

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 22.4%

Weekly Readings will cover: Judges 8 through Judges 14

Sunday: Judges 8

Monday: Judges 9

Tuesday: Judges 10

Wednesday: Judges 11

Thursday: Judges 12

Friday: Judges 13

Saturday: Judges 14

Current # of email addresses in the group: 599

I hope you enjoyed our first week of study of the book of Judges. These stories read like movie scripts. We now enter our second of three weeks studying this amazing book.

Website archive location for audio files & PDFs:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep-dive-reading-program-circa-2022-2025-903711>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 39

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 246 - SUNDAY: September 3rd

Judges 8

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “Though Gideon’s little band completely routed the Midianites and their allies, nevertheless he called to the men of Ephraim to come down and aid in completing the victory (Judges 7:24). The Ephraimites were quick to the task, taking the territory pointed out by Gideon, and capturing and executing two of the leading Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb, whose heads they proudly brought to Gideon (verses 24-25). But the meeting with Gideon was not entirely pleasant. The men of Ephraim sharply upbraided Gideon for his refusal to call them to the initial engagement, feeling that they had been denied their rightful part in a great battle (Judges

8:1). Gideon's reply astutely appealed to the vanity of the Ephraimite men. "Though you were called to aid in the mopping-up activity, yet you have done far better than I," he basically told them, "for you have taken and killed two Midianite princes—and how shall my little skirmish compare to that!" (compare verses 2-3). Thus said, the Ephraimites' anger was assuaged.

As Gideon and his men returned to the land of Israel, exhausted and faint with hunger, they came to Succoth and asked the elders of the city for provision to continue their pursuit of other Midianite leaders. The elders of Succoth refused, saying that it looked to them like Gideon hadn't captured anyone. The men of Penuel, upon the same request, made a similar reply. In both cases Gideon promised to return and punish the cities for their impertinence. According to the culture of the day, Gideon had every right to make the request, for he was a fellow countryman who was warring against Israel's foes. The actions of the Succothites and Penuelites showed disloyalty and cowardice. When Gideon captured the two Midianite kings, he returned to Succoth and Penuel and carried out his threats, whipping the elders of Succoth with thorns and breaking down a defensive tower in Penuel. The victory achieved by Gideon was so stupendous that the men of Israel were intent on making him king. But Gideon refused—God was Israel's king, and Gideon made sure to impress that point on the men of Israel. Gideon did take a reward, however, which was also his due according to the standard of the day. But Gideon behaved foolishly, for he took his reward of gold and made an ephod—a ceremonial religious garment—of it. It became an object of veneration by the Israelites and, sadly, even proved a snare to Gideon and his family (verse 27). When Gideon died, the people went back into total idolatry, even building a temple to Baal (verses 33-35; Judges 9:4).

Gideon's story presents the first signs of a yearning for kingship in Israel. As previously stated, most of the real governmental power in

Israel at the time was in the hands of the elders of the various tribes, and the tribes tended to look to their own interests, even when the national fortune or honor was at stake. The repeated cycle of servitude and deliverance began to expose the weakness of the tribal confederacy as it then existed and to awaken a desire for a more powerful central government. Sadly, the repeated cycle of servitude and deliverance did not impress on the Israelites the need for fidelity to God and the covenant. That was the lesson they should have learned. But men seldom blame their own evil hearts, preferring rather to blame “the system.”” [END]

Verse 5 – This is the area where Jacob had erected both a house and booths for his livestock (see Genesis 33:17).

Verse 6 – The JFB commentary states: “an insolent as well as a time-serving reply. It was insolent because it implied a bitter taunt that Gideon was counting with confidence on a victory which they believed he would not gain; and it was time-serving, because living in the near neighborhood of the Midianite sheiks, they dreaded the future vengeance of those roving chiefs. This contumelious manner of acting was heartless and disgraceful in people who were of Israelitish blood.” [END]

Verse 14 – John Gill’s commentary states: “wrote down their names, and what part of the city they dwelt in; or Gideon took down in writing for himself their names and places of abode from the young man, that he might not forget: and in this Gideon showed great wisdom, and strict justice; being desirous to punish only the delinquents, and not the innocent with the wicked, the people with their rulers; for though he asked bread of the men of Succoth, the answer was returned in the ill natured manner it was by the princes.” [END]

Verse 20 – John Gill’s commentary states: “Being the near kinsman of his father's brethren, whom these kings had slain, was a proper person to avenge their blood on them; and the rather Gideon might order him to do it, for the greater mortification of the kings, to die by the hand of a youth; and for the honour of his son, to be the slayer of two kings, and to inure him to draw his sword against the enemies of Israel, and embolden him to do such exploits:” [END]

Adam Clarke’s commentary adds: “By the ancient laws of war, prisoners taken in war might be either slain, sold, or kept for slaves. To put a captive enemy to death no executioner was required. Gideon slays Zebah and Zalmunna with his own hand. So Samuel is said to have hewn Agag in pieces, 1Sa 15:33. Benaiah slew Joab, 1Ki 2:25. Saul orders his guards to slay the priests who had contributed to the escape of David, 1Sa 22:17; and David caused one of his attendants to slay the Amalekite who pretended to have slain Saul, 2Sa 1:15.” [END]

Verse 21 – John Gill’s commentary states: “the Targum calls them chains, as in Jdg 8:26 no doubt of gold; so the horses of King Latinus had golden poitreles or collars hanging down their breasts. They were, according to Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Gersom, in the form of the moon; see Isa 3:18 some have thought that these were worn in honour of Astarte, or the moon, the goddess of the Phoenicians, from whom these people had borrowed that idolatry.” [END]

Verse 23 – When God chooses a leader, He sees what men cannot. Here we see the humility and reliance on God that made Gideon a great judge of Israel.

Verse 27 – JFB commentary adds: “That no idolatrous use was in view, nor any divisive course from Shiloh contemplated, is manifest from Jdg 8:33. Gideon proposed, with the gold he received, to make an ephod for his use *only* as a civil magistrate or ruler, as David did (1Ch 15:27), and a magnificent pectoral or breastplate also. It would

seem, from the history, that he was not blamable in making this ephod, as a civil robe or ornament merely, but that it *afterward* became an object to which religious ideas were attached; whereby it proved a snare, and consequently an evil, by *perversion*, to Gideon and his house” [END]

Day 247 - MONDAY: September 4th

Judges 9

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states for this chapter: “As stated in yesterday's reading, when Gideon died, the Israelites went right back to their old ways, fornicating with the gods of the Canaanites. How quickly do men turn when the restraining influence of a righteous man is removed!

Although Gideon did not become an actual king, he did have a heavy influence on all aspects of public life. In fact, the large number of sons born to him after his victory—70!—indicates that Gideon amassed a rather large harem (Judges 8:30), something usually reserved for kings. So although he did not become a king *de jure*, he was apparently the *de facto* king in Israel. This is also indicated by the name of one of his sons, whom he actually gave the royal title of Abimelech (verse 31), which means "My Father Is King"—and Abimelech's remarks indicate that Gideon's 70 sons were placed in important positions of leadership (compare Judges 9:1-2).

While Gideon earlier realized that he should not be crowned king, it is possible that he later didn't see things so clearly, particularly when we consider what happened with the ephod and his having many wives. (The multiplying of wives to oneself was forbidden to the kings of Israel in Deuteronomy 17:17 because it carried the danger of turning the one doing so away from God—and this principle was certainly applicable to anyone.) Furthermore, Gideon's strong leadership, the deference of the

people of Israel toward him, his personal lifestyle and the role of his sons in governing Israel probably did little to dispel the notion among the people that, even if he was not an actual king, he might as well have been.

Nevertheless, it is nowhere stated that Gideon ever actually assumed the *title* of king—and, with what is made of this issue in chapters 8 and 9, we would certainly expect the account to say so if he had. Thus, it is most likely that he never did. Naming his son Abimelech was perhaps a recognition of what he *effectively* was—not what he *truly* was. And perhaps he was even hopeful of being blessed with some kind of dynastic succession of leadership, as presumptuous as that seems to be.

Whatever the case, it is clear that Gideon's son Abimelech *did* want to be acknowledged as king. Upon his father's death, Abimelech realized that if he did not move immediately, he would forever lose his opportunity for that honor. His first action was to gain the support of his mother's influential Shechemite family, who saw that if Abimelech reigned in Israel, they would likely obtain high posts in the new government and all the benefits that went with them. This led the men of Shechem to throw their support, and money from the temple of Baal-Berith there, behind Abimelech. With the new money, Abimelech hired an entourage to accompany him—putting on the airs of a king, a public relations move. With the support of a significant city, and a personal entourage, Abimelech next eliminated any potential competition by murdering all his brothers, Gideon's sons. Immediately, the men of Shechem and Beth Millo crowned Abimelech king. Pathetically, this occurred at the terebinth tree at Shechem, where Jacob, so many years before, had commanded those of his household to put away the foreign gods that were among them (Genesis 35:4).

Jotham, the youngest of Gideon's sons, was the only survivor of the massacre. His long parable of the trees who sought a king charged the men of Shechem and Beth Millo with the grossest foolishness and the most treacherous dealings against Gideon, and he called forth a destruction upon them in repayment. Being the only blood descendant of Gideon, he knew Abimelech would do all he could to take his life, so he fled and hid.

The pact between Abimelech and his Shechemite supporters lasted for three years. Thereafter, "God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem" (verse 23). What caused the breach is not stated, but the disaffection caused the men of Shechem to support one Gaal, son of Ebed, in his bid for the throne. The rebellion was brought to a quick end—Abimelech killed Gaal and destroyed the city, including its pagan temple—and thus the treachery of the Shechemites against Gideon was repaid.

On the heels of this victory, Abimelech attacked another city, Thebez. But during the attack, a woman dropped a grinding stone down onto Abimelech's head. Dying, he ordered his armor-bearer to kill him, lest it be said that he was killed by a woman. And so Abimelech's treachery against his father Gideon was repaid.

God watches over His people. When the righteous cry out to him for deliverance from their enemies, God will act, although the unfolding of the events may, to all outward appearances, seem to have little to do with God. In the case of Abimelech, all God had to do was break the league between the Shechemites and Abimelech. The natural wickedness of the players involved would serve to bring things to a conclusion. And, true to His word, those who seek to exalt themselves will be abased." [END]

Verse 4 – The JFB commentary states: “idle, worthless vagabonds, the scum of society, who had nothing to lose, but much to gain from the success of a revolutionary movement.”

Verse 45 – Regarding the city being “sown with salt”, John Gill’s commentary states: “not to make it barren, for he would rather than have sowed the field, though this would not have had any effect of that kind, for any time at least; but to show his detestation of it, because of the ill usage he had met with, and as a token of its perpetual destruction, to which he devoted it, determining that if it was in his power it should never be rebuilt; but it was hereafter, and became again a very flourishing city in Jeroboam's time. Thus the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, in the year 1162, when he took Milan, not only ploughed it up, but sowed it with salt; and in memory of it there is a street in it, now called "la contrada della Sala": besides, Abimelech did this to deter other cities from rebelling against him; for if he so used his own city, more severely, if possible, would he use others.” [END]

Day 248 - TUESDAY: September 5th

Judges 10

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “After the reign of Abimelech, which does not appear to have included much territory other than Shechem and its surrounding villages, Tola judged Israel and worked some kind of deliverance, although we do not know against whom. He judged 23 years.

Following Tola, Jair judged 22 years. His 30 sons were noblemen and rulers of as many cities in Gilead, thus indicating that Jair had a rather large administrative apparatus, which exercised significant influence in Gilead and probably further afield. Since no mention is made of a deliverance made by Jair, it appears that he continued the era of peace produced by Tola.

The 45 years of peace and relative fidelity to God were shattered upon the death of Jair. Israel ran wholeheartedly back into idolatry, embracing the gods of not just the Canaanites, but also of the Syrians, Sidonians, Moabites, Ammonites and Philistines. And so, for 18 years God sold His people into the hands of foreigners—the Philistines and Ammonites, two of the very peoples whose gods Israel adopted. From the catalog of pagan gods, and the scanty notes of the Ammonite invasion into the territories of Ephraim and Benjamin, it would appear that the greater part of the oppression fell on the tribes east of Jordan, and that the Ammonite invasion might have been a coordinated effort with the Philistines to divide Israel down the middle.

When the 18 years elapsed, Israel came to its senses and, for the first time, the cause of their misery is actually stated by them in the account—their rejection of God and attachment to the Baals. But when they cried out to God, He rejected their pleas and told them He would not save them. Nevertheless, Israel repented and served God. Eventually, God could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

Ammon gathered in Mizpah, and Israel met them. But who would deliver Israel?" [END]

I don't have anything additional to add to this chapter.

Day 249 - WEDNESDAY: September 6th

Judges 11

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program: "We come now to one of the most difficult passages in the book of Judges—the story of Jephthah. The story is more important than one would at first suspect, for the critics have seized upon it as evidence that God is self-contradictory, bloodthirsty and devoid of any sense of equity and justice. Similarly, those who adhere to the belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture have found

the story to be a stone of stumbling, especially since the book of Hebrews includes Jephthah *by name* in its famous catalog of the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32-34).

If the common understanding of the story is correct, we surely have a very odd series of facts to explain. Jephthah demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the history of his people, a history he could only have learned from the books of Moses (see Judges 11:12-28). Yet, if this is so, how do we explain his apparent ignorance of the blaring prohibition against child sacrifice contained in the books of Moses? (Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:2; Deuteronomy 12:31-32; Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

Again, immediately after sending the ambassadors to Ammon "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (verse 29). But if this is so, how could a person led by the Holy Spirit be so absolutely callous as to sacrifice his own child? In fact, Jephthah's vow is made *immediately* after receiving the Spirit (verse 30)—how is that to be explained? Moreover, if the common understanding of the story is correct, God gave Jephthah the victory over Ammon knowing full well that Jephthah would sacrifice his child, and yet He never said a word—not in person, not in a dream, not by a prophet.

And further, how could a man who was so scrupulous to keep his vow (verse 35) be so unscrupulous as to murder his innocent child in flagrant disobedience to God's law? Additionally, when his daughter learned of her father's vow, she *encouraged* him to keep the vow and asked only to be able to go and mourn her virginity for two months, at the end of which time she *voluntarily* returned so that her father could carry out his vow. Jephthah's daughter exhibits no terror, no pleading for her life—even the friends with whom she mourned her virginity allowed her to return! How is that to be explained?

And why didn't Jephthah avail himself of the laws for redeeming things vowed (Leviticus 27)—he said, "I *cannot* go back"—when such an option would have been open to him?

And finally, if the common understanding of Jephthah's vow is correct, where is that marvelous and self-evident *faith* that caused the writer of Hebrews, probably the apostle Paul, to unhesitatingly include him in his catalog of the heroes of faith?

The confusion can be cleared up by carefully examining Jephthah's vow. Let us notice it in the New King James Version: "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering" (verses 30-31). First, notice that it is a conditional vow (if...then). Second, the phrase "whatever comes out to meet me" is actually "the one who comes forth to meet me" in Hebrew, an apparent reference to a person. *The Nelson Study Bible* concurs: "The phrase *to meet me* seems to refer more appropriately to a human than to an animal" (note on Judges 11:31).

How then are we to understand Jephthah's vow? The Hebrew of verse 31 is the source of the difficulty—or rather, the *translation* of the Hebrew text is the source of the difficulty. The next phrase could just as well be translated, "...shall surely be the Lord's, **OR** I will offer it a burnt-offering." *The Nelson Study Bible* notes, "The conjunction in Jephthah's pivotal statement in v. 31, that whatever or whoever came out of the door 'shall be the Lord's, *and* I will offer it up as a burnt offering' could be translated *or*. Thus, if a person came out first, he would dedicate that person to the Lord, or if an animal came out first, he would offer the animal as a burnt sacrifice" (note on Judges 11:39). This explanation, however, has left out the possibility of an unclean animal, such as a dog, coming out. Presumably, a clean animal in this

scenario would be sacrificed while an unclean animal would be dedicated like a person. But there is a possibility that this translation is not *entirely* correct either, as it leaves out the possibility of nothing or no one coming out to meet Jephthah. This brings us to the next apparent problem in translation.

The clause "or I will offer it up as a burnt offering" could also be rendered, "or I will offer Him a burnt offering." If that is correct, then we are left with Jephthah imagining a person coming out to meet him and stating, in a perhaps corrected rendering of verse 31, "The one who comes forth to meet me I will consecrate to the Lord, or [if no one comes out] I will offer Him [i.e., the Lord] a burnt offering." This changes the complexion of the difficulty entirely.

What emerges from a clear understanding of the Hebrew is significant. First, let's note that Jephthah was making a conditional vow with God. *If* God would give Jephthah the victory and bring him safely home, *then* Jephthah would either dedicate a person of his household to God or he would offer a burnt-offering to God if no one came out. Once God performed His part of the vow, Jephthah was bound to fulfill his part.

Second, and most important however, Jephthah left the choice in *God's* hands! Jephthah could not control who would come out of the doors of his house to greet him (or whether anyone would), just as Abraham's servant had no control over who would give him drink (see Genesis 24:12-14). The vow contained a choice to be made by God: either accept a consecrated person or a burnt offering. Therefore, Jephthah was perhaps, to a degree, acting on *faith*, allowing God to choose how Jephthah would fulfill his part of the covenant.

Yet it still appears that the vow was rash and unwise. Jephthah had apparently not thought this through well enough. He was shocked and

deeply grieved that his daughter was the one who came out to meet him, stating that this had brought him very low (verse 35). He was clearly expecting it to be someone else—probably a household servant. No doubt, he learned a powerful lesson that day.

Thankfully, as the evidence seems to support, Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter—he devoted her to the service of God, much as did Hannah devote Samuel to the service of God. As such, Jephthah's daughter would remain a virgin as she served at the tabernacle as part of a special class of dedicated women (compare Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22; Luke 2:36-37). It appears that they acted as door porters, singers, musicians and workers in cloth (most valuable and needed when the tabernacle stood, as it did in Jephthah's day). This dedication meant that Jephthah would have no grandchildren—for his daughter was his only child—and thus no heir.

As we know, the Israelites viewed barrenness as a stigma, and for the family line to end was considered virtually a curse from God. Now becomes very clear the grief of Jephthah (for he would have no inheritor) and of his daughter (for she would have no children) and of her friends (for their friend would never become "a mother in Israel," and possibly mother of the promised Messiah) and of the people of Israel (for their hero would not leave them descendants and his name would "perish out of Israel")! It is interesting to note the contrast between Jephthah and the judges immediately before and after him. They both had 30 sons (Judges 10:3-4; Judges 12:8-9), while Jephthah had just this one and only daughter.

As a final observation, we must note verse 39 again. The sacred historian records that Jephthah "carried out his vow with her which he had vowed" and then adds, "she knew no man." It is not recorded that Jephthah *sacrificed* her—that is apparently a conclusion based upon an incomplete understanding of the above scriptures. Some will argue that

this last clause just magnifies the tragedy of her death—that she died young without ever marrying. But if, indeed, Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed in gruesome and flagrant disobedience to God, this added statement about knowing no man would seem to be superfluous and inane; it only appears to make sense if she continued in a state of celibacy after Jephthah fulfilled his vow.

The writer of Hebrews, then, is vindicated for including Jephthah in the heroes of faith. Though Jephthah was evidently rash and unwise in making his vow to start with, he nevertheless obeyed God's command to pay one's vows to Him (Deuteronomy 23:21-23), even when it was to his own hurt (compare Psalm 15:4). In that sense, Jephthah's fulfilling of his vow may be seen as a real act of faith! He was willing to give up his only hope of grandchildren and perpetuation of the family line, enduring a social stigma, in order to obey God. Why? Because he looked forward to the promises that he had seen and embraced (Hebrews 11:13), which would be bestowed in that country of God (verse 14) when he would be raised in that better resurrection (verse 35)! Truly, then, Judges 11 reveals Jephthah to be, in the end, a courageous man of integrity, faith and vision!" [END]

I don't have anything additional to add to this very thorough breakdown of this chapter.

Day 250 - THURSDAY: September 7th

Judges 12

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program: "The Gileadites were a clan within Manasseh, dwelling east of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea. They appear to have been very independent of their tribe, and this independence irked the men of Ephraim, who generally headed the House of Joseph. Hence their accusation that the Gileadites were fugitives among Ephraim and Manasseh (verse 4).

Now that the war with Ammon was over, the men of Ephraim suddenly showed courage. They accused Jephthah of deliberately failing to summon them to the battle as a means of humiliating the leading tribe in Joseph, and they intended to wage war against him. Led by Jephthah, the Gileadites steadfastly held their ground, taking the strategic byways and heights. They recognized Ephraimite infiltrators by their distinctive accent (showing that even in a small geographical region like Israel there were sharp delineations between—and sometimes bitter divisions among—the Israelite tribes and clans). However, the battle went entirely in favor of Jephthah and the Gileadites, and Gilead remained independent of their larger tribal units.

Jephthah judged only six years. After him a long series of judges followed: Ibzan of Bethlehem, seven years; Elon the Zebulonite, ten years; Abdon the Pirathonite (Ephraimite), eight years. Thus Israel enjoyed a total of 31 years of peace.” [END]

Verse 6 – The Hebrew word for “Shibboleth” means “a stream” or a course of water. Here they were wanting to pass over this section of water and it served to find out which group they were in by how they said this word.

Day 251 - FRIDAY: September 8th

Judges 13

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program: “At this point in the Judges narrative you may have noticed something interesting about Israel's periods of liberty—they approach about 40 years, or one generation. It seems that Israel would remain faithful to God only when a generation of Israelites experienced oppression. But the next generation would speedily go into idolatry, only to be oppressed. How true this remains! One generation seldom learns from the errors of its predecessor, and every

generation feels it must "push the boundaries" set by the previous generation.

After about a generation of peace, Israel again sinned, so God delivered them into the hands of the Philistines, who dwelt on the lowland coasts of Israel's southwest. For 40 years the Philistines had oppressed Israel. Now God raised up a deliverer, Samson of the tribe of Dan.

Samson was the son of Manoah, whose wife had been barren. Throughout the Scriptures we see that God sometimes caused barren women to bear the one through whom He would work. This was done as a sign of God's involvement with the child from the start, and that any glory of accomplishment was to go to God. And it brought added respect to the chosen servant, which could help him accomplish the task God gave him to do. Manoah's wife was visited by the Angel of the Lord—whom they later understood to be God Himself, i.e., the preincarnate Christ, which this may have been (verse 22; compare Genesis 16:10-13). This divine messenger told her that she would conceive a child and instructed her to avoid all wine, products of the vine and unclean foods, for her son would be a Nazirite from birth, consecrated to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Manoah recognized the seriousness of the news and asked God how to raise the child. Manoah and his wife instinctively knew that if they were to raise a son who would do the works of God they would need divine assistance in their parenting. This is certainly the case of Christian parents today, because we live in a world that is largely lacking in godly values. Those who have children today need to ask God for wisdom in the process of rearing children. They also need to actively pursue knowledge of proper child rearing.

Again the Angel appeared and reiterated the need to avoid wine, products of the vine and anything unclean. Manoah and his wife then

offered God a burnt offering and a grain offering. And as the offerings were consumed upon the altar, the Angel of the Lord ascended to heaven, whereupon they came to the conclusion regarding the Messenger's identity.

A major theme of this chapter is consecration to holiness. The child was to be a Nazirite from birth for the entirety of his life. The Nazirite (Numbers 6) was consecrated to God for a stipulated period, during which he was forbidden to cut his hair, to partake of wine or any other grape products, or to defile himself. Wine is often used as a symbol of spiritual stupefaction, and so the lesson is that separation to God requires absolute avoidance of anything that will dull one's spiritual senses. The dietary laws, moreover, are also explicitly connected with the requirement of holiness (Deuteronomy 14:1-3). Thus, the lesson is that the raising of holy children is only possible through holy parents doing all they reasonably can to remove sources of spiritual defilement from their children. Of course, even this will not guarantee the child's persistence in holiness—as it certainly did not in the case of Samson.

Surprisingly, however, for those readers interested in biblical typology, the story of Samson appears to offer, to a limited degree, a type of Christ. Samson, whose name means "Like the Sun," was Israel's deliverer and strong man. Christ, the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), a "sun and shield" (Psalm 84:11), is Israel's Deliverer and Strong Man (compare Luke 11:21-22). Samson had miraculous physical strength; Christ had miraculous spiritual strength. Samson's conception was announced by a spirit messenger from God, as was Christ's. Both Manoah's wife and Mary conceived as a result of divine intervention. Samson was separated to God from conception and for the entirety of His life, as was Christ (though Christ was not a Nazirite as some argue). Moreover, as the story will unfold, Samson's greatest victory came at the hour of his death, as did Christ's. There are marked differences between them, of course. The type breaks down when we see Samson

unwilling to submit to God for so much of his life, unlike Christ who obeyed His Father perfectly. Still, there are some parallels. And Samson's name was, in the end, recorded in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:32).” [END]

Verse 18 – Dive into this “wonderful”

Day 252 - SATURDAY: September 9th

Judges 14

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program: “Samson's life as a deliverer for Israel stands in sharp contrast to the other deliverers God raised up for Israel.

Despite such promising beginnings, Samson showed himself susceptible to being foolishly enticed by the world. God did not want the Israelites intermarrying with pagan gentiles, but Samson took a Philistine woman as his first wife. Also, Samson, as a Nazirite, should have avoided any uncleanness, but he took the honey from the carcass of the lion, which would have rendered the honey unclean (compare Leviticus 11:24-38). In short, Samson was a hardheaded man, but God would use that as a means of provoking the Philistines and delivering Israel.

The marriage of Samson, and the trickery that attended it, also shows that Samson was easily manipulated by the object of his desire. Neither his first, unnamed, wife, nor the woman Delilah would prove to be loving, faithful wives—but, rather, willing tools in the hands of the Philistine oppressors. Moreover, Samson seemed to be generally blind to their deceptions.

These kind of strange personal characteristics in a deliverer of Israel seem to be contradictory to the purposes of God. But in the case of Samson, God intended to use just such a man to seek an occasion against the Philistines (Judges 14:4). God can use the most unlikely of instruments to accomplish His purposes, even the very weaknesses and

sins of men. If this is so with the weaknesses of God's servants, how much more when His servants purge themselves of sin and weakness and become truly holy and spiritually strong! Let us all strive to be just such excellent tools in the hands of our awesome God." [END]

Verse 4 – It's interesting to me to see that this was all part of God's ultimate plan.

Verse 19 – John Gill's commentary states: "one of the five principal cities of the Philistines; it lay near the Mediterranean sea, and, according to Bunting, was twenty four miles from Timnath; why he went so far, is not easy to say; some think there was some grand solemnity or festival observed there at this time, which he knew of, when persons put on their best suits of apparel, and such he wanted: and slew thirty men of them; in vindication of which, it may be observed, that Samson was now raised up of God to be judge of Israel; and that he acted now as such, and under the direction and impulse of the Spirit of God, and the persons he slew were the common enemies of Israel; and if now observing a festival in honour of their gods, they were justly cut off for their idolatry:" [END]

Verse 20 – The Adam Clarke commentary states: "This was the same kind of person who is called the friend of the bridegroom, Joh 3:29. And it is very likely that she loved this person better than she loved her husband, and went to him as soon as Samson had gone to his father's house at Zorah. She might, however, have thought herself abandoned by him, and therefore took another; this appears to have been the persuasion of her father, Jdg 15:2. But her betraying his secret and his interests to his enemies was a full proof he was not very dear to her;" [END]