

# Bible Challenge 2018

## Week 9a: February 25-March 3

### Outline:

Judges 1: A Summary of the Failed Conquest of the Land  
Judges 2-3:6: A Summary of the Book  
Judges 3:7-11: The Judgeship of Othniel  
Judges 3:12-30: The Judgeship of Ehud  
Judges 3:31: The Judgeship of Shamgar  
Judges 4-5: The Judgeship of Deborah  
Judges 6-8: The Judgeship of Gideon  
Judges 9: The Usurper Abimelech  
Judges 10:1-5: The Judgeship of Tola and Jair  
Judges 10:6-12:7: The Judgeship of Jephthah  
Judges 12:8-15: The Judgeship of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon  
Judges 13-16: The Judgeship of Samson  
Judges 17-21: People Doing whatever is Right in Their Own Eyes

The Book of Judges covers a period of about 350 years between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel and Israel's first king. Though the book of Judges is called just that, Samuel is actually the last judge over the people. On the most essential level, Judges were deliverers of the people from their oppressors. In some ways, they functioned as prophets, priests, and kings and in that sense, foreshadow the coming of the Messiah, the Greater Judge (though the title of Judge is not specifically attributed to Christ in the Scriptures).

To appreciate the cycles that are found in this book, one should understand the phrase, "the people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." While it typically is not reflected in our English translations, the word "Evil" has the definite article in the original Hebrew. That means the text is referring to a specific "evil thing" and not to general evil things. Most commonly this is a matter of idolatry to which this phrase refers... over and over again, the people are guilty of looking to the idolatrous gods of the pagans rather than the living God of Israel. How often, as Christians, we are guilty of doing much the same.

### A Summary of the Failed Conquest of the Land

There are large sections of the ending of the book of Joshua that are repeated in chapter 1. Recognizing that these historical books were written at different times as chroniclers looked back and compiled these accounts under the oversight of the Holy Spirit, it is pretty understandable to imagine Judges almost as a stand-alone volume, covering the initial invasion to set the context for the years of the Judges.

### A Summary of the Book

Chapter 2 and the first part of chapter 3 form the real introduction of this book — even a summary of the book as a whole. It begins with an appearance of the Angel of Yahweh (the pre-incarnate Christ) who condemns the people for not breaking down their idols. Thus, the warning that is lived out in this book follows ... but the idols will become a snare to the people and a thorn in their side. Then, with the death of Joshua arises a body of people who do not remember the works of the Lord...indeed, they did not remember because they had not been taught the things of God by their parents. Shame on the generation that does not point their children to the fear of the Lord.

The body of this section contains a general summary of the cycles that will follow in this book: the people do The Evil; God brings in an enemy to subjugate the people as their punishment; they repent and cry out to the Lord, and the Lord sends a Judge to deliver them and give them a season of peace in the land. Then, well, the cycle starts all over again.

This section closes with a reminder of God's sovereignty when we are told that the reason that God permitted those Canaanites to remain in the land was to teach the people warfare. In a very real sense, this stands as a reminder to us as well that God permits the wicked in the land to remain with us to teach us warfare as the church...maybe not with guns and bombs, but a spiritual warfare that looks to God for help rather than to the work of our own hands.

### Othniel

We don't know a lot about Othniel apart from the fact that he is the son of Kenaz, who is Caleb's younger brother. He is considered the paradigm of the Judge, delivering the people from Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia, who had dominated the people for 8 years.

### Ehud

Ehud is the next Judge and a major figure in the book of Judges. His role is to deliver the people from king Eglon of Moab, who had dominated the people for 18 years. We don't know for sure when the book of Ruth took place in the context of the Judges, but this is the only account where Moab ruled over Israel and free travel back and forth would have been more common. We simply do not know.

### Shamgar

We know less about Shamgar than we know about Othniel, yet we see in Shamgar a foreshadowing of Samson to come as he slays 600 Philistines with an oxgoad (a long, pointy stick used to get stubborn oxen to move along). We are not told how many years the Philistines had oppressed Israel or whether they were just making raids into the lands, simply that Shamgar delivered Israel with his actions.

### Deborah

Surprise of surprises, at least it would have been in ancient Israel, but God raised up a female judge (in this case, the text later demonstrates that the purpose behind this was to shame the men who failed to take leadership). In this case, King Jabin of Canaan had oppressed Israel for 20 years and she was raised up to deliver the people, in this case, not by her own hand or by the hand of a general, but by the hand of Jael, the wife of Heber, who drove a tent-stake through the skull of Sisera. Judges 5 contains the song sung by Deborah and Baraq to celebrate God's victory.

### Gideon

Next to Samson, Gideon is perhaps one of the favorite judges, yet his life is tragic given the rise to power of his son, Abimelech. In this case, the Midian Hordes had conquered the land for 7 years, subjecting it to raids. The account of Gideon is well known, so I won't comment on that here, but I will highlight the emphasis on worship that is placed in the context of the story. That, indeed, is how leadership is to be lived out.

### Abimelech

One of Gideon's many sons. He slaughtered his brothers to try and become king of Israel. His rise is tragic and his fall is a mark of God's divine judgment, yet he ruled (though not as a judge) for 3 years before his fall.

### Tola and Jair

It seems that these Judges rule during a time of more or less peace. Both men ruled Israel for a long period of time before the nation once again falls unto pagan control.

### Jephthah

As the book of Judges progresses, what we find is that the Judges are going downhill (morally) right along with the people. Gideon and Abimelech were bad enough, but now comes Jephthah who was the son of a prostitute and grew up outside of the land. And so, after 18 years under the power of the Philistines, the people call on God and he essentially says, "Go fend for yourselves." Eventually, Jephthah is called on and he overthrows the Philistines, though not without making a pagan vow...one that would cost him his daughter's life. This was more than just rash, as many commentators suggest, this is a reminder of the tragedy that happens when you blend the world's ideas into your theology.

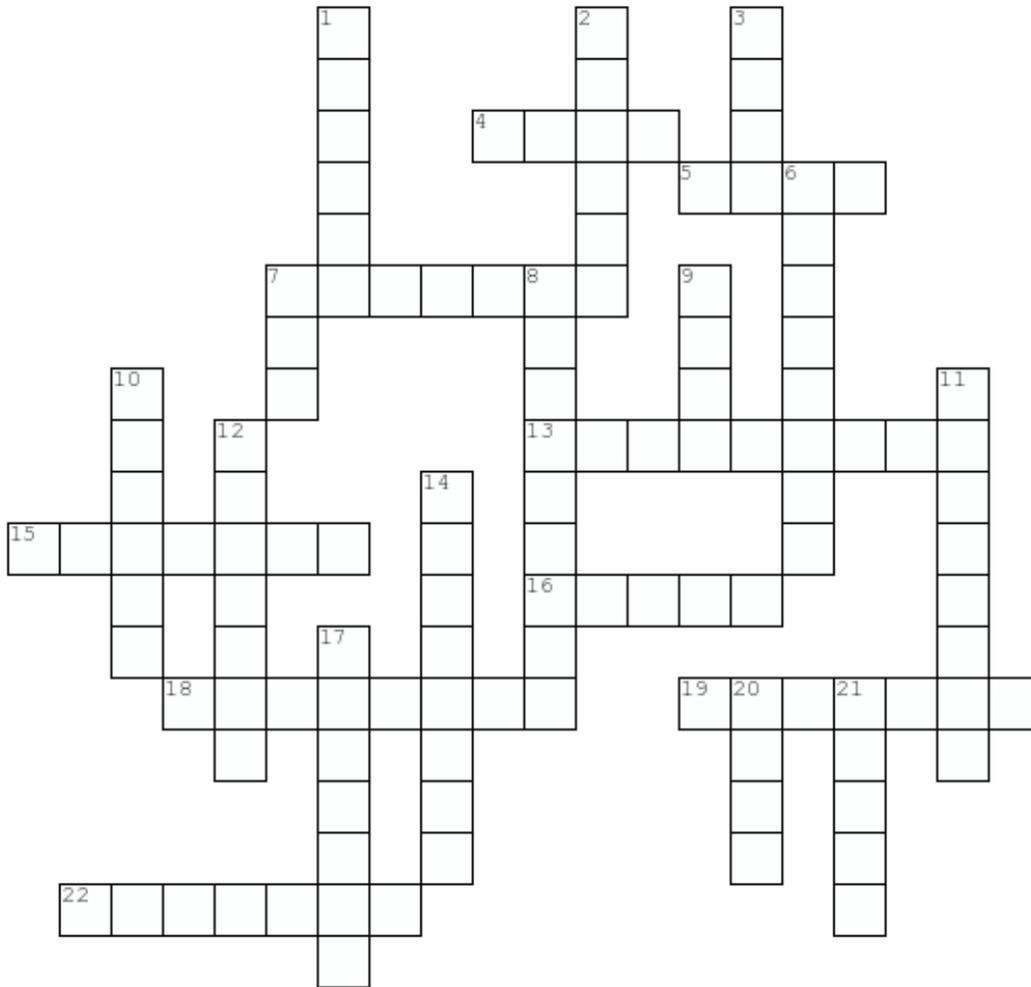
### Samson

For the record, "Sampson" is not how our Bible's translate his name, but it is not wrong in a technical sense (Sampson is the Greek spelling of this Judge's name). After 40 years of Philistine rule, God raises up this Judge to deliver Israel from their enemies, though the deliverance would cost Samson his life.

### Doing What is Right In One's Own Eyes

Yuck...that's all that can be said about this era. Every man did what was right in their own eyes and the land devolved into sin. How greatly this ought to stand as a warning to us in our society today. Are we really that far off? I think not.

# Week 9A: Judges



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## **Across**

4. Judges reminds us that when there is no \_\_\_\_\_ in Israel the people do what is right in their own eyes.
5. This judge had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys and ruled thirty cities.
7. The only female Judge.
13. Abimelech died because a woman dropped one of these on his head.
15. The people of this city betrayed the rightful sons of Gideon.
16. The people made Gideon this (a kind of religious totem) when he would not become king.
18. This Judge was the son of a prostitute of Gilead.
19. This woman betrayed Samson to the Philistines.
22. This group of people could not say Shibboleth properly, but pronounced it Sibboleth.

## **Down**

1. Gideon used this as a way to demonstrate to the People that God had called him to wage war on Midian.
2. Samson's father's name.
3. Samson took the gates off of this Philistine city and carried it into Judean territory.
6. What sin does the phrase, 'The Evil' typically refer to in Judges?
7. This tribe forsook their inheritance and sought out to conquer one of their own.
8. The name of Gideon's wicked son.
9. The woman responsible for killing Sisera.
10. This Benjaminite city was wiped out by the rest of the tribes due to their sin.
11. Gideon earned this name, meaning 'Let Baal contend for himself.'
12. This judge is related to Caleb.
14. Jephthah made a pagan vow and ended up sacrificing whom.
17. This Judge slew Philistines with an oxgoad.
20. This judge's left-handedness aided him in his ruse.
21. This Judge was buried in Bethlehem.