

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

- 1) 04 Dec 2016 Joshua 1:1-18
- 2) 11 Dec Joshua 2:1 – 6:27
- 3) 18 Dec Joshua 7:2 – 12:24
- 4) 25 Dec Christmas Message Luke 1:26-38
- 5) 01 Jan 2017 Joshua 13:1 – 22:34
- 6) 08 Jan Joshua 23:1 – 24:33
- 7) 15 Jan Sanctity of Life Prov 24:10-12; Mark 10:46-49
- 8) 22 Jan Judges 1:1 – 5:31
- 9) 29 Jan **Judges 6:1 – 12:15**
- 10) 05 Feb Judges 13:1 – 16:31
- 11) 12 Feb Judges 17:1 – 21:25
- 12) 19 Feb Ruth 1:1 – 2:23
- 13) 26 Feb Ruth 3:1 – 4:22

INTRODUCTION – PART 1

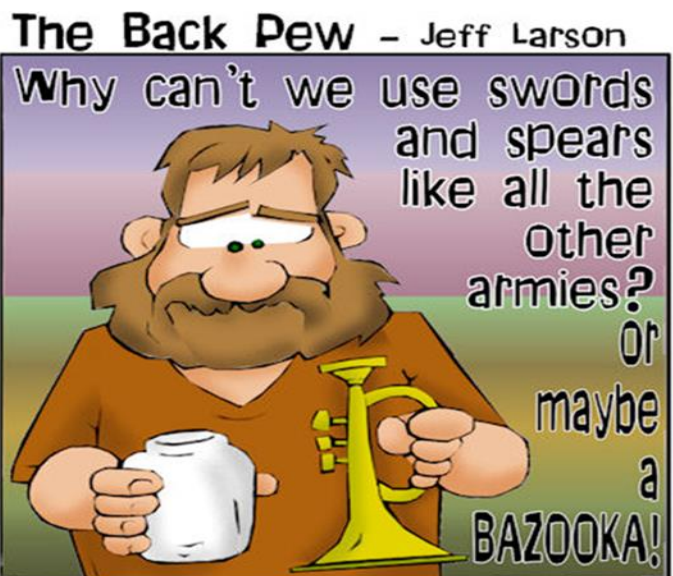
- One of the most notable judges, Gideon, was also one of the most questioning – “Where are God’s miracles?” Was Gideon faithless?
- Should we lay out fleeces or trust in dreams to find God’s will?

Passage	Comments
Judges 6:1-40	<p>God uses the Few, the Doubtful to Show His Might</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv1-7. Israel did what was evil again. Overran by sheer numbers, they had to dig out caves to hide in • v8. An unnamed prophet explains the reason why - SIN • vv11-12. A Theophany (God appears in human form) • v13. Gideon asks questions still being asked today: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ “If God exists why is there evil in the world?” ♦ And “Where are all His miracles?” ♦ What other questions do we ask? _____? • vv14-21. God reveals His plan to Gideon – “Go & Deliver!” But Gideon makes excuses and asks for a sign, so the Angel of the Lord revealed He was God by accepting Gideon’s worship of an offering • v25. God again speaks to Gideon, and commands him to tear down his father’s altar of Baal & Asherah pole, which was a tree stump carved into a phallic symbol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ What idols should we tear down? _____? • vv34-39. Gideon did not move against the Midianites until the Spirit of God came upon him, and he requests for tangible evidence from God by using a fleece <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Was this right or wrong for Gideon to do?
A Few Words on Laying Down Fleeces Today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If God were to appear to us in person, or give us a phone call or send us an email, then asking for tangible proof, as Gideon did, would be a reasonable request • Since God conveys His will to us in more subtle ways today (Heb 1:1-2) through His Son (or His Word), then “laying down a fleece” involves a providential answer and not something that breaks the laws of physics • Remember – unbelievers seek signs/wonders... Jn 4:48 • If we lack something, such as wisdom, then ask for it. This includes asking for confirmation of God’s leading. But know this - the answer will be a providential answer • For example: “Lord, please confirm you are leading me into full time missions work?” The answer won’t involve the Sun standing still, but it might involve a providential answer to financial support, or a long-closed door of opportunity finally opens up
Should we expect to see a Miracle or Providence?	
Was Gideon a Coward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:11. Gideon is hiding & threshing wheat in a wine vat • 6:15. Gideon makes excuses of his smallness • 6:27. Gideon destroys his father’s altar at night for fear • 6:36-40. Gideon asked for tangible evidence from God • 7:10. Gideon checks out the enemy’s camp with Purah
Not per Hebrews 11:32	

Passage	Comments
	<p>Conclusion – Gideon was just like many of us – doubtful about directly seeing and hearing from God, but he was willing to do what needed to be done once he received confirmation – He truly proved all things 1Thes 5:21</p>
7:1-25	<p>God defeats 135,000 men with 300 (45:1 ratio)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v6. What is the spiritual significance of the 300 men who lapped water like a dog over those who knelt down to drink? Were they any braver, smarter, or stronger? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Probably no spiritual significance. God just wanted 300 men and no more, and the water test did it ♦ God could’ve chosen only the left-hand warriors – but we would’ve conjured up all kinds of unwarranted spiritual ramifications from that exercise. God knew what He was doing with using the drinking water test • v11-15. Gideon is motivated after hearing confirmation of impending doom for the Midianites from a dream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ What motivates us to do great things for God?
A Few Words on Dreams	<p>Are dreams reliable? Can dreams motivate or confirm for us any decisions we need to make?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dreams may be of God (Joel 2:28); or may be “lying” dreams (Zech 10:2); or just from weariness (Ec 5:3) • Solomon says fear God & don’t trust dreams..... Ec 5:7 • God holds His word above man’s dreams..... Jer 23:28 • Like Gideon, be sure to prove all things..... 1Thes 5:21 • ALSO NOTE, God-invoked dreams along with accurate dream interpretations are extremely rare, even in the Bible – so do not use dreams to help make decisions, especially after eating pizza and spicy buffalo wings
8:1-21	<p>To Kill or Not to Kill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v10. An army of 135,000, where only 15,000 escape • v20. Gideon asked his oldest son to slay the 2 Midian kings, but Jether refused, being young & afraid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Was it right or wrong for Gideon to ask his son to slay these 2 men, possibly thinking he was training his son in the art of war?

PART 1 CONCLUSION/APPLICATIONS

- God’s Word is reliable under all conditions, even after eating pizza late at night. But dreams and fleeces are not as rock solid



After the Lord trims a 32,000 man army down to a lean mean 300, He arms them with trumpets and clay jars (Judges 7:8)

INTRODUCTION – PART 2

- Here we wrap up Gideon’s story and we look at some less notable judges (Tola, Jair, Ibzon, Elon, Abdon), and also some notorious judges (Abimelech – 1st king within Israel, Jephthah - possibly committed human sacrifice)

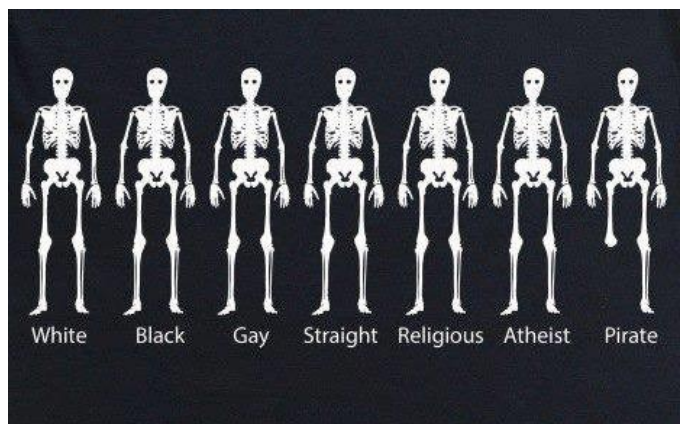
Passage	Comments
Judges 8:22-35	<p>Gideon’s Good & Bad Decisions Became His Legacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv22-23. Gideon rejects becoming a dynasty • vv24-27. However, Gideon makes a golden ephod from jewelry, and it becomes an idol BAD decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Aaron made a golden calf from jewelry Ex 32:24 ◆ Moses’ serpent also became an idol 2Kings 18:4 ◆ What expensive artifacts are worshipped today? Cars? Boats? Hobbies? _____ • vv30-31. Gideon had many wives and one concubine, and fathered 70 sons and one illegitimate heir (talk about succumbing to one’s sexual appetite) • We can assume God blessed Gideon with much wealth and he used it to support his “many wives” and 70 sons • God has blessed Americans beyond what we deserve, & being so blessed we should live for God & not for self • After all that Gideon did (good & bad) he is portrayed in Hebrews 11:32 as a man of faith we should emulate
9:1-57	<p>Abimelech, Illegitimate Son of Gideon, Becomes King</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A whole chapter is dedicated to his ruthlessness, including killing his 70 half-brothers (v5) • v23. God intervenes by “sending an evil spirit” to disrupt the harmony between Abimelech and Shechem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How does God control men and nations today? ◆ Was our presidential election influenced by God? • v45. Abimelech killed every person in Shechem, including burning down a tower w/ 1,000 men & women in it • v53. Abimelech tried to repeat his success in the next town, but a woman dropped a rock on his head • v56. God brought vengeance & justice upon Abimelech for killing Gideon’s sons – but it took 3 years (v22)
A Word on Vengeance	<p>Romans 12:19 Never take your own revenge, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance Is Mine, I Will Repay,” says the Lord</p> <p>BUT WHY DOES GOD’S JUSTICE TAKE SO LONG?</p> <p>2Peter 3:9 The Lord is ... patient with everyone, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (God is patient, and we should be too)</p>
10:1-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv1-5. Tola and Jair are quickly mentioned as judges who brought peace to the land over a 45-year period • v6. Israel again slips back into idolatry and even added to their sins by worshipping more and more gods • vv13-16. God says “NO MORE WILL I DELIVER YOU”, & like a loving parent He relents after they repent with fervency – for they put away their idols & served God
11:1-40	<p>Jephthah, Son of a Harlot, came to the Rescue and Makes a Needless Vow to Sacrifice Something</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegitimacy was viewed with disdain back then & now • vv3-11. Jephthah puts his “Bad-Boy” reputation to good use by leveraging his “worthless fellows” who followed him to fight for Israel and rescue them from Ammonites • v29-40. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah to do battle and succeed. Jephthah did not need to make the vow he did to sacrifice the 1st thing out of his house, be it an animal (sheep) or servant

Passage	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Note: It wasn’t uncommon to have animals in the lower portion of a house to protect them from thieves or bad weather. Jesus might have been born in such a house with a built in stable. See lesson for Mat1-2 • Did Jephthah actually sacrifice his daughter? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some very reputable commentaries state he did (Jewish Talmud, Josephus, Barnes, JFB, MHC) ◆ Some commentaries believed Jephthah made his daughter remain single (Clark) ◆ Other commentaries remained silent on the matter (Calvin, Gill, Poole, Trapp) • This is a tough one – especially since Jephthah is listed as a faithful agent in Hebrews 11:32, and God put His Spirit upon him (v29) to secure peace for Israel – BUT, other godly men, such as David & Solomon, also committed serious flaws of murder, adultery, &/or idolatry • In either case, the Bible is clear that God is totally against human sacrifice – save for His own Son, or to show no greater love than to die for a friend Jn 15:13
A Word on Illegitimacy	<p>It wasn’t too long ago, even in America, a child born out of wedlock was ostracized at school and at work</p> <p>An Apocrypha passage: “<i>Her [illegitimate] children will not take root ...or bear fruit.</i> (Sirach 23:22-25 NRSV)</p> <p>BUT the Bible says illegitimacy is only bad when a child lives like an illegitimate (undisciplined) child & not like an adopted child with a loving father (God).. Heb 12:7-8</p> <p>Recall that Jesus was illegitimate since Joseph was not his father – so illegitimacy need not be spiritually fatal</p>
12:1-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vv1-7. Internal squabble ensues with the Ephraimites taking offense against Jephthah – and 42,000 die. • Principle. Never pick a fight with someone who has the Spirit of God upon him • vv8-15. Three minor judges, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, judge Israel for a total of 25 years with no fanfare

PART 2 CONCLUSION/APPLICATIONS

- Not all judges were godly judges, just like not all Israelite kings were godly kings, and not all Levitical priests were godly priests
- God can even use the wicked to accomplish good – in this case to deliver Israel from oppressive regimes using a wicked Judge or 2
- ...& watch out for rash vows. God prefers obedience, not sacrifices

NEXT WEEK: **Judges 13-16.** Samson – the Judge who made decisions based on his emotions



“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” **John 7:24**