

The Book of Judges

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Introduction

The judges of Israel were God's chosen representatives to arbitrate legal matters among His people. They were also given the responsibility to administer social affairs and to lead in military campaigns against Israel's enemies. God Himself was the supreme Judge of the judges over Israel.

Authorship and Date

It's likely the book of Judges was written during the reign of Saul, Israel's first king. There are several references in the book of Judges which state "in those days there was no king in Israel" (Jud. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). This seems to imply that at the time of the writing there was a king in Israel.

Though he is never named within the book, Samuel the prophet is regarded as the author of the book of Judges. If Samuel is accepted as the author, this would place the writing sometime around 1040 B.C.

Chronology of Judges

The book of Judges records the period of time between the end of the leadership of Joshua (Judg. 1:1; 2:6-9) and the appointment of Saul as Israel's first king (ca. 1350 to 1050 B.C.). Some judges served consecutively and others ruled concurrently.

The people of Israel rejected God as their king and the judges He'd appointed over them and they requested a human king (1 Sam. 8:7; 12:12). The period of the Judges ends when Samuel anoints Saul as the first king in Israel (1 Sam. 10:1).

The Function of the Judges

The term Judge (שֹׁפֵט *shaphat* – judge or deliverer) refers to God's judicial and military leader who protected Israel from enemies. "It was a general term for leadership combining the executive (including military) and judicial aspects of governing. Thus the judges of Israel were primarily military and civil leaders, with

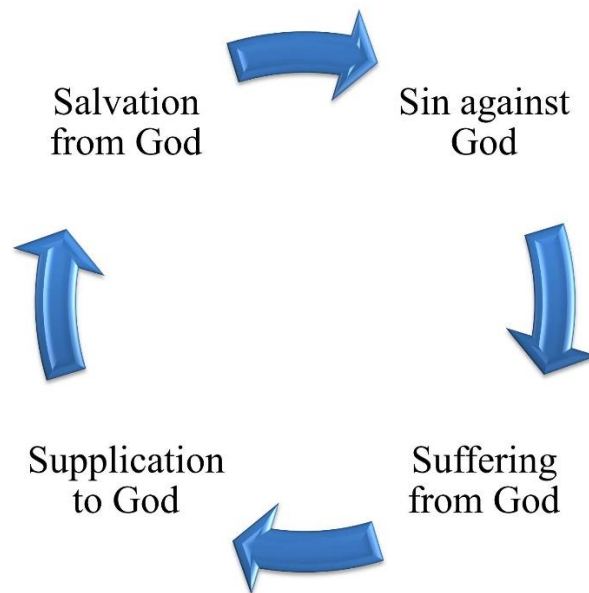
strictly judicial functions included as appropriate (cf. 4:5).”¹ The judges themselves were sinful men, who had their own failings, yet their faith in God makes them usable to the Lord to accomplish His will.

The Theme of Judges

Judges demonstrates Israel’s repeated failure to follow God as king. The nation repeatedly allowed itself to be influenced by the surrounding culture and turned away from God and worshipped idols (see pattern in Judges 2:1-23). The pattern throughout the book is:

1. Israel turns away from the Lord and worships idols (sin)
2. God sends discipline that results in their slavery (slavery)
3. Israel cries out to the Lord from their oppression (supplication)
4. God raises up a judge to rescue them (salvation)

Cycle of Behavior in Judges



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¹ F. Duane Lindsey, “Judges,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 374.

The above pattern is repeated six times throughout the book of Judges. Israel's spiritual condition—either in obedience or disobedience—determined their political and physical success or failure (Deut. 28). Not only did Israel fail to obey God and drive out the Canaanites, but they even befriended them, intermarrying, adopting their culture, and eventually worshipping their gods. When Israel was faithful to the Lord, God strengthened them to defeat their enemies, but when Israel was disobedient, God strengthened their enemies. The faith of one generation did not guarantee the faith of the next, so a legacy could not be guaranteed. The period was marked by general rebellion, in which “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). Israel's failure to take the land of Canaan resulted in long term problems for many years.

Outline

The events of the judges are preceded by an introductory section (1:1–3:6) which reveals Israel's disobedience to God and subsequent military failure to take the land of Canaan. In Judges 2:6-10 the writer briefly recounts the death of Joshua which had already been reported in the book of Joshua (Josh. 24:29-30; Judg. 1:1). Judges 3:7-16:31 is the repeated cycle of disobedience toward God. And Judges 17:1-21:25 reveals the continuation of Israel's disobedience.

1. Israel's disobedience subsequent to the death of Joshua (1:1-3:6)
2. Israel's repeated cycle of disobedience (3:7-16:31)
3. The afterward Israel's disobedience (17:1-21:25)

Why God's Judgment?

God's judgment throughout the period of Judges is based on the fact that Israel repeatedly violates God's will, which is based on a bilateral covenant relationship with blessings and cursings. There are several biblical covenants mentioned throughout Scripture. The word *covenant* translates the Hebrew בְּרִית *berith* and Greek διαθήκη *diatheke*. The Hebrew בְּרִית *berith* means an "agreement, covenant, or contract."² The Greek διαθήκη *diatheke* means "last will, covenant, contract."³ Both words basically have the same meaning. A contract—then and now—reflects a binding promise. In Scripture, there are unilateral and bilateral covenants. A *unilateral covenant* meant that God promised to bless the recipient unconditionally. That is, God promised blessings that are free from any expectation of obedience to commands on the part of the recipient. A *bilateral covenant* made God's blessing or cursing depend on obedience to His stipulations.

In Scripture, there are two bilateral covenants, the Edenic Covenant⁴ and the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:5, 8; 20:1-31:18). The Edenic Covenant consisted of the promises of blessing and cursing that was conditioned on Adam's obedience or disobedience in the Garden. If Adam obeyed, then life in the Garden would continue. If he disobeyed, then there would be the curse of death (Gen. 2:14-17). In the Mosaic Covenant, God promised blessing or cursing depending on whether the Israelites obeyed or disobeyed the commands of the Law (Deut. 28:1-68).

In the *unilateral covenants*, God promises to bless certain people and there are no conditions placed on His blessing. Examples of *unilateral covenants* include:

1. The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:16-17; cf. Hos. 6:7).
2. The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:8-17).
3. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-4).
4. The Palestinian/Land Covenant (Deut. 29:1; 30:1-10).
5. The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:4-16; Ps. 89:33-37).
6. The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:21-28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6-7; Heb. 8:8-13; 9:15; 12:24).

² Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 157–158.

³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 228.

⁴ The word "covenant" is not used either for the Edenic or Adamic covenants; however,

The Land Covenant, Davidic Covenant, and New Covenant are amplifications of the Abrahamic Covenant, in which God promises *land*, *seed*, and *blessing* to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4).

Some of the biblical covenants had a sign associated with them. For example, the rainbow is the sign of the Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:12-16). Circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:11). The Sabbath is the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 31:12-17). The red juice is the sign of the New Covenant (Luke 22:19-20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

All the biblical covenants were given to Israel and must find ultimate fulfillment with them. The Church is not Israel, but we partake of some of the blessings of the New Covenant because of our union with Jesus. Whenever Christians partake of the Lord's Supper, they are telling themselves and others that they are in a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ; specifically, the New Covenant, which was instituted by the Lord Jesus on the night before His crucifixion. As a result of the inauguration of the New Covenant, the Christian is blessed with forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17) and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:14; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). The other blessings associated with the New Covenant are still future and belong to Israel, which blessings describe Israel in their land, with a new heart that will know and serve God (Jer. 31:31-40). Jesus—Israel's true Messiah—will rule over the land in those days.

God pronounced promises of blessing and cursing to Israel depending on whether they obeyed or disobeyed His Word (read Deut. 28:1-68; 30:15-20). The word *blessing* translates the Hebrew noun בְּרָכָה *berakah*, which occurs sixty-seven times in the OT. In Deuteronomy 28, the word refers to the tangible goodness that makes life enjoyable and rich, which is promised to His covenant people, Israel, if they would simply obey His commands. Areas of blessing include:

1. All locations at all times (Deut. 28:3, 6).
2. Healthy offspring, crops, and livestock (Deut. 28:4-5, 8, 11).
3. Military success (Deut. 28:7).
4. Fruitful labor (Deut. 28:8, 12a).
5. International recognition and respect (Deut. 28:9-10).
6. Financial prosperity (Deut. 28:12b).
7. Serving as an international leader to other nations (Deut. 28:13).

God also promised to bring curses, which would undo all the blessings and bring Israel down, if they disobeyed (Deut. 28:15-68). The Hebrew noun קִלְקָלָה *qelalah* is

translated *curse* in Deuteronomy 28:15 & 45. “The basic meaning of this root sets forth the quality of ‘slightness’ as to provision, speed, or circumstance...this root is used of intending a lowered position, technically, to curse.”⁵ In Deuteronomy 28:16-19, Moses uses the Hebrew verb אָרַר *arar* six times, which means, “to bind with a curse.”⁶ The form of the verb is passive, which means a curse is received by the nation of Israel if they turn away from God. The cursing could be avoided if God’s people would simply obey the Lord (Deut. 28:15, 20, 45-47, 58-59, 62; 29:25-28; 30:17-18).

⁵ Leonard J. Coppes, “קָלַל 2028,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 800.

⁶ Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 91.

Judges 1:1-19

Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD [seeking His will], saying, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites [a generic term to refer to all the people living in the land], to fight against them?”² The LORD said, “Judah [the tribe] shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”³ Then Judah said to Simeon his brother [who resided within the territory of Judah; see Josh. 19:1], “Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you.” So Simeon went with him.⁴ Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands, and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek [obedience to God led to victory].⁵ They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.⁶ But Adoni-bezek [אֲדוֹנֵי־בֶזֶק Adoni-bezeq – Lord of Bezek] fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes [forever preventing him from engaging in military action].⁷ Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.” [Recognizes what’s happened to him as divine retribution for his cruelty to others] So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.⁸ Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire [centuries later, David would recapture the city; 2 Sam. 5:6-9].⁹ Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland.¹⁰ So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.¹¹ Then from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher) [“city of the book”; perhaps known for its library].¹² And Caleb said, “The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife.” [Thinking about her future]¹³ Othniel [who became the first judge in Israel; Judg. 3:7-11] the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife [Caleb gave her to the man who demonstrated faith and obedience to God].¹⁴ Then it came about when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field [loving husbands often acquiesce to please their wives]. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”¹⁵ She said to him, “Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.” [which were necessary for crops and daily life] So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.¹⁶ The descendants of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people. [The

Kenite's were allies of Israel; cf. Judg. 4:11] ¹⁷ Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it [חָרַם *charam* – *exterminate, to devote to destruction; based on God's command; Deut. 20:10-18*]. So the name of the city was called Hormah. ¹⁸ And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. ¹⁹ Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots [God later rebukes them for disobedience; Judg. 2:1-3].

Summary of Judges 1:1-19:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel failed to follow in the pattern of faith and obedience to God. After the death of Joshua, Judah and Simeon led the first military campaign against the Canaanites. Their obedience to God resulted in the defeat of the Canaanites and the Perizzites at the city of Bezek. They captured Adoni-bezek and disabled him from being a threat. Adoni-bezek recognized his defeat and punishment as divine retribution for the evil he did to seventy other kings. He does not complain, but recognizes the justice of what happens to him because of his cruelty to others. He was transported to the city of Jerusalem and died there.

Their first victory was over the inhabitants of **Bezek**. After slaying **ten thousand men**, they **cut off the thumbs and big toes** of the king, as he had done to his foes. He should have been put to death, as the Lord had commanded (Deut. 7:24), but instead he was only maimed. Then he was taken to Jerusalem, where he later died. This foreshadowed Israel's disobedience in dealing with the heathen in their land. Rather than completely crushing them, the Israelites only crippled them. Such partial obedience was disobedience and would cost the Jews dearly in the days ahead.⁷

2. Caleb offered his daughter in marriage to the man who defeated Kiriath-sepher, thus demonstrating himself as faithful, obedient to God, and having courage in battle. Such a man would make a suitable husband to provide and care for Achsah. In this way, Caleb was thinking about Achsah's future safety and provision. Othniel rose to the challenge and proved himself worthy.

⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*: (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 265.

3. The success of Judah and Simeon suddenly came to a stop when they came against the enemy on iron chariots. It was a lack of faith that resulted in their defeat, and God later rebuked them for failing to take the land (Judg. 2:1-3).
4. Success or failure among God's people is predicated on faithful obedience to His Word. This requires learning God's Word before living His will. God's people will always face enemies in the world and we must be willing to pursue His commands over our personal fears. Like the days of the judges, God is now working in His church, not through one leader, but through men and women He's raised up for our spiritual growth. These men and women have their shortcomings, but God works through them to guide and bring spiritual victory, both personally, and in the world.

Judges 1:20-36

Then they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised; and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak [see Num. 13:30-33; Deut. 9:1-6].²¹ But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day [i.e. the time of the author].²² Likewise the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them [faithful to keep His word].²³ The house of Joseph [i.e. Ephraim and Manasseh; see Gen. 41:51-52] spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz).²⁴ The spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, “Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly.” [it was wrong to negotiate terms of peace with the inhabitants of Canaan; see Deut. 20:16-18]²⁵ So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go free [against God’s will; see Deut. 7:1-5].²⁶ The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz [rebuilt the city in norther Syria] which is its name to this day [i.e. the time of the author].²⁷ But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land [they occupied the places that Israel refused to take as the Lord commanded].²⁸ It came about when Israel became strong [had the physical might], that they put the Canaanites to forced labor [contrary to God’s command to drive them out], but they did not drive them out completely.²⁹ Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.³⁰ Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.³¹ Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob.³² So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.³³ Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.³⁴ Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country [drove the Israelites back], for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;³⁵ yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong [had the physical might], they became forced labor [contrary to God’s command to drive them out].³⁶ The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.

Summary of Judges 1:20-36:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel—as a nation—failed to obey God and drive out the inhabitants of the land.
2. Caleb initially obeyed the Lord and drove out the sons of Anak, who had previously intimidated the sons of Israel (Num. 13:30-33). He did by faith what all Israel should have done. Israel—for the most part—operated from fear rather than faith, and this led to policies of appeasement with those who should have been driven out. Their decisions of toleration sowed the seeds of their future destruction because they allowed themselves to be exposed to the religious and ethical values of people who were opposed to the Lord.
3. The Canaanite culture was marked by a pantheon of deities—El, Baal (son of El), Dagon, Anath, Astarte, and Ashera—to whom the Canaanites offered human sacrifice and engaged in sexual fertility rights with temple prostitutes. Israel became influenced and corrupted by the depraved Canaanite culture for centuries to come (see Deut. 18:10; 2 Kings 17:16-17; 21:1-7).
4. God’s policy was that Israel was to destroy all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Deut. 7:1-5), offering negotiations of peace only with cities outside the land (Deut. 20:10-18). God was in no way cruel by demanding the destruction of the Canaanites. In fact, the Lord had been very patient with their extreme wickedness (Gen. 15:16; 2 Pet. 3:9), and the time had come for justice to prevail. Israel failed to execute God’s will, and let the inhabitants of the land remain. God rebukes them for their disobedience (Judg. 2:1-5). “This series of tribal defeats was the first indication that Israel was no longer walking by faith and trusting God to give them victory”⁸
5. God’s policy for the Christian today is to be a light in the world (Acts 13:47; Eph. 5:6-10) and to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-45; Rom. 12:20; 1 Pet. 3:9). The Christian today is defeated to the degree that he is friendly toward the world and allows himself to be influenced by the surrounding pagan culture. The fact is, “bad associations corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33). The Christian is to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to love those who are lost, but never be accepting of worldly values (1 John 2:15-17). Faith sees things in their proper place, from the divine perspective, from the light of eternity (2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18; 1 Pet. 1:3-7; 4:13). Fear often magnifies situations and makes them appear larger than they really are. May we all grow and learn to please God with a life of faith (Prov. 3:5-6; Heb. 11:16).

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Available*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 13.

Judges 2:1-23

Now the angel of the LORD [see Josh. 5:13-15] came up from Gilgal [the place of blessing] to Bochim [the place of weeping]. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers [patriarchal promise; Gen. 12:1-3]; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you,² and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me [see Ex. 23:33; 34:11–16; Num. 33:50–56; Deut. 7:1–5]; what is this you have done?³ “Therefore I also said [in judgment], ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they will become *as thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you [spiritual trap].”⁴ When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.⁵ So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.⁶ When Joshua had [previously] dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.⁷ The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua [i.e. Joshua’s generation], and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel [firsthand experience].⁸ Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.⁹ And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.¹⁰ All that generation [vs. 7] also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know [i.e. acknowledge] the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel [refused to acknowledge God’s works].¹¹ Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals [in several geographical locations; e.g. Baal-Peor, Baal-Berith, Baal-Gad, Baal-Zebub],¹² and they forsook the LORD [broke the covenant], the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.¹³ So they forsook the LORD and served Baal [sun god] and the Ashtaroth [a.k.a. Asherah, moon goddess].¹⁴ The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.¹⁵ Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil [רָעָה *raah* – evil, calamity, disaster, injury], as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them [see Deut. 28], so that they were severely distressed.¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them [God rescues them].¹⁷ Yet they did not listen to their judges [see 1 Sam. 8:7-8], for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.¹⁸ When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from 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 and afflicted them.¹⁹ But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers [progressively worse], in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.²⁰ So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice,²¹ I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,²² in order to test Israel by them [to expose their hearts], whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.”²³ So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

Summary of Judges 2:1-23:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God judged Israel for their failure to take the land after Joshua’s death; and Israel then began a progressive cycle of downward decline as they served pagan gods.
2. Judges 2:1-5 presents the angel of the Lord (*theophany* – bodily appearance of God the Son), who renders judgment upon Israel for their failure to perform His will. The angel of the Lord speaks as God (Judg. 2:1-3; cf. Gen. 22:15-18), and is recognized as God (Ex. 3:2-6; Judg. 13:21-22).
3. Judges 2:6-10 is a retelling of Joshua’s death in order to show a spiritual contrast between the generation of Joshua and that which followed. The generation that came after Joshua collectively ignored (passive rejection) God’s commands and promises and turned to spiritual idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of an imaginary substitute in place of the Creator. Pagan gods do not really exist, except in the minds of their worshippers. Though a generation may work to provide a spiritual heritage, there are no guarantees the following generation will accept it. Once people choose sin and turn to that which is worthless and self-serving, it eventually darkens any memory of God’s promises and works.
4. Israel served the Baals when life was going well, but turned to the Lord when He brought discipline. This suggests a form of syncretism in which the Israelites served both God and pagan idols. Today we see Christians who go to church on Sunday, pray and worship God, and then read their astrological horoscopes on Monday, believing their life is dictated by impersonal stars.
5. Under the Mosaic Covenant, Israel was obligated to engage in military campaigns to defeat their enemies and claim the physical land promised to Abraham. There was to be no tolerance. In the Church age, the battle is not physical, but spiritual (Eph. 6:12). The Christian has no authority to bear the sword, to put dissenters to death, as that is given to governments (Rom. 13:1-4). Our responsibility is to keep ourselves unstained by the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Jam. 1:27), to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), and witness for Christ that others might believe the gospel and be saved (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). The Bible is our sword by which we

destroy spiritual and intellectual strongholds, within ourselves and others (2 Cor. 10:3-6). The Christian is to get along with others, showing tolerance (Rom. 12:17-18), except when it comes to something that harms our walk with God, and then we are to be intolerant (Rom. 13:13-14; 1 John 2:15-17).

Judges 3:1-11

Now these are the nations which the LORD left [God controlled Israel's circumstances; see Judg. 2:21-23], to test Israel by them [to expose the heart and teach obedience] (*that is*, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; ² only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly). ³ *These nations are*: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. ⁴ They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses [Ex. 34:11-17; Num. 33:50-56; Deut. 7:1-5]. ⁵ The sons of Israel lived among [i.e. failed to remove] the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; ⁶ and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods [in violation of Deut. 7:1-4]. ⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil [עָרַב *hara* - lit. *the evil*, referring to idolatry] in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served [עָבַד *abad* - to work, labor, serve; here probably has a liturgical meaning] the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim [Heb. Cushan of double wickedness] king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. ⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD [as God intended suffering to accomplish], the LORD raised up a deliverer [עָשָׂה *yasha* - to deliver, save] for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel [who had already proven himself in battle; see Judg. 1:11-15] the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Summary of Judges 3:1-11:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God punished Israel for disobedience (Judg. 3:1-6), and when His people cried out to Him, He raised up a deliverer to rescue them and give them rest (Judg. 3:7-11).
2. God left the pagan nations in the land *to punish* Israel for their disobedience (Judg. 2:3), *to teach* them warfare (Judg. 3:2), and *to test* them (Judg. 3:4). The Lord's tests were designed to expose the hearts of His people as to whether they would obey Him or not (see Ex. 16:4; 20:20). Israel failed God by:
 - a. Living among the Canaanites (Judg. 3:5).

- b. Intermarrying with the Canaanites (Judg. 3:6).
 - c. Serving the gods of the Canaanites (Judg. 3:7).
- 3. In Judges, God is the primary cause of Israel’s blessing and cursing, victory or defeat. God is always pictured as sovereign ruler, and the people were to submit their lives to Him if they were to know success. We observe that God allows His people (and fallen angels) to produce sin and evil, but never beyond or against His sovereign will (Job 1:1-21; Ps. 105:12-15; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps. 135:6). And, “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Dan 4:35). Throughout Judges
 - a. Israel repeatedly did evil in the sight of the Lord, each generation progressively getting worse (Judg. 2:19; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).
 - b. God repeatedly gave them into the hands of their enemies to punish them (Judg. 3:8, 12; 4:2; 6:1; 10:6-7; 13:1).
 - c. When His people cried out to the Lord, He repeatedly delivered them (Judg. 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6; 10:12; 18:23).
- 4. Othniel was the first of Israel’s judges whom the Lord raised up as a deliverer to the give them rest from their enemies. Othniel would have been somewhere between 75 and 95 years of age. Othniel was obedient to the Lord. The obedience of this one man changed the course of history and proved a blessing to the nation of Israel.
- 5. Idolatry is the selfish sin of substitution in which we devote ourselves to something or someone in place of God. It is foremost a sin of the heart in which we dedicate ourselves to something or someone lesser than God to meet our wants and needs. Biblically, there is only one God, and He demands that His people worship Him. God states, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth” (Ex. 20:3-4). The exclusive worship of God is for His glory and our benefit. An idol can be either a physical object that symbolizes a deity, or it can be an abstract concept such as greed or justice. A physical idol is merely the work of a craftsman (see Isa. 44:9-20). There no life in it (Ps. 115:1-8; Jer. 51:17; Hab. 2:18-20), nor can it deliver in times of trouble (Isa. 46:5-7). A mental idol is created in one’s mind and becomes the object of one’s devotion. The record of Israel’s history—with the exception of a few generations that were faithful to God—is a record of their worship of pagan idols (Ex. 32:1-6), which at times included human sacrifice (Deut. 12:31; 18:10-11; 2 Ki. 21:6; Ezek. 16:20-21). The books of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2

Chronicles, Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all reveal Israel regularly committed idolatry, and this caused them to suffer greatly under God's discipline as He faithfully executed the cursing aspects of the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28). Devotion to God guards our hearts from the sin of idolatry.

Judges 3:12-31

Now the sons of Israel again did evil [עָרַע *hara* - lit. *the evil*, referring to idolatry] in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon [an unbeliever] the king of Moab against Israel [God empowers him against Israel; cf. Isa. 10:5-6; Jer. 25:8-11], because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.¹³ And he gathered to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and defeated Israel, and they possessed the city of the palm trees [i.e. Jericho].¹⁴ The sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years [because of their sin].¹⁵ But when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer [יָשַׁע *yasha* – to deliver, save] for them, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man [יְמִין אֶטָר *itter yamin* – lit. *shut up/bound right hand; perhaps implying he was disabled*]. And the sons of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.¹⁶ Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length [גֹּמֵד *gomed* – about 16 inches], and he bound it on his right thigh under his cloak.¹⁷ He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.¹⁸ It came about when he had finished presenting the tribute, that he sent away the people who had carried the tribute.¹⁹ But he himself turned back from the idols which were at Gilgal [perhaps seeing the idols provoked him to turn back], and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.” And he said, “Keep silence.” And all who attended him left him.²⁰ Ehud came to him while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, “I have a message from God for you.” And he arose from his seat.²¹ Ehud stretched out his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly.²² The handle also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly; and the refuse came out.²³ Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and shut the doors of the roof chamber behind him, and locked them.²⁴ When he had gone out, his servants came and looked, and behold, the doors of the roof chamber were locked; and they said, “He is only relieving himself in the cool room.” [Possibly smelling Eglon’s refuse]²⁵ They waited until they became anxious; but behold, he did not open the doors of the roof chamber. Therefore they took the key and opened them, and behold, their master had fallen to the floor dead.²⁶ Now Ehud escaped while they were delaying, and he passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah.²⁷ It came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was in front of them [perhaps this was a prearranged meeting to go to war].²⁸ He said to them, “Pursue them, for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands.” [God’s victory is assured if His people will do His will] So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross.²⁹ They struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped. [God gave them victory]³⁰ So Moab

was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years. ³¹ After him came Shamgar [Canaanite name] the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad [wooden pole with metal tip, used by ox herders]; and he also saved Israel.

Summary of Judges 3:12-31:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel disobeyed God and worshipped idols, God punished them, they cried out to Him and He raised up Ehud to save them.
2. Israel forfeited their rest from the Lord when they chose to disobey Him. The Lord was the primary cause of Israel's suffering as He employed a pagan king to afflict His people. After eighteen years of oppression, God's people cried out to Him and He raised up Ehud to rescue them and give them rest. Suffering makes men cry to God who, otherwise, during peaceful times, would never seek Him. Ehud may have been crippled in his right arm, but God's victory depended on His power and not Ehud's abilities. God called Ehud to be Israel's deliverer, but this does not mean He approved of all Ehud's actions, particularly his deception. After Ehud killed Eglon, The Lord used him to lead Israel in a military campaign against the Moabites and to defeat them.

...God used a man whom others would have regarded as unusual, because he was left-handed, to affect a great victory. Ehud did not excuse himself from doing God's will because he was different, as many Christians do. He stepped out in faith in spite of his physical peculiarity.⁹

3. Shamgar is a Canaanite name, perhaps implying he was half Jewish and half Canaanite, or perhaps a converted Canaanite. The oxgoad was an unorthodox weapon, but used in the hand of God's servant, it proved most effective. Unlike Ehud who led an army into battle, God used Shamgar as a solitary deliverer to rescue His people. Like Ehud, Shamgar was not a likely figure to serve as Israel's deliverer (humanly speaking), but God often chooses the weak things of this world that His wisdom and power and glory will shine through (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

⁹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jdg 3:12.

4. God calls all sorts of men and women to serve Him. None are perfect. Yet, God uses imperfect people to accomplish His will. If we desire His will above all else, then God can use us to effect real change and be a blessing to others. The success of God's plans ultimately rest upon the divine author who devised them, and it is part of His plan to include us, as weak and unworthy as we are, to share in His program for mankind.

Judges 4:1-24

Then the sons of Israel again did evil [הָרַע *hara* - lit. *the evil*, referring to idolatry] in the sight of the LORD [allusion to God's omniscience], after Ehud died [spiritual vacuum results in spiritual decline].² And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor [a city previously destroyed by Joshua; see Josh. 11:1; 10-13]; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.³ The sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.⁴ Now Deborah [Heb. bee], a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.⁵ She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.⁶ Now she sent and summoned Barak [בָּרַק *Baraq* – lightning] the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.’⁷ ‘I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his many *troops* to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand.’”⁸ Then Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” [Barak puts this condition on God's command]⁹ She said, “I will surely go with you [affirms his request]; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.” [Deborah speaks as a prophetess] Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.¹⁰ Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him.¹¹ Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaananim, which is near Kedesh.¹² Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.¹³ Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon.¹⁴ Deborah said to Barak, “Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you.” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.¹⁵ The LORD routed [הָמַם *hamam* – to confuse or confound] Sisera and all *his* chariots and all *his* army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from *his* chariot and fled away on foot.¹⁶ But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.¹⁷ Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael [Heb. mountain goat] the wife of Heber the Kenite [God providentially directed Sisera's steps], for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite [apparently

Heber was friendly with Canaan].¹⁸ Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid.” And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug.¹⁹ He said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him.²⁰ He said to her, “Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there anyone here?’ that you shall say, ‘No.’”²¹ But Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand [women regularly put up and took down tents, so Jael would have been familiar with peg and hammer], and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died [fulfilling Deborah’s prophecy; see Judg. 4:9].²² And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple.²³ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel.²⁴ The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Summary of Judges 4:1-24:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel disobeyed God and worshipped idols, God punished them, they cried out to the Lord, and He raised up Deborah and Barak to save them.
2. Ehud had a positive spiritual impact on the nation of Israel. After Ehud’s death, the nation forfeited their walk with God and turned back to idolatry, substituting the Lord’s blessing for cursing. After a period of suffering, Israel cried to the Lord and He raised up Deborah, who served as a prophetess and judge in Israel, but the role of warrior/deliverer was given to Barak. Deborah was one of three prophetesses mentioned in the Old Testament; the other two are Miriam (Exod. 15:20) and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14). As a prophetess, Deborah communicated God’s Word, which produced faith among those who were positive to the Lord.
3. It was God who called Barak to battle and guaranteed him victory (Judg. 4:6-7). Barak had enough faith to obey God’s call to battle and to defeat the armies of Canaan (see Heb. 11:32-33), but it also appears he had weak faith and requested Deborah accompany him (Moses, Gideon and Jeremiah also hesitated at God’s call; see Ex. 3-4; Judg. 6:11-40; Jer. 1:4-8). Barak’s lack of faith resulted in the loss of glory from defeating Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army. Sisera was defeated by Jael, and Deborah honored Jael in her victory song (Judg. 5:24-27). Scripture reveals that it was God who drew Sisera into battle, to the place he naturally desired to go, and then created the situation that

- determined his defeat. From Deborah's victory song we learn God sent rain to help Barak defeat Sisera, bogging his chariots in mud (see Judg. 5:4–5, 20–22).
4. Battles challenge the believer to live by faith and to trust God and His Word more than human resources and experience. The weakening instinct of self-preservation motivates us to run from trouble, but God calls us to live by faith and to trust Him above all else. Those who live by faith and gain life's victories have joy the unfaithful will never know.

Wiersbe comments on Jael:

Should we bless or blame Jael for what she did? She invited Sisera into her tent, treated him kindly, and told him not to be afraid; so she was deceitful. The Kenites were at peace with Jabin, so she violated a treaty. She gave Sisera the impression that she would guard the door, so she broke a promise. She killed a defenseless man who was under her protection, so she was a murderess. Yet Deborah sang, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent" (5:24). To begin with, let's not read back into the era of the Judges the spiritual standards taught by Jesus and the apostles. Also, let's keep in mind that the Jews had been under terrible bondage because of Jabin and Sisera; and it was God's will that the nation be delivered. Both Jabin and Sisera had been guilty of mistreating the Jews for years; and if the Canaanite army had won the battle, hundreds of Jewish girls would have been captured and raped (v. 30). Jael not only helped deliver the nation of Israel from bondage, but also she helped to protect the women from the most vicious brutality. She wasn't a Semitic "Lady Macbeth" who murdered her guest for her own personal gain. There was a war on, and this courageous woman finally stopped being neutral and took her stand with the people of God.¹⁰

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Available*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 39–40.

Judges 5:1-31

Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying, ² “That the leaders led in Israel, that the people volunteered [i.e. no standing army], bless the LORD! ³ “Hear, O kings; give ear, O rulers! I-- to the LORD, I will sing, I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁴ “LORD, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, even the clouds dripped water [a rain storm]. ⁵ “The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD, this Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁶ “In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, and travelers went by roundabout ways [because of violence on the highways]. ⁷ “The peasantry ceased [not safe to farm], they ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel [a mother loves, provides and protects]. ⁸ “New gods were chosen [Israel’s idolatry]; then war *was* in the gates [internal strife]. Not a shield or a spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel [perhaps not permitted; see 1 Sam. 13:19]. ⁹ “My heart *goes out* to the commanders of Israel, the volunteers among the people; bless the LORD! [Appreciation for those tribe who volunteered] ¹⁰ “You who ride on white donkeys, you who sit on *rich* carpets [i.e. the wealthy], and you who travel on the road [i.e. the poor] -- sing! [Everybody sing praise to the Lord] ¹¹ “At the sound of those who divide *flocks* among the watering places, there they shall recount the righteous deeds of the LORD, the righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates. ¹² “Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, sing a song! [God stirred Deborah to praise Him] Arise, Barak, and take away your captives, O son of Abinoam. ¹³ “Then survivors came down to the nobles; the people of the LORD came down to me as warriors. ¹⁴ “From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek *came down*, following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; from Machir [i.e. Manasseh] commanders came down, and from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office. ¹⁵ “And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; as *was* Issachar, so *was* Barak [Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun and Naphtali came to battle]; into the valley they rushed at his heels; among the divisions of Reuben *there were* great resolves of heart. ¹⁶ “Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, to hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart [considered to fight but did not]. ¹⁷ “Gilead remained across the Jordan; and why did Dan stay in ships? Asher sat at the seashore, and remained by its landings [Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher stayed home]. ¹⁸ “Zebulun *was* a people who despised their lives *even* to death, and Naphtali also, on the high places of the field [Zebulun and Naphtali praised for their heroism]. ¹⁹ “The kings came *and* fought; then fought the kings of Canaan at Taanach near the waters of Megiddo; they took no plunder in silver. ²⁰ “The stars fought from heaven [i.e. divine involvement,

perhaps angels; see Job 38:7], from their courses they fought against Sisera. ²¹ “The torrent of Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. O my soul, march on with strength. ²² “Then the horses’ hoofs beat from the dashing, the dashing of his valiant steeds. ²³ ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD, ‘Utterly curse its inhabitants; because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the warriors.’ ²⁴ “Most blessed of women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; most blessed is she of women in the tent. ²⁵ “He asked for water *and* she gave him milk; in a magnificent bowl she brought him curds. ²⁶ “She reached out her hand for the tent peg, and her right hand for the workmen’s hammer. Then she struck Sisera, she smashed his head; and she shattered and pierced his temple. ²⁷ “Between her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay; between her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell dead. ²⁸ “Out of the window she looked and lamented, the mother of Sisera through the lattice, ‘Why does his chariot delay in coming? Why do the hoofbeats of his chariots tarry?’ [a mother’s dread] ²⁹ “Her wise princesses would answer her, indeed she repeats her words to herself, ³⁰ ‘Are they not finding, are they not dividing the spoil? A maiden, two maidens for every warrior; to Sisera a spoil of dyed work, a spoil of dyed work embroidered, dyed work of double embroidery on the neck of the spoiler?’ [comforts herself with false assumptions] ³¹ “Thus let all Your enemies perish [a curse upon God’s enemies], O LORD; but let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might.” [blessing for those who love Him] And the land was undisturbed for forty years.

Summary of Judges 5:1-31:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Deborah and Barak sing a victory song of praise to the Lord for His righteous acts of deliverance.
2. The use of personal pronouns implies the song was written by Deborah (Judg. 5:7, 9, 13). Deborah and Barak praised God for His victory over the Canaanites, and praised those tribes who voluntarily answered the Lord’s call. The praise song was supernaturally inspired and sung on the day of victory. Praise is a response to the good actions of another. Victory songs served to remind later generations of God’s faithfulness to care for His own during difficult times. The Lord proved to be Israel’s victor in this battle. Deborah praises Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun and Naphtali who came to battle, but Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher stayed home and did not come to help fight.
3. Sisera’s mother waited long and feared her son’s late return. Her mother’s dread is contrasted with Deborah’s rejoicing as a mother over Israel. Deborah answered God’s call as a leader in Israel, but she did not abandon her identity as a mother; rather she incorporated it into her caring role for Israel. For Israel,

- the battle was both physical and spiritual, as God's people prepared themselves and went to war, knowing their victory was determined by heaven.
4. In the Church age, our battle is spiritual and not physical (Eph. 6:12). As Christians, our responsibility is to keep ourselves unstained by the world (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Jam. 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17), to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), and share the gospel that others might believe in Christ and be saved (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). The Bible is our sword by which we destroy spiritual and intellectual strongholds, within ourselves and others (2 Cor. 10:3-6; Heb. 4:12). The victory always belongs to God.

Judges 6:1-24

Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD [i.e. committed idolatry]; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years [for suffering].² The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds [to hide food].³ For it was when Israel had sown [their crops], that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east [Bedouins] and go against them [seasonal attacks].⁴ So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey [steal their crops and herds].⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.⁶ So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.⁷ Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD on account of Midian,⁸ that the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.’⁹ ‘I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land,¹⁰ and I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.’” [Israel’s suffering is because of their disobedience to God; see Deut. 7:1-6; 31:16-18]¹¹ Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah [Gideon is later buried at Ophrah; see Judg. 8:32], which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save *it* from the Midianites [Gideon hiding his activity].¹² The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.” [גִּבּוֹר *gibbor* – strong, mighty, warrior; God sees what Gideon will become because the Lord is with him]¹³ Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.” [Gideon misunderstands God’s judgment upon Israel is because of their failure to the covenant]¹⁴ The LORD looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?” [The Lord’s call to deliver Israel]¹⁵ He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” [Gideon takes stock of himself and considers himself incapable]¹⁶ But the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.” [God’s call and presence guarantees victory]¹⁷ So

Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. [To give Gideon assurance] ¹⁸ “Please do not depart from here, until I come *back* to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.” ¹⁹ Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour [a large amount of food considering the lack of resources]; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought *them* out to him under the oak and presented *them*. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. [gave Gideon his sign] ²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.” [Gideon realizes he’s seen God in theophany] ²³ The LORD said to him, “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.” ²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace [יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם - Yahweh shalom]. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Summary of Judges 6:1-24:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God punishes Israel for their disobedience, but when they cried to the Lord, He called Gideon to be their deliverer.
2. Israel cried to the Lord, but rather than immediately sending a deliverer as before, God rebuked Israel through an unnamed prophet who cited God’s historical deliverance and His covenant agreement with them. God states plainly that Israel is being punished for their disobedience (Judg. 6:8-10; cf. Judg. 2:1-2).
3. After His rebuke, God called Gideon to deliver Israel. Like Moses and Jeremiah, Gideon hesitated at God’s call, seeing himself as inadequate to do God’s will (see Ex. 3-4; Jer. 1:4-8). God’s call and presence would make Gideon into the warrior He needed. It was probably Gideon’s insecurity that prompted him to ask the angel of the Lord for a sign; the Lord agreed. To Gideon’s credit, he demonstrated hospitality to the angel of the Lord, and when the Lord accepted it as a worship offering, Gideon then knew he’d been visited by God. The Lord’s acceptance of Gideon’s offering was an acceptance of Gideon himself. Gideon became frightened after realizing he’d been visited by the angel of the Lord, but the Lord reassured him with comforting words. Afterward, Gideon built an altar of worship and named it, “The LORD is peace” (Judg. 6:24).

4. God graciously involves us in His plans, and He equips those whom He calls. God sees us not for what we are or possess, but for what He can accomplish through us by means of His guidance and enablement (Phil. 1:6; 2:13). The believer is automatically crippled when he tries to understand how to accomplish God's will by means of human resources. To succeed, the believer must learn to rise above human viewpoint and live within the divine perspective, for God's estimation is always correct. This requires faith. It is a truth of Scripture that God often chooses the weak of this world to achieve His will (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Judges 6:25-40

Now on the same night the LORD said to him [calling Gideon to take immediate action], “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old [perhaps corresponding to Israel’s years of suffering; see Judg. 6:1], and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it [destroy the family idols];²⁶ and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.” [To atone for their sin]²⁷ Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father’s household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night. [Gideon’s fear did not keep him from doing God’s will]²⁸ When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.²⁹ They said to one another, “Who did this thing?” And when they searched about and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash did this thing.”³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die [death was pronounced by those who were worthy of death; see Deut. 13:6-10], for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it.”³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him [defending his son’s actions], “Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god [and he’s not], let him contend for himself [i.e. fight his own battles], because someone has torn down his altar.”³² Therefore on that day he named him [Gideon] Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he had torn down his altar.³³ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.³⁴ So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon [lit. clothed Gideon]; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them [these tribes were near the valley of Jezreel].³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, “If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken [Judg. 6:14-16],³⁷ behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken.” [Gideon is seeking reassurance from God]³⁸ And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more [Gideon knows he’s testing God]; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on

the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.”⁴⁰ God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground [a display of God’s grace].

Summary of Judges 6:25-40:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Gideon obeyed God and tore down the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole that stood beside it.
2. Israel was suffering oppression from the Midianites because of their spiritual infidelity (Judg. 6:1). God’s deliverance necessitated that Israel obey Him by destroying their idols and return to worshipping Him. God called Gideon to judge and lead Israel back to Him, and this meant that Gideon had to deal with the idolatry within his own family. By destroying the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole, Gideon was committing himself to God and preparing himself to do His will. Gideon was obedient to God, but he was also fearful of the reaction of his father and the men of the city. In many cases fear is neither unreasonable nor sinful, unless it impedes us from doing God’s will. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the overcoming of fear to do the right thing.
3. Gideon’s actions were met with hostility by the men of the city who sought his death. Those who pronounced death upon Gideon for tearing down the altar of Baal, were in fact guilty of death because they supported idolatry in Israel and led others away from God (Deut. 13:6-10). Gideon’s father was encouraged by Gideon’s act of faith and supported his son against his detractors who sought to kill him. Sometimes it takes the faith of only one person to bring a family and others back to a walk with God. Once Gideon had committed himself to the Lord, the Spirit of Yahweh empowered him to do His will.
4. The fleece-test reveals a lack of faith on the part of Gideon who already knew God’s will for Him (Judg. 6:14, 16), and had already received a sign from the Lord (Judg. 6:17, 21). Operation “fleece” revealed Gideon’s internal struggle to accept God’s call upon His life as a judge and leader in Israel. Gideon felt he needed God’s assurance that He was with him. Gideon had weak faith, but he was open about it before the Lord, and God graciously accommodated him. At times, God graciously responds to our weaknesses as well.
5. Our walk with God should be our highest priority and all else should support that endeavor. Walking with God means we learn His word and seek to live His will (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). It sometimes means we make choices contrary to family values (when they are worldly), as well as choices that go against cultural values and practices. We live in a world that is heavily influenced by demonic forces which are hostile to God (Acts 26:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2-3; 6:12; Col. 1:13) and our daily actions either

help or hinder the spiritual lives of others. All we think, say and do (i.e. a move, new job, financial pursuit, etc.) should be weighed against the impact it will have upon the spiritual lives of others with whom we interact. God sustains those who walk with Him.

Judges 7:1-25

Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. ² The LORD said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’ [The military reduction emphasized God’s deliverance] ³ “Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead [see Deut. 20:8].” So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained [removing the fearful strengthened the rest]. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” ⁵ So he brought the people down to the water [to test them discreetly]. And the LORD said to Gideon, “You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.” ⁶ Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men [maintaining alertness]; but all the rest of the people knelt to drink water. ⁷ The LORD said to Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the *other* people go, each man to his home.” [God did not need the 300 to defeat Israel’s enemies; see Ps. 33:16; Isa. 37:33-36] ⁸ So the 300 men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the *other* men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. ⁹ Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.” ¹⁰ “But if you are afraid to go down [and he was], go with Purah your servant down to the camp, ¹¹ and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.” [Divine viewpoint builds courage] So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. ¹² Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. ¹³ When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend [providential meeting]. And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread [poor man’s bread] was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.” [Destroyed by something small] ¹⁴ His friend replied, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.” [God’s dream instilled fear into the feared Midianites] ¹⁵

When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship [with his faith strengthened]. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”¹⁶ He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers [military commanders carried torches and trumpets].¹⁷ He said to them, “Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.”¹⁸ “When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”¹⁹ So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch [about 10:00 PM], when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands [suddenly exposing their torches].²⁰ When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” [No sword was present]²¹ Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled [in fear of an imaginary army].²² When they blew 300 trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army [self-slaughter caused by divine confusion]; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.²³ The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian [cleanup crew].²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were summoned and they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.²⁵ They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

Summary of Judges 7:1-25:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God defeated the Midianite army of 135,000 using Gideon and 300 Israelite men.
2. God greatly reduced Gideon’s army so that Gideon would trust in Him and Israel would not become boastful. Gideon and his 300 men were a brave group, warriors who looked to God for victory. God controlled the minds of the Midianites and made them fearful by means of a troubling dream, which dream strengthened Gideon’s faith and increased his courage. God’s promise of victory included Gideon’s wise tactics on the battlefield. It was common for Israelite commanders to lead their troops into battle with a torch and horn,

so when the Midianites saw the hundreds of torch bearers blowing their horns and shouting, they imagined a great Israelite army was upon them, and in a state of panic attacked each other and fled.

3. God often uses unlikely persons to accomplish His will (1 Cor. 1:26-29), and sometimes brings us to a place of helplessness so that His salvation is more pronounced (2 Cor. 12:7-10), with the result that His people will boast in God and not themselves (Jer. 9:23-24). For the Christian, the lesson of trust is more valuable than the victory itself.

Judges 8:1-21

Then the men of Ephraim said to him [Gideon], “What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?” [Angry because they felt excluded] And they contended with him vigorously.² But he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim [follow up campaign] better than the vintage of Abiezer [initial battle]?”³ “God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb [Midianite commanders] into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” [Recognizing Ephraim’s accomplishments] Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that [see Prov. 15:1].⁴ Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.⁵ He said to the men of Succoth [Israelite city east of the Jordan River], “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”⁶ The leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?” [Refusing to support Gideon]⁷ Gideon said, “All right, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.” [Consequences for siding with the enemy of Israel]⁸ He went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered [also refusing to support Gideon].⁹ So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.” [Perhaps the tower they were hiding in]¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen [from the main battle].¹¹ Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting [the Midianites probably felt secure since they’d crossed the Jordan River into their own territory].¹² When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.¹³ Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.¹⁴ And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.¹⁵ He came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?’”¹⁶ He took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them [because of their failure to help defeat God’s enemies].¹⁷ He tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.¹⁸ Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?”

And they said, “They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king.” [A stately appearance] ¹⁹ He said, “They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.” [Household justice was expected; see Deut. 19:6, 12] ²⁰ So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them.” [To humiliate them] But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. ²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels’ necks.

Summary of Judges 8:1-21:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of the Midianite army, and exacts justice on those Israelites who refused to stand with him.
2. When called to battle, the tribe of Ephraim fought with Gideon and captured and killed two chief Midianite commanders (Judg. 7:24-25). Afterward, they spoke harshly to Gideon, asking why they’d not been considered among those originally called (Judg. 8:1). Gideon spoke graciously to the tribe of Ephraim, acknowledging their efforts to help defeat the Midianites, stating that God had used them to capture and defeat two Midianite commanders. Gideon’s selfless response preserved unity with the tribe of Ephraim.
3. In contrast to the tribe of Ephraim, the Israelite men of Succoth and Penuel refused to help Gideon in his battle against the Midianites and were therefore regarded as traitors. It’s possible the men of Succoth and Penuel were afraid of Midianite retaliation if Gideon failed to defeat his enemies. However, their refusal to help was actually a display of unbelief. “Theirs was the sin of hardness of heart toward their brethren and treason against the God of heaven.”¹¹ Gideon could tolerate the personal insults of Ephraim who had helped him fight God’s enemies, but he could not tolerate the rebellion of the men of Succoth and Penuel. The protection that the men of Succoth and Penuel tried to secure was ultimately forfeited because of their choice to side with Israel’s enemies.
4. There are times when God’s obedient people will face opposition, both from believers and unbelievers. There is a time to speak softly and graciously in order to preserve peace (Ps. 34:14; Prov. 15:1, 18; 16:32; 17:14; Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Heb. 12:14); however, there is also a time for strong language to correct

¹¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Available*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 72.

those who need it (Matt. 16:21-23; 23:13-39; Acts 13:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Gal. 2:11-14; Heb. 5:11-14). It becomes characteristic of a maturing believer to discern how to respond to others according to God's will.

Judges 8:22-35

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule [מָשַׁל *mashal* – rule, have dominion, reign] over us, both you and your son, also your son’s son, for you have delivered [יָשַׁע *yasha* – rescue, deliver, save] us from the hand of Midian.” [The men of Israel credited Gideon with victory rather than God; see [Judg. 7:2](#)] ²³ But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.” [God was their true King] ²⁴ Yet Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil.” (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) ²⁵ They said, “We will surely give *them*.” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil. ²⁶ The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold [between 42-62 pounds], besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels’ necks. ²⁷ Gideon made it into an ephod [אֶפֹּוֹד *ephod* – priestly robe], and placed it in his city, Ophrah [most likely as a memorial to God’s deliverance], and all Israel played the harlot with it there [worshipped it as an idol], so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household [Gideon’s family worshipped the thing he had created]. ²⁸ So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon [the last reference to peace in the book of Judges]. ²⁹ Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. ³⁰ Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives [like the kings]. ³¹ His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech [אַבִּימֶלֶךְ *Abimelek* – my father the king]. ³² And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ³³ Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals [engaged in idolatry], and made Baal-berith their god [resumed the idolatry Gideon had tried to destroy]. ³⁴ Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side [refused to recognize God as their deliverer]; ³⁵ nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in accord with all the good [טוֹבָה *tobah* – good, good things, benefit] that he had done to Israel [those who abandoned God also abandoned His servant].

Summary of Judges 8:22-35:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel tried to make Gideon king (Judg. 8:22-23), then they worshipped the ephod he’d created (Judg. 8:27), and they eventually returned to idolatry after his death (Judg. 8:33-34).

2. Gideon took some of the gold he'd acquired from the Midianites and created an ephod (Judg. 8:25-27). The ephod was originally part of the clothing worn by the high priest (Ex. 28:1-6). It is possible Gideon made the ephod for himself, and like the priests of Israel, sought to consult the Lord directly, as did others in Israel (see Judg. 17:5; 18:14-20). Or, it could be that Gideon made the ephod as a memorial to remind Israel that it was the Lord who delivered them (Judg. 8:34). The end result was that the ephod became an object of worship as the men of his city followed the natural inclinations of their depraved heart.
3. It was valid for Gideon to be recognized and rewarded for his obedience to the Lord. However, Gideon seems to have desired and requested more than was due him when he multiplied wives and sons (Judg. 8:30), even naming one Abimelech, which means "my father the king" (Judg. 8:31). Gideon's success over the Midianites was followed by spiritual failure when he succumbed to the cultural landmines that plagued his culture.
4. Israel had a pattern of crying out to the Lord when faced with a crisis (Judg. 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6-7; 10:10), but then did as they pleased and worshipped false gods when everything was going well (Judg. 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). However weak, it seems Gideon had a restraining influence upon Israel, which restraint was removed after his death, as Israel quickly turned to Baal worship (Judg. 8:33-35).
5. Israel's return to idolatry exposes the depravity of the human condition which is naturally bent toward sin, the exclusion of God, and the substitution of a manufactured god. We are all born with a sin nature that leads us to sin and evil (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 7:11; 15:19; John 3:19; Rom. 3:10-20; 7:18; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19; 1 John 1:8-10). Individuals may be denoted as given over to evil (Matt. 5:39), and so may a generation (Matt. 16:4), as well as an age (Gal. 1:4; 5:15-16). Satan's world system seeks to silence the Christian either through temptation and absorption, or through oppression and exclusion. The Christian is victorious over the world when his mind (the control center for his thoughts, feelings, and actions) is saturated with God's Word (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17), and he continues in prayer (Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2), and godly Christian fellowship (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23-25), under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).

Judges 9:1-25

And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's relatives [i.e. [Canaanite relatives](#)], and spoke to them and to the whole clan of the household of his mother's father, saying, ² "Speak, now, in the hearing of all the leaders of Shechem [[both Jews and Canaanites](#)], 'Which is better for you, that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, rule over you, or that one man rule over you?' Also, remember that I am your bone and your flesh." [[Abimelech identifies himself with his Canaanite heritage](#)] ³ And his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the hearing of all the leaders of Shechem; and they were inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our relative." ⁴ They gave him seventy *pieces* of silver from the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless [[רֵיקָה req – empty, worthless](#)] and reckless [[פָּחָז pachaz – to be wanton or reckless](#)] fellows, and they followed him. ⁵ Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the [[legitimate](#)] sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone [[the picture of a sacrificial killing, perhaps done to Baal](#)]. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself. ⁶ All the men of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king [[wicked men choose a wicked leader](#)], by the oak of the pillar which was in Shechem. ⁷ Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and called out. Thus he said to them, "Listen to me, O men of Shechem, that God may listen to you [[introduces divine viewpoint and gives the first parable in Scripture](#)]." ⁸ "Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' ⁹ "But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my fatness with which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?' ¹⁰ "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come, reign over us!' ¹¹ "But the fig tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees?' ¹² "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come, reign over us!' ¹³ "But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men, and go to wave over the trees?' [[The olive tree, fig tree, and vine were all productive and desirable plants; perhaps a picture of Gideon and his sons](#)] ¹⁴ "Finally all the trees said to the bramble [[worthless plant, like Abimelech](#)], 'You come, reign over us!' [[Their strong desire for a king clouded their judgment](#)] ¹⁵ "The bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come and take refuge in my shade [[an impossible offer](#)]; but if not, may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.' [[a threat](#)] ¹⁶ "Now therefore, if you have dealt in truth and integrity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have dealt with him as he deserved-- ¹⁷ for my father fought for you and risked his life [[lit. threw his life out in front](#)] and delivered you from the hand of Midian; ¹⁸ but you have risen against my father's house today and

have killed his sons, seventy men, on one stone [perhaps implying a religious sacrifice], and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your relative-- [on the basis of being part of your family] ¹⁹ if then you have dealt in truth and integrity with Jerubbaal and his house this day, rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. [There is cause for rejoicing, if the actions of the Shechemites are just] ²⁰ “But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech.” [i.e. may they destroy each other] ²¹ Then Jotham escaped and fled, and went to Beer and remained there because of Abimelech his brother [who wanted to kill him]. ²² Now Abimelech ruled over Israel three years. ²³ Then God sent an evil spirit [רוּחַ רָעָה - *ruach ra'ah* – an evil spirit, or a spirit that causes calamity or disaster; cf. 1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Ki. 22:19-23] between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech [as God intended], ²⁴ so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers [God will bring justice]. ²⁵ The men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who might pass by them along the road; and it was told to Abimelech.

Summary of Judges 9:1-25:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Abimelech rose to power in Israel by evil means; but the true King of Israel caused trouble for Abimelech.
2. Abimelech was not eligible to be king in Israel since he was the son of a Canaanite concubine. However, his ambition to be king led him to murder his half-brothers in order to remove any rivalry. Abimelech's evil plan was funded by the Shechemites who used pagan temple resources. After killing his brothers (with the exception of Jotham), the Shechemites then rewarded Abimelech as their king.
3. Jotham was a believer who introduced divine viewpoint and pronounced judgment upon both Abimelech and the men of Shechem. The trees in Jotham's parable (perhaps Gideon's legitimate sons) preferred a place of productivity over a lesser place of leadership. By doing God's will, Gideon had brought blessing upon Israel, but Abimelech and the men of Shechem returned his goodness with evil by murdering his sons. God, in turn, brought justice for the sons of Gideon by sending an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, so that they would destroy each other. The mountain robbers probably deprived Abimelech of resources he needed to rule.

4. Evil cannot exist by itself, as though it were something to be captured and put in a container. Evil exists only in connection with the willful creatures who manufacture it—which includes both fallen angels and people. Evil sometimes refers to the mental attitude of a person that leads to sinful actions (Matt. 15:19), but when used by God, it refers to the calamity or destruction He brings upon men for His own purposes (Job 2:10; Isa. 45:5-7; Lam. 3:38; Amos 3:6). God uses evil men to accomplish His plans (Jer. 25:8-11; 27:6-7; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28), and evil spirits to chastise the wicked (Judg. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Kings 22:19-23), and to reveal the good character of godly men (Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Cor. 12:7). God will eventually banish all the wicked (Rev. 20:11-15).

Judges 9:26-57

Now Gaal the son of Ebed [probably Canaanite] came with his relatives, and crossed over into Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their trust in him [turned allegiance from Abimelech, as God intended].²⁷ They went out into the field and gathered *the grapes of* their vineyards and trod *them*, and held a festival; and they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank and cursed Abimelech [celebration of rebellion].²⁸ Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? [Half Israelite/Canaanite] Is he not the son of Jerubbaal [the man who attacked Baal], and *is* Zebul *not* his lieutenant? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him?”²⁹ “Would, therefore, that this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech.” [Gaal offers himself as a better ruler] And he said to Abimelech, “Increase your army and come out.”³⁰ When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger burned.³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech deceitfully [i.e. privately], saying, “Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his relatives have come to Shechem; and behold, they are stirring up the city against you.”³² “Now therefore, arise by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in wait in the field [perhaps just outside the city].”³³ “In the morning [second day], as soon as the sun is up, you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and behold, when he and the people who are with him come out against you, you shall do to them whatever you can.”³⁴ So Abimelech and all the people who *were* with him arose by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies.³⁵ Now Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the city gate; and Abimelech and the people who *were* with him arose from the ambush.³⁶ When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains.” [not suspecting an attack] But Zebul said to him, “You are seeing the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.” [as a deceiver, Zebul tries to make him question what he sees]³⁷ Gaal spoke again and said, “Behold, people are coming down from the highest part of the land, and one company comes by the way of the diviners’ oak.”³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, “Where is your boasting now with which you said, ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’ Is this not the people whom you despised? Go out now and fight with them!” [challenging him to act upon his words]³⁹ So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem and fought with Abimelech.⁴⁰ Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him; and many fell wounded up to the entrance of the gate.⁴¹ Then Abimelech remained at Arumah [a nearby city], but Zebul drove out Gaal and his relatives so that they could not remain in Shechem.⁴² Now it came about the next day [third day], that the people went out to the field, and it was told to Abimelech.⁴³ So he took his people and divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field; when he looked and saw the people coming out from the city, he arose

against them and slew them.⁴⁴ Then Abimelech and the company who was with him dashed forward and stood in the entrance of the city gate [to secure the entry point]; the other two companies then dashed against all who *were* in the field and slew them.⁴⁵ Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he captured the city and killed the people who *were* in it; then he razed the city and sowed it with salt [made it agriculturally sterile].⁴⁶ When all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the inner chamber of the temple of El-berith [perhaps hoping Baal will protect].⁴⁷ It was told Abimelech that all the leaders of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.⁴⁸ So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a branch from the trees, and lifted it and laid it on his shoulder. Then he said to the people who *were* with him, “What you have seen me do, hurry *and* do likewise.”⁴⁹ All the people also cut down each one his branch and followed Abimelech, and put *them* on the inner chamber and set the inner chamber on fire over those *inside*, so that all the men of the tower of Shechem also died [burned alive], about a thousand men and women.⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he camped against Thebez and captured it.⁵¹ But there was a strong tower in the center of the city, and all the men and women with all the leaders of the city fled there and shut themselves in; and they went up on the roof of the tower [seeking protection].⁵² So Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and approached the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire.⁵³ But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head [providential act], crushing his skull [as God intended].⁵⁴ Then he called quickly to the young man, his armor bearer, and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, so that it will not be said of me, ‘A woman slew him.’” So the young man pierced him through, and he died.⁵⁵ When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead [Israelites aligned themselves with a wicked man], each departed to his home.⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father in killing his seventy brothers.⁵⁷ Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the [prophetic] curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them.

Summary of Judges 9:26-57:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God exacted justice upon Abimelech and the men of Shechem for unjustly killing the seventy sons of Gideon.
2. God caused division between Abimelech and the Shechemites (see Judg. 9:23) so that they warred against and killed each other. God is not the author of evil, but He does use evil spirits and wicked men to accomplish His divine purposes. Abimelech killed his brothers on a stone (Judg. 9:5), and God used a stone to crush his head (Judg. 9:53; cf. 2 Sam. 11:21). God controls the

affairs of mankind and brings justice in the time and manner He determines best.

3. According to Scripture, **God sovereignly creates and controls all life** (Gen. 2:17; Job. 1:21; Ps. 104:29–30; Eccl. 12:7; Dan. 5:23), **our birth and calling** (Ps. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:4-5; Gal. 1:15), **nature** (Ps. 147:8; Jonah 1:4; Mark 4:39-41), **small circumstances** (Prov. 16:33; cf. Ps. 22:18; Matt. 27:35), **sickness and health** (Ex. 4:11; 2 Chron. 21:12-20; Matt. 4:24), **prosperity and adversity** (1 Sam. 2:7; Job 2:10; Isa. 45:5-7), **suffering** (Ps. 119:71; Heb. 12:5-11), and **the development of godly character** (Rom. 5:2-5; Phil. 1:6; Jam. 1:2-4).

Judges 10:1-18

Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save [יָשָׁא *yasha* –save, deliver, rescue] Israel; and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. ² He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir. ³ After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ He had thirty sons [most likely implying polygamy] who rode on thirty donkeys [a picture of wealth and status], and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair to this day [perhaps a picture of nepotism]. ⁵ And Jair died and was buried in Kamon. ⁶ Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD [engaged in idolatry], served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. ⁷ The anger [אָפַח *aph* nose, nostril, anger] of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines [who attacked from the west] and into the hands of the sons of Ammon [because of Israel’s disobedience to God; see Deut. 28:15, 47-48]. ⁸ They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they *afflicted* all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites [attacking Israelites who lived east of the Jordan River]. ⁹ The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan [toward the west] to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed [see Deut. 28:25-34]. ¹⁰ Then [after eighteen years of suffering; see vs. 8] the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals [specifically cites the sin].” ¹¹ The LORD said to the sons of Israel, “*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines? ¹² “Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands. ¹³ “Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you [as long as they continue in disobedience]. ¹⁴ “Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress.” ¹⁵ The sons of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day.” [a plea of desperation] ¹⁶ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD [returned to God]; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer [implying God would act to alleviate their suffering]. ¹⁷ Then the sons of Ammon were summoned and they camped in Gilead [in preparation to attack Israel]. And the sons of Israel gathered together and camped in Mizpah. ¹⁸ The people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon? He shall become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.” [perhaps expressing human viewpoint]

Summary of Judges 10:1-18:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God delivered Israel through Tola and Jair, but after they died, Israel again chose idolatry rather than service to God, and the Lord punished them according to His covenant promises, and delivered them according to His mercy.
2. Both Tola and Jair were judges in Israel, and it appears their leadership produced stability and blessing for 45 years (Judg. 10:1-5). During the time of peace, Israel failed to grow spiritually, and eventually turned away from the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtaroth, which were the pagan deities of Aram, Sidon, Moab, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines (Judg. 10:6). God punished Israel for their idolatry (Judg. 10:7-9). But Israel cried out to the Lord for deliverance (Judg. 10:10; 15), and though He initially answered them with a rebuke, citing many past deliverances (Judg. 10:11-14), eventually their misery moved Him to act (Judg. 10:16).

It was not their repentance that he found impossible to ignore, but their misery. Only the Lord's pity stood between the Israelites and utter ruin. They deserved to be abandoned, but (such is his mercy) he could not give them up (*cf.* 2:18; Ho. 11:8–9).¹²

After Israel repented and God relented concerning His anger, Israel then gathered their military forces to battle the Ammonites (Judg. 10:17-18). In the next chapter Jephthah is chosen to fight against the Ammonites (Judg. 11:1-11), and he judged Israel six years until his death (Judg. 12:7). It seems Samson was a contemporaneous judge with Jephthah and was used by God to fight against the Philistines (see Judges Chapters 13-16).

3. We learn from Scripture that God is very patient with people, both unbelievers and believers (Ex 34:6; Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; Neh. 9:17; Jonah 4:2). God is patient with the unbeliever that he/she might come to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1-2; Col. 1:19-20; 1 Tim. 1:15-16). God is also patient with us as believers and gives us time and opportunity to advance to spiritual maturity, which can be hastened by trials (Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Jam. 1:2-4). We tend to desire a life of comfort, but such a life often produces weak character. God desires that we have a godly character, and this occurs when we have biblical values and consistently make good choices that are pleasing to Him (Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 1:9-10; Heb. 11:6).

¹² D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 277.

Judges 11:1-28

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot [perhaps a Canaanite]. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. ² Gilead's wife bore him sons [who would be his heirs]; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, "You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman." [Jephthah suffered family abuse] ³ So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him. ⁴ It came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel [by God's doing; see [Judg. 10:6-9](#)]. ⁵ When the sons of Ammon fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob [perhaps seeking a human solution]; ⁶ and they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon." ⁷ Then Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me and drive me from my father's house? So why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?" ⁸ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "For this reason we have now returned to you, that you may go with us and fight with the sons of Ammon and become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." [called Jephthah back when they needed him] ⁹ So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back to fight against the sons of Ammon and the LORD gives them up to me, will I become your head?" ¹⁰ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD is witness between us; surely we will do as you have said." [God will judge either party if the covenant between them is broken] ¹¹ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD at Mizpah. ¹² Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon, saying, "What is between you and me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" [Jephthah first seeks a diplomatic solution; cf. vs. 14] ¹³ The king of the sons of Ammon said to the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and the Jordan; therefore, return them peaceably now." ¹⁴ But Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the sons of Ammon [seeking a peaceful solution first], ¹⁵ and they said to him, "Thus says Jephthah, 'Israel did not take away the land of Moab nor the land of the sons of Ammon. ¹⁶ 'For when they came up from Egypt [several hundred years earlier; cf. Exodus chapters 12-14], and Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh, ¹⁷ then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let us pass through your land," but the king of Edom would not listen [see Num. 20:14-21]. And they also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh [see Deut. 1:46]. ¹⁸ 'Then they went through the wilderness and around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped beyond the Arnon; but

they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon *was* the border of Moab [see Deut. 2:1-8].¹⁹ ‘And Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land to our place.”²⁰ ‘But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; so Sihon gathered all his people and camped in Jahaz and fought with Israel.²¹ ‘The LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country [see Deut. 2:24-37].²² ‘So they possessed all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan.²³ ‘Since now the LORD, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before His people Israel, are you then to possess it?²⁴ ‘Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? [implying spiritual forces behind politics and war] So whatever the LORD our God has driven out before us, we will possess it.²⁵ ‘Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them? [see Num. 22-24]²⁶ ‘While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?²⁷ ‘I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.’²⁸ But the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded the message which Jephthah sent him [rejecting Jephthah’s diplomacy; see Judg. 11:12, 14].

Summary of Judges 11:1-28:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God elected Jephthah—a man of unjust suffering—to lead as Israel’s judge during a time of conflict with the Ammonites.
2. Jephthah was a great warrior, but he was born the son of a prostitute (Judg. 11:1), and was rejected by his brothers for something he could not control (Judg. 11:2). Jephthah’s destiny as a leader in Israel was partly shaped by the abuse of his brothers. Like David (1 Sam. 22:2), Jephthah became the leader of social outcasts like himself (Judg. 11:3). When Israel was attacked by the Ammonites, they needed a great warrior, so they called for Jephthah (Judg. 11:4-6). Jephthah accepted the offer to be leader in Gilead and to fight and save the people who originally rejected him (Judg. 11:7-11), displaying himself as more righteous than those who called him. After accepting Israel’s offer to be the leader in Gilead, Jephthah sought a peaceful solution to the problem through diplomacy (Judg. 11:12, 14). Jephthah was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32), and the moral authority of his diplomacy rested upon the acts of God as revealed in

Scripture (Judg. 11: 9, 21, 23–24). However, the Ammonites rejected Jephthah's diplomacy (Judg. 11:28), and the biblical basis for his authority, and chose war (Judg. 11:32-33). The king of Ammon did not care about truth or justice, because it did not serve his agenda.

3. God is aware of the abuse and suffering of all people, and He uses hardships to humble and exalt those whom He elects for greater purposes (1 Sam. 2:6-8; 2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 75:6-7; Dan. 2:21; 4:37; cf. Rom. 5:3-5). Many who are rejected by worldly standards are the very ones the Lord elevates to be His servants (1 Sam. 16:1-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Jam. 2:5). It is our connection with God and His purposes that elevates us to a place of divine service and gives value to our daily walk.

Judges 11:29-40

Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah [to empower him to do God's will; see Judg. 3:10; 6:34; cf. Ex. 31:3; 1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13], so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon [to fight them; see vss. 32-33].³⁰ Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand,³¹ then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and [possibly translated "or"] I will offer it up as a burnt offering."³² So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD gave them into his hand [it was God who gave the victory].³³ He struck them with a very great slaughter from Aroer to the entrance of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.³⁴ When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing [joy that her father was successful and not harmed]. Now she was his one *and* only child; besides her he had no son or daughter.³⁵ When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take *it* back." [Jephthah was grieved that his daughter was the object of his vow of sacrifice]³⁶ So she said to him, "My father, you have given your word to the LORD; do to me as you have said, since the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the sons of Ammon." [she is as committed to keeping the vow as Jephthah]³⁷ She said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity [because she will never be married and have children], I and my companions."³⁸ Then he said, "Go." So he sent her away for two months; and she left with her companions, and wept on the mountains because of her virginity.³⁹ At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man. Thus it became a custom in Israel,⁴⁰ that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year [to honor her obedience to her father and God].

Summary of Judges 11:29-40:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God empowered Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites; however, before the battle, Jephthah made an unnecessary and thoughtless vow which his daughter had to fulfill.

2. Jephthah may have felt he had to barter with God as an act of diplomacy in order to secure his victory over the Ammonites, and he did this by making a vow (Judg. 11:30-31). Making a vow was a serious matter that required forethought and commitment (Deut. 23:21-23). There are two major views about Jephthah's vow to sacrifice:
 1. Jephthah actually offered his daughter as a human sacrifice, and the statement "a burnt offering" should be taken at face value. If this is the case, then Jephthah probably derived this strange understanding and commitment from the Canaanite culture, for human sacrifice was forbidden under the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5). This would also explain Jephthah's grief when he said his daughter, "You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take *it* back" (Judg. 11:35).
 2. Jephthah only dedicated his daughter for service to the Lord and did not kill her (cf. 1 Sam. 1:9-11; 26-28). This understanding is derived from an alternate reading of Judges 11:31 in which the word "and" might also be rendered "or", so that Jephthah's vow was to dedicate for service whoever came through the door of his home, "or" to sacrifice an animal if it appeared. This view is favorable also because of other clues in the text, namely, Jephthah knew Scripture well enough not to make such a blunder (Judg. 11:15-27), previous Scripture views him as a thoughtful man, the text seems to emphasize dedication when it reads that his daughter "had no relations with a man" (Judg. 11:39), and future generations honored her faithfulness (Judg. 11:40).

Whatever the view, the overall lesson is that we should never make hasty vows to God.

3. The work of the Holy Spirit in the OT is different than in the NT. In the OT, the Holy Spirit empowered only a few believers such as **Artisans** (Ex. 31:1-5), **Judges** (Num. 11:25-29; Judg. 3:9-10), **Prophets** (Ezek. 2:2), and **Kings** (1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13). In the NT, the Holy Spirit baptizes each believer into union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), indwells us (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19), seals us (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), gives us spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-11), glorifies Jesus (John 16:13-15), fills us (Eph. 5:18), and sustains our spiritual walk (Gal. 5:16-18, 25). The spiritual walk is what God expects of His children. Walking with God means we are rightly related to Him by faith (John 3:16), and that we continue in faith (2 Cor. 5:7), trusting Him in all things (Prov. 3:5-6). Walking with God does not mean a life of sinless perfection; rather, it means we handle our sin in a biblical manner with humility and confession (e.g. 2 Sam. 12:1-23; cf. 1 Kings 11:4; 1 John 1:8-10). Walking with God means we go in the same direction He is going, and

like a friend, we are glad to share in His fellowship (1 John 1:1-10). It means God is regularly in our thoughts, and we live every day conscious of Him and His will for our lives (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:16-17). It means we are open and honest with Him about everything, and agree to let His light shine in our lives, not fearing what it exposes (1 John 1:5-7). It means being sensitive to what may offend Him, and making every effort to please Him through a life of faith (2 Cor. 5:9; Heb. 11:6).

Judges 12:1-15

Then the men of Ephraim were summoned [perhaps by their tribal leaders], and they crossed to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the sons of Ammon without calling us to go with you? [Ephraim is behaving contentiously, as before; see [Judg. 8:1-2](#)] We will burn your house down on you.” [threatening harm against Jephthah and his family] ² Jephthah said to them, “I and my people were at great strife with the sons of Ammon; when I called you [Jephthah states he did invite them], you did not deliver me from their hand [Ephraim refused to help]. ³ “When I saw that you would not deliver *me*, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the sons of Ammon, and the LORD gave them into my hand [the Lord gave the victory; see [Judg. 11:32-33](#)]. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?” [Jephthah challenges their perception of events] ⁴ Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said [about the Gileadites], “You are fugitives [i.e. deserters] of Ephraim, O Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim *and* in the midst of Manasseh [the Ephraimites falsely accuse the Gileadites of being disloyal].” ⁵ The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim [in order to cut off their retreat]. And it happened when *any of* the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,” [lying to protect himself] ⁶ then they would say to him [in order to test him], “Say now, ‘Shibboleth.’” [שִׁבּוֹלֶ֑ת *shibboleth* – a flowing stream] But he said, “Sibboleth,” [שִׁבּוֹ֑לֶת *sibboleth* – an ear of corn] for he could not pronounce it correctly [since he had a different dialect]. Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim. ⁷ Jephthah judged Israel six years [he rescued Israel from external oppression]. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead. ⁸ Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him. ⁹ He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters [from a polygamous lifestyle] *whom* he gave in marriage outside *the family*, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons [intermarried with Canaanites]. And he judged Israel seven years [rescued Israel from oppression]. ¹⁰ Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. ¹¹ Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him; and he judged Israel ten years [rescued Israel from oppression]. ¹² Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. ¹³ Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him [rescued Israel from oppression]. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys [a picture of polygamy as well as a wealthy lifestyle; cf. [Judg. 10:4](#)]; and he judged Israel eight years [rescued Israel from oppression]. ¹⁵ Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Summary of Judges 12:1-15:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Jephthah and the Gileadites fought against the Ephraimites and killed 42,000 men. Subsequent to Jephthah, God raised Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon as judges in Israel.
2. The Ephraimites possessed a strange jealousy that influenced them to quarrel with others. They had previously argued with Gideon after he had defeated the Midianites (Judg. 8:1-2), and now they contended with Jephthah after he had defeated the Ammonites (Judg. 11:32-33), claiming they had not been called to help fight in the battle and threatening to destroy Jephthah's home (Judg. 12:1). Jephthah reports he had called them for help, but they refused (Judg. 12:2-3). The Ephraimites then spoke condescendingly to the Gileadites, accusing them of being fugitives from the tribe of Ephraim (Judg. 12:4). Jephthah could have overlooked the personal insults hurled at him by the Ephraimites (Prov. 19:11), but the threat of attack against his family necessitated self-defense. The jealous and hostile Ephraimites picked a fight with Jephthah and the Gileadites and the conflict cost Ephraim 42,000 lives (Judg. 12:4-6). Arrogant people often refuse to recognize their faults and will resort to violence—either physical or verbal—rather than admit their failings.
3. After the death of Jephthah, three minor judges are listed: Ibzan (Judg. 12:8-10), Elon (Judg. 12:11-12), and Abdon (Judg. 12:13-15). These are classified as minor judges because we know so little about them. The other minor judges listed in the book of Judges are Tola (10:1-2), Jair (10:3-5), and Shamgar (3:31).
4. The judges were successful in many ways because they were obedient to the task that the Lord assigned to them. Though the judges were successful and worthy of praise (see Heb. 11:32-34), they were also sinful men who were susceptible to the pagan values and lifestyles promoted by their surrounding culture (i.e. idolatry, polygamy, dynastic ambitions, etc.).
5. Among God's people we observe both righteous and sinful behavior. This is because we have two natures that simultaneously pull us in antithetical directions (Rom. 7:15-21; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:8-10). We are born with a sinful nature which has a natural affinity for Satan's values and world-system and which is never eradicated during our time on earth (Prov. 20:9; Jer. 17:9; Ps. 130:3; 1 John 1:8). All believers sin (1 Ki. 8:46; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 53:6; Jam. 3:2; 1 John 1:10). However, as born-again believers (John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), we also have a new nature that desires to serve God and to walk with Him (Ps. 1:2; 40:8; Rom. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 4:16; 1 John 2:29; 3:9). Walking with God means He is regularly in our thoughts

(Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:16-17), that His Word saturates our thinking (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18), that we apply His Word (Matt. 7:24-27; Jam. 1:22; 4:17), that we are open and honest with Him (1 Jo. 1:5-7), and that we make every effort to please Him through a life of faith (2 Cor. 5:9; Heb. 11:6). Over time, His qualities become our qualities, and the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in us (Gal. 5:22-23).

Judges 13:1-25

Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD [seventh time; Judg. 3:5-8, 12-14; 4:1-3; 6:1-2; 8:33-35; 10:6-9], so that the LORD [יהוה *YHVH*] gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years [and they ruled Israel; see Judg. 14:4; 15:11].² There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no *children* [like Sarah and Hannah; see Gen. 11:30; 1 Sam. 1:5-6].³ Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman [a visible appearance of God; see vs. 22; cf. Gen. 31:11-13; Ex. 3:1-6] and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son [a special act of God].⁴ “Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.⁵ “For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite [נָזִיר *nazir* - to dedicate; consecrate; set apart; see Num. 6:1-21] to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” [Israel’s deliverance was continued by Samuel and David]⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name.⁷ “But he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’” [she had a role in Samson’s life from conception onward]⁸ Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.”⁹ God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.¹⁰ So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came the *other* day has appeared to me.”¹¹ Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am.”¹² Manoah said, “Now when your words come *to pass* [an expression of faith], what shall be the boy’s mode of life and his vocation?”¹³ So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Let the woman pay attention to all that I said.¹⁴ “She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.”¹⁵ Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.” [a show of hospitality]¹⁶ The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food [refuses meal], but if you prepare a burnt offering, *then* offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.¹⁷ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your

words come *to pass*, we may honor you?”¹⁸ But the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” [פִּלִי – *pili* – *wonderful, incomprehensible*; see Ps. 139:6; Isa. 9:6]¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders [i.e. *did a wonderful thing*] while Manoah and his wife looked on.²⁰ For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground [a *natural response to a divine encounter*; see Rev. 1:17].²¹ Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.²² So Manoah said to his wife, “We will surely die, for we have seen God.” [excited response; same as Gideon; Judg. 6:22-23]²³ But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear *things* like this at this time.” [she calms her husband with biblical-rational thinking]²⁴ Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him.²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahanehdan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Summary of Judges 13:1-25:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God revealed to Manoah and his wife that they would have a son who would help to begin the defeat the Philistines (Judg. 13:5).
2. Manoah’s wife was barren and could not have children (like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth). God intervened to provide a son—Samson—that He would use to accomplish His will among His people. Samson had a divine calling from birth (Judg. 13:2-25), as did Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5), John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17), and the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:15-16). Samson fought against the Philistines, who were later defeated by Samuel (1 Sam. 7:10-14), and David (2 Sam. 5:17-25). Samson was a contemporary with Jephthah and Samuel.
3. Samson was called to be a Nazarite from birth until death (Judg. 13:7). The Nazarite vow was normally a voluntary consecration to God which required abstaining from wine, cutting one’s hair, and not touching a dead body (Num. 6:2-6). Abstaining from wine would have cleared the mind for biblical thinking, leaving the hair uncut was a public declaration that one had taken the Nazarite vow, and not touching a corpse would have kept one ceremonially clean for worship.

4. Manoah requested to know his son's future vocation, perhaps to prepare Samson for his future work (Judg. 13:12). God refused Manoah's request, but restated the original instruction concerning his wife's diet during her time of pregnancy (Judg. 13:4, 7, 13-14). Manoah and his wife both came to realize they'd had a personal encounter with God (Judg. 13:20-21); however, their responses were different. Manoah responded with irrational fear, believing they would die (Judg. 13:22), but his wife corrected his thinking with a biblical-rational response in order to allay his fears (Judg. 13:23).
5. Though much of Samson's life is marked by carnality, he also obeyed God, and this resulted in his being recorded among God's faithful (Heb. 11:32). We learn from Scripture that God often calls the weak to accomplish His will in the world (1 Cor. 1:26-29); however, a divine call does not guarantee spiritual success (Jam. 4:17), as each believer must choose to walk with God (Gal. 5:16-17), and to obey His will (Rom. 6:11-13). Spiritual success depends on biblical obedience.

Judges 14:1-20

Then Samson went down to Timnah [about 4 miles west of Zorah] and saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he came back and told his father and mother, “I saw a woman in Timnah, *one* of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.” [forbidden under the Mosaic Law; see [Deut. 7:1-4](#)] ³ Then his father and his mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” [uncircumcised = unbelievers outside the Abrahamic covenant; see [Gen. 17:1-14](#)] But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she looks good to me.” [Samson is operating from the flesh; 1 John 2:16] ⁴ However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD [Josh. 11:20; Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:35], for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines [God would use Samson’s weakness to provoke the Philistines; see [Judg. 13:5](#)]. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. ⁵ Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion *came* roaring toward him. ⁶ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat [with ease] though he had nothing in his hand [i.e. no weapon]; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done [perhaps his parents were in Timnah]. ⁷ So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson. ⁸ When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. ⁹ So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went [violation of Nazarite vow; see [Num. 6:6](#)]. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them and they ate *it*; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion [hiding the source]. ¹⁰ Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there [מִשְׁתֶּה *mishteh* - a drinking party], for the young men customarily did this. ¹¹ When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. ¹² Then Samson said to them, “Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes [clothes were used as a form of income]. ¹³ “But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.” And they said to him, “Propound your riddle, that we may hear it.” ¹⁴ So he said to them, “Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.” But they could not tell the riddle in three days. ¹⁵ Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father’s house with fire [threatening murder; see [Judg. 15:6](#)]. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not *so*?” ¹⁶ Samson’s wife wept before him and said, “You only hate me, and you do not love

me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told *it* to me.” And he said to her, “Behold, I have not told *it* to my father or mother; so should I tell you?”¹⁷ However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard [she was persistent; cf. [Judg. 16:16](#)]. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people.¹⁸ So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, “What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?” And he said to them, “If you had not plowed with my heifer [i.e. harvested with another man’s animal], you would not have found out my riddle.”¹⁹ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily [as before; see vs. 6], and he went down to Ashkelon [23 miles SW of Timnah] and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of *clothes* to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father’s house.²⁰ But Samson’s wife was *given* to his companion who had been his friend [the father thought Samson abandoned her; see [Judg. 15:1-2](#)].

Summary of Judges 14:1-20:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God used Samson’s fleshly desires as an occasion to provoke the Philistines.
2. Samson appears as one who desires to satisfy his flesh with women (Judg. 14:1-4; cf. 16:1, 4), food (vss. 14:8-9), games (vs. 14:12), and clothing (vs. 14:13). He sought to marry an unbelieving Philistine woman (Judg. 14:3), and this was contrary to Scripture (Deut. 7:1-4; cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-16). Samson was a strong-willed child who pushed to get his way, little did he know his new Philistine wife would prove pushy too (Judg. 14:16-17). God used Samson’s strong will and sinful choices as an occasion to cause disruption between the Philistines and Israelites (Judg. 13:4-5; 14:6, 19). Samson probably felt emboldened when the Spirit of God gave him superhuman strength to kill a lion that attacked him at a vineyard (Judg. 14:5-6). It is possible Samson broke two parts of his Nazarite vow by touching a dead carcass and drinking wine (Judg. 14:8-10). Scripture reveals it was the cutting his hair that caused the Spirit of the Lord to depart from him (Judg. 16:17-20; cf. 13:5). At the wedding feast Samson gave a riddle and promised a payment of clothes to thirty of his wedding guests (Judg. 14:12-14). When the guests could not answer the riddle, they threatened Samson’s wife and family (Judg. 14:15). Rather than go to her new husband about the problem, she sought to handle it herself, believing the threat of her countrymen was greater than Samson’s ability to protect. Samson’s wife wore him down through repeated weeping and accusations of hating her (Judg. 14:16-17). Samson broke and gave her the answer to his riddle, which she then revealed to her people, who

demanded payment (Judg. 14:18). Samson—in anger—killed thirty Philistines in the city of Ashkelon in order to pay his debt (Judg. 14:19). Samson lost his wife when he left Timnah and returned home to his family (Judg. 14:20).

3. God desires we walk with Him and obey His will (Prov. 3:5-6); however, His sovereign plans are never threatened or defeated by human failures, as He can providentially include sinful actions to accomplish His plans (see Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28). Human desires are not wrong, as long as we don't become like beasts which live only by their desires (Ps. 32:8-9; 73:21-22).

Judges 15:1-20

But after a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife with a young goat [assuming she is still his wife], and said, “I will go in to my wife in *her* room.” [to consummate the marriage] But her father did not let him enter. ² Her father said, “I really thought that you hated her intensely; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please let her be yours instead.” [to appease Samson’s anger] ³ Samson then said to them, “This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm.” ⁴ Samson went and caught three hundred foxes [שׂוּאָל *shual* – fox or jackal], and took torches, and turned *the foxes* tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails. ⁵ When he had set fire to the torches, he released the foxes into the standing grain of the Philistines, thus burning up both the shocks and the standing grain, along with the vineyards *and* groves. ⁶ Then the Philistines said, “Who did this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and gave her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire [perhaps easier targets than Samson]. ⁷ Samson said to them, “Since you act like this, I will surely take revenge on you, but after that I will quit.” ⁸ He struck them ruthlessly with a great slaughter [killed untold number]; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam. ⁹ Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah, and spread out in Lehi. ¹⁰ The men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” And they said, “We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him as he did to us.” [to kill him] ¹¹ Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? [accepting the Philistines as overlords] What then is this that you have done to us?” [upset with Samson for causing disruption] And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.” ¹² They said to him, “We have come down to bind you so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me.” ¹³ So they said to him, “No, but we will bind you fast and give you into their hands; yet surely we will not kill you [they are willing to give up God’s man to keep artificial peace with the enemy].” Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock [Samson permits; perhaps to preserve the lives of his fellow Israelites]. ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily [divine enablement] so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. ¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it [an unlikely weapon, see Judg. 3:31]. ¹⁶ Then Samson said, “With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps [a picture of bodies piled upon each other], With the jawbone of a donkey I have killed a thousand men.” ¹⁷ When he had finished speaking, he threw

the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi [*Heb. Jawbone Hill*].¹⁸ Then he became very thirsty [*suffering physical exhaustion*], and he called to the LORD and said [*Samson's first recorded prayer*], “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant [עֶבֶד *ebed – slave, servant*], and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” [*feels the fatigue of the battle*]¹⁹ But God split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his [*natural*] strength returned and he revived. Therefore he named it En-hakkore [*Heb. Spring of the one who cries out*], which is in Lehi to this day.²⁰ So he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Summary of Judges 15:1-20:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God continued to work through Samson to cause disruption between the Philistines and Israelites.
2. After the conflict with the Philistines during the wedding feast (Judg. 14:12-20), Samson returned to claim his wife, only to find her father had given her to another man (Judg. 15:1-2). Samson was so outraged that he felt revenge was justified (Judg. 15:3), so he burned the crops of the Philistines (Judg. 15:4-5). The Philistines then killed Samson's wife and her father, perhaps because they were easier targets (Judg. 15:6). Samson retaliated again and killed an untold number (Judg. 15:7-8). The Philistines prepared for war and camped in Judah, and this caused great alarm among the Israelites (Judg. 15:9-10). 3000 Judahites came to Samson upset that he had caused disruption between them and the Philistines and sought to deliver him over to death (Judg. 15:11-13). When the Philistines saw Samson bound, they shouted a victory cry over him, but the Spirit of the Lord empowered Samson, and with a fresh jawbone of a donkey he killed a thousand men (Judg. 15:14-16). Afterward he named the battlefield Jawbone Hill (Judg. 15:17). God then provided Samson with the natural resources he needed to restore his physical and mental health (Judg. 15:18-19).
3. God had originally called the Israelites to take the land by force (Deut. 7:1-6), yet the Israelites in Samson's day had disobeyed the Lord and turned to idols, so God was punishing them for forty years (Judg. 13:1). The Lord brought about Samson's birth to begin Israel's deliverance (Judg. 13:5), but the task would later be completed by Samuel and David (1 Sam. 7:10-14; 2 Sam. 5:17-25). The sinful state of the Israelites kept them from seeing Samson as God's deliverer, and their spiritual darkness produced in them a misplaced anger at Samson for upsetting the Philistines. They sided with the enemy rather than God's judge, preferring wrong-slavery to freedom.

4. Christians should strive for peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Heb. 12:14), but never when it means forfeiting God's will (Dan. 3:16-18; 6:1-10; Acts 5:27-29; 1 Pet. 4:14-16). The believer with spiritual integrity will stand with God, even when other believers choose friendship with the world. Having spiritual integrity means being consistent with God; it means knowing and choosing His will above self-interest, and calling wayward believers to do the same. We need Christians with integrity.

Judges 16:1-31

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot [יששׁה ishshah – woman, wife, female] there, and went in to her [בוא אֵלָּהּ bo el – has sexual connotation].² When it was told to the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here,” they surrounded *the place* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, “*Let us wait* until the morning light, then we will kill him.”³ Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars [supernatural act]; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron [about 38 miles east].⁴ After this it came about that he loved a woman [יששׁה ishshah – woman, wife, female] in the valley of Sorek [foothills 13 miles SW of Jerusalem], whose name was Delilah [Heb. devotee; possibly a temple prostitute].⁵ The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and see where his great strength *lies* and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver [ten pieces of silver approximates an annual salary; see Judg. 17:10].”⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you [openly bold].”⁷ Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh cords [made from animal intestines] that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like any *other* man.”⁸ Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them.⁹ Now she had *men* lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered.¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies [said the deceiver]; now please tell me how you may be bound.”¹¹ He said to her, “If they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used, then I will become weak and be like any *other* man.”¹² So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” For the *men* were lying in wait in the inner room. But he snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread.¹³ Then Delilah said to Samson, “Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies [said the deceiver]; tell me how you may be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web *and fasten it with a pin, then I will become weak and be like any other man.*”¹⁴ So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his hair and wove them into the web. And she fastened *it* with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web.¹⁵ Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? [said the deceiver who loves money] You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength

is.”¹⁶ It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.¹⁷ So he told her all *that was* in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any *other* man.” [his sinful relationship breaks down his character; cf. 1 Cor. 15:33]¹⁸ When Delilah saw that he had told her all *that was* in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines [to betray Samson], saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all *that is* in his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands.¹⁹ She made him sleep on her knees [perhaps drugging him], and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him [perhaps to wake him], and his strength left him [because he had broken his Nazarite vow].²⁰ She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free [false confidence].” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him [cf. 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11].²¹ Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison [doing women’s work].²² However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.²³ Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god [a Canaanite grain deity], and to rejoice, for they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands [they assume victory as divine approval].”²⁴ When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hands, even the destroyer of our country, who has slain many of us.”²⁵ It so happened when they were in high spirits [i.e. inebriated], that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may amuse us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars [to humiliate him].²⁶ Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, “Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them [Samson is aware of the building structure].”²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And about 3,000 men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was amusing *them*.²⁸ Then Samson called to the LORD [יהוה *Yhvh*] and said [Samson’s second recorded prayer], “O Lord [אֲדֹנָי *Adonay*] GOD [יהוה *Yhvh*], please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God [אֱלֹהִים *elohim*], that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”²⁹ Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.³⁰ And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” [he had earlier asked to live; see Judg. 15:18-19] And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.³¹ Then his brothers and all his father’s

household came down, took him, brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years [cf. Judg. 15:20].

Summary of Judges 16:1-31:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Samson fell into sin that ultimately led to divine discipline—defeat by the Philistines, gouging out of his eyes, public humiliation, and death—but God used Samson one last time to attack the Philistines, and so God’s will was accomplished through His servant.
2. It’s not clear why Samson went to Gaza; but once there, he fell into sin and slept with a prostitute. It was there that the Philistines tried to capture him; but Samson supernaturally tore the gates from the city wall and transported them to an adjacent hill, showing that neither guards nor gates could restrain him (Judg. 16:2-3). Samson then fell in love with Delilah, but it was a selfish relationship for both of them, born out of lust. Samson loved games and being promiscuous, and Delilah loved money. Biblical love is consistent with God and is born out of a virtuous relationship with Him (reflecting His loyalty, goodness, and grace). Samson was defeated by the woman he loved and was betrayed by her to his enemies. His spiritual blindness and slavery to immorality preceded his physical blindness and slavery to the Philistines. Though it was Samson’s failures that resulted in divine discipline (his loss of strength, eyesight, capture and humiliation), it was his turning back to God and crying out to Him that resulted in one final heroic act. In the end, Samson wanted to die, and God enabled him to end his life while also giving him one last opportunity to serve as a judge and defeat Israel’s enemy.
3. Samson is a complex character who simultaneously displays the characteristics of a righteous person (in judging Israel) as well as a sinner (pursuing fleshly desires). However, God sovereignly worked through Samson’s strengths and weaknesses to accomplish His will. Samson served the Lord and did His will (Heb. 11:32), but his poor choices of worldly companions and lifestyle (1 Cor. 15:33) led to divine discipline and eventual death (Heb. 12:5-11). Throughout his life Samson appears to be a type of Israel in that he had a special calling from God (Judg. 13:7; Deut. 7:6-8), was blessed by God (Judg. 13:24; Deut. 2:7), had godly supervision (Judg. 14:3; Deut. 6:1-2), and was led by the Lord to defeat the enemy (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19; Deut. 20:3-4), yet he squandered his calling by following his sinful passions and turning away from God (Judg. 14:3; 16:1, 4; cf. Judg. 2:11; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).

God uses us, even with all our imperfections and failings, and should we fail terribly and suffer divine discipline, there is still hope for ministry if we'll humble ourselves and seek the Lord (Judg. 16:26-30; cf. Ps. 51:6-13). Christian ministry is always hindered to the degree we choose to operate by fleshly desires and worldly values. God is very gracious and tolerant, but does not leave unpunished those who repeatedly defy Him (Heb. 12:5-11). Effective Christians are those who learn God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:2), live God's will (Jam. 1:22), and advance to spiritual maturity (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Judges 17:1-13

Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah [מִיכָהוּ *Mikayehu – who is like Yahweh?*].² He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it [i.e. stole it].” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD [יְהוָה *Yhvh – proper name of God*].”³ He then returned the eleven hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image [carved wood idol overlaid with metal; a violation of Exodus 20:4-5; Deut. 27:15] and a molten image [molded metal idol]; now therefore, I will return them to you.”⁴ So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred *pieces* of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah [his mother led him into idolatry].⁵ And the man Micah had a shrine [בַּיִת *bayith – a house for his idols; even though the Lord’s Tabernacle was nearby, at Shiloh; see Judg. 18:31*] and he made an ephod [אֶפֶוד *ephod – priestly garment; see Ex. 28:3-6*] and household idols [תְּרָפִים *teraphim – small carved idols*] and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest [God chose the Levites—not Ephraimites—to lead worship at the Tabernacle; see Ex. 40:13-15; Num. 18:1-7].⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel [to enforce God’s law]; every man did what was right in his own eyes [concerning self-made religion].⁷ Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite [Moses’ grandson, Jonathan; see Judg. 18:30]; and he was staying there [living outside the 48 cities designated for Levitical priests; see Num. 35:1-7; Josh. 21:1-41].⁸ Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he might find a *place*; and as he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah.⁹ Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find a *place*.”¹⁰ Micah then said to him, “Dwell with me and be a father [i.e. spiritual father; see 2 Ki. 13:14] and a priest to me [the Levites were to serve the Aaronic priests; not replace them; see Ex. 40:13-15; Num. 3:9-10; 18:1-7], and I will give you ten *pieces* of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance [basic provisions for living].” So the Levite went in [a picture of spiritual compromise].¹¹ The Levite agreed to live with the man [rather than correcting Micah’s false theology, the Levite joins him in his idolatry], and the young man became to him like one of his sons.¹² So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah.¹³ Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, seeing I have a Levite as priest.” [a false assumption]

Summary of Judges 17:1-13:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that an Israelite named Micah engaged in religious syncretism by blending the worship of Yahweh with the religious cultic practices of the Canaanites.
2. Micah is introduced as a son who stole a great amount of wealth from his mother. He returned the wealth fearing the curse she'd uttered on the thief, and was subsequently blessed in the name of Yahweh (Judg. 17:1-2). Micah's mother then—in the name of Yahweh—used some of the silver to create a molten image and graven image, which she gave to her son (Judg. 17:3-4). Micah took the images from his mother and put them in his shrine and made an ephod (perhaps to worship; see Judg. 8:24-27) and more household idols and then ordained his son to be the family priest (Judg. 17:5). Micah's house was a type of Israel in his day, in which “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6), and all of this was contrary to God's commands (Exodus 20:4-5; Deut. 27:15). Micah then welcomed a wandering Levite (Judg. 17:7-10), whom he consecrated to serve as his family priest (Judg. 17:11-12). This was contrary to Scripture, for only descendants of Aaron could serve as priests, whereas Levites were to serve as priestly assistants (Num. 8:19; 18:1-7). Micah falsely believed he would have God's blessing by having a Levitical priest as the leader of his new religion (Judg. 17:13). This would later prove untrue (see Judg. 18).
3. Religious syncretism is the blending of the doctrines and practices of two or more religions in order to come up with something new. In Judges 17 we have the record of a man named Micah who blended the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites with the worship of Yahweh and the end result was a monstrous self-serving religion that promoted spiritual anarchy among God's people (see Judg. 18). Under the Mosaic Covenant, the priests and Levites were to instruct and guide God's people to walk with and serve Him at the tabernacle/temple (Lev. 10:8-11; Deut. 17:9-10; 33:8-10; 2 Chron. 17:7-9; 35:3; Mal. 2:1-7). Under the New Covenant, pastors & teachers are to instruct and guide Christians to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), that believers may walk with and serve God in the home (Eph. 5:22-6:9), the local church (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 10:23-25), and to behave godly toward outsiders (Col. 4:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:9-12). God's revelation in the Bible makes it clear that there is no room for religious syncretism (Exodus 20:4-5; Deut. 27:15; Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6; Acts 4:12). There will always be false teachers among God's people, and only those who know and live God's Word will find protection against their false teachings and practices (Deut. 13:1-4; 18:18-22; Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1; Rev. 2:2).

Judges 18:1-31

In those days there was no king of Israel [to enforce God's Law]; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel [Dan had received land; see [Josh. 19:40-48](#); but later lost it to the Amorites; see [Judg. 1:34](#)].² So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, "Go, search the land." And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.³ When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there and said to him, "Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this place? And what do you have here?"⁴ He said to them, "Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest." [contrary to Scripture, for only descendants of Aaron could serve as priests, whereas Levites were to serve as priestly assistants; see [Ex. 40:12-15](#); [Num. 8:19](#); [18:1-7](#)]⁵ They said to him, "Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous." [the Danites should have stoned Micah and his Levite for practicing idolatry and then sought God's will at Shiloh with legitimate priests; see [Deut. 13:6-11](#); [Judg. 18:31](#)]⁶ The priest said to them, "Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD'S approval [assuming to speak for God]."⁷ Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure [not feeling threatened]; for there was no ruler humiliating them for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone [preferring isolation in a remote location].⁸ When they came back to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, "What do you report?"⁹ They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land."¹⁰ "When you enter, you will come to a secure people with a spacious land; for God has given it into your hand [assuming God's blessing], a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth."¹¹ Then from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out [six hundred was probably sufficient considering Laish was not expecting an attack].¹² They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan [i.e. camp of Dan] to this day [from the writer's perspective]; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim.¹³ They passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.¹⁴ Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? [in violation of God's

Word; see [Exodus 20:4-5](#); [Deut. 27:15](#)] Now therefore, consider what you should do.”¹⁵ They turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare.¹⁶ The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.¹⁷ Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up *and* entered there, *and* took the graven image and the ephod and household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.¹⁸ When these went into Micah’s house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”¹⁹ They said to him, “Be silent, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?” [\[the Danites offer him a better job\]](#)²⁰ The priest’s heart was glad [\[contrary to God’s will\]](#), and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people [\[the Levite followed the idols\]](#).²¹ Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the valuables in front of them [\[realizing they may be attacked from the rear\]](#).²² When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who *were* in the houses near Micah’s house assembled and overtook the sons of Dan.²³ They cried to the sons of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is *the matter* with you, that you have assembled together?”²⁴ He said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have besides? [\[Micah’s life is empty without his idols\]](#) So how can you say to me, ‘What is *the matter* with you?’”²⁵ The sons of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will fall upon you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household.”²⁶ So the sons of Dan went on their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house [\[Micah abandons his gods to preserve his life\]](#).²⁷ Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure [\[unsuspecting and unprepared for an attack\]](#), and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire.²⁸ And there was no one to deliver *them*, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.²⁹ They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.³⁰ The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image [\[a act of spiritual anarchy\]](#); and Jonathan, the son of Gershom [\[see Ex. 2:22\]](#), the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land [\[God will judge them for their sin; Deut. 28:49-65\]](#).³¹ So they set up for themselves Micah’s graven image which he had made [\[establishing tribal](#)

idolatry, which continued beyond the days of Jeroboam; see [1 Ki. 12:25-30](#)], all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

Summary of Judges 18:1-31:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that the tribe of Dan desired land beyond what God had allotted to them, and by force stole Micah's idols and priest, and violently attacked the people of Laish and renamed their city Dan.
2. The tribe of Dan sent five spies to search for new territory (Judg. 18:1-2) beyond the choice land allotted to them (Josh. 19:40-48) because they had failed to drive out the Amorites who lived there (Judg. 1:34). The spies encountered Micah's Levite-priest and asked for divine guidance and received a false blessing (Judg. 18:3-6). The five men came to the peaceful town of Laish and saw they were ungoverned and unprotected (Judg. 8:7). After returning home they informed their brethren about their findings and counseled them to attack the city and take possession of the land (Judg. 18:8-12). Six hundred Danites marched toward Laish, stopping at Micah's house along the way and stealing his idols (Judg. 18:13-18), and convincing his priest to serve the tribe of Dan (Judg. 18:19-21). Micah pursued them in protest, but abandoned his efforts when they threatened his life (Judg. 18:22-26). The six hundred Danite warriors killed the people of Laish and renamed the city Dan (Judg. 18:27-29). The Danites then set up Micah's idol and appointed Jonathan as their priest; and so the Danites continued in idolatry until the time of their captivity (Judg. 18:30-31).
3. Moses had led Israel into a covenant relationship with God which included promised blessing for obedience. However, Moses' grandson—Jonathan—led many away from God and into empty idolatry. Idolatry is the sin of substitution in which we devote ourselves to something or someone in place of God. Biblically, there is only one God, and He demands that His people worship Him (Ex. 20:3-4). The exclusive worship of God is for His glory and our benefit. A physical idol is merely the work of a craftsman (see Isa. 44:9-20). There is no life in it (Ps. 115:1-8; Jer. 51:17; Hab. 2:18-20), nor can it deliver in times of trouble (Isa. 46:5-7). From the human perspective, ancient people did not necessarily see the idol as the god itself, but rather as a representation of the god who might reside in, or become attached to the idol. Micah's gods were vulnerable to attack and could not protect him (Judg. 18:17-26); later, those same gods would fail the Danites (Judg. 18:30). From the divine perspective, the worship of idols is the worship of demons ([Deut. 32:17](#)), and Israelites who led others into idolatry were to be stoned because they promoted spiritual rebellion among God's people ([Deut. 13:6-11](#)). "The

Danites were the first tribe to establish idolatry publicly in Israel. Perhaps this is why their tribe does not appear in the list of 12 tribes that will each produce 12,000 godly Israelite witnesses during the tribulation period (Rev. 7:5–8).¹³

¹³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jdg 18:27.

Judges 19:1-30

Now it came about in those days, when there was no king in Israel [to enforce God's law], that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, who took a concubine¹⁴ [פִּילְגֶשֶׁת *pilegesh* - a legal wife of secondary rank; cf. Judg. 19:3-5] for himself from Bethlehem in Judah. ² But his concubine played the harlot against him [or got angry at him – LXX, NET], and she went away from him to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for a period of four months. ³ Then her husband arose and went after her to speak tenderly to her [Heb. לֵב *leb* – lit. *spoke to her heart* - a shallow love at best considering his later actions; see Judg. 19:25-29] in order to bring her back, taking with him his servant and a pair of donkeys. So she brought him into her father's house, and when the girl's father saw him, he was glad to meet him [perhaps hoping their relationship would be restored and the social shame of the family removed]. ⁴ His father-in-law, the girl's father, detained him; and he remained with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there. ⁵ Now on the fourth day they got up early in the morning, and he prepared to go; and the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Sustain yourself with a piece of bread, and afterward you may go." ⁶ So both of them sat down and ate and drank together; and the girl's father said to the man, "Please be willing to spend the night, and let your heart be merry." ⁷ Then the man arose to go, but his father-in-law urged him so that he spent the night there again. ⁸ On the fifth day he arose to go early in the morning, and the girl's father said, "Please sustain yourself, and wait until afternoon"; so both of them ate. ⁹ When the man arose to go along with his concubine and servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Behold now, the day has drawn to a close; please spend the night. Lo, the day is coming to an end; spend the night here that your heart may be merry. Then tomorrow you may arise early for your journey so that you may go home." ¹⁰ But the man was not willing to spend the night, so he arose and departed and came to a place opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). And there were with him a pair of saddled donkeys; his concubine also was with him. ¹¹ When they were near Jebus, the day was almost gone; and the servant said to his master, "Please come, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it." ¹² However, his master said to him, "We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners who are not of the sons of Israel [the Jebusites were native Canaanites who had not been driven out]; but we will go on as far as Gibeah." ¹³ He said to his servant, "Come and let us approach one of these places; and we will spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah [wrongly assumes safety among fellow Israelites]." ¹⁴ So they passed along and went their way, and the sun set on

¹⁴ A concubine was a legal wife—though of secondary rank—and was part of the practice of polygamy. Under the Law, a concubine was promised food, clothing, and a place to live (Ex. 21:7-11; Deut. 21:10-14).

them near Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin.¹⁵ They turned aside there in order to enter *and* lodge in Gibeah. When they entered, they sat down in the open square of the city, for no one took them into *his* house to spend the night [no display of hospitality].¹⁶ Then behold, an old man was coming out of the field from his work at evening. Now the man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was staying in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites.¹⁷ And he lifted up his eyes and saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”¹⁸ He said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, *for* I am from there, and I went to Bethlehem in Judah. But I am *now* going to my house, and no man will take me into his house.”¹⁹ “Yet there is both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and also bread and wine for me, your maidservant, and the young man who is with your servants; there is no lack of anything.”²⁰ The old man said, “Peace to you. Only let me *take care of* all your needs; however, do not spend the night in the open square.” [echoing the words of Lot; see [Gen. 19:1-11](#)]²¹ So he took him into his house and gave the donkeys fodder, and they washed their feet and ate and drank.²² While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows [lit. *sons of wickedness, or nothingness* - בְּנֵי-בְלִיַּעַל *benei beliyya'al*], surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have [sexual] relations with him.” [sexual terrorists]²³ Then the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house [hospitality included protection], do not commit this act of folly.”²⁴ “Here is my virgin daughter and his concubine [the old man offers both women in order to protect his primary guest]. Please let me bring them out that you may ravish them and do to them whatever you wish. But do not commit such an act of folly against this man.”²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man [i.e. the Levite] seized his concubine and brought *her* out to them [throws her out to save himself]; and they raped her and abused her all night until morning, then let her go at the approach of dawn.²⁶ As the day began to dawn, the woman came and fell down at the doorway of the man’s house where her master was, until *full* daylight.²⁷ When her master arose in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, then behold, his concubine was lying at the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold.²⁸ He said to her, “Get up and let us go,” [a callous statement] but there was no answer [the woman is either dead or unconscious]. Then he placed her on the donkey; and the man arose and went to his home [appearing apathetic].²⁹ When he entered his house, he took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces [disrespecting her dead body], limb by limb, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel [demanding justice; cf. [1 Sam. 11:7](#)].³⁰ All who saw *it* said, “Nothing like this has *ever* happened or been

seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!”

Summary of Judges 19:1-30:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that a Levite—in order to save himself—sacrificed his concubine to worthless men who gang raped and killed her.
2. A Levite left Ephraim to persuade his runaway concubine to return home (Judg. 19:1-3). His father-in-law was glad to see him and entertained him for three days (Judg. 19:4-7). The Levite eventually left and traveled homeward with his wife, servant, and two donkeys (Judg. 19:8-10). They could have stayed in Jebus, but traveled on to Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 19:11-14). The only display of hospitality in Gibeah was by an old man who brought them into his home and cared for them (Judg. 19:15-21). Like the story of Sodom, several wicked men came searching for the visitor to sexually assault him, and the old man sought to protect his visitor (Judg. 19:22-23). However, the old man was willing to throw his daughter and the concubine out to the attackers to save himself and the Levite (Judg. 19:24; cf. Gen. 19:4-8). The wicked men refused, so the cowardly Levite forced his wife out of the house and into their hands to be raped and abused all night (Judg. 19:25-26). The next morning the callous Levite gathered his concubine’s body and took her home, then cut her into twelve pieces and sent a portion to the twelve tribes of Israel (Judg. 19:27-29). “Clearly he did not really love this woman or he would have defended her and even offered himself in her place. His actions speak volumes about his views of women, himself, and God’s will.”¹⁵ The final verse is a question posed by the Israelites concerning how they would respond to this evil act (Judg. 19:30).
3. A husband’s love is to be based on the character of God. For the Christian, he is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:23-29). The husband is to provide for his wife physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He is to protect her at all costs, even with his own life if necessary. The husband is to build his wife up in the Lord, seeking her best at all times. He is to make his wife feel safe so that she can love him without fear (1 John 4:18). These values and actions do not guarantee the wife will respond positively. However, there can be no healthy marital relationship if the husband is not leading with these values and actions.

¹⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Jdg 19:22.

Judges 20:1-48

Then all the sons of Israel [except Benjamin] from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man [כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד - *k'ish echad* – expresses Israelite solidarity; cf. vss. 8, 11] to the LORD at Mizpah [in response to the rape of the concubine at Gibeah, in Benjamin].² The chiefs of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.³ (Now the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the sons of Israel said, “Tell *us*, how did this wickedness take place?”⁴ So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, “I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin [Judg. 19:11-22].⁵ “But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died [Judg. 19:22-28; a sin that warranted death; see Deut. 22:25-26].⁶ “And I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the land of Israel’s inheritance; for they have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel.⁷ “Behold, all you sons of Israel, give your advice and counsel here.”⁸ Then all the people arose as one man, saying, “Not one of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us return to his house [deciding to go up against Gibeah in Benjamin].⁹ “But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* against it by lot.¹⁰ “And we will take 10 men out of 100 throughout the tribes of Israel, and 100 out of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000 to supply food for the people, that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, they may punish *them* for all the disgraceful acts that they have committed in Israel.”¹¹ Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.¹² Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has taken place among you?”¹³ “Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove *this* wickedness from Israel.” But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers [protecting the rapist/murderers], the sons of Israel.¹⁴ The sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the sons of Israel.¹⁵ From the cities on that day the sons of Benjamin were numbered, 26,000 men who draw the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered, 700 choice men.¹⁶ Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss [elite fighters].¹⁷ Then the men of Israel besides Benjamin were numbered, 400,000 men who draw the sword; all these were men of war.¹⁸ Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel [about four miles north of Mizpah], and inquired of God and said, “Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin?” Then the LORD said, “Judah *shall go up* first [seeking the God’s will; cf. Judg. 1:1-2].”¹⁹ So the sons of Israel arose in the

morning and camped against Gibeah.²⁰ The men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel arrayed for battle against them at Gibeah.²¹ Then the sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and felled to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel [Benjamin wins first battle].²² But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day.²³ The sons of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and inquired of the LORD [*wept = increased passion*], saying, “Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?” And the LORD said, “Go up against him.”²⁴ Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.²⁵ Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and felled to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel; all these drew the sword [Benjamin wins second battle].²⁶ Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD [*wept...fasted...offered sacrifices = intensified passion*].²⁷ The sons of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days,²⁸ and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron’s son, stood before it to *minister* in those days) [*this verse helps date this event as occurring shortly after Israel entered the land*], saying, “Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?” And the LORD said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand [*first time God declares He’ll give them the victory*].”²⁹ So Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah.³⁰ The sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as at other times.³¹ The sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city, and they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times, on the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, *and* in the field, about thirty men of Israel.³² The sons of Benjamin said, “They are struck down before us, as at the first [*false confidence*].” But the sons of Israel said, “Let us flee that we may draw them away from the city to the highways.”³³ Then all the men of Israel arose from their place and arrayed themselves at Baal-tamar; and the men of Israel in ambush broke out of their place, even out of Maareh-geba.³⁴ When ten thousand choice men from all Israel came against Gibeah, the battle became fierce; but Benjamin did not know that disaster was close to them [*could not foresee their fate*].³⁵ And the LORD struck Benjamin before Israel [*God now gives the victory*], so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day, all who draw the sword [*in defense of the rapist/murderers*].³⁶ So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. When the men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah,³⁷ the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gibeah; the men in ambush also deployed and struck all the city with the edge of the

sword.³⁸ Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city.³⁹ Then the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel, for they said, “Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.”⁴⁰ But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, Benjamin looked behind them; and behold, the whole city was going up *in smoke* to heaven.⁴¹ Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were terrified; for they saw that disaster was close to them.⁴² Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness [to flee], but the battle overtook them while those who came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst of them.⁴³ They surrounded Benjamin, pursued them without rest *and* trod them down opposite Gibeah toward the east.⁴⁴ Thus 18,000 men of Benjamin fell; all these were valiant warriors.⁴⁵ The rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, but they caught 5,000 of them on the highways and overtook them at Gidom and killed 2,000 of them [25,000; an approximation of vs. 35].⁴⁶ So all of Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men who draw the sword; all these were valiant warriors.⁴⁷ But 600 men [the remaining male Benjamites] turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon [four miles east of Bethel], and they remained at the rock of Rimmon four months.⁴⁸ The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found; they also set on fire all the cities which they found.

Summary of Judges 20:1-48:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that eleven tribes of Israel go to war against the tribe of Benjamin in order to exact justice for the Levite’s concubine who was raped and murdered in Gibeah.
2. The tribes of Israel—minus Benjamin—gathered to hear the Levite’s account of the rape and killing of his concubine (Judg. 20:1-7), and then decided to take action (Judg. 20:8-11), giving Benjamin the opportunity give up the offenders, which they refused to do (Judg. 20:12-13). The result was civil war between eleven tribes of Israel and the Benjamites. Three times God directed the eleven tribes to fight against Benjamin (Judg. 20:18, 23, 26-28); however, He permitted the Israelites to taste defeat on the first two occasions (40,000 men died), perhaps to discipline them for their pride—because they had excluded God from their lives for many years—and to prompt them to look to Him alone for victory. Each defeat led the tribes to seek God more humbly and earnestly, to know His will and to have His blessing. God finally defeated Benjamin for the wickedness of the men they were defending (Judg. 20:35).

25,100 Benjamites were killed (Judg. 20:35), and their city was destroyed (Judg. 20:48). 600 Benjamites survived the battle and hid themselves in the wilderness of Rimmon (Judg. 20:47).

3. Sometimes God lets us experience defeat in order to break down our pride and to condition us to look to Him in all things and to cast ourselves upon His sustaining grace (Ps. 55:22; 2 Cor. 12:7-10;). Whatever the defeat, we must look to the Lord (Prov. 3:5-6) and accept that He is in sovereign control (Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:35) and that He is working all things for our benefit (Rom. 8:28; cf. Gen. 50:20).

Judges 21:1-25

Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, “None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage.” [an act of punishment not previously mentioned] ² So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly [because of the loss of so many Jewish brethren from Benjamin]. ³ They said, “Why, O LORD, God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be *missing* today in Israel?” [their question may be introspective, or accusatory, as though it’s God’s fault] ⁴ It came about the next day that the people arose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. ⁵ Then the sons of Israel said, “Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?” For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” ⁶ And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel today. ⁷ “What shall we do for wives for those who are left [God is not consulted about the solution], since we have sworn by the LORD not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?” [hoping to find a solution to restore Benjamin] ⁸ And they said, “What one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly [about 48 miles NE of Shiloh]. ⁹ For when the people were numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there [perhaps they’d been warned they’d be punished if they did not come to fight; cf. 1 Sam. 11:7]. ¹⁰ And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there, and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword [because they failed to participate in the battle], with the women and the little ones [wrongly attacking the innocent]. ¹¹ “This is the thing that you shall do: you shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has lain with a man.” ¹² And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him; and they brought them [as captives] to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. ¹³ Then the whole congregation sent *word* and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them [seeking reconciliation]. ¹⁴ Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead; yet they were not enough for them. ¹⁵ And the people were sorry for Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶ Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do [again, not consulting God] for wives for those who are left [i.e. the remaining 200], since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?” ¹⁷ They said, “*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe will not be blotted out from Israel. ¹⁸ “But we cannot give them wives of our daughters.” For the sons of Israel had sworn, saying,

“Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”¹⁹ So they said [giving a human solution], “Behold, there is a feast of the LORD from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah.”²⁰ And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards,²¹ and watch; and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin [kidnapping a wife].²² “It shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us [as they should], that we shall say to them, ‘Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take for each man of Benjamin a wife in battle, nor did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty [of the self-imposed curse].’”²³ The sons of Benjamin did so [broke the Law in order to keep the letter of their personal oath; cf. Ex. 21:16], and took wives according to their number from those who danced, whom they carried away. And they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the cities and lived in them.²⁴ The sons of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went out from there to his inheritance.²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel [to enforce God’s law]; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Summary of Judges 21:1-25:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Israel grieved over the depleted condition of Benjamin, but then acted with a human solution that harmed innocent persons.
2. The eleven tribes of Israel had made a self-induced vow that none of their daughters should be given to the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 21:1, 5, 7, 18); subsequently, the eleven tribes grieved the near-destruction of Benjamin (Judg. 21:2, 6), and sought to resolve the problem of how to restore them. Though they offered sacrifice to God (Judg. 21:3-4), they did not consult Him concerning Benjamin’s restoration (Judg. 21:5-7). The human solution was to attack Israelites from Jabesh-gilead—who had not participated in the battle—and to destroy all its inhabitants (men, women, and children), and then take the remaining 400 virgin girls and give them as wives to the Benjamites (Judg. 21:8-12), thus reconciling and restoring the tribe (Judg. 21:13-15). The elders of Israel then considered how to provide wives for the remaining 200 Benjamites who had not been given a wife, while not violating their self-induced vow that they should not give them wives from their children (Judg. 21:16-18). The human solution was that the Benjamites should kidnap wives for themselves during the time of the annual feast at Shiloh (Judg. 21:19-22),

and so they did (Judg. 21:23-24). The conclusion to the account, as well as the book as a whole, is that “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25).

3. Sin will always rise—personally and nationally—when God’s word is ignored and His will disobeyed. The divine solution is always to fear God (Prov. 1:7; 8:13), and this means learning His word and obeying it (Ps. 34:11-14; 119:9-11). To fear God also means seeking God’s will in every aspect of our lives and not compartmentalizing (Prov. 3:5-7). The life of faith is often challenging, but the good choices bring stability and blessing.

Introduction to Ruth
Dr. Steven R. Cook

Title:

The book of Ruth is titled after a Moabitess who had married a Hebrew. After the death of her husband, Ruth followed her mother-in-law back to Israel where she cared for her.

Author:

The author is not known, though Samuel seems likely.

Date:

Ruth was written during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). The explanation of an unpracticed tradition (Ruth 4:7), as well as the genealogy of David (Ruth 4:17-22), would suggest the events of the book occurred in the latter part of the twelfth century B.C.

Audience:

The audience appears to be Israelites living during the time of David, since he is the last person mentioned in the book (Ruth 4:22).

Purpose:

The book was written to highlight God's sovereignty, loyal-love and providential care over those who trusted Him during difficult times (Ruth 2:12). Ruth—a Moabitess—trusted God and agreed to care for Naomi, her mother-in-law, who had lost her husband and two sons (Ruth 1:1-22). Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 3:9), is a model of Christ, who willingly redeemed us with His own blood (1 Pet. 1:17-19). The book also reveals God's grace in saving a Gentile woman who was included in the genealogical line of David (Ruth 4:17-22) and Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Ruth 1:1-22

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed [a dark period in Israel's history], that there was a famine in the land [perhaps as divine judgment for Israel's disobedience; see Deut. 28:23-24]. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab [the Moabites were born out of sin; see Gen. 19:30-38] with his wife and his two sons. ² The name of the man was Elimelech [אֵלִמֶלֶךְ *Elimelek* - Heb. *my God is king*], and the name of his wife, Naomi [נָעֻמִי *Noomi* - Heb. *pleasant*]; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon [מַחֲלֹן *Machlon* - Heb. *sickly*] and Chilion [כִּלְיוֹן *Kilyon* - Heb. *frail*], Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah [the birthplace of David and Jesus; 1 Sam. 17:58; Luke 2:4-7]. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. ³ Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They took for themselves Moabite women as wives [forbidden under the Law; see Deut. 7:1-4]; the name of the one was Orpah [עֲרַפָּה *Orpah* – back of the neck] and the name of the other Ruth [רוּת *Ruth* – friend or companion; Ruth married Mahlon; see Ruth 4:10]. And they lived there about ten years. ⁵ Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. ⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD [יְהוָה *YHVW* – God's covenant name] had visited His people in giving them food [God controls circumstances]. ⁷ So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly [חֶסֶד *chesed* – loyal-love, kindness; cf. Ruth 2:20; 3:10] with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ “May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband [advising them to remarry].” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰ And they said to her, “No, but we will surely return with you to your people.” ¹¹ But Naomi said, “Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? [to fulfill the Levirate marriage custom; see Deut. 25:5-10] ¹² “Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me.” ¹⁴ And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her [דָּבַק *dabaq* – to cling, hold fast]. ¹⁵ Then she said, “Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said [her statement of faith in God], “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your

people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God [[clinging to God](#)].¹⁷ “Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me [[a total break from her past and commitment to God and His people](#)].”¹⁸ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.¹⁹ So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi [[נְעֻמִי Noomi – pleasant](#)]; call me Mara [[מָרָא Mara - bitter](#)], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.²¹ “I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?” [[perception ≠ reality](#)]²² So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess [[Ruth’s nationality is mentioned several times; see Ruth 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10](#)], her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Summary of Ruth 1:1-22:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Ruth abandoned her birth-family and culture and entrusted herself to God, committing to care for Naomi, her mother-in-law.
2. The chapter opens with a Jewish family leaving Israel because of a famine and traveling to Moab (Ruth 1:1-2). Elimelech died sometime after entering Moab and his two sons, Malhon and Chilion, married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, and remained there ten years until they died (Ruth 1:3-5). Naomi heard there was food in Israel and decided to return to her homeland (Ruth 1:6-7). Naomi then encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return to their families and remarry (Ruth 1:8-15). After much weeping, Orpah consented, but Ruth clung to Naomi (Ruth 1:14). Ruth then abandoned her birth-family and culture and entrusted herself to God and committed to care for Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). Then Naomi and Ruth traveled to Bethlehem and arrived at the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:18-22). Naomi originally left Israel because of a food famine in the land and returned with a famine in her soul, believing God was against her (Ruth 1:20-21). However, though Ruth had suffered greatly too—being poor, husbandless and childless—her faith in God was unshaken and the Lord would eventually bless Naomi through Ruth (Ruth 4:14-15). Ruth’s selfless character became well known in Bethlehem (Ruth 2:11).
3. God will, at times, permit us to leave the place He wants us to be, and after a time of suffering, will forgive and restore us when we return to Him (Isa. 55:7; Micah 7:18; cf. Luke 15:11-24). Trials and hardships provide an opportunity

to live by faith and to let our lives shine for others to see (Ruth 2:11). Faith in God lifts us above the circumstances of our lives so that we can thank Him for the things He causes that help us to be better rather than bitter (Rom. 5:1-3; 8:28; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18; Jam. 1:2-4). Scripture reveals that God is not only with us (Heb. 13:5-6), but that He is for us (Rom. 8:31), and this gives us stability in our souls while living in an unstable and hostile world (Isa. 26:3-4; Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:6).

Ruth 2:1-23

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech [see [Ruth 1:3](#)], whose name was Boaz [[רַעַב Boaz - quickness](#)].² And Ruth the Moabitess [emphasizing her Gentile heritage; cf. [Ruth 1:22](#); [2:6, 21](#); [4:5, 10](#)] said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain [see [Lev. 19:9-10](#); [23:22](#); [Deut. 24:19](#)] after one in whose sight I may find favor [[חֵן chen – favor, grace](#)].” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.”³ So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened [by divine providence] to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.⁴ Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “May the LORD be with you.” [an expression of faith that desires God’s best for the needy] And they said to him, “May the LORD bless you.” [an expression of faith that desires God’s blessing to the merciful-wealthy]⁵ Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” [Boaz takes note of Ruth]⁶ The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.”⁷ “And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves [asks permission rather than assuming her rights].’ Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while [working hard, taking short breaks].”⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.”⁹ “Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.” [offering Ruth protection and provision beyond what the Law required]¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” [Ruth was surprised by grace]¹¹ Boaz replied to her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know [demonstrating unselfish love to care for Naomi; see [Ruth 1:16-17](#)].”¹² “May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge [The Lord would fulfill Boaz’ request through Boaz himself].”¹³ Then she said, “I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.”¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar [making Ruth feel welcome in his company].” So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some

left.¹⁵ When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.¹⁶ “Also you shall purposely pull out for her *some grain* from the bundles and leave *it* that she may glean [providing more than what the Law prescribed], and do not rebuke her [i.e. do not make her feel rejected].”¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley [i.e. about thirty pounds].¹⁸ She took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took *it* out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied.¹⁹ Her mother-in-law then said to her, “Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed [realizing Ruth had received special treatment].” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.”²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he [Boaz] be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness [חֶסֶד *chesed* – loyal-love] to the living and to the dead [i.e. Ruth, Naomi, and her dead sons].” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives [גֹּאֵל *gaal* – redeemer, i.e. a family-guardian who cares for the widows of his diseased relatives; see Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 4:5].”²¹ Then Ruth the Moabite said, “Furthermore, he said to me, ‘You should stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.’”²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his maids, so that *others* do not fall upon you in another field [and harm her].”²³ So she stayed close by the maids of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest [two month process – April thru June]. And she lived with her mother-in-law [and cared for her].

Summary of Ruth 2:1-23:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Ruth fell under the gracious care of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer.
2. Ruth went to glean from the fields in order to get food for her and Naomi and was providentially guided to the field of Boaz, her kinsman (Ruth 2:1-3). Boaz reveals himself as one who cares for the poor and desires to bless them (Ruth 2:4). Boaz notices Ruth and enquires about her and receives a glowing report (Ruth 2:5-7). Boaz, moved with compassion, tells Ruth to stay in his fields for her protection and provision (Ruth 2:8-13). More so, Boaz welcomed Ruth into his company and personally served her, providing for her from among the harvest and not merely the edges of his field (Ruth 2:14-16). Ruth worked hard and shared her resources with Naomi (Ruth 2:17-18). Naomi learned that Ruth had been blessed by Boaz and informed her that he was a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 2:19-21); a term employed of God (see Ex.

- 6:6; 15:13; Isa. 41:14). Finally, Ruth explained that Boaz offered his provision and protection to her during the harvest season (Ruth 2:22-23).
3. God's providential protection and provision for Ruth and Naomi came through Boaz, who modeled faith in God and favor to those under his care, a favor that went beyond what the law required. Favor among men is often the result of God's sovereign work in the hearts of others (Gen. 39:21; Ex. 3:21; 11:3; Dan. 1:9). Ruth modeled a godly worker who shared her resources with her family and who demonstrated humility and integrity. God is gracious to us (Eph. 2:1-10), provides for all our needs (Eph. 1:3; Phil. 4:19), and blesses us beyond what we deserve (Rom. 8:28-38; Eph. 3:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Ruth 3:1-18

Then [at the end of harvest season] Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? [i.e. lasting security]”² “Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight [threshing = separating the kernels of grain from the chaff].”³ “Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your *best* clothes [perhaps to indicate she is passed grieving her deceased husband; see Gen. 38:14; 2 Sam. 14:2], and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.”⁴ “It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down [a picture of submission implying a request for marriage]; then he will tell you what you shall do.”⁵ She said to her, “All that you say I will do.”⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.⁷ When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down [an expression of submission].⁸ It happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet.⁹ He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering [כַּנָּפִי *kanaph* – lit. *wing* – i.e. “cover me with the covering I removed from you”; a picture of protection and provision; cf. Ezek. 16:8] over your maid, for you are a close relative [גֹּאֵל - *goel* – *kinsman-redeemer*].”¹⁰ Then he said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness [חֶסֶד *chesed* – *loyal-love*; i.e. to carry on the name of her deceased husband] to be better than the first [to sacrifice all to care for Naomi; see Ruth 1:16-17] by not going after young men, whether poor or rich [Ruth pursued a marriage that would provide protection and provision for her and Naomi].”¹¹ “Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask [concerning marriage], for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence [אִשְׁתֵּי חַיִּיל - *esheth chayil* – *woman of worth*; cf. Prov. 31:10 the woman of excellence has a strong work ethic, commitment to family and concern for others].”¹² “Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I [Boaz recognizes the legal right of a closer relative; thus honoring/submitting to God’s word].”¹³ “Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you [as the Law directs], good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives [i.e. swearing an oath of promise; see 1 Kings 1:29-30]. Lie down until morning.”¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning and rose before one could recognize another; and he said [probably to his workers], “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor [to avoid gossip and protect her reputation].”¹⁵ Again he said, “Give me the cloak that is on you and hold it.” So she

held it, and he measured six *measures* of barley and laid *it* on her [approximately 60 pounds, as a sign of his good will]. Then she went into the city.¹⁶ When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did it go, my daughter?” [i.e. did Boaz agree to the proposal?] And she told her all that the man had done for her.¹⁷ She said, “These six *measures* of barley he gave to me, for he said, ‘Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” [Boaz is thoughtful about others]¹⁸ Then she said, “Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.” [Boaz is not a procrastinator]

Summary of Ruth 3:1-18:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Ruth proposes marriage to Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, and he agrees.
2. At the end of the harvest season, Naomi suggests to Ruth that she pursue a lasting relationship with Boaz and instructs her about how to approach him (Ruth 3:1-4), and Ruth consents (Ruth 3:5). Ruth went to the threshing-floor where Boaz was working and, after he’d eaten and fallen asleep, she came and lay at his feet and uncovered them (Ruth 3:6-7). Boaz woke in the middle of the night and was startled to find Ruth lying at his feet (Ruth 3:8), who then expressed her desire for Boaz to serve as her kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 3:9), to protect and provide for her as the widow of his deceased relative (see Lev. 25:25; Deut. 25:5). Boaz was pleased by her request and acknowledged Ruth as a woman of excellence, whose inner qualities appealed to him (Ruth 3:10-11). However, Boaz recognized there was another kinsman-redeemer whose legal right was greater than his (Ruth 3:12-13). Being a man of excellence (Ruth 2:1), Boaz promised to quickly pursue the matter (Ruth 3:13b), then advised Ruth to wait until morning, at which time he gave her a large portion of food as a gesture of his good intention (Ruth 3:14-15). Ruth then returned to Naomi with the good news of Boaz’ reply (Ruth 3:16-17), and Naomi advised her to wait until she hears the news of Boaz’ handling of the matter (Ruth 3:18).
3. Boaz and Ruth both modeled godly virtues, which are those settled inner qualities which conform to the character of God and are manifest in the thoughts, words and actions of a regenerate person. Some of the virtues that Boaz and Ruth displayed include:
 - a. Commitment to God, His will, and His people (Ruth 1:16-17; 2:11-12; 3:12-13; cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 6:10).
 - b. A strong work ethic (Ruth 2:7, 3:2; cf. Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:7-9).
 - c. Compassion for the less fortunate (Ruth 2:8-16; 18; 3:15-17; cf. Jam. 1:27; 1 John 3:17).

- d. A desire to protect and help the weak (Ruth 2:8-9; 3:10-11; cf. Acts 20:35; Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:14).
- e. A desire to seek the best interest of others (Ruth 3:1-5; cf. Eph. 4:1-2; Phil. 2:3-4).

Ruth 4:1-22
Steven R. Cook

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there [to fulfill his promise; see Ruth 3:11-13], and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz spoke was passing by [according to God's providence], so he said, "Turn aside, friend, sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.² He took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down [this was common legal practice].³ Then he said to the closest relative [not named], "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land [in her legal possession] which belonged to our brother [אָח *ach* – brother, relative] Elimelech."⁴ "So I thought to inform you [according to your legal right], saying, 'Buy *it* before those who are sitting *here* [as witnesses], and before the elders of my people [see Lev. 25:23-25]. If you will redeem *it* [גָּאָל *gaal* – i.e. to pay the price for freedom], redeem *it*; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem *it*, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem *it*."⁵ Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance [see Deut. 25:5-6]."⁶ The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance [by marrying Ruth and having children]. Redeem *it* for yourself; you *may have* my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem *it*."⁷ Now this was *the custom* in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of *land* to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another [perhaps forfeiting his right to walk on the land]; and this was the *manner of attestation* in Israel [the writer explains the custom to his generation].⁸ So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself." And he removed his sandal.⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.¹⁰ "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his *birth* place; you are witnesses today."¹¹ All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "*We are* witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah [Jacob's wives], both of whom built the house of Israel [along with their two maids; Bilhah and Zilpah; see Gen. 30:1-13]; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem."¹² "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah [a surrogate father; see Gen. 38:6-30], through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman."¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive [God controls

the womb; cf. Gen. 16:2; 29:31; 30:2, 22], and she gave birth to a son.¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today [in contrast to [Ruth 1:19-21](#)], and may his name become famous in Israel.¹⁵ “May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age [care for you in later years]; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons [high praise for Ruth], has given birth to him.”¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.¹⁷ The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” So they named him Obed [עֹבֵד *Obed – one who serves; perhaps Naomi in old age*]. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David [a godly man from a godly line].¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez [the son Judah by Tamar; Gen. 38:27-29]: to Perez was born Hezron,¹⁹ and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab,²⁰ and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon,²¹ and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed,²² and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David [God did bless Boaz and Ruth; see [Ruth 4:11-13](#); ultimately in Jesus, the Messiah; see [Matt. 1:3-6, 16](#)].

Summary of Ruth 4:1-22:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Boaz fulfilled his promise to Ruth and became her kinsman redeemer.
2. Boaz fulfilled his promise to Ruth by going to the city gate—where the elders of the city gathered and legal transactions took place—and approaching the kinsman redeemer who was closest to Naomi and Ruth and requesting he purchase Naomi’s land and take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:1-5). The nearest kinsman refused the offer claiming it would jeopardize land he currently owned, and then offered Boaz the option of buying the land and marrying Ruth (Ruth 4:6-8). Boaz accepted the offer and purchased the land and took Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:9-10). All the witnesses present approved of Boaz’ actions and pronounced a blessing on him and Ruth (Ruth 4:11-12). Boaz and Ruth married and she bore a son, named Obed (Ruth 4:13, 17). The women of the city celebrated the Lord’s love for Naomi and pronounced a blessing on her and her new grandson (Ruth 4:14-15). Naomi then cared for her grandson (Ruth 4:16-17). The author—presumably Samuel—provided a genealogical record from Judah’s son, Perez, to David, showing both David’s connection with a Jewish patriarch, as well as the godly grandparents, Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:17-22). God rewarded Boaz and Ruth who demonstrated sacrificial love to the needy. God provides for His own people. This includes Naomi who lost faith in God and became bitter, believing the Lord was against her, as well as Ruth and Boaz, who were committed to God, walked in His ways, and demonstrated sacrificial love for the less fortunate.

3. Jesus is our redeemer (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14). All humanity is enslaved to sin (Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:1-3), and we are too poor to pay the price for our own spiritual liberation (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), but Jesus paid the price for our sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9-10), and now we are free and able to walk with God and do His will (Col. 1:13-14; cf. Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 5:8-10).

Appendix I

Quotes Concerning the Kinsman Redeemer

Charles L. Feinberg:

The OT concept of kinsman-redeemer includes the protection of a relative's person and property. It involves avenging the murder of a relative, the purchase of his alienated property, and/or the marriage to his widow (cf. Lev 25:25; Num. 35:21; Ruth 4). The Kinsman-Redeemer is voluntarily committed to champion Israel's cause. He brings peace to his own but unrest to his oppressors.¹⁶

Robert Hughes:

The qualifications and functions of the kinsman-redeemer are illustrated in the person of Boaz, who is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kinsman-redeemer had to be a blood relative to have the right of redemption, even as Christ was a blood relative of man through the Virgin Birth (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5–8; Heb. 2:14–18). The kinsman-redeemer had to have the resources to purchase the forfeited inheritance, even as Christ had the resource of his own precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18–19). The kinsman-redeemer also had to have the resolve to redeem, even as Christ laid down his life of his own volition (Mark 10:45; John 10:15–18). The book of Ruth is one of the most instructive Old Testament books concerning the redemptive work of Christ.¹⁷

Thomas Constable:

God did not have to provide redemption. He did it out of the love of His own heart. That is grace. Furthermore God did it all. There is nothing that the redeemed person could do to obtain his redemption but trust the person of his redeemer. That too is grace.¹⁸

¹⁶ Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 678.

¹⁷ Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*, The Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 104–105.

¹⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jdg 21:25.