkable female domestic champion (Jael) were called and honoured.
1. Deborah the prophetess (**JDG 4:4**) is one of a number of prophetesses in the record. **c/w EXO 15:20; 2KI 22:14; NEH 6:14; ISA 8:3; LUK 2:36; ACT 21:9.**
 2. The Holy Ghost called these women prophetesses, in contrast with "...that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess..." (**REV 2:20**).
 3. For the N.T. transitional period, *daughters* and *handmaidens* would prophesy. **ACT 2:17-18.**
- B. For their sin, God sold them into the hand of the Canaanite king, Jabin. **JDG 4:1-3.**
1. As earlier, the imagined power of the enemy's iron chariots was an issue. **v. 3 c/w JDG 1:19.**
 2. In this chapter, the chariots of the enemy were overcome. **JDG 4:15.**
 3. The problem was not the chariots but rather the sin and capitulation to oppression which could be corrected by repentance, faith, courage and action which God blesses.
 4. This should remind us in our battles against the world, the flesh and the devil that we are not the hapless drudges of the powers of darkness unless we allow them to have such power. Repentance, faith, courage and appropriate action are as blessed now as then. **1JO 5:4.**
- C. Deborah "...arose a mother in Israel" (**JDG 5:7**), a fitting description since the men in Israel were acting like "mommy's boys."
1. When the time came to confront the oppressors, even Barak the commander was unwilling to go unless "mother" was with him. **JDG 4:6-8.**
 2. The men had become as women. **c/w JER 51:30.**
 3. Israel in general had abandoned their personal arms under the delusions of their new gods, a recipe for oppression. **JDG 5:8 c/w 1SAM 13:19, 22.**
 - a. A softer, more tender religion had taken over. Bad religion enervates men and enervated men also choose bad religion which accommodates their lack of personal strength and self-discipline.
 - b. We read of bad religion's interplay with sodomitic notions. **ROM 1:23-28.**
 - c. We reject effeminacy in Christ's kingdom. **1CO 6:9-10.**
 - d. (**PRO 14:34**) Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.
 - e. Civilizations that ascend on sound principles can fall on their lusts.
 - f. Christians that pretend to know Christ without the sword of the spirit are set

- up for a fall into spiritual and moral degeneracy. Only those who are convinced they have God's word and put it to use have the potential for victory. **1TH 2:13.**
4. The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali apparently had retained good sense and arms since they were called and then engaged the enemy with the sword. **JDG 4:10-16 c/w JDG 5:18.**
 - a. It is oft said that the pen is mightier than the sword. But there are times when writing takes a back seat to action and Zebulun was so praised. **JDG 5:14.**
 - b. "The scribes of Zebulun and learned men, To wield the sword, laid down the pen." (Sir Richard Blackmore, quoted in Matthew Henry Commentary)
 5. NOTE: The order of God in marriage and in life in general is of male authority and leadership. It is not an honorable thing for that order to be usurped or abandoned.
 - a. There are some women who wrongfully seize power or control it behind the scenes, as Jezebel. **1KI 21:25.**
 - b. There are other women who take the reins that men abandon, sometimes out of a sense of survival moreso than rebellion, as Abigail. **1SAM 25:23-25.**
 6. The honor of the day should have gone to Barak but instead went to Jael. **JDG 4:9, 17-24.**
 - a. She did not let family or politics interfere with her righteous violence (**JDG 4:11, 17**), nor should men do so in their righteous violence against the sin which keeps them from God's kingdom. **MAT 11:12.**
 - b. Jael was justified in her godly deception of Sisera, even as Gideon was later justified in his godly deception. **JDG 6:11-12.**
 - c. She not only spiked Sisera but took his head off. **JDG 5:26.**
 - d. For this, she was "Blessed ABOVE women..." (**JDG 5:24**). c/w **LUK 1:28.**
 7. **JDG 5:28-30** drip with righteous sarcasm. c/w **1KI 18:27.**
- D. Deborah was very gracious in praising them that did well, even though some of the tribes were unimpressive. **JDG 5.**
1. Special praise was given to those who *willingly offered themselves to the LORD*. **JDG 5:2, 9 c/w 2CO 8:5.**
 2. The tribes of Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher were shamed. **JDG 5:16-17.**
 3. Meroz was cursed bitterly. **JDG 5:23 c/w JER 48:10; 1CO 16:22; GAL 1:8-9.**
 4. This description might remind us of the differing assessments of the churches of Asia in **REV 2-3.**
- E. Though Barak started out weak, yet he finished strong. **JDG 4:16, 22.**
1. Deborah joined him in a lovely duet. **JDG 5:1.**
 2. Barak was urged to *lead his captivity captive* (**JDG 5:12**), and this he did in one sense by overcoming the weakness which held him captive. See also **EPH 4:8.**
 3. Barak is listed among the champions of faith. **HEB 11:32-34.**
- F. Concerning Sisera's demise, "So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years" (**JDG 5:31**). c/w **GEN 3:15; MAL 4:2; REV 1:16.**

VI. Judges 6.

- A. This chapter begins the account of Gideon being raised up to judge Israel. Next to Samson, Gideon's record as a champion of faith (**HEB 11:32**) is the longest in this book.
- B. Israel's sin in going after the gods of the Amorites (v. 10) brought them again under oppression, this time to the Midianites. They had chosen Joshua's "Door #2" and were

now feeling the consequences of service to a false god who led them by their lusts and was of no help to them when trouble came (**JOS 24:15 c/w JDG 6:1-6**). The pleasures of sin (and of false religion which accommodates it) are only for a season. **HEB 11:24-25**.

1. Idolatry, as vain and ridiculous as it is, has always been remarkably appealing to, and difficult to separate from, for God's people who are prone to cultivate a religion that appeals to the flesh. **1CO 10:7, 20; 2CO 6:16**.
 2. The oppressors were traced back to Midian (from root words meaning *brawling, contention*), a son of Abraham. **GEN 25:2**.
 3. Midian had a land of their own for a time and Moses hid in a portion thereof, marrying the daughter of the priest, Reuel/Jethro. **EXO 2:15-21**.
 4. Because of their confederacy with Balak in corrupting Israel in the wilderness, God commanded that they be vexed, smitten. **NUM 25:16-18; 31:1-18**.
 - a. The account of **NUM 31:1-18** implies a thorough destruction of Midian, yet there was evidently a surviving remnant which repopulated that land and became a formidable enemy. c/w **1KI 11:14-17**.
 - b. NOTE: The remnant of a sin over which we have had victory may lie dormant, seemingly dead, but as long as we are in the flesh, it can revive through our indifference to holy government of our old man, as does the dead tree of **JOB 14:7-9**. Our bodies and minds must be under continual subjection to the law of Christ for continued dominion. **1CO 9:27; GAL 4:8-11**.
 5. The Midianites advanced a brutal deprivation policy, as Moses had prophesied would happen to Israel when they turned from God. **LEV 26:16; DEUT 28:51**.
 - a. A modern example of this was Stalin's seizure of all the grain stores of the Soviet Ukraine to feed Russia and prop up the illusion of the success of socialism/communism (the Holodomor). The Ukraine was reduced to starvation and cannibalism. Millions died.
 - b. It was at this nadir that Israel gave up on the helpless gods of the Amorites and cried unto the LORD. v. 6.
- C. It is said that "...whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered..." (**JOEL 2:32 c/w ROM 10:13**).
1. Deliverance began with a reproofing sermon from a prophet. vs. 7-10.
 2. The great salvation by repentance and faith in **ACT 2:38-47** began with a reproofing sermon about their guilt of innocent blood tempered with grace, mercy and hope. **ACT 2:29-37**.
 3. Deliverance from evil should be a regular plea but it behooves us to prioritize deliverance us from the evil of sin to help prevent the need for deliverance from bondage by evil men and from bondage to sin. **MAT 6:13**.
- D. The LORD (vs. 14, 16, 23) found Gideon clandestinely threshing and hiding wheat to preserve life under dismal oppression, and God blessed him. vs. 11-18.
1. Men have a duty of faith to provide for their house. **1TI 5:8**.
 2. Men of faith understand that political powers are limited by God and sometimes must be resisted. **1PE 2:13-16; ACT 5:29**.
 3. Mind the circumstances of Gideon's tactics: they are not a model or excuse to flippantly disregard civil power for every discomfort or abuse of power.
 4. In Gideon, God chose a prudent man with doubts and a meek opinion of his status in Israel, to His own glory. v. 15 c/w **1CO 1:26-29**.
 5. Gideon was a sign-seeker looking for confirmation of the word (v. 18) and God accommodated him in the verses to follow.

- E. **vs. 19-24** show us that:
1. Gideon had prudently stored enough to prepare a reasonable fare (**v. 19**) and this may remind us of our duty to lay up in store material and spiritual treasures against the day of God. **MAT 6:20; 1TI 6:17-19; 1CO 16:1-2.**
 2. The LORD's acceptance of our offerings is His answer of peace through Jesus Christ. **1PE 2:5 c/w HEB 13:15-16.**
- F. Before the Midianites could be destroyed, false religion needed to be cast down. **vs. 25-32.**
1. Thus, the *casting down of imaginations* and all idols (material or otherwise) are preparations for gospel success and deliverance from the oppressor. **2CO 10:5; ACT 26:18.**
 2. Wherever God is supposed to reign, His house must be judged and cleansed. **1PE 4:17; JAM 4:8.**
 3. Gideon's cautious bravery at the word of God is notable (**v. 27**) and godly zeal does well to learn to be *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*. **MAT 10:16.**
 4. Curious that the false god Baal needed to have his worshippers plead for him when his system was insulted. **vs. 29-32.**
 - a. False gods habitually need the support of extra-judicial zealots to avenge their being "dissed." **ACT 19:23-34.**
 - b. But the true God is well able to plead His own case and cause against gainsayers. **JOB 22:15-17.**
- G. The enemies gathered in mass for war but the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon and many rallied to the cause. **vs. 33-35 c/w ISA 59:19.**
- H. Gideon sought confirmation that God would use him to save Israel by putting a fleece upon the floor. If in the morning the dew were only on the fleece but not the ground, then Gideon would know that God would save Israel by him. It came to pass. But for Gideon, that wasn't enough, so he reversed the sign the next day and that also came to pass. **vs. 36-40.**
1. First, God had already declared that he would save Israel (**v. 14**). Was the subsequent asking for a sign an act of faith or doubt?
 2. Gideon's sign was not merely a circumstance; it was a miracle. Should we start asking God for miracles to determine His will? Remember that sign-seeking is not unique to the godly. **MAT 12:39.**
 3. Gideon did not put out a fleece to *determine God's guidance* (which had already been given). Gideon was seeking *confirmation*.
 4. Gideon had already asked for a confirming sign and God granted it. **vs. 17-22.**
 5. Gideon's putting out the fleece was really an expression of his reluctance to believe the call of God.
 6. That Gideon asked God to not be angry when he changed the sign (**v. 39**) indicates that he knew he was on thin ice.
 7. God accommodated Gideon but God later judged Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, who sought a sign in unbelief (**LUK 1:11-20**). Should this be the model for us? Why choose Gideon's model?
 8. Gideon's fleece project does NOT establish a precedent for us to follow.
 9. We have nothing in Scripture that instructs us or encourages us to seek signs from God to determine His will in decision-making. Scripture's commands and its principles of wisdom are to direct our decisions.

VII. **Judges 7.**

- A. This chapter sets forth one of the most incredible military victories of all time wherein a

small troop of 300 with improbable outfitting were used of God to defeat a multitudinous army of Midianites. This engagement far outranks the later famous 300 Spartans of the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BC) who were wiped out by the Persians. Oliver Cromwell's victories against all odds in fighting the superior numbers and forces of the king in the English civil war of the 1600's have been likened to Gideon's victory but the comparison is imperfect.

B. vs. 1-8.

1. God had made it clear by promise and confirmation that He would save Israel by Gideon's hand (**JDG 6:14, 36-40**), and now proceeds to reduce Gideon's forces.
 - a. This would be a trial of faith for Gideon and here we do not see him putting up the type of doubting objections as he had done in the previous chapter. His faith was strengthening and faith is made to grow under pressures more than under pleasantness. **2TH 1:3-4**.
 - b. When we face things that challenge our presuppositions and comforts, we do well to pray, "...Increase our faith" (**LUK 17:1-5**).
2. God was deliberately handicapping Gideon and his forces so that there would be no doubt as to how the victory would be won. Oftentimes, God handicaps those closest to Himself to ensure that His glory is foremost. **GEN 32:24-25; 2CO 12:7**.
3. God guards His glory tightly and expects us to do likewise. **JER 9:23-24; 1CO 1:29; 4:7; 1CO 15:57; PHIL 2:12-13**.
4. God even availed Himself of a provision in Moses' Law. v. 3 c/w **DEU 20:8**.
 - a. We have no such provision in Christ's Law. **HEB 13:5-6; REV 2:10**.
 - b. We are held to higher accountability and duty. **HEB 2:1-3**.
5. After the herd was culled of the fearful, then God culled out the imprudent.
 - a. Only those who were careful to maintain continual watchfulness were useful for this confrontation. **EPH 6:18; 1TH 5:5-6**.
 - b. Not even the one who drank upstream of the rest was considered prudent but that is in its place a wise principle. Even the water of Life is purest from the Source before it is processed through sinners.
6. God will permit trouble in the church to sift the chaff from the wheat and manifest the approved. **1CO 11:19**.
7. This should remind us to not measure the rightness or potential of a venture by the numbers. **NUM 13-14; 2KI 6:15-17; LUK 12:32; 2CO 10:12**.

C. vs. 9-14.

1. God here helps Gideon in his forward walk of faith, not by giving him an "out" for fear's sake as He had done with the 22,000 but by giving him some insights as to what the enemy was thinking.
 - a. God has likewise given us a Book full of insights into the adversaries' devices. **2CO 2:11**.
 - b. Our Bible reveals Satan's goals, tactics and even his weak spots. **MAT 4:1-11; 1JO 2:13-14; 5:18**.
2. Gideon finds that the vast enemy is not totally convinced of their success.
 - a. We err when we think that the enemy always has a united front and that God could not already be filling them with doubts and fears. **ACT 5:34-39**.
 - b. Perhaps Gideon's boldness in **JDG 6:25-27** had become well-known and God used the enemy's superstitions to affect their mind. c/w **ACT 28:6**.
 - c. Perhaps God used their dreams to trouble them. c/w **MAT 27:19; ECC 5:7**.
 - d. We do well to note that God is not only able to empower the faithful but also to enervate the enemy.

3. Gideon was *a cake of barley bread*, not *a case of barley-brew*. Soberness is needed for victory. **ROM 13:12-14; 1TH 5:8.**
- D. **vs. 15-18.**
1. The reconnaissance mission animated Gideon who in turn energized his men to set up a triangulated assault upon the enemy camp. NOTE: Much of our spiritual warfare depends upon such a triangulation: faith, hope and charity. **1CO 13:13.**
 2. The outfitting of Gideon's men was not exactly typical of warriors: pitchers, lamps, trumpets. So "Christ crucified" was and is to natural man a stumblingblock and a piece of foolishness but stronger than men. **1CO 1:23-25.**
- E. **vs. 19-23.**
1. The element of surprise was in their favor, as was the commandment of **NUM 10:9.**
 2. The enemy in confusion fought one another while the 300 watched.
 - a. This was another case of "...Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD..." (**EXO 14:13-14**).
 - b. Confusion among the enemy is an effective tactic to be exploited when possible. **2CH 20:23; ACT 23:6-7.**
 - c. It is helpful in witnessing to employ the principle of Reductio Ad Absurdum to both hone your own arguments and show someone else where their arguments meet themselves coming.
 - d. It has been said that you should not interfere with your enemy's suicide.
- F. **vs. 24-25.**
1. Gideon did not stop once the host of Midian was threshed. They pursued and destroyed the heads of the enemy force.
 2. NOTE: In our battles against sin, we must not only mortify the troops but also the chiefs which excite the troops: "...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life..." (**1JO 2:16**).
 3. Purifying the hands (outward sins) requires purifying the heart. **MAT 15:18-19; JAM 4:8.**
- G. This victory was celebrated as a model for victory against other enemies. **PSA 83:11.**
- H. This victory anticipated the victory of God through Jesus Christ over the entire realm of Satan and death. **ISA 9:1-7 c/w 1CO 15:51-58.**

VIII. Judges 8.

- A. **vs. 1-9.**
1. In the thick of Gideon's victorious "evangelism" campaign of converting the Midianites to reduction and death, Gideon must deal with trouble in the church. c/w **ACT 14:27-28; 15:1-2.**
 2. The first grief was from Ephraim who had just had the glory of slaying two princes of Midian. v. 1 c/w **JDG 7:24-25.**
 - a. This was a peevish reaction born of envy and vainglory. ct/w **PHIL 2:3.**
 - b. Gideon was of Manasseh (**JDG 6:15**), Ephraim's brother and they had a long history of brotherly contention. **ISA 9:21.**
 - c. Right works are not uncommonly envied (**ECC 4:4**) and hatred often gained as much by good works as by evil works.
 - d. Gideon wisely gives them a soft answer. vs. 2-3 c/w **PRO 15:1; 25:11.**
 - e. Gideon didn't even bring up the fact that Ephraim didn't successfully block the escape of 15,000 Midianites. v. 10.
 - f. Christ teaches us to absorb slights and consider forbearance, forgiveness. **MAT 5:38-42; COL 3:13.**

3. Gideon and his men did not let faintness stop them. **v. 4 c/w 2SAM 23:10; PSA 18:37.**
 - a. Reaping will come to well-doers who faint not. **GAL 6:9.**
 - b. Having a true perspective of our troubles helps us stave off fainting. **HEB 12:2-4.**
 - c. **(PRO 24:10)** If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.
 - d. Faithful saints will find that God bears them up through times when they think their strength is gone. **ISA 40:31; 2CO 12:9.**
 - e. Mind that Gideon was not on a recruiting mission: he was moving ahead with the 300 that God said would be used for deliverance (**JDG 7:7**). His faith was being proved by his works. **JAM 2:18.**
 4. The men of Succoth and Penuel out of self-interest refused to support this good man in his good venture with sustenance. **vs. 5-9 c/w 1SAM 25:10-11.**
 - a. They evidently thought that soldiers fighting for the public good should do so of their own charges. **c/w 1CO 9:7.**
 - b. Those who do not support a godly work with their persons should at least support it with their provisions. **PHIL 4:15-16.**
 - c. Gideon's faith is also seen in that he doesn't say, "...If I come again..." but "...when..." (**vs. 7, 9**). He has complete faith in God to secure him to victory and return. **c/w ACT 2:27; JOH 14:1-3.**
 - d. And he wouldn't spare. **c/w 2TH 1:7-9.**
- B. vs. 10-17.**
1. Zebah, Zalmunna and the remnant of their host had assumed themselves secure in Karkor. **vs. 10-12.**
 - a. Karkor means *foundation*. Be mindful of your foundation. **MAT 7:26-27.**
 - b. They falsely assumed themselves secure and suddenly found out otherwise. **c/w JDG 18:27.**
 - c. If the house of God on earth is the *gate of heaven* (**GEN 28:17**), the *gates of hell* (**MAT 16:18**) might well be false religious systems, especially antichrist systems which pose as secure havens for the persecutors of the true church. Such are the last places for the children of God to find security. **REV 18:4.**
 - d. We should ever beware of assuming security because our unrepentance has not yet yielded judgment. **ECC 8:11 c/w ROM 2:4-6.**
 - e. "The security of sinners often proves their ruin, and dangers are most fatal when least feared." (Matthew Henry)
 - f. Unbelieving Israel has falsely assumed security in their "God's chosen people" rhetoric and wealth for thousands of years in spite of severe wake-up calls.
 - g. Mind that Gideon and his men, being denied sustenance, still pursued while faint, and cleaned up! **v. 12.**
 2. Chickens came home to roost for Succoth and Penuel. **vs. 13-17.**
 - a. Gideon severely chastened the men of Succoth and it was very educational. **c/w PRO 29:15.**
 - b. "Our blessed Saviour, though he was a Son, yet *learnt obedience by the things which he suffered*, Heb 5:8. Let every *pricking brier*, and *grieving thorn*, especially when it becomes a *thorn in the flesh*, be thus interpreted, thus improved. 'By this God designs to teach me; what good lesson shall I learn?' " (Matthew Henry)
 - c. The men of Penuel sought refuge in the wrong tower (**v. 17 ct/w PSA 18:2**).

There is no threat of sin or judgment in Christ, only when we are out of Christ and in the flesh. **1JO 3:6.**

C. **vs. 18-21.**

1. Zebah and Zalmunna must answer for their crimes, which included the slaying of Gideon's brothers, possibly back in **JDG 6:2-3**. Tabor means *mound*.
 - a. "...each one resembled the children of a king." It should be hoped that if we must suffer in the flesh, that it be because we resembled our King. **1PE 4:15-16.**
 - b. For some reason, Gideon said he would not slay them had they not attacked his family. Why?
 - (1) This is bordering on partiality in judgment. God is no respecter of persons. **DEU 10:17 c/w 1TI 5:21.**
 - (2) It is possible that Gideon was not dealing with them as prisoners of war here but as murderers for which he acted as the *avenger of blood*. **DEU 19:11-12.**
 - c. We should mortify all sin in our members, no exceptions, and especially no exceptions for the ones that are personally dear to us.
2. Gideon's firstborn son was still young and not yet tempered for the role of executioner, so Gideon slew them.
 - a. The church is to set them to judge who are *least esteemed*, not least wise, fit or experienced. **1CO 6:4.**
 - b. The church, being scoffed at by an unbelieving world which sees it as a weak, foolish entity and esteems it lightly, is nonetheless where saints should be resolving small issues of conflict. **1CO 6:5-7.**

D. **vs. 22-23.**

1. Israel offered to make Gideon their universal ruler, a prelude to their errant design which happened in Samuel's day. **1SAM 8:6-7.**
2. Gideon refused the power, a rare self-restraint in history similar to the later Cincinnatus or Cromwell (upon whose tomb/coffer was apparently written, "Christ, not man, is King").

E. **vs. 24-27.**

1. Apparently, the Midianites really pimped out their rides.
2. If you are wondering how much 1700 shekels of gold was, it was 34000 gerahs. **EXO 30:13.**
3. Gideon slipped in that he made an ephod (priestly vestment which for Israel's high priest was the holder of the oracle stones, Urim and Thummim, which were used to determine the mind of God). c/w **1SAM 23:9; 30:7.**
 - a. Even if Gideon's intentions were noble, it proved to be a snare for himself and for Israel, likely being used for idolatrous divination as did the heathen. c/w **JDG 17:5.**
 - b. Even when God once ordered a brass serpent to be made, it later became an object of worship that had to be destroyed. **NUM 21:8-9 c/w 2KI 18:4.**
 - c. Religious icons, images, etc. are fraught with potential snares of idolatry which is to be fled, not fed. **1CO 10:14.**

F. **vs. 28-35.**

1. Midian was subdued and their destruction was celebrated in **PSA 83.**
2. While Gideon lived, Israel walked uprightly. But when he died, they promptly forgot him, his family, and their God. Such are the ways of those who will only be good while under the eye of a good man. ct/w **PHIL 2:12; PRO 6:6-8.**

IX. **Judges 9.**

- A. The pendulum of peace and oppression in this chapter rests at its nadir for a season of civil strife and war.
1. When Satan is not trying to destroy the church from without, he is much willing to destroy from within (and sometimes through petty strife or power seizures). **ACT 20:29-30; JAM 4:1; 1CO 6:6-8; 3JO 1:9-10.**
 2. As regenerate believers, we need to be ever on guard against internal factions of our old nature frustrating our purpose in Christ. **GAL 5:17; 1CO 9:27.**
- B. This chapter sets forth a stark example of ruthlessness in politics by ambitious men, and how God allows both the rise and the frustration of troublemakers who are his leashed whips for chastening and purifying His church. **1CO 11:19; 2TI 3:8-9.**
1. Remember that the time of Judges (with its chaos and swings) was when "...there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (**JDG 21:25**).
 2. Yet in this chapter, a rebel son of Gideon was by treachery and ruthlessness made king, contrary to Gideon's wishes. **v. 6 c/w JDG 8:23.**
 3. It is strange that Gideon named this son of a concubine, Abimelech (*my father is king*). **JDG 8:31.**
- C. **vs. 1-6.**
1. Abimelech pushed for power by tribal factionalism, a base move for ambitious men, insinuating without proof that other of Gideon's sons would push for power (**v. 2**). People who themselves design ill are most likely to suspect that others do likewise.
 2. The city of Shechem may have had the historical residue of the treachery of Simeon and Levi (**GEN 34:25-31**) in its memory as well as a false god, Baalberith (*lord of the covenant*) and his house. **v. 4 c/w JDG 8:33.**
 3. Abimelech played to their lusts (**v. 3 c/w 2SAM 15:2-6**) and they financed his campaign out of an idol's treasury. **v. 4.**
 4. Abimelech then used the funds to hire rabble to do his dirty work, as Trotsky and Lenin (and perhaps George Soros) would do thousands of years later. **vs. 4-5 c/w ACT 17:5.**
 5. Discipleship excludes regard for brethren (**LUK 14:26**) but not like this.
 6. Abimelech's murderous campaign got him elected, which says as much about them as it does about Abimelech. **v. 6 c/w PSA 12:8; ECC 10:6.**
 7. But Jotham escaped by hiding (**v. 5 c/w 2KI 11:1-2**), and we do well to hide in Christ when Satan's powers are after us. **COL 3:3-6 c/w 1CO 10:13.**
- D. **vs. 7-21.**
1. Jotham bravely reproved the wicked with a parable: there were plenty of honorable sons of Gideon that could have been their ruler but restrained themselves in accord with Gideon's intentions. **vs. 7-15.**
 2. But Shechem chose the prickly bramble, Abimelech, and the harshness he represented (**vs. 14-15**). Fools who rely on tyrants to lead them should consider that tyrants are tyrannical in general, not just when aimed.
 3. Jotham reminded them of how good Gideon was for them and how evil they were therefore for the ill treatment of his sons, leaving them with a curse of mutual destruction. **vs. 16-21.**
 - a. The curse causeless shall not come. **PRO 26:2.**
 - b. But there was plenty of cause, and God respected the curse later.
 - c. Let us never trivialize how good our Savior has been to us, in spite of our

circumstances, and bring a curse to pass on ourselves.

1CO 16:22 c/w HEB 10:29-31.

E. **vs. 22-33.**

1. The love affair between Abimelech and Shechem didn't last long, and another power-grasper, Gaal, arose to capture the support of Shechem. Alliances of wicked men may run no longer than the first tiff. But godly saints will strive to work their way through tiffs. **MAT 5:23-24; 18:15; LUK 17:3.**
2. Gaal spoke very brazenly in challenging Abimelech (v. 29) but "...Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off" (**1KI 20:11**).
3. Zebul was not impressed with Gaal, especially since Zebul had been included in Gaal's diatribe, so he alerted Abimelech. **vs. 30-33.**
4. Sin was on all hands here, and was contesting with itself. Have you ever found yourself in spiritual chaos and your sins at war against themselves to see which one would gain the day?

F. **vs. 34-49.**

1. These verses set forth the folly and futility of sinners and sin struggling for mastery in a wicked cause. The way of transgressors is hard. **PRO 13:15.**
2. If Gideon were able to look down from heaven, he could see his enemies again destroying one another. His son, Jotham, though, could fondly reflect upon the whole situation in view of his curse.
3. The tower of Shechem's sin provided no protection against the sinful designs of Abimelech. We never get anywhere by hiding from one sin in another sin, so choose your pavilion wisely. **PSA 27:5.**
4. Contrast v. 48 with **JDG 7:17** and "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (**PHIL 4:9**). Choose your patterns wisely.
5. There was much collateral damage to others. **v. 49.**
 - a. There were no Rahabs to be found among them who saved themselves as she did from that untoward generation. **HEB 11:31 c/w ACT 2:40.**
 - b. The main targets of Abimelech's wrath *perished not alone in their iniquity.* c/w **JOS 22:20.**

G. **vs. 50-57.**

1. Abimelech's tower strategy failed this time because of overconfidence. His tactical error resonated throughout Jewish history. c/w **2SAM 11:21.**
2. His head was broke and his brains probably leaking out but at least his damnable pride was still intact! **v. 54.**
3. God's vengeance may sleep for a while but not forever. **LUK 18:7-8.**

X. **Judges 10.**

A. This chapter again sets forth the pendulum swing of true worship to idolatry, of peace to oppression, and of repentance which works salvation. This chapter is basically the set-up for the details of an unusual deliverer in **Chapter 11.**

B. **vs. 1-5.**

1. In the wake of the depraved, murderous Abimelech (**JDG 10**), there were about 45 years of stability while they stayed away from idolatry. This was a notably long period of good during these chaotic times.
2. Two judges/deliverers/saviors, Tola and Jair, filled this season. Curiously, there is no mention of a foreign oppressor at this time that had overtaken Israel.
3. Some of the best deliverances are being saved from the potentials of darkness, not

only from the consequences of yielding to darkness. Faithful leadership will stress this principle as long as possible. **1TI 4:16; 2TI 4:2-4.**

- a. It appears that the good service which Tola and Jair performed was to save Israel from themselves.
 - b. Christ came, not only to save us from the penalty of sin, but also from its power and pollutions. **MAT 1:21.**
 - c. Those that deliver themselves in accord with fair warning are truly delivered. **ROM 14:11-14.**
 - d. NOTE: Do not be duped into concluding that being delivered from temptation is of less value than experiencing the mercy of God that is extended to the repentor who had yielded to the temptation. Such thinking will end up with “Let us do evil that good may come” (**ROM 3:8**) and will ultimately disparage Jesus Christ, Who never yielded to temptation.
4. It seems strange that so little is mentioned of Tola and Jair for their 45 years of good judgeship, even less than was mentioned of Abimelech.
- a. The roll call of faith in **HEB 11** specifically names some major players but they were not the only players. **HEB 11:35-40.**
 - b. Not everyone in the early church was a Paul, Apollos, John, Peter or James, etc. Yet the likes of Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla et. al. played important roles in kingdom purposes. God will in one way or another remember the work and labor of love of faithful saints. **HEB 6:10.**
 - c. The more feeble members in the church who are faithful in what they have and do are to be honored abundantly. **1CO 12:14-31.**
 - d. “We know nothing of Tola and Jair in comparison with what we know of Abimelech. Yet the very fact that little is said of them is a proof that they were good and honest men. We are too ready to mistake notoriety for fame and both for signs of greatness. They are not the greatest men who make the most noise in the world. It is something if this censorious world can say no ill of us. Aim at doing well rather than at striking attention.”
(Pulpit Commentary)
5. Jair had 30 sons who were circuit judges. **v. 4 c/w JDG 5:10.**
- a. Samuel likewise judged Israel. **1SAM 7:16.**
 - b. Paul built churches, then circled back to follow up with them, and ordained elders where appropriate. **ACT 15:36-41; 14:21-23.**
 - c. Jair’s sons could have been known as the 30-30-30 court.
- C. **vs. 6-9.**
1. When Israel went astray, they went completely astray. No mention is made here of them serving the LORD and serving idols, per **2KI 17:33**. They were as Athens was later described, “...wholly given to idolatry” (**ACT 17:16**).
 2. The seven idolatrous devotions (**v. 6**) are starkly juxtaposed to the seven deliverances noted in **vs. 11-12**, an effective reproof.
 3. God put them under oppression for eighteen years, and the oppression affected both sides of the church divided by the Jordan river. This should remind us that leaven and its effects spread broadly. **1CO 5:6; 2TI 2:16-17.**
 4. Funny how the gods of Israel’s newfound allies in religion didn’t honor their devotions and save them from the heathens’ terrors. Beware the allure of carnal religion which draws you away from Christ only to turn on you since it is not governed by the heavenly principles of true religion. The gods of the nations were sexy and exciting but bloodthirsty. **DEU 12:29-31.**

- D. **vs. 10-18.**
1. Israel's wake-up call under oppression hearkens to **PSA 78:34**. Early repentance is preferable, and a space of repentance is only a space. **REV 2:21-23**.
 2. Selling out to sin after better knowledge can have grievous implications for even finding one's way back. **LUK 12:47 c/w HEB 10:26-27; 2TI 2:24-26**.
 3. God told them exactly what Moses had warned about.
vs. 13-14 c/w DEU 32:37-38 c/w JER 2:28.
 4. Israel finally did the right thing and threw themselves on the mercy of the court of God, surrendering any defense and owning their sin. That is the best thing for any sinner to do when he has dug himself into a deep hole.
JOB 33:27-28; JON 3:9-10.

XI. **Judges 11.**

- A. This chapter sets forth the judgeship of Jephthah whom God raised up in response to the call for help against Ammon by the reforming Gileadites. **JDG 10:17-18.**
- B. Because of the unusual calling of Jephthah, a bastard, and his fateful vow detailed in this chapter, it will be helpful to remember:
1. Israel was prone during this era to embracing Canaanite religions and the gods of the Canaanites were noted for demanding child sacrifice. **DEU 12:30-31.**
 2. Israel was prone to adopt their heinous customs. **PSA 106:34-38.**
 3. There was no shortage of disorder and ignorance in those days. **JDG 21:25.**
- C. In spite of everything, Jephthah was a noted champion of faith. **HEB 11:32.**
1. Jephthah was *a mighty man of valour* (v. 1), like Gideon. **JDG 6:12.**
 2. Remember that the judges were saviors. **NEH 9:27.**
 3. Jephthah was therefore an imperfect type of the man of perfect faith, the mighty Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Judge and Savior of men.
JOH 8:29 c/w HEB 11:6; PSA 89:19; ISA 9:6; JOH 5:22; TIT 1:4.
- D. **vs. 1-3.**
1. Jephthah was the son of an harlot, rejected of his brethren. c/w **JOH 1:11.**
 2. He was, by definition, a *bastard* (one begotten and born out of wedlock; an illegitimate or natural child). The Talmud says Jesus was so born of Miriam/Mary.
 3. A bastard under Moses' Law was unfit for entering the congregation. **DEU 23:2.**
 4. As a reproach to Israel's religious whoredom, God would raise up a son of an harlot, a bastard, to be their judge and deliverer.
 - a. Mind that a natural bastard does not choose to be a bastard and he cannot alter his reality. Spiritual bastardy can be altered by God.
JOH 8:41-42 c/w GAL 4:4-6.
 - b. All the children of Adam bear his image of sin though they did not choose it.
ROM 5:12.
 - c. All victims of sinning headship have one hope: Jesus Christ. **ROM 5:19.**
 - d. Though born a bastard of man, if born again of God, the inheritance is sure.
ROM 8:30; 1PE 1:3-5.
 5. Jephthah was a disadvantaged child. But we don't read of where he used his disadvantage as an excuse to turn criminal, do nothing with his life, or allow it to excuse or impair his service to God. c/w **EXO 4:10-12; 1TI 4:12.**
- E. **vs. 4-11.**
1. Under pressure from the warring Ammonites, Jephthah's brethren were forced to call upon him for deliverance.
 2. Here is a case where natural Israel looked for deliverance in the countryman whom

- they had rejected. c/w **2CO 3:15-18.**
3. Let all who have suffered rejection by peers for righteousness' sake be faithful and patient. There will be vindication. **ISA 66:5 c/w ISA 45:24; REV 3:9.**
- F. **vs. 12-28.**
1. Jephthah attempted to pursue a diplomatic course first by reasoning with the Ammonite king.
 2. A man of faith will seek peace and make inquiry before hasting to strife. **PRO 25:8-9; ROM 12:18; 2TI 2:24-25.**
 3. A man of faith will be studied so as to silence opposition with facts, not fists. **2TI 2:15; 1PE 3:15; TIT 1:9-11.**
 4. A man of faith will be sure that “the LORD the Judge” can overcome in any contest with idol gods or idle doctrines. **1KI 18:21; ACT 6:9-10; 2TI 4:16-17.**
 5. One area where attempts at peace are unwarranted is when Satan is roaring against us with false accusations or temptations. We dare not reason with him or patch up some inglorious peace, but go to war against him in the faith. **1PE 5:8-9.**
- G. **vs. 29-40.**
1. Jephthah made an unspecific and unadvised solemn vow unto God and stuck to it.
 2. The Spirit of the LORD was upon him (v. 29) when he made his vow. Even inspired men of faith may *speak unadvisedly with their lips*. **PSA 106:33; ACT 23:3-5.**
 3. Jephthah was victorious in battle, but then brought low by the events which followed.
 - a. God does temper our victorious mountaintops with valleys of trials and weakness. Remember Elijah. **ROM 11:2-3; 1PE 1:6.**
 - b. However, let us not attribute to God’s providential care the poorly informed decisions we make which are our own doing. **PRO 19:3; EZE 18:25.**
 - c. “Perverse mankind! whose wills, created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute decree;
All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscalled the crimes of fate.”
(Alexander Pope)
 4. Jephthah believed that vows and oaths are solemn things. **NUM 30:2; DEU 23:21-23; PSA 15:4.**
 5. Human sacrifice is great sin (**PSA 106:37-38**). Is it just to commit great sin to honor a vow?
 - a. David wisely reneged on his oath to shed Nabal's blood. **1SAM 25:22-23.**
 - b. Herod should have reneged on his vow to Herodias' daughter. **MAR 6:22-27.**
 - c. If someone has sworn to uphold the creed of some false religious system, is he therefore forbidden to come to repentance to the knowledge of the truth?
 - d. Weightier laws must overrule when two laws come into conflict. **MAT 12:3-5.**
 - e. The law even had a provision for handling rash oaths. **LEV 5:4-6.**
 - f. Imprudent oaths should be confessed as sin and put under the blood. **1JO 1:9.**
 6. The evidence here is that Jephthah kept his vow as uttered, and his daughter complied.
 - a. Some say that because the daughter bewailed her virginity for two months (v. 38), that she was simply made a nun, and so was devoted unto the Lord.

- (1) If perpetual virginity was her fate, what was the point of the two months? She would have the rest of her life to bewail that.
 - (2) Whereas one may choose celibacy in view of a more spiritual walk, no such thing is commanded. Paul spoke a private judgment (not a commandment) of a virgin's ability to *attend upon the Lord without distraction*. **1CO 7:25, 32-35 c/w 1TI 4:3.**
- b. Perhaps Jephthah misinterpreted **LEV 27:29**, equating those devoted by the curse of God with those devoted by men's vows. c/w **1SAM 15:2-3.**
 - c. Perhaps Jephthah was thinking of how God intervened when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac (**GEN 22:11-12**), but God had not so commanded Jephthah. **GEN 22:2.**
 - d. Perhaps Jephthah's decisions reflected disorderly times, Canaanitish pollutions and a lack of a full grasp of the law of God. God's people can be destroyed by lack of knowledge. **HOS 4:6.**
 - e. An improperly informed conscience can lead to extremes. **JOH 16:2-3.**
 - f. Well-informed daughters of Abraham know there are limits to authority. **1PE 3:5-6.**
- H. Thank God for His adoption, regeneration and fatherly chastenings. **HEB 12:6-8.**
- I. Here is some additional information about **LEV 27:29**, mentioned above.
1. This chapter deals with things that were ostensibly for God, some of which could be redeemed (the sanctified things) and some which could not (the devoted things).
 2. A sanctified thing, person or beast had an appraised value and could be redeemed by paying that value plus twenty percent (the fifth part). **vs. 13, 15, 19.**
 3. There are two classes of devoted things:
 - a. those which were consecrated to God for the maintenance of the priests. **v. 21 c/w NUM 18:14.**
 - b. those devoted to God's justice which were to be utterly destroyed and nothing even of the residue claimed for personal reasons, as was the case with Jericho or a murderer. **JOS 6:17-19; NUM 35:31.**
 4. Whatever God commanded was to be used only for His appointed purposes forbade any person from pretending a personal claim contrariwise.
 5. devoted: Vowed; appropriated or set apart by a vow or formally; under a vow; dedicated, consecrated. 3. Formally or surely consigned to evil or destruction; doomed.
 - a. Oxford English Dictionary cites **DEU 13:17** relative to the latter definition, where the marginal reference says "devoted" for "cursed thing."
 - b. The Hebrew word for "the cursed thing" is *cherem* (SRN 2764) and is the same word underlying "devoted" in **LEV 27:21, 28-29.**
 - c. Thus, a person could be devoted to God for holy use in His service by a personal vow (as was Samuel, **1SAM 1:11**), or devoted by God Himself to a curse and death, as were the seven nations of Canaan, Jericho, Amalek, or a murderer.
 - d. **NUM 21:1-3** was a case where Israel vowed the utter destruction of some Canaanites before they even entered Canaan if God would help them, and He did, so they were obliged to take no prizes of men.
 - e. Since the Law of God forbade slaying the innocent and human sacrifice, **LEV 27:29** must refer to whom God Himself had appointed to a curse and death. Note that the phrase "unto the LORD" in **v. 28** is not in **v. 29.**
 6. The devotion of a man/men by God unto a curse and death which could not be

altered, retracted or redeemed should remind us of the awful gravity of Jesus Christ being made a curse for us, devoted to utter destruction without a chance of redemption that He might redeem us from our sins. **GAL 3:13 c/w ROM 8:32.**

7. Our conversion and submission to Jesus Christ is essentially a vow of devotion unto dying daily to sin, self and the world, and even physical death. **ROM 8:36; 2CO 4:10-11; REV 2:10; 12:11.**

XII. Judges 12.

A. vs. 1-4.

1. Jephthah, having just wrought a great victory for Israel, might have expected to be received with thanks and praise but instead was berated by his own countrymen, men of Ephraim, a peevish attitude they had also shown to Gideon. **JDG 8:1.**
2. Their anger was ridiculous and fierce, as if everything that was deemed an offense should be met with heated fury. ct/w **JAM 1:19-20.**
3. It is a sad observation that leaders who have the church's best interests at heart and who, in the way of duty, exercise themselves nobly for it, are sometimes unloved or even despised of their beneficiaries. **PSA 109:4; 2CO 12:14-15.**
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ could not do enough good to pacify His haters. **JOH 10:32.**
5. One could wonder which of the basest motivations, or combination of them, was making them so ridiculous: greed (they didn't get any spoils of battle), pride (should a bastard like Jephthah show us up?) or envy, before which no man can stand? **PRO 27:3-4; ECC 4:4.**
6. "Those resentments that have the least reason for them have commonly the most rage in them." (Matthew Henry)
7. Also, Ephraim had not made Jephthah their captain: Gilead had (**JDG 11:4-11**). Jephthah had no such support and grant of authority from Ephraim: they were of the kind who like the benefits of another's courage and labor without any of the cost. Further, Jephthah *had* called them! v. 2.
8. Ephraim also overlooked that the victory was of the LORD (**JDG 11:32**); their real gripe was against God Himself.
9. Though it was through some sketchy decision-making and compliance to an unjust expectation, Jephthah had just suffered the loss of his only child. Where was Ephraim's mercy and compassion, or even their loving exhortation that could have helped him understand the error of his ways? Instead, they piled on. **PSA 109:16; 69:26.**
10. They had even railed on him and reviled him. v. 4.
 - a. rail: To utter abusive language.
 - b. revile: To subject to contumely or abuse, to assail with opprobrious or abusive language.
 - c. contumely: Insolent reproach or abuse; insulting or offensively contemptuous language or treatment; despite; scornful rudeness: now esp. such contemptuous treatment as tends to inflict dishonor and humiliation.
 - d. This can cost one his inheritance in Christ's kingdom. **1CO 5:11; 6:9-10.**
 - e. Unbridled tongues set on fire the course of nature. **JAM 3:6.**
 - f. "It is no new thing for those that are most culpable to be most clamorous in accusing the innocent." (Matthew Henry)
11. Having to go it of his own accord, Jephthah put his own life at risk for the great cause. We do well to respect those who hazard their lives for godly endeavors more than those who ride on their coat-tails. **ACT 15:25-26 ct/w 3JO 1:9-10.**

- B. **vs. 5-6.**
 - 1. Ephraim poked the bear and the bear woke up angry and tare 42,000 Ephraimites.
 - 2. The Gileadites capitalized on a foible of human nature, and sometimes a man's speech betrays his origin. **MAT 26:73.**
 - 3. Freemasonry seizes upon this story and makes Shibboleth the secret password for the ritual of the Second or Fellow Craft degree of the lodge.
- C. **v. 7.**
 - 1. Jephthah, the bastard who judged Israel, died after a short six years of judgeship.
 - 2. Though this world placed ill marks on him, the Holy Spirit's mark is the one that counts. **HEB 11:32-33.**
- D. **vs. 8-15.**
 - 1. Following Jephthah was a series of relatively short-term judges, which may be a statement of the condition of the people. **PRO 28:2.**
 - 2. Two of them produced large families.
 - 3. It is probably not true that Elon signed his name with "X."

XIII. **Judges 13.**

- A. This begins the account of the judgeship of Samson, an eminent type of Christ in many ways but with his fame was also considerable infamy.
- B. He was a flawed champion of faith with whom we are made perfect. **HEB 11:32, 40.**
- C. He was born in the thick of Philistine oppression (v. 1) and judged for twenty years. **JDG 15:20; 16:31.**
- D. His name means, "like the sun." c/w **MAL 4:2; REV 1:16.**
- E. His father's name was *Manoah*, which means "rest."
 - 1. That name comes from the same root as *Noah*, which also means "rest."
 - 2. Through these men, God executed judgment upon His enemies, relieved God's people of the oppression and curse they lived under, and gave them rest. c/w **GEN 5:29 c/w GAL 3:13; ROM 10:4.**
- F. His family was of the tribe of Dan, which means "judge(ed)(ing)." Appropriately, he was raised up to judge God's people. **GEN 49:16.**
- G. As other of the Judges, he was a savior. **NEH 9:27.**
- H. In many ways, Samson foreshadowed and typified Christ.
 - 1. Samson was a Nazarite, set apart for holy use. Though Jesus Christ was not under the vow of a Nazarite, He is separated, holy in conduct and usage. **HEB 7:26.**
 - 2. Both were saviors.
 - 3. Both were judges.
 - 4. Both have an identity with the sun.
 - 5. Both fought against the enemies of God and His people.
 - 6. Both were mighty in battle to save. **PSA 24:8; ISA 63:1.**
 - 7. Both were raised up when Israel was dominated by foreign oppressors.
 - 8. Both were ill-received as a judge/savior by their own people. **JOH 1:11.**
 - 9. Both were betrayed by a close confidante for pieces of silver.
 - 10. Both were turned over to a foreign power by their own people.
 - 11. Both were taunted and tortured by the enemies of the Lord.
 - 12. Both executed judgment from a high place while restrained and derided.
 - 13. Both accomplished greater victories by their death than by their life.
- I. **vs. 1-5.**
 - 1. In the pattern of this book's history, Israel fell again into sin and under oppression.
 - 2. There is a lack of evidence of humility and repentance at the time God would raise

- up Samson.
- a. God sometimes saves for His own name's sake. **EZE 36:21-22.**
 - b. Thus, it seems that Samson also brokenly figures Christ in that His salvation of His people from the just desserts of their sins is not with an eye to their personal performance but to His own name, Jesus. **MAT 1:21.**
3. From a very unlikely source, a barren woman, God would bring forth a deliverer. c/w **PSA 113:9; 127:3.**
 4. This angel of the LORD was likely the LORD Himself, as with Gideon (**JDG 6:11-27**). In the phrase, "...Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (v. 18), the Hebrew word underlying *secret* (SRN H6383) is translated *wonderful* in **PSA 139:6**. Compare that with **ISA 9:6**.
 5. Mrs. Manoah was in the ranks of other notable women who were withheld from but eventually rewarded with special children: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Elisabeth.
 - a. It may not have been a miraculous vitalizing of her womb (as Sarah, **ROM 4:19**), but it was a promise.
 - b. "Many a woman, after having been long barren, has borne a son by providence, but Samson was by promise, because a figure of the promised seed, so long expected by the faith of the Old Testament saints." (Matthew Henry)
 6. She was charged to abstain from wine, strong drink and unclean food in accord with Samson being a Nazarite from the womb (c/w **NUM 6:3**). He obviously had personhood and identity from conception, contrary to the abortion industry's position.
 7. That Samson's hair should be left exceptionally uncut/long is no more an argument to justify long hair on men than were the exceptional orders for Isaiah or Hosea. **ISA 20:1-4; HOS 1:2; 3:1 c/w 1CO 11:14.**
 8. Samson only *began* to deliver (v. 5). Jesus Christ *began and finished* deliverance of His people. **HEB 5:9; 12:2; 9:12.**
- J. **vs. 6-14.**
1. She did well in conferring with her God-fearing husband about radical information. c/w **GEN 3:1-6.**
 2. Manoah did well in seeking clarity from God. c/w **JAM 1:5-6.**
 3. Note Manoah's petition concerning the child to come. **vs. 8, 12.**
 - a. He does not ask what benefits would be derived from this event.
 - b. He asks for direction in the proper rearing of the child. This should be the foremost concern of parents.
 - c. Parents (especially new parents) need instruction in the proper training of children. **EPH 6:4; PRO 22:6; DEU 6:6-7.**
 - d. "...How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (v. 12). This was a specific inquiry relative to the promise, but it may be said in general concerning all children, "With tender, loving care, with respect for boundaries, with a view to God and His ways, with facilitating tranquility and purity in the home, without taking out your anxieties and frustrations on them."
 4. The angel instructed Manoah to follow the information that his wife had outlined to him (**vs. 13-14**). Husbands should not be indifferent to the insights of their wives, especially when they are rooted in true revelation.
- K. **vs. 15-25.**

1. Manoah showed godly hospitality to this stranger. c/w **HEB 13:2; 1PE 4:9.**
2. The angel of the LORD told Manoah to recognize a difference between a common meal and a holy meal. v. **16** c/w **1CO 11:20-22.**
3. Manoah inquired of the angel's name, but the angel resisted. vs. **17-18.**
 - a. There are certain things which God has chosen to remain secret, and we don't know what they are because of that. **DEU 29:29** c/w **MAR 13:31-32.**
 - b. We do well to study those things which God has revealed in scripture rather than intrude into what He has not revealed, which leads to angel-worship. **ISA 8:20** c/w **COL 2:18.**
 - c. It is interesting that the name of an angel of God was not revealed to Israel until after they had been taken captive to Babylon and were cured of their idolatry. **DAN 8:16.**
4. Manoah jumped to a hasty conclusion about the event, but his wife exhibited more rational faith than him (vs. **22-23**). Saints should avoid concluding doom from God's revelations when He has so clearly provided proof of His tender care and approval of our well-intended efforts. **PHIL 3:13-14** c/w **ROM 7:21-25.**
5. Samson the deliverer was finally born and in time the Spirit of the Lord began to move him (vs. **24-25**). Where the Spirit of the Lord is, we might expect liberty. **2CO 3:17.**

XIV. Judges 14.

- A. In this chapter, God begins to curiously use Samson to judge the Philistines who "...had dominion over Israel" (v. **4**).
 1. Samson was a chosen instrument to be occasionally animated by *the Spirit of the LORD* to begin the Philistines' demise. **JDG 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14.**
 2. In this chapter, Samson sets forth a riddle while his own life and ministry are somewhat of a riddle, a paradox. He did what God wanted by that which was seemingly weak and evil and we are not to presume to *do evil, that good may come.* **ROM 3:8.**
 3. "...because he was designed not to be a pattern to us (who must walk by rule, not by example), but a type of him who, though he knew no sin, was made sin for us, and appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that he might *condemn* and *destroy* sin in the flesh, Rom 8:3." (Matthew Henry)
 4. Scripture provides us with examples of very flawed men who were occasionally operated on by the Spirit of the Lord, like Saul or Caiaphas. **1SAM 10:10; 11:6; JOH 11:49-52.**
 5. We know that Samson was a man of faith (**HEB 11:32**) though significantly flawed, as were/are all other persons of faith other than Jesus Christ, the flawless Man of faith. **JOH 8:29** c/w **HEB 11:6.**
 6. Samson's flaws cannot be justified except in the context that God used Him for His designs to trouble the Philistines. God could have raised up and used someone of greater integrity but even the best of men (other than Christ) still have the stain of sin and filthy-rag righteousnesses. **ISA 64:6.**
 7. None should boast if used by God. **ISA 10:15; JER 9:23-24; GEN 32:10.**
- B. vs. **1-4.**
 1. Samson *saw* a Philistine woman who *pleased him well* (v. **3**).
 - a. He only briefly encountered her and at this point he did not say that her good works or interlocution pleased him well. This is natural attraction (which is not of itself evil but a poor basis on which alone to build a good

- relationship). Character is better. **PRO 11:22; 31:30; 1PE 3:3-6.**
- b. The Cambridge KJV marginal rendering of “pleaseth me well” is “right in mine eyes,” characteristic of the times. **JDG 21:25.**
 - c. The lusts of the flesh and eyes rank high on the trouble-list. **1JO 2:16.**
 - d. Samson’s weak spot began to show. Animal instincts can take down strong men. **PRO 7:26.**
2. Samson did well to involve his godly parents in the matter, and their concerns were justified. But a familiar story of seeking a rubber stamp for one’s intentions unfolds here: Samson wanted this woman in spite of sound parental warnings.
 3. The Philistines were not specifically listed among the devoted nations of Canaan with whom no peace or marriages were to be made. **DEUT 7:1-4.**
 - a. But they were idolaters and the risks of spiritual and moral corruption were real. **JDG 10:6.**
 - b. The best marriages are where husband and wife have great love for the Lord Jesus Christ of the Scriptures, submission to Him and to one another in Him, respect for one another that does not exalt self, working through all troubles with faith and patience, sealing their hearts against any competitive intruder or former involvements. Lesser marriages can work but likely take more work.
 - c. This Philistine woman was no Ruth. **RUTH 1:16.**
 4. Behind the scenes of Samson’s impulsiveness was the providence of God Who had designs against the Philistines. **v. 4.**
 - a. NOTE: the sovereignty and providence of God are His domains to accomplish His will. We dare not presume upon them when we have plainly defined duties and conversation (manner of living).
 - b. Assuming that you are indispensable to God’s plans is a very unwise posture. **ROM 11:14-24.**
 - c. NOTE: If it be assumed that Samson was pursuing this woman by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, then the betrothal and marriage was really just a ruse to create a scenario that would provide some legal justification for slaying Philistines, a “false flag” for the destruction of Israel’s enemies. But the narrative lends itself more readily to God using and overruling Samson’s impulsiveness to accomplish His purposes
- C. vs. 5-9.**
1. While in the general way of duty, a lion attacked the man of God (**v. 5**). We should expect to encounter adversity where there is an opportunity to do God's work. **1CO 16:9.**
 2. The devil is such a lion who seeks to undo us and devour us. **1PE 5:6-8.**
 3. Samson feared not to fight the lion, and prevailed by the Spirit of the Lord (**v. 6**). Neither should we fear the temptations and persecutions that the devil roars at us. Through faith and the Spirit’s truth we may overcome. **1PE 5:9; GAL 5:16; 1JO 2:14.**
 4. It is said that some, through faith, *stopped the mouths of lions* (**HEB 11:33**). If we apply ourselves prayerfully to the word of God and live according to it, we may do likewise. **TIT 1:9-11; 1PE 3:13-17.**
 5. Samson faced the lion alone and prevailed. Though we do well to have the support of others in our battles against sin and tribulation, a Spirit-filled man can stand alone and prevail. **ISA 63:3-5; 2TI 4:16-17.**
 6. Mind that Samson had nothing in his hand to defeat the lion. **v. 6.**

- a. God's ministers should not have their hands full of carnal entanglements. **2TI 2:4.**
- b. We do not need technology to win the battle against Satan: the studied word of God treasured in the heart is superior. **PSA 119:11; MAT 4:1-11.**
- 7. After the lion was defeated, there was sweetness for the victor (vs. 8-9). Satan can be successfully resisted, and after the battle there is sweetness. **1PE 5:10.**
 - a. Who would have thought that there could come something sweet and beneficial out of the carcass of a once-roaring lion?
 - b. Honey and God's words enlighten the eyes. **1SAM 14:29 c/w PSA 119:130.**
 - c. God's words are better and sweeter. **PSA 119:103; 19:10.**
- 8. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus roughly parallels this account of the lion v. Samson.
 - a. Saul roared against Christ and His church, animated by the lionish devil himself (who held the Gentiles in darkness). **ACT 9:1.**
 - b. Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, mightily prevailed over Saul.
 - c. Saul's old sin nature and Pharisee-delusion were arrested and mortified.
 - d. From that shell of a *dead body of sin* (**ROM 6:6**) came forth the sweet honey of the gospel for the opening of the eyes of the Gentiles. **ACT 26:17-18.**
 - e. With Saul, "...out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness..." (**JDG 14:14**).
- 10. The Law, like this lion, roared at sinners with a message of the curse, futility, condemnation, death. Christ abolished it by His cross, satisfying its demands for us (**COL 2:13-14; ROM 10:4; 7:6**), and from it now we enjoy the sweetness of the gospel of Jesus Christ hidden within it. **JOH 5:39; ROM 15:4.**
- 11. Samson also had to deal with bees after the lion's demise.
 - a. Expect the glorious gospel to come with some stings but its benefits make it worth the discomfort.
 - b. Samson was basically being prepped to engage the multitudes of the Philistines. c/w **PSA 118:12.**
- 12. Though the source of the honey was despicable, it did not deter Samson from eating and sharing it with others. v. 9.
 - a. The sweetness of the gospel is not that Jesus was hailed as a king by the masses (**JOH 6:14-15**) but that He out of love suffered a shameful death in the stead of sinners to redeem them unto an eternal inheritance. **HEB 9:15; GAL 2:20.**
 - b. Neither should the offense of the cross of Christ deter us from sharing its benefits with others. **ROM 1:16; 2TI 1:8.**
- 13. In the lion and the honeycomb is a basic picture of life from death. This is the core of the gospel which saves and feeds us. **1CO 15:1-4.**
- 14. How many are less wise or more scrupulous than Samson in that they:
 - a. reject the gospel message because it is declared by flawed sinners (**JOH 9:34**)? or
 - b. reject the *beauty of holiness* (**PSA 29:2**) in favor of a false holiness of beauty to make religion more appealing to the world? or
 - c. scoff at a small church of humble believers in spite of **LUK 12:32; 2CO 10:12**? or
 - d. hough themselves from effective labor for Christ because His gift is lodged within the corrupt husk of the old man? But see **ROM 7:24-25** and don't

wait for a resurrection body in the future to live the life of victory when you can live it now by faith. **1JO 5:4.**

15. We would observe also that Samson "...went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well" (v. 7).
 - a. He actually talked with her: a healthy policy before and after marriage.
 - b. That she had a mind and a mouth only encouraged him.
- D. **vs. 10-20.**
 1. Samson went down to marry the Philistine woman and "...made there a feast; for so used the young men to do" (v. 10).
 - a. "Though he was a Nazarite, he did not affect, in a thing of this nature, to be singular, but did *as the young men used to do* upon such occasions. It is no part of religion to go contrary to the innocent usages of the places where we live: nay, it is a reproach to religion when those who profess it give just occasion to others to call them covetous, sneaking, and morose. A good man should strive to make himself, in the best sense, a good companion." (Matthew Henry)
 - b. Innocent customs and usages are permissible, sometimes enjoyable or even advisable. Jesus attended a wedding feast where He made wine (**JOH 2:1-11**), did not flee Jerusalem at the civic *festival of the dedication* (**JOH 10:22-23**) and perfect Job's family celebrated birthdays. **JOB 1:4 c/w JOB 3:1-3.**
 - c. Customs that are open doors to sin or which glorify sin (e.g. gluttony and drunkenness) or customs that displace or corrupt true religion are where lines must be drawn. **DEUT 12:29-32; JER 10:1-4; MAT 6:7.**
 2. For some reason (perhaps vanity), Samson ventured a wager with her countrymen. **vs. 12-15.**
 - a. Samson had the most to lose in this wager, but his confidence in his own cleverness outran his good judgment. Have you ever plowed into some seemingly "goof-proof" venture which had hidden goofs, or made a zealous boast like Peter and the rest? **JAM 4:13-16; MAT 26:33-35.**
 - b. If we are intent upon entering such an arrangement, we had better be prepared to render our dues. **PSA 15:4.**
 - c. Samson's wager was more a contest of wits than of chance. This cannot be said of most casino-type games in an "industry" that exploits a foolish "get rich quickly" scheme against the odds and can be as addictive as heroin.
 - d. The Philistines were not obligated to take Samson up on his challenge but their vanity was at least as strong as his and viewing this as an opportunity weighted in their favor (Samson had more to lose than each of them), they obviously agreed to the terms. It was a subtle snare by flattering the Philistines' sense of their own intellectual prowess. **PRO 29:5.**
 3. See how the wicked operate. When wit fails them, they resort to dirty tactics. **v. 15 c/w ACT 6:9-15.**
 - a. Samson's wager is an example of foolishly assuming that dishonorable men are going to follow an honorable course.
 - b. Be careful in alliances and contracts. Generalizations based upon pattern recognition must be used cautiously but can prevent destructive entanglements. **TIT 1:10-12.**
 4. The woman yielded to their extortion. **vs. 15-17.**
 - a. Unlike Jael, family ties, fear and pressure dictated this woman's action.

- c/w **JDG 4:2, 17-21.**
- b. She did not have the faith to trust that the person who comes into the household of a man of God comes also under the superintendence and protection of God. **RUT 2:12; PSA 56:4.**
 - c. Sinning to save one's skin or station never prospers, especially when it involves betraying the righteous. c/w **JDG 15:6; JOH 11:48; PRO 29:25.**
 - d. Appeal threats to God and do right. **ACT 4:29.**
5. Samson's wife resorted to *tears* and *You don't love me.* **v. 16.**
- a. There are times when these are legitimate entreaties (**GEN 29:31-32**) but not when used for manipulation.
 - b. The general rule in marriage is openness and trust in all things, being "...heirs together of the grace of life..." (**IPE 3:7**).
 - c. Exceptions to this rule may be necessary for the protection of the spouse or family but these exceptions dare not be made the rule. God has withheld information from His church but has otherwise been fully open to us. **JOH 16:12; ACT 1:7 c/w 1CO 2:12.**
 - d. How oft, though, have we, like Samson's wife, questioned God's love for us when He doesn't give us what we want? Look to Calvary, not circumstances or silence, to determine if God loves you. **1JO 4:9-10; 3:16.**
6. Samson finally caved in under the pressure. **v. 17 c/w PRO 27:15; LUK 18:5.**
- a. Some have tried to find a contradiction in the text here, since **v. 15** says that the Philistines threatened the woman on the seventh day and yet **v. 17** seems to say that she had been on Samson's case for all seven days.
 - b. **v. 17** does not say, "for seven days" but "...the seven days, while their feast lasted..." That is, her entreaties occurred within the remainder of the seven days of the feast.
 - c. Alternatively, what's to say that Samson's wife had not been troubling him for the entire seven days of the feast, but only turned up the heat after she had been threatened?
7. Samson lost the wager, but he figured out how that had happened. Wise too late. **v. 18.**
- a. To 'plow with one's heifer' denotes being yoked together with them in common cause, a collaboration.
 - b. Could Samson have been accused of being a "conspiracy nut" because of his accusation which was a reasonable deduction? " 'To think no evil, where no evil seems,' is the duty of a Christian; but to refuse to see it, where it most evidently appears, is an imposition on the understanding itself." (Adam Clarke)
 - c. Would the local chapter of POW (Philistine Organization of Women) have raised an immediate outcry, demanding that Samson be forced to donate to their cause and enroll in a sensitivity-training course?
 - d. Sadly, we all too often let the devil plow with our old nature to the betrayal of our confession, faith and Savior.
 - (1) Like Samson's wife, we need to realize that our allegiance is not to our former ways and allies, but to our Husband. **ROM 7:4-6 c/w IPE 4:3-4.**
 - (2) Like Samson's wife, who should have depended upon the protection of her new husband of faith, we also should realize that our old sins need not have their way with us. **ROM 6:13-14.**

8. In retaliation, the Spirit of the Lord moved Samson against other Philistines. **v. 19.**
 - a. God was not unjust in exercising wrath upon the men of Ashkelon.
 - b. Philistines were a people already slated for destruction and dispossession of their land because of their wickedness. **JOS 13:1-3 c/w JDG 3:1-3.**
9. Samson's bride was plucked out of his hand (**v. 20**) but Christ destroys His bride's enemies and insures she will never be plucked out of His hand. **JOH 10:27-29.**

XV. Judges 15.

A. vs. 1-2.

1. Samson showed a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation to the wife who had betrayed him. c/w **ACT 2:36-40.**
2. What woman would not be impressed with a young goat for a gift? Mind that a kid represented a good meal that even God might accept, or future milk. **JDG 6:19; PRO 27:27.**
3. The unjust remarriage of Samson's wife is an example of worldly, presumptive folly.
 - a. Where was the sense of probity in the woman and her father? Was Samson's absence a justification for breaking covenant? c/w **EXO 32:1; MAT 24:48; HEB 10:37-39; 2PE 3:3-4.**
 - b. Here is a warning against acting upon faulty premises/assumptions. Compare "I verily thought" (**v. 2**) with **ACT 26:9.**
 - c. The offering of the younger sister ("She's better-looking anyway") may not have made points with his own family.
 - d. The Philistine wife is not much unlike the weak church member who looks for the first seemingly reasonable excuse to abandon the faith for a substitute.
4. This account should remind us that the marriage covenant is not something to be dispensed with upon flimsy premises; that hurts, anger and temporary distance may well happen in marriage, and that family should be very cautious about interfering in the relationship.
5. "Matrimonial cases have been numerous, and sometimes intricate and perplexed; made so not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often in these cases people resolve, before they ask, what they will do." (Matthew Henry)

B. vs. 3-5. Though he had presented himself as a forgiving reconciler, his overtures had been insulted and rejected. So Samson took vengeance.

1. Though betrayed unto death by the nation to Whom He had been born, Christ gave Israel a chance of pardon through repentance and faith, but the bulk of the nation rejected Him still. Only a remnant were saved.
2. What happened in 70 A.D. was the vengeance of God, and Christ in parable even referred to Rome's military as *His armies*. **LUK 21:22; MAT 22:7.**
3. Though PETA would have had a meltdown, Samson used three hundred foxes (not three hundred Fox News employees) to accomplish his purpose.

C. vs. 6-8.

1. Somehow, the Philistines had correctly deduced the reason for the carnage (perhaps from Samson's speech itself, **v. 3**) and took out their frustrations on Samson's wife and father-in-law.
2. These brutish fools did not pursue or attack mighty Samson, but chose to destroy his weak family members. This was not justice but cowardice.
 - a. Compare this with the way persecutors (even Saul) went against the church

- of Christ.
- b. Let us be wary of taking ugly vengeance on the associates of our own sinful exercises, as David seemed to do with the citizens of Rabbah. **2SAM 11:1, 17 c/w 2SAM 12:29-31.**
 - c. Samson's wife, who sought to save her life, lost it. c/w **LUK 9:24.**
3. Samson retaliated with what sounds like a full "Chuck Norris" treatment, hobbling them and trampling upon them in his fury. c/w **ISA 63:3.**
- D. **vs. 9-13.**
1. In spite of Samson's great victory over dark forces of the enemy, his countrymen nevertheless folded as easily as his wife did to Philistine pressure. c/w **JOH 10:32.**
 2. One could argue that they were being prudent, and counting the cost of resisting an opposing force, per **LUK 14:31-32.**
 - a. Sacrificing one of your own to the wicked demands of the enemies of righteousness is not being prudent; it is being cowardly and self-loving. c/w **2TI 3:2.**
 - b. What they did is not unlike what Judas and the Jewish leaders did to Christ, or what churches have sometimes done in capitulating to the excesses of civil authority under color of civil obedience, echoing, "...We have no king but Caesar" (**JOH 19:15**).
 - c. Samson was being betrayed again but this time it was not by Philistines. Philistines will be Philistines but better should be expected of Judah.
 3. Samson, being still under the Spirit's care and power, submitted to their demands, knowing that it would not be his undoing. c/w **JOH 10:17-18; ACT 2:23-24.**
- E. **vs. 14-17.**
1. The Philistines shouted jubilantly at the coming of a bound Samson. But the triumphing of the wicked is short. **JOB 20:5.**
 2. They were numerically a flood compared to one Samson, but see **ISA 59:19.**
 3. The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him and his bands were loosed. v. 14.
 - a. *Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* **2CO 3:17.**
 - b. The resurrection of Christ "...according to the spirit of holiness..." (**ROM 1:4**) was the loosing of "...the pains of death..." (**ACT 2:24**).
 - c. Our deliverance from the bondage of the flesh is owing to our walking in the Spirit. **GAL 5:16.**
 4. Samson didn't just *chase a thousand*, he chastised a thousand. c/w **JOS 23:10.**
 5. His weapon was the jawbone of an ass, for God exalts His power through insignificant or despised things. **1CO 1:27-29.**
 6. Samson forgot **1CO 1:29** but at least he threw away the jawbone and didn't make a relic out of it. v. 17.
- F. **vs. 18-20.**
1. Samson gave God the glory after he was humbled and in trouble. We do well to give God the glory before, during, and after any victory we might enjoy in Christ. **2CO 2:14; ROM 8:37; PHIL 2:12-13.**
 2. Samson's close encounter under God's power was followed by a humbling, as was the case with Jacob and Paul. **GEN 32:31; 2CO 12:7.**
 3. Samson wisely called upon the LORD for deliverance. c/w **ROM 10:13.**

XVI. Judges 16.

- A. This chapter sets forth the transition of Samson the Nazarite to Samson the Not So Bright, and it is a warning to believers against the foolish assumption of invincibility, and the

foolish assumption that God is obliged to always help His worthies, even in their folly.

1. Paul understood that even as chief apostle, he could still become a castaway if he did not control his fleshly desires. **1CO 9:27**.
2. Samson fell prey to the things warned against in **1JO 2:16**.
3. No man other than Jesus Christ is irreplaceable.

B. vs. 1-3.

1. **harlot**: Applied to a woman. **a.** As a general term of execration... **b.** A female juggler, dancing-girl, ballet-dancer, or actress... **c. spec.** An unchaste woman; a prostitute; a strumpet. (Very frequent in 16th c. Bible versions, where Wyclif had *hoore*, whore; prob. as a less offensive word.)
2. It is only speculation that Samson was using the old spy tactic employed at Jericho in the days of Joshua (**JOS 2:1**) and evangelists don't persuade harlots to repent by *laying till midnight* at the harlot's house.
 - a. It is more likely that Samson, whose weaknesses were his eyes and alluring women, *joined himself to the harlot*. c/w **1CO 6:16-17**.
 - b. Considering the powerful emotional experiences of **JDG 15** in which his in-laws betrayed him, his wife was killed, his countrymen betrayed him, and then his Spirit-empowered victory over the Philistines ultimately justified him, he was in a vulnerable position of *pride* and *natural desire*: two powerful forces that can bring a man low, especially when combined.
 - c. NOTE: some of the most perilous times of Christian experience are in the wake of great victories and high emotions. Consider how personal interaction with the resurrected Christ generated joy which neutralized faith. **LUK 24:36-41**.
3. As in **JOS 2:2**, the enemy somehow knew Samson's comings and goings, and would use that information against him. Clearing his browser history would likely not have made any difference.
4. Samson dramatically escaped the Philistines' designs. God had not yet withdrawn from him. The gates of the enemy were no match for the man of faith.
v. 3 c/w MAT 16:18.

C. vs. 4-5.

1. It might be wondered if Samson's escape from the harlot's house and the Philistines' designs was interpreted by him as positive reinforcement of his choices by God. Beware of such unfounded assumptions. Jonah's bad choice "seemed" to be validated by finding a ship bound for Tarshish. **JON 1:3**.
2. Samson fell for Delilah, whose name means *feeble, languishing*. Perhaps she was of a weak constitution or was of reduced circumstances and Samson had a soft spot for such. Rescuing poor stray cats does not always work out well.
 - a. One thing is certain: her tactics left Samson feeble and languishing.
 - b. No mention is made of a marriage, and a marriage would have implied that he would take her to his home (which also is not mentioned).
 - c. As her tactics show, she aligns more with the likes of the strange woman who "...hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her" (**PRO 7:26**).
 - d. NOTE: false religion can be a Delilah or strange woman, alluring through flattery, lust and sensual enticements: pomp, splendor, grand music and architecture. If a religion empowers you by *feeling good* more than by *knowing and doing good*, it is not the true religion but a harlot religion like **REV 17:4-5**.

3. She agreed to take money to betray him. She was not even threatened. Samson was cursed by bad relationships and betrayals, and sometimes the latter is almost guaranteed by the former.
4. The Philistines decided it was better to use human lust and natural affection to gain the victory rather than brute strength. Satan knows well how to *allure through the lusts of the flesh* (**2PE 2:18**) to capture souls, and the man who puts his foot in the snare makes himself a willing captive (and his pride makes it more difficult to be delivered from his captor).
 - a. This is especially so with false religion's snares.
 - b. It is easier to deceive a man than it is to convince him that he was deceived by his choices.

D. **vs. 6-14.**

1. Three times this deceitful woman tried to get Samson to reveal the source of his strength and she accuses him of lying. They were both adept at that.
 - a. Warning: there are times when being tight-lipped in a relationship is necessary, but a relationship full of lies is a relationship full of Satan. **JOH 8:44.**
 - b. An alternate approach: "Honey, I am under vow to God and I cannot in good conscience comply with your requests. Please respect my denial."
2. Samson trifled with her temptations rather than shutting them down. Trifling with temptation is very unwise since it is making provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts. **ROM 13:14.**
3. By the third time, Samson was getting closer to the fact that his hair might have something to do with it. She was wearing him down and, as it turns out, he was not as invincible as he thought.
4. As these verses and the ones to follow imply, Samson was too emotionally attached to this woman who was a destructive force in his life.
 - a. No human relationship should be so strong that it would mean surrendering the faith to maintain its peace. **MAT 10:34-39.**
 - b. If the relationship be lawful, it might justify some compromise on indifferent things and some forbearance and patience, but even lawful relationships have limitations to their bonds. **2TH 3:6.**

E. **vs. 15-20.**

1. Delilah played her trump card: "You don't love me."
2. Like his first wife who "...lay sore upon him..." (**JDG 14:17**), Delilah "...pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death" (**v. 16**).
 - a. Samson's choices, like Lot's, were the cause of the vexation. **2PE 2:8.**
 - b. When Jesus promised us tribulation, He was emphasizing troubles that others bring upon us because of Him (**JOH 16:32-33**), not the ones we bring upon ourselves in spite of Him. Much of our suffering is self-inflicted.
 - c. "The choices of life, not the compulsions, reveal character." (A.W. Tozer)
3. He showed her all his heart, and she knew he had done so. Instead of honoring his new honesty, she ratted him out.
 - a. Be wary in everyday matters about divulging your deepest secrets because some people will use them against you.
 - b. God alone may be trusted in this regard. **PSA 62:8.**
4. Samson was either a very deep sleeper or had "help," perhaps from something secretly administered. c/w **PRO 23:35.**

- a. Being *past feeling* is oft the cause of being overcome. **EPH 4:19.**
 - b. He had given his strength to this woman. c/w **PRO 31:3.**
 - c. His hair was not his strength. It was the token of God his Strength but the loss of the token made him weak. Our faith is a token from God for spiritual strength and the casting away of faith is certain spiritual weakness. **HEB 11:34; EPH 3:16-19; ROM 4:20.**
 - d. When we sleep, our enemies don't. **MAT 13:25.**
 - 5. Samson had squandered the Lord his Strength and knew it not. **v. 20.**
 - a. This is what sin and high-mindedness can do to a believer: deceive him into thinking that the Lord is always with him regardless of his conduct.
 - b. (**JOH 15:5**) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
- F. vs. 21-31.**
- 1. Samson was taken to Gaza where he had previously dallied with the harlot. **v. 1.**
 - 2. They put out his eyes which had oft led him to bad relationships, and made him a grinding prisoner.
 - a. Here is a warning to us to personally mortify our own eyes before sin does it to us. **MAT 5:29 c/w PSA 119:37.**
 - b. Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers and so enslaves them. **2CO 4:3-4.**
 - 3. The idolatrous Philistines foolishly attributed their triumph to Dagon, an insult that God will not endure. **ISA 42:8 c/w DAN 5:3-5, 23.**
 - 4. Samson had *sported himself with his own deceivings* (**2PE 2:13**) and was here put on public display to make sport for Philistines. Consider the image:
 - a. The brutalized man of faith is publicly mocked.
 - b. He is their entertainment (and he brought down the house).
 - c. His arms are spread apart.
 - d. He dies praying.
 - e. He accomplishes his greatest victory over the enemy in death.
 - f. There is much of Christ in all of this.
 - 5. But there are distinctions.
 - a. Samson died for his own errors but not Christ. **2CO 5:21.**
 - b. Samson prayed for vengeance but Christ prayed for forgiveness. **LUK 23:34.**
 - c. Samson's death was actively suicidal but Christ's was by the hand of sinners. **ACT 2:23.**
 - d. Samson died to slay men but Christ died to save men. **1TI 1:15.**
 - e. Samson remains dead.
 - 6. Remember Samson's pillars.
 - a. The most sophisticated of religious errors often rest upon a couple of pillars that should be taken out. Concentrate on them.
 - b. The many sins to which we fall prey likewise may be based upon a couple of pillars like spiritual malnutrition and making provision for the flesh.
 - c. Christ took out sin and death, the pillars of Satan's bonds.

XVII. Judges 17.

- A. This chapter sets forth a curious mingling of ignorance, superstition and idolatrous images with a professed honoring of the true LORD, a popular form of religion.
 - 1. There are three main characters: Micah, Micah's mother, and a gadabout Levite.

2. This chapter is very appropriately a place for the general theme of Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (v. 6).
 3. This chapter sets the stage for the next chapter which shows the degeneracy of religion in Israel spread broadly, as told in the continuing misadventures of Micah and the Levite.
- B. vs. 1-6.**
1. Micah’s mother had a nice cache of 1100 pieces of silver that went missing and Micah turns out to be the reason. How many parents have suffered similar pains?
 - a. Perhaps she was a beneficiary of Delilah (**JDG 16:5**), so that 1100 pieces that served to the ruin of Samson was a prelude to 1100 pieces that served to the ruin of religion.
 - b. She was a woman of some age since she was a grandmother (note v. 5) but she was not senile nor blind: she knew she had 1100 shekels of silver and that they had disappeared.
 - c. We read not that she *swept the house* (**LUK 15:8**) but swore a curse. When “edged,” try sweeping rather than swearing. Sweepers get a clean house; swearers a dirty mouth.
 2. She had cursed indirectly or directly and Micah heard, so he confessed the deed to her and restored the money, a notable turn. c/w **LUK 15:21**.
 3. Her response, “...Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son” (v. 2) shows us that the true God was still in vogue in her heart (but horribly confused with vain thoughts).
 - a. She had not utterly sold out to Baal (or any other false god).
 - b. Her compassion is notable but it may have been influenced by the fact that she apparently had intended the money for Micah’s benefit to begin with.
 4. However, her designs for the money were askew: she intended to make forbidden images (**EXO 20:4**) which were for her son’s benefit.
 - a. How many parents have similarly thought they could buy influence from the LORD for their children by corrupt motions of religion?
 - b. Consider the parent who thinks they are doing the child a favor with a corrupt rival gospel of Santa Claus with his carnal gifts.
 - c. What she had planned was little different from the “golden calf incident” at Sinai which involved precious metal formed into a forbidden image to the glory of the LORD and the “good” of the people.
EXO 32:4-6 c/w 1CO 10:7.
 - d. NOTE: much evil is done in the name of the LORD by vain thinking about precious metals, and also when corrupt religion is deemed to be the best way to carnal prosperity. **1PE 1:18; JER 44:17.**
 - e. Those who lay claim to the NAME are to *depart from iniquity*, not sanitize it for use by false good intentions. **2TI 2:19; 2CO 6:15-16.**
 5. The woman fudged on her stated dedication (1100 to 200). She lied to her son or lied to God. Small wonder that a religion built on lies is lived out by lies. Maybe she was “slapping him in the face” with this pittance of her original plan. v. 4.
 - a. Apparently there was an idol founder in the land, a craft which depends upon false religion and so is defended with ridiculous zeal. **ACT 19:23-28.**
 - b. God’s tolerance of her fudged dedication was not repeated for Ananias and Sapphira. **ACT 5:1-11.**
 6. “And the man Micah had an house of gods...” (v. 5).
 - a. This would have been *the church of the dead gods, pillar and ground of lies.*

- ct/w **1TI 3:15**.
- b. The house of God is the gate of heaven (**GEN 28:17**) but houses of gods are gates of hell (**MAT 16:18**). False religion is the worm-hole to Satan's kingdom of lies. There is one gate to God (**JOH 14:6**), many gates to Satan.
 - c. "Micah's House of Gods" sounds like a roadside curiosity on Rt. 666.
7. "...and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest" (v. 5). Micah developed a complete rival system similar to what Jeroboam later did, incorporating heathen superstitions. **1KI 12:28-33**.
- a. He made an *ephod* (priestly vestment). c/w **EXO 28:4**.
 - b. He made *teraphim* (idols, images to be revered and used for divination), from *teraphym* (SRN H8655), otherwise translated as *images* in **2KI 23:24** and **EZE 21:21**.
 - c. He *consecrated one of his sons to be his priest*. But he was not a Levitical son of Aaron to confer such an office, nor would his son be eligible. **HEB 5:4**.
 - d. He did this assuming the LORD was his God and knowing that it was a compromise. v. 13.
- C. **vs. 7-13**.
1. In this section we have the coincidental coming together of wayward Micah and a wandering Levite which results in a happy mutual arrangement for the two of them.
 - a. It was as if the stars were aligned to bless them (I speak as a fool). This is another example of the error of concluding truth or right from circumstances rather than reasoning from the Scripture.
 - b. Herod and Pilate were happily brought together over their shared condemnation of Jesus Christ. **LUK 23:12**.
 2. The young Levite was from "...Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah..." (v. 7) which was not a Levitical city listed in **JOS 21**.
 - a. He was a sojourner (temporary resident) there, and sought to sojourn where he could find a place (to his liking). **vs. 8-9**.
 - b. He didn't seek out Shiloh where the tabernacle was set up (**JOS 18:1**), which would have been an appropriate destination for a good Levite. **DEU 18:6-8**.
 - c. He was as a wandering bird looking for a comfortable nest. **PRO 27:8**.
 - d. His "house to house" model was not evangelical, as is evident from his willingness to sell himself to Micah for benefits over principles. **vs. 10-12 ct/w ACT 20:20, 33; TIT 1:7, 10**.
 - e. I have known men who shopped around for an ordination and/or ministry when they were not even qualified.
 3. Micah jumped at the chance of a personal Levitical priest and seems to have abandoned interest in his priest-son. He polished his first error with an unqualified Levite, thinking this error was an upgrade for his interests. NOTE: every valid priest had to be a Levite but not every Levite could be a priest: only the sons of Aaron qualified (and Micah still had no authority to consecrate someone).
 - a. "No marvel if those who can make any thing serve for a god can also make any thing serve for a priest...Thus those who please themselves with their own delusions, if Providence unexpectedly bring any thing to their hands that furthers them in their evil way, are too apt to infer thence that God is pleased with them." (Matthew Henry)
 - b. Depicted here is an idolatrous folly coated with elements of true religion

- administered by a false ministry of "...a father and a priest..." (v. 10) which is pleasing to all involved in it. This is obviously similar to Catholicism with its hybrid of paganism and Christ. Note **MAT 23:9**.
- c. Hiring an unprincipled Levite means the Levite is a captive to the expectations of his hirer, a regrettable model of denominational church systems.
 - d. Micah made and bought a personal priest for personal benefit. The Levite prostituted himself to Micah for personal benefit. What could possibly go wrong with this mutually happy arrangement? Read the next chapter.
4. "Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (v. 13).
- a. He is assuming God's favor is automatically triggered and obligatory, based on outward forms of religion which substitute for personal righteousness. c/w **2TI 3:5**.
 - b. Contrast his assumption with the prayer of **PSA 125:4**.
 - c. "Carnal hearts are apt to build too much upon their external privileges, and to conclude that God will certainly do them good because they are born of godly parents, dwell in praying families, are linked in society with those that are very good, and sit under a lively ministry; whereas all this is but like having a Levite to be their priest, which amounts to no security at all that God will do them good, unless they be good themselves, and make a good use of these advantages. (Matthew Henry)