

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2016: *Rebellion and Redemption*
Lesson 4 “Conflict and Crisis: The Judges”

Read for this week’s study

Judges 4; Judges 6; Judges 14; Hebrews 11:32; 1 Samuel 2:12–25, 8:1–7.

Memory Text

“And Hannah prayed and said: ‘My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation’” (1 Samuel 2:1, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Deborah
- III. Gideon
- IV. Samson
- V. Ruth
- VI. Samuel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

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ISRAEL’S JUDGES

A. Introduction

- 1. Misadventures of WenAmun. The last verse in the Book of Judges states: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (21:25). How could this happen if the Lord was Israel’s King?
- 2. A good summary of the nation’s ups and downs is presented in Judges 2:10-19. According to this passage, what was the main task of a Judge?
- 3. This week’s lesson talks about the following men and women: Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Ruth and Samuel. Would you object if we added the story of Hannah?

B. Gideon the brave (Judges 6:11-24)

- 1. Gideon is greeted by the Lord’s Messenger, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!” His reaction to the greeting sounds impolite. Instead of scolding him, what did the Lord say?
- 2. As a member of an insignificant clan from Manasseh’s tribe, Gideon hesitates for a moment to obey God. How was the tribe of Manasseh different from the tribe of Ephraim? How does God reassure Gideon?

3. Gideon builds an altar to the Lord. Why does he call it “the Lord is Peace”?

C. Ruth (Ruth 2:4-13)

1. The narratives told in the books of Judges and Ruth talk about the same period of Israel’s history. What do they have in common? Are there contrasts between them?
2. Ruth faced a number of odds in the land of Judah. Can you name some of them?
3. The foreman introduces Ruth to Boaz. What does he point out about her?
4. Boaz’s words betray a high respect toward Ruth. What traits of Ruth’s character stand out to him?

D. Hannah (1 Samuel 2:5-8)

1. Elkanah had two wives. Which of the two did he marry first?
2. Like several of the matriarchs, Hannah had difficulty to become pregnant. Could childbearing be viewed as one of the battlefields in the great controversy?
3. Hannah was desperate to find solution to her problem. Who did she take her problem to?

E. Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19-21)

1. Samuel began his priestly ministry under Eli. What else did the Lord have in store for him? What three important offices did he hold in Israel?
2. The young Samuel learned the importance of listening to God. What is the meaning of the expression “he let none of His words fall to the ground”?
3. It was Samuel’s privilege to anoint the first two kings over Israel. Why was he hesitant to do this?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, we go right from Joshua into Judges, and it doesn’t get better, does it? If anything, it gets worse. What do you think of what followed the death of Joshua—the story of Ehud, and the fat king Eglon? You remember he drove his dagger into that fat king, and he was so fat that the flesh closed over the handle. Have you ever heard a sermon on that? It could go with the verse, “That which thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,” perhaps. Hardly seems appropriate for a Sabbath morning service. Then why is it in the Bible? Then Jael and Sisera. Remember Jael invited this refugee to come into her tent. Did she feed him supper, and give him a Bible study? She fed him supper, and suggested he have a nap. And while he slept, she drove a tent peg through his temples. And they sang the Doxology thereafter, you recall.

And then Deborah and Barak, (Judges 4 & 5) and Gideon, his fleece, his conquests, his idols, his wives and his concubine. What about that story of Gideon? And then Samson, and his great

strength, and his cruelty, and his immorality, and his powerful leadership to be sure, and his final destruction of the heathen temple, which may have been one of the biggest things he did. And then Jephthah, who made the rash promise, and we're not sure what happened to his daughter. And then the Levite and his concubine, recognized in the book of Hosea as the lowest thing that ever happened in the history of Israel. And then one notices two verses that I think are keys to the book of Judges. Judges 21:25, and Judges 17:6. "In those days; every man did what was right in his own eyes." I think that really is a key to this book. They lacked good leadership, and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 –Joshua, Judges, Ruth, recorded November, 1983, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/11MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Joshua & Judges) <http://pkp.cc/12MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/13MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Ruth & 1 Samuel) <http://pkp.cc/14MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

When we came to particularly fifth and sixth grade we came to the five or six hundred stories that the children read in those two years, and there'd be the stoning of Achan and so on. And we found that traditionally all the stories would be grouped under certain qualities of character, like obedience. Stories like Gideon, say, would be under faith. Well, he had a lot of faith. How much faith have you got? Would you ask for a wet fleece tomorrow morning and a dry one on Wednesday? It takes a lot of faith? At least it's under that heading.

We turned it around and said, "Look, read that whole story." God sent an angel to Gideon, asked him to do something. Gideon said, "I'll do it." But as the day wore on his doubts crept over him because, you know, he was not a very strong person in some ways. He had a harem of concubines and he had idols. He was the best judge God could find to help his people. He sent them Gideon. So that night there came out through space the plaintive request, "Dear God, I'm feeling less and less sure that you've asked me to do something, but if I could wake up in the morning and find the fleece wet and the ground dry, I'd be so reassured."

And God said, "Shame on you, I've sent you a message already, you don't get any signs."

No, those were difficult days for Israel, the Moabites were tyrannizing them and God said to an angel, "That man needs help. Go down and give him a wet fleece on the dry ground."

But the next night there came the same plaintive request out through space, "Dear God I got up in the morning and the fleece was wet and the ground was dry, but I got up a little late and I got to thinking. Sure the ground would dry quicker than the fleece and I really don't know if you

communicated with me. But if tomorrow morning you could give me a dry fleece on the wet ground I'd know for sure that you've done it."

And God said, "Yes, give him a dry fleece on the wet ground."

Now who looks good, Gideon or God? So that's no longer under the heading of faith, that's under the heading of the goodness of God who is so very gracious. And that goes for all the stories. They're now about God, not about us. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Understanding the Mission of the Church*, #3, recorded September, 1983, Camp AuSable, Michigan} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMUTMOTC>*

What about Sampson? Sampson was filled with the Spirit. In fact, it says repeatedly "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily on Sampson." And in these last days we pray that the Spirit may come mightily upon us that we may finish the work. Well, if the same Spirit descends on us that descended on Samson; maybe we've been using the wrong method! We've been trying to win souls in Los Angeles. We should be getting jawbones of asses and going in there and killing the lot! I mean, that would stamp out sin, wouldn't it? How many of us are there here? Multiply by 1,000. We could do a pretty good job, at least in the local area, couldn't we? Is that the way it's going to go? Well, a little child has just had Samson in his Bible class, and then he goes home, and his father prays that we may all be filled with the Holy Spirit. The boy says, "Well, I remember when Samson was filled with the Spirit. He was pretty destructive. Is that what we're going to do?" And you say, "Oh no. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and all those other good things." "Well then, what spirit did Samson have?" "Well son, let's go on to the next lesson."

What do you do with those stories? What is the lesson of Samson's life? He had a marvelous beginning, didn't he, even before he was born. Talk about prenatal influences. It was promised to his parents that he would be a great man. He was sent off to a wonderful start. And I always envied his strength as a boy. I didn't care about much else, just his muscles. I even thought about what he did to the gates, that time.

Mother's policy was, after we were duly, and I'm sure appropriately, and fittingly and justly punished, we had to sit on the bottom stair near the front door until repentance came. Well, sometimes, before repentance came, I would look at that front door, big as it was, and the door posts on either side, and I would remember the lesson on Samson. And I'd think, "Boy! I wish I could put my shoulders to that door. I'd cart the whole thing out and dump it on Sheepcote Lane, and I'd come back into the house and say, "See, Mother!" Hmmm! Obviously repentance hadn't come yet, and that's why we had to sit on the bottom stair until thoughts improved.

Well, isn't that the lesson? And why go to the barber if you want to be strong? Let it grow! How are we to understand those details of the story? Or should we stand back further from the story

of Samson? Did they need a leader who was a strong man they would respect, or did they need some gentle philosopher? Not in the days of the judges. Somebody who could lead strongly, like a Gideon, a military man, or Samson, a man of great strength. They would respect that. And Samson did a fair job for quite a few years. He ruled and he judged, and he helped them from time to time. But he also indulged himself terribly, and died a suicide almost. Well, he said, "Let me die with them!" It's not quite a suicide, is it? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 –Joshua, Judges, Ruth, recorded November, 1983, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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So looking back on Ruth. Most important to me is the fact that in the days of the Judges, we wonder why God would still work with them. There were people, there was a remnant of people, as in the days of the Flood, really nice people who trusted God, and he could work with them, communicate with them, and continue the unfolding of his plan. And speaking of the unfolding of his plan, the Book of Ruth welcomes a Moabitess into the lineage of David and of Christ, to be added to Rahab, from the Book of Joshua, to the lineage of David and of Christ. And all of this speaks well of our God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 –Ruth & 1 Samuel, recorded November, 1983, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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And so Hannah wanted to be loved by her husband, who maybe had another wife with lots of boys. She said, "I need a son, God, or my husband will not love me." Is that a good reason? Well, all that we read is that God blessed her with a son. And Hannah said, in her gratitude, "I will dedicate him, and before he is very old I'll bring him up to live here at headquarters." I mean, what finer place for a little boy to grow up in than a place where Hophni and Phinehas are assaulting women in the temple when they come to worship! What an awful place to bring that boy. It might have been better if he'd stayed home. But she went ahead and brought Samuel. By the way, what happened to Samuel's sons? Were they any good? No, it's commented on, isn't it? In chapter 8 of 1 Samuel, there is mention made of this. We often speak of Aaron's sons not doing well, and Eli's sons doing worse, and now look at Samuel's sons. 1 Samuel 8:1:

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel [you see, they are still having judges, in Samuel, still having judges until there was a king]. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain.

Does anybody have *Today's English Version*, the *Good News Bible*? It's very vivid all through here. Their only interest is money or something like that. They took bribes and they perverted justice. So here you have Eli's sons behaving so grossly, and Samuel's sons behaving so badly.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and they said to him, "Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to govern us, like all the nations."

So it would appear they weren't choosing between God and a king. They were choosing between those two bad boys and a king. That made it a little less clear, didn't it, as they made up their minds? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Ruth & 1 Samuel*, recorded November, 1983, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Further Study with Ellen White

There was ever a remnant who were true to Jehovah; and from time to time the Lord raised up faithful and valiant men to put down idolatry and to deliver the Israelites from their enemies. But when the deliverer was dead, and the people were released from his authority, they would gradually return to their idols. And thus the story of backsliding and chastisement, of confession and deliverance, was repeated again and again. {PP 545.1}

By the repeated manifestations of His power in behalf of Israel, God would lead them to have faith in Him—with confidence to seek His help in every emergency. He is just as willing to work with the efforts of His people now and to accomplish great things through weak instrumentalities. All heaven awaits our demand upon its wisdom and strength. God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20. {PP 554.1}

Man is not left alone to conquer the power of evil by his own feeble efforts. Help is at hand and will be given to every soul who really desires it. Angels of God, that ascend and descend the ladder which Jacob saw in vision, will help every soul who will, to climb even to the highest heaven. {PP 568.2}