

2017

# The Book of Judges

Despicable People Doing Deplorable Things





# Table of Contents

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INTRODUCTION .....	5
The Title of the Book	
Historical and Religious Background	
The Composition of the Book	
Theme and Purpose of the Book	
PART ONE: THE FAILURE OF THE ISRAELITES TO CONQUER CANAAN (1:1 – 3:6)	
I. Prologue: Israel’s Failure to Possess the Land (1:1 – 2:5)	
A. Half-hearted Discipleship (1:1-36) .....	7
B. Forgetting Who God Is (2:1-5) .....	9
II. Second Prologue: Summary of the Cycles of Sin and Salvation (2:6 – 3:6)	
A. Living Among Idols (2:6-19) .....	11
B. Spiritual Prostitution (2:16-3:6) .....	13
PART TWO: THE SIX-FOLD CYCLE OF SIN AND SALVATION (3:7 – 16:31)	
III. The Aram-Naharaim and Othniel Cycle	
Remembering Who God Is (3:7-11) .....	15
IV. The Moab and Ehud Cycle	
Unexpected Deliverer (3:12-30) .....	17
V. Parenthesis 1: The Governorship of Shamgar (3:31) .....	19
VI. The Canaanite and Deborah/Barak Cycle	
Godly Ruler and Rescuer (4:1 – 5:31) .....	19

VII. The Midianite and Gideon Cycle (6:1 – 9:57)	
The Weak Mighty Warrior (6:1-16) . . . . .	21
The Uncertainty of the Leader (6:16-40). . . . .	22
Triumph in Weakness (7:1-25) . . . . .	24
Ruling as Kings (8:1-31) . . . . .	26
Abimelech’s Conspiracy and Downfall (9:1-57) . . . . .	28
VIII. Parenthesis 2: The Governorships of Tola and Jair (10:1-5). . . . .	30
IX. The Ammonite and Jephthah Cycle (10:6 – 12:7)	
The Outcast (Judges 10:6 – 11:11) . . . . .	30
Failed Diplomacy (Judges 11:12 – 12:7) . . . . .	32
X. Parenthesis 3: The Governorships of Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (12:8-15). . . . .	32
XI. The Philistine and Samson Cycle (13:1 – 16:31)	
Miraculous Birth and Monastic Life (13:1-25) . . . . .	34
God’s Working Even through Sin (14:1 – 15:20). . . . .	36
The Weak Victor (16:1-31) . . . . .	38
PART THREE: THE DEGENERATION OF ISRAEL (17:1 – 21:25)	
XII. The Religious Degeneration of Israel (17:1 – 18:31) . . . . .	40
XIII. The Moral Degeneration of Israel (19:1 – 21:25) . . . . .	42

# INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES

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## The Title of the Book

*If this is the Book of Judges, who are they judging?*

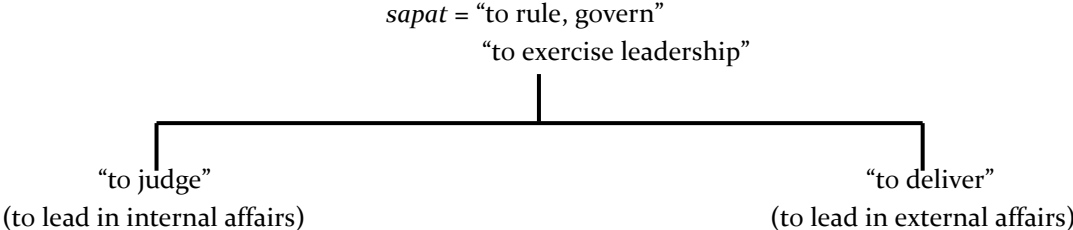
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*So why do we call this the 'Book of Judges'?*

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*Did the judges do more than judge?*

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## Historical and Religious Background

*Where does the 'Book of Judges' fit in relation to the rest of the Bible?*

---

*What did worship look like during the time of the judges?*

---

*What is syncretism?*

---

## **The Composition of the Book**

*Is the Book of Judges historically true or a work of fiction?*

---

## **Theme and Purpose of the Book**

*What are the lessons/truths to be learned from the Book of Judges?*

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1. *God relentlessly offers his grace to people who do not deserve it, or seek it, or even appreciate it after they have been saved by it.*
2. *God wants lordship over every area of our lives, not just some.*
3. *There is a tension between grace and law, between conditionality and unconditionality.*
4. *There is a need for continual spiritual renewal in our lives here on earth, and a way to make that a reality.*
5. *We need a true Savior, to which all human saviors point, through both their flaws and strengths.*
6. *God is charge, no matter what it looks like.*

# PART ONE: THE FAILURE OF THE ISRAELITES TO CONQUER CANAAN

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## **Prologue: Israel's Failure to Possess the Land (1:1 – 2:5)**

“The book of Judges begins by looking backwards, and ends by looking forwards. This period of Israel's history opens: “After the death of Joshua” (1:1); its final words strain toward the age of monarchy, of Saul, David, Solomon and their successors: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (21:25). To understand and appreciate the great peaks and troughs, the triumphs and (more often) the tragedies of the time of the judges, we must begin by looking over our shoulders, as 1:1 encourages us to do.” (Keller 15)

## **Half-hearted Discipleship (1:1-36)**

### **Promise-Keeping God**

#### *What do we learn by looking back at the Book of Joshua?*

---

1. Joshua was Moses' chosen successor to lead the people of Israel (Numbers 27:12-23).
2. The Book of Joshua chronicles the work of God in and through His people in conquering the land that was promised to their ancestors. It is a book that teaches us that the people of God can bravely obey and worship Him because God keeps His promises.
3. For the most part, the Israelites obeyed and trusted God in the conquest of Canaan during the life of Joshua, but there was still much that was left undone at the end of his life.

### **Brave Spirituality**

*What was God's call for His people in regard to the Promised Land? Why?*

---

### **Successes and Failures of Judah**

*As Judah goes to battle, in what ways are they faithful and in what ways are they flawed?*

---

### **Common Sense**

*What is it that keeps us from whole-heartedly enjoying the promises of God?*

---

### **Failures of the Remaining Tribes**

*What happened with the rest of the tribes and their conquests?*

---



## **B. Forgetting Who God Is (2:1-5)**

### **God's Assessment of Israel**

*Judges 2:1-2*

*Why does the angel of the LORD come up from Gilgal?*

---

*What was God's assessment of Israel's performance in obeying His commands?*

---

---

*God wants all of me, not pieces. He wants to be the LORD over every aspect of my life, not just some. "Ultimately, either all of our life is given to God in grateful, loving obedience; or none is." (Keller 24)  
Partial obedience is disobedience!*

---

### **Israel's Disobedience Exposed**

*Judges 2:2-5*

*How do we reconcile the apparent discrepancy between Judges 1:19 and 2:2?*

---

*What are some common reasons for justifying one's disobedience?*

---

- Inability to Forgive
- Unwillingness to Tell the Truth
- Inability to Resist Temptation

*How do we cure a bad case of 'I don't wanna'?*

---

*What was God's response in relation to their disobedience?*

---

*How did the Israelites respond to this indictment?*

---

#### **The Tension of Judges**

*What is God really saying when He asks, 'Why have you done this?'*

---

*How are we able to resolve this tension?*

---

*Where are you saying to God: I cannot? Are you really saying: I will not?*

---

**II. Second Prologue: Summary of the Cycles of Sin and Salvation (2:6 – 3:6)**

**A. Living among Idols (2:6-19)**

**A Life Well Lived**

*Judges 2:6-9*

*How did the Israelites respond to Joshua's challenge to obey the LORD?*

---

*What happened among the Israelites after the death of Joshua?*

---

**Another Generation**

*Judges 2:10-11*

*How is it possible that this next generation "did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel"?*

---

*What was the result of the people forgetting the story of their deliverance?*

---

*Who is to blame for this collapse of true worship from one generation to the next?*

---

*How are we to counteract the tendency toward complacency and compromise?*

---

***If you are a parent:***

***How are you passing your faith on to your children? What has encouraged you and what has challenged you today?***

---

***If you are not a parent with children living at home:***

***How are you praying for and sharing your faith with younger generations in your church?***

---

### **The Repeated Cycle**

*Judges 2:10-19*

***Describe the cycle that repeats itself in Israel's history throughout Judges.***

---



***How have you seen the “Judges Cycle” in your own Christian life? How does the reality of your sin and of God’s grace prompt you to praise and thank Him today?***

---

## **B. Spiritual Prostitution (2:16 – 3:6)**

In the previous section, we were introduced to the idea of a ‘Cycle of Sin’ that plagued the children of Israel. The people would rebel against God and worship the gods of the surrounding people groups. This would cause God to become angry, similar to the way a parent would become angry when his child is disobedient. This anger is an outworking of His love for His people. As a means of getting their attention, God would then allow one of their enemies to oppress the Israelites. When that oppression became more than they could bear, they would cry out to God in repentance and God would deliver His people through the leadership of one of the judges. The people would then live in peace and obedience until the death of that judge. Then they would return to living even more corrupt lives than their predecessors.

### **Married Prostitute**

*Judges 2:16-17*

*How does God see our idolatry?*

---

*How does God respond to the Israelites and their idolatry?*

---

### **The Judge or the Idols?**

*Judges 2:18*

*What was God’s purpose and plan when raising up judges in Israel?*

---

### **Gods, Plural**

*Judges 2:19*

*What happened when God’s appointed judge died?*

---

*Who did the Israelites serve instead?*

---

***Who were these other gods? And why were there so many?***

***Think back to God's instructions to His children entering into the Promised Land. What did He instruct them to do? (Deuteronomy 31:1-8)***

---

***Why is it so dangerous to worship the LORD plus?***

***What can we do to guard against this tendency toward syncretism?***

---

- First, identify ALL the alternative 'gods' in our society today.
- Second, take an honest look at every area of our lives—family, career, ambitions, time, possessions, recreation, etc.—and ask two questions:
  - 1) Am I willing to do whatever God tells me to do in this area of my life?
  - 2) Am I willing to accept whatever God sends my way in this area of life?

### **The Mercy of Judgment**

*Judges 2:2:21 – 3:6*

***According to Judges 2:21-22, what was God's purpose in no longer driving out the nations that inhabited the Promised Land?***

---

***In Judges 3:1-2, what were the purposes of God in these verses?***

---

***Did the Israelites pass or fail these tests? (Judges 3:5-6)***

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# PART TWO: THE SIX-FOLD CYCLE OF SIN AND SALVATION

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JUDGE	OPPRESSOR	PERIOD OF OPPRESSION	PERIOD OF REST	BIBLICAL REFERENCE
Othniel	Cushan-rishathaim, king of the Mesopotamians	8 years	40 years	Judges 3:7-11
Ehud	Eglon, king of Moab Moabites	18 years	80 years	Judges 3:12-30
Shamgar	Philistines			Judges 3:31
Deborah	Jabin, king of Canaan Canaanites	20 years	40 years	Judges 4 - 5
Gideon	Midianites	7 years	40 years	Judges 6 - 8
Tola	Abimelech (not killed by Tola)	3 years	23 years	Judges 10:1-2
Jair			22 years	Judges 10:3-5
Jephthah	Philistines and Ammonites	18 years	6 years	Judges 10:6 - 12:7
Ibzan			7 years	Judges 12:8-10
Elon			10 years	Judges 12:11-12
Abdon			8 years	Judges 12:13-15
Samson	Philistines	40 years	20 years	Judges 13 - 16

### III. The Aram-Naharaim and Othniel Cycle

#### Remembering Who God Is (3:7-11)

##### Heart-Forgetfulness

*Judges 3:7*

***When the people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and forgot Him, did they really forget God? Or does this mean something else?***

---

***What's the difference between knowing something in your 'head' and knowing something with your 'heart'?***

---

*How can we keep from 'forgetting' God? (2 Peter 1)*

---

*How can we be sure to remember God?*

---

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 22)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 10)

**How God Brings Revival**

*Judges 3:8-11*

*What does God do in these verses to bring them to revival?*

---

*What role does God's anger and wrath play in bringing about revival?*

---

*What does it mean here when they 'cried out to the Lord'?*

---

*What were Othniel's qualifications to serve as deliver/judge?*

---



## **IV. The Moab and Ehud Cycle**

### **Unexpected Deliverer (3:12-30)**

#### **A Left-Handed Rescuer**

*Judges 3:12-15*

*Why did it take so long for God to send a deliverer to Israel?*

---

*Who did God send to rescue them? What is significant about him being left-handed?*

---

*What kind of man does God choose to use?*

---

#### **The Right (Left) Man**

*Judges 3:15-30*

*What is the plan for delivering Israel from Moabite oppression?*

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*What happened when Ehud went to the king to present the tribute?*

---

*What was the secret that Ehud had for Eglon?*

---

*What can we learn about Eglon from this story?*

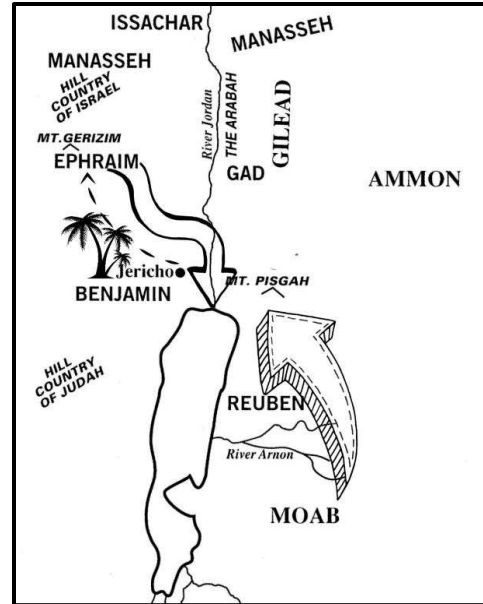
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*Why was it possible for Ehud to get away so easily?*

---

*Where did Ehud go and what happened next?*

---



### **Ehud: God's Type of Leader**

*Isaiah 53:2-3*

*From Ehud onward, all of the judges point to Christ's salvation of mankind. In what ways were the judges inferior to Jesus?*

---

*Why would God choose to use such flawed individuals?*

---

### **Think of What You Were**

*1 Corinthians 1:26-29*

*"Paul says that God tends to choose and use people who are weaker socially, physically, and even morally. Why?"*

---

*"Think of what you were..." How are you "left-handed"? How does this humble you?*

---

## V. Parenthesis 1: The Governorship of Shamgar (3:31)

<u>JUDGE</u>	<u>ENEMY</u>	<u>WEAPON</u>
Ehud	Moabites	Two-edged Dagger
Shamgar	Philistines	Oxgoad (Cattle Prod)
Deborah (Jael)	Canaanites	Tent Peg
Gideon	Midianites	Pitchers, Torches & Trumpets
Samson	Philistines	Jawbone of a Donkey
		Columns & Roof of a Building

## VI. The Canaanite and Deborah/Barak Cycle

### Godly Ruler and Rescuer (4:1 – 5:31)

#### A Godly Ruler

*Judges 4:1-5*

*Who was the commander of the Canaanite army? And why were the Israelites so afraid of him and his army?*

---

*Who did God send to judge His people at this time?*

---

#### A Godly Rescuer

*Judges 4:6-16*

*Who did Deborah call upon to be the godly rescuer of Israel?*

---

*How did he respond to this call?*

---

*In Hebrews 11:32, Barak is listed among others as a “hero of the faith.” What evidence do we find here of his heroism?*

---

### **Death by Tent Peg**

*Judges 4:11, 17-22*

*After the army of Sisera fell (v 16), what happened to Sisera?*

---

*What did Deborah prophecy concerning the death of Sisera?*

---

### **God Wins**

*Judges 4:24 - 5:31*

*What insights do we gain from Deborah’s Song in chapter 5 about the story of God’s deliverance in chapter 4?*

---

... Concerning “God”

... Concerning “the Tribes of Israel”

... Concerning “the battle”

... Concerning “the victory”

... Concerning “the character of Sisera”

### **Living with Two Perspectives**

*What happens if we only have an historical perspective on life?  
What difference would it make to maintain both an historical  
and theological perspective on life?*

---

## **VII. The Midianite and Gideon Cycle (6:1 – 9:57)**

### **The Weak Mighty Warrior (6:1-16)**

#### **Sermon before Salvation**

*Judges 6:7-10*

*What was God trying to communicate to Israel through His prophet?*

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*What can we learn about repentance from 2 Corinthians 7:8-10?*

---

*Do the Israelites ever show any signs of true repentance?*

---

#### **If God Is with Us**

*Judges 6:11-16*

*Who is the angel of the Lord?*

---

*What did the angel of the Lord convey to Gideon in this conversation?  
How did Gideon rebuff the Lord's assertions?*

---

## **The Uncertainty of the Leader (6:16-40)**

### **Two Altars**

*Judges 6:16-35*

*What does Gideon decide to do to determine once and for all that he is speaking with God? How was this confirmed by God?*

---

*“Before they can throw off the enemies around them (the Midianites), they have to throw off the enemies among them (the false idols of Canaan).” What did Gideon do to make this happen?*

---

*In what ways does this story reflect the struggle that believers have in their lives in regard to their personal, spiritual growth?*

---

*How did all the people react when they saw what Gideon had done?*

---

*After this incident with the two altars, what happened to Gideon?  
How did he begin to emerge as a leader in Israel?*

---

*In what ways is the work of the Holy Spirit different today  
than it was in the time of Gideon?*

---

### **The Famous Fleeces**

*Judges 6:36-40*

*What is Gideon asking God to do with the fleece?*

---

*What was Gideon trying to discern by asking God to do this?*

---

*Why should we not use this model to determine God's will in our lives?*

---

*In regard to the fleece, what was Gideon really asking for?*

---

## Triumph in Weakness (7:1-25)

### You Need Fewer Men

*Judges 7:1-8*

*What did God tell Gideon concerning the number of soldiers? Why?*

---

*What did God tell Gideon to do to reduce the number of soldiers?*

---

*Why did God instruct Gideon to reduce the number of soldiers?*

---

### My Weakness, His Strength

*2 Corinthians 12:5-10*

*Why is it important to God to work through our weakness?*

---

*God does not  
save in the way  
we expect—He  
saves through  
weakness!*

*Have there been times in your life that God weakened you so that you could see his hand at work?*

---

*Have there been times in your life that God weakened you and then worked through that weakness?*

---

### The Loaf of Barley

*Judges 7:9-14*

*How did Gideon describe the Midianite and Amalekite camp?*

---



*What did Gideon discover that brought him encouragement?*

---

**The God Who Reassures**

*Judges 7:15*

*How did Gideon respond when he gained new perspective on the battle?*

---

*What does this encounter teach us about the work of God in our lives?*

---

*Are we any different? How do we receive God's assurance?*

---

**The Brilliant Strategy**

*Judges 7:16-19*

*What is Gideon's battle plan for defeating the Midianites?*

---

*Why is this considered a 'brilliant' plan?*

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**Victory**

*Judges 7:19-25*

*How did God bring about victory against the Midianites?*

---

## **Ruling as Kings (8:1-31)**

### **Teaching a Lesson**

*Judges 8:1-21*

*Why were the men of Ephraim upset with Gideon? How did Gideon respond?*

---

*Why did Gideon become angry with the people of Succoth and Penuel?*

---

*How did Gideon respond to them? Why is his response so different?*

---

*Did Gideon keep the 'promise' that he made to Succoth and Penuel?*

---

*What happened with Zebah and Zalmunna? What does this teach us about Gideon's character?*

---

## **The Danger of Success**

“Gideon’s need for respect and honor—and his violent, bitter rage when he fails to be given what he thinks he deserves—shows that his success in battle has been the worst thing for him. He has become addicted to and dependent on his success.” (Keller 95)

*Why can it be spiritually dangerous to experience success or blessing?*

---

## **King Gideon?**

*Judges 8:22-32*

*What did the men of Israel ask Gideon to do? Why?*

---

*Do Gideon’s actions in verses 24-27 match with the attitude portrayed in verse 23?*

---

*What was the result of Gideon’s hypocritical actions?*

---

*How is it possible for Gideon to turn down being king and then immediately begin acting like one?*

---

## **Abimelech's Conspiracy and Downfall (9:1 – 9:57)**

### **Grasping for Power**

*Judges 9:1-6*

*What did Abimelech do in an effort to grasp for power in Israel?*

---

*Did Abimelech's plan to gain power in Israel work?*

---

*What lessons can be learned from this passage about choosing a leader?*

---

### **The Thornbush King**

*Judges 9:7-21*

*What is Jotham trying to communicate to the people with his story in 9:7-15?*

---

*Why is it so ridiculous to consider the thornbush as the king of the trees?*

---

*What were Jotham's warnings to the people in Judges 9:16-20?*

---

### **The Fire of the Thornbush**

*Judges 9:22-29*

*How could Abimelech's reign be characterized? (Judges 9:22-25)*

---

*In verses 27-29, what is ironic about Gaal's rise to power?*

---

*What are some evidences that Abimelech's reign fulfill the characterization portrayed of him in Jotham's parable?*

---

### **Is God Absent?**

*Judges 9:23-24, 56-57*

*What were God's purposes in the events of Judges 9:22-55?*

---

*What can we learn from this situation concerning God's present judgment?*

---

## VIII. Parenthesis 2: The Governorships of Tola and Jair (10:1-5)

*Who arose to deliver Israel following the rule of Abimelech? How long did each govern Israel?*

---

*From what oppressors did Tola and Jair deliver Israel?*

---

## IX. The Ammonite and Jephthah Cycle (10:6 – 12:7)

### The Outcast (Judges 10:6 – 11:11)

#### Sold Into Slavery

*Judges 10:6-7*

*Where did all these 'gods' in verse 6 come from?*

---

*If idolatry led to slavery, why did the Israelites continue in idolatry?*

---

*What was the result of the Israelites' vulnerability to idolatry?*

---

## **I Will No Longer Save You**

*Judges 10:8-16*

*How could the oppression by the Ammonites and Philistines be described?*

---

*Did the Israelites' repentance seem sincere—especially when compared to other times when they cried out to God for deliverance?*

---

*How did God respond to their cries for deliverance?*

---

*What are the signs of true repentance?*

---

## **The Crime Boss**

*Judges 10:17 – 11:11*

*Why is Jephthah a surprising choice as God's deliverer? (Judges 11:1-11)*

---

## **Failed Diplomacy (Judges 11:12 – 12:7)**

### **The Pen before the Sword**

*Judges 11:12-28*

*What did Jephthah do when the Ammonites threatened with war? (11:12-13)*

---

*What were the three arguments used to refute the Ammonite claims?*

---

**HISTORICAL ARGUMENT – 11:15-22**

**THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT – 11:23-24**

**LEGAL PRECEDENT – 11:25-27**

*How effective were Jephthah's attempts at diplomacy? In your opinion, why?*

*How does the Bible say we should handle false accusations?*

---

### **A Terrible Vow**

*Judges 11:29-40*

*What was the vow that Jephthah made? What can we learn from this?*

---

*What was the result of his vow to God?*

---



***Why did Jephthah make this promise to God?***

---

***What did Jephthah's daughter request before he carried out his vow?***

---

***Why did Jephthah keep his vow?***

---

***What can we learn from this terrible episode in Israel's history?***

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**War within Israel**

*Judges 12:1-7*

***What was different between Jephthah's interaction with the Ammonites and his interaction with the Ephraimites?***

---

**X. Parenthesis 3: The Governorships of Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (12:8-15)**

JUDGE	OPPRESSOR	PERIOD OF OPPRESSION	PERIOD OF REST	BIBLICAL REFERENCE
Ibzan			7 years	Judges 12:8-10
Elon			10 years	Judges 12:11-12
Abdon			8 years	Judges 12:13-15

*What can we learn about each of these three judges from the text?*

---

**XI. The Philistine and Samson Cycle (13:1 – 16:31)**

**Miraculous Birth and Monastic Life (13:1-25)**

**Whose Eyes Matter?**

*Judges 13:1*

*How will your life this week reflect the truth that God's eyes matter more than yours?*

---

*What three things, other than God, do you spend most time thinking about; become most excited about; care most about? How could these things become idols to you? How can you spot it happening?*

---

*Why are self-defined standards so dangerous?*

---

**You Will Have a Son**

*Judges 13:2-5*

*What was unique about the circumstances of Samson's birth?*

---

*What is a Nazirite vow? What is its purpose?*

---

*How did Samson's mother react when she was told what would happen?*

---

*What difference does it make to our obedience when we act out of faith in God's promises, rather than an unwillingness to obey?*

---

*How did Samson's father, Manoah, react to this news?*

---

*Are there ways in which you are not enjoying your relationship with God because you would rather have some regulations to follow?*

---

## **Vindictive, Self-Absorbed, Emotionally-Immature, Sexually-Addicted Man (14:1 – 15:20)**

### **A Philistine Woman**

*Judges 14:1-3*

*Where was Samson going and why?*

---

*What did he see along the way? How did he react to this sight?*

---

*What were the cultural customs for parent-child relationships? What concern should we have here about how he speaks to his parents?*

---

*For what reasons were Samson's parents against him marrying a Philistine? Was this an issue of racial prejudice?*

---

*Inter-faith coexistence is becoming more and more prevalent in the world today. It is socially unacceptable to consider Christianity as the Only, True Way to God. What are some examples of how the church has tried to 'coexist' with the world, but instead found that she has surrendered to the world?*

---

### **God at Work through Sin**

*Judges 14:4*

*What does God do when his people are losing their identity in the world because they look so much like the world?*

---

## **A Lion, a Bet, and a Woman**

*Judges 14:5 – 15:8*

***What happened on Samson's return trip to Timnah (14:5-6)?  
Why did he not tell his mother and father what happened?***

---

***Read Judges 14:10-20. What happens at the wedding celebration for Samson and the Philistine woman? How does this reveal his true nature?***

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***What did Samson discover when he returned to fetch his wife?***

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***How is Samson able to do all these mighty things? (14:6, 19)***

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## **Leadership without Peace**

*Judges 15:10-20*

***What is the result of Samson's actions in the first half of Judges 15?***

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***What did Samson do in verse 18 that the Bible had never recorded him doing before?***

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## **The Weak, Defeated Victor (16:1-31)**

### **Destructive Pattern of Behavior Continues**

*Judges 16:1-3*

*In verse 2, the men of the city were said to be setting an ambush for Samson. What happened? Was the ambush successful?*

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### **Dangerous and Deceitful Delilah**

*Judges 16:4-22*

*What did she do to try to discover the source of his strength?  
How many failed attempts did she have before he relented?*

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*What can we learn about relationships from Samson and Delilah?*

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*Once Delilah realized that Samson had told her the truth, what happened next?*

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*What did the Philistines do to Samson once he was captured?*

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*From where did the Philistines believe that Samson obtained his power?  
What was the source of Samson's strength?*

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*Why were the Philistines unconcerned about Samson's hair growing back?*

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**The Final Showdown: Yahweh vs. Dagon**

*Judges 16:23-30*

*After reading Judges 16:23-25, what was the purpose for this Philistine feast?*

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*Who was gathered together in this place for this celebration?*

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*Why do you think God returned Samson's strength to him?*

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*What was the result of Samson regaining his strength?*

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**Samson: A Picture of Christ**

*Judges 16:23-30*

<b>Compare/Contrast</b>	<b>Samson the Judge</b>	<b>Christ the Messiah</b>
What was the reason for his imprisonment and death?	•	•
What did his death accomplish?	•	•
What happened when he was arrested and imprisoned?	•	•
In what way was he treated when he was arrested?	•	•
In what way did he die?	•	•
What did his death accomplish?	•	•