

From Jephthah to Samson Judges 12:1-13:5

Introduction

Jephthah received the victory over the Ammonites and carried out his vow to God. He was followed by three more judges before the people returned to doing evil in the sight of the Lord. Israel's longest time of living under oppression was about to begin.

Outline of Judges 12:1-13:5

- I. Jephthah's Last Years - Judges 12:1-7
- II. The Next Three Judges - Judges 12:8-15
- III. Samson the Judge - Judges 13:1-5

I. Jephthah's Last Years - Judges 12:1-7

The Ephraimites confronted Jephthah with a **hostile** question and a threat, *Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon and did not call us to go with you?*

Why did the tribe of Ephraim believe they deserved special treatment? Perhaps it was because Joshua, who had led the Israelites into the promise land, was an Ephraimite. Maybe it dated all the way back to Joseph's youngest son Ephraim who received the greater blessing from his grandfather Jacob, although he was the younger brother (Genesis 48:20). The tribe of Ephraim seemed to think very highly of themselves. However, just as in the days of Gideon, they arrived too late to help Jephthah fight against the Ammonites, and they complained that they were not "called" to help. It is as if they expected a special "invitation to war." This time, the Ephraimites threatened God's chosen deliverer, *We will burn your house down on you with fire!* Sadly, the Ephraimites wanted to fight their own Israelite brothers. Unlike Gideon, Jephthah held them accountable for their actions saying, *My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me...When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands...and*

God delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come...to fight against me?

If only the Ephraimites had listened to Jephthah when he explained it was God who did the delivering. Instead, they made matters worse by turning to name calling, *You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim.* Jephthah had been reasonable when he spoke to Ephraim, but Ephraim was looking for a fight, and so they persisted. Jephthah's army fought Ephraim and a tragic civil war began. The Ephraimites crossed the Jordan River and were quickly defeated. They hurried back to cross the river and found it was guarded by the Gileadites. Unable to tell friend from enemy (because they were all Israelites), the Gileadites came up with a test. Anyone who wanted to cross the Jordan had to speak the word "Shibboleth." The Ephraimites could not pronounce it correctly, and it was the last word for 42,000 of them. Their words gave them away and showed them to be the traitors. The Gileadites, led by Jephthah, won the battle, and Ephraim was silenced, for a time.

Jephthah ruled Israel six years, died, and was buried in a Gileadite city. He was truly a mighty man of valor who knew God.

II. Judges Following Jephthah - Judges 12:8-15

After Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon judged Israel. We don't know much about them, except that they kept the peace for a period of twenty-five years.

The first, Ibzan was from Bethlehem (believed to be from Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun, not Judah, where Jesus was born). He had 30 sons and 30 daughters, all of which were married. It is possible that their marriages extended Ibzan's influence further throughout

the area. He judged Israel seven years, died, and was buried at Bethlehem.

The eleventh judge, Elon of Zebulun, judged Israel 10 years, died, and was buried in Aijalon. There is nothing more known about Elon.

Abdon, the son of Hillel, was a Pirathonite, who judged Israel for 8 years. He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode 70 donkeys. Abdon was the only judge from the tribe of Ephraim. His body was buried in Pirathon, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

Only one judge remains in the book of Judges (although, he is not the last judge of the time period). Here is a review of those that have been covered up to this point:

DELIVER/ JUDGE	OPPRESSED BY	YEARS OPPRESSED	YEARS OF REST
Othniel	Mesopotamia	8	40
Ehud	Moab	18	80
Shamgar	Philistines		
Deborah	Canaanite king	20	40
Gideon	Midian	7	40
Tola		23	
Jair		22	
Jephthah	Ammonites	18	
Ibzan		7	
Elon		10	
Abdon		8	
Samson	Philistines	40	20

III. Judge Samson - Judges 13:1-5

The Israelites did evil again in God's sight, and He *delivered them into the hands of the Philistines*¹ who oppressed them for 40 years. Sadly, something is missing in the cycle that has become so familiar in the book of Judges. Evil is done in God's sight, Israel suffers God's judgement...then God raises up a deliverer. What happened to the cry for mercy from God? Apparently, Israel had "grown so used

1 The Philistines came from the area which is known today as the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians living there today descended from the Philistines.

to bondage (that) they (didn't) even have sense to call out for relief. At least here the very God who judges them begins to work their deliverance - anyway. That is grace - grace greater than all our sin, than all our stupidity, than all our density" (Judges: Such A Great Salvation, Dale Ralph Davis). Thank God that He gives us mercy even when we fail to ask for it!

In spite of Israel's failure to cry out for God's mercy, God provided a deliverer like no other. In fact, He chose the deliverer before he was born. To demonstrate His power, He chose a childless couple who lived in the city of Zorah. Manoah was from the tribe of Dan, and his wife was **barren**. It was a tragedy in Israel to have no children because it meant the couple was deprived of one of God's greatest blessings.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife giving her wonderful news, *you shall conceive and bear a son*. She was not the first woman in scripture to receive this blessed miracle, nor would she be the last:

- God revealed to Abraham that his wife, Sarah, would bear a son. She was past the age of being able to have children, so when she overheard this information, she laughed. That is why their son was named Isaac, meaning laughter (Genesis 17:19).
- Rebekkah, Isaac's wife, was also barren. Isaac pleaded with God for her, and God blessed the couple with twin boys, Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:21).
- Rachel, Jacob's second wife, was also barren. In time, God remembered her, and she gave birth to Joseph. Later, she bore Benjamin (Genesis 30:22-24, 35:17-18).
- Elizabeth and Zacharias had given up hope of having a child. When an angel appeared and spoke to Zacharias, he had a hard time believing that his prayers had been heard (Luke 1:11-18). Their son was named John (the Baptist).
- The most famous miracle birth in all of history involved a girl named Mary who was engaged to Joseph of Nazareth. An angel told her she would give birth to a

son (while she was still a virgin), and He would be called Jesus. He would be the Savior of the world.

These women show a pattern of how God works. Why did God repeat this theme? Why use these women who had no human energy or ability to change their situation? "He displays his power precisely when and where (we) can contribute nothing, and all in order to lift our eyes to Himself, so that we will have no illusions or delusions about where our help is found" Judges: Such A Great Salvation, Dale Ralph Davis). Lift up your eyes to the Lord! Recognize that your help and salvation come from the Lord (Psalm 121:1).

There were special instructions that came with the Angel's birth announcement. She was told not to drink wine or strong drink during her pregnancy and not to eat any unclean thing. The child's hair was to never be cut. The Angel explained that her son was to be a Nazirite (or Nazarite) to God from the **womb**. A Nazirite vow involved:

- not having wine, strong drink, or anything from the grapevine
- not cutting one's hair
- not going near a dead body

These were the outward signs showing that a person had made an inward commitment to separate himself to God. The vow could last for a period of time, or an entire lifetime (Numbers 6). John the Baptist was a lifelong Nazirite. Also, the apostle Paul took what appears to have been the Nazirite vow for a brief time (Acts 21:23-26).

The purpose of Samson's life was determined by God before his birth. The Bible tells of others known "from their mother's womb." These include not only the writer of Psalm 139, the prophet Jeremiah, the apostle Paul, John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Christ, but also you and me (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15; Matthew 1:20-21; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:4-5)! Just as God had a specific plan for this child to *begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*, He also has a

specific purpose for your life. When you were in your mother's womb, not even shaped to look like a baby yet, He had already planned your days (Psalm 139:16). He knows you and your every thought. The words King David spoke to his son, Solomon, are also for you: *...know (God) and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever* (I Chronicles 28:9). †

Prayer

Ask God to give you a heart that desires to obey Him. Confess to Him the things that tempt you to disobey, and ask Him to strengthen your will to overcome temptations.

Memory Verse

Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Psalm 139:16, 17

Vocabulary

hostile - having or showing unfriendly feelings

barren - not able to produce children or offspring

conceive - to become pregnant

bear - to give birth to

womb - muscular organ where young develop before birth

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 10

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. What did you learn from Jephthah's episode with the Ephraimites?

2. ☆ (Memory Question) What previous judge received a visit from the same Angel of the Lord who appeared to Manoah and his wife? See Judges 6:11-12 for help.

DAY TWO: Read Judges 13:6-23.

3. a. How did Manoah's wife describe the visitor she had seen?

- b. What remarkable news had the visitor brought to her?

- c. What special instructions had the visitor told her?

4. a. What was Manoah's first response? Give verse_____.

- b. ? (Thought Question) Why do you think Manoah did this?

- c. How did God answer Manoah's prayer?

- d. Did Manoah learn anything new about the child from the Angel? If so, what?

5. a. From verses 15 and 17, did Manoah think the Angel was a man or a heavenly being? Give a reason for your answer.

- b. What two things made Manoah realize that it was the Angel of the Lord?
Give verses_____.

- c. What was Manoah's reaction?

6. What wise advice did Manoah's wife use to comfort and encourage her husband? Underline the correct answer(s) below.
- a. If the Lord had wanted to kill us, He would not have accepted our offering.
 - b. Let us pray and ask for a sign.
 - c. Manoah, you worry too much! Chill out!
 - d. God would not have shown us all these things at this time if He planned to kill us.

DAY THREE: Read Judges 13:24-14:4.

7. From Judges 13:24-25, give two ways God showed grace to Samson?
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8. Answer the following questions using Judges 14:1-3.

- a. Where did Samson go? _____
- b. What did he see? _____
- c. What did he want? _____

9. a. From Leviticus 20:26, and Deuteronomy 7:1-4, why did Samson's parents disapprove of the wife he had chosen?
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- b. Using Proverbs 1:8, 4:1, and 6:20, what do you think about Samson's response to his parent's concern in verse 3?
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10. a. What didn't Samson's parents know? Give verse ____.
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- b. What was the Lord seeking to do through Samson's actions?
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DAY FOUR: Read Judges 14:5-18.

10. Fill in the blanks.

- a. When Samson went down to visit _____, a _____ came roaring against him.

- b. The _____ of the _____ came mightily upon him and he _____.

- c. Samson did not tell his _____ or _____ what he had done.

11. From verses 8 and 9, what else did Samson not tell his parents?
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12. a. What did Samson find when he revisited the body of the dead lion?

b. What did Samson do with what he found?

c. How did Samson use what he found in the lion's dead body at the feast?

d. How did the Philistines figure out the answer?

13. What is your opinion of Samson's wife? Give reasons for your answer.

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 14:19-20.

14. a. How did Samson pay for his lost bet?

b. How was he able to do this?

c. What else did Samson lose?

15. From what you have read about Samson in chapters 13 and 14, what do you think about him?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 10

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

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|------|----------------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| 1. . | hostile | | unfriendly | | angry | | kind |
| 2. . | barren | | pregnant | | fruitless | | infertile |
| 3. . | bear | | deliver | | lose | | produce |

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**Word****Definition****bear**

muscular organ where young develop before birth

barren

having or showing unfriendly feelings

womb

to become pregnant

hostile

to give birth to

conceive

not able to produce children or offspring

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.

GNREI

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to rule as a king, queen, emperor, etc.

CERHALTIRO

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a statement or question to make a point without expecting an answer

XTLEA

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to raise in power; glorify

RIEFST

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bitter disagreement; struggle; fight

MOKC

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to make fun of; ridicule; treat with scorn

PUORCRT

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

characterized by improper conduct

TABLNCUOAE

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

responsible to explain one's actions; answerable

REEDUN

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to continue to exist in pain or suffering

LENRET

--	--	--	--	--	--

to become less determined

SAHR

--	--	--	--

doing something quickly and without thinking carefully of what will happen

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1 2 3 4 4 5 6 7 8 9

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10 11

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12 13 14