

## AN EXPOSITION OF

## THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The book of Judges is the history of Israel during the government of the Judges, who were occasional deliverers, raised up by God to rescue Israel from their oppressors, to reform the state of religion, and to administer justice to the people. The state of God's people does not appear in this book so prosperous, nor their character so religious, as might have been expected; but there were many believers among them, and the tabernacle service was attended to. The history exemplifies the frequent warnings and predictions of Moses, and should have close attention. The whole is full of important instruction.

## CHAPTER 1

*Proceedings of the tribes of Judah and Simeon. (1-8) Hebron and other cities taken. (9-20) The proceedings of other tribes. (21-36)*

## Judges 1:1

**Vs. 1-8:** The Israelites were convinced that the war against the Canaanites was to be continued; but they were in doubt as to the manner in which it was to be carried on after the death of Joshua. In these respects they inquired of the Lord. God appoints service according to the strength he has given. From those who are most able, most work is expected. Judah was first in dignity, and must be first in duty. Judah's service will not avail unless God give success; but God will not give the success, unless Judah applies to the service. Judah was the most considerable of all the tribes, and Simeon the least; yet Judah begs Simeon's friendship, and prays for aid from him. It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites; and all Christians, even those of different tribes, should strengthen one another. Those who thus help one another in love, have reason to hope that God will graciously help both. Adoni-bezek was taken prisoner. This prince had been a severe tyrant. The Israelites, doubtless under the Divine direction, made him suffer what he had done to others; and his own

conscience confessed that he was justly treated as he had treated others. Thus the righteous God sometimes, in his providence, makes the punishment answer the sin.

### ~~(100)~~ Judges 1:9

**Vs. 9-20:** The Canaanites had iron chariots; but Israel had God on their side, whose chariots are thousands of angels, ~~(187)~~ Psalm 68:17. Yet they suffered their fears to prevail against their faith. About Caleb we read in ~~(156)~~ Joshua 15:16-19. The Kenites had settled in the land. Israel let them fix where they pleased, being a quiet, contented people. They that molested none, were molested by none. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

### ~~(102)~~ Judges 1:21

**Vs. 21-36:** The people of Israel were very careless of their duty and interest. Owing to slothfulness and cowardice, they would not be at the pains to complete their conquests. It was also owing to their covetousness: they were willing to let the Canaanites live among them, that they might make advantage of them. They had not the dread and detestation of idolatry they ought to have had. The same unbelief that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it. Distrust of the power and promise of God deprived them of advantages, and brought them into troubles. Thus many a believer who begins well is hindered. His graces languish, his lusts revive, Satan plies him with suitable temptations, the world recovers its hold; he brings guilt into his conscience, anguish into his heart, discredit on his character, and reproach on the gospel. Though he may have sharp rebukes, and be so recovered that he does not perish, yet he will have deeply to lament his folly through his remaining days; and upon his dying bed to mourn over the opportunities of glorifying God and serving the church he has lost. We can have no fellowship with the enemies of God within us or around us, but to our hurt; therefore our only wisdom is to maintain unceasing war against them.

## CHAPTER 2

*The angel of the Lord rebukes the people. (1-5) The wickedness of the new generation after Joshua. (6-23)*

### Judges 2:1

**Vs. 1-5:** It was the great Angel of the covenant, the Word, the Son of God, who spake with Divine authority as Jehovah, and now called them to account for their disobedience. God sets forth what he had done for Israel, and what he had promised. Those who throw off communion with God, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, know not what they do now, and will have nothing to say for themselves in the day of account shortly. They must expect to suffer for this their folly. Those deceive themselves who expect advantages from friendship with God's enemies. God often makes men's sin their punishment; and thorns and snares are in the way of the forward, who will walk contrary to God. The people wept, crying out against their own folly and ingratitude. They trembled at the word, and not without cause. It is a wonder sinners can ever read the Bible with dry eyes. Had they kept close to God and their duty, no voice but that of singing had been heard in their congregation; but by their sin and folly they made other work for themselves, and nothing is to be heard but the voice of weeping. The worship of God, in its own nature, is joy, praise, and thanksgiving; our sins alone render weeping needful. It is pleasing to see men weep for their sins; but our tears, prayers, and even amendment, cannot atone for sin.

### Judges 2:6

**Vs. 6-23:** We have a general idea of the course of things in Israel, during the time of the Judges. The nation made themselves as mean and miserable by forsaking God, as they would have been great and happy if they had continued faithful to him. Their punishment answered to the evil they had done. They served the gods of the nations round about them, even the meanest, and God made them serve the princes of the nations round about them, even the meanest. Those who have found God true to his promises, may be sure that he will be as true to his threatenings. He might in justice have abandoned them, but he could not for pity do it. The Lord was with

the judges when he raised them up, and so they became saviors. In the days of the greatest distress of the church, there shall be some whom God will find or make fit to help it. The Israelites were not thoroughly reformed; so mad were they upon their idols, and so obstinately bent to backslide. Thus those who have forsaken the good ways of God, which they have once known and professed, commonly grow most daring and desperate in sin, and have their hearts hardened. Their punishment was, that the Canaanites were spared, and so they were beaten with their own rod. Men cherish and indulge their corrupt appetites and passions; therefore God justly leaves them to themselves, under the power of their sins, which will be their ruin. God has told us how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts are, but we are not willing to believe it, until by making bold with temptation we find it true by sad experience. We need to examine how matters stand with ourselves, and to pray without ceasing, that we may be rooted and grounded in love, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Let us declare war against every sin, and follow after holiness all our days.

## CHAPTER 3

*The nations left to prove Israel. (1-7) Othniel delivers Israel. (8-11) Ehud delivers Israel from Eglon. (12-30) Shamgar delivers and judges Israel. (31)*

### **Judges 3:1**

**Vs. 1-7:** As the Israelites were a type of the church on earth, they were not to be idle and slothful. The Lord was pleased to try them by the remains of the devoted nations they spared. Temptations and trials detect the wickedness of the hearts of sinners; and strengthen the graces of believers in their daily conflict with Satan, sin, and this evil world. They must live in this world, but they are not of it, and are forbidden to conform to it. This marks the difference between the followers of Christ and mere professors. The friendship of the world is more fatal than its enmity; the latter can only kill the body, but the former murders many precious souls.

### **Judges 3:8**

**Vs. 8-11:** The first judge was Othniel: even in Joshua's time Othniel began to be famous. Soon after Israel's settlement in Canaan their purity began to be corrupted, and their peace disturbed. But affliction makes those cry to God who before would scarcely speak to him. God returned in mercy to them for their deliverance. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel. The Spirit of wisdom and courage to qualify him for the service, and the Spirit of power to excite him to it. He first judged Israel, reprov'd and reformed them, and then went to war. Let sin at home be conquered, that worst of enemies, then enemies abroad will be more easily dealt with. Thus let Christ be our Judge and Lawgiver, then he will save us.

### **Judges 3:12**

**Vs. 12-30:** When Israel sins again, God raises up a new oppressor. The Israelites did ill, and the Moabites did worse; yet because God punishes the sins of his own people in this world, Israel is weakened, and Moab strengthened against them. If lesser troubles do not do the work, God will send greater. When Israel prays again, God raises up Ehud. As a judge, or

minister of Divine justice, Ehud put to death Eglon, the king of Moab, and thus executed the judgments of God upon him as an enemy to God and Israel. But the law of being subject to principalities and powers in all things lawful, is the rule of our conduct. No such commissions are now given; to pretend to them is to blaspheme God. Notice Ehud's address to Eglon. What message from God but a message of vengeance can a proud rebel expect? Such a message is contained in the word of God; his ministers are boldly to declare it, without fearing the frown, or respecting the persons of sinners. But, blessed be God, they have to deliver a message of mercy and of free salvation; the message of vengeance belongs only to those who neglect the offers of grace. The consequence of this victory was, that the land had rest eighty years. It was a great while for the land to rest; yet what is that to the saints' everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan.

**Judges 3:31**

**Vs. 31:** The side of the country which lay southwest, was infested by the Philistines. God raised up Shamgar to deliver them; having neither sword nor spear, he took an ox-goad, the instrument next at hand. God can make those serviceable to his glory and to his church's good, whose birth, education, and employment, are mean and obscure. It is no matter what the weapon is, if God directs and strengthens the arm. Often he works by unlikely means, that the excellencies of the power may appear to be of God.

## CHAPTER 4

*Israel again revolts, and is oppressed by Jabin. (1-3) Deborah concert's their deliverance with Barak. (4-9) Sisera defeated. (10-16) Sisera put to death by Jael. (17-24)*

### **Judges 4:1**

**Vs. 1-3:** The land had rest for eighty years, which should have confirmed them in their religion; but it made them secure, and indulge their lusts. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jabin and his general Sisera, mightily oppressed Israel. This enemy was nearer than any of the former. Israel cried unto the Lord, when distress drove them to him, and they saw no other way of relief. Those who slight God in prosperity, will find themselves under a necessity of seeking him in trouble.

### **Judges 4:4**

**Vs. 4-9:** Deborah was a prophetess; one instructed in Divine knowledge by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. She judged Israel as God's mouth to them; correcting abuses, and redressing grievances. By God's direction, she ordered Barak to raise an army, and engage Jabin's forces. Barak insisted much upon her presence. Deborah promised to go with him. She would not send him where she would not go herself. Those who in God's name call others to their duty, should be ready to assist them in it. Barak values the satisfaction of his mind, and the good success of his enterprise, more than mere honor.

### **Judges 4:10**

**Vs. 10-16:** Sisera's confidence was chiefly in his chariots. But if we have ground to hope that God goes before us, we may go on with courage and cheerfulness. Be not dismayed at the difficulties thou meetest with in resisting Satan, in serving God, or suffering for him; for is not the Lord gone before thee? Follow him then fully. Barak went down, though upon the plain the iron chariots would have advantage against him: he quitted the mountain in dependence on the Divine power; for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people, <sup><1023></sup>Jeremiah 3:23. He was not deceived in his

confidence. When God goes before us in our spiritual conflicts, we must bestir ourselves; and when, by his grace, he gives us some success against the enemies of our souls, we must improve it by watchfulness and resolution.

**Judges 4:17**

**Vs. 17-24:** Sisera's chariots had been his pride and his confidence. Thus are those disappointed who rest on the creature; like a broken reed, it not only breaks under them, but pierces them with many sorrows. The idol may quickly become a burden, <sup>2411</sup>Isaiah 46:1; what we were sick for, God can make us sick of. It is probable that Jael really intended kindness to Sisera; but by a Divine impulse she was afterwards led to consider him as the determined enemy of the Lord and of his people, and to destroy him. All our connections with God's enemies must be broken off, if we would have the Lord for our God, and his people for our people. He that had thought to have destroyed Israel with his many iron chariots, is himself destroyed with one iron nail. Thus the weak things of the world confound the mighty. The Israelites would have prevented much mischief, if they had sooner destroyed the Canaanites, as God commanded and enabled them: but better be wise late, and buy wisdom by experience, than never be wise.



## CHAPTER 5

*Praise and glory ascribed to God. (1-5) The distress and deliverance of Israel. (6-11) Some commended, others censured. (12-23) Sisera's mother disappointed. (24-31)*

### **Judges 5:1**

**Vs. 1-5:** No time should be lost in returning thanks to the Lord for his mercies; for our praises are most acceptable, pleasant, and profitable, when they flow from a full heart. By this, love and gratitude would be more excited and more deeply fixed in the hearts of believers; the events would be more known and longer remembered. Whatever Deborah, Barak, or the army had done, the Lord must have all the praise. The will, the power, and the success were all from Him.

### **Judges 5:6**

**Vs. 6-11:** Deborah describes the distressed state of Israel under the tyranny of Jabin, that their salvation might appear more gracious. She shows what brought this misery upon them. It was their idolatry. They chose new gods, with new names. But under all these images, Satan was worshipped. Deborah was a mother to Israel, by diligently promoting the salvation of their souls. She calls on those who shared the advantages of this great salvation, to offer up thanks to God for it. Let such as are restored, not only to their liberty as other Israelites, but to their rank, speak God's praises. This is the Lord's doing. In these acts of his, justice was executed on his enemies. In times of persecution, God's ordinances, the walls of salvation, whence the waters of life are drawn, are resorted to at the hazard of the lives of those who attend them. At all times Satan will endeavor to hinder the believer from drawing near to the throne of grace. Notice God's kindness to his trembling people. It is the glory of God to protect those who are most exposed, and to help the weakest. Let us notice the benefit we have from the public peace, the inhabitants of villages especially, and give God the praise.

## **Judges 5:12**

**Vs. 12-23:** Deborah called on her own soul to be in earnest. He that will set the hearts of other men on fire with the love of Christ, must himself burn with love. Praising God is a work we should awake to, and awake ourselves unto. She notices who fought against Israel, who fought for them, and who kept away. Who fought against them. They were obstinate enemies to God's people, therefore the more dangerous. Who fought for them. The several tribes that helped are here spoken of with honor; for though God is above all to be glorified, those who are employed must have their due praise, to encourage others. But the whole creation is at war with those to whom God is an enemy. The river of Kishon fought against their enemies. At most times it was shallow, yet now, probably by the great rain that fell, it was so swelled, and the stream so deep and strong, that those who attempted to pass, were drowned. Deborah's own soul fought against them. When the soul is employed in holy exercises, and heart-work is made of them, through the grace of God, the strength of our spiritual enemies will be trodden down, and will fall before us. She observes who kept away, and did not side with Israel, as might have been expected. Thus many are kept from doing their duty by the fear of trouble, the love of ease, and undue affection to their worldly business and advantage. Narrow, selfish spirits care not what becomes of God's church, so that they can but get, keep, and save money. All seek their own, <sup><31621></sup>Philippians 2:21. A little will serve those for a pretense to stay at home, who have no mind to engage in needful services, because there is difficulty and danger in them. But we cannot keep away from the contest between the Lord and his enemies; and if we do not actively endeavor to promote his cause in this wicked world, we shall fall under the curse against the workers of iniquity. Though He needs no human help, yet he is pleased to accept the services of those who improve their talents to advance his cause. He requires every man to do so.

## **Judges 5:24**

**Vs. 24-31:** Jael had a special blessing. Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a low and narrow sphere, if they serve God according to the powers he has given them, shall not lose their reward. The mother of Sisera looked for his return, not in the least fearing his success. Let us take heed of indulging

eager desires towards any temporal good, particularly toward that which cherishes vain-glory, for that was what she here doted on. What a picture does she present of an ungodly and sensual heart! How shameful and childish these wishes of an aged mother and her attendants for her son! And thus does God often bring ruin on his enemies when they are most puffed up. Deborah concludes with a prayer to God for the destruction of all his foes, and for the comfort of all his friends. Such shall be the honor, and joy of all who love God in sincerity, they shall shine for ever as the sun in the firmament.

## CHAPTER 6

*Israel oppressed by Midianites. (1-6) Israel rebuked by a prophet. (7-10) Gideon set to deliver Israel. (11-24) Gideon destroys Baal's altar. (25-32) Signs given him. (33-40)*

### ~~QURE~~ Judges 6:1

**Vs. 1-6:** Israel's sin was renewed, and Israel's troubles were repeated. Let all that sin expect to suffer. The Israelites hid themselves in dens and caves; such was the effect of a guilty conscience. Sin dispirits men. The invaders left no food for Israel, except what was taken into the caves. They prepared that for Baal with which God should have been served, now God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof.

### ~~QURE~~ Judges 6:7

**Vs. 7-10:** They cried to God for a deliverer, and he sent them a prophet to teach them. When God furnishes a land with faithful ministers, it is a token that he has mercy in store for it. He charges them with rebellion against the Lord; he intends to bring them to repentance. Repentance is real when the sinfulness of sin, as disobedience to God, is chiefly lamented.

### ~~QURE~~ Judges 6:11

**Vs. 11-24:** Gideon was a man of a brave, active spirit, yet in obscurity through the times: he is here stirred up to undertake something great. It was very sure that the Lord was with him, when his Angel was with him. Gideon was weak in faith, which made it hard to reconcile the assurances of the presence of God with the distress to which Israel was brought. The Angel answered his objections. He told him to appear and act as Israel's deliverer, there needed no more. Bishop Hall says, While God calls Gideon valiant, he makes him so. God delights to advance the humble. Gideon desires to have his faith confirmed. Now, under the influences of the Spirit, we are not to expect signs before our eyes such as Gideon here desired, but must earnestly pray to God, that if we have found grace in his sight, he would show us a sign in our heart, by the powerful working of his Spirit there, The Angel turned the meat into an offering made by fire; showing

that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God, who was to be served and honored by sacrifice, and who in the fullness of time was to make himself a sacrifice. Hereby a sign was given to Gideon, that he had found grace in God's sight. Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God's wrath and curse, a message from heaven has been a terror to him, as he scarcely dares to expect good tidings thence. In this world, it is very awful to have any converse with that world of spirits to which we are so much strangers. Gideon's courage failed him. But God spoke peace to him.

### **Judges 6:25**

**Vs. 25-32:** See the power of God's grace, that he could raise up a reformer; and the kindness of his grace, that he would raise up a deliverer, out of the family of a leader in idolatry. Gideon must not think it enough not to worship at that altar; he must throw it down, and offer sacrifice on another. It was needful he should make peace with God, before he made war on Midian. Till sin be pardoned through the great Sacrifice, no good is to be expected. God, who has all hearts in his hands, influenced Joash to appear for his son against the advocates for Baal, though he had joined formerly in the worship of Baal. Let us do our duty, and trust God with our safety. Here is a challenge to Baal, to do either good or evil; the result convinced his worshippers of their folly, in praying to one to help them that could not avenge himself.

### **Judges 6:33**

**Vs. 33-40:** These signs are truly miraculous, and very significant. Gideon and his men were going to fight the Midianites; could God distinguish between a small fleece of Israel, and the vast floor of Midian? Gideon is made to know that God could do so. Is Gideon desirous that the dew of Divine grace might come down upon himself in particular? He sees the fleece wet with dew to assure him of it. Does he desire that God will be as the dew to all Israel? Behold, all the ground is wet. What cause we sinners of the Gentiles have, to bless the Lord that the dew of heavenly blessings, once confined to Israel, is now sent to all the inhabitants of the earth! Yet still the means of grace are in different measures, according to the purposes of God. In the same congregation, one man's soul is like Gideon's moistened fleece, another like the dry ground.

## CHAPTER 7

*Gideon's army reduced. (1-8) Gideon is encouraged. (9-15) The defeat of the Midianites. (16-22) The Ephraimites take Oreb and Zeeb. (23-25)*

### Judges 7:1

**Vs. 1-8:** God provides that the praise of victory may be wholly to himself, by appointing only three hundred men to be employed. Activity and prudence go with dependence upon God for help in our lawful undertakings. When the Lord sees that men would overlook him, and through unbelief, would shrink from perilous services, or that through pride they would vaunt themselves against him, he will set them aside, and do his work by other instruments. Pretenses will be found by many, for deserting the cause and escaping the cross. But though a religious society may thus be made fewer in numbers, yet it will gain as to purity, and may expect an increased blessing from the Lord. God chooses to employ such as are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing. They grudged not at the liberty of the others who were dismissed. In doing the duties required by God, we must not regard the forwardness or backwardness of others, nor what they do, but what God looks for at our hands. He is a rare person who can endure that others should excellencies him in gifts or blessings, or in liberty; so that we may say, it is by the special grace of God that we regard what God says to us, and not look to men what they do.

### Judges 7:9

**Vs. 9-15:** The dream seemed to have little meaning in it; but the interpretation evidently proved the whole to be from the Lord, and discovered that the name of Gideon had filled the Midianites with terror. Gideon took this as a sure pledge of success; without delay he worshipped and praised God, and returned with confidence to his three hundred men. Wherever we are, we may speak to God, and worship him. God must have the praise of that which encourages our faith. And his providence must be acknowledged in events, though small and seemingly accidental.

### **Judges 7:16**

**Vs. 16-22:** This method of defeating the Midianites may be alluded to, as exemplifying the destruction of the devil's kingdom in the world, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the sounding that trumpet, and the holding forth that light out of earthen vessels, for such are the ministers of the gospel, <sup>4006</sup>2 Corinthians 4:6,7. God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, a barley-cake to overthrow the tents of Midian, that the excellencies of the power might be of God only. The gospel is a sword, not in the hand, but in the mouth: the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; of God and Jesus Christ, of Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb. The wicked are often led to avenge the cause of God upon each other, under the power of their delusions, and the fury of their passions. See also how God often makes the enemies of the church instruments to destroy one another; it is a pity that the church's friends should ever act like them.

### **Judges 7:23**

**Vs. 23-25:** Two chief commanders of the host of Midian were taken and slain by the men of Ephraim. It were to be wished that we all did as these did, and that where help is needed, that it were willingly and readily performed by another. And that if there were any excellencies and profitable matter begun, we were willing to have fellow-laborers to the finishing and perfecting the same, and not, as often, hinder one another.

## CHAPTER 8

*Gideon pacifies the Ephraimites. (1-3) Succoth and Penuel refuse to relieve Gideon. (4-12) Succoth and Penuel punished. (13-17) Gideon avenges his brethren. (18-21) Gideon declines the government, but gives occasion for idolatry. (22-28) Gideon's death, Israel's ingratitude. (29-35)*

### **Judges 8:1**

**Vs. 1-3:** Those who will not attempt or venture any thing in the cause of God, will be the most ready to censure and quarrel with such as are of a more zealous and enterprising spirit. And those who are the most backward to difficult services, will be the most angry not to have the credit of them. Gideon stands here as a great example of self-denial; and shows us that envy is best removed by humility. The Ephraimites had given vent to their passion in very wrong freedom of speech, a certain sign of a weak cause: reason runs low when chiding flies high.

### **Judges 8:4**

**Vs. 4-12:** Gideon's men were faint, yet pursuing; fatigued with what they had done, yet eager to do more against their enemies. It is many a time the true Christian's case, fainting, and yet pursuing. The world knows but little of the persevering and successful struggle the real believer maintains with his sinful heart. But he betakes himself to that Divine strength, in the faith of which he began his conflict, and by the supply of which alone he can finish it in triumph.

### **Judges 8:13**

**Vs. 13-17:** The active servants of the Lord meet with more dangerous opposition from false professors than from open enemies; but they must not care for the behavior of those who are Israelites in name, but Midianites in heart. They must pursue the enemies of their souls, and of the cause of God, though they are ready to faint through inward conflicts and outward hardships. And they shall be enabled to persevere. The less men help, and the more they seek to hinder, the more will the Lord assist.



Gideon's warning being slighted, the punishment was just. Many are taught with the briers and thorns of affliction, who would not learn otherwise.

### **Judges 8:18**

**Vs. 18-21:** The kings of Midian must be reckoned with. As they confessed themselves guilty of murder, Gideon acted as the avenger of blood, being the next of kin to the persons slain. Little did they think to have heard of this so long after; but murder seldom goes unpunished in this life. Sins long forgotten by man, must be accounted for to God. What poor consolation in death from the hope of suffering less pain, and of dying with less disgrace than some others! yet many are more anxious on these accounts, than concerning the future judgment, and what will follow.

### **Judges 8:22**

**Vs. 22-28:** Gideon refused the government the people offered him. No good man can be pleased with any honor done to himself, which belongs only to God. Gideon thought to keep up the remembrance of this victory by an ephod, made of the choicest of the spoils. But probably this ephod had, as usual, a teraphim annexed to it, and Gideon intended this for an oracle to be consulted. Many are led into false ways by one false step of a good man. It became a snare to Gideon himself, and it proved the ruin of the family. How soon will ornaments which feed the lust of the eye, and form the pride of life, as well as tend to the indulgences of the flesh, bring shame on those who are fond of them!

### **Judges 8:29**

**Vs. 29-35:** As soon as Gideon was dead, who kept the people to the worship of the God of Israel, they found themselves under no restraint; then they went after Baalim, and showed no kindness to the family of Gideon. No wonder if those who forget their God, forget their friends. Yet conscious of our own ingratitude to the Lord, and observing that of mankind in general, we should learn to be patient under any unkind returns we meet with for our poor services, and resolve, after the Divine example, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

## CHAPTER 9

*Abimelech murders his brethren, and is made king. (1-6) Jotham rebukes the Shechemites. (7-21) The Shechemites conspire against Abimelech. (22-29) Abimelech destroys Shechem. (30-49) Abimelech slain. (50-57)*

### ~~1001~~ Judges 9:1

**Vs. 1-6:** The men of Shechem chose Abimelech king. God was not consulted whether they should have any king, much less who it should be. If parents could see what their children would do, and what they are to suffer, their joy in them often would be turned into sorrow: we may be thankful that we cannot know what shall happen. Above all, we should fear and watch against sin; for our evil conduct may produce fatal effects upon our families, after we are in our graves.

### ~~1002~~ Judges 9:7

**Vs. 7-21:** There was no occasion for the trees to choose a king, they are all the trees of the Lord which he has planted. Nor was there any occasion for Israel to set a king over them, for the Lord was their King. Those who bear fruit for the public good, are justly respected and honored by all that are wise, more than those who merely make a figure. All these fruit-trees gave much the same reason for their refusal to be promoted over the trees; or, as the margin reads it, to go up and down for the trees. To rule, involves a man in a great deal both of toil and care. Those who are preferred to public trust and power, must forego all private interests and advantages, for the good of others. And those advanced to honor and dignity, are in great danger of losing their fruitfulness. For which reason, they that desire to do good, are afraid of being too great. Jotham compares Abimelech to the bramble or thistle, a worthless plant, whose end is to be burned. Such a one was Abimelech.

### ~~1003~~ Judges 9:22

**Vs. 22-29:** Abimelech is seated in the throne his father refused. But how long does this glory last? Stay but three years, and see the bramble

withered and burned. The prosperity of the wicked is short and fickle. The Shechemites are plagued by no other hand than Abimelech's. They raised him unjustly to the throne; they first feel the weight of his scepter.

**Judges 9:30**

**Vs. 30-49:** Abimelech intended to punish the Shechemites for slighting him now, but God punished them for their serving him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. When God uses men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing, and they another. That, which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find, who run to idols for shelter; such will prove a refuge of lies.

**Judges 9:50**

**Vs. 50-57:** The Shechemites were ruined by Abimelech; now he is reckoned with, who was their leader in villainy. Evil pursues sinners, and sometimes overtakes them, when not only at ease, but triumphant. Though wickedness may prosper a while, it will not prosper always. The history of mankind, if truly told, would greatly resemble that of this chapter. The records of what are called splendid events present to us such contests for power. Such scenes, though praised of men, fully explain the Scripture doctrine of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, the force of men's lust, and the effect of Satan's influence. Lord, thou has given us thy word of truth and righteousness, O pour upon us thy spirit of purity, peace, and love, and write thy holy law in our hearts.

## CHAPTER 10

*Tola and Jair judge Israel. (1-5) The Philistines and Ammonites oppress Israel. (6-9) Israel's repentance. (10-18)*

### ~~10:1~~ Judges 10:1

**Vs. 1-5:** Quiet and peaceable reigns, though the best to live in, yield least variety of matter to be spoken of. Such were the days of Tola and Jair. They were humble, active, and useful men, rulers appointed of God.

### ~~10:6~~ Judges 10:6

**Vs. 6-9:** Now the threatening was fulfilled, that the Israelites should have no power to stand before their enemies, ~~10:6~~ Leviticus 26:17,37. By their evil ways and their evil doings they procured this to themselves.

### ~~10:10~~ Judges 10:10

**Vs. 10-18:** God is able to multiply men's punishments according to the numbers of their sins and idols. But there is hope when sinners cry to the Lord for help, and lament their ungodliness as well as their more open transgressions. It is necessary, in true repentance, that there be a full conviction that those things cannot help us which we have set in competition with God. They acknowledged what they deserved, yet prayed to God not to deal with them according to their deserts. We must submit to God's justice, with a hope in his mercy. True repentance is not only for sin, but from sin. As the disobedience and misery of a child are a grief to a tender father, so the provocations of God's people are a grief to him. From him mercy never can be sought in vain. Let then the trembling sinner, and the almost despairing backslider, cease from debating about God's secret purposes, or from expecting to find hope from former experiences. Let them cast themselves on the mercy of God our Savior, humble themselves under his hand, seek deliverance from the powers of darkness, separate themselves from sin, and from occasions of it, use the means of grace diligently, and wait the Lord's time, and so they shall certainly rejoice in his mercy.

## CHAPTER 11

*Jephthah and the Gileadites. (1-11) He attempts to make peace. (12-28) Jephthah's vow. He vanquishes the Ammonites. (29-40)*

### **Judges 11:1**

**Vs. 1-11:** Men ought not to be blamed for their parentage, so long as they by their personal merits roll away any reproach. God had forgiven Israel, therefore Jephthah will forgive. He speaks not with confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the further punishment of Israel. Nor does he speak with any confidence at all in himself. If he succeed, it is the Lord delivers them into his hand; he thereby reminds his countrymen to look up to God as the Giver of victory. The same question as here, in fact, is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. If he save you, will ye be willing that he shall rule you? On no other terms will he save you. If he make you happy, shall he make you holy? If he be your helper, shall he be your Head? Jephthah, to obtain a little worldly honor, was willing to expose his life: shall we be discouraged in our Christian warfare by the difficulties we may meet with, when Christ has promised a crown of life to him that overcometh?

### **Judges 11:12**

**Vs. 12-28:** One instance of the honor and respect we owe to God, as our God, is, rightly to employ what he gives us to possess. Receive it from him, use it for him, and part with it when he calls for it. The whole of this message shows that Jephthah was well acquainted with the books of Moses. His argument was clear, and his demand reasonable. Those who possess the most courageous faith, will be the most disposed for peace, and the readiest to make advances to obtain; but rapacity and ambition often cloak their designs under a plea of equity, and render peaceful endeavors of no avail.

### **Judges 11:29**

**Vs. 29-40:** Several important lessons are to be learned from Jephthah's vow.

1. There may be remainders of distrust and doubting, even in the hearts of true and great believers.
2. Our vows to God should not be as a purchase of the favor we desire, but to express gratitude to him.
3. We need to be very well-advised in making vows, lest we entangle ourselves.
4. What we have solemnly vowed to God, we must perform, if it be possible and lawful, though it be difficult and grievous to us.
5. It well becomes children, obediently and cheerfully to submit to their parents in the Lord.

It is hard to say what Jephthah did in performance of his vow; but it is thought that he did not offer his daughter as a burnt-offering. Such a sacrifice would have been an abomination to the Lord; it is supposed she was obliged to remain unmarried, and apart from her family. Concerning this and some other such passages in the sacred history, about which learned men are divided and in doubt, we need not perplex ourselves; what is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough. If the reader recollects the promise of Christ concerning the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and places himself under this heavenly Teacher, the Holy Ghost will guide to all truth in every passage, so far as it is needful to be understood.

## CHAPTER 12

*Ephraimites quarrel with Jephthah. (1-7) Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon judge Israel. (8-15)*

### **Judges 12:1**

**Vs. 1-7:** The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Jephthah as with Gideon. Pride was at the bottom of the quarrel; only by that comes contention. It is ill to fasten names of reproach upon persons or countries, as is common, especially upon those under outward disadvantages. It often occasions quarrels that prove of ill consequence, as it did here. No contentions are so bitter as those between brethren or rivals for honor. What need we have to watch and pray against evil tempers! May the Lord unequaled all his people to follow after things which make for peace!

### **Judges 12:8**

**Vs. 8-15:** We have here a short account of three more of the judges of Israel. The happiest life of individuals, and the happiest state of society, is that which affords the fewest remarkable events. To live in credit and quiet, to be peacefully useful to those around us, to possess a clear conscience; but, above all, and without which nothing can avail, to enjoy communion with God our Savior while we live, and to die at peace with God and man, form the substance of all that a wise man can desire.

## CHAPTER 13

*The Philistines, Samson announced. (1-7) The angel appears to Manoah. (8-14) Manoah's sacrifice. (15-23) Birth of Samson. (24, 25)*

### **Judges 13:1**

**Vs. 1-7:** Israel did evil: then God delivered them again into the hands of the Philistines. When Israel was in this distress, Samson was born. His parents had been long childless. Many eminent persons were born of such mothers. Mercies long waited for, often prove signal mercies; and by them others may be encouraged to continue their hope in God's mercy. The angel notices her affliction. God often sends comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel their troubles most. This deliverer of Israel must be devoted to God. Manoah's wife was satisfied that the messenger was of God. She gave her husband a particular account, both of the promise and of the precept. Husbands and wives should tell each other their experiences of communion with God, and their improvements in acquaintance with him, that they may help each other in the way that is holy.

### **Judges 13:8**

**Vs. 8-14:** Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet, as Manoah, have believed. Good men are more careful and desirous to know the duty to be done by them, than to know the events concerning them: duty is ours, events are God's. God will guide those by his counsel, who desire to know their duty, and apply to him to teach them. Pious parents, especially, will beg Divine assistance. The angel repeats the directions he had before given. There is need of much care for the right ordering both of ourselves and our children, that we may be duly separate from the world, and living sacrifices to the Lord.

### **Judges 13:15**

**Vs. 15-23:** What Manoah asked for instruction in his duty, he was readily told; but what he asked to gratify his curiosity, was denied. God has in his



word given full directions concerning our duty, but never designed to answer other questionings. There are secret things which belong not to us, of which we must be quite contented to be ignorant, while in this world. The name of our Lord is wonderful and secret; but by his wonderful works he makes himself known as far as is needful for us. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But without Christ in the heart by faith, our services are offensive smoke; in him, acceptable flame. We may apply this to Christ's sacrifice of himself for us; he ascended in the flame of his own offering, for by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, <sup><302></sup>Hebrews 9:12. In Manoah's reflections there is great fear; We shall surely die. In his wife's reflection there is great faith. As a help meet for him, she encouraged him. Let believers who have had communion with God in the word and prayer, to whom he has graciously manifested himself, and who have had reason to think God has accepted their works, take encouragement from thence in a cloudy and dark day. God would not have done what he has done for my soul, if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last; for his work is perfect. Learn to reason as Manoah's wife; If God designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not give me tokens of his favor.

### <sup><1738></sup>Judges 13:24

**Vs. 24, 25:** The Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson when a youth. This was evidence that the Lord blessed him. Where God gives his blessing, he gives his Spirit to qualify for the blessing. Those are blessed indeed in whom the Spirit of grace begins to work in the days of their childhood. Samson drank no wine or strong drink, yet excellencies in strength and courage, for he had the Spirit of God moving him; therefore be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

## CHAPTER 14

*Samson desires a wife of the Philistines. (1-4) Samson kills a lion. (5-9) Samson's riddle. (10-20)*

### **Judges 14:1**

**Vs. 1-4:** As far as Samson's marriage was a common case, it was weak and foolish of him to set his affection upon a daughter of the Philistines. Shall one, not only an Israelite, but a Nazarite, devoted to the Lord, covet to become one with a worshipper of Dagon? It does not appear that he had any reason to think her wise or virtuous, or any way likely to be a help meet for him; but he saw something in her agreeable to his fancy. He that, in the choice of a wife, is only guided by his eye, and governed by his fancy, must afterwards thank himself if he find a Philistine in his arms. Yet it was well done not to proceed till Samson had made his parents acquainted with the matter. Children ought not to marry, nor to move towards it, without the advice and consent of their parents. Samson's parents did well to dissuade him from yoking himself unequalled with unbelievers. It seems that it pleased God to leave Samson to follow his own unequalled, intending to bring out good from his conduct; and his parents consented, because he was bent upon it. However, his example is not recorded for us to do likewise.

### **Judges 14:5**

**Vs. 5-9:** By enabling him to kill a lion, God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face. He was alone in the vineyards, whither he had rambled. Young people consider not how they exposed themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when they wander from their prudent, pious parents. Nor do men consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wines. Our Lord Jesus having conquered Satan, that roaring lion, believers, like Samson, find honey in the carcass, abundant strength and satisfaction, enough for themselves, and for all their friends.

**Judges 14:10**

**Vs. 10-20:** Samson's riddle literally meant no more than that he had got honey, for food and for pleasure, from the lion, which in its strength and fury was ready to devour him. But the victory of Christ over Satan, by means of his humiliation, agonies, and death, and the exaltation that followed to him, with the glory thence to the Father, and spiritual advantages to his people, seem directly alluded to. And even death, that devouring monster, being robbed of his sting, and stripped of his horror, forwards the soul to the realms of bliss. In these and other senses, out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness. Samson's companions obliged his wife to get the explanation from him. A worldly wife, or a worldly friend, is to a godly man as an enemy in the camp, who will watch every opportunity to betray him. No union can be comfortable or lasting, where secrets cannot be entrusted, without danger of being divulged. Satan, in his temptations, could not do us the mischief he does, if he did not plough with the heifer of our corrupt nature. His chief advantage against us arises from his correspondence with our deceitful hearts and inbred lusts. This proved an occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. It were well for us, if the unkindness we meet with from the world, and our disappointments in it, obliged us by faith and prayer to return to our heavenly Father's house, and to rest there. See how little confidence is to be put in man. Whatever pretense of friendship may be made, a real Philistine will soon be weary of a true Israelite.

## CHAPTER 15

*Samson is denied his wife, He smites the Philistines. (1-8) Samson kills a thousand of the Philistines with a jaw-bone. (9-17) His distress from thirst. (18-20)*

### **Judges 15:1**

**Vs. 1-8:** When there are differences between relations, let those be reckoned the wisest and best, who are most forward to forgive or forget, and most willing to stoop and yield for the sake of peace. In the means which Samson employed, we must look at the power of God supplying them, and making them successful, to mortify the pride and punish the wickedness of the Philistines. The Philistines threatened Samson's wife that they would burn her and her father's house. She, to save herself and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband; and the very thing that she feared, and by sin sought to avoid, came upon her! She, and her father's house, were burnt with fire, and by her countrymen, whom she thought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband. The mischief we seek to escape by any unlawful practices, we often pull down upon our own heads.

### **Judges 15:9**

**Vs. 9-17:** Sin dispirits men, it hides from their eyes the things that belong to their peace. The Israelites blamed Samson for what he had done against the Philistines, as if he had done them a great injury. Thus our Lord Jesus did many good works, and for those the Jews were ready to stone him. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, his cords were loosed: where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and those are free indeed who are thus set free. Thus Christ triumphed over the powers of darkness that shouted against him, as if they had him in their power. Samson made great destruction among the Philistines. To take the bone of an ass for this, was to do wonders by the foolish things of the world, that the excellencies of the power might be of God, not of man. This victory was not in the weapon, was not in the arm; but it was in the Spirit of God, which moved the weapon by the arm. We can do all things through Him that strengtheneth us. Seest thou a poor Christian, who is enabled to overcome

a temptation by weak, feeble counsel, there is the Philistine vanquished by a sorry jaw-bone.

~~1758~~ **Judges 15:18**

**Vs. 18-20:** So little notice did the men of Judah take of their deliverer, that he was ready to perish for want of a draught of water. Thus are the greatest slights often put upon those who do the greatest services. Samson prayed to God in this distress. Those that forget to attend God their praises, may be compelled to attend him with their prayers. Past experiences of God's power and goodness, are excellencies pleas in prayer for further mercy. He pleads his being exposed to God's enemies; our best pleas are taken from God's glory. The Lord sent him seasonable relief. The place of this action was, from the jaw-bone, called Lehi. And in the place thus called, God caused a fountain suddenly and seasonably to open, close by Samson. We should be more thankful for the mercy of water, did we consider how ill we can spare it. Israel submitted to him whom they had betrayed. God was with him; henceforward they were directed by him as their judge.

## CHAPTER 16

*Samson's escape from Gaza. (1-3) Samson enticed to declare where his strength lay. (4-17) The Philistines take Samson, and put out his eyes. (18-21) Samson's strength is renewed. (22-24) He destroys many of the Philistines. (25-31)*

### **Judges 16:1**

**Vs. 1-3:** Hitherto Samson's character has appeared glorious, though uncommon. In this chapter we find him behaving in so wicked a manner, that many question whether or not he were a godly man. But the apostle has determined this, <sup><S113></sup>Hebrews 11:32. By adverting to the doctrines and examples of Scripture, the artifices of Satan, the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the methods in which the Lord frequently deals with his people, we may learn useful lessons from this history, at which some needlessly stumble, while others cavil and object. The peculiar time in which Samson lived may account for many things, which, if done in our time, and without the special appointment of Heaven, would be highly criminal. And there might have been in him many exercises of piety, which, if recorded, would have reflected a different light upon his character. Observe Samson's danger. Oh that all who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, or any fleshly lusts, would see themselves thus surrounded, way-laid, and marked for ruin by their spiritual enemies! The faster they sleep, the more secure they feel, the greater their danger. We hope it was with a pious resolution not to return to his sin, that he rose under a fear of the danger he was in. Can I be safe under this guilt? It was bad that he lay down without such checks; but it would have been worse, if he had laid still under them.

### **Judges 16:4**

**Vs. 4-17:** Samson had been more than once brought into mischief and danger by the love of women, yet he would not take warning, but is again taken in the same snare, and this third time is fatal. Licentiousness is one of the things that take away the heart. This is a deep pit into which many have villainy; but from which few have escaped, and those by a miracle of mercy, with the loss of reputation and usefulness, of almost all, except

their souls. The anguish of the suffering is ten thousand times greater than all the pleasures of the sin.

### **Judges 16:18**

**Vs. 18-21:** See the fatal effects of false security. Satan ruins men by flattering them into a good opinion of their own safety, and so bringing them to mind nothing, and fear nothing; and then he robs them of their strength and honor, and leads them captive at his will. When we sleep our spiritual enemies do not. Samson's eyes were the inlets of his sin, (ver. 1,) and now his punishment began there. Now the Philistines blinded him, he had time to remember how his own lust had before blinded him. The best way to preserve the eyes, is, to turn them away from beholding vanity. Take warning by his fall, carefully to watch against all fleshly lusts; for all our glory is gone, and our defense departed from us, when our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites, is profaned.

### **Judges 16:22**

**Vs. 22-24:** Samson's afflictions were the means of bringing him to deep repentance. By the loss of his bodily sight the eyes of his understanding were opened; and by depriving him of bodily strength, the Lord was pleased to renew his spiritual strength. The Lord permits some few to wander wide and sink deep, yet he recovers them at last, and marking his displeasure at sin in their severe temporal sufferings, preserves them from sinking into the pit of destruction. Hypocrites may abuse these examples, and infidels mock at them, but true Christians will thereby be rendered more humble, watchful, and circumspect; more simple in their dependence on the Lord, more fervent in prayer to be kept from falling, and in praise for being preserved; and, if they fall, they will be kept from sinking into despair.

### **Judges 16:25**

**Vs. 25-31:** Nothing fills up the sins of any person or people faster than mocking and misusing the servants of God, even thought it is by their own folly that they are brought low. God put it into Samson's heart, as a public person, thus to avenge on them God's quarrel, Israel's, and his own. That strength which he had lost by sin, he recovers by prayer. That it was not from passion or personal revenge, but from holy zeal for the glory of God

and Israel, appears from God's accepting and answering the prayer. The house was pulled down, not by the natural strength of Samson, but by the almighty power of God. In his case it was right he should avenge the cause of God and Israel. Nor is he to be accused of self-murder. He sought not his own death, but Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of their enemies. Thus Samson died in bonds, and among the Philistines, as an awful rebuke for his sins; but he died repentant. The effects of his death typified those of the death of Christ, who, of his own will, laid down his life among transgressors, and thus overturned the foundation of Satan's kingdom, and provided for the deliverance of his people. Great as was the sin of Samson, and justly as he deserved the judgments he brought upon himself, he found mercy of the Lord at last; and every penitent shall obtain mercy, who flees for refuge to that Savior whose blood cleanses from all sin. But here is nothing to encourage any to indulge sin, from a hope they shall at last repent and be saved.



## CHAPTER 17

*The beginning of idolatry in Israel, Micah and his mother. (1-6)  
Micah hires a Levite to be his priest. (7-13)*

### **Judges 17:1**

**Vs. 1-6:** What is related in this, and the rest of the chapters to the end of this book, was done soon after the death of Joshua: see chap. **Judges 20:28**. That it might appear how happy the nation was under the Judges, here is showed how unhappy they were when there was no Judge. The love of money made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her, and made her so unkind to her son, as to curse him. Outward losses drive good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her God, before it was made into a graven or a molten image. Micah and his mother agreed to turn their money into a God, and set up idol worship in their family. See the cause of this corruption. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

### **Judges 17:7**

**Vs. 7-13:** Micah thought it was a sign of God's favor to him and his images, that a Levite should come to his door. Thus those who please themselves with their own delusions, if Providence unexpectedly bring any thing to their hands that further them in their evil way, are apt from thence to think that God is pleased with them.

## CHAPTER 18

*The Danites seek to enlarge their inheritance, and rob Micah.*

### **Judges 18:1**

The Danites determined to take Micah's gods with them. Oh the folly of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them, that could not keep themselves from being stolen! To take them for their own use, was a double crime; it showed they neither feared God, nor regarded man, but were lost both to godliness and honesty. What a folly was it for Micah to call those his gods, which he had made, when He only is to be worshipped by us as God, that made us! That is put in God's place, which we are concerned about, as if our all were bound up in it. If people will walk in the name of their false gods, much more should we love and serve the true God!

## CHAPTER 19

*The wickedness of the men of Gibeah.*

### **Judges 19:1**

The three remaining chapters of this book contain a very sad history of the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, in Benjamin. The righteous Lord permits sinners to execute just vengeance on one another, and if the scene here described is horrible, what will the discoveries of the day of judgment be! Let each of us consider how to escape from the wrath to come, how to mortify the sins of our own hearts, to resist Satan's temptations, and to avoid the pollutions there are in the world.

## CHAPTER 20

*The tribe of Benjamin nearly extirpated.*

### **Judges 20:1**

The Israelites' abhorrence of the crime committed at Gibeah, and their resolution to punish the criminals, were right; but they formed their resolves with too much haste and self-confidence. The eternal ruin of souls will be worse, and more fearful, than these desolations of a tribe.

## CHAPTER 21

### *The Israelites lament for the Benjamites.*

#### **Judges 21:1**

Israel lamented for the Benjamites, and were perplexed by the oath they had taken, not to give their daughters to them in marriage. Men are more zealous to support their own authority than that of God. They would have acted better if they had repented of their rash oaths, brought sin-offerings, and sought forgiveness in the appointed way, rather than attempt to avoid the guilt of perjury by actions quite as wrong. That men can advise others to acts of treachery or violence, out of a sense of duty, forms a strong proof of the blindness of the human mind when left to itself, and of the fatal effects of a conscience under ignorance and error.