

# JUDGES

## Title:

The Hebrew word here translated “Judges” also means leaders or defenders. In this book the “judges” God raised up did more than try to administer justice; they led the people and delivered them from their enemies.

## Author:

According to ancient Jewish tradition Samuel wrote this book, but there is no definite proof either for or against this. The author left no clues in the text itself to indicate who wrote it. The writers of the Bible were not concerned with promoting themselves. They would all have agreed with the psalmist who said “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory” (Ps 115:1). They wrote by the inspiration of the one true God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), and their concern was to record exactly what God inspired them to record. In a very real sense the author of every book of the Bible was God Himself using human instruments. This does not mean that the writers of the Bible were like robots or inanimate word processors. God took the writers as they were, with their faults and failings, with their human intellects and emotions and wills, and worked in them and through them to bring His Word into the world, just as He wanted it to be. God is great enough and wise enough to be able to do this, and He did do it. Men wrote the Bible, but what they wrote came from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4).

## Date:

Probably about 1000 BC.

## Themes:

This book contains events in the history of Israel from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel. It reveals what any people can become when they do what they please rather than what God pleases. It reveals also God’s compassion and help for the people even when they were guilty of detestable sins. It speaks too of God’s hatred of sin and how He punished it. From another viewpoint it is the story of God’s deliverance of an unworthy people and the great heroes of the faith He used to do this. Some key verses are 2:10-23; 21:25.

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**1** Now after the death of Joshua this took place: the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, “Who should first go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?”

<sup>2</sup>And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up. See, I have delivered the land into his hand”.

<sup>3</sup>And Judah said to his brother Simeon, “Come up with me into my allotment to fight against the Canaanites; and likewise I will go with you into your allotment”. So Simeon went with him.

<sup>4</sup>And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands, and in Bezek they killed ten thousand of them. <sup>5</sup>And they found Adonibezek in Bezek and fought against him, and killed the Canaanites and the Perizzites. <sup>6</sup>But Adonibezek fled, and they pursued him, caught him and cut off his thumbs and his large toes.

<sup>7</sup>And Adonibezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and their large toes cut off gathered *their food* under my table. God has repaid me in accordance with what I have done”. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

<sup>8</sup>Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem and had taken it and struck it with the edge of the sword and had set the city on fire.

<sup>9</sup>And afterwards the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the mountains and in the south

and in the lowlands. <sup>10</sup>And Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now previously the name of Hebron was Kirjath-Arba), and they killed Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.

<sup>11</sup>And from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now previously the name of Debir was Kirjath-Sepher). <sup>12</sup>And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kirjath-Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah in marriage”. <sup>13</sup>And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage. <sup>14</sup>And it happened when she came *to him* that she moved him to ask her father for a field. And she got down from *her donkey*, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?”

<sup>15</sup>And she said to him, “Give me a blessing; for you have given me an area in the south. Give me springs of water also”. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

<sup>16</sup>And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lies* to the south of Arad. And they went and lived among the people.

<sup>17</sup>And Judah went with Simeon his brother and they killed the Canaanites who lived in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah. <sup>18</sup>Also Judah took Gaza with its territory

**1:1** “Joshua”— Josh 24:29. The date of his death is probably about 1390 B.C.

“Canaanites”— see Gen 10:15-19. In Joshua’s day Israel had occupied much of the land of Canaan, but there were still areas where the Canaanites opposed them (Josh 13:1-5; 23:4-5). The question the Israelites asked reveals their belief that God had given them all the land and that He would enable them to take it.

**1:3** “Judah said to his brother Simeon”— here obviously means the descendants of Judah said to the descendants of Simeon. Of course, both Judah and Simeon had died long before this. The territory Joshua allotted to the tribe of Simeon was within the territory allotted to Judah (Josh 19:1,9). So these two tribes joined forces to occupy their land.

**1:4** “Perizzites”— Gen 10:18; 15:20; 34:30; Ex 3:17.

**1:6** “Adonibezek”— compare Ex 21:23-25; Lev 24:19-20. See Esther 7:10.

**1:7** “Table”— he had treated his captured enemies like dogs.

**1:8** “Jerusalem”— Israel did not occupy the city at

that time (v 21). See 2 Sam 5:6-9.

**1:9** “Mountains”— south of Jerusalem.

“The south”— the Negev, the desert area in the southern part of Canaan (v 17).

**1:10** “Hebron”— Josh 14:15. Hebron was in the hill country about 40 kilometers south of Jerusalem.

**1:11** “Debir”— a town near Hebron.

**1:12** “Caleb”— Num 14:6-9,30; Josh 14:6-15.

**1:13** “Othniel”— 3:7-11.

**1:16** “Kenite”— the Kenites were a tribe descended from Midian, a son of Abraham by his second wife Keturah.

“Father-in-law”— Ex 2:16-21.

“City of palm trees”— Jericho.

**1:17** Hormah means “destruction”.

**1:18** The Philistines lived in the Mediterranean coastal area west of Judah. Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron were three of their five principal cities, the other two being Ashdod and Gath. Judah took the three cities mentioned here but later the Philistines regained control of them (14:19; 16:21; 1 Sam 6:17; 7:14).

and Askelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

<sup>19</sup>And the LORD was with Judah, and Judah drove out the inhabitants of the mountains, but could not drive out *the inhabitants* of the lowlands, because they had chariots of iron. <sup>20</sup>And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said; and he drove out the three sons of Anak from there. <sup>21</sup>But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; but the Jebusites live among the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

<sup>22</sup>Likewise the house of Joseph went up against Bethel; and the LORD was with them. <sup>23</sup>And the house of Joseph sent *men* to spy out Bethel (now previously the name of that city was Luz). <sup>24</sup>And the spies saw a man coming out of the city and said to him, "Please show us a way into the city, and we will show you mercy". <sup>25</sup>And when he showed them a way into the city, they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and his whole family go. <sup>26</sup>And the man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and called its name Luz, which *is* its name to this day.

<sup>27</sup>And Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants* of Beth Shean and its towns, or Taanach and its towns, or the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its towns, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region. <sup>28</sup>But it happened when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labour, but

did not completely drive them out. <sup>29</sup>Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. <sup>30</sup>Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites lived among them and became forced labour. <sup>31</sup>Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob; <sup>32</sup>but the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. <sup>33</sup>Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-Anath, but they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. However the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh and of Beth-Anath became forced labour for them. <sup>34</sup>And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, and would not let them come down into the lowlands. <sup>35</sup>For the Amorites were determined to live in Mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet the hand of the house of Joseph grew powerful, so that the *Amorites* became forced labour. <sup>36</sup>And the boundary of the Amorites was from the ascent to Akrabbim, from the rock, and *continued* upwards.

**2** And the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt, and led you to the land which I swore to your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you; <sup>2</sup>and you must make no treaty with the inhabitants

**1:19** "Could not"— Josh 15:63; 17:12. They were unable only because they had disobeyed God and so He did not enable them to have complete victory (2:1-3, 20-23; Josh 23:12-13).

"Iron"— Josh 17:16. Iron chariots posed no problem to God, but He permitted them to be a problem to Judah. The people of Israel did not use iron chariots themselves, it seems, until the time of David's sons.

**1:20** "Caleb"— v 12.

"Anak"— Num 13:22.

**1:21** Even after the victory of Judah (v 8), Benjamin failed to hold Jerusalem which was in the territory allotted to them (Josh 18:21-28).

"Jebusites"— Gen 10:15-20; 15:16-21.

**1:22** "Joseph"— the descendants of Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Half of the tribe of Manasseh had territory east of the Jordan River (Josh 13:8).

**1:26** "Hittites"— then a powerful people to the

north of Israel.

**1:27** "Did not drive out"— this refrain is repeated in vs 29, 30, 31, 33. Israel's disobedience to God cost them a great deal of trouble and large areas of land. On the importance of obedience see Josh 1:7-8.

**1:28** "Forced labor"— vs 30, 33, 35; Josh 17:13; 1 Kings 5:13; 9:20-22. Notes on slavery at Ex 21:2; Eph 6:5. God commanded Israel to exterminate these depraved peoples living in Canaan, not to make forced laborers of them (Deut 7:1-2, 16).

**1:34** "Amorites"— Gen 10:15-20; 15:16-21.

**2:1** "Angel of the LORD"— note at Gen 16:7. Here He speaks as Jehovah God Himself— "I brought you up out of Egypt" (Ex 20:1-2); "I swore to" (Gen 17:8); "my covenant" (Deut 7:9).

"Gilgal"— the headquarters of the armies of Israel under Joshua (Josh 4:19-22; 5:10; 9:6; 10:6, 15, 43; 14:6). It was in the low-lying plain of the Jordan River.



of this land. You must throw down their altars. But you have not obeyed my voice. Why have you acted like this? <sup>3</sup>Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they will be *like thorns* in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you”.

<sup>4</sup>And it came about, when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people raised their voice and wept. <sup>5</sup>And they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>And when Joshua let the people go, each one of the children of Israel went to his inheritance to possess the land. <sup>7</sup>And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works that the LORD did for Israel.

<sup>8</sup>And Joshua the son of Nun, the LORD’s servant, died, *being* a hundred and ten years old. <sup>9</sup>And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, on the northern

side of the hill Gaash.

<sup>10</sup>And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which did not know the LORD, or even the deeds which he had done for Israel. <sup>11</sup>And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, <sup>12</sup>and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, *some* of the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed down to them and provoked the LORD to anger. <sup>13</sup>And they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashtaroth. <sup>14</sup>And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies around *them*, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. <sup>15</sup>Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them to *make things go* wrong, just as the LORD had said and just as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

**2:2** “*This land*”– Ex 23:22; 34:12; Deut 7:2. Compare 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jam 4:4.

“*Altars*”– Ex 23:24; 34:13; Deut 7:5. The worship of the true God must not be mixed with the worship of the false gods of Canaan. See 1 Kings 18:21.

“*Not obeyed*”– 1:27-36. Israel’s determination to drive out all the Canaanites should have been greater than the determination of the Canaanites to stay (1:27). By full submission to God in faith they could have cleared out their enemies from the whole land. See note at Josh 1:17.

**2:3** “*From before you*”– Josh 23:12-13. God’s promise to expel the Canaanites was based on the condition that Israel obey Him.

“*Snare*”– thorns may speak of pains and troubles that would come from the Canaanites, snares may speak of the hidden dangers of their false worship (Ex 23:33; 34:12; Num 33:55; Deut 7:16). **2:4-5** Their tears did not change God’s mind. The Hebrew word Bochim means “weepers”.

**2:6-9** These verses take the story back to Josh 24:28-31. They serve to introduce what follows.

**2:10** “*Gathered to their ancestors*”– note at Gen 25:8.

“*The LORD*”– they were called the people of God but did not know God. Compare 1 Sam 2:12; 3:7.

“*For Israel*”– as is often the case the previous generation had failed in their duty to teach their children the things of God – Deut 4:9-10; 6:6-7; 11:19. Compare Ps 78:4.

**2:11** “*Did evil*”– this will follow from the ignorance revealed in v 10 as surely as night follows day.

The knowledge of God acts as some restraint on men. If this restraint is removed evil will sprout, blossom, and flourish. Compare Rom 1:28-31; Eph 4:18-19.

“*Baals*”– Baal means “lord”, or “owner”. In the Old Testament the word is used of a certain false god more than 70 times. The Canaanites worshiped him under several different forms, so the plural is used here. He was sometimes worshiped as the storm god, or as the god of fertility. Sometimes he was worshiped with shameful sexual rites involving temple prostitutes. Sometimes his worshipers offered children in the fire to him (Jer 19:5). He was sometimes represented as standing on a bull.

**2:12** “*Gods*”– they broke the very first of God’s commandments (Ex 20:2-3; Deut 6:4-5), and all other evils flowed from that.

“*Anger*”– notes at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

**2:13** “*Ashtoreth*”– a goddess supposed to be the wife of Baal. Note at 1 Kings 11:5.

**2:14** Their punishment fit their crime. In disobedience they let their enemies remain in the land and started worshiping their gods, so God handed them over to those same enemies (6:1; 13:1). Compare Rom 1:24,26,28; 1 Tim 1:20. See Gal 6:7.

**2:15** What chance of victory can there be, either in the physical or spiritual realm, if the hand of God is against His people? There is only one thing that will bring the hand of God against them – sin; and only one way to cause the hand of God to work for them again – repentance and faith (2 Chron 7:14; Ps 32:4-5; Isa 55:7).

<sup>16</sup>However, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup>But still they would not listen to their judges, but prostituted themselves to other gods and bowed down to them. They quickly turned out of the way in which their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not do so. <sup>18</sup>And when the LORD raised up judges for them, then the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to compassion because of their groanings on account of those who oppressed them and troubled them. <sup>19</sup>And it came about when the judge was dead, *that* they went back and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and to bow down to them. They did not stop their practices or their stubborn ways.

**2:16-19** This is the brief story of the book of Judges and, for that matter, in some measure, the story of the whole Old Testament. And though we live in other places, other times than Israel, we would make a big mistake if we thought we were superior to them by nature. The Bible teaches the truth that all are sinners, by nature all are rebellious against the true God, all are disobedient to His Word. God did not give us the history of Israel that we could learn how bad they were, but that we might realize to some extent what we are and what He is and what He wants us to be.

In this book it is said that God raised up twelve judges. Othniel was the first and Samson the last named. The last judge and the greatest was Samuel, whose story is in the book of 1 Samuel. The judges were from different tribes (Othniel – Judah; Ehud – Benjamin; Shamgar – unknown; Deborah – unknown, but probably Ephraim; Gideon – Manasseh; Tola – Issachar; Jair – Manasseh; Jephthah – Manasseh; Ibzan – either Judah or Zebulun; Elon – Zebulun; Abdon – Ephraim; Samson – Dan; Samuel – Levi).

The enemies they faced were from all sides of Israel: northeast, southeast, east, south, west, north. In other words, people of Israel in all parts of the country were involved in the testing and teaching of 2:22; and 3:2 (see notes there).

**2:16** “LORD raised up” – this was God’s grace at work toward an unworthy people.

“Judges” – the Hebrew word means either judges or leaders. On the whole it seems that those whom God raised up to deliver Israel performed both of these functions, but with some of the individuals named their leading was more in prominence than their judging.

**2:17** “Prostituted themselves” – notes at Lev 20:5; Jer 2:20.

<sup>20</sup>And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he said, “Because this people have broken my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not listened to my voice, <sup>21</sup>from now on I will not drive out from before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, <sup>22</sup>so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it, as their fathers kept *it*, or not”. <sup>23</sup>Therefore the LORD left those nations, not driving them out speedily; and he did not deliver them into the hands of Joshua.

**3** Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to test Israel by them, as many in *Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan, <sup>2</sup>so that the generations of the children of Israel might learn; *that is*, to teach war to those who previously knew nothing about it: <sup>3</sup>five lords of the Philistines,

“Fathers” – v 7.

**2:18** “Compassion” – this wonderful quality in God is seen everywhere in the Bible – Ex 2:24-25; 3:7; 22:27; 34:6; 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Chron 36:15; Ps 78:38; 86:15; 103:13-14; Isa 49:13; Jer 12:15; Lam 3:22; Micah 7:19; Matt 9:36; Mark 1:41; Rom 9:15.

**2:19** “Corrupted themselves” – in spite of God’s grace and compassion, the people got worse and worse. They did not understand the truth later recorded in Rom 2:4.

“Stubborn” – Ex 32:9; Deut 9:6; 1 Sam 15:23; Acts 7:51.

**2:20** “Anger” – notes at Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

**2:21** Note at v 3.

**2:22** “Test” – notes at Gen 22:1; Ps 66:10,12. Now Christians also are tested by the unbelieving people among whom they live (as well as by Satan without and their own sinful natures within). The test is whether they will keep the ways of the Lord when the vast majority does not, whether they will be a separate holy people, or adopt the customs and habits of false religion and corrupt society.

**3:1** “Test” – 2:22.

**3:2** “Teach warfare” – compare Ps 18:34-40; 144:1. God wanted to prepare them to live in the kind of world they lived in. Israel was a nation in the land God had given them, but all through their history they were surrounded by enemy nations bent on their destruction (see Ps 83:1-8). Warfare is a continual theme of the historical books of the Bible. It was essential for Israel to know how to fight. Now the battles of God’s people are not physical ones but spiritual (Eph 6:10-12. See note at Josh 1:17), and they needed to learn how to fight them.

**3:3** “Philistines” – note at 1:18. Hermon and Hamath were in the far northern parts of the land.

and all the Canaanites and Sidonians and Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon from Mount Baal-Hermon to the entrance to Hamath. <sup>4</sup>And they were to test Israel by them, to know whether they would listen to the commandments of the LORD which he commanded their fathers through Moses.

<sup>5</sup>And the children of Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites and Amorites and Perizzites and Hivites and Jebusites; <sup>6</sup>and they took their daughters to be their wives and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

<sup>7</sup>And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. <sup>8</sup>Therefore the anger of the LORD burned against Israel and he sold them into the hand of Cushan Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan Rishathaim for eight years. <sup>9</sup>And when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came on him, and he judged Israel and went out to war; and the LORD delivered Cushan Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hands, and he got the upper hand over Cushan Rishathaim. <sup>11</sup>And the land had rest for forty years. And Othniel the son

of Kenaz died.

<sup>12</sup>And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>13</sup>And Eglon gathered to himself the children of Ammon and Amalek and went and attacked Israel, and took possession of the city of palm trees. <sup>14</sup>So the children of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, for eighteen years.

<sup>15</sup>But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. And the children of Israel sent a present through him to Eglon, the king of Moab. <sup>16</sup>But Ehud made a double-edged sword a cubit long, and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. <sup>17</sup>And he brought the present to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. <sup>18</sup>And when Ehud had finished offering the present, he sent away the people who had carried the present. <sup>19</sup>But he himself turned back from the quarries that were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king". The king said, "Keep quiet!" And all who stood around him went out from his presence.

<sup>20</sup>And Ehud came to him. And he was sitting alone in a room of the summer palace. And Ehud said, "I have a message from

3:4 Note at 2:22.

3:5-6 Deut 7:1-6; Josh 23:12; 1 Kings 11:1-8; 2 Chron 18:1; 2 Cor 6:14-18.

3:7 "Did evil"– v 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.

"Baals"– 2:11-13.

"Asherahs"– Asherah was a goddess (similar to Ashtoreth) worshiped by the Canaanites. They considered her the wife of their chief god (whom they called El). Her worshipers used to carve wooden poles to represent her and placed them at her shrines – 6:26; Ex 34:13; 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chron 15:16; 17:6; 34:3-4; Micah 5:14.

3:8 "Anger"– 2:13-14,20; 6:39; 10:7; Num 15:3; Ps 90:7-11. God's anger is an important theme of Judges which describes events when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). And what sinful people see fit to do always deserves God's anger.

"Mesopotamia"– an area northeast of Israel.

3:9 "Cried out"– another common theme of this book – v 15; 4:3; 6:6-7; 10:10,12. The sad thing is that they cried out to the Lord only when in trouble, and not for power to live consistent,

holy lives.

"Raised up"– note at 2:16-19.

"Othniel"– 1:13. He was of the tribe of Judah.

3:10 "Spirit of the LORD"– 6:34; 11:29; 14:6,19. God gave power to those He raised up, and enabled them to do what He called them to do – as indeed He always will. References to the Spirit at Gen 1:2; notes at John 14:16-17.

3:11 2:18.

3:12 "Did evil again"– 2:19.

"Moab"– a country east of Israel. Note at Gen 19:37.

3:13 Ammonites were to the east of Israel. The Amalekites were a nomadic people who generally roamed the deserts south and southeast of Israel.

"City of Palm Trees"– Jericho.

3:15 "Ehud"– what follows reveals Ehud as a very bold, very clever man.

"Left-handed"– many of the descendants of Benjamin, the "son of (Jacob's) right hand" (Gen 35:18), were left-handed (Jud 20:15-16).

"Present"– probably the yearly payment demanded by Eglon.



God for you". And he got up from *his* seat, <sup>21</sup>and Ehud put out his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh and drove it into his belly. <sup>22</sup>And the handle also went in after the blade; and the fat closed on the blade, so that he could not draw the sword out of his belly; and the body waste came out. <sup>23</sup>Then Ehud went out to the porch and shut the doors of the room behind him and locked them.

<sup>24</sup>When he had gone out, *the king's* servants came, and when they saw that the doors of the room were locked, they said, "He must be relieving himself in his summer palace". <sup>25</sup>And they waited until they were ashamed, but he did not appear opening the doors of the room. So they took a key and opened *them*, and saw that their lord had fallen down on the floor, dead.

<sup>26</sup>And Ehud escaped while they were waiting, and went beyond the quarries and escaped to Seirath. <sup>27</sup>And it came about when he arrived that he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the hills, with him in front of them.

<sup>28</sup>And he said to them, "Follow me! For the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hands". And they went down after him and captured the fords of the Jordan toward Moab, and did not let anyone cross over. <sup>29</sup>And at that time they

killed about ten thousand men of Moab, all tough men and brave fighters, and not a man escaped.

<sup>30</sup>So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

<sup>31</sup>And after *Ehud* Shamgar the son of Anath was *judge*. He killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

**4** Then, after Ehud died, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth of the Gentiles. <sup>3</sup>And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, for *Jabin* had nine hundred iron chariots and he mightily oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years.

<sup>4</sup>And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup>And she used to stay under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the children of Israel would come up to her for judgment. <sup>6</sup>And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel given a command? Go and proceed to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men

**3:20** "Message from God"— God had raised up Ehud (v 15) to deliver His people from Eglon. Ehud means that God's message to Eglon was a message of God's vengeance.

**3:21** This was not personal vengeance on Ehud's part, but the working out of God's justice in the deliverance of His people.

**3:27** "Trumpet"— 6:34; 7:18; Lev 23:23; Num 10:1-10.

**3:28** "Fords"— 12:5; Josh 2:7 — where the water of the river was shallowest and crossing easiest.

**3:30** "Eighty years"— the longest period of peace mentioned in Judges.

**3:31** "Shamgar"— nothing more is known of this man except that his times and those of Deborah overlapped — 5:6-7.

"Six hundred"— a feat of personal strength and daring exceeded only by Samson (15:15), and one of David's mighty warriors (2 Sam 23:8).

**4:1** 2:18-19; 3:12.

**4:2** "Jabin"— Joshua killed a king of the same name who ruled in the same area (Josh 11:1,10).

"Hazor"— a city in Galilee, north of the Sea, in the territory of Naphtali.

**4:3** "Iron chariots"— 1:19.

**4:4** The Hebrew name Deborah means "bee".

"Prophetess"— Ex 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14; Isa 8:3; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9. Note at Gen 20:7. Deborah was the only woman among the judges or leaders of Israel.

"Led"— or "judged".

**4:5** "Bethel"— a town about 20 kilometers north of Jerusalem.

"Ephraim"— we are not told that Deborah was of this tribe, but this indicates she may have been. She could have moved to this area from some other place. Compare 10:1.

**4:6** "Barak"— his name means "lightning". In the story which follows he takes second place to Deborah, but is mentioned by name in Hebrews chapter 11 among the great heroes of faith, and she is not (Heb 11:32 — not all the best and greatest of Old Testament saints are listed there by name).

"Given a command"— Deborah was a true prophetess and got God's message and delivered it in God's name.

"Tabor"— a hill steeply rising from the plain not far from the Sea of Galilee. Its peak is about 600 meters above sea level.



from the children of Naphtali and from the children of Zebulun. <sup>7</sup>And I will draw Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude to you at the Kishon river, and I will deliver him into your hands".

<sup>8</sup>And Barak said to her, "If you go with me, then I will go; but if you do not go with me, *then* I will not go".

<sup>9</sup>And she said, "Certainly I will go with you. However, the journey that you are about to take will not result in your honour. For the LORD will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman". And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. <sup>10</sup>And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men on foot, and Deborah went up with him.

<sup>11</sup>Now Heber the Kenite, *who was* of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and camped in the plain of Zaananim, which is near Kedesh.

<sup>12</sup>And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. <sup>13</sup>And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles to the Kishon river.

<sup>14</sup>And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this *is* the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone out before you?"

So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men behind him. <sup>15</sup>And the LORD routed Sisera, and all *his* chariots and *his* whole army, with the edge of the

sword before Barak; so that Sisera got down from *his* chariot and fled away on foot. <sup>16</sup>But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the army, to Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the whole of Sisera's army fell by the edge of the sword and not a man was left.

<sup>17</sup>However Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the household of Heber the Kenite.

<sup>18</sup>And Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me. Don't be afraid". And when he had turned aside to her into the tent, she covered him with a rug.

<sup>19</sup>And he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty". And she opened a container of milk and gave him a drink, and covered him.

<sup>20</sup>Again he said to her, "Stand in the door of the tent, and if it so happens that any man comes and asks you, saying, 'Is there any man here?' you must say, 'No.' "

<sup>21</sup>Then Heber's wife Jael took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temples and fastened it into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

<sup>22</sup>And as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael appeared, coming out to meet him, and she said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man for whom you are looking". And when he came into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead, with the peg through his temples.

<sup>23</sup>So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

**4:7** "Draw"— v 13; Prov 21:1.

"Kishon"— this river flows through part of the plain of Jezreel (also called Megiddo or Megiddon), west of Mt Tabor.

**4:8** It was not enough for Barak that God had told him to go and that God would be with him. Obviously his faith was weak, yet he had true faith. In Hebrews chapter 11 his timid nature and his fears are not mentioned. God will remember the best things about His people and forgive and eventually forget the worst (Heb 6:10; 8:12). But this does not mean that they can follow the worst without penalty.

**4:9** "Kedesh"— not to be confused with the Kadash-Barnea in the south of Israel.

**4:11** "Heber"— the Kenites (1:16) had been friends of Israel. Heber became friendly with Israel's enemies (v 17).

"Hobab"— Num 10:29.

**4:13** Verse 7.

**4:14** "Before you"— see Josh 5:13-15; 23:3; 2 Sam 5:24. God Himself would lead him into battle.

**4:15** "Routed"— 7:21-22; Ex 14:24; Jud 10:10; 1 Sam 7:10; 14:15; 2 Kings 7:6; Ps 18:14.

**4:17** Verse 11. Jael means "mountain goat".

**4:18** "Tent"— it seemed to Sisera the perfect place to hide. No one but her husband or father would think of entering her tent uninvited – it would have been altogether against custom.

**4:19** "Container"— in those days there were no glass bottles like we have today. The usual containers for liquids were skins of goats or sheep made watertight. See Matt 9:17.

**4:21** Barak with an army had been afraid to meet Sisera (v 8). This woman, alone and without weapons of war, dared to slay him. Obviously she did not agree with her husband when he forsook Israel to become friends of Israel's enemies.

<sup>24</sup>And the hand of the children of Israel bore down more and more heavily on Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

**5** And on that day Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang a *song*, saying,  
<sup>2</sup> “Praise the LORD for vengeance taken for Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.  
<sup>3</sup> “Listen, O you kings! Give ear, O you princes! I, even I, will sing to the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.  
<sup>4</sup> LORD, when you went out of Seir, when you marched out from the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dripped, yes, the clouds dripped water.  
<sup>5</sup> The mountains melted away before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.  
<sup>6</sup> “In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, and the travelers walked through byways.  
<sup>7</sup> *Life in the villages* came to a stop, came to a stop in Israel, until I,

Deborah, arose,  
*until* I arose a mother in Israel.  
<sup>8</sup> “They chose new gods; then war *came* to the gates.  
 Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?  
<sup>9</sup> My heart *is* with the leaders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Praise the LORD.  
<sup>10</sup> “Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, you who sit in judgment and walk by the way.  
<sup>11</sup> “*Those who are delivered* from the noise of archers in the watering places, there they will declare the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous acts toward the *inhabitants* of his villages in Israel.  
 Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.  
<sup>12</sup> “Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake! Utter a song! Arise, Barak! And lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.  
<sup>13</sup> “Then he caused the survivors to have dominion over the nobles among the people;

**4:24** “*Destroyed*”— with his army destroyed and his general dead, Jabin was no match for an Israel whose courage had been revived by two women.

**5:1** “*Song*”— victory over their enemies naturally brought songs to the victors’ hearts and lips (Ex 15:1-18; 2 Sam 22:1-51). Spiritual victories too will result in joyful singing (Eph 5:15-20; Rev 15:2-4). This song sung by Deborah and Barak is a superb example of early Hebrew poetry.  
**5:2** “*Willingly offered*”— v 9; 1 Chron 29:5; Rom 12:1-2.

**5:4-5** These verses refer to the time when God brought Israel through the Sinai desert, around Edom, and into Canaan. Compare Deut 33:2; Ps 68:7-10.

**5:6** “*Shamgar*”— 3:31.

“*Deserted*”—the main roads were unsafe because of the enemy – 4:2-3.

**5:7** “*I*”— in the whole of Israel there was no other leader to rally the people and defeat the enemy. God may use women to do a man’s job when

there are no men available or willing to do it.

**5:8** “*New gods*”— 2:13,19. Compare Deut 32:17.

“*Israel*”— the people had compromised with the Canaanites and had no will to resist (3:5-6), so they were totally unprepared to fight. Can it not be said of many Christians now “not a shield of faith, not a sword of the Spirit is seen among them” (Eph 6:14-17)

**5:9** “*My heart is with*”— this is the reason she was able to inspire leaders and people alike.

**5:10** “*Donkeys*”— indicates the leaders and the wealthy (10:4; 12:14). Horses were not used by the Israelites until later in history.

**5:11** “*Righteous acts of the LORD*”— God’s delivering His people, and destroying the ungodly were righteous acts. God, as always, was acting in perfect justice. See 1 Sam 12:7-11; Ps 145:17; Rev 15:3; 16:5-6.

**5:12** “*Awake*”— a stirring call to action. Compare Ps 7:6; 35:23; 44:23.

“*Captive*”— compare Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8.

the LORD caused me to have  
 dominion over the mighty.  
 14 "From Ephraim a root of those  
 in Amalek *came down*;  
 after you, Benjamin, among  
 your people.  
 Leaders came down  
 from Machir,  
 and out of Zebulun  
 those who handle  
 the pen of the writer.  
 15 And the princes of Issachar were  
 with Deborah;  
 Issachar, and also Barak;  
 he was sent on foot into the valley.  
 In the divisions of Reuben  
*there were* great searchings  
 of heart.  
 16 Why did you stay among  
 the sheepfolds to hear  
 the bleatings of the flocks?  
 Concerning the divisions  
 of Reuben  
 there were great searchings  
 of heart.  
 17 Gilead stayed beyond Jordan.  
 And why did Dan remain  
 in ships?  
 Asher continued at the seashore,

and stayed at his breakwaters.  
 18 Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people  
*who* put their lives  
 in jeopardy of death  
 on the high places of the field.  
 19 "The kings *came and* fought,  
 then the kings of Canaan fought in  
 Taanach by the waters  
 of Megiddo;  
 they took no plunder of silver.  
 20 They fought from the heavens;  
 the stars in their courses  
 fought against Sisera.  
 21 The river of Kishon swept  
 them away,  
 that ancient river, the river Kishon.  
 O my soul, you have trampled  
 down strength.  
 22 Then the hooves of the horses  
 hammered  
 because of the prancing,  
 the prancing of their mighty ones.  
 23 'Curse Meroz',  
 said the angel of the LORD,  
 'curse its inhabitants bitterly,  
 because they did not come  
 to the help of the LORD,  
 to the help of the LORD against the  
 mighty.'

5:13 "Me"— v 1.

5:14 "Amalek"— note at Ex 17:8. Though usually occupying desert areas south and east of Israel, at some time before Israel came into Canaan Amalekites lived in what became Ephraim's territory. See 12:15. Ephraim put down its roots in what had once been possessed by Amalek.

"Machir"— Manasseh's firstborn son. His descendants settled on both sides of the Jordan River. Here the reference is to those west of the river.

5:16 "Searchings of heart"— evidently the Reubenites were shaken by doubts about helping their brother tribes in the fight. This was in accordance with the character of their forefather. See Gen 49:3-4.

5:17 "Gilead"— an area east of the Jordan River occupied by the half tribe of Manasseh.

"Asher"— Dan and Asher had territories along the Mediterranean Sea.

5:18 In the battle of God against the enemies of His people, both those who fought (Ephraim, Benjamin, part of Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar, Naphtali), and those who refused to fight (Reuben, Dan and Asher) are revealed. So at the end of this age it will be revealed who fought and who did not fight the Lord's spiritual battles. See 1 Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3; 4:7-8.

5:19 "Megiddo"— 4:7.

5:20 This is poetry, and means that God Himself fought against Sisera (see 4:6-7). It does not mean that the position of the stars was unfavorable to Sisera, or any other such superstitious nonsense. The position of the stars and planets has no power to influence men's fate. The true and living God will deal with every individual according to His own will and wisdom. Our business should be to know Him, serve Him, and please Him in everything, not to try and find out what our horoscopes may be. Every day is a good day if we love and serve the true God. No day is a good day if we do not. See the note at Gen 25:24.

5:21 Their dead bodies fell into the river and were carried away.

5:23 "Meroz"— a town in Naphtali. It was cursed, not because of what it did, but because of what it did not do. Compare Matt 25:31-33,41-46; 1 Cor 16:22. Note at v 18. See also Matt 12:30. In the Lord's battles neutrality is not acceptable. If we do not help Him it is as though we hinder Him. If we are not for Him we show we are for His enemies, or at least we reveal an evil indifference to Him and His cause. And men will pay the penalty for that, even though they may pride themselves on their tolerant spirit of neutrality.

"Angel of the LORD"— note at Gen 16:7.

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael,  
 1 the wife of Heber the Kenite;  
 most blessed shall she be of women  
 in the tent.

25 He asked water,  
 and she gave *him* milk;  
 she brought forth curds  
 in an excellent bowl.

26 She put her hand to the peg,  
 and her right hand to  
 the workmen's hammer,  
 and with the hammer  
 she struck Sisera.  
 She crushed his head,  
 and she pierced and  
 struck through his temples.

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell,  
 he lay down.  
 At her feet he bowed, he fell.  
 Where he bowed,  
 there he fell down dead.

28 "The mother of Sisera  
 looked out at a window,  
 and cried out through  
 the lattice,  
 'Why is his chariot  
 so long in coming?  
 Why are the wheels of  
 his chariots delayed?'

29 "Her wise ladies answered her,  
 indeed she gave answer  
 to herself,

30 'Have they not found,  
 have they *not* divided  
 the plunder;  
 to each man a girl or two;  
 to Sisera a plunder of *garments of*  
 various colours,  
 a plunder of various colours of

needlework,  
 of various colours of needlework  
 on both sides,  
 for the necks of *those who*  
 take the plunder?'

31 "So may all your enemies perish,  
 O LORD.  
 But *may* those who love him  
 be like the sun when it goes  
 forth in its might".

And the land had rest for forty years.

**6** And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hands of Midian for seven years. <sup>2</sup>And Midian had the upper hand against Israel; *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made for themselves the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves and strongholds. <sup>3</sup>And it so happened that when Israel sowed seed, the Midianites would come up, and the Amalekites, and the eastern peoples would come up against them, <sup>4</sup>and would camp against them and destroy the produce of the ground as far as Gaza, and leave no supply of food for Israel, no sheep or ox or donkey. <sup>5</sup>For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, and they would come as numerous as grasshoppers; for both they and their camels were beyond counting. And they would enter the land to destroy it. <sup>6</sup>And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>And it came about, when the children of Israel cried to the LORD because of the Midianites, <sup>8</sup>that the LORD sent a prophet

**5:24** "*Jael*"— 4:21. She did not believe in trying to be neutral but came to the help of God's people against a powerful and ungodly foe.

**5:28** "*Mother*"— eventually mothers of enemies of God will be disappointed; mothers in Israel (v 7) will joyfully sing of God's grace and power.

**5:31** "*Perish*"— Num 10:35; Ps 68:1-2. See note at Ps 35:8. Notice that there are only two classes of people here — God's enemies and those who love God. Not loving God means enmity with God — v 23; John 15:18; Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 16:22.

**6:1** "*Did evil*"— 2:18-19; 3:7,12; 4:1.

"*Midian*"— Gen 25:2 - a people to the south and east of Israel.

**6:2-3** Midian was not strong enough alone to subjugate Israel. Midian had allies in the Amalekites and other peoples in the region.

And God was working against Israel because of its sins (v 1).

**6:5** "*Grasshoppers*"— 7:12. They were compared to grasshoppers both because of their numbers and because they left the land stripped bare. Compare Ex 10:13-15. The prophet Joel used similar language about another invasion.

**6:6** "*Cried out*"— 3:9,15; 4:3. The Israelites as usual waited until they were completely desperate before crying to God. Men in general try to use God as a last resort, when everything else has failed them.

**6:8-10** This time God, instead of immediately raising up a deliverer, sent a prophet to remind them of His grace and power and the people's sins. See Ex 20:1-6. Instruction was needed as much as or more than deliverance.



to the children of Israel, who said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘I brought you up from Egypt and led you out of the house of bondage, <sup>9</sup>and I rescued you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all who oppressed you, and drove them out from before you and gave you their land. <sup>10</sup>And I said to you, I *am* the LORD your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed my voice.’ ”

<sup>11</sup>And the angel of the LORD came and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite. And his son Gideon was threshing wheat near the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD *is* with you, you mighty warrior”.

<sup>13</sup>And Gideon said to him, “Oh my Lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all of this happened to us? And where *are* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites”.

<sup>14</sup>And the LORD looked at him and said, “Go in this strength of yours, and you will save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”

<sup>15</sup>And he said to him, “Oh my Lord, how will I save Israel? See, my family *is* poor in Manasseh and I *am* the least in my father’s household”.

<sup>16</sup>And the LORD said to him, “I will

certainly be with you, and you will strike down the Midianites as one man”.

<sup>17</sup>And he said to him, “If now I have found grace in your sight, then show me a sign that *it is* you talking with me. <sup>18</sup>Please do not leave here until I come *back* to you and bring out my offering and place *it* before you”.

And he said, “I will wait until you come back”.

<sup>19</sup>And Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes with an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and put the broth in a pot and brought *them* out to him under the oak and presented *them*.

<sup>20</sup>And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes and lay *them* on this rock and pour out the broth”. And he did so. <sup>21</sup>Then the angel of the LORD stretched out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire came up out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed from his sight.

<sup>22</sup>And when Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD, Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face”.

<sup>23</sup>And the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear. You will not die”.

<sup>24</sup>Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it Jehovah Shalom. To this day it *is* still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

<sup>25</sup>And it came about on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Take your

**6:11** “Angel of the LORD”—5:23. Note at Gen 16:7. Here He appeared as an ordinary man.

**6:12** “With you”— Ex 3:12; Josh 1:5; Isa 7:14; Heb 13:5-6.

“Warrior”— this word was based on what the angel knew Gideon would do in the future.

**6:13** “Why then has all of this happened to us”— compare Ps 42:9-10. If we get our eyes away from God and His Word we will fall into perplexity and discouragement.

**6:14** “LORD”— (Jehovah)— here is proof that “the angel of the LORD” (v 11) is to be identified with Jehovah Himself. Gideon could not save Israel from Midian, but Gideon sent by God could.

**6:15** “Lord, how”— another reluctant servant of God. Compare Ex 3:1; 4:13; Jer 1:6; Josh 1:1-3. Isa 6:8 is different.

“Least”— see 1 Cor 1:26-31.

**6:17** “Sign”— Gideon was wise to ask for this sign. The person before him appeared as an ordinary man. And it seems Gideon was fully aware that anyone could come and speak in God’s name

and try to convince him to take action against Midian. For notes on asking for signs see also vs 36-40; 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isa 7:10-11. When men want to do God’s will and ask for a sign to make sure of His will, God is willing to grant them. But signs should be asked for in faith, not in unbelief (see Matt 12:38-39).

**6:18** “I will wait”— in this something of God’s gracious character is revealed. God longs to bless men (Isa 30:18). He waits for them. Compare Rev 3:20.

**6:19** “Ephah”— probably about one half bushel.

**6:21** Lev 9:24.

“Fire”— note at Ex 3:2. This was the sign Gideon asked for in v 17 and it showed that his offering was accepted.

**6:22** “Face to face”— 13:22; Gen 32:30. This was a recognition, and fear, of God’s fiery holiness.

**6:24** “Altar”— see Gen 8:20.

“Shalom”— v 23. A beautiful name of the true God – The LORD is Peace. Note on Jehovah at 3:14-15.

**6:25** Note on Baal and Asherah at 2:11; 3:7.

father's young bull, the seven year old second bull, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the *Asherah* grove that is by it, <sup>26</sup>and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this rock, in the ordered way. And take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which you cut down".

<sup>27</sup>Then Gideon took ten of his male servants and did as the LORD told him. But it was *like this*: he did not do it in daylight, because he was afraid of his father's household and the men of the city; so he did *it* at night.

<sup>28</sup>And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, see, the altar of Baal was thrown down and the grove by it was cut down and the second bull was offered on the altar *that* was built.

<sup>29</sup>And they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they made a search and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing".

<sup>30</sup>Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son to die, because he has thrown down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the grove that was by it".

<sup>31</sup>And Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? May the one who pleads for him be put to death while *it is still* morning. If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because *someone* has thrown down his altar". <sup>32</sup>Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because *he* has thrown down his altar".

<sup>33</sup>Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the eastern peoples gathered

together and crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel. <sup>34</sup>But the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and the Abiezerites were called out to follow him. <sup>35</sup>And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who was also called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher and to Zebulun and to Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

<sup>36</sup>And Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, <sup>37</sup>see, I will put a fleece of wool on the *threshing* floor; and if the dew comes only on the fleece, and all the ground *is* dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said". <sup>38</sup>And it happened like that. For he got up early the next day and squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.

<sup>39</sup>And Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me, and I will speak just once more. I pray you, please let me test with the fleece just once more. Now let the fleece be dry and let there be dew all over the ground". <sup>40</sup>And God did so that night. For only the fleece was dry and there was dew all over the ground.

**7** Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people who were with him, got up early and camped beside Harod's well, so that the army of the Midianites was to the north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. <sup>2</sup>And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands. *If I did*, Israel would boast against me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me'. <sup>3</sup>Now therefore

**6:27** "*Afraid*" – v 12! Here is an important lesson for all of us – Gideon did not allow his fears to keep him from obeying God.

**6:30** "*Die*" – how utterly perverse their thoughts! Because of their idol worship they were the ones who deserved to die, not Gideon. See Deut 13:6-15. This is an example of how the world, and, alas, sometimes God's people, turn the truth on its head.

**6:31** "*His altar*" – an excellent answer that reminds us of Elijah's treatment of the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:21-27.

**6:32** "*Jerubbaal*" – means "let Baal contend".

**6:33** "*Jezreel*" – 4:7; 5:19.

**6:34** "*Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon*" – See 3:10. The Hebrew literally means "the Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon". This expression

in Hebrew is found in only two other places – 1 Chron 12:18; 2 Chron 24:20.

"*Trumpet*" – 3:27.

**6:35** "*Manasseh*" – Gideon was of this tribe.

**6:36-40** Gideon should have believed the promise and the sign God had already given (vs 14, 16, 21). But God did not rebuke Gideon for asking for another sign. He was willing to stoop to Gideon's weakness and meet his need of further assurance. He knew that by nature Gideon was a fearful and cautious man (vs 15, 27; 7:10). Ps 103:13-14 is always true.

**7:1** "*Valley*" – the plain of Jezreel (6:33).

**7:2** "*Too many*" – see 1 Sam 14:6; Ps 33:16.

"*Boast*" – compare Jer 9:23-24; 1 Cor 1:27-31; 3:21; Eph 2:9. Boasting in themselves would have been disastrous for them.

make an announcement in the hearing of the people and say, 'Whoever is trembling and afraid, let him go back and leave early from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people went back, leaving ten thousand.

<sup>4</sup>And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. And it shall be *like this*: if I say to you about someone, 'This one shall go with you', he shall go with you; and if I say about someone *else*, 'This one shall not go with you', he shall not go".

<sup>5</sup>So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps the water with his tongue, like a dog laps, set him apart by himself; likewise everyone who kneels down to drink". <sup>6</sup>And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD said to Gideon, "I will save you through the three hundred men who lapped, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. As for all the others, let each man go to his place". <sup>8</sup>So the people took provisions in their hands and their trumpets. And he sent all *the rest of* Israel away, each man to his tent, and kept those three hundred men. And the army of Midian was below him in the valley.

<sup>9</sup>And it came about the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down to the army, for I have delivered it into your hands. <sup>10</sup>But if you are afraid to go down, go down with your servant Phurah to the army, <sup>11</sup>and you can hear what they are saying. And after that your hands will be strengthened to go down to the army". Then

he went down with Phurah his servant to the outposts of the armed men in the camp. <sup>12</sup>And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the eastern people lay along in the valley like grasshoppers in number; and their camels *were* beyond counting, as many as the sand on the seashore.

<sup>13</sup>And when Gideon came, just then a man was telling a dream to his companion and saying, "Look, I had a dream, and, see, a cake of barley bread came rolling into the camp of Midian, and came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned it, so that the tent lay flat".

<sup>14</sup>And his companion answered and said, "This *is* nothing else except the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. For God has delivered Midian and all the army into his hands".

<sup>15</sup>And it happened *that* when Gideon heard the dream being told and its interpretation, he worshipped and returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise! For the LORD has delivered the army of Midian into your hands". <sup>16</sup>And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in each man's hand, with empty pitchers, with torches inside the pitchers.

<sup>17</sup>And he said to them, "Watch me and do likewise. And, look, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, you must do just as I do. <sup>18</sup>When I blow on a trumpet, I and all those who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on all sides of the whole camp and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.*' "

<sup>19</sup>So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set a new guard. And they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers

**7:3** "*Afraid*"— compare Deut 20:8. God did not want many men for the battle but the few He did want had to be willing in faith to risk everything for Him. This is not less true now.

**7:4** "*Test them*"— doubtless God's process of testing men goes on continually in unseen ways.

**7:6** The 300 remained alert and prepared for action, while the remainder relaxed and showed themselves vulnerable to attack. God did not need many men, but the few He wanted had to be watchful and ready for anything. Can we think it is any different for the Lord's spiritual battles now?

**7:10** "*Afraid*"— God knew that Gideon by nature was a man tempted to timidity and fear (6:15,27),

and gave him further encouragement in the incident which follows (vs 11-14).

**7:15** God's method of encouraging His timid servant bore fruit. In general we can say that anything that encourages our faith in the one true God is from God (compare 2 Thess 2:17), anything that discourages our faith is from some source in opposition to God.

**7:18** "*Gideon*"— Gideon was not concerned for his own honor here — he knew that the enemy feared his name (v 14).

**7:19** "*Middle watch*"— there were three watches during the night. The middle one was at a time when sleep would have fallen on the camp.



in their hands. <sup>20</sup>And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands to blow on. And they cried out, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" <sup>21</sup>And each man stood in his place around the camp. And the whole army ran, and cried out as they fled.

<sup>22</sup>And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow *soldier*, throughout the whole army. And the army fled to Beth-Shittah in Zererah and to the border of Abel-Meholah, to Tabbath. <sup>23</sup>And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh and chased after the Midianites. <sup>24</sup>And Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and in advance of them seize the water *crossings* as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan". Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the water *crossings* as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan.

<sup>25</sup>And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they killed Oreb on the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. And they pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

**8** And the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you treated us like this, not calling us when you went to fight against the Midianites?" And they rebuked him sharply.

**7:21-22** Compare Josh 23:10; 1 Sam 14:14-15; 2 Kings 7:6-7. Obedience to God and boldness of faith can always defeat superior forces. Compare Luke 10:9,20; Jam 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9.

**7:24** "Jordan"—to present the enemy escaping eastward across the river.

**7:25** "Zeeb"—Ps 83:11.

**8:1** "Sharply"—those who win great victories are not always applauded for them. See 12:1 also. These critics in their self-centeredness could not praise God for a success won through someone else.

**8:2** Gideon is saying that Ephraim's final pursuit of the enemy ("gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim") was far more important than his own initial attack ("the grape harvest of Abiezer"). Abiezer was Gideon's clan—6:11).

**8:3** "Subsided"—Prov 15:1. Gideon did not add fuel to the flames of envy that had begun to blaze

<sup>2</sup>And he said to them, "What have I done now compared with you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer? <sup>3</sup>God has delivered the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, into your hands. And what was I able to do compared with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided, when he said that.

<sup>4</sup>And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed it, he and the three hundred men with him, weary but still pursuing the enemy. <sup>5</sup>And he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me; for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian".

<sup>6</sup>And the princes of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?"

<sup>7</sup>And Gideon said, "So when the LORD delivers Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, then I will rip up your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars".

<sup>8</sup>And he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered him. <sup>9</sup>And he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower".

<sup>10</sup>Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the armies of the eastern peoples. For a hundred and twenty thousand men who drew sword had fallen. <sup>11</sup>And Gideon went

in their hearts. He did not want the campaign against Midian to be hindered. He would rather win the battle against the enemy than win the argument against allies, and was willing to praise them rather than himself. In all this he displayed true wisdom.

**8:4** "But still pursuing"—this should be true also in our spiritual life in Christ. Paul was sometimes exhausted (2 Cor 4:8-9; 7:5), but he kept pursuing the goal (Phil 3:13-14).

**8:5** "Succoth"—Gen 33:17; Josh 13:27; 1 Kings 7:46. This was an Israelite town east of the Jordan River. Its people should have been glad to help Gideon in his efforts to destroy his and their enemies.

**8:7** Compare 5:23.

**8:8** "Penuel"—Gen 32:30-31; 1 Kings 12:25. Another Israelite town which should have helped Gideon.



up by way of the tent dwellers to the east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the army; for the army was off guard. <sup>12</sup>And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and seized the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

<sup>13</sup>And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*, <sup>14</sup>and caught a young man of the men of Succoth and questioned him; and *the youth* wrote down for him the *names of the leaders* of Succoth, and its elders, seventy-seven men. <sup>15</sup>And he came to the men of Succoth and said, "See Zebah and Zalmunna about whom you taunted me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your weary men?'" <sup>16</sup>And he took the elders of the city, and thorns and briars from the wilderness, and with them gave a lesson to the men of Succoth. <sup>17</sup>And he broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

<sup>18</sup>Then said he to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men *were those* whom you killed at Tabor?" And they answered, "They *were* like you. Each one looked like the children of a king".

<sup>19</sup>And he said, "They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you". <sup>20</sup>And he said to Jether his firstborn, "Get up *and* kill them". But the youth did not draw his sword, because he was afraid; for he was still a youth.

<sup>21</sup>Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "You rise up and strike us down. For as the man, *so is* his strength". And Gideon got up and

killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on the necks of their camels.

<sup>22</sup>Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian".

<sup>23</sup>And Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD shall rule over you". <sup>24</sup>And Gideon said to them, "I would request that each one of you give me the earrings from his plunder". (For they had golden earrings, because the *enemy had been* Ishmaelites.)

<sup>25</sup>And they answered, "We will willingly give *them*". And they spread a cloth, and each man threw on it the earrings from his plunder. <sup>26</sup>And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand seven hundred shekels of gold. Besides *there were* ornaments and necklaces and purple clothing that had been on the kings of Midian, besides the chains that were around the necks of their camels. <sup>27</sup>And with this *gold* Gideon made an ephod and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel went there prostituting themselves to it. This became a snare to Gideon and to his household.

<sup>28</sup>In this way Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they no longer lifted up their heads. And the country had rest for forty years in the days of Gideon.

<sup>29</sup>And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. <sup>30</sup>And Gideon had seventy sons, his bodily descendants; for he had many wives. <sup>31</sup>And his concubine, who was in Shechem, also bore him a son,

**8:15-17** Again we see the seriousness of the sin of refusing to help God's servants in their fight against God's enemies. Note at 5:23.

**8:22** "*Rule over us*"— they revealed the desire in the hearts of men to have, not God, but a strong man rule them. See note at 1 Sam 8:5-22. Very briefly these Israelites unknowingly voiced a fact evident in the whole history of the world — a tendency to make benefactors into dictators.

**8:23** "*I will not rule over you*"— Gideon is in great and wonderful contrast to many even in Christian circles who grasp for power at any cost and love to lord it over others.

"*The LORD shall rule over you*"— Num 23:21; 1 Sam 12:12. Now there is only one Head of the Church that God approves — the Lord Jesus Christ the King (Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23). Beware that any speak of Him as those in the parable He taught (Luke 19:14).

**8:24** Ishmaelites formed a part of the defeated army.

**8:26** "*A thousand seven hundred shekels*"— about 19.5 kilograms.

**8:27** "*Ephod*"— Ex 28:6-30; 39:2-26; Lev 8:7.

"*Prostituting themselves to it*"— this means they worshipped it in place of the true God. As usual they, as men in general do, took something once appointed by God, and perverted it into something against God (compare 2 Kings 18:4). Indeed, throughout their history many in Israel perverted the use of the whole law of God and made it an instrument for self-righteousness and self-worship, and so found themselves in opposition to Him.

**8:29** "*Jerubbaal*"— Gideon (6:32).

**8:30** "*Many wives*"— this is not an example God wants us to follow — Gen 30:1; 2 Sam 3:2-5; 1 Kings 11:1-8.

and he called his name Abimelech. <sup>32</sup>And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

<sup>33</sup>And it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned back and prostituted themselves to the Baals and made Baal-Berith their god. <sup>34</sup>And the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. <sup>35</sup>And they did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *that is*, Gideon, for all the good which he had done to Israel.

**9** And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with the whole family of the household of his mother's father, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Please say in the hearing of all the men of Shechem, 'What *is* better for you, that all the seventy sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you? Remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh.' "

<sup>3</sup>And his mother's brothers spoke all these words about him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He *is* our brother". <sup>4</sup>And they gave him seventy *pieces* of silver from the house of Baal-Berith. With it Abimelech hired worthless and reckless persons to follow him. <sup>5</sup>And he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal, on the same stone. However Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, was left, for he hid himself. <sup>6</sup>And all the men of Shechem and all Beth Millo gathered together and

went and made Abimelech king, by the oak at the pillar in Shechem.

<sup>7</sup>And when they told *this* to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and raised his voice and shouted and said to them, "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. <sup>8</sup>*Once* the trees went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.'

<sup>9</sup>"But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I leave my fatness, with which God and man are honoured, and go to hold sway over the trees?'

<sup>10</sup>"And the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come *and* reign over us.' <sup>11</sup>"But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to hold sway over the trees?'

<sup>12</sup>"Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come *and* reign over us.'

<sup>13</sup>"And the vine said to them, 'Should I leave my wine, which cheers God and man, and go to hold sway over the trees?'

<sup>14</sup>"Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come *and* reign over us.'

<sup>15</sup>"And the bramble said to the trees, 'If you anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow. But if not, may fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

<sup>16</sup>"Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt fairly with Jerubbaal and his household and have done to him as he deserved <sup>17</sup>(For my father fought for you and risked his life and delivered you from the hands of Midian. <sup>18</sup>And at this time you have risen up against my father's household

**8:33-34** 2:18-19.

**8:33** "*Prostituted*"— Ex 34:15; Lev 20:5; Jer 2:2. Baal Berith means "Lord of the covenant". They worshiped a false god who could neither make nor keep a covenant and rejected the one true God who was in a living covenant relationship with them (Ex 19:5-6). Notes on Baal at 2:11. This is what spiritual prostitution is like.

**8:35** People who are not grateful to God may not show much gratitude to His servants either.

**9:1** 8:29-31. Once again, as the following story reveals, the having of multiple wives proved disastrous. See Gen 30:1; 2 Sam 3:2-5; 1 Kings 11:1-8. Those who do not follow God's appointed way will suffer the consequences.

**9:2** 8:23.

**9:3** They did not inquire what sort of man Abimelech was. Since he was a relative he was

acceptable as their leader, regardless of his character. In this way people will often get the worst kind of leaders, and will deserve them.

**9:4** "*Seventy silver shekels*"— about 0.8 kilogram. "*Baal Berith*"— 8:33.

**9:6** "*Beth Millo*"— or "the house of Millo" — the Hebrew word "Beth" means "house".

"*King*"— little they cared that Abimelech was a murderer of his brothers. It was enough that he was their relative! In this way, sometimes even in Christian circles, thieves and immoral men gain positions of leadership. But if God's true blessing is desired, God's principles must be followed.

**9:8-15** Jotham means that his slain brothers were like good and profitable trees and not one had desired to be king. The people of Shechem had chosen one like a thorn bush to rule them.

and have killed his seventy sons on the same stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his female slave, king over the people of Shechem, because he is your brother); <sup>19</sup>if then you have dealt in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his household this day, *then* be happy with Abimelech, and let him also be happy with you. <sup>20</sup>But if not, may fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth-Millo, and may fire come out from the men of Shechem and Beth-Millo, and devour Abimelech”.

<sup>21</sup>And Jotham ran off and escaped. He went to Beer and stayed there, for fear of his brother Abimelech.

<sup>22</sup>And Abimelech reigned three years over Israel. <sup>23</sup>Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech. <sup>24</sup>*God's purpose* was that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come back on their brother Abimelech who killed them, and *the shedding* of their blood be put on him and on the men of Shechem who assisted him in the killing of his brothers. <sup>25</sup>And the men of Shechem set men in ambush for him on the top of the mountains, and they robbed everyone who came near them along that way. And this was told to Abimelech.

<sup>26</sup>And Gaal, the son of Ebed, came with his brothers and went over to Shechem. And the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. <sup>27</sup>And they went out into the fields, and harvested their vineyards and trampled out *the grapes* and held a festival, and went into the house of their god and ate and drank and cursed Abimelech. <sup>28</sup>And Gaal, the son of Ebed, said, “Who *is* Abimelech and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is he* not the son of Jerubbaal? And *isn't* Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; for why should we serve him? <sup>29</sup>Would to God that this people were under my hand! Then I would get rid

of Abimelech”. And he said to Abimelech, “Increase your army and come out”.

<sup>30</sup>And when Zebul, the governor of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger burned. <sup>31</sup>And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Look, Gaal, the son of Ebed, and his brothers have come to Shechem. And, see, they are stirring up the city against you. <sup>32</sup>Now therefore get up at night, you and the people who *are* with you, and lie in wait in the field. <sup>33</sup>And in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, it should be that you get up early and attack the city. And, look *when* he and the people who *are* with him come out against you, then you can do to them as you see the opportunity”.

<sup>34</sup>And Abimelech, and all the people who were with him, got up at night and set an ambush against Shechem in four groups. <sup>35</sup>And Gaal, the son of Ebed, went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city. And Abimelech, and the people who were with him, got up out of the ambush.

<sup>36</sup>And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the top of the mountains”. And Zebul said to him, “You see the shadow of the mountains *looking* like men”.

<sup>37</sup>And Gaal spoke again and said, “See, people are coming down from the middle of the land, and another group is coming along by the plain of Meonenim”.

<sup>38</sup>Then Zebul said to him, “Now where *is* your mouth with which you said, ‘Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him?’ *Are* not these the people whom you have despised? Please go out and fight with them”.

<sup>39</sup>And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem and fought with Abimelech. <sup>40</sup>And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many fell wounded, up to the entrance of the gate. <sup>41</sup>And Abimelech stayed at Arumah. And Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out, so that they could not stand in Shechem.

**9:20** Jotham is saying that Abimelech and the people of Shechem would be the destruction of one another. This curse on them God fulfilled (v 57).  
**9:22** Abimelech ruled only that part of Israel that submitted to him.

**9:23** “*Evil spirit*”— this may mean that God, for purposes of judgment, created an attitude of enmity between Abimelech and the people. Or it may mean that an evil spirit in the unseen world was sent to Shechem. Compare 1 Sam 16:14,23; 1 Kings 22:19-23. See also notes at 2 Sam 24:1;

Job 1:7.

**9:24** Verses 56,57 – an example of how God takes vengeance on evil men for their evil deeds. Note and references at Num 31:1-3.

**9:26-55** An example of the way men behave when God is not their king and they do what they please (21:25).

**9:28** “*Hamor*”— Hamor was the Canaanite who founded the city of Shechem before Israel even arrived in the land (Gen 33:18-19).



<sup>42</sup>And it came about on the next day, that the people went out into the field and told Abimelech. <sup>43</sup>And he took the people and divided them into three groups and set an ambush in the field, and watched. And now the people came out of the city, and he rose up against them and attacked them. <sup>44</sup>And Abimelech, and the group that was with him, rushed forward and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city. And the *other* two groups rushed on all *the people* who *were* in the fields and killed them. <sup>45</sup>And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city and killed the people who *were* in it, and broke down the city and sowed it with salt.

<sup>46</sup>And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered the inner room of the temple of the god Berith. <sup>47</sup>And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem had gathered together. <sup>48</sup>And Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who *were* with him. And Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a branch from the trees and picked it up and put *it* on his shoulder, and said to the people who *were* with him, "Hurry *and* do the same thing that you have seen me do". <sup>49</sup>And each man among all the people also cut down his branch and followed Abimelech, and put *them* against the inner room and set fire to the room on the men; so that all the persons of the tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

<sup>50</sup>Then Abimelech went to Thebez and camped against Thebez and captured it. <sup>51</sup>But there was a strong tower inside the city, and all the men and women, everyone in the city, fled there and shut themselves in and went up to the top of the tower. <sup>52</sup>And Abimelech

came to the tower and fought against it, and went near the door of the tower to burn it with fire. <sup>53</sup>And a certain woman threw a piece of a millstone on Abimelech's head and broke his skull.

<sup>54</sup>Then he quickly called to the young man *who* was his armour-bearer and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that men do not say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" And his young man pierced him through, and he died. <sup>55</sup>And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, each man left for his place.

<sup>56</sup>In this way God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech which he did to his father, in killing his seventy brothers. <sup>57</sup>And God returned on the heads of the men of Shechem all their evil. And the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal, came on them.

**10** And after Abimelech, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, rose up to defend Israel. And he lived in Shamir in Mount Ephraim. <sup>2</sup>And he judged Israel twenty-three years, and died and was buried in Shamir.

<sup>3</sup>And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty-two years. <sup>4</sup>And he had thirty sons who rode on thirty young donkeys, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-Jair to this day. They *are* in the land of Gilead. <sup>5</sup>And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

<sup>6</sup>And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and Ashtaroth and the gods of Syria and the gods of Sidon and the gods of Moab and the gods of the children of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD and did not serve

**9:46** "*The god Berith*"— or "El-Berith". The name means "god of the covenant". This god is the same as Baal-Berith (v 4; 8:33).

**9:49** Verses 3,20.

**9:54** Even while dying, pride was the ruling passion of his heart. There is no confession of sin, no calling on God. So ends the sad account of the son of a great man in Israel.

**9:56-57** Once again we see the unseen God justly judging the actions of men and causing them to reap what they sow. See Esther 7:10; Ps 18:25-27.

**10:1** This Tola is never mentioned again in the Bible. We are not told why he, being of the tribe of Issachar, came to live in Ephraim. Perhaps it was merely because Ephraim was centrally located in the whole land.

**10:2** "*Judged*"— or "led".

**10:3** "*Jair*"— we know nothing more of Jair than is given in these verses. Gilead was east of the Jordan River. "Havoth Jair" means the villages of Jair.

**10:6** "*Again*"— 2:18-19; 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1. Nothing could long prevent them from following the desires of their depraved hearts. Are we better by nature than they? See Rom 3:9.

"*Baals and Ashtoreth*"— see 2:11-13; 1 Kings 11:5. These gods were not enough for these stubborn and sinful people. They wanted to worship all the gods of all Israel's enemies. If we do not choose the true God as our one God, we will never be satisfied with the gods, no matter how many they may be.



him. <sup>7</sup>And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the children of Ammon. <sup>8</sup>And that year they troubled and oppressed the children of Israel. For eighteen years *they oppressed* all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in Gilead, in the land of the Amorites. <sup>9</sup>Moreover the children of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah also and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

<sup>10</sup>And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against you by forsaking our God, and also by serving the Baals".

<sup>11</sup>And the LORD said to the children of Israel, "*Did I not rescue you* from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon and from the Philistines? <sup>12</sup>Also the Sidonians and the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to me, and I delivered you from their hands. <sup>13</sup>Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore I will no longer deliver you. <sup>14</sup>Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation".

<sup>15</sup>And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems good to you. Only deliver us, we pray you, this day". <sup>16</sup>And they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

<sup>17</sup>Then the children of Ammon gathered together and camped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves and camped in Mizpeh. <sup>18</sup>And the people *and* leaders of Gilead said to one another, "Who *is* the man who will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? He will be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead".

**10:7** "*Anger*"— 2:12,20; Num 25:3; Ps 90:7-11.

"*Ammon*"— the Philistines were on the west of Israel, the Ammonites on the east. Israel was as if between two grinding stones.

**10:10** "*Cried out to the LORD*"— 3:9,15; 4:3; 6:6-7. Did they wait eighteen years to cry to God (v 8)?

"*We have sinned*"— confession of sin that is merely the result of some physical distress (v 9) is not the kind of confession God requires. See Ex 9:27.

**10:11** "*The LORD said*"— probably through a prophet.

**11** Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a brave warrior, and he was the son of a prostitute. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. <sup>2</sup>And Gilead's wife bore him sons. And his wife's sons grew up and drove out Jephthah and said to him, "You will not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you *are* the son of another woman". <sup>3</sup>Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and stayed in the land of Tob. And worthless fellows gathered around Jephthah and went around with him.

<sup>4</sup>And it so happened in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. <sup>5</sup>And it happened *that* when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob, <sup>6</sup>and said to Jephthah, "Come and be our leader, so that we can fight with the children of Ammon".

<sup>7</sup>And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me and drive me from my father's house? And why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?"

<sup>8</sup>And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "So we turn again to you now, so that you may go with us and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead".

<sup>9</sup>And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them up to me, will I be your head?"

<sup>10</sup>And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "May the LORD be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words".

<sup>11</sup>Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them. And Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

<sup>12</sup>And Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the children of Ammon, saying, "What is there between you and me, that you have come against me to fight in my land?"

**10:14** "*Tribulation*"— Isa 44:17; 45:20; 46:7; 57:13.

**10:15-16** These words and actions showed a measure of repentance, but God knew their good intentions would be like the dew of the morning of a hot day.

**11:1** "*Warrior*"— 6:12; 1 Tim 6:12.

**11:3** "*Tob*"— 2 Sam 10:6,8. A land on the Syrian border.

**11:9** "*LORD delivers them up to me*"— a recognition that victory would not come by his skill in battle but by God's grace. Jephthah is listed with the heroes of faith in Heb 11:32.

<sup>13</sup>And the king of the children of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, “Because when Israel came up from Egypt, they took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan. Now therefore restore those *regions* again peaceably”.

<sup>14</sup>And Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the children of Ammon, <sup>15</sup>and they said to him, “This is what Jephthah says: ‘Israel did not take the land of Moab or the land of the children of Ammon, <sup>16</sup>but when Israel came up from Egypt and travelled through the desert to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh, <sup>17</sup>then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “Please let me pass through your land”. But the king of Edom would not hear *of it*. And in the same way they sent *word* to the king of Moab. But he would not consent. And Israel stayed in Kadesh.

<sup>18</sup>“Then they went along through the desert and went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and travelled to the east of the land of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon, but did not enter the territory of Moab. For the Arnon was the border of Moab.

<sup>19</sup>“And Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land to my place”. <sup>20</sup>But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory, and Sihon gathered all his people together and camped in Jahaz and fought against Israel.

<sup>21</sup>“And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hands of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel took

possession of the whole land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. <sup>22</sup>And they took over all the territories of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and from the desert to the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup>“So the LORD God of Israel dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and now should you possess it? <sup>24</sup>Will you not possess that which Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whomever the LORD our God drove out from before us, their *land* we will possess.

<sup>25</sup>“And now *are* you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel or did he ever fight against them? <sup>26</sup>While Israel lived in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *are* along by the territories of the Arnon for three hundred years, why did you not recover *them* during that time? <sup>27</sup>Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you are wronging me by warring against me. May the LORD the Judge be the judge today between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.’ ”

<sup>28</sup>However the king of the children of Ammon did not listen to the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

<sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpeh of Gilead; and from Mizpeh of Gilead he went *on* to the children of Ammon. <sup>30</sup>And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, “If you deliver the children of Ammon into my hands without fail, <sup>31</sup>then it shall be *that* whatever comes out of the doors

**11:13** “*My land*”– this was a false claim, as Jephthah makes clear in the following verses. When there is greed for land the facts of history are often ignored or perverted.

**11:15-22** Jephthah gives the truth about things – Num 20:14-21; 21:10-12,21-35.

**11:20** “*Did not trust Israel*”– or the meaning might be “would not make an agreement with Israel”.

**11:21** Verse 9.

**11:24** “*Chemosh*”– pronounced Key-mosh. Note at 1 Kings 11:7. Actually their god Chemosh had given them nothing, and could give them nothing – Ps 115:1-8. It was the God of Israel, the one true God, who divided to all nations their lands (Acts 17:24-28). But this was not understood by everyone in Old Testament days any more than it is now.

**11:25** “*Balak*”– Num 22:1-2.

**11:26** Three hundred years had elapsed since Moses led Israel to the Jordan River. This places the time of this story at about 1100 B.C., almost a hundred years before David began his reign.

**11:27** “*Judge*”– 1 Sam 24:12-15. They are wise who let God decide what they should have or not have, and leave the working out of justice to Him (Gen 18:25; Deut 32:4; 2 Chron 19:7; Ps 58:11; 71:9; 75:7; 89:14; 94:2).

**11:28** They who are determined to pursue their own course will not be changed by reason, or by appeals to history.

**11:29** 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 14:6,19.

**11:30** “*Vow*”– Israelites practiced the making of vows (Gen 28:20; Lev 7:16; 22:17; 27:2; 1 Sam 1:11; 2 Sam 15:7), and since they were often foolish sometimes their vows must have been foolish. Certainly the vow of Jephthah was.

of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it as a burnt offering".

<sup>32</sup>So Jephthah went on to the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. <sup>33</sup>And he struck them down from Aroer as far as Minnith, twenty cities, and to the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. In this way the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

<sup>34</sup>And Jephthah came to Mizpeh to his house, and just then his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. And she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter.

<sup>35</sup>And it came about, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are one of those who trouble me; for I have opened my mouth to the LORD and I cannot go back on it".

<sup>36</sup>And she said to him, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the LORD, do to me according to what came out of your mouth, since the LORD has taken vengeance for you on your enemies, on the children of Ammon".

<sup>37</sup>And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: leave me alone for two months, so that I may go up and down on the mountains and lament because of my virginity, I and my companions".

<sup>38</sup>And he said, "Go". And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her companions and on the mountains

lamented because of her virginity. <sup>39</sup>And it came about at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he did with her *in accordance* with the vow which he had made. And she did not know a man. And it became a custom in Israel, <sup>40</sup>that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days in a year.

**12** And the men of Ephraim gathered together and went northward, and said to Jephthah, "Why did you pass over to fight against the children of Ammon and not call us to go with you? We will burn down your house on you with fire".

<sup>2</sup>And Jephthah said to them, "I and my people were struggling greatly with the children of Ammon, and when I called you, you did not rescue me from their hands. <sup>3</sup>And when I saw that you did not rescue me, I put my life in my hands and went out against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hands. Why then have you come up to me today to fight against me?"

<sup>4</sup>Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim; and the men of Gilead struck Ephraim down, because they said, "You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites". <sup>5</sup>And the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites; and it happened that when those Ephraimites who escaped said, "Let me go over", that the men of Gilead said to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he

**11:31** "Burnt offering"—an offering that was killed and completely burned on the altar (Lev 1:3-9).

**11:32** "LORD delivered"—Jephthah's victory was not because of his vow, but because God had raised him up for that very purpose (v 29). The victory would have been just as certain without his rash vow.

**11:35** "Tore his clothes"—in Israel a usual way to show dismay, sorrow, or alarm.

"I cannot go back on it"—see Num 30:2; Deut 23:21-23; Eccl 5:4-5. He was not as many who treat lightly their promises to God and easily forget them.

**11:36** She too knew how serious a matter it was to break a vow to God.

**11:37** "Lament because of my virginity"—lament because she would not be able to marry. In Israel virginity before marriage was regarded as the normal thing, and something to be honored, as

it should be now. Women of Israel considered not marrying and not having children a thing of sorrow and shame.

**11:39** "Vow"—vs 31,35.

**12:1** "Ephraim"—compare 8:1.

"Fire"—a great reward for saving Israel!

**12:4** "Fugitives"—Ephraim and Manasseh were both descended from one forefather—Joseph. The Gileadites, most of whom were of the tribe of Manasseh, had asked for and received their inheritance east of the Jordan River, away from the rest of the people of Manasseh and Ephraim. This was sometimes a source of friction between those to the east and those to the west of the Jordan. See Joshua chapter 22. Now a civil war erupted—the first, it seems, among any of the tribes of Israel.

**12:5** "Fords"—3:28; Josh 2:7.



said, “No”,<sup>6</sup> then they said to him, “Now say Shibboleth”. And he would say “Sibboleth”, unable to pronounce *it* correctly. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. And at that time forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites fell.

<sup>7</sup>And Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

<sup>8</sup>And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. <sup>9</sup>And he had thirty sons and thirty daughters, *whom* he sent outside *the family*, and brought in thirty girls from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel for seven years. <sup>10</sup>Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

<sup>11</sup>And after him Elon, a Zebulunite, judged Israel. And he judged Israel for ten years. <sup>12</sup>And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried in Aijalon in the region of Zebulun.

<sup>13</sup>And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. <sup>14</sup>And he had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy young donkeys. And he judged Israel for eight years. <sup>15</sup>And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill of the Amalekites.

**13** And once more the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

<sup>2</sup>And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had not borne *children*. <sup>3</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said

to her, “Look now, you *are* barren and have not borne *children*; but you will conceive and bear a son. <sup>4</sup>Now therefore you must be careful and not drink wine or strong drink. And do not eat any unclean *thing*. <sup>5</sup>For, look, you will conceive and bear a son. And no razor is to come on his head; for the child is to be a Nazirite to God from birth. And he will begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines”.

<sup>6</sup>Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of an angel of God, very awesome. But I did not ask him from where he was, and he did not tell me his name. <sup>7</sup>But he said to me, ‘Look, you will conceive and bear a son. And now drink no wine or strong drink and do not eat any unclean *thing*; for the child is to be a Nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.’ ”

<sup>8</sup>Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, “O my Lord, let the man of God whom you sent come back to us and teach us what we should do for the child that will be born”.

<sup>9</sup>And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came back to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but her husband Manoah was not with her. <sup>10</sup>And the woman ran quickly and told her husband and said to him, “Look, the man who came to me the *other* day has appeared to me”.

<sup>11</sup>And Manoah arose and followed his wife and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am”.

<sup>12</sup>And Manoah said, “Now let your words be fulfilled. What should the boy’s rule of

**12:6** “*Forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites*”— such was the sad consequences of their envy. Oh, envy is a bitter thing, unfit to have a place in a Christian’s heart. Compare Prov 14:30; 27:4; Matt 27:18.

**12:7** “*Judged*”— or “led”. The Hebrew word means both things.

**12:8** “*Bethlehem*”— besides the famous Bethlehem in Judah there was another in Zebulun about 11 kilometers from Nazareth (Josh 19:15-16). It is not known which Bethlehem is meant here.

**12:12** “*Aijalon*”— there were also two Aijalons, the other was in Ephraim where God performed a miracle for Joshua (Josh 10:12-14).

**12:15** “*Amalekites*”— note at 5:14.

**13:1** “*Once more*”— 2:18-19; 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6.

“*Philistines*”— see Gen 10:14.

**13:2** “*Zorah*”— a town in Dan (Josh 19:40-41)

near the territory occupied by the Philistines.

“*Barren*”— Gen 11:30; 16:1; 25:21; 1 Sam 1:2; Luke 1:7.

**13:3** “*Angel of the LORD*”— note at Gen 16:7.

**13:5** “*Nazirite*”— notes at Num 6:2-5.

“*Begin*”— many years later King David completed the deliverance Samson had begun (2 Sam 5:17-25; 8:1). God does not always immediately deliver His people from those persons or those things which trouble and torment them.

**13:6** The angel appeared to her in the form of a man.

**13:8** “*Teach us*”— all parents would do well to look to God to find out how to bring up their children, and not assume that they know how, or get their only information on the subject from some book or other written by worldly men (see Eph 6:4).



life be and *what* should his work be?”

<sup>13</sup>And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Let the woman be careful about all that I said to her. <sup>14</sup>She must not eat anything that comes from the vine, and she must not drink wine or strong drink or eat any unclean *thing*. She must observe all that I commanded her”.

<sup>15</sup>And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “I pray you, let us detain you until we prepare a young goat for you”.

<sup>16</sup>And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you may detain me, I will not eat your bread. But if you offer a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD”. For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.

<sup>17</sup>And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What *is* your name? *Tell us*, so that when your words come true we can honour you”.

<sup>18</sup>And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, since it is a wonder?” <sup>19</sup>So Manoah took a young goat, with a grain offering, and offered it on a rock to the LORD. *And the angel did a wonderful thing as Manoah and his wife looked on.* <sup>20</sup>For it happened that when the flame rose up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife saw *it* and fell on their faces to the ground. <sup>21</sup>But the angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah

knew that he was the angel of the LORD.

<sup>22</sup>And Manoah said to his wife, “We will certainly die, because we have seen God”.

<sup>23</sup>But his wife said to him, “If the LORD wanted to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, and he would not have shown us all these *things* or told us *such things* as these at this time”.

<sup>24</sup>And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**14** And Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup>And he came up and told his father and his mother and said, “I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. So now get her for me as my wife”.

<sup>3</sup>Then his father and his mother said to him, “*Is there* no woman among the daughters of your brethren or among all my people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well”.

<sup>4</sup>But his father and his mother did not know that it was of the LORD, that he was seeking an occasion against the Philistines; for at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. <sup>5</sup>Then Samson and his father

**13:13-14** It is interesting that the instruction the angel gave was not for the son but for the mother. In other words, the most important thing in bringing up children is for parents first to obey God and be what He wants them to be.

**13:15-16** Heb 13:2.

**13:17** “*Name*”– Gen 32:29. Manoah thought he was speaking with a human prophet.

“*Come true*”– Deut 18:21-22.

**13:18** “*A wonder*”– see Isa 9:6. It was not possible for the angel of the LORD, who was a manifestation of Jehovah Himself, to tell Manoah all His name, that is, all His nature and attributes. Ex 34:5-7 gives the briefest possible summary of them. But the whole Bible is hardly sufficient to reveal all of God’s name. It is wonderful indeed, beyond our full comprehension at present. Compare Rom 11:33-36.

**13:22** “*God*”– Manoah realized something that some readers of the Bible today do not realize – that the angel of the LORD was a manifestation of God Himself. He thought death would result from their seeing Him. See 6:23; Ex 33:20.

**13:23** Sometimes wives have more common sense than their husbands.

**13:24** “*Samson*”– the name comes from a Hebrew word meaning “sun” or “brightness”.

**13:25** “*Spirit of the LORD*”– 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6,19. Notes and references on the Holy Spirit at Gen 1:2; Matt 3:16; John 14:16-17.

**14:2** “*Get her for me*”– parents then, as now among most people in India, arranged marriages for their sons and daughters.

**14:3** “*Uncircumcised*”– 1 Sam 14:6. Note on circumcision at Gen 17:9-14. Samson’s parents were unhappy with Samson’s choice. Doubtless they knew that God had prohibited marriages between His people and those not His people – Deut 7:1-3. Compare 2 Cor 6:14-18.

**14:4** “*Of the LORD*”– compare Gen 45:8 and 2 Sam 24:1 with 1 Chron 21:1; 12:15; 2 Chron 25:20; Acts 2:23. God can use even the weaknesses and sinful acts of his own people (as well as those who are not His people) to fulfill His purposes.

and his mother went down to Timnath and came to the vineyards of Timnath, and a young lion appeared, roaring against him. <sup>6</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily on him, and he tore it just as he would have torn a young goat, and *he had* nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. <sup>7</sup>And he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well.

<sup>8</sup>And after a time he returned to get her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion and saw that *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. <sup>9</sup>And he took some of it in his hands, and walked on eating *it* and came to his father and mother, and he gave *some* to them, and they ate *it*. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

<sup>10</sup>So his father went down to the woman. And Samson made a feast there, for doing so was the custom of the young men. <sup>11</sup>And it came about, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

<sup>12</sup>And Samson said to them, "I will now give you a riddle. If you can tell it to me within the seven days of the feast and find out *its meaning*, then I will give you thirty linen sheets and thirty changes of clothes. <sup>13</sup>But if you cannot tell *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen sheets and thirty changes of clothes". And they said to him, "Give your riddle, and we will listen to it".

<sup>14</sup>And he said to them,  
 "Out of the eater came  
 something to eat,  
 and out of the strong came  
 something sweet".

And in three days they could not explain the riddle. <sup>15</sup>And it came about on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you called us

to take what we have? *Is it not so?*"

<sup>16</sup>And Samson's wife wept in front of him and said, "You only hate me and do not love me. You have given a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it to me".

And he said to her, "Look, I have not told *it* to my father or my mother, and will I tell *it* to you?"

<sup>17</sup>And she wept in front of him for the seven days, while their feast lasted; and it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressured him so hard. And she told the riddle to the sons of her people.

<sup>18</sup>And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before sunset, "What *is* sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"

And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle".

<sup>19</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came on him and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, and took the plunder from them and gave changes of clothes to those who explained the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house. <sup>20</sup>But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion who had been his friend.

**15** But a little time later, in the time of wheat harvest, it came about that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "I will go in to my wife in *her* room". But her father would not let him go in.

<sup>2</sup>And her father said, "I really thought that you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister prettier than she? Please take her instead of her".

<sup>3</sup>And Samson said about them, "Now I will be blameless in regard to the Philistines, even though I harm them". <sup>4</sup>And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches and turned *the foxes* tail to tail and put a torch in the middle between two

**14:6** "Spirit"— 13:25.

"What he had done"— Samson was not like some men who have to boast of every small thing they do.

**14:15** "Seventh"— some versions have "fourth".

"Fire"— another unpleasant glimpse of man's nature — Rom 1:28-31.

**14:16** "Love me"— 16:15. A common method of some women who want to bring unjust pressure on their men to get them to do something or other.

"My people"— the thirty companions (v 11-13) were Philistines.

**14:18** "My heifer"— a heifer is a young cow, especially one that has not had a calf. Samson means his wife.

**14:19** "Spirit of the LORD"— 13:25; 14:6.

"Ashkelon"— one of the chief cities of the Philistines.

**15:3** "Philistines"— 13:1; 14:4.

**15:4** "Foxes"— the word in Hebrew may also mean jackals.

tails. <sup>5</sup>And when he had set the torches on fire, he let *them* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and also the standing grain, together with the vineyards *and* olive groves.

<sup>6</sup>Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they answered, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his friend”. And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

<sup>7</sup>And Samson said to them, “Since you have done this, I will take vengeance on you, and after that I will stop”. <sup>8</sup>And he struck them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. And he went down and stayed on the top of the rock Etam.

<sup>9</sup>Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah and spread out in Lehi. <sup>10</sup>And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?”

And they answered, “We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he has done to us”.

<sup>11</sup>Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam and said to Samson, “Don’t you know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What *is* this you have done to us?”

And he said to them, “I did to them just as they did to me”.

<sup>12</sup>And they said to him, “We have come to bind you, so that we can deliver you into the hands of the Philistines”.

And Samson said to them, “Swear to me

that you will not attack me yourselves”.

<sup>13</sup>And they spoke to him, saying, “No; but we will bind you fast and deliver you into their hands. But we will certainly not kill you”. And they bound him with two new cords and brought him from the rock.

<sup>14</sup>And when he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily on him, and the cords that *were* on his arms became like flax burned in the fire and his bonds came loose from his hands. <sup>15</sup>And he saw a fresh jawbone of a donkey and put out his hand and picked it up, and with it killed a thousand men.

<sup>16</sup>And Samson said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey,  
heaps on heaps!

With the jaw of a donkey

I have killed

a thousand men”.

<sup>17</sup>And it came about, when he finished saying *this*, that he threw the jawbone out of his hand and called that place Ramath-Lehi. <sup>18</sup>And he was very thirsty, and called out to the LORD and said, “You have given this great deliverance into the hand of your servant, and now must I die from thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” <sup>19</sup>But God hollowed out a place there in Lehi, and water came out of it. And when he had drunk, his strength returned and he revived. Therefore he called its name En-Hakkore. *It is in Lehi to this day.*

<sup>20</sup>And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

**15:7** “*Vengeance*”— note at Num 31:2-3.

**15:9** “*Lehi*”— the exact location of Lehi (and Etam – v 8) is not known.

**15:11** “*Three thousand men*”— a huge force to capture one man – an indication of their respect for Samson’s prowess.

“*Rulers over us*”— 14:4.

“*Did to me*”— compare Matt 5:38-41; 7:12; Luke 6:27-31.

**15:12** Instead of opposing their enemies they accepted their authority over them and opposed the one who would not – not an unknown thing in spiritual matters as well.

**15:14** “*Spirit of the LORD*”— 13:25. Four times the account speaks of the Spirit of the LORD in connection with the work of Samson – more often than with any other person in the book of Judges, or indeed with any other Old Testament character except Ezekiel. Yet Samson sometimes revealed himself as a carnal man. He is an illustration of the truth of Zech 4:6.

**15:15** “*A thousand men*”— compare 3:31; 2 Sam 23:8. Samson’s feat was unequalled by any man in the Bible.

**15:17** “*Ramath-Lehi*”— the name means “jawbone hill”.

**15:18** “*To the LORD*”— the first mention of Samson praying. There is only one other (16:28).

“*Deliverance*”— as all the heroes of faith did, Samson acknowledged that victory was given by God – 12:3. Compare Deut 20:4; Josh 21:44; Ps 44:7; 144:9-10. All spiritual victories will come the same way.

**15:19** “*Out of it*”— God is perfectly able to supply the needs of His servants any time, anywhere – Ex 16:3-4,11,12; 17:6; 1 Kings 17:2-6,9; Ps 23:1,5. Let us not speak as Israel did in Ps 78:19. En-Hakkore is Hebrew and means “The spring of the one who calls out”.

**15:20** “*Judged*”— or “led” – the Hebrew word means both.



**16** Then Samson went to Gaza, and he saw a prostitute there and went in to her. <sup>2</sup>And *someone told* the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here”. And they surrounded *him* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city, and were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him”.

<sup>3</sup>And Samson lay down until midnight, and got up at midnight and picked up the doors of the city gate and the two posts and went away with them, bar and all. And he put *them* on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of a hill that *is* before Hebron.

<sup>4</sup>And it came about afterwards, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup>And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him and see in what his great strength *lies*, and how we can overpower him, so that we can bind him and subdue him, and each one of us will give you eleven hundred *shekels* of silver”.

<sup>6</sup>And Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me in what your great strength *lies* in and with what you can be bound to subdue you”.

<sup>7</sup>And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh straps that have never been dried, then I will be weak and become like any other man”.

<sup>8</sup>Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh straps which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. <sup>9</sup>Now men were lurking there, staying with

her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are on you, Samson”. And he broke the straps, as a piece of string snaps when it touches the fire. So *the secret of his strength* was not known.

<sup>10</sup>And Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now please tell me with what you can be bound”.

<sup>11</sup>And he said to her, “If they bind me tightly with new ropes that have never been used, then I will be weak and become like any other man”.

<sup>12</sup>So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* on you, Samson”. And *there were* men in ambush staying in the room. And he snapped them off his arms like a thread.

<sup>13</sup>And Delilah said to Samson, “Up till now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me with what you can be bound with”.

And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks *of hair* on my head with the cloth on a loom”.

<sup>14</sup>And she fastened it with the peg, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* on you, Samson”. And he woke from his sleep, and went away with the peg of the beam and with the cloth on the loom.

<sup>15</sup>And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you’, when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me in what your great strength *lies*”. <sup>16</sup>And it came about as she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that

**16:1** “Gaza”— another (14:19) of the five chief cities of the Philistines.

“To her”— Samson was physically strong, morally weak. His moral weakness eventually cost him his freedom, his eyes, and his life (vs 21,30). Prov 23:27-28 is always true and Gal 6:7 is a principle that applies to all.

**16:3** “Hebron”— a city in Judah 60 or 70 kilometers from Gaza. Did Samson go all that distance? or just to the top of some high hill which looked toward Hebron?

**16:4** “Delilah”— probably another Philistine, though this is not certain. She could have been of some other people or even a traitorous Israelite. Her name probably means “a flirt” or “a devotee”. The verses which follow show she flirted with money and was more devoted to it than to Samson or probably anything else. Samson did not have the moral strength to resist her (v 1). But in all this too God would work out His purposes against the Philistines (14:4).

**16:5** “His great strength”— it seems from this that Samson did not have the appearance of an

exceptionally strong man. They realized there was some secret that did not meet the eye.

“Eleven hundred shekels”— about 13 kilograms. Comparison with 17:10 shows something of the value of so much silver in those days. There are always people who will sell lovers, friends, principles, and their own souls for money — Matt 26:14-16.

**16:7** Samson foolishly begins to play a dangerous game that concerned holy truth about his relationship with God. It resulted in disaster (v 17), as it was bound to do.

**16:11** Even Samson, not the most intellectual of men, knew now that Delilah was trying to trap him for the Philistines. But he continued the game.

**16:13** “Hair on my head”— now Samson gets closer to the truth.

**16:15** “Love you”— Samson finally gave in to this argument as he had before (14:16). Some people make the same mistake again and again. In this respect Samson the deliverer was like the people he tried to deliver.

**16:16** Compare Prov 27:15-16.



his soul was vexed to death, <sup>17</sup>that he told her all his heart and said to her,

“No razor has come on my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will go from me and I will become weak and be like any *other* man”.

<sup>18</sup>And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up just this once, for he has told me all his heart”. Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought money in their hands. <sup>19</sup>And she put him asleep on her knees; and she called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. And she began to subdue him, and his strength went from him.

<sup>20</sup>And she said, “The Philistines *are* on you, Samson”.

And he awoke out of his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself”. And he did not know that the LORD had left him.

<sup>21</sup>Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with bronze fetters. And he became a grinder in the prison house. <sup>22</sup>However, after he had been shaved, the hair of his head began to grow again.

<sup>23</sup>Then the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, “Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hands”.

**16:17** He knew his great strength was not in his physical frame but in his relationship to God (13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14). So now the believer’s strength is not in himself but in the Lord (Eph 6:10). Samson revealed his secret. His behavior was something like that which the Lord Jesus warned against in Matt 7:6.

**16:20** His hair, the sign of his special relationship to God as a Nazirite, was gone, and it seems that at first he was not aware of it. But with it went the special relationship that alone had made him strong. He had knowingly betrayed himself and his relationship to God into the hands of the enemy, and now paid the price of his betrayal. He sold his strength for pleasure with a sinful woman – not the last to do so. For example, both David and Solomon failed in the same way.

**16:21** See Prov 5:7-11; 7:21-27. Samson’s story is an illustration, one of the saddest in the Bible, of how far even a man dedicated to God’s service may fall. Sexual sin alone brought the mighty “warrior” of 15:14-15 down to the pathetic wreck of this verse. Lust had found another victim to

<sup>24</sup>And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the destroyer of our country, who killed many of us”.

<sup>25</sup>And it came about, while their hearts were in good *spirits*, that they said, “Call for Samson, so that he may amuse us”. And they called for Samson from the prison house, and he was an amusement for them. And they placed him between the pillars.

<sup>26</sup>And Samson said to the boy who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars the temple is resting on, so that I can lean on them”. <sup>27</sup>Now the temple was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there, and about three thousand men and women *were* on the roof, who were watching as Samson was being an amusement for *them*.

<sup>28</sup>And Samson called out to the LORD and said, “O Lord God, remember me, I pray you, and strengthen me, I pray you, just this once, O God, so that at once I may have revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes”. <sup>29</sup>And Samson took hold of the two central pillars on which the temple rested and by which it was held up, the *one pillar* with his right hand and the other with his left. <sup>30</sup>And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines”. And he bowed down with *all his* might, and the temple collapsed on the lords and on all the people who *were* in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were

add to its long list of ruined men – see notes at 2 Sam 11:1; 1 Kings 11:1. The Bible tells things as they are and does not make its heroes to be sinless and perfect. Notes at Gen 9:21; 12:13; 27:18-26; Ex 32:2-4; Num 20:12; 2 Sam 11:1; Matt 26:69-75.

**16:23** “*Dagon*” – 1 Sam 5:1-12. This is another sad result of the sin and fall of any of God’s servants – the true God is thought to be weak and His name is dishonored, and often false gods are praised. Compare 1 Chron 10:8-10.

**16:25** “*Amuse us*” – the Hebrew word here indicates something that produces mocking laughter. What can be sadder than a mighty man of God made a spectacle for ridicule to the ungodly?

**16:28** Though this prayer was offered from a bad motive (personal vengeance), God heard it. If God waited till His people’s prayers were absolutely pure and selfless before answering, how many answers would they ever get? But God is compassionate and remembers we are but dust (Ps 103:13-14).

**16:30** Note at 14:4.

more than *those* whom he killed in his life.

<sup>31</sup>Then his brothers and all the household of his father came down, took him and brought *him* up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burial place of Manohah his father. And he had judged Israel for twenty years.

**17** And there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. <sup>2</sup>And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and also spoke about in my hearing, look, the silver is with me. I took it”.

And his mother said, “*May you be blessed by the LORD, my son*”.

<sup>3</sup>And he returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I had wholly dedicated the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a cast idol. So now I will give it back to you”.

<sup>4</sup>So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, who made a carved image and a cast metal idol with it. And they were in Micah’s house. <sup>5</sup>And the man Micah had a shrine for the gods, and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

<sup>6</sup>In those days *there was no king in Israel*, but everyone did *what was right* in his own eyes.

<sup>7</sup>And there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, among the family of Judah, who was a Levite and was staying there. <sup>8</sup>And the man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to live where he could find a *place*. And as he travelled he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim.

<sup>9</sup>And Micah said to him, “From where do you come?”

And he said to him, “I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I can find a *place*”.

<sup>10</sup>And Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver yearly and a set of clothes and your food”. So the Levite went in.

<sup>11</sup>And the Levite was content to stay with the man; and to him the young man was like one of his sons. <sup>12</sup>And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest and was in the house of Micah. <sup>13</sup>Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will do good to me, since I have a Levite as *my priest*”.

**18** In those days *there was no king in Israel*.

And in those days the tribe of the Danites

**16:31** Samson is listed with the great heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, his sins and failings passed over. Compare 4:8; Ps 103:10-14; Isa 44:22; Micah 7:18-19.

“*Judged*” – may also be translated “led”.

**17:1** “*Micah*” – a shortened form of Micaiah which means “who is like Jah (Jehovah)?” It was a common name in Israel. The prophet Micah lived several hundred years after this one.

**17:2** “*Eleven hundred shekels*” – about 13 kilograms.

“*Curse*” – Micah’s mother probably pronounced a curse on whoever stole the money, and he was afraid disaster would come on him. She immediately pronounces a blessing on him, thinking this would counteract the curse.

**17:3** Making idols in the name of Jehovah God who had forbidden all idolatry (Ex 20:4-5,23)! This is the sort of thing that happened when “every one did what was right in his own eyes” (v 6), and did not do what was right in the Lord’s eyes.

**17:5** “*Ephod*” – 8:27; Ex 28:6.

“*Priest*” – another violation of the law. Only descendants of Aaron were to be priests (Ex 28:1; 29:9).

**17:6** Note at 21:25.

**17:7** “*Levite*” – note on Levites at Num 1:51.

**17:10** “*Father*” – here used as a word of respect (2 Kings 2:12; 6:21; 13:14).

“*Ten shekels*” – about 110 grams.

**17:11** As with many in Christian circles so with this Levite – he was willing to work where the money was. God’s will and the principles of God’s Word didn’t enter into his decision (vs 19,20). Alas, that there should be any Christian workers who hire themselves out to the highest bidder! They should remember that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

**17:13** Micah in his ignorance made three mistakes in his thinking – that God was pleased with his idols (vs 3,4), that God was pleased to have all Levites as priests (v 5), and that God would bless him merely because of what someone else was and did. If the Lord was good to Micah it was in spite of these things, not because of them.

**18:1** The tribe of Dan had been allotted a small territory west of Ephraim and Judah which extended to the Mediterranean coast (Josh 19:40-46). However, they had not been able to possess all of their inheritance (1:34).

was looking for an inheritance in which to live; for to that day no inheritance had fallen to them among the tribes of Israel. <sup>2</sup>And the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, brave men from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, "Go, explore the land". When they came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim, they spent the night there.

<sup>3</sup>When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned aside there and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this *place*? What do you have here?"

<sup>4</sup>And he said to them, "Micah has done such and such for me and has hired me, and I am his priest".

<sup>5</sup>And they said to him, "Please ask counsel from God, so that we may know whether our journey, which we are going on, will be successful".

<sup>6</sup>And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. Your journey on which you are going is in the LORD's presence".

<sup>7</sup>Then the five men departed and came to Laish, and saw the people who were there, how they lived carelessly, just like the Sidonians, quiet and carefree. And *there was* no ruler in the land who might humiliate *them* in *any* way. And they were far from the Sidonians, and had no dealings with anyone.

<sup>8</sup>And the *Danites* came to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol; and their brethren said to them, "What *do* you say?"

<sup>9</sup>And they said, "Arise, let's go up against them; for we saw the land, and, look, it is very good. And *will* you *do* nothing? Don't hesitate to go and enter to take possession of the land. <sup>10</sup>When you go, you will come to a carefree people, and to a spacious land; for God has given it into your hands. *It is*

a place where *there is* no lack of anything on earth".

<sup>11</sup>And six hundred men of the family of the Danites, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and from Eshtaol. <sup>12</sup>And they went up and camped in Kirjath-Jearim, in Judah. Therefore they call that place Mahaneh-Dan to this day. Look, *it is* west of Kirjath-Jearim. <sup>13</sup>And they went from there to the hill country of Ephraim and arrived at the house of Micah.

<sup>14</sup>Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish, responded and said to their brethren, "Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod and household gods and a carved image and a cast metal idol? So now consider what you have to do". <sup>15</sup>And they turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to Micah's house, and greeted him. <sup>16</sup>And the six hundred men who were of the children of Dan, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate. <sup>17</sup>And the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up, entered there, *and* took the carved image and the ephod and the household gods and the cast idol. And the priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men *who were* armed with weapons of war.

<sup>18</sup>And these went into Micah's house and brought out the carved image, the ephod and the household gods and the cast metal idol. Then the priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

<sup>19</sup>And they said to him, "Keep quiet! Put your hand on your mouth, and go with us and be a father and a priest to us. *Is it* better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" <sup>20</sup>And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went among

**18:2** "Zorah"— 13:2.

**18:3** "Levite"— they either knew him before or recognized from his accent or speech that he was not a native of Ephraim.

**18:5** God had already revealed where the tribe of Dan should be (Josh 19:40-46. Note at Josh 14:2). It was up to them to trust God to enable them to take all the territory allotted to them, and not to run away from it. It is never good for anyone to try to escape from the place where God has placed him (or her).

**18:6** He did not know whether or not the Lord

approved. He told them what they wanted to hear, and he used God's name in vain.

**18:7** Laish is the same as the Leshem of Josh 19:47. It was about 160 kilometers from where they started. The Sidonians were to the west on the Mediterranean coast.

**18:10** "Your hands"— sometimes, as in this case, men take what God has not put in their hands.

**18:12** "Mahaneh-Dan"— this means "Dan's camp".

**18:17** 17:3; 21:25.

**18:20** "Glad"— note at 17:11.



the people. <sup>21</sup>So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the valuables before them.

<sup>22</sup>And when they were some distance from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house gathered together, and caught up with the children of Dan. <sup>23</sup>And they shouted to the children of Dan. And they turned their faces and said to Micah, "What's wrong with you, that you come with such a crowd?"

<sup>24</sup>And he said, "You have taken away my gods, which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. And what else do I have? And what is this you say to me, 'What's wrong with you?'"

<sup>25</sup>And the children of Dan said to him, "Let not your voice be heard among us, or else some angry fellows will rush at you, and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household". <sup>26</sup>And the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

<sup>27</sup>And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest he had, and came to Laish, to a people at peace and carefree, and they struck them down with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. <sup>28</sup>And *there was* no one to save *them*, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. And it was in the valley that *lies* near Beth-Rehob. And they built a city and lived in it.

<sup>29</sup>And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of their father Dan, who was born to Israel. But at first the name of the city was Laish. <sup>30</sup>And the children of Dan set up the carved image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. <sup>31</sup>And they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he had made. *It was*

*there* all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

**19** And it came about in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that a certain Levite staying in a remote place in the hill country of Ephraim, took a concubine for himself from Bethlehem in Judah. <sup>2</sup>And his concubine acted like a prostitute against him and went away from him to her father's house to Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for four whole months. <sup>3</sup>And her husband arose and went after her to speak to her in a friendly way and to bring her back. He had his servant with him, and a couple of donkeys. And she brought him into her father's house; and when the girl's father saw him, he was glad to meet him. <sup>4</sup>And his father-in-law, the girl's father, pressed him *to stay*, and he remained with him for three days. So they ate and drank and spent the nights there.

<sup>5</sup>And it came about on the fourth day, when they got up early in the morning, that he rose up to leave, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a piece of bread, and afterwards go on your way". <sup>6</sup>And they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together; and the girl's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry". <sup>7</sup>And when the man got up to leave, his father-in-law urged him to stay. So he spent the night there again. <sup>8</sup>And he got up early in the morning on the fifth day to leave, and the girl's father said, "Please refresh your heart". And they waited until afternoon, and both of them ate.

<sup>9</sup>And when the man got up to leave, he, and his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, now the day is drawing toward evening. Please stay all night. See, daylight is coming to an end. Spend the night here and let your

**18:24** "*Taken away my gods*"— compare Gen 31:30,53.

"*What else do I have*"— a sad, pathetic thing for a man of Israel to say. Israel was the nation in covenant relationship with the one true God. And it is a sad thing that some people still have nothing but idols and priests, for this means they have nothing at all.

**18:25** They were willing to break another of God's laws and murder fellow Israelites for the sake of idols! 21:25. It is not surprising

that Dan later became a center of idolatry — 1 Kings 12:28-30.

**18:30** "*Manasseh*"— because the priest who went with the Danites was a Levite, and because Gershom was the name of one of the sons of Moses, some scholars seem quite certain that this should read "Moses" and not Manasseh, but there is no proof for this, and the best Hebrew manuscripts have "Manassah".

**18:31** "*Shiloh*"— Josh 18:1; 1 Sam 1:3.

**19:1** 21:25.



heart be merry. And tomorrow get away early on your journey to your home".<sup>10</sup> But the man would not stay that night, but he rose up and left, and came opposite Jebus, which is Jerusalem. And with him *there were* two saddled donkeys. His concubine also was with him.

<sup>11</sup>By the time they were near Jebus, daylight was almost over, and the servant said to his master, "Please come and let us turn into this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it".

<sup>12</sup>And his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into the city of strangers who are not of the children of Israel. We will go on to Gibeah".<sup>13</sup> And he said to his servant, "Come on, and let us *try to reach* one of these places to spend all night: Gibeah or Ramah".<sup>14</sup> And they passed on by and went on their way. And *when they came* near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, the sun set.<sup>15</sup> And they turned aside there to go in and spend the night in Gibeah. And when he went into the city, he sat down in a street, for no one took them into his house to spend the night.

<sup>16</sup>And then an old man came in the evening from his work out of the field, which was also in the hill country of Ephraim. He was living in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites.<sup>17</sup> And when he raised his eyes, he saw a traveller in the street of the city. And the old man said, "Where are you going? And from where are you coming?"

<sup>18</sup>And he said to him, "We are passing through from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote place in the hill country of Ephraim, from where I came. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, but I am *now* going to the house of the LORD. And no one has taken me to his house.<sup>19</sup> Yet there is both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and also there is bread and wine for me and for your maid servant and

for the young man who is with your servants. *There is no lack of any thing*".

<sup>20</sup>And the old man said, "Peace be with you. However, I *will see* to all your needs. Only do not spend the night in the street".<sup>21</sup> So he brought him into his house and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet and ate and drank.

<sup>22</sup>Now while they were making their hearts merry, suddenly some men of the city, wicked scoundrels, surrounded the house *and* pounded on the door and spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who has come into your house, so that we can know him".

<sup>23</sup>And the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren, please, no! Don't do *such* a wicked thing, since this man has come into my house, do not do this foolish thing.<sup>24</sup> Look, *here is* my daughter, a virgin, and his concubine. I will bring them out now, and you can humble them and do with them whatever seems good to you. But do not do such a vile thing to this man".

<sup>25</sup>But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning, and when day began to dawn they let her go.<sup>26</sup> Then the woman came at the dawn of day and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.

<sup>27</sup>And her master got up in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way; and there was the woman, his concubine, fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were on the threshold.<sup>28</sup> And he said to her, "Get up, and let us be going". But no one answered. Then the man lifted her up onto a donkey, and the man rose up and went to his place.

**19:10** 1:21; 2 Sam 5:6-7.

**19:12** "*Gibeah*"— this Gibeah was in Benjamin, a short distance north of Jerusalem. There were two other Gibeahs, one in Judah, one in Ephraim.

**19:15** "*No one took them into his house*"— this was contrary to the custom of the times. Compare 6:18-19; 13:15; Heb 13:2.

**19:18** "*House of the LORD*"— 18:31.

**19:22** Notes at Gen 19:4-5. These men were Israelites who had picked up the vile ways of the Canaanites— Lev 18:22,24. By their actions they were grinding God's law beneath their unholy feet.

**19:23** Compare Gen 19:7; Rom 1:26-27.

**19:24** Note at Gen 19:8. Surely it was also a disgraceful thing for this man to offer defenseless women to these vile men, even to save the life of the Levite.

**19:25** The Levite was willing to sacrifice the woman to save himself. Such is the way men may behave when they do only as they see fit.

**19:28** "*Get up*"— these words reveal no love, no sympathy, no basic human concern for the woman he had condemned to terrible abuse. This is the kind of character that develops when people do what is right in their own eyes, and not what is right in God's eyes.

<sup>29</sup>And when he came into his house, he grasped a knife and took hold of his concubine and divided her into twelve pieces, *along* with her bones, and sent her into all the territories of Israel. <sup>30</sup>And it came about that all who saw it said, “No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt to this day. Think about it, take advice, and speak *your minds*”.

**20** Then all the children of Israel came out from Dan to Beersheba and *from* the land of Gilead. The congregation was gathered together to the LORD as one man in Mizpeh. <sup>2</sup>And the leaders of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew sword. <sup>3</sup>(Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpeh.) Then the children of Israel said, “Tell us. How did this wickedness happen?”

<sup>4</sup>And the Levite, the husband of the woman who had been killed, answered and said, “I came to Gibeah that *belongs* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. <sup>5</sup>And the men of Gibeah rose against me and at night surrounded the house where I was, intending to kill me. And they forced my concubine so that she died. <sup>6</sup>And I took my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the whole country of the inheritance of Israel, for they have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. <sup>7</sup>Look, you *are* all children of Israel. Give here your advice and counsel”.

**19:29** “*Israel*”— compare 1 Sam 11:7. The Levite chose this startling way to inform the tribes of what had taken place, doubtless with the hope that they would take vengeance on Gibeah.

**20:1** “*All the children of Israel*”— that is, men from every section of the country from the far north to the far south (Dan to Beersheba). Only Jabesh Gilead was not represented (21:8-9).

“*Mizpeh*”— there are several Mizpahs mentioned in the Bible, but this one was in Benjamin, not far from Gibeah.

**20:9** “*Cast lots*”— a common practice among the Israelites – Josh 7:14; 18:6; 1 Sam 14:41-42; 1 Chron 24:5.

**20:10** “*Deal with them in accordance with all the vileness*”— what they deserved was death – v 13. See note at Ex 21:36.

**20:13** “*Put away evil*”— compare Deut 13:5; 17:7; 19:19-20. Possibly they had in mind what happened in Israel when one man sinned in

<sup>8</sup>And all the people arose as one man, saying, “Not a one *of us* will go to his tent, nor will any *of us* return to his house. <sup>9</sup>But now this *is* the thing which we will do to Gibeah: we will *cast* lots and *go up* against it, <sup>10</sup>and we will take ten men out of a hundred from all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred out of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to bring provisions for the people, so that when they arrive at Gibeah in Benjamin, they may deal *with them* in accordance with all the vileness that they have committed in Israel”. <sup>11</sup>So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.

<sup>12</sup>And the tribes of Israel sent men through the whole tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What *is* this wickedness that has been done among you? <sup>13</sup>Now therefore deliver *to us* the men, the wicked scoundrels who *are* in Gibeah, so that we can put them to death and put away evil from Israel”. But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel, <sup>14</sup>but the children of Benjamin gathered together from the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the children of Israel. <sup>15</sup>And at that time the children of Benjamin from the cities were counted, twenty-six thousand men who drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who were counted as seven hundred choice men. <sup>16</sup>Among all this people seven hundred choice men *were* left-handed. Each one could sling stones at a hair and not miss.

<sup>17</sup>And besides Benjamin, the men of Israel were counted, four hundred thousand men who drew sword. All these *were* warriors.

Joshua’s day and the whole of Israel suffered for it (Joshua chapter 7). They realized that to avoid God’s punishment on themselves they had to do something about this terrible violation of God’s law. Notes at Josh 7:1,12,13,26; 2 Sam 21:1,5,6; Acts 5:1-11. Their stand shows that there was still some moral fiber left in the nation even in those dark times.

**20:14** This was totally unreasonable. They mobilized to defend guilty men, violent sexual perverts and murderers who were worthy of death, simply because they were of the same tribe. This naturally resulted in a terrible disaster. Let us all understand that defending the guilty is sharing their guilt, and God will punish it. When evil people should be exposed and punished we must not cover up their evil deeds just because they are related to us. If we do, we cannot escape God’s judgment ourselves. See note on v 48.

**20:16** “*Sling stones*”— 1 Sam 17:40.

<sup>18</sup>And the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God and asked counsel of God and said, "Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?" And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up first".

<sup>19</sup>And the children of Israel got up in the morning and camped against Gibeah. <sup>20</sup>And the men of Israel went out to the battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. <sup>21</sup>And the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and that day destroyed twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites on the field. <sup>22</sup>And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again set their battle lines in the place where they put themselves in array the first day. <sup>23</sup>And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up again to fight against the children of Benjamin my brother?" And the LORD said, "Go up against him".

<sup>24</sup>And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. <sup>25</sup>And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day, and again destroyed eighteen thousand men of the children of Israel on the field. All these were swordsmen.

<sup>26</sup>Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up and came to the house of God, and wept and sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. <sup>27</sup>And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, <sup>28</sup>and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar,

the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I again go out to fight against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I stop?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand".

<sup>29</sup>And Israel set an ambush around Gibeah. <sup>30</sup>And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. <sup>31</sup>And the children of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city, and, as at other times, they began to strike down and kill some of the people, about thirty men of Israel, in the highways, one of which went up to the house of God and the other to Gibeah and in the field.

<sup>32</sup>And the children of Benjamin said, "They are being struck down before us, just like at first". But the children of Israel said, "Let us run away and draw them from the city into the highways".

<sup>33</sup>And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place and put themselves in array at Baal-Tamar, and those of Israel waiting in ambush came out of their places, out of the meadows of Gibeah. <sup>34</sup>And ten thousand choice men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce, but the *Benjamites* did not know that disaster was near them. <sup>35</sup>And the LORD struck down Benjamin before Israel; and that day the children of Israel destroyed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of the Benjamites. All these were swordsmen.

<sup>36</sup>So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated; for the men of Israel gave ground to the Benjamites, because they trusted those who were waiting in

**20:18** "To the house of God"— in Hebrew "house of God" is one word — "Bethel", and this phrase could be translated "to Bethel" (also v 26).

"Asked counsel of God"— it seems they did not ask whether they should fight with Benjamin, only who should go to fight first.

**20:23** A different and humbler question than that of v 18. The Lord sent them, but it resulted in further great bloodshed and defeat (v 24). It seems that God was using the occasion to punish all Israel, or at least to teach them some severe lessons. This is not stated in this chapter, but there is enough reason in other parts of Judges to cause us to think so.

**20:26** They humbled themselves still further to seek the Lord and He heard them.

"Offerings"— notes at Leviticus chapters 1–3.

**20:28** "Phinehas"— if this is the same Phinehas that was the priest in the days of Joshua (Josh 22:13), the events of these last three chapters took place not long after Joshua's death.

"Your hand"— God had not told them this before.

**20:35** Even with a numerical superiority of 15 to 1 (vs 15,17), it was the Lord who had to give them the victory. No doubt the Benjamites were fierce and skillful fighters, but it is probable also that they had less reluctance to kill their fellow Israelites than their fellow Israelites had to kill them. But at last almost the whole of the armed men of Benjamin were destroyed.



the ambush they had placed near Gibeah, <sup>37</sup>and those who had been in ambush quickly rushed on Gibeah. And those who had been in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. <sup>38</sup>Now the arranged sign between the men of Israel and those who had been in ambush, was that they should make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city. <sup>39</sup>And when the men of Israel drew back from the battle, Benjamin began to strike down and kill about thirty of the men of Israel, for they said, “No doubt they are being struck down before us, just as *in* the first battle”. <sup>40</sup>But when the cloud began to rise up from the city *like* a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them and saw the cloud from the city rising up to the sky. <sup>41</sup>And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin were alarmed, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. <sup>42</sup>Therefore they turned *their backs* on the men of Israel toward the wilderness road. But the battle overtook them, and those who came out of the cities destroyed them between them. <sup>43</sup>*In this way* they surrounded the Benjamites and chased them and easily trampled them down opposite Gibeah toward the sunrise. <sup>44</sup>And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell. All these *were* brave men. <sup>45</sup>And they turned and fled toward the wilderness toward the rock of Rimmon. And they picked off five thousand of them in the highways, and pursued *the rest of* them to Gidom and killed two thousand of them.

<sup>46</sup>So that the total *number* of the Benjamites who fell that day was twenty-five thousand swordsmen. All these *were* brave men. <sup>47</sup>But six hundred men turned and fled into the wilderness to the rock Rimmon, and stayed at the rock Rimmon for four months. <sup>48</sup>And the men of Israel turned back on the children

of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword, both the men of every city and the cattle and all that was encountered. They also set on fire all the cities to which they came.

**21** Now the men of Israel had made an oath in Mizpeh, saying, “None of us will give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage”.

<sup>2</sup>And the people came to the house of God, and stayed there until evening before God and raised their voices and wept bitterly. <sup>3</sup>And they said, “O LORD God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel?”

<sup>4</sup>And it came about the next day that the people rose early and built there an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. <sup>5</sup>And the children of Israel said, “Among all the tribes of Israel who *is there* who did not come up with the congregation to the LORD?” For they had made a great oath concerning the one who did not come to Mizpeh to the LORD, saying, “He shall surely be put to death”.

<sup>6</sup>And the children of Israel were grieved for Benjamin their brother and said, “Today one tribe is cut off from Israel. <sup>7</sup>What shall we do about wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters in marriage?” <sup>8</sup>And they said, “Which of the tribes of Israel did not come up to Mizpeh to the LORD?” And, *lo and* behold, no one from Jabesh-Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly. <sup>9</sup>For the people were numbered, and, *lo and* behold, none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead *were* there.

<sup>10</sup>And the congregation sent twelve thousand of the bravest men there and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike

**20:48** Because of the sin of a few vile men in Gibeah and the senseless defense of them by the Benjamites, more than 65,000 men lost their lives (vs 21,25,35), Gibeah and other cities were destroyed with their population of many thousands more (vs 37,48), and a whole tribe was almost obliterated (v 47; 21:3). Is not the defense of wickedness a very costly matter? The reason it is so costly is this: those who defend wickedness share in the guilt of those they defend and will have God fighting against them.

**21:1** Note on vows at 11:30-31. This one had a curse on anyone who broke it (v 18).

**21:2-4** Verses 6,15. The experience of civil war resulted in some brokenness of spirit – a flower that blossomed from the muck of the occasion, great good in the midst of a terrible disaster (compare Ps 51:17).

**21:2** “*The people came to the house of God*” – or “the people went to Bethel”.

**21:5** “*Death*” – they considered that failing to do one’s duty in that time of crisis was as worthy of death as the defense of wickedness. Compare 5:23; 8:15-17.

**21:10-11** This was in fulfillment of the vow of v 5.



down the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. <sup>11</sup>And this *is* what you must do: utterly destroy every male and every woman that has lain with a man”. <sup>12</sup>And they found four hundred young virgins among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead who had not known a man by lying with him. And they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

<sup>13</sup>And the whole congregation sent *some men* to speak to the children of Benjamin who *were* at the rock Rimmon, and to proclaim peace to them. <sup>14</sup>And at that time Benjamin came out again; and they gave to them in marriage those women of Jabesh Gilead whom they had saved alive. But still they were not sufficient for them.

<sup>15</sup>And the people were grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a gap in the tribes of Israel. <sup>16</sup>Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do about wives for those who are left, since the women in Benjamin have been destroyed?” <sup>17</sup>And they said, “*There must be* an inheritance for those of Benjamin who have escaped, so that a tribe of Israel is not destroyed. <sup>18</sup>However, we must not give them our daughters in marriage, for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, ‘Cursed *be* the one who gives *anyone* in marriage to

Benjamin.’ ” <sup>19</sup>Then they said, “Look, *there is* an annual feast of the LORD in Shiloh *in a place* to the north of Bethel, to the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem and to the south of Lebonah”.

<sup>20</sup>So they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards <sup>21</sup>and watch, and when the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and each man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. <sup>22</sup>And it shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, ‘Do this favour to them for our sakes; because we did not take a wife for each man in battle. And you did not give wives to them at this time, *that you should be guilty.*’ ”

<sup>23</sup>And the children of Benjamin did so, and they caught *some* of those who were dancing and took wives *for themselves*, according to their number. And they went away and returned to their inheritance and repaired the cities and lived in them.

<sup>24</sup>And the children of Israel left there at that time, each man to his tribe and to his family, and each man left there and went to his inheritance.

<sup>25</sup>In those days *there was* no king in Israel. Everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

21:18 Verse 1.

21:21 “*Shiloh*”– this was in the territory of Ephraim.

21:25 “*Right in his own eyes*”– they had no earthly king and did not submit to their heavenly King. They forsook the Word of God, did not bow to its authority, and did as they pleased. The result was the events recorded in this book of Judges. This is one of the saddest accounts of human failure in the Bible, indeed in the whole literature of the world. It is a story of failure we see any time, any where when men do as they see fit instead of doing as God sees fit. Human nature has not

improved since the days of Judges and those who cast off authority and restraint now will behave as people did then.

But in the gloom of these final words of the book and in the darkness of the times let us not forget the bright beams of faith that shone here and there. Four persons from Judges are named among the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 – more than from any other book except Genesis. And in the midst of the sinful behavior of His people, God’s grace and compassion and mercy shine even brighter than they otherwise might have done.

