

Judges

The goal of this Bible Class is to give the students a working knowledge of the whole book of Judges. It is based on an expository approach to teaching the Bible, with an emphasis in preparing the students for the worship of our Savior. The various lessons are to be viewed by the teacher as thematic suggestions to help with preparation. While the lessons are not intended to be read to the class word for word, the main ideas should be the substance of what is taught. The teacher, in preparation for the class, should consider reading through the whole curriculum before beginning the class, as well as the book of Judges several times. This will provide the instructor with a broad and comprehensive understanding of Judges as it is being taught. At the end of the course, the class will be concluded with a Bible Knowledge Evaluation. The instructor should be sure to review the material sufficiently that the student is able to correctly answer the questions on the evaluation.

It is important that the instructor be not only knowledgeable about the material, but also able to teach it with enthusiasm and conviction. Students best learn from teachers that are themselves excited about the scriptures. The use of maps, diagrams, white boards etc. is extremely helpful. Some of these have been provided in the curriculum. It is suggested that the class be conducted in an interactive manner. This can be accomplished by having them read short portions of the scripture texts, asking them questions, and wholeheartedly encouraging them to ask questions. All students should be encouraged to bring a Bible to class.

The inclusion of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as part of the curriculum is designed to help the students acquire a broad understanding of Christian doctrine along with the specific Bible teaching. The Elders of the church will coordinate the specific questions and answers to be used in the class.

It will become evident to the teacher that this course curriculum, while not dealing with every verse and concept in the book of Judges, is comprehensive and deeply theological. It is designed to help the students understand the book of Judges in its wider biblical context, with emphasis on its place in the redemptive history of God's covenant people. The students will be confronted with and asked to understand and remember fairly difficult concepts. It should be remembered that children are able to comprehend much more than we often give them credit for. While this class will be a challenge for both the teacher and the students, the rewards for the efforts of those in the class will be surprising and exciting.

Suggested Supplemental Reading Material for the Teacher:

Leithart, Peter, *House For My Name*, pp. 113-118.

Jordan, James, *Judges: God War Against Humanism*, or *Judges: A Practical and Theological Commentary*.

Dorsey, David, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, pp. 105-120.

May Yahweh bless you and the students as you seriously study His Word.

Judges: Student Evaluation

Name _____ Date _____

(1) The judges were _____ deliverers.

(2) The outline of the book of Judges is a series of two's. Fill in the blanks.

I. Two _____

II. Two Exemplary Judges

Othniel and _____

III. Two _____ Judges

Deborah and Gideon

IV. Two Compromised Judges

Jephthah and _____

V. Two _____

(3) The Covenant Cycle repeated through the book of Judges has 5 parts. Fill in the blanks.

1) _____/Blessing

2) Fall/_____

3) _____/Exile/Slavery

4) _____/Forgiveness

5) Restoration/_____

(4) The primary sins of Israel were (circle one):

(a) Making covenants with inhabitants of the land (b) not tearing down worship places

(c) Worshipping false gods (d) all of the above.

(5) The phrase repeated in Judges, "There was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes," means that if there were a king, Israel would not have had so much trouble. True or False (circle one).

(6) Some think Abimelech was the first _____ of Israel. Was he a godly man? Yes or No

(7) Who was the true Judge and King of Israel?

What did you learn from Judges that will help you be a better Christian? _____

Judges: Student Evaluation Answer Key

- (1) The judges are **SPIRIT EMPOWERED** deliverers.
- (2) The outline of the book of Judges is a series of two's. Fill in the blanks.
- I. Two **INTRODUCTIONS**
- II. Two Exemplary Judges
Othniel and **EHUD**
- III. Two **UNLIKELY** Judges
Deborah and **GIDEON**
- IV. Two Compromised Judges
Jephthah and **SAMSON**
- V. Two **EXAMPLES**
- (3) The Covenant Cycle repeated through the book of Judges has 5 parts. Fill in the blanks.
- 1) **CREATION**/Blessing
 - 2) Fall/**SIN**
 - 3) **JUDGMENT**/Exile/Slavery
 - 4) **REPENTANCE**/Forgiveness
 - 5) Restoration/**RECREATION**
- (4) The primary sins of Israel were:
(a) Making covenants with inhabitants of the land (b) not tearing down worship places
(c) Worshipping false gods (d) **ALL OF THE ABOVE.**
- (5) The phrase repeated in Judges, "There was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes," means that if there were a king, Israel would not have had so much trouble. True or **FALSE** (circle one).
- (6) Some think Abimelech was the first **KING** of Israel. Was he a godly man? Yes or **NO**
- (7) Who was the true Judge and King of Israel? **YAHWEH**

Week One – Judges: A Theological Introduction

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last two pages of this lesson.]

Who can tell me the three-part outline of the book of Exodus? [Exodus from Egypt; Covenant with Yahweh (including Law); Worship of Yahweh (Tabernacle)] God showed love and grace to the people by saving them from slavery, making them His people by covenant and teaching them to worship Him. In Deut. 4, Moses reminded the people of the great things God had done for them, asking: has any people ever before had God speak to them from a fiery cloud, or do such great signs and wonders as when He brought them out of slavery? The answer is **NO!** God had done something so unique in Israel that they should never forget the wonderful works of the Lord for them. Moses also warned them strongly. [Read briefly portions of Deut. 4:15-31 to give the students the sense of the passage.]

¹⁵“**Take careful heed to yourselves**, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ¹⁶“lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷“the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸“the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. ¹⁹“And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. ²⁰“But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.

Marriage Covenant

²³“Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. ²⁴“For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Prophecy - Warning

²⁵“**When** you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, **and** act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶“I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷“And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. ²⁸“And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹“**But** from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰“When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, **when** you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice ³¹“(for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), **He** will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

Why didn't the people go into the land? [Because they rebelled against the Lord through idolatry and refusing to trust Yahweh and enter the land.] Covenant faithfulness is the key to understanding God's relationship with His people. God is always faithful, and will bless His people when they keep covenant with Him. God's people are faithful when they worship Him only, and obey His Law. He wants a faithful Bride. He doesn't want her to ever go after other husbands. If they failed to be faithful to the covenant and sin, Yahweh will judge their sin, ultimately by kicking them out of the land, just as they were kick out the inhabitants of the land. But, when they repent (turn away from sin), and trust in the mercy of the Lord, He will save them again. [Pass out the Covenant Cycle diagram.] Explain that God deals with men by covenant, and the Covenant Cycle is played out over and over again in history, until finally, Christ makes an end to it in the new heavens and new earth.

We have seen that Moses was a sort of "new Adam," raised up to deliver the people, and lead them. After the wilderness wanderings, and the death of Moses and Aaron (the High Priest), what would happened next? Would the people obey Yahweh and remain faithful to Him, or would they be the same as their fathers?

As we saw in the book of Joshua, Yahweh raised up another new Adam: Joshua ("Yahweh Saves"). He also gave them another new High Priest, Eleazar. Under their leadership, the people not only remained faithful in worship, but also obeyed the Lord and took control of the Promised Land. At the end of the book of Joshua we saw that the people renewed covenant again, and promised faithfulness to the Lord. Finally, we read of the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar. The question comes to mind again, What will happen in Israel now that a new generation must pickup from where these great leaders left off?

The Book of Judges and the King of Israel: Yahweh

And so we come to the book of Judges. The very first words of Judges tell us that this is the continuation of the story (1:1). Judges was most likely written by Samuel, who was himself a judge in Israel (1 Sam. 7:6, 15). Judges tells the story of Israel from the time of Joshua until there began to be kings in Israel, a period of about 450 years (Acts 13:20). To understand the importance of the book of Judges we need to know about the beginning of the period of the kings of Israel. Turn with me to 1 Samuel 8.

⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.** ⁸“According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. ⁹“Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.”

What we will see in the book of Judges is that the people forget the Lord and all the great things He had done for them, and failed to teach their children (Deut. 4:9-10; Judges 2:10). They lost a sense of who they were. They were saved by Yahweh, brought into covenant with Him, and given the garden-land that He had promised their fathers. They lost faith in God, and followed after other gods.

What they forgot is that God is King in Israel. He sits on His throne above the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle at Shiloh. Whenever they remained faithful to Him, Yahweh led them to victory over the kings of the land. But as they began to forget Yahweh their King, they began to think that they had no king. They began to think that their God was not as good and powerful as the gods of the land. They began to go after the gods of the land, and seek a human king. Repeatedly the writer said, “There was no king in Israel” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1 1:25), with the people’s response being that “everyone did that which was right in their own eyes” (Num. 15:39; Deut. 12:8; Judges. 17:6; 21:25). They rejected God as their King, doing what they wanted, not being faithful to Yahweh.

What the Judges Were

The book of Judges is the story of the 450 years where we see the Covenant Cycle being played out again and again. During this period, Israel did not drive out the wicked inhabitants of the land and allowed them to stay in the land. Israel made covenants with the inhabitants of the land and failed to tear down their places of idol worship. Israel became like the people of the land. The result was that they progressively went farther and farther away from the Lord, and He judged them. Instead of driving the nations out of the land, He used the nations to test/trouble Israel.

What was the job of the judges? During the time of Moses, the judges were responsible to rule over the people by making judgments from the law of the Lord. They would settle disputes between people according to the law (Ex. 18). They were leaders/rulers of the people, and were to be obeyed (Deut. 16:18-17:13). As

leaders, they had an important part in covenant renewal (Josh. 8:33ff; 24:1ff), and were thus, called upon to help the people keep covenant with God.

In the book of Judges, the judges have a new roll. They are *Spirit empowered savior-leaders* (3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14). Judges 3 says that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel, and raised him up to deliver the people.

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

⁷So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. ⁸Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia...⁹When 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.

The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon the judge to deliver the people. This same empowerment by the Holy Spirit became characteristic of David, the future king of Israel (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9, 20, 23). God uses special people for special works of salvation and leadership, and gives them His Spirit for the task.

This is an important thing to remember. The first time we see the Holy Spirit in the Bible is in Gen. 1:2, where we see that He is actively bringing order to the chaos in the unformed world. Now, in Judges, the Holy Spirit is hovering over Israel, and empowers the judges to bring order and salvation to the nation. The Spirit uses special people to bring salvation and leadership to Israel. They not only do it in terms of warfare, but also by teaching the people the Word of the Lord. But time after time, they do not listen to the judge, or when the judge died, and they went again through the Covenant Cycle [Teacher: Use the handout to show the students the Covenant Cycle, mentioning that it will be important to understand and remember it.]

The Spirit of God brings deliverance from the enemies of God and His people. Ultimately, Christ, the true Judge and King of the world, would send His Spirit into the world (Acts 2) to fill His people and conquer the world. He will use us.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 1:1-2:5 and pay close attention to the failures of Israel.

Week One – Judges: A Theological Introduction

Deuteronomy 4:15-31

The Book of Judges and the King of Israel: Yahweh

What the Judges Were

Exodus 18; Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13

Spirit empowered savior-leaders

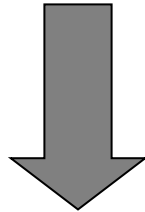
(Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14)

(1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9, 20, 23)

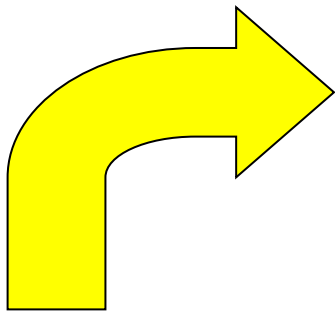
Homework assignment: Read Judges 1:1-2:5 and pay close attention to the failures of Israel.

COVENANT CYCLE

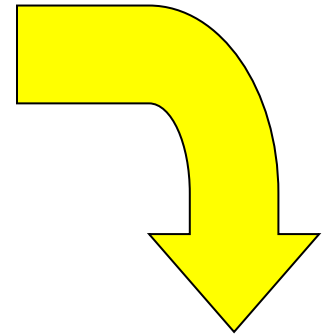
Creation/Blessing



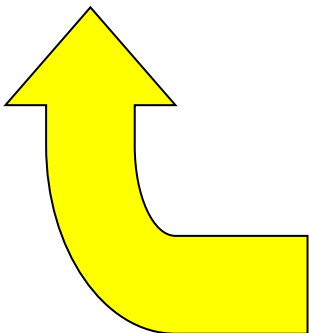
FALL/SIN



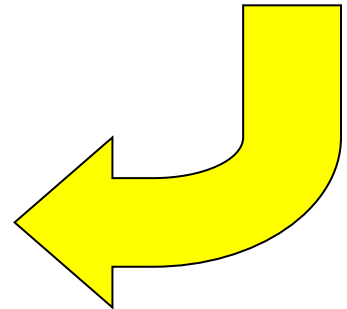
**RESTORATION/
RE-CREATION**



**JUDGMENT/
EXILE/SLAVERY**



**REPENTANCE/
FORGIVENESS**



Week Two – From Conquest to Compromise Judges 1-2:5

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

The outline for the book of Judges is as follows. The outline does not include every judge, but does emphasize the ones that the book of Judges deals with in detail. Notice that it is a series of two's. [The teacher should be aware that the middle sections are best outlined in a series of 7, with a chiastic structure as seen in the outline to the right. This best expresses the literary flow of the text, and helps to highlight the turning point in the book. It would be good to emphasize this through the course of the Bible class.]

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)

B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

a. Othniel

b. Ehud

c. Deborah and Barak

d. **TURNING POINT: Gideon**

c'. Abimelech

b'. Jephthah

a'. Samson

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last page of this lesson.]

In the first part of the book of Judges, we see two introductions that help us understand what the writer is trying to communicate in the book. It is not just a collection of hero stories. Rather, it is a description of how Yahweh, the only real hero, deals with His unfaithful people. Today we will look at the first of these two introductions, 1:1-2:5. This section begins and ends with the covenant people assembling before the Lord to hear from Him about the conquest of the land.

Judges 1:1-2

¹Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"

²And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand."

The people began well. They consulted the Lord, apparently remembering Him and His word to them (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:1). They were placing their faith in Him to win the victories.

By the end of this section, we see that the people had begun to compromise the faith, not being faithful to Yahweh God. Judges 2:1-5

¹Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. ²‘And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? ³“Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’ ” ⁴So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. ⁵Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD.

God reminded Israel of His salvation of them, and His promise to be faithful to His covenant promises. He also reminded them of His commands to them to not make covenants with the Canaanites, and to destroy their worship. What we see in the previous verses is that they disobeyed both of these commands. The response of Yahweh is to *not drive out* the inhabitants of the land, causing trouble for Israel. The main trouble for them is that the false gods would be a snare/trap for the people.

Though they started well, eventually Israel became unfaithful to their covenant God. Seven tribes are listed in Judges 1, and things get worse and worse.

Turn to Judges 1

1) Judah & Simeon (vv. 2-20)

In vv. 2-20 we see the success of the Tribe of Judah and Simeon in conquering southern Canaan. By far, this is the best of what we see in this section, but still not perfect (v. 19, couldn't drive out inhabitants of low lands because of chariots). V. 4 says they killed 10,000 men. Vv. 5-7, Judah found *Adoni-Bezek* (which means, “Lord of Lightning”). This king is a picture of the Satanic ruler of this age (*Lucifer* (meaning “light-bearer” in Is. 14:12) is a name for Satan). Adoni-Bezek ruled cruelly over 70 kings. Remember back in Genesis 10 where we learned about the 70 nations of the world following the flood. Throughout the Bible, the number 70 is a symbol of the nations. This story shows that Judah has an initial victory over Satan. In v. 8, Judah takes Jerusalem. This is significant, because Judah is the royal tribe, and Jerusalem later becomes the royal city where Yahweh the King will dwell in the midst of His people, and the kingdom of David will begin. It is at the city of the kings of Israel the Satanic ruler Adoni-Bezek is killed.

2) Benjamin (v. 21)

Jerusalem is in the territory of Benjamin (why Judah took the city we do not know). The Benjaminites did not drive out the inhabitants of the land, but chose instead to live **WITH** them. They decided to just try to get along with the people that Yahweh had commanded them to destroy. As we shall see at the end of the book (in Ch. 20-21) that Benjamin is nearly destroyed because they had become like the sinful inhabitants of the land.

3) Joseph (vv. 22-29)

Joseph was given a double portion of blessing by his father Jacob. His two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) were each given an inheritance in the land. Joseph began well, but ended badly in these verses. They did not drive out the inhabitants of the land, but allowed them to remain with them. Even when Israel was strong, they chose not to drive out the Canaanites, but to just make them pay tribute (slavery, taxes). They compromised with the Canaanites, and made covenant with them, the very thing God commanded Israel not to do. We cannot seek to be friends with the enemies of God.

4) Zebulun (v. 30)

Zebulun did not drive out the Canaanites, but *allowed them to live with them*. Zebulun did not even put the Canaanites under tribute. They were getting along with the enemy quite well.

5) Asher (vv. 31-32)

Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of their land. Rather, they dwelt among them. What is interesting about v. 32 is that we see a change in the language. *Asher lived with the Canaanites*, as if the Canaanites were to ones to allow Israel to live with them. The enemy was in control of the land, and Asher was content with this.

6) Naphtali (v. 33)

Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of the land either, and they were willing to merely *dwelt with them*. Eventually, Naphtali put them under tribute, but we know that this was not obedience to Yahweh.

7) Dan (vv. 34-36)

Worst of all was Dan. Not only did they not conquer the inhabitants of the land, they *allowed themselves to be driven into the mountains* (in Judges 18 we see the religious apostasy and failure clearly). Later, they were given help by the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), and put the Amorites under tribute.

All in all, the children of Israel did badly. We could be tempted to feel sorry for Israel as we read this story. Over and over again they are defeated in battle. But remember back to the book of Joshua. Why did they lose any battles? Because of disobedience! When Israel remained faithful to Yahweh, He gave them victory. Yahweh promised to give them victory over the Canaanites. The only reason they failed was for sin and unfaithfulness to the covenant (see Joshua 23).

Turn to Judges 2:1-5

In this passage the Angel of the Lord (Yahweh, the covenant Lord, is **Jesus**) meets with them to accuse them of sin [Read Ex. 23:20-23, and the teacher can remind of Josh. 5:13ff]. He begins by reminding them of His grace and covenant promises. What is the failure of the Israelites in this passage? [v. 2, they made covenants with the inhabitants of the land, and did not tear down their places of worship.] The result is that God will not drive out the Canaanites. He says that He will make them thorns in their sides, and cause the gods of the Canaanites to be a snare to them. Why would Yahweh use the gods of the land as a snare (like a trap laying on the ground to catch a bird or animal)? [It is a snare that would be designed to humble Israel and bring her to her knees.] The book of Judges is written to reveal how the sin of making covenant with the Canaanites and not tearing down their places of worship affects Israel and her relationship with Yahweh.

In vv. 4-5 we see the repentance and faith of the people. They turned from their sin (repentance) and called out to God in faith. They lifted up their voices and wept. As a way to remember this event, the place where they wept became known as *Bochim*, meaning “weepers.”

Judges 1 is an important warning for all of us. As the covenant people of God, we have been given the whole earth for our inheritance. He has saved us and brought us out of our bondage to sin and death. Jesus, the greater Moses and greater Joshua, has by His cross given us the command to go into the entire world and disciple the nations. He will use us to conquer the unbelieving world with the sword that comes out of the mouth of Jesus, the word of God. The question is, will we obey? Will we seek to be at peace with the unbelieving world around us, or will we be willing to apply the Bible to all of life? It is not easy to do the work of evangelism and teaching the nations to obey the Lord. It takes courage and strength. Are you learning the Bible so that you can teach others? Are you willing to tell people about the good news about Jesus? If so, God will use you. If not, the world will have victories over you and the kingdom of God will not grow.

One of the greatest enemies that we will ever have is our own sin. We must fight against the desire that we have to do as we please and do what we want as opposed to what God has said in His word. Instead of being selfish and full of pride, we should be humble before the Lord, and serve Him in our families and in the church. We also learn from this passage what we are to do when we sin: repent and trust God. He is ever willing to forgive and restore his people.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 2:6-3:6 and look at how the Covenant Cycle is seen there.

Week Two – From Conquest to Compromise
Judges 1-2:5

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

**A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel
(17-18)**

**B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel
(19-21)**

- a. Othniel
- b. Ehud
- c. Deborah and Barak
- d. TURNING POINT: Gideon
- c'. Abimelech
- b'. Jephthah
- a'. Samson

Homework assignment: Read Judges 2:6-3:6 and look at how the Covenant Cycle is seen there.

Week Three – Principles of Chastisement Judges 2:6-3:6

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

As we saw last week, after the death of Joshua and Eleazar the High Priest, Israel began well in their duty to take possession of the land. But as time went on, they began to disobey Yahweh. In 2:1-5, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus, Yahweh) met with the children of Israel to convict them of their sin: making covenants with the Canaanites, and not tearing down their places of worship. This is significant because what people did was become idolaters, worshipping other gods. When confronted with this sin, the people wept at Bochim (“Weepers”) in repentance and faith.

Today we will look more closely at what their problem was. Judges 2:6-3:6 is the second introduction to the book. [Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last page of this lesson.]

There is an increasing unfaithfulness in the people, which is manifested increasing unfaithfulness of the judges. Review outline:

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)

B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

I. Generation of Joshua 2:6-10

Throughout the days of Joshua Israel served the Lord. V. 10 alerts us to the problem:

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

As we saw in v. 1 and vv. 6-9, Israel was indeed a blessed people. Yahweh had done wonderful things for them. But they failed to pass on to their children a remembrance of these and a sense of faithfulness to the Lord. Based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25, parents are to teach their children to know the Lord and what he has done for Israel. This they failed to do. They were busy doing what they thought was God's will (conquering the land), but they did not teach their children. [When you have children, you must teach them.] Israel was a blessed people, but they did not remember Yahweh or His covenant salvation. The result was that they forsook Yahweh.

II. Failure of Later Generations 2:11-23

A. Evil in the sight of Yahweh vv. 11-13

¹¹Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹²and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.

¹³They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

While Israel may forgotten Yahweh, or thought he was far away, **He saw them.** He is always near to His covenant people, to bless or the judge.

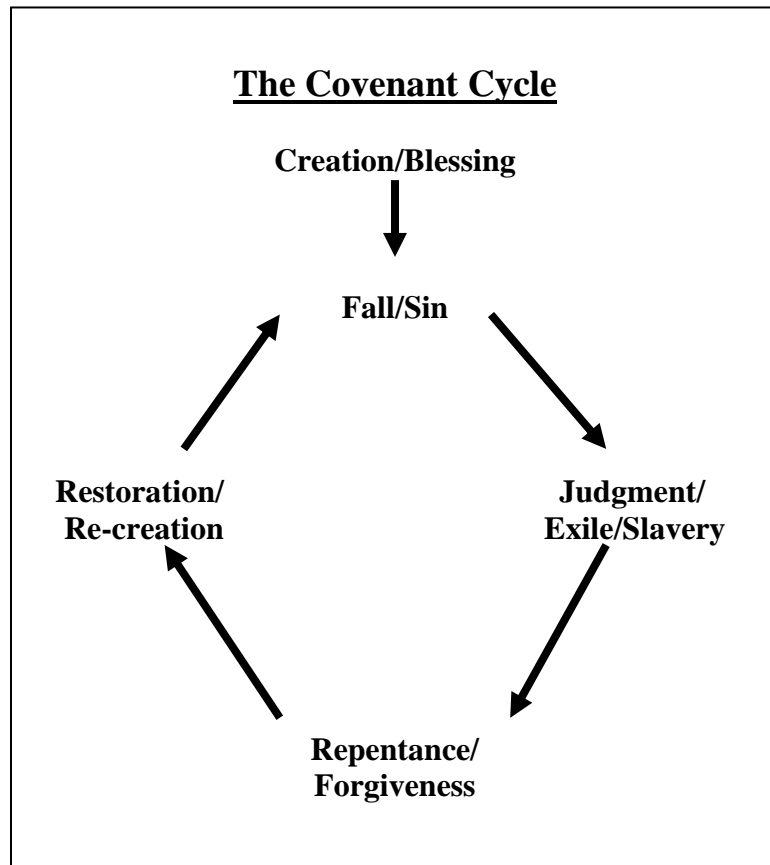
The specific sin written of here is that Israel served the Baals (the gods Baal and Ashteroth). Basically, this was a religion of Nature, believing that there is power in nature that must be encouraged to work on behalf of the worshipper. Baal was the male side of this religion, and Ashteroth was the female side of the religion. If you wanted to have good crops, many babies, good health and peace, you did things in worship (like sacrificing animals or children, sleeping with people you were not married to, or cutting yourself) to motivate the gods to help you. Serving the Baals meant trying to manipulate nature to get what you want.

The true religion of Yahweh is nothing like this. You cannot get these things without being faithful to the covenant and obeying the Lord. There is nothing you can do in nature apart from Yahweh that will give you what you want in life.

Nature has no power. God works in creation to either bless or judge; creation is just His way of doing it. Thus, turning to the Baals means rejecting Yahweh as the giver of the blessings we need. This forsaking of Yahweh, makes God angry. In His anger, God judges His people to bring them to repentance.

B. The Covenant Cycle in Judges vv. 14-19

As we have seen, the blessed people (2:1) fell into sin (2:2-3, 11-13). This is the beginning part of the Covenant Cycle. [Teacher: Refer to the handout from the last lesson, or draw the Covenant Cycle on the board as you talk about it.]



Next, God judged them by selling them into slavery again (2:14-15), and caused them great trouble.

¹⁴And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. ¹⁵Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

But when the people cried out to God in repentance, God heard them and sent them judges to deliver them again (2:16-18). Specifically, Yahweh was with the judge, who we said were “**Spirit empowered deliverers.**”

¹⁶Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. ¹⁸And when the LORD raised up judges for them, 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 pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

When the judge died, the Covenant Cycle was repeated (2:19).

¹⁹And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings or from their stubborn way.

[Read this section by section with the students, making reference to the covenant cycle. Use white board. **They must understand this concept.**]

In vv. 2:20-23 and 3:1-6 we see that God intended to use the nations to judge or punish His people. As with all punishments, these were not designed to destroy His covenant children, but to teach and correct them, making them more mature and faithful. God’s love and mercy is always part of His dealings with His children. He does not seek our destruction as covenant children, but our salvation and maturity in the faith. God loves you and will use trials and difficulties to help you grow in your knowledge and love for Him. When you sin, He may use some of these trials to help you see your sin and to turn from it. God often uses your parents to discipline you for your sin because He loves you and wants you to be a faithful child of the covenant. He will also use your parents as “Spirit empowered deliverers” in your life to save you from the many troubles your sin gets you into. Trust the Lord and obey Him, and He will bless you.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 3:7-31 and look at how the Covenant Cycle is repeated in the work of Othniel and Ehud. Also see how the Spirit works to make the judge a “Spirit empowered deliverer.”

Week Three – Principles of Chastisement
Judges 2:6-3:6

I. Generation of Joshua 2:6-10

II. Failure of Later Generations 2:11-23

A. Evil in the sight of Yahweh vv. 11-13

B. The Covenant Cycle in Judges vv. 14-19

Homework assignment: Read Judges 3:7-31 and look at how the Covenant Cycle is repeated in the work of Othniel and Ehud. Also see how the Spirit works to make the judge a “Spirit empowered deliverer.”

Week Four –Exemplary Judges **Judges 3:7-31**

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

As we have seen so far, the generation that followed Joshua forgot Yahweh and forsook Him. We also looked at the Covenant Cycle and how God took Israel through a periods of judgment, repentance, forgiveness, deliverance and restoration by the judges, the Spirit empowered deliverers. When the judges died, Israel returned to their sin. [Review Covenant Cycle diagram and outline.] What was the sin they committed that caused Yahweh to sell them into slavery again? [Idolatry. Idolatry is the sin of seeing anyone or anything as more important than God and not obeying Him.]

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last two pages of this lesson.]

Now in Ch. 3 we begin to look as some of the judges, the Spirit empowered deliverers Yahweh used to restore and re-create the nation of Israel. Remember in our outline of Judges that there were two Exemplary Judges (good examples).

I. Othniel 3:7-11

Read 3:7-11. How do these verses follow the Covenant Cycle?

- 1) Creation/Blessing – Israel was experiencing blessing from God
- 2) Fall/Sin – V. 7 Israel fell into sin
- 3) Judgment/Exile – V. 8 God judged Israel. How did He feel about Israel’s sin? [hot anger] How did God judge Israel? [Sold them into slavery to foreign ruler. Show class where Mesopotamia is on map. Very far away.]
- 4) Repentance/Forgiveness – V. 9a, Israel repents. Why?
- 5) Restoration/Re-creation – Vv. 9b-10, God raised up a deliverer, Othniel. This is the turning point in the story.

Othniel means “Lion of God.” Othniel was the nephew of Caleb, who was of the Tribe of Judah, the royal tribe (David & Jesus were of the tribe of Judah). He was not a descendent of Judah, but was Kenizzite, whose family sometime in the past converted and was made a part of the covenant people (Gen. 15:19; Josh. 14:6). Remember that it was the tribe of Judah in Judges 1:2 that was commanded to first go out in conquest. In 1:11-15 (cf. Josh. 14:6-15) we see Othniel doing well and taking control of Kirjath Sepher, and winning the hand of Caleb’s daughter.

Othniel was a picture of the coming Lion of Judah, Jesus, winning His Bride. We, the members of Christ's Church, are the Bride of Jesus.

V. 8 says that Yahweh sold Israel into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia, who served him for eight years. Cushan-Rishathaim means, "The Cushite of Double Wickedness." This probably was not his name, but it illustrates how severe the slavery was. Israel was in his "**hand**," meaning under his control. The Lord delivered him into the **hand** of Othniel and his **hand** prevailed or took control away from Cushan-Rishathaim (vv. 8, 10). This play on words continues into the next section (v. 15).

Notice in v. 10, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel to empower him to prevail over God's enemy and deliver His people. Othniel is just a normal man, but by the power of the Spirit of Yahweh is able to do mighty works of salvation.

V. 11 tells us that Othniel judged the people, and the land rested (had Sabbath) for 40 years. Notice that for only 8 years they were enslaved, and God's restoration lasted 40 years. The mercies of the Lord and indeed greater than His judgments.

II. Ehud 3:12-30

Now, let's look at 3:12-30 to see the Covenant Cycle here.

1) Creation/Blessing 3:11

The land had rest (compare to Sabbath at the end of creation /rebirth/regeneration) for 40 years – a generation.

2) Fall/Sin 3:12, "...Israel again did evil..."

3) Judgment/Exile 3:12-14

"So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab... fourteen years(v.14)"

Eglon, means "like a calf." Remember the golden calf – idolatry. God sends the idol to judge Israel for their idolatry. Eglon is king of Moab (from Lot's daughter). Eglon gathers the men of Ammon (Lot's other daughter), and Amalek (descended from Esau). These were very wicked and rebellious peoples, and to be conquered by them was a terrible judgment. Moab was much nearer than the enemy God had sent in the days of Othniel. These enemies took the City of Palms (very near to Jericho), which is a reversal of the victory that God had won at Jericho. Israel served Eglon 18 years (longer than Cushan-Rishathaim), meaning the sin had increased as well.

4) Repentance/Forgiveness – Israel cried out 3:15

Ehud, means, “I will give thanks: I will be praised.” He was of the tribe of Benjamin. Later, Saul, the first Yahweh-anointed king of Israel, was a Benjamite. Interestingly, the name Benjamin means, “Son of the right hand” or “I am at my father’s right-hand” or “I am right-handed.” As Ehud and many other Benjamite warriors are said to be left-**handed** (Judges 20:15-16), we have a play on words. The king of Mesopotamia is delivered into the **hand** of Othniel (3:8, 10), now Ehud, the left-**handed** judge deceptively delivers with his **hand** a tribute to Eglon, but uses his **hand** to kill the oppressor (3:15, 18, 21). He then led Israel in battle against the enemy, saying, “Follow *me*, for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your **hand**.” Yahweh’s hand controls Israel and the nations. He now gives His enemies into the hand of Israel.

5) **Restoration/Recreation 3:16-30**

Ehud’s deliverance – Rest for 80 years – two generations

Ehud uses a double-edged sword. Hebrews 4:12 says,

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Notice the turning from the idol worship (stone images) in vv. 19 and 26. Ehud comes in judgment against Eglon for his tyranny and leading the people into idolatry, slaying the fat idol-king Eglon, who had grown fat by feasting on Israel (vv. 20-22). By killing Eglon, Ehud is able to lead the children of Israel into victory. There is a triple witness of the Lord’s total victory in v. 29: 1) 10,000 Moabites killed 2) all stout men of valor 3) not a man escaped. V. 30, Moab was brought under the **hand** of Israel, and rested for 80 years – 2 generations.

Lessons: Zeal for the honor of the Lord. Courage to do God’s work - take the two edged sword of the Word of God to yourself, to your brothers and sisters, to the world

III. **Shamgar 3:31**

³¹After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

Shamgar was probably someone that was converted to faith in Yahweh. We do not know much about him other than his great deliverance of Israel from the Philistines here in v. 31. He killed 600 Philistines miraculously with a large pointed stick used to poke an ox to make it do what you wanted. Deborah sang of his deliverance in Judges 5:6, 8.

God used these men not only to deliver the people from their enemies, but also to be examples to us. We should seek to be like them in the way that they bravely fought the enemies of God and His people. They were righteous men that led the people into righteousness. These stories teach us that God is a loving and merciful Father who not only judges His people when they sin, but restores us more abundantly as we return to Him and obey Him.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 4-5. Observe how being a woman makes Deborah an *Unlikely Judge*. See how a woman crushes the head of the enemy.

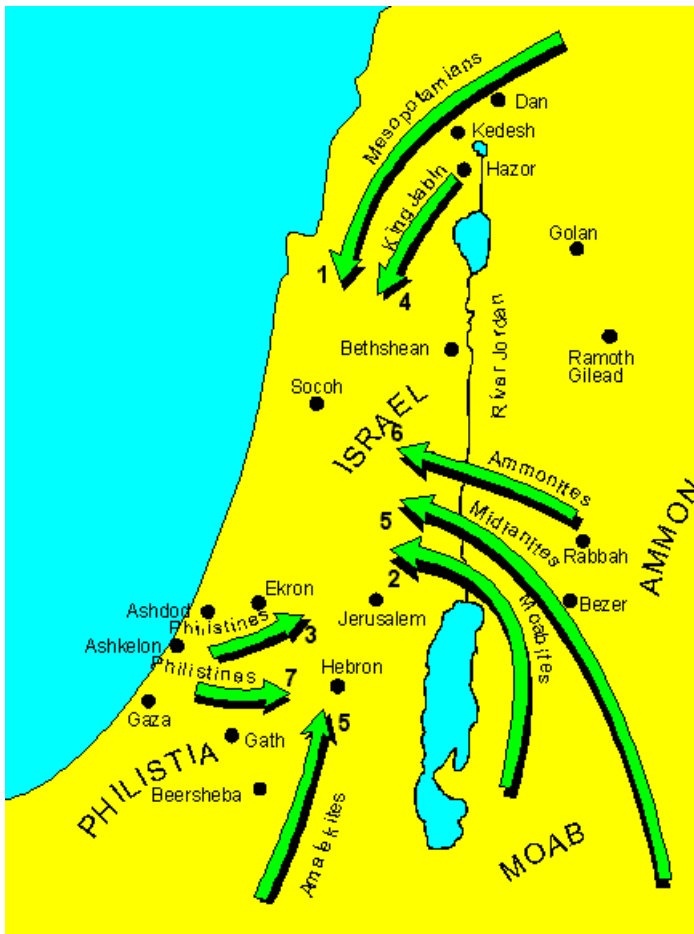
Week Four –Exemplary Judges

Judges 3:7-31

I. Othniel 3:7-11

II. Ehud 3:12-30

III. Shamgar 3:31



Israel's incomplete conquest and the worship of foreign gods caused great problems in the time of the judges. The Israelites came under the rule of one country after another. However several of the judges defeated the enemy armies and liberated Israel.

- 1 **Othniel** defeats King Cushan Rishathaim of Mesopotamia, who had ruled Israel for 8 years (Judges 3:7-11).
- 2 **Ehud** defeats King Eglon of Moab who had ruled for 18 years (Judges 3:12-30).
- 3 **Shamgar** defeats the Philistines (Judges 3:31).
- 4 **Deborah and Barak** defeat Jabin of Hazor, who had ruled Israel 'with cruelty and violence for 20 years' (Judges 4-5).
- 5 **Gideon** drives out the Midianites and Amalekites who had oppressed Israel for 7 years (Judges 6-8, 9).
- 6 **Jephthah** defeats the Ammonites, who had ruled for 18 years (Judges 10:6-12:15).
- 7 **Samson** did great exploits against the Philistines, who ruled Israel for 40 Years (Judges 13-16).

Homework assignment: Read Judges 4-5. Observe how being a woman makes Deborah an *Unlikely Judge*. See how a woman crushes the head of the enemy.

Week Five – First Unlikely Judge: Deborah Judges 4-5

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

We have looked at the two introductions, and the two good judges. What did the two introductions teach us? [Israel began well, but with the generation after Joshua, the people had forgotten Yahweh and did not teach their children. They made covenants with the people of the land, and did not tear down their places of worship. They became idolaters. The Covenant Cycle.]

Who were the two Exemplary/Good judges? [Othniel and Ehud.]

Today we will begin to look at the two unlikely judges: Deborah (a woman), and next week, Gideon (a young man). In the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:32-34 speaks of the faith of some of the judges:

³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of **Gideon** and **Barak** and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

The reference to Barak is the whole story of Deborah, Barak and Jael and how God destroyed the enemies of Yahweh through them. This is a faith story.

[Teacher: Give students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

I. Deborah – The First Unlikely Judge

Find the covenant cycle in Judges 4

1) Creation/Blessing 3:30

The land had rest for 80 years (recall the Sabbath rest on the 7th day of creation – “rest” means that a recreation has taken place).

2) Fall/Sin 4:1

“...the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.” What sort of evil did they do? [Remind of: 2:1-5; 12-13, 17, 19, 3:6. They made covenants with the people of the land, did not tear down false places of worship, forsook Yahweh and worshipped false gods.]

3) Judgment/Exile/Slavery 4:2-3

Jabin king of Canaan (Hazor – look in the north, the land of Naphtali), and Sisera (“battle array”) was the commander of his army, the right-hand man of Jabin. In Joshua 11 we saw that Joshua had led Israel in victory over an earlier Jabin in Hazor. The Canaanites, who had been defeated once, now rule Israel. The name Jabin means, “whom God observes,” and was a title for rulers at that time, like Pharaoh in Egypt. In Joshua 11 we saw that Israel hamstringed the horses and burned their chariots with fire. Apparently, they had recovered their military strength, for they had 900 chariots (cf. 1:19). Jabin oppressed Israel for **20 years**

4) Repentance/Forgiveness 4:3

“And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord...” Why did they cry out? (see the rest of v. 3).

5) Restoration/Recreation 4:4-5:31a

v. 4 – Deborah = “bee, industrious” - a prophetess in Israel. In v. 5 we see that she sits under a palm tree (trees often a picture a connection between heaven and earth), in the mountains (mountains often a picture of a connection heaven and earth, where God meeting with His people). Deborah is a prophetess and judge that people come to for guidance from Yahweh. She is a mother to the children of Israel. She does not lead the people as a father (Levite-Priest), but as a mother.

Something interesting to keep in mind is Gen. 3:15:

And I will put enmity between you [serpent-Devil] and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And
you shall bruise His heel.”

What makes this verse important is that Satan not only attacks the seed throughout scripture, but also he attacks the woman. Deborah is a mother of Israel that raises a godly seed (Judges 5:7, 28), as opposed to the mother of Sisera that raises a wicked seed. It is now time for the seed of the woman (Deborah’s Barak) to crush the head of the serpent (Sisera).

In v.6 God commanded, through Deborah, that Barak deploy troops at Mt. Tabor. Barak means, “Lightning, or lightning flash.” Barak is a Levite, and should lead the men into holy war for Yahweh. Mt. Tabor is in the area near the border of Issachar, Naphtali, and Zebulun. Ten thousand from Naphtali and Zebulun are to go with Barak (near-by tribes) to meet Sisera at the Kishon River. (Later in 1 Kings 18, Elijah has the prophets of Baal executed at the Brook Kishon). It is interesting that v. 7 says that Yahweh will send Sisera against Israel to be delivered into their hands.

In v. 8, Barak refuses to go out to fight unless Deborah goes with him. It would not be wrong for Barak to ask Deborah to come, since she is the Spirit empowered prophetess/judges that spoke for Yahweh. The problem was that he did not trust the **WORD** of the Lord. He wanted the word-giver. He should have trusted the Lord, not Deborah. In v.9, Deborah responded to Barak's lack of faith in Yahweh by saying, "...there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." It does not say who the woman is at this time. But we will see that it is the wife of a traitor. God uses both the traitor and his wife to do His will. Often times we do not know what God is doing in our lives, but if we trust Him, He will bless us.

Vv. 11-13 tell us that Heber (which means "companion or comrade," and obviously Heber is not a good comrade to Israel) the Kenite was not faithful to the covenant like the rest of his extended family. He was a descendent of Jethro (Father in Law to Moses), who were God fearing Gentiles. Heber betrayed Israel as a spy for Sisera. As a result, Sisera gathered his army. Remember though, it is Yahweh who deploys Sisera against Israel (v. 7), and so it is Yahweh who is using the unfaithful Heber for His purposes.

In vv.14-15 we see the **TURNING POINT** of the story: Deborah said to Barak, "UP! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand." How does she know? [she is a Spirit empowered leader.] V. 15 says that it was Yahweh Himself that won the victory, using Barak and the 10, 000 men. It is a complete victory (v. 16). [In the next chapter, in the Song of Deborah, we learn from her that Yahweh brought a rainstorm that helped to win the battle. This is much like the Exodus when Yahweh saved Israel by killing the Egyptians in the Red Sea.]

In vv. 17-22 we see the completion of the victory of the Lord. The only one to escape the battle was Sisera, who fled on foot, abandoning his source of trust, his chariots. Where did he go in v. 17? [The tent of Jael, the wife of the traitor Heber.] This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Deborah to Barak that the glory of the battle would go to a woman. Jael means, "mountain goat," and Israel had come out of the mountains to fight against Sisera. She invites him in (bids him strongly) and tells him not to fear (probably believable because she is Heber's wife). She covered him with her mantle (a blanket). Sisera asks for water, Jael gave him milk, which probably made him relax, and he fell asleep in tent. She drove a tent peg through his temple – **JUDGMENT**. Was Jael right to do this?

[see 5:24] In v. 22, Barak arrived – the prophecy was fulfilled. The woman, protecting the seed, Israel, wounded the head of the serpent.

II. The Song of Deborah 5:1-31

[It may be best to just have the students read the text, only commenting briefly.]

Song of Deborah – a musical interlude for the hearers of this account (written by Deborah, v. 7). It is a song of praise to Yahweh for His victory over His enemies, and His love for His People.

v. 1-3 – Praise to the Lord, and a command to the rulers of the earth to give head to the great work that God has done. Reminds of Psalm 2

v. 4-5 – Compares to the coming of the Law at Sinai – (thunder and lightning there too).

v. 6-8 – In the days of the oppression by Jabin – There was no trade, no travel, no village life, and no ability of the army of Israel to go to war. But God raised up Deborah, a mother in Israel to help the people.

V.8 - THEY CHOSE NEW GODS – Idolatry

v. 9-11 – The song calls upon the wealthy and the judges and all the people to praise the Lord.

v. 12-18 – Tribes who participated – Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, Reuben, Naphtali.

V.13 – Note, Deborah says that it was the Lord who came down from the mountains (though it was the actually tribes who came down).

Vv. 19-22 – The battle – Note that it was heaven that fought against Sisera.

v. 23 – Curse upon Meroz – same as the rebuke of Barak – for inaction, unwillingness to fight **for the Lord.**

v. 24-27 – Praise of Jael

v. 28-30 – No one came back to report on the battle – not a man lest standing – Total victory of the Lord. - Mother of Sisera thinks he is taking the spoil

Creation/Blessing – 5:31b – “So the land had rest for **forty years”**

Lesson to student

- Be a man – Be willing to do your duty – don’t slough your responsibilities.
- Be willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ.
- Make God’s enemies your enemies – like Jael.
- As you girls grow to be women, be a mother that teaches her children the ways of the Lord.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 6-8. Observe how being a young man is hard for Gideon. This makes him an *Unlikely Judge*.

Week Six – Second Unlikely Judge: Gideon

Judges 6-8

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

In the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:32-34 speaks of the faith of some of the judges:

³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of **Gideon** and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

[Teacher: Give students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

- 1) **Creation/Blessing** – Judges 5:31b – “So the land had rest for forty years”
- Emphasize again the relative time differences between oppression and blessing...

<i>Oppressor</i>	<i>Years of Oppression</i>	<i>Deliverer</i>	<i>Years of Rest</i>
Mesopotamians – Cushan-Rishathaim	Eight	Othniel	Forty
Moab, Ammon, Amalek – Eglon	Eighteen	Ehud	Eighty
Philistines	Not given	Shamgar	Not given
Canaanites – Jabin and Sisera	Twenty	Deborah, Barak	Forty

- 2) **Fall/Sin** – Judges 6:1a – “Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Notice, it is “...in the sight of the Lord” – **We cannot hide our sin from God.**

- 3) **Judgment/Exile/Slavery** – Judges 6:1b-6a “So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years.” Read 6:1b-6a This is an oppression of famine – the famine of Ruth?? Notice – It is the Lord who delivers them into the hand of the Midianites, not the strength of the Midianites that is responsible for them being able to defeat Israel. Also the Amalekites and the people of the East (Mesopotamians??)

- 4) **Repentance/Forgiveness** – Judges 6:6b-10- “...and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord” A prophet is sent – first mention of this. The words are similar to those at Bochim - 2:1-5. The Lord appeals to Israel on the basis of His previous mercy and goodness to them, and calls them to thankful obedience.

Yahweh formally accuses them of disobedience to His voice – He is a God who speaks to His people.

5) **Restoration/Re-Creation** – Judges 6:11-8:28

I. Gideon, the unlikely Judge

In v.11 the Angel of the Lord = Yahweh/Jesus came to Gideon, and sat under a terebinth tree (a place of meeting between God and men, where the oracles of God are given). Ophrah – Town in Manasseh, perhaps west of Mt. Gerizim. Gideon means “hewer, chopper.”

Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress [explain threshing and wine presses]. Why? Where would you usually thresh wheat? [In the open so the wind can separate the grain from the chaff/waste. Vv. 3-6 says that the Midianites and Amalekites came and destroyed their crops, causing famine and hardship. Israel was hiding their crops from the enemy.]

In v. 12 – Gideon is called a mighty man of valor...You are what God calls you, not what you say that you are! In v.13 - Gideon lamented over God’s failure to deliver Israel [What about acknowledging sin?] He also failed to realize that God uses people to deliver...namely, him! In v.14, Yahweh says, “You are the deliverer!” In v.15, Gideon denies this, saying that his clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and he is the youngest in his family [This is similar to Moses’ not wanting to go to Pharaoh, and also to Saul later see 1 Samuel 9:21.] In v.16, The Lord says, “I will be with you.” This is all Gideon needs! The presence of the Lord is what ensures the victory (Josh. 5:13-15).

In Vv. 17-24, **Gideon asks for a sign**: the acceptance of an offering from his hand. The Lord consumed the offering, then disappears, but still speaks words of kindness to Gideon. Gideon built an altar - “Yahweh Shalom” - The Lord is Peace. The principle: Worship before work...worship that leads to work [as in our Lord’s Day worship every week!]

In vv. 25-32 we see the beginning of Gideon’s work as a judge of Israel: the destruction of the idols (which will lead to the destruction of the idol worshippers). Gideon’s father, Joash, is a caretaker of idols for idol worship. The altar to Baal was torn down, and the Asherah pole torn down (Canaanite goddess). An altar to Yahweh was erected in their place. In vv. 28-32 we see that this godly action by

Gideon angered the people of the town. Jaosh defends Gideon and says, “Let Baal defend himself.” Gideon is called Jerubbaal = “Let Baal plead.”

Turn to 6:33-35 - The armies of the enemies of God gather for war. Remember what the judges were? [Spirit empowered deliverers.] Spirit of the Lord is upon Gideon (v. 34). His own clan joins him first followed by his tribe (Manasseh), Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali

Again we see young Gideon asking Yahweh for a sign (6:36-40). Twice he uses a fleece (skin of a goat) to see from the Lord if He will save Israel by Gideon’s hand. In times when we feel fearful or confused, it is good to ask the Lord in prayer to make things more clear to us and give us the faith to trust in Him.

Read 7:1-8. The battle is the Lord’s. Gideon will win, not because he is a great commander or a mighty army. Rather, Yahweh will win the victory with only 300 men. “The people who are with you are too many.” WHY? [v. 2, “...lest Israel claim glory for itself against me saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’] How does God shrink down Gideon’s army? 1) Whoever is afraid may go home - 32,000 → 10,000 (2 out of three go home) [See Deut 20:8]. Only one person who was afraid remained...who was it? Gideon!! [See v.10-11]. 2) How they drink water - 10,000 → 300 (scoop in hands like a dog “scoops” with his tongue - may indicate those who were more watchful and alert, instead of throwing caution to the wind and dropping down on all fours to drink from the stream?).

In 7:9-15 we see Gideon’s third sign. God promises to deliver the Midianites into Gideon’s hand, but offers (without Gideon asking) to give Gideon a sign that He will keep His promise. Yahweh sent Gideon, along with his servant Purah to the Midianite’s camp. V.12 says that the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all of the people of the East were “lying in the valley as numerous as locusts. Just as God judged Egypt with the plague of locusts in Exodus, so now Yahweh is judging Israel with a plague of human locusts. Would this make you less afraid? In vv. 13-14, they overhear the dream of Midianite soldier. In v.15 we see Gideon’s response – WORSHIP! He repeats God’s words back to the Israelites (compare with v. 9).

7:16-25 - The battle is the Lord’s

In vv.16-22 we see the battle strategy: Divide (v. 16-20), and instill fear and self-destruction (v. 21-22). The battle is the Lord’s (cf. with v. 2). Vv. 23-24, Gideon called upon Ephraim to help and they captured two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb.

II. The Compromise of Gideon

Turn now to Judges 8. Here we see that Gideon has trouble, not with the Midianites, but with his fellow Israelites. In vv. 1-3, the men of Ephraim accused Gideon of not calling them soon enough to get into the battle. But he wisely speaks with them, causing their anger to go away. A soft anger turns away anger.

In v. 4 we see that Gideon still has 300 men! What does this say about the battle? It is the Lord's! His men are very tired as they crossed the Jordan eastward in hot pursuit of the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna. He wanted some food from the men of Succoth and Penuel, but they refused (in fear). Gideon told these men he would return after the victory to judge them, which he did (vv. 5-9; cf. 13-17).

In vv. 10-12 and vv. 18-21 we see the destruction of the Midianite army, which began with 135,000 → and now only 15,000. In v. 11 – Gideon now attacks when the Midianites felt **secure** (not fearful). Vv. 18-21 we see the death of Zebah and Zalmunna – because they had killed Gideon's brothers. Gideon instructs his firstborn son Jether (“abundance”) to kill Z. and Z. (Why? - for humiliation?), but he refused to do it. Z. and Z. want Gideon to do it himself – he does.

In the final section, vv. 22-35, we see that **the great man of faith Gideon**, who destroyed the false gods of Baal and Asherah, **became a man that led the people into idolatry**. It may not have been his intention to do so, but it happened. In vv. 22-23, The Israelites seek to make Gideon king, and to establish a dynasty. Gideon responded correctly by saying, “The Lord shall rule over you.” May have been a sincere refusal, or a couched acceptance? Abimelech, one of Gideon's sons, means “my father, a king.” While we don't know what was going on, we do know he began to act like a king in some ways, see v. 24-26 (cf. Deut. 17:14-20). Gideon requested gold earrings. They gave them up and more besides! (40-75 lbs. of gold). The saddest part of this story is in v. 27, “Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.” Gideon makes a gold ephod. While we do not know exactly what this was, it could have been an idol used to discern the will of God? It was probably something made to be like the ephod worn by the high priest and used to consult with God (Ex. 28:6-12). Instead of remaining faithful to perform worship and follow God's commandments regarding the tabernacle and priesthood, all Israel played the harlot with the ephod. A harlot is a woman that takes money to sleep with a man not her husband. Israel

(Yahweh's Bride) used the ephod to have a relationship with other gods, to worship them. V. 28 tells us that the Midianites were subdued, never to be heard from again as an oppressor of Israel.

The story of Gideon concludes sadly in vv. 29-35: Gideon (Jerubbaal) goes to his own house, has 70 sons by his many wives, and 1 son (Abimelech, meaning, "my father a king") by a concubine in another town (Shechem). Gideon died – Israel plays the harlot with the Baals (remember the ephod). Israel made Baal-Berith (which literally means, "lord of the covenant") their god. They totally rejected Yahweh, the true covenant Lord. What an amazing turn around. The story of Gideon started so well, but has ended so poorly.

Vv.34-35, Israel was neither thankful to God, nor to Gideon.

The lessons that we learn from this story are many.

- 1) God uses unlikely people to serve Him. It may be a woman or a very young man. God can use three hundred to conquer thousands. He may want to use you to do great things for His kingdom. Are you willing?
- 2) The Lord often calls upon us to be brave in this world against people and forces that seem much more powerful than us. But if He has commanded us to do something He will give us the ability to do it. We must trust Him not ourselves. We must be willing to not just live for Yahweh, but must also confront and defeat the enemies of God.
- 3) We do God's work God's way. Gideon may have thought that making the ephod was serving God, but it turned out to be something that led the people away from the Lord. We must be careful to do just what the Lord says, not just what seems right to us.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 9. Notice the fact that the people are so willing to have a wicked man be king over them, just like the kings around them.

Week Six – Second Unlikely Judge: Gideon
Judges 6-8

Hebrews 11:32-34

<i>Oppressor</i>	<i>Years of Oppression</i>	<i>Deliverer</i>	<i>Years of Rest</i>
Mesopotamians – Cushan-Rishathaim	Eight	Othniel	Forty
Moab, Ammon, Amalek – Eglon	Eighteen	Ehud	Eighty
Philistines	Not given	Shamgar	Not given
Canaanites – Jabin and Sisera	Twenty	Deborah, Barak	Forty

I. Gideon, the unlikely Judge Judges 6-7

II. The Compromise of Gideon Judges 8

Homework assignment: Read Judges 9. Notice the fact that the people are so willing to have a wicked man be king over them, just like the kings around them.

Week Seven – Abimelech: The King who was not a king
Judges 9

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

a. Othniel

b. Ehud

c. Deborah and Barak

d. **TURNING POINT: Gideon (6:1-8:32)**

c. Abimelech

b. Jephthah

a. Samson

Judges is a transition book between Joshua and 1 Samuel. It was written by Samuel to prepare Israel for a King, or to show them how they got Saul, the king like the nations all around them. Deuteronomy 17:14-20:

“When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me,’¹⁵ “you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother.¹⁶ “But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’¹⁷ “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. 18 “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites.¹⁹ “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,²⁰ “that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

The king **is** to be a man: 1) whom the Lord chooses 2) who is among your brethren, who is not a foreigner. He is **not** supposed to: 1) multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, 2) multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, 3) multiply gold and silver for himself. He **is** supposed to: 1) make a copy of the law for himself, 2) read it, and 3) obey it. The three reasons given for the commands are that: 1) his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, 2) he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, 3) he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

In the lives of Gideon and Abimelech (Judges 8:22-9:57) we have 2 examples of how **not** to rule Israel. Gideon is the turning point in the book of Judges. With him (at the end of the Gideon story) we begin to see the judges compromising.

1) Gideon

He was God's chosen man (as a judge/deliverer, **but**, not to be a king). He was from among his brethren, not a foreigner. He originally rejected the dynasty, but ended up building dynasty (70 sons – set up to rule when Gideon died, see 9:2). He multiplied gold → makes an ephod. He had multiplied wives (v. 30). Set up an idol, breaking the first and second commandment.

2) Abimelech

Not God's chosen man, but self-appointed (9:2), anointed by the people (9:6). He was a usurper. He was a half foreigner?, not from among the brethren (despite what 9:3 says). He was a murderer (killed seventy (69) of Gideon's sons on one stone – not obeying the commandments).

I. The Covenant Cycle and Abimelech

1) Creation/Blessing 8:28-32

“And the country was quiet for 40 years.” Note: the text says the country was “quiet,” which is different than in the previous summaries, “So the land had rest for...” (3:11, 30; 5:31). It is almost like the writer was building suspense in the story because the reader should know that, based on the way the Gideon story ended, the quiet would only be temporary.

2) Fall/Sin 8:33-35

Read vv. 33-34. Notice the sin of ungratefulness to God the Father (Yahweh), and God the Son (Gideon – who went in the place of the Angel of the Lord – Jesus). This lack of thankfulness was manifest by a lack of remembrance of Yahweh.

3) Judgment/Exile/slavery 9:1-6

God raised up a half Canaanite to rule over Israel (Abimelech = “My Father is King”). This is a picture of what Israel should expect when she would have a king in the future. When Israel would be unfaithful during the kings, Yahweh would give them **bad kings in Israel**. During the time of the judges when Israel was unfaithful, Yahweh sold them into slavery to **foreign oppressors**. Abimelech is an oppressor from within Israel – Foreshadow of Saul and other bad kings. He is

from Shechem – place where Joseph’s brothers turned against him (the place where Rehoboam is later crowned king and the kingdom is divided).

Right away we see the evil of Abimelech. He paid 70 shekels of silver to kill Gideon’s 70 sons, his own brothers (only one brother escaped, Jotham). This money came from the temple of Baal-Berith (“lord of the covenant”) that we read about last week at the conclusion of the Gideon story. He did this to make it easy for the men of Shechem to decide to make him king. The reason this helps him is that these 70 sons of Gideon were rulers throughout Israel. He asked them, which is better to have one ruler or seventy rulers over you? So they helped him kill his brothers. What is startling about this is that Shechem is both a Levitical City, and a City of Refuge (Josh. 20:7; 21:21). The men of Shechem should have protected the sons of Gideon, because they should have been concerned with justice as a City of Refuge. They should have been well taught in the word of Yahweh because many of them were Levites. They clearly failed to do their job, and as worshippers of Baal, rejected God’s word.

In v. 6 we see that Abimelech was made Israel’s first king. This happened at the terebinth tree in Shechem. We have seen these same trees earlier in Judges. Deborah judged Israel under one (4:11) and Gideon his father met the Angel of the Lord under one (6:11,19). Once again we see this symbol of the tree being a place where earth meets heaven through Yahweh’s appointed representatives, usually in judgment. This time, Abimelech uses the symbol as a way of making himself look like God’s man.

4) Repentance/Forgiveness 9:7-21

In v. 7 – God sent a prophet to prepare them for a deliverer – the surviving son of Gideon, Jotham (which means “Yahweh is perfect/undefiled.” **Yahweh is to be their king!**) He went up to Mt. Gerizim (the mountain of covenant blessing which is near Shechem, cf. Deut. 11:29; 27:11-26; Josh. 8:30-35) and cried out with a loud voice for the nation of Israel (see previous example in 6:6 of the nation of Israel crying out to God for deliverance). Jotham prophesied judgment on the men of Shechem and Abimelech (fire), which was to be judgment for the murder of Gideon’s sons.

5) Recreation/Restoration 9:22-57

Abimelech’s reign was oppression for 3 years (9:22). In v. 23 God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. **Yahweh Himself** is the Spirit empowered ruler, the Judge of Israel that will bring deliverance, to avenge the death of Gideon’s sons. Gaal (meaning, “hatred/loathing/to abhor”)(a

Canaanite/Shechemite) declared himself ruler. Abimelech is warned about Gaal, and used similar strategy as Gideon to take Shechem. Fire comes out of Abimelech and destroys Shechem, and Thebez. A woman kills Abimelech at Thebez with a rock (similar to Jael killing Sisera), and by the sword (similar to Saul...asking for someone to run him through). In the end, a woman crushes the head of the serpent (Gen. 3).

CHARACTER:

- 1) Perseverance – Gideon did not persevere and it led Israel into idolatry/judgment and cost him his sons.
- 2) Ungratefulness – The Israelites were not grateful to the Lord, nor to Gideon for their great deliverance, and it led to idolatry and destruction.
- 3) Pride – Abimelech thought more highly of himself than he ought to have and it led to usurping the leadership of Israel, and murder.
- 4) Show great care to only have leaders over you that are godly, and be careful to follow God’s word.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 10-12. Notice how Jephthah is a compromised judge.

Week Eight – Compromised People and Jephthah Judges 10-12

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

We have seen Covenant Cycle played out over and over again. The people sin, Yahweh judges them, they repent (turn away from their sin in faith) and Yahweh graciously forgives, He raises up the judges (Spirit empowered deliverers) and restores Israel. After the story of Gideon, we have change in the way the book tells the story. We have a wicked king in Abimelech. We begin to see compromised judges. These are Jephthah and Samson. Both do well as judges, but end badly.

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)

B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

a. Othniel

b. Ehud

c. Deborah and Barak

d. TURNING POINT: Gideon

c. Abimelech

b. Jephthah

a. Samson

In the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:32-34 speaks of the faith of even Jephthah, the compromised judge. His faith early in his life is an example to us:

³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and **Jephthah**, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

I. Jephthah Judges 10-12

1) Creation/Blessing Judges 9:55

“And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.” A picture of rest...blessing

Two Transitional Judges

1. Tola means, “worm.” He judged Israel 23 years (10:1-2).

2. Jair means, “he enlightens.” He judged Israel 22 years (10:3-5). Jair attempted to set up dynasty – 30 sons on 30 donkeys (judges often rode donkeys, cf. 5:10; 12:14) in 30 towns of Jair.

2) Fall/Sin Judges 10:6

Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

We see sevenfold idolatry – worse than the nations around them. Israel forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.

3) Judgment/Exile/Slavery Judges 10:7-9

So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

Jephthah and Samson judging at the same time! The Philistines oppressed Israel in West Side of Jordan (this is covered in the account of Samson). Ammon oppressed Israel on “other side of the Jordan” (east of the Jordan where Reuben, Gad and ½ Manasseh had settled). God sells Israel into the hands of the oppressors for 18 years of oppression on the other side of the Jordan, also the Ammonites cross over the Jordan and fight against Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim

4) Repentance/Forgiveness Judges 10:10-18

¹⁰And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!”

Read vv. 11-14 – God (likely) sends another prophet –Yahweh says, in effect, “I have saved you over and over again, and you still have not loved me. I will not save you anymore.”

In vv. 15-16 – Israel demonstrates biblical repentance – **words, feelings, and deeds** - Notice the tender language of v. 16 –“And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” He loves His people and desires to bless us. As 1 John 1:9 says: ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As we see in vv. 17-18, the stage is set for the people to be delivered again. But whom will God send as His Spirit empowered deliverer?

5) **Recreation/Restoration Judges 11-12**

The story continues by telling us who it will be. Jephthah means “he opens.” He was a Gileadite (the area to the east of the Jordan from the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee). He is described as “Mighty man of valor.”

Jephthah’s father is from Gilead; Mother is a harlot. In v. 2, his brothers drive him out and deny him his part of the inheritance. Jephthah flees to Tob and bands together with worthless (poverty stricken) men and went raiding with them (v. 3), he is a gang leader. In vv. 4-11, Ammon makes war against Israel. Elders of Gilead call for Jephthah because he is good warrior and pledge to make him leader. Jephthah went to the army at Mizpeh. There “Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD.” (v. 11). He truly was a man of faith and prayer. Before he did the work God had for him, he spent time in prayer. We should be always in prayer as well.

In vv. 12-28 – Jephthah appealed to the King of Ammon to stop the war (in accordance with the Law of Moses, Deut. 20:10-18; 2:26; Num. 20:14;21:21). It was a warning. The king of the people of Ammon refused. Jephthah said in v. 27:

‘Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. **May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment** this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.’

In 11:29 we see that Jephthah is the Spirit empowered deliverer. Read vv. 30-31. He made a vow, to offer an ascension offering [not burnt offering] to the Lord, which is a dedicating of oneself to the Lord. Whoever of his household (usually women came out to meet the warriors) that comes out to meet him upon his return would become a servant at the tabernacle of the Lord (married to God instead of to a man). This was much like Hannah’s dedication of Samuel.

In vv. 32-33 Jephthah defeated the Ammonites in a very great slaughter. As a godly man, we see in vv. 34-40 that Jephthah fulfilled his vow [READ THIS.] It was his daughter that came out to meet him – his only child. Jephthah wept

because he would have no chance for his family line to continue. As a godly daughter, she willingly submitted to the vow. She was never able to marry but served Yahweh at the Tabernacle. V. 39-40 says that her godly submission was remembered four days each year as a custom among the daughters of Israel. [On keeping vows, see Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:4; Prov. 20:25.]

In Judges 12:1-7 we see that Jephthah dealt also with a problem with the tribe of Ephraim. This is the same tribe that similarly accused Gideon (8:1).

¹Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!”

Jephthah tried to reason with them as Gideon had done, and as Jephthah had done with the Ammonites (11:12-27), but they preferred to fight. Jephthah fought and defeated 42,000 of them. Note the curious way Jephthah was able to determine who the Ephraimites were. He made them say “Shibboleth” (lit. “speak so”), which the people of Ephraim could not say because of their accent.

Clearly, Jephthah was a good and godly ruler (his only problem was that he made a vow rashly that he regretted). He judged Israel for only 6 years.

Three Transitional Judges

- 1) **Ibzan** from Bethlehem (meaning “house of bread”). He judged Israel 7 years, and had 30 daughters and 30 sons (12:8-9).
- 2) **Elon** means, “mighty, terebinth” like the tree we have seen so much associated with the judges. He judged Israel 10 years (12:11-12).
- 3) **Abdon** He judged Israel 8 years, and he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on donkeys (12:13-15).

Increasingly, we see a movement to have a central ruler or king, with a dynasty. With Gideon the people wanted to make him ruler, which he sort of did. Abimelech was made king. Certainly a dynasty was the request of Jephthah. With the minor judges we see Jair, Ibzan and Abdon who all had many children that were probably rulers also. This was a problem only because it generally meant for Israel a rejection of Yahweh as King and Judge. Human rulers must be men faithful to the covenant, not just a part of a dynasty.

Character Lessons:

- 1) We should be like Jephthah who sought to avoid war and fighting. We are to be peacemakers whenever we are able. That does not mean that we can tolerate sinfulness in people around us. But we should be anxious to find a way to be at peace with our brothers in the Lord as we live for Him in this world.
- 2) We should be careful to make only godly vows or promises to the Lord. We should only make vows that we will not regret later, and that honor the Lord. Making a vow or promise to the Lord is a good and necessary part of the Christian life (e.g. in court or in marriage), and we should always keep our word.
- 3) We should remember that the Lord is our true King, and all other men who are rulers should submit to His authority. If we turn to men for help (in the way we should do to God), we are sinfully trusting men and not putting our faith in God.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 13-14. Notice the special way Samson was to live. How did the Spirit of Yahweh come upon Samson?

Week Nine – Samson The Nazarite Judges 13-14

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Review outline and how the Covenant Cycle helps us to understand the book of Judges.

Today we come to the final judge of the book, Samson. In our outline, he is a compromised judge. He started out very well, and clearly the Lord is with him. But toward the end of the story the Lord left him because of his sin. In faith, he called out to Yahweh at the end and the Lord returns to use him one last time. There are many lessons to be learned from the life of this man of faith.

In the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:32-34 speaks of the faith of some of the judges:

³²And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and **Samson** and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

1) **Creation/Blessing** – not specifically mentioned, but assumed after the days of Abimelech. - Remember – The times of Samson are most likely the same as the times of Jephthah (and of Samuel, for that matter).

2) **Fall/Sin** Judges 13:1a “Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD...”- see Judges 10:6

Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, **and the gods of the Philistines**; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

3) **Judgment/Exile/Slavery** – Judges 13:1b

“...and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.” cf. Judges 10:7

So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and **He sold them into the hands of the Philistines** and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

4) **Repentance/Forgiveness** – none cited.

5) **Regeneration/Recreation** Judges 13:2-16:31

I. Samson the Nazirite Judges 13

V. 2 - Manoah = “rest”; similar to Noah. He was of the tribe of Dan [point out on map.] His wife was barren - Manoah and his wife could have no children [Other such women include Sarah, Rachel, Hannah – God brings life from death (barren wombs) in all of these cases, the child they bear is a significant person in the Bible.]

In v. 3 - Angel of the Lord appears to his wife. Who is this? [Jesus] Jesus tells her...1) She will have a son, 2) He is to be a Nazirite. Read Numbers 6:1-8. A Nazirite was someone that separated himself to the Lord [Leithart - The word nazir means separation, and in particular the nazir was separated to a particular task. Often this task involved the going to war for Yahweh – holy war. Thus, the Nazirite was a temporary priest consecrated to carry on holy war.] The rules concerning the Nazirite are:

1) No grapevine products – grapes, raisins, grape juice, wine [No Sabbath rest, because wine is a sign of rest and godly rulership – Leithart – The Nazirite's abstinence from alcohol should also be seen in this context. Wine has a sabbatical-eschatological character; the Nazirite was forbidden to drink wine, to rest from his labors and to enjoy their fruits, until his task was complete, until the holy war was won.]

2) No haircuts [Leithart - The Nazirite's uncut hair points to his special consecration to the Lord (Num. 6:5)]. In the Bible, long hair is sometimes a symbol of glory, like the glory cloud of God.

3) No going near a dead body – even a close relatives – no uncleanness of death (sin); He is to be separated (holy) to the Lord.

v. 5 - What holy war is Samson to wage? [The war against the Philistines – See Judges 13:5.]

v. 4 - Why is his **mother** not to drink wine or eat anything unclean? – What she eats is what Samson would “eat” in the womb. Samson is to be a Nazirite **even in the womb!**

Vv. 6-7 - Wife tells Manoah. v. 8 - Manoah prays to the Lord for a second appearance that he might learn how they are to raise the boy to fulfill God’s plan for him. Vv. 9-10 - Jesus comes again to the woman and she tells Manoah. Vv. 11-14 – Manoah speaks to Jesus. Vv. 15-23 Manoah wants Jesus to stay and eat with them. Jesus refuses, but suggests an Ascension Offering instead – a picture of

Samson's consecration to the Lord as a Nazirite, and perhaps Manoah and his wife's consecration to raise him as such. [Similar to Gideon's encounter with the Angel of the Lord, 6:11ff.] **We are to be wholly consecrated unto the Lord** – (See Romans 12:1). Manoah asked Jesus His name, but The Lord refused, saying his name is Wonderful. He is the One who will do wonders through Samson. Jesus ascended in the smoke of the Ascension Offering. Manoah and realizes that they have seen God, and is sure they will both be killed. In v.23 - Manoah's wife in faith reassured him. V. 24 – Birth of Samson = “like the sun.” Jesus, the greater Samson, is called the Sun of Righteousness – Mal 4:2

II. Samson Against the Philistines Judges 14

Samson goes to Timnah – in Dan [see Map]. Samson pursues a Philistine woman and wants her as a wife – Should he have done this? Under normal circumstances, believers are not to marry unbelievers. Manoah and his wife try and discourage him from this pursuit. It may have been that this woman was a believer in Yahweh. Clearly, in v.4 we see that “...it was of the Lord,” because He would use it to strike against the Philistines. [Note: Don't let this be to you a license to sin! If you are a Christian, you must seek a godly husband or wife. While we do not know if Samson sinned by taking a Philistine wife, we can praise God that he can even use our sin to His glory!

Vv.5-9 – Samson went to the **vineyards** of Timnah (wine is a picture of rest and blessing, something Samson is to stay away from due to his Nazirite vow. The text doesn't say he ate or drank any grapevine products). In v. 6 we see the first indicator that Samson is a judge in Israel: “The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.” To his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. He tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat – How could he do this? [In the strength of the Holy Spirit.] It is important to see that he did not tell anyone about this, because later he used this to kill the enemy. 1 Peter 5 tells us that Satan is a roaring lion seeking to devour the people of God. The lion may represent Satan in the form of the Philistines seeking to destroy Israel, which Samson will destroy.

In v. 7 – Samson went down and talked to the woman and she pleased him well. In vv. 8-9, Samson saw the lion carcass and saw a swarm of bees and honey in it – reached in and took some – Is this OK? [Nazirites are not to touch dead bodies, although the text does say he did. He may have used a stick or something.] He ate some of it and gave some to his parents.

In vv. 10-20 we see the Wedding feast, which means trouble for the Philistines. It was like a party for the groom, with 30 “friends” for the bridegroom. Samson

plays a game with them: Read vv. 12 –14. If they solve the riddle in seven days, he will give them gifts of clothing, but if not, they will have to give him clothing. In vv. 15-17 we see these “Friends” threaten Samson’s bride: They **are willing to murder for clothes!**

This begins to show us how the women in Samson’s life betrayed him. She pestered Samson and he tells her the riddle. [Next week we will see that Delilah uses the same means to betray Samson.] In vv. 18-19 Samson begins to “move against the Philistines.” The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he killed 30 Philistines of Ashkelon and takes their clothing and gives it to the “friends.” The Lord, the just Judge, is giving the Philistines back what they wanted to do to Samson’s wife and family. In anger Samson goes back up to his father’s house. The father of his bride thought Samson had rejected his daughter, so he gave her to one of his companions as a wife (14:20-15:3). God prevented the wedding and used this whole event to begin to judge the Philistines.

In vv. 3-8, Samson went out and caught 300 foxes (a miracle) and set fire to the standing grain of the Philistines by tying torches to the tail of pairs of the foxes. Yahweh used the beasts of the field to aid Samson in the defeat of the Philistines. Philistines respond by murdering the woman and her father. Samson reacts to this by attacking them “hip and thigh” (with all of his strength? Including hand to hand wrestling and grappling?) and there was a great slaughter. After this, Samson went down to Judah, and lived in the cleft of the rock (or cave) at Etam which is a secure or safe place in the Lord [in the hill country of Judah, SSW of Jerusalem, point out on map].

The men of Judah just wanted to get along with the Philistines (vv. 9-19). They should have been fighting against them, instead they were happy to have the enemy rule over them. When the Philistines came up against Judah to arrest Samson for what he had done, the men of Judah negotiated with the Philistines to betray Samson. 3,000 men of Judah went up against Samson, and said, in effect, we would rather have the Philistines rule us than having you cause us trouble (the trouble Yahweh wanted them to cause the Philistines). So the men of Judah bound Samson, and gave him to the Philistines. Once again, we see the Lord working through Samson as a Spirit empowered deliverer (despite the lack of desire on Judah’s part to be delivered). Samson, with Spiritual strength, broke the ropes that bound him and killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. When he was finished with this slaughter, he was tired and thirsty. God miraculously provided water out of a rock, and he was refreshed. V. 20 says “he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.” He was a good judge, and was

mightily used by God to cause trouble for the Philistines. We must not be like the men of Judah, being content with sin and the rule of wicked men and the Devil in our world. We should be like Samson, and work to see God's kingdom established on the earth. May God make us all men and women of faith like Samson.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 15-16. Notice the fall of Samson into sin.

Week Ten – Samson The Compromised Judges 15-16

- ❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism
- ❖ Review

I. Two Introductions:

- A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)
- B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

- A. Othniel (3:7-11)
- B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

- A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)
- B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

- A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)
- B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

- A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)
- B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

- a. Othniel
- b. Ehud
- c. Deborah and Barak
- d. TURNING POINT: Gideon
- c. Abimelech
- b. Jephthah
- a. Samson

Review covenant cycle:

Throughout the book of Judges Israel is said to play the harlot with the gods around them (2:17; 8:27, 33). Israel, the people of God, was the wife of Yahweh. But she was not a faithful wife. To be a harlot is a woman that takes money to sleep with a man. What this means is that Israel turned to other gods to have a relationship with them that they should only have with their Husband, Yahweh. They should have been faithful to Yahweh and worshipped Him only. These other false husbands raised the jealousy of Yahweh, and He came against His bride in judgment, but then raised up the judges to not only restore His bride, but also to destroy the enemies of His people.

Throughout the book of Judges, we see God saving His people by great wonders through His Spirit empowered deliverers. This is especially the case with Samson.

Last week we saw that Samson took a Philistine wife (although we know that the sons of God were not to take the daughters of men, it was of the Lord, 14:4). God used this bad marriage to defeat many of the Philistines.

15:20, Samson judged Israel for 20 years. As Samson faithfully lead Israel, it went well for them. Now, in Ch. 16, we come to the sad end of Samson's life. Like Israel in general, he went after a Philistine harlot, with the result being disaster and destruction. Samson as the anointed judge is a picture of Israel as a whole. His failures are their failures.

Turn to Judges 16. Here we see Samson going to Gaza, a major Philistine city. This is a city that should be filled with Israelites. Joshua conquered it (Josh. 10:41) but they lost it (13:3). It was given to the tribe of Judah (15:47), and recaptured it (Judges. 1:18). Now it is clearly a Philistine town.

Samson went to Gaza to be with a harlot. The men of the city found out that he was there and wanted to kill him (v. 2). It seems that Samson knew of this, and he miraculously took hold of the gates of the city and tore them out and carried them to the top of a hill. The city was laid wide open. God used Samson to show the Philistines that their days were numbered. Sadly, Samson was not interested in destroying Gaza, but only played with it. Unlike our Savior, Jesus, who destroyed the gates of hell, leaving the kingdoms of Satan wide open for conquest by the Church (Matt. 16:18).

Samson and Delilah

“After this,” Samson loved a woman named Delilah (v. 4). We do not know if she was a Philistine or Israelite. But if she was an Israelite, she was a Philistine at heart. She became associated with the Philistines, and aided them. She was bribed (paid by the 5 Philistine rulers, like a harlot) with a great deal of money (v. 5). They want her to entice Samson to tell her what the secret to his strength was, enabling them to overpower, bind and afflict him. They thought his power was magic. But it was Yahweh working through him (Being a Nazarite was not magic, but being set aside unto God's service). Three times she tried and failed find out Samson's secret. Each time she had men hidden in another room, but they never showed themselves. She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson,” but they remained hidden. After all, if Samson had seen them, he would have known she was betraying him. She kept him thinking it was a game. Her continual pressure eventually wore him down. Just like his wife had worn him down with nagging, so too, Delilah wore him down. [Girls, God will give you a husband some day. You are to be his helper – do not nag your husband, but help him to be and do all that the Lord calls him to do and be.]

V. 17, Samson said “my strength will leave me,” meaning the Holy Spirit. He knew it was not magic, but the work of God. God gives strength to those who are dedicated to Him and to the work He gives us. Samson was already in sin, and God was about to pull away His Strength from him. V. 19, we see Samson sinfully “sleeping” with Delilah. He gave away his strength by sinning with Delilah, and then telling her his secret. He preferred his sin with a harlot-like woman to faithfulness to God. Love and desire for the woman blinded him. Thus, when the Philistines captured Samson, they blinded him and made him a slave grinding in prison (v. 21), which is much like Israel, blinded by idolatry and enslaved.

V. 22, yet, his hair began to grow again – the story is not over. He was humiliated by having his head shaved, which was a symbol of his humiliation in sin. As his hair grew back, he began to repent and turn to the Lord. Yahweh gave him back his strength, i.e. the Holy Spirit. This is a picture of Israel. If they will humble themselves and repent of their harlotry with the gods of the land, God will remove their slavery and build them back to a position of strength.

Vv. 23-24, the Philistines provoked the Lord. “Our god has delivered Samson...” It was God who delivered Samson into their hands. Not only so, Dagon was not a god at all. It was a war of the God/gods. It is possible that Israel thought that Dagon was stronger than Yahweh. But Yahweh would show them and the Philistines the truth – Yahweh is the God who alone should be worshipped.

At a time of rejoicing and pagan worship, the Philistine brought Samson out to amuse them. V. 27, 3000 people were at the temple of Dagon for the celebration. V. 28 says, Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!”

³⁰Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

Yahweh used Samson to crush the heads of the Philistines – including Dagon. Samson was a messiah for Israel. Just as Jesus the Messiah would have to die to save His people and crush the head of the serpent, so Samson was a picture or Jesus. Samson, at his death, killed more of the enemies of God than during his life as a judge of Israel.

Character lessons (from James Jordan):

- 1) Even the strongest man will fall if he goes after the evil of unbelieving nations.
- 2) Involvement with the unbelieving culture will destroy their lives, blinding them and rendering them unable to accomplish God's will.
- 3) A more perfect Messiah would be needed if Israel would ever be finally delivered from sin and bondage. What Israel needed was a Deliverer Who would be both morally pure and all-powerful.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 17-18. Notice the false gods, false priesthood and false places of worship, as opposed to true worship of Yahweh at Shiloh.

Week Eleven – Levite’s Failure To Guard Worship Judges 17-18

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Today we come to the final section in the book of Judges. Review outline & Covenant Cycle.

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)

B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

- a. Othniel
- b. Ehud
- c. Deborah and Barak
- d. **TURNING POINT: Gideon**
- c. Abimelech
- b. Jephthah
- a. Samson

These two conclusions (Ch. 17-18 & 19-21) are sort of an explanation of what has happened throughout the book of Judges. The events described in these remaining chapters probably happened before most of the stories in the book. The two conclusions are a way of helping the Israel understand their history. What they show us is the failure of the Levites to guard the worship of Yahweh, and to promote godliness and holiness in the covenant community.

One thing to keep in mind as we begin to look at these conclusions is the repeated phrase, “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Of course we know that **there was a king in Israel throughout this time**. What was His name? [Yahweh!] The Lord Himself was King of the covenant people. When the people wanted to make Gideon king, he said, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you” (8:23). The Lord ruled Israel through the judges (Spirit empowered deliverers), who was Himself called “The Judge” (11:27). But by repeatedly saying that “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did

what was right in his own eyes,” the author of Judges (Samuel it is believed) is trying to get the people to see that Israel had rejected the true king so that she could do whatever she wanted. Remember back in the beginning of the book that we saw that the parents failed to teach their children about Yahweh (2:10). They forgot the Lord and forsook Him. In their mind, “...*there was* no king in Israel; so, everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.” What they really wanted, in their unbelief, was a king like the nations around them (Deut. 17:14; 1 Sam. 8:5, 20). They wanted a king that they could see and hear, rather than Yahweh in heaven. Notice too, that they wanted gods that they could see and touch (man-made), rather than the Creator. They were not willing to walk by faith, but by sight. They thought that their struggles and troubles were a problem with the government. If only they had a king like the nations around, everything would go well and they would not be enslaved by the nations. The truth was that if they had kept covenant with Yahweh, they wouldn’t have had the kinds of problems we see in Judges. Eventually, because of this lack of faith, Israel demanded to have a king. But, as we see in the books of Samuel and Kings, Israel still had problems. Before there were kings in Israel, when Israel was unfaithful, Yahweh used foreign nations to judge them. After there were kings in Israel, Yahweh used bad kings to judge them, and eventually, exiled them from the land altogether. The problem was not with having a king or not – Faithfulness to Yahweh is the most important thing for Israel.

I. Failure of the Levites, Ch. 17

The failure of faith manifests itself first in failure of worship. We saw in 2:1-5 that the people made covenants with the inhabitants of the land, and failed to tear down their places of worship. Eventually, Israel began to worship the gods. They wanted to be like the nations, having gods of their own making and of their own choosing. Idol worship is the belief that you can use the idol as a magical means of communicating with and manipulating God. This failure of faith, as we see in these two conclusions, began as a result of the failure of the Levites and priests to do their job.

The Levites were to be the teachers and guardian priests of Israel. They were to make sure that the worship of Yahweh was maintained. Remember that in Joshua, the Levites were given cities throughout the land to teach the people, and they were to serve as priests at the tabernacle in Shiloh. But what we see in Ch. 17-18 is that they did not do their job. This is why we see the judgments of Yahweh over and over again in the book of Judges.

Turn to Judges 17. Read Vv. 1-6. Just as Samson was betrayed for 1100 pieces of silver, so to Yahweh is betrayed with 1100 pieces of silver. Micah stole this money from his mother, but decided to return it when she put a curse on it. The mother of Micah intended to use the silver to develop idol worship, as contrasted with Deborah, a true mother in Israel. Every kind of idolatry is mentioned: A graven image covered with silver, a molten image made of silver, an ephod used to answer questions and other household idols. Not only do we have false gods, but also we have a false place of worship, a shrine. Finally, Micah makes one of his sons his priest, a false priesthood (not Levitical). In v. 6 we see that false worship leads to failure to see Yahweh as King: “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes”

In vv. 7-13 we see the problem. There was a Levite that came to town from Bethlehem (“House of Bread”). We do not know at this point who he is, but in 18:30 we learn that he was none other than, Jonathan, the grandson of Moses! The Levites were to be local pastors throughout Israel. It was the descendents of Aaron that were to be the priests serving in the central sanctuary. This Levite was offered the job of being Micah’s priest, which he gladly did for money. Once again, Yahweh is betrayed for money. The sad thing is that Micah, in this disobedient and faithless act of making the Levites priest, thought that Yahweh would bless him. Micah believed he could manipulate God to get what he wanted. You only receive blessing from God by obeying God in His way.

II. The Migration of the tribe of Dan, Ch. 18

In 18:1 we read, “In those days *there was* no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day *their* inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.” The same problem with Micah is also seen in the tribe of Dan. The Danites did not believe in the kingship of Yahweh either. Yahweh had given them their own land (Josh. 19:4-18), but they had failed to conquer it. They wanted it to be easy. They sent out spies (like Moses had done). But they did not go to the territory of Dan, but to Ephraim. These were faithless and cowardly men (by contrast with Samson, a Danite, a mighty man, Judges 13:2).

Vv. 3-6 says that they came to Micah’s house and talked to the Levite/false priest. They asked him to consult with God (the gods) to find out if their mission would be successful. The foolish priest said in v. 6, “Go in peace. The presence of the LORD *be* with you on your way.” It was correct for the men to seek the Lord, as was done in Judges 1:1. But they should have gone to the tabernacle in Shiloh (in

Ephraim) and asked the real priests, who would have told them to go and take the land Yahweh had given them. This shows their sinful hearts.

In vv. 7-12, the spies returned with their report. They had found a place that had little defense, Laish. It was indeed a city that Israel was to conquer, but it was not in the territory of Dan. So they, sinfully, set out with 600 men to take the city.

In vv. 13-21 the Danites went to Micah's house. In v. 14, the spies asked the question, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do." This was a good question. If they were faithful to the Lord, they would have destroyed Micah and his house of idols (Deut. 17:1-7; 13:1ff). Instead, they talked the priest into going with them. They offered to make him priest over their whole tribe. This small time pastor/priest would be able to become a big time preacher and priest. What an opportunity! This made the priest glad, and he took (stole) Micah's idols.

In vv. 22-26 we read that Micah came after the Danites and his priest. This is a funny part of the story. Micah, the thief, is himself robbed. Micah said in v. 24, "you have taken my gods which I have made, and the priest [he made/consecrated]." Apparently, man-made gods aren't very faithful to their makers. The Danites just tell Micah to go away, and he does.

Vv. 27-31 we see that the Danites then take the false gods and the false priest, take the city of Laish, and set up a false place of worship in the city they renamed "Dan." V. 31 says, So they "set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." They set up their own place of worship, apart from Yahweh's place in Shiloh. They decided that they did not want to have God be their King, nor serve Him in the way and place He had determined. The city of Dan became a center of idolatrous worship under the leadership of Moses's descendents (Jonathan, grandson of Moses, v. 30).

What we are to learn from this passage is that if the Levites had been faithful to maintain the true worship of Yahweh, God would have been viewed as King in Israel. Failure of faith begins with failure in worship. We must be faithful worshippers of the Lord if we are to be blessed by Him.

Homework assignment: Read Judges 19-20. Notice the moral corruption and sin.

Week Twelve –Levite’s Failure To Guard Morality Judges 19-20

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Today we come to the final section in the book of Judges. Review outline & Covenant Cycle.

I. Two Introductions:

A. From Conquest to Compromise (1:1-2:5)

B. Principles of Chastisement (2:6-3:6)

II. Two Exemplary Judges:

A. Othniel (3:7-11)

B. Ehud (3:12-30)

III. Two Unlikely Judges:

A. Deborah, a woman (4:1-5:31)

B. Gideon, a youth (6:1-9:57)

IV. Two Compromised Judges:

A. Jephthah, the half-breed (10:1-12:15)

B. Samson, the Nazirite (13:1-16:31)

V. Two Examples

A. The Levites fail to guard the worship of Israel (17-18)

B. The Levites fail to guard the morality of Israel (19-21)

a. Othniel

b. Ehud

c. Deborah and Barak

d. **TURNING POINT: Gideon**

c. Abimelech

b. Jephthah

a. Samson

Last week we saw that the failures of Israel began with the failure of the Levites to guard the worship of Yahweh, and to teach the people His Word. This failure to nurture and guard the people of God led to the repeated cycle of covenant judgment. As we said last week, the stories given in this last section (Two Examples) all happened before the judges, and explain why Israel was having so much trouble throughout the book of Judges. Chapters 19-21 form a dramatic climax to the whole book. What it tells us is that the reason God kept sending in the oppressors from the nations around Israel is that His people had become just like the wicked people they were to dispossess. He did this in large measure because the Levites were themselves wicked men. When the leaders of the congregation are wicked, it causes problems generally. This is seen in the Levitical failure to guard the worship of Yahweh (last week), and the moral corruption that was characteristic of the Levites and the whole nation. Yahweh was not going to drive out the inhabitants of the land to bring in Israel if she would be every bit as wicked, worshipping the same gods, and defiling the land in just the same ways.

I. The Levites Moral Failure Judges 19

We will only be able to briefly look at the specifics of the story today, but we should understand what the Lord is communicating to us about Israel and ourselves. Once again, in 19:1 we are reminded that “*there was no king in Israel.*” Israel have forgotten that Yahweh was King, and so they did what was right in their own eyes, not what He had commanded.

Ch. 19 tells the story of a Levite and his concubine (a wife of secondary status that was not given a dowry). In this story the concubine is not faithful to her husband, and plays the harlot (sleeping with men that are not her husband for money). Immediately we are to think of Israel, who has been playing the harlot throughout the book of Judges. She went to her father’s house, like Israel kept returning to her fathers of the past (the idolatry of the false gods they had left). But we see in v. 3 we see that the Levite loved his wife and went after her to speak tenderly to her heart, and successfully gains her back (as Yahweh had done so many times with His unfaithful Bride Israel). The father was pleased that the Levite came. They eat and drank in fellowship. Each time the Levite is ready to leave and get back to his work as a Levite, the father detains him. This goes on several times, which makes you think that something is not right. Finally, after this has gone on too long, the Levite left in the evening and came near Jebus (which was Jerusalem) but did not stay there because it was still a city of unbelievers. They went on to Gibeah (which was the birthplace of Saul), which was a city of Israel where he would be honored as a priest of God. It was a Benjamite city.

When the Levite got to Gibeah, he didn’t receive the welcome he should have. He waited in the city square hoping that someone would show hospitality to him. The sun had gone down and no one offered him a place to stay. Had this city loved Yahweh, they would have loved His servant, the Levite. V. 18, “I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house.” Finally, in vv. 16-21 an old man took him in, which shows that there was no one righteous of the younger generation (as we saw in the early part of the book of Judges). Everything should be fine now. But all is not well. Gibeah is apparently a city like Sodom (Gen. 18:16-19:38). The men of Gibeah (“sons of Belial,” thugs and perverted, ungodly men) were horribly wicked (like the nations). Vv. 22-24 says:

²²As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house *and* beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him *carnally!*” ²³But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act *so* wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. ²⁴“Look, *here is* my virgin daughter and *the man’s*

concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!”

The men of Gibeah wanted to sleep with the Levite, like a man sleeps with his wife. A terrible sin! This is the same wickedness that was in Sodom when God destroyed that wicked city (there are many parallels with Sodom in this city). What we see here is that **Israel had become another Sodom**. But the old man tried to talk them out of their sin by offering them his own daughter and the Levite’s concubine. They eventually were given just the concubine, and did terrible things to her. What kind of loving husband is this? He certainly wasn’t guarding her in love. By morning she was dead by the front door. In v. 27ff we see what kind of man the Levite really was. When he came out of the safety of the house, he merely said, “Get up,” but seeing that she was dead, he threw her body onto his donkey and went home. Then he cut up her body into 12 pieces and sent them throughout Israel to the twelve tribes. V. 30, And so it was that all who saw it said, “No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!”

Clearly, this Levite had failed to guard his bride. Yahweh was telling Israel that the Levites (who were to be an image of Yahweh, Israel’s Husband) had failed to guard the Bride of the Lord, and look at what has happened! Israel is wicked like Sodom, and deserved to be judged by Yahweh. The Levites are to blame (in part) for the wicked condition of Israel.

II. Israel’s War Against Benjamin Judges 20

In chapter 20 we see the godly response of Israel. V. 1 says, So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. Mizpah is not far from Gibeah, and apparently they consulted the Lord there. All of Israel is represented - except for the tribe of Benjamin (and one city, Jabesh Gilead). The Benjamites sided with the wicked men of Gibeah. Think of it, the whole tribe of Benjamin was willing to go to war to protect these sons of Belial instead of destroying them in judgment. 400,000 men of Israel came to fight against the tribe of Benjamin at Gibeah (Benjamin had only 26,700 men). As you read this story, you feel glad that righteous Israel was going to deal with this wickedness. In v. 18, Israel consulted Yahweh at the tabernacle, who said they should go up against Benjamin. It seems very exciting that God was sending them against the wicked Benjamites. V. 21 says that the Benjamites killed 22,000 men of **Israel!** What is happening? In v. 23 Israel again went to the consult with Yahweh weeping and asked if they should go up again against Benjamin, and Yahweh said to go again. This time, 18,000 men of Israel were slain! Why do you think they kept losing to the wicked Benjamites?

They obviously were in sin as well. You cannot do holy war unless you are right with God (remember Achan and Ai, Josh. 7-8?). So, in v. 26 we see that Israel got the message and went weeping to the tabernacle, sat in fasting and prayer, and made offerings to the Lord. They repented of their own sin before asking God again if they should go against Benjamin. This time, Yahweh said he would give them victory. Through the rest of the chapter, we learn that Israel defeated the tribe of Benjamin and killed all but 600 men of the tribe. By this victory, God said, in effect, that if you are going to be like the wicked people of the land, I will judge you in the same way as them. If you want to be like the nations, I will destroy you like the nations. This judgment was severe enough that it almost wiped out the entire tribe of Benjamin, including men, women, children, beasts and the cities Israel came to (V. 48). If almost all the men and women of the tribe were killed, that could mean the end of the tribe. Benjamin needed salvation.

III. The Salvation of Benjamin Judges 21

If Benjamin were to continue as a tribe of Israel, the 600 surviving men of Benjamin would have to be given wives. But the men of Israel had sworn a godly oath not to give their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites. They had also sworn an oath to destroy the city of Jabesh Gilead because they did not help fight against Benjamin. They destroyed Jabesh Gilead, and took 400 of their virgin women for wives for the Benjamites. But there still were not enough women for them. Israel had a godly sadness for Benjamin. While they could not give their daughters to the Benjamites, they allowed the men of Benjamin to take some of the daughters of Israel during the dances at the feast of Tabernacles at Shiloh. Thus, Benjamin was saved as a tribe of Israel.

Conclusion of the book of Judges

Remember, these stories of the Levites in 17-21 all happened *before* the period of the judges described in this book. Because Israel did not repent and turn from idolatry (rejecting Yahweh as King in Israel), and did not turn from the sin of doing what was right in their own eyes as opposed to doing what God wanted them to, Yahweh sent foreign oppressors. By sending the oppressors, Yahweh was saving them, and preparing them for the future king that He would raise up. When David, a man after God's own heart, is made king, Yahweh established a new covenant, and promised that a King would reign forever: Jesus, the Christ (the anointed King). Jesus is the greater Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Judge and David that would rule forever in righteousness, leading God's covenant people in holiness.

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