

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (June 12) – Judges 12, 13

Notice how Manoah's wife changes the final phrase of the annunciation when she recounts it to her husband. She leaves out "and he shall begin to save Israel from the Philistines." (13:5) She adds, "the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb *to the day of his death.*" (13:7) Her silence on the explicit promise of salvation and replacing it with "*to the day of his death*" is a hint of what kind of future lies before Samson. Samson will be a powerful but spiritually dubious judge of Israel who will end up sowing as much destruction as he does salvation. The Angel of the Lord (2:1; 6:12; 13:3) "is unlike other angelic beings in the Old Testament. He displays divine attributes, actions, and names. He is even worshiped. He is the pre-incarnate Christ. The New Testament calls him Jesus (Gal. 4:14; Rev. 20:1-3)."¹ The Angel of the Lord says, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" (13:18). The promised Messiah is called Wonderful Counselor (Is. 9:6).

Tuesday (June 13) – Judges 14, 15

The Spirit of the Lord endowed Samson with supernatural strength, but he was still a sinner with many shortcomings. In demanding to marry a Philistine woman, he breaks the fourth commandment, disrespecting his parents' wishes. He also transgresses God's law that specifically forbade marrying pagan neighbors (Dt. 7:3-4). He violates his Nazarite vow by touching the dead corpse of the lion to reach the honey within. The week-long feast he attends at the home of the parents of his Philistine bride-to-be is a drinking party. He violates his Nazarite vow to abstain from alcohol. God still uses unlikely Samson as a judge of Israel to begin delivering His people from the Philistines. Samson is unlike other Israelite judges, in that his countrymen didn't help him. Even worse, the men of Judah hand Samson over to the Philistines. But God uses this for his purposes. By His Spirit, He endows Samson with strength to fight the enemy hosts with no help from fellow Israelites.

Wednesday (June 14) – Judges 16

Samson's greatest weakness was women. Delilah manipulates Samson and successfully tempts him into sin. When Samson cuts his hair, he violates the last of his Nazarite vows. His strength was not in his hair. The loss of his strength was temporal punishment for his sin, for "The Lord had left him" (16:20), His eyes were gouged out and he was enslaved by the Philistines. Samson's story follows the sequence which has repeated over and over in Judges. Samson apostatizes, he transgresses God's law. Samson is battered, the Lord leaves him. Samson calls out to God. God hears Samson and delivers him, endowing him with supernatural strength once again to carry out God's judgment against the Philistines.²

Thursday (June 15) – Judges 17, 18

"In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6). This is repeated three more times in the remaining chapters of Judges (18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

¹ Reed R Lessing, *Prepare the Way of the Lord: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 176.

² Lessing, *Prepare*, 178.

Micah sins gravely by having household idols. The Levite not only commits idolatry but falls into greater sin by claiming to speak on behalf of the one true God (18:6). The Danites claim to have no inheritance, but they come from Zorah and Eshtaol which are cities assigned to the tribe of Dan (Jsh 19:41) They are bloodthirsty, greedy, and discontent with the portion of land allotted to them. They commit idolatry by taking Micah's household idols and pagan Levite priest. "Though militarily successful through God's Spirit, none of the [deliverers] in the book of Judges launched a crusade against Israel's idolatry. (The only judge to do that was Samuel [cf. 1 Samuel 7:1-11].)"³

Friday (June 16) – Judges 19

Despite the Levite's earlier interest in being reconciled to his concubine, he turned her over to the mob. The Levite sinned gravely, as did his host who offered his daughter to the mob. These events harken back to Genesis 19, where Lot and his host gravely sinned in a similar way. The Levite coldly denies his concubine a proper burial. He dismembers her and uses her body to make a statement. All in Israel hear this horrific story and remember that nothing like this has happened in Israel's history since the time of Abraham and Lot. This shows the extent of the wickedness in Israel.

Saturday (June 17) – Judges 20

There is no judge to put down Israel's enemies. The enemies are now their own brethren. Gibeah was a Benjaminite city. Enraged men of the surrounding tribes go to the Benjaminites and demand justice for the murdered woman. When the tribe of Benjamin doesn't cooperate, the Lord speaks and instructs the tribe of Judah to go up against Benjamin. Even though they receive God's instruction to attack, the Israelites who go up against Benjamin are beaten back with massive losses twice. On the third attempt, after humbling themselves before the Lord, they are given the victory. Gibeah is burned to the ground. Just like the pagan Canaanite cities were destroyed before, the city of God's own people was devoted to total annihilation because of their blatant idolatry and rampant wickedness.

Sunday (June 18) – Judges 21

The men of Israel took vengeance on the inhabitants of the city of Jabesh-gilead. Because this city did not join the Israelite army against the Benjaminites, they are punished. This was not commanded by God. Neither did God command the Benjaminites to ambush the daughters of Shiloh. "What began as an attempt to punish the rape and murder of one woman ended with the punishers engineering the rape of 600 women and the murder of thousands."⁴ Israel seemed to be in desperate need for a king (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). "Israel required a monarch who would bring political stability"⁵ as well as guard God's people from the influx of idol worship from the pagan nations around them. Judges sets the stage for Samuel, through whom God establishes the throne of David. But one greater than David is here. The New Testament announces that Jesus of Nazareth is this longed for and perfect king.

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³ Lessing, *Prepare*, 170.

⁴ Lutheran Study Bible, Judges 21:22-23 footnote

⁵ Lessing, *Prepare*, 176.