

288.1: Judging Judges (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 19, Updated)

The Reign of the Judges

The Book of Judges is like a television series (and a violent show at that, no surprise there) with quite uneven episodes. Not only do we have superhero Samson and strategist Gideon, we have Deborah, one of the most powerful women in all of scripture. With all these different characters and events, some inspiring, some disturbing, a common theme runs through the season, so to speak: God raises up a judge for Israel, things don't go so well, and the cycle repeats. This sets us up for season 2: Israel needs a king.

Productive Sunday School

- I. Reading Review
- II. Initial thoughts and reflections on Judges
- III. Lessons from the judges (memorable, compelling stories)
 - a. Deborah: Recognizing power from unexpected sources, using cleverness. Be courageous and fierce.
 - b. Gideon: Trusting in the Lord
 - c. Samson: Cautionary tale of squandered strengths
- IV. Who has God "raised up" in our lives? How can we be instruments of God to help others?
- V. Context matters: Putting ourselves in places and relationships that help us be our best selves
- VI. Conclusion: Again, holding scriptures accountable enables us to responsibly benefit from their lessons.

Reading

[Judges 2](#) The Lord warns the Israelites to covenant with the Lord, not the Canaanites. Joshua and the generations who experienced the "work the Lord had done for Israel" were faithful, but their children were not. The Israelites worship Canaanite gods and goddesses. Summary of Judges (2:18-19)

¹⁸Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. ¹⁹But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

[4](#) Deborah is one of the most powerful women in the Bible, and I hope we all take the opportunity to discuss and celebrate her. She is a judge and a prophetess, the most direct servant of God in her day. Barak goes to her for counsel. Note that she even has a tree named after her. I love how she is married but her husband is mentioned only in passing. Jael is seriously fierce in this chapter too. Probably the best woman chapter in the Bible. Judges 5 is one of the oldest chapters in the Bible.

[6](#) I'm interested in how the "angel of the Lord" interacts in these chapters. Gideon's actions are examples of divination. Gideon feels unworthy of his call and seeks reassurance. He destroys the altars and objects used to worship other gods.

[7](#) Theme: Relying on the Lord instead of our own strength. God whittles down his army based on their behavior. Interesting that Gideon selects the “if you are afraid” option in vv. 10-11. Gideon needs constant reassurance.

[13](#) Note the formulaic pattern: Israelites are evil, God gives them over to their enemies, people plead with the Lord, Lord raises up a judge. Has anyone seen the Samson trailer yet? Pretty cringeworthy I think. Samson is a Nazarite, someone consecrated to the Lord and held to certain standards. Events leading up to Samson’s miraculous conception/birth.

[14](#) Samson’s.... not marriage. The story of Samson is one of squandered gifts. Samson uses his divine strength and cleverness for his own gain, rather than to deliver Israel.

[15](#) Samson’s near-wife and her family gets burned up out of vengeance? Ack. Samson kills tons of people with a jawbone.

[16](#) Sad story of betrayed trust.

288.2: Judging Judges (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 19, Sunday School)

[The Reign of the Judges](#)

The book of Judges presents a hodgepodge of redemption and anarchy, all leading up to theme of the need for a king in Israel (kind of a teaser for the King David sequel). This portion of the episode covers:

- Lessons we learn from Judges (cycles of apostasy and return which should be familiar to readers of the Book of Mormon)
- Lessons we learn from each story
 - Deborah and Jael
 - Gideon
 - Samson
- Who God has “raised up” in our lives to help us
- How we can surround ourselves by influences that will help us live according to our values

288.3: Judging Judges (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 19, Study Notes)

The Reign of the Judges

The book of Judges presents a hodgepodge of redemption and anarchy, all leading up to theme of the need for a king in Israel (kind of a teaser for the King David sequel). This portion of the episode covers:

- Judges in historical context
- The problem with God delivering Israel over to its enemies.
- Analysis of the role of Deborah in the manual
- The story of Gideon and reliance. What happens when the angelic armies fail to show up?
- Returning to the problems in the Samson story.