

1. Judges 6 and 7 is the story of Gideon.
2. The oppressors this time are the Midianites.
3. The condition of Israel is due to their spiritual weakness - their apostasy.
 - 1) When we dishonor the Lord, we lose the right to claim His protection over us.
 - 2) Not every calamity is due to sin.
 - 3) Israel found itself in subservience to Midian because she refused to be in subservience to God.
 - 4) It is the same with individuals.
4. Gideon is another example of God choosing His own leader and making an unlikely choice.
 - 1) "Mighty man of valor"
 - 2) He needs an extraordinary amount of reassurance.
 - 3) He acts in secret under the cover of darkness.
 - 4) Another example of an unlikely choice - D.L. Moody
 - 5) Secret - They made themselves available to God.
5. I Corinthians 1:27ff: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him."
 - 1) God chose Gideon.
 - 2) God chose the battle plan.
6. Gideon asks the perennial question of people in trouble.

- 1) Where is God in the midst of all our troubles?
- 2) Who moved - you or God?
- 3) The answer to Israel's problem is found in Isaiah 59:1, 2.

7. The "fleece"

- 1) Definition - Setting up a controlled situation and then saying, "God if this happens, then I will know your will is "A", but if that happens, I will know your will is "B".
- 2) Is this an acceptable way of discerning the will of God?
 - a) On the negative side
 - i. God had already clearly told him what to do.
 - ii. On another occasion, Gideon again needed a "faith injection", and we are told this is not a model to emulate.
 - b) On the positive side
 - i. God does not rebuke him for asking for this "fleece".
 - ii. Other examples:
 - a. Eleazar, Abraham's servant, did the same thing when looking for a wife for Isaac.
 - b. King Hezekiah - 2 Kings 20
 - c. King Ahaz in Isaiah 7
 - c) Laying out fleeces will strengthen the faith of a weaker Christian. As we mature in our faith, we will find ourselves in less need of fleeces.

8. Judges 6:34; "...the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." The Hebrew literally says, "The Spirit of God clothed Himself with Gideon."

- 1) The ability to do the work of God is not inherent in God's servants - it is an endowment of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Christianity is not a "self-help" religion.

3) Being filled with the Spirit “connects” us to the resources of Christ through His Holy Spirit who has come to dwell in us.

9. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit did not indwell people.

1) He came upon them, but not in a permanent way.

2) Now the Holy Spirit indwells those who have been joined by faith to Christ.

1. Judges 8 and 9 finishes the account of Gideon.
2. Israel had 300 men; Midian had 135,000. The odds were 450 to 1.
3. The men of Succoth and Peniel refused to help at all.
4. Israel had lost its sense of being a nation and functioned instead as 12 semi-connected tribes - there was no unity.
 - 6) Because there was no obedience to God.
 - 7) Because they were without strong, godly leadership.
 - 8) Because there was no unifying vision in Israel.
5. Besides the lack of unity, there was no faith.
 - 3) No faith in God
 - 4) No faith in themselves
6. No unity, no faith - and a very low level of spirituality
 - 4) Moral standards were low.
 - 5) There was a spirit of revenge.
 - 6) Gideon's lack of discernment in making the ephod and the polygamy he practiced, show how far Israel had fallen.
 - a) The ephod was now something carried, rather than something worn by the priests.

b) Polygamy was widely practiced, but not acceptable to God.

7. Israel was intended to be a Theocracy

3) Gideon understood this.

4) Abimelech, his son, did not.

8. Judges 9:36: “Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father...God also made the men of Shechem pay for all their wickedness.”

1. The great majority of Judges 10-12 is given to the story of Jephthah.
2. The tragic stories of Jephthah and of Lot have much in common; both men were degraded in their thought processes and sought to honor God by proposing or carrying out despicable acts.
3. Jephthah is called upon to lead the Israelites because of his military skill, not his holiness.
4. God is not a God to be manipulated.
5. Jephthah actually believed that God would be happy with a human sacrifice, showing how little he knew about God.
6. Jephthah was not a righteous man; so why did God choose him to lead Israel?
7. A minority view of this passage suggests that Jephthah “sacrificed” his daughter to perpetual service at the tabernacle as a virgin.
8. Back to the question “Why did God use Jephthah?”:
 - 1) We do not really know.
 - 2) I Corinthians 1 - God has a habit of using the despised things.
 - 3) God can use unrighteous as well as righteous instruments to accomplish His work.
9. A “shibboleth” is a trademark or identifying characteristic of a watchword or catch phrase of a particular group of people. The Ephraimites could not pronounce the “sh” and so failed the “shibboleth” test.
10. It is good for us to realize how much the Bible has shaped our culture and language and this provides opportunities for us to share with people where certain where certain ideas have come from.

1. Judges 13-15 is the story of Samson, another deliverer of Israel with “clay feet”.
2. Samson was the 12th judge of Israel and his life is marked as special from the beginning.
3. Scripture tells us of 5 “special” births announced in advance to the parents by an angel.
 - 1) To Hagar regarding Ishmael
 - 2) To Abraham and Sarah regarding Isaac
 - 3) To Manoah and his wife regarding Samson
 - 4) To Zechariah regarding John the Baptist
 - 5) To Mary and Joseph, regarding Jesus
4. Nazirite vows
 - 1) For Samson, as for Samuel and John the Baptist, the vow was prescribed upon them from birth.
 - 2) They were not to drink wine, cut their hair, or touch a dead body. They were to live their lives in a special relationship to the Lord.
 - 3) Of the 3, Samson is the one who did not take the vow seriously.
5. Samson was a lustful, vengeful and self-centered man.
6. When we put God’s glory first, He will be pleased to use us to accomplish His will AND we will be the beneficiaries of His blessing.

7. The angel of the Lord says his name is “Wonderful.”

1) Isaiah 9:6

2) Manoah knew he had been in the presence of God.

8. Manoah’s response is classic. When people recognize who God is, they begin to see themselves as they really are.

9. We must see Jesus both as our friend and as the Holy One.

10. Revenge was a predominant feature of life in the times of the judges...“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

11. God’s patience is incredible.

1. Judges 16-18 finishes the story of Samson, and contains the curious story of Micah.

2. Samson fell victim to the Philistines because of sin and pride.

3. You cannot sin with impunity and expect that God will simply ignore it. Because the Spirit of God empowered him, Samson came to the mistaken conclusion that sin does not matter.

4. Sin breaks fellowship with God and if you persistently sin, you cannot hope to enjoy the favor of God.

5. Samson, at some point in time, had begun to believe that the power was his and not from God.

6. As a result, his spiritual senses dulled and he was unable to sense the presence or absence of God at all.

7. Archaeologists have unearthed a set of pillars like those described in this passage.

8. Chapters 17 and 18 record the results of the statement in 17:6: "In those days Israel had no king and everyone did as he saw fit."
 - 1) Micah and the traveling Levite set up a private place of worship, which was against God's law.

 - 2) The Danites took the priest and his idols to serve them, despite the fact that the House of God was at Shiloh.

 - 3) The times in which we live are much like that of the judges - people want to do what is right in his own eyes.