

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 17 — “Playing Our Part in God’s Long Game”— September 14, 2025

Introduction: A Snapshot of a Civilization in Decline

We find ourselves in a difficult place as a nation. We have been in the midst of a cultural cold war for many years that has been exacerbated by recent events. At the same time, recent poll data suggests a significant divide between young men and women regarding what the most important things are in life. A nation that does not value life or the foundational human institutions of marriage and family cannot hope to maintain peace and prosperity and will devolve further into conflict and chaos.

Main Point: The brief account of the non-cycle judges and the beginning of the Samson narrative remind us of the importance of thinking of our lives in terms of _____.

Judges 12:8-13:24

Jephthah's period of judging Israel involved the defeat of the enemies of his people as well as tragedy on both a personal (the sacrifice of his daughter) and a regional level (the slaughter of the Ephraimites). Israel then seems to have entered a period of security and flourishing. Would they return to the Lord or fall once again into apostasy and political instability?

Exposition:

I. A second group of non-cycle judges serve to describe the condition of Israel in the time between Jephthah and Samson. (vv. 8-15)

Observations:

(1) The judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon seem to have ruled during a period of relative _____.

(2) The primary emphasis for two of them was on their extended _____.

(3) The descriptions of these judges hints at the fact that Israel’s _____ is continuing.

⇒ When compared to the other non-cycle judges (Tola—23 yrs. & Jair—22 yrs.), these judges were in leadership for shorter periods of time (Ibzan—7 yrs., Elon—10 yrs., & Abdon—8 yrs.).

⇒ The descriptions of the progeny of both Ibzan and Abdon imply polygamy among the nation’s leadership.

“The fact that several of the judges fathered extremely large families points to their living like the eastern potentates of their day. This is further evidence that Canaanite culture was influencing the Israelites adversely. The judges’ lives evidence mixed success and failure. Children are a blessing from the Lord (cf. 10:1-5), so even in spite of apostasy God continued to bestow grace on His people.” —Thomas Constable

Key Point: God calls His people to be _____ according to His Word no matter their circumstances, but particularly in times of peace and prosperity.

II. Israel once again abandoned the Lord and He permitted them to be oppressed by enemies from the East (v. 1)

Observations:

(1) Israel once again did “the _____ thing.”

(2) Although they had been delivered from the Ammonites, the _____ spent 40 yrs. raiding and attacking settlements in Israel.

III. In response to Israel’s oppression, the Lord intervened and began to prepare the way for the one who would begin to deliver them. (vv. 13:1-24)

Observations:

(1) The Lord is highlighted as taking the initiative since the people did not even _____ out to Him.

- (2) The Lord appeared to a woman of the tribe of Dan who was _____, giving her specific instructions regarding the child she would bear.
- ⇒ The instructions recall the laws regarding Nazarites in Numbers 6:1-21.
 - ⇒ That her son will only “_____” to deliver Israel hints at the sad state of the nation and the character of her leaders.
- (3) The woman reported what happened to her husband whose actions indicate that he may have _____ her.
- (4) Manoah then prayed that the Lord would again send the “man” to tell them more about how to rear the child.
- ⇒ The Lord once again came to the woman, indicating the first appearance, though culturally surprising, was no mistake.
 - ⇒ When the Lord addressed Manoah, he did with repeated references to his wife.
- (5) Manoah’s interactions with “the man” indicate that he did not fully understand the gravity of the situation.
- “let us...prepare a young goat for you” → “prepare a burnt _____”*
- “What is your name...?” → “my name...is _____” (Isa. 9:6; 28:29)*
- ⇒ The Angel of the Lord’s response to Manoah _____ the fullness His true identity.
- (6) Manoah and his wife responded rightly to both the _____ and _____ of the Lord.
- “they fell on their faces” → “but then his wife said to him...”*
- “Manoah’s wife is presented as the mature, trusting, and reasonable character, while Manoah himself is depicted as rather foolish, controlling, and fearful.” —Boda & Conway
- (7) In time, the Word of the Lord to them was fulfilled and she gave birth to a son.
- Samson*

Key Points: God’s _____ work in our lives begins even before we are born.

Fathers and mothers are entrusted with the _____ of raising their children in accordance with God’s Word.

Applying the Text

- Thinking of our lives in terms of multiple generations helps to guard us from the worldliness of _____.

Expressive individualism is the idea that each person’s identity is rooted in their inner psychological core—feelings, desires, and intuitions—and that authenticity is achieved by outwardly expressing and living in accordance with this inner self, regardless of external norms, traditions, or expectations.

Psa. 145:4-6—⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. ⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

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