

Judges, Juries and Justice

Lesson Nine

Judges 2-7, 13-16; Ruth; 1 Samuel 1-7

With the Promised Land settled and divided between the tribes, life should be peaceful for the people of Israel. They must simply live in the covenant relationship with God which they had promised to do. However, this turned out to be a difficult task for the Israelites; and they often failed to do as they had promised God they would do.

The period of the Judges covers a little over three hundred years. It is a time between the exodus and the establishment of the monarchy when kings were chosen to rule the people.

The purpose of the judges that God appointed from time to time was to deliver the Israelites from the oppression they were experiencing because of rebellion against God. The peaceful life they should have been living did not last for long once the Israelites conquered the Promised Land. It did not last long because the people continued to be rebellious and disobedient. They did not live up to their end of the bargain they had made with God. The sin which they repeated over and over again was idolatry. They would worship other gods--usually the gods of the neighboring lands or the gods of the people living among them whom they had not destroyed as God had directed them to do. When the people would disobey, God would punish them. The punishment took the form of defeats at the hands of their enemies. The people would then repent of their disobedience and God would raise up a judge to deliver the people from the oppression they were experiencing.

The Judges who will be studied closely in this chapter are Gideon and Samson. These were not the only judges. One judge was a woman named Deborah. This lesson also will deal with the faithfulness of Ruth. A section on the prophet Samuel will conclude this lesson. Samuel was used by God to anoint the first king over Israel, thus ending the period of rule by judges.

GIDEON

Judges 2-7

And Joshua, the servant of the Lord, died; and there arose another generation which did not know the Lord, nor the works which He had done for Israel. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed other gods. And the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies. When the Lord raised up judges, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies.

Why do the people sin? _____

One of the judges God raised up was Gideon. **Read Judges 6:7-16, 36-40** to see how God called Gideon to deliver the Israelites.

What sin have the people committed? _____

Why does Gideon doubt that the Lord is with Israel? _____

What two excuses does Gideon make when the Lord tells him that he is being sent to Deliver Israel?

1) _____ 2) _____

What assurance does the Lord give Gideon? _____

What sign does Gideon want the Lord to perform? _____

Does the Lord do this? _____

What other test does Gideon have for the Lord? _____

Does the Lord do it? _____

Then Gideon rose up early in the morning and all the people with him. And the Lord said unto Gideon, "The people that are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, 'Mine own hand has saved me.' Now therefore, proclaim in the ears of the people saying, 'Whoever is afraid, let him return.'" And there returned of the People twenty-two thousand, and there remained ten thousand. And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are yet too many; bring them down to the water. Every one that laps of the water with his tongue as a dog laps, him shall you set by himself; likewise every one that bows down upon his knees to drink." And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men. And the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and let all the other people go every man to his place."

And the same night the Lord said to him, "Arise, go down to the host and hear what they say." Then he went down with his servant. And the Midianites and the Amalekites lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And there was a man that told a dream to his fellow and said, "Behold, I dreamed, and, lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host of Midian and came to a tent and struck it so that it fell." And his fellow answered and said, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, a man of Israel: into his hand has God delivered Midian." And Gideon worshiped and returned to the host of Israel and said, "Arise; for the Lord has delivered into your hand the host of Midian." And he divided the

three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers. And he said to them, "Look on me, and as I do so shall you do." So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came to the newly set watch, and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers and held the lamps in their left hands and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Then all the host of Midian ran and cried and fled. The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow. Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel.

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us." But Gideon said, "I will not rule over you; for the Lord shall rule over you." And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

Why does the Lord want to use only three hundred soldiers to defeat the Midianites?

What encouragement does Gideon receive on his reconnaissance trip? _____

In what way are most of the Midianites killed? _____

Will Gideon become the ruler of the Israelites? _____

For how long do the Israelites enjoy peace? _____

SAMSON

(Part I)

Judges 13-15

Israel has need of another judge. They have been disobedient and have been punished. It is time for them to be delivered from the hands of their enemies.

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. And there was a man of the Danites whose name was Manoah. The angel of the Lord appeared unto his wife and said to her, "Behold now, you shall bear a son. And no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God, and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. The child grew, and the Lord blessed him.



Please note that Samson would "begin" to deliver the Israelites. Completion of this deliverance would take place under King David.

For how long had they been under Philistine control? _____

Read Judges chapter 14. It gives insight into the person of Samson, and it sets the stage for the beginning of the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines.

Why are Samson's parents unhappy about his choice of wife? _____

What does Samson kill on his journey with his parents? _____

What does Samson discover on his return trip? _____

What will be the prize for the riddle solvers? _____

Who finds out the answer to the riddle? _____

Who is Samson's "heifer"? _____

Where does Samson get the clothing? _____

Killing thirty Philistines is not enough revenge for Samson. He will soon do something even more drastic that will get the attention of the Philistines and raise the tension between the Israelites and the Philistines.

But in the time of the wheat-harvest Samson visited his wife. And her father said, "I verily thought that you had hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion." And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes and turned them tail to tail and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines and burned up both the shocks and also the standing corn with the vineyards and olives. Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson." Then the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah. And the men of Judah bound Samson and brought him to the Philistines. And when he came, the Philistines shouted against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and the cords that were upon his arm became as flax that was burned with fire and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of a donkey and took it and killed a thousand men with it.

What does the action of the men of Judah indicate about their relationship with the Philistines? _____

SAMSON

(Part II)
Judges 16

Probably the most familiar incident from Samson's life is his betrayal by Delilah.
Read Judges 16:1-22 to see how all of this came about.

With whom does Samson fall in love? _____

What will each ruler give Delilah if she betrays Samson? _____

Does she agree to help them? _____

What line does she use that finally gets him to tell her his secret? _____

What is the secret of Samson's great strength? _____

What do the Philistines do to Samson once they capture him? _____

What does Samson do at the prison? _____

The story of Samson does not end here. The Philistines think that they are rid of Samson, but he is not yet done with them.

However, the hair of his head began to grow again. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon, their god. And they called for Samson and he made them sport; and they set him between the pillars. Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called to the Lord and said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray you, and strengthen me only this once." And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood and said, "Let me die with the Philistines." And he bowed himself with all his might and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were in it. So the dead which he killed at his death were more than they which he killed in his life.



RUTH

Book of Ruth 1-4

The story of Ruth takes place during the rule of the judges. The title is the name of the main character in the story. The author is not known. Ruth was an alien believer. She had married an Israelite and had embraced the faith of her husband and his family. Ruth is an ancestor of David and hence of Jesus.

In the days when the Judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem named Elimelech went into the country of Moab with his wife Naomi and two sons. And Elimelech died there. But his sons took wives of the women of Moab. The name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth. And when they had dwelt there about ten years, the sons both died. Then Naomi arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab. And on the way she said to them, "Go, return; the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." They lifted up their voice and wept. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned; but Ruth clung to her. Naomi said, "Return also." Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave 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; where you die, will I die, and there will I be buried; nothing but death shall part you and me."

To which town will Naomi return? _____

Who will go with her? _____

Things look bleak for Naomi and Ruth. A woman with no male relatives to look after her would have little to look forward to. With the help of her young daughter-in-law, Naomi's prospects do improve somewhat.

Read Ruth 2:1-16 to see what happens next to these two women.

Who is a relative of Naomi's husband? _____

In whose fields does Ruth end up gleaning? _____

Who notices Ruth and asks about her? _____

Is Ruth to glean in any other fields? _____

What about Ruth has impressed Boaz? _____

What does Boaz tell the men to do for Ruth? _____

When Naomi finds out what has happened she is elated. As a close relative of Boaz, Naomi recognizes that he has a responsibility to her and to Ruth. In this part of the world at this time, male relatives were to look after the widows in their families. Any widow who had no children was to be married by the brother of her husband so that she might have an heir.

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and came to her mother-in-law. And her mother-in-law said, "Where have you gleaned today?" Ruth said, "The man's name is Boaz." Naomi said, "Blessed be he of the Lord. The man is one of our near relatives." So Ruth gleaned to the end of the harvest. And Naomi said, "Boaz winnows barley tonight in

the threshing floor. Put your best clothing on and go down to the threshing floor." And she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law told her and said to Boaz, "Spread your garment over your handmaid; for you are a near relative." And Boaz said, "It is true that I am your near relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. If he will not do the part of a kinsman to you, then will I do it, as the Lord lives." And she came to her mother-in-law and told her all. Then she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest until he has finished the thing this day." Then Boaz went and said to the kinsman, "Will you redeem Elimelech's parcel of land?" And he said, "I cannot redeem it; buy it for yourself." So Boaz bought the land and took Ruth, and she was his wife. And the Lord gave her a son, and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

When Ruth told Boaz to spread his garment over her, she was requesting that he marry her as was the duty of a kinsman-redeemer. Notice that not every male was willing to accept the responsibility of redeeming their relatives. Boaz, however, goes far beyond what he was required to do in looking out for Ruth and Naomi. In this regard he illustrates the work of Jesus on our behalf.

SAMUEL

1 Samuel 1-7

It is not certain who wrote 1 and 2 Samuel. 1 Samuel chronicles the events in Israel from the birth of Samuel until the death of Saul, the first king of Israel.

As noted in the introduction to this lesson, the period of rule by judges ends when Samuel anoints the first king of Israel. In fact, Samuel anoints the first two kings of Israel each in turn. Samuel also acts as the last judge of Israel. **Read 1 Samuel 1** to find out about Samuel's birth and the unusual promise his mother made to God.

Which of Elkanah's wives has no children? _____

Why does Elkanah give her double portions? _____

What topic does Peninnah (rival) keep bringing up to Hannah to provoke her? _____

Why does Hannah cry at the temple? _____

What will Hannah do with her son, if God gives her a son? _____

What does Eli, the priest, think is wrong with Hannah? _____

Does the Lord give Hannah a son? _____

What does Hannah do with the boy after he is weaned? _____

In whose care does she place Samuel? _____



Children were considered to be fully weaned when they were about three or four years old. What a remarkable thing it was that Hannah did. Chapter three indicates that Hannah visited Samuel each year when Elkanah went to offer sacrifices for the family. She would take him a new robe each year. The Lord blessed Hannah for her faithfulness and gave her three sons and two daughters.

Eli was the high priest in Israel. He was a servant of the Lord. However, he was getting very old; and his sons, who were priests, were very wicked indeed. Eli's warning to his sons came too late. They were not willing to change. Because of that, Eli's family would be excluded from serving as priests.

Now Eli was very old and heard of all that his sons did. He said to them, "Why do you do such things? No, my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear." Notwithstanding, they did not listen to the voice of their father. And the child Samuel grew on and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men. There came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Why do you scorn My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My house and honor your sons above Me? Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. There shall not be an old man in your house forever. And this shall be a sign to you that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.'"

What does "There shall not be an old man in your house forever" mean? _____

Read 1 Samuel 3 to find what happens to Samuel as he lives with Eli the priest.

What two things were rare in those days?

1) _____

2) _____

Who calls Samuel? _____

Who does Samuel think is calling? _____



How many times does Samuel run to Eli? _____

What does the Lord tell Samuel? _____

Of what is Eli guilty? _____

Does Samuel tell Eli what the Lord told him? _____

Do the people of Israel recognize Samuel as a prophet of the Lord? _____

Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. And the Philistines fought and Israel was smitten and the Ark of God was taken. The two sons of Eli were slain. There ran a man of the army, and he came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head and told the news to Eli. All the city cried out. And when he made mention of the Ark of God, Eli fell off his seat backward and his neck broke and he died. Now he was ninety-eight years old and had judged Israel forty years.

What has happened to the Ark of the covenant? _____

The taking of the Ark of the Covenant was a serious matter. It signaled that the covenant relationship between God and the people was strained at this time. The people had come to think that they could get God to do as they wished simply because they had the Ark. On the other hand, the Philistines got more than they bargained for when they took the Ark. They put it in the temple of the pagan god they worshiped. God shows his superiority to their god in a series of plagues that come upon the Philistines. Even the statue of their god inside the temple where they place the Ark falls on its face the day after the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant. They set the statue up and the next day it has fallen over again and this time broken, too. The Philistines soon tire of the other plagues that happen to them and return the Ark to the Israelites.

And the Lord visited the Philistines with many plagues on account of the Ark of the Covenant so that they sent it back to the children of Israel. And it was taken to Kirjathjearim. Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel saying, "If you do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and serve the Lord only; and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." Then they put away the strange gods and served the Lord only. Samuel gathered all Israel together to Mizpeh and cried to the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. The Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and they were struck down. They came no more into the coast of Israel. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up and called it Ebenezer saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

What is the result of the repentance of the Israelites? _____

REVIEW

1. Who rules Israel for the first three hundred years in the Promised Land? _____
2. What sin do the people keep repeating? _____
3. How many soldiers does Gideon take? _____
4. Who is dominating Israel in the days of Samson? _____
5. Who betrays Samson the first time? _____
6. Who betrays Samson the second time? _____
7. How do the Philistines subdue Samson? _____
8. How does Samson die? _____
9. What country is Ruth from? _____
10. What happens to her husband? _____
11. With whom does Ruth stay? _____
12. Where do they go? _____
13. Who serves as Naomi and Ruth's kinsman-redeemer? _____
14. Who is Samuel's mother? _____
15. Who raises Samuel? _____
16. What is wrong with Eli's sons? _____
17. Whose family will not ever see men reach old age? _____
18. What happens to the Ark of the Covenant? _____
19. How do the Israelites get the Ark of the covenant back? _____
20. Do the people repent of their idolatry? _____