



School of the Bible

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People of Faith

The purpose of these notes are to assist in developing a proper understanding of the course presented. They are not a comprehensive evaluation of the material and are intended to supplement instruction given.

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The Judges – Gideon and Samson

Outline

1. Judges – Background
2. Gideon – Mighty Man of Courage
3. Samson – Gifts or Character?

1. Judges – Background

1.1 Setting

- After the conquest under Joshua' leadership and the introduction of a King (Saul) – 350 to 520 year period.
- Israelites came into Canaan not as a unified country but numerous city–states with separate governments, often allied to major powers.
- Israel adopted a tribal structure. Each clan descended from Jacobs' sons and had their own leadership structures.
- The tribes of Israel meant to be united by their distinctive relationship to Yahweh but this did not materialise.
- Joshua: People were obedient in conquering the land
- Judges: People were disobedient, idolatrous and often defeated
- 7 distinct cycles of Israel drifting away
- 5 Reasons
 - Disobedience (Judges 1:19,21,35) Idolatry (Judges 2:12)
 - Intermarriage (Judges3: 5–6)
 - Not heeding Judges (Judges2: 17)
 - Turning away from God (Judges 2:19)
- 4 part sequel
 - Departure from God
 - God's Chastisement
 - Israel's Prayer
 - God's deliverance through raising up Judges
- Apostasy covered the whole land.
- Judges were unique charismatic leaders
 - Means: "Deliverer" or "Saviour"
 - Mainly military leaders
 - 14 Judges
- **God did not choose spiritual giants and raise them up as Judges.**

The judges were men and women that acted in Faith

1. Gideon – Mighty Man of Courage.

1.1 His call

1.1.1 He does not see himself the way God sees him.

1.1.1.1 When he hears the call, he responds to God "How can I deliver Israel? I am from the poorest tribe in Manasseh, and the least in my family."

1.1.2 God calls him a warrior, a mighty man of valour.

1.1.3 He tests the instruction of God by putting out fleeces.

1.1.4 Gideon wants to make sure what he heard was truly God.

1.1.4.1 Gideon did not doubt God's ability or power, but he hesitated because he knew of Israel's sin and felt that God's presence had been taken away from Israel and that was the reason for all of this calamity.

1.1.5 Gideon's confidence and strength started growing.

1.2 Preparation.

1.2.1 Obedient to the instruction of the Lord.

1.2.1.1 Gideon's first assignment was to destroy his father's altar of Baal in the family's backyard.

1.2.1.2 This time, he acted upon God's voice and he did so immediately.

1.2.1.3 This act required great courage, for Gideon feared his father's house and the men of the city who must have worshiped at the altar.

1.2.1.4 For this reason, Gideon and ten servants destroyed the altar of Baal and a wood idol by night and erected an altar to the Lord. Gideon immediately presented an offering to the Lord on the altar.

1.2.1.5 Through this act of obedience, Gideon was ready for the work of the Lord.

1.3 The Impossible Mission.

- 1.3.1 As the oppression of the Midianites intensified, Gideon sent out messengers to all Manasseh and the surrounding tribes to rally volunteers to Israel's cause (Judg. 6:35).
- 1.3.2 When Gideon's volunteers assembled, about 32,000 citizen soldiers stood in the ranks (Judg. 7:1).
- 1.3.3 Although there were 135,000 Midianites camped in a nearby valley, God directed Gideon to thin out the ranks. After dismissing the fearful and afraid, only 10,000 remained. Gideon's band was now outnumbered about 13 to 1.
- 1.3.4 Those who lapped the water with their hands, never taking their eyes from the horizon, were retained in Gideon's army; those who got down on their knees to drink, forgetting to keep watch for the enemy, were dismissed. Now only 300 soldiers remained (Judg. 7:5-7).
- 1.3.5 The Midianites outnumbered Gideon's band 450 to 1. But God and Gideon had a secret plan! Gideon divided the army into three companies. Then he gave each man a trumpet, a pitcher, and a torch. At the appointed time, 300 trumpets blasted the air, 300 hands raised their pitchers and smashed them to bits, 300 burning torches pierced the darkness, and 300 warriors cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judg. 7:19-21). The Midianites were thrown into panic. In the confusion, some committed suicide or killed their comrades. The remaining soldiers fled. The enemies of Israel were completely routed, and Israel's homeland was secure (Judg. 7:22; 8:10). It was a glorious victory for God and for Gideon, who became an instant hero (Judg. 8:22).

1.4 Snared.

- 1.4.1 Gideon took an offering (all of the earrings from the enemy spoil.)
 - 1.4.1.1 He made an ephod (priestly garment) and put it in his city
 - 1.4.1.2 All of Israel worshiped it.

1.4.2 What Gideon fought so diligently to stop, in the worship of other gods, was evident again.

1.5 Faith lessons from Gideon

1.5.1 Faith is activated by Godly purpose

1.5.2 Being afraid should never impact your faith

1.5.3 Our faith is in God's ability

1.5.4 Obedience is all God is asking for

2. Samson – Gifts or Character?

2.1 As a Nazrite

2.1.1 Those who took Nazirite vows were not supposed to:

- Drink wine, or any strong drink.
- Cut their hair.
- Touch any dead thing

2.1.2 As long as Samson remained a Nazirite (devoted to God) he was unconquerable.

2.1.2.1 He did not take this devotion seriously.

- This was a marriage of two unequally yoked. However, God worked through it for the deliverance of Israel.

“Mixed marriages were forbidden (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3). Samson’s parents were right to oppose his marriage to a heathen woman from the people who constantly oppressed Israel. We should not understand here that God had forced Samson into this marriage. Samson had made the decision.

Though it was not right, God found a way to accomplish His will in spite of the lack of wisdom of one of His servants. It proved to be the crucial link in the liberation of Israel.”¹

2.2 Anointed by the Spirit of the Lord.

2.2.1 In spite of this he succumbed to temptation.

2.3 He appeared to lack wisdom at times.

2.3.1 He was courageous in battle.

- Capturing 300 foxes and putting their tails on fire to run through the fields and vineyards.

2.3.2 Samson was the only judge known that never called on the army of Israel to fight his battle. He always fought single-handedly.

2.4 He was mighty in physical strength.

- Yet he was weak in resisting temptation.

2.4.1 He could tear off the gates of Gaza and carry them up hill, yet he could not resist the temptation of women.

2.5 He had a noble beginning but a sad end.

2.5.1 He moved under the influence of the Holy Spirit, yet he tried to do things in his own strength.

2.6 The Exploits of Samson.

2.6.1 Killing a lion barehanded.

2.6.2 Killing 30 men.

- 2.6.2.1 The solving of the riddle, when his wife deceived him in telling her the answer, and she in turn told her people for fear of her family and her being burned.

2.6.3 Caught 300 foxes.

¹ The Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim

- 2.6.3.1 After he came to be with his wife and found out that her father had given her to Samson's companion.
- 2.6.3.2 Samson caught the foxes and put their tails on fire and let them loose in the fields of the Philistines. All of the corn, vineyards and olives were destroyed.
- 2.6.4 Killed the Philistines with a great slaughter.
 - 2.6.4.1 After the Philistines burned his former wife and all of her relatives, Samson attacked them in revenge.
- 2.6.5 Broke 2 new ropes that bound him.
 - 2.6.5.1 3000 men of Judah came to Samson and asked him why he had done this. Samson was causing harm to come to them, so they bound him and turned him over to the Philistines.
- 2.6.6 Killed 1,000 armed men with the jawbone of a donkey.
 - 2.6.6.1 After he broke the ropes that bound him he took the jawbone and slew 1,000 men.
- 2.6.7 Removed the city's gates, carrying them to the top of the hill.
 - 2.6.7.1 This happened just after his relationship with a harlot.
- 2.6.8 Broke 7 bowstrings that bound him.
 - 2.6.8.1 Samson falls in love with Delilah, who tries to get him to tell her his secret to his strength.
 - 2.6.8.2 He tells her that if he is bound with 7 new bowstrings then he would lose his strength.
- 2.6.9 Broke new ropes that bound him.
 - 2.6.9.1 Samson is playing with fire; he enjoyed her company, and he thought that he could handle this situation in his own strength.
- 2.6.10 Broke the pin that bound his 7 locks of hair to the wall and carried the pin and web with him.
 - 2.6.10.1 Samson told Delilah to weave his hair in 7 locks as a web.
 - 2.6.10.2 Delilah continued to press him and he finally told her the secret to his strength. She called for the Philistines and

they brought her money. She told them to shave his 7 locks.

2.6.10.3 When Samson awoke, he went out not knowing that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him.

2.6.10.4 The Philistines took him and put his eyes out and bound him and he became a prisoner. The Philistines began to worship their god Dagon saying that he delivered them from Samson.

2.6.10.5 Samson was brought in and made sport of and he asked the guard to let him stand against the pillars.

2.6.10.6 Samson cried out to the Lord, asking to be avenged for his eyes.

2.6.11 Slew 3,000 men and women by pulling down the great pillars that held up the house.

2.7 Lessons from Samson's life

2.7.1 We all called to be holy and set apart for the Lord

2.7.2 We should not do things in our own strength.

2.7.3 Be determined and strive to align our character and gifts

“The great statement of these verses is that the true source of Samson's great strength was not in his long hair or in abstaining from strong drink. It was to be found in his dedication to God and the personal relationship that he maintained with Him.

His admission to Delilah in Judges 16:17 should be interpreted then as a denial of that trust and a breaking of his covenant vow, for which the Lord left him (Judges 16:20). His strength returned one more time, allowing him to decimate the Philistines, but only after he had admitted that the Lord was the Source of that strength (Judges 16:28), which was apparently a statement of repentance.”²

² The Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim

“And indeed this man deserves to be admired for his courage and strength, and magnanimity at his death, and that his wrath against his enemies, went so far as to die himself with them. But as for his being ensnared by a woman, that is to be ascribed to human nature, which is too weak to resist the temptations to that sin; but we ought to bear him witness, that in all other respects he was on of extraordinary virtue.”³

³ Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews