

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 reproof sermon from a prophet. **vs. 7-10**.
 2. The great salvation by repentance and faith in **ACT 2:38-47** began with a reproof 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. c/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.**