

Hymns: 1 A Mighty Fortress is Our God 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 26 Trust and Obey  
Scripture: Psalm 19:7-14; 18:1-3,16-19; 46; 91

Big Idea: The Spirit of the Lord is our strength

Less than two weeks ago, *Judge* Neil Gorsuch took the oath of office to fill the ninth slot in the Supreme Court left open fourteen months by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. With that event in mind, it's particularly appropriate that we explore some highlights in the book of *Judges* in this week's continuing study of the Dispensation of Law.

Last time, you may recall that we witnessed Joshua leading the Israelites across the Jordan River and conquering Jericho through the power of the Captain of the Lord's Host. He went on to take possession **all** of the Promised Land and divide it among the tribes of Israel.

In many ways, the Book of Judges is like a **riddle**. The term *Judges* makes us think of men or women in black robes deciding disputes based on the law. In reality, these biblical judges were more like *governors*.

The misnomer *Judges* just **begins** the questions surrounding this enigmatic book. It contains **many** strange events, at least one **very** big dilemma, as well as an explicit riddle. As Johnny Carson might have said, "Ed, that's some weird, wild stuff!" As our review proceeds, you'll likely agree.

As a child, I remember enjoying thinking about riddles – which were sometimes called "brain teasers." Riddles can be fun. Can anyone share a famous riddle with us? How about:

*What's black and white and red all over? a newspaper*  
*How do you make varnish vanish? remove the "r"*  
*How do you catch a unique rabbit? you 'neak up on him*

Does anyone remember who told the riddle in the book of Judges? That's right, Samson. Samson was a judge appointed by God. Today, we're going to look at this very puzzling character as well as his riddle.

What's puzzling about him? On the one hand, he's a type of Christ. On the other, he's a type of Israel. On top of that, he uses his amazing strength to do some **very** strange things. Despite all of his lies and immoral behavior, he's listed in that highly distinguished group of names in Hebrews chapter 11 where it enumerates heroes of faith.

To start things off, let's set the context.

## Judges 2

*[7] And the people served the LORD  
all the days of Joshua,  
and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua,  
who had seen all the great works of the LORD, ....  
[8] And Joshua ..., **died**, being an hundred and ten years old.*

Notice that 110 is three score and ten plus 40. It's as if the Lord gave Joshua back every year that he wandered in the wilderness with the Israelites.

[11] *And the children of Israel*

**did evil** in the sight of the LORD,  
and **served** Baalim: [a false god]

[12] *And they*

**forsook** the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt,  
and **followed** ... the gods of the people that were round about them,  
and **bowed themselves** unto them,  
and **provoked** the LORD to anger.

[14] *And the anger of the LORD was **hot** against Israel,  
and he **delivered them** into the hands of ...their enemies.*

[15] *...and they were **greatly** distressed.*

[16] *Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges,  
which delivered them **out** of the hand of those that [plundered] them.*

[17] *And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they  
**went a whoring after** other gods,  
and bowed themselves unto them: ...*

[18] *And **when** the LORD raised them up judges, then  
the LORD was **with** the judge,  
and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge:  
[why?]  
for it repented the LORD because of their groanings ...*

[19] *And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that  
they ... corrupted themselves **more than their fathers**,  
in following other gods to serve them,  
and [] bow[ing] down unto them; ....*

[20] *And the anger of the LORD was **hot** against Israel; and he said, Because [] this people  
hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers,  
and have not hearkened unto my voice;*

[21] *I also will **not** henceforth drive out any [] of the nations which Joshua left when he died:  
[why?]*

[22] *That **through them I may prove Israel**, whether [or not] they will keep the way of the  
LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did...*

So here's one answer for us even today as to why God allows difficulties in our lives. It is to **test** us.

*[23] Therefore the LORD  
left those nations,  
without driving them out hastily;  
neither [did he deliver] them **into** the hand of Joshua.*

This then begins the **sad** story of the Israelites in the Promised Land. Just as the Lord promised, when they obeyed Him, He blessed them. When they turned from Him, He withheld His blessing and let the foreigners among them, whose false gods they worshiped, overpower them and oppress them until they repented.

The Book of Judges details these events through about a dozen judges in approximately a 350-year time period. Four of these judges are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 among the heroes of faith. They are:

Barak  
Gideon  
Jephthah  
Samson

Today, we will look at the strange story of **Samson** – the most prominent of the judges.

### [Judg.13](#)

*[1] And the children of Israel did **evil again** in the sight of the LORD;  
and the LORD **delivered them** into the hand of the Philistines **forty years**.*

*[2] And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, ....*

*[3] And **the angel of the LORD** appeared unto the woman, and said unto her,*

***Behold now**, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.*

Don't miss this. The Lord announced **a miracle birth** of a son. How many **other** times does this happen in scripture?

1. Isaac
2. John the Baptist
3. Jesus

*[4] Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat **not** any*

*unclean thing:*

*[5] For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head:*

*[why?]*

*for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb:*

*and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.*

*[24] And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson:*

*[which means like the sun.]*

*and the child grew,*

*and the LORD blessed him.*

*[25] And the **Spirit of the LORD** began to move him at times in the camp of Dan....*

### **Judg.14**

Samson told his parents he wanted to marry a Philistine woman. They objected, but he insisted.

*[4] But his father and his mother **knew not that it was of the LORD,***

*that he sought an occasion against the Philistines:*

*for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*

Samson and his parents went down to Timnath to effect the marriage betrothal. On the way, Samson was attacked in a vineyard by a young lion. The **Spirit of the Lord** came upon him and Samson **tore it apart** with his **bare hands** as if it were a young goat. They completed the betrothal and returned home.

*[8] **And after a time he returned** to take her,*

*[that is, to consummate the marriage]*

*and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and,*

***behold**, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.*

*[10] ... Samson made there a feast; ...*

This was the seven-day feast associated with the wedding celebration and honeymoon.

*[11] And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.*

*[12] And Samson said unto them, **I will now put forth a riddle unto you:***

*if ye can declare it [to] me within the seven days of the feast, ...,*

*then I will give you thirty **sheets** and thirty change[s] of garments:*

*[13] But if ye **cannot** declare it [to] me,*

*then shall ye give **me** thirty sheets and thirty change[s] of garments.*

*And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.*

[14] *And he said unto them,  
Out of the eater came forth meat,  
and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*

The young men couldn't figure out the riddle, so they went to Samson's wife and threatened to **burn her and her father's house** if she didn't give them the answer. His wife "wept before him seven days." Wasn't that a special honeymoon?

On the seventh day, he finally gave in and told her.

[18] *And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down,  
What is sweeter than honey?  
and what is stronger than a lion?*

*And he said unto them,  
If ye had not plowed with my heifer,  
ye had not found out my riddle.*

[19] *And **the Spirit of the LORD** came upon him,  
and he went down to Ashkelon,  
and slew thirty men [],  
and took their spoil,  
and gave change[s] of garments unto them which expounded the riddle.  
And his anger was kindled,  
and he went up to his father's house.*

That was quite an abrupt and unusual end to his honeymoon.

### ***Judg.15***

When Samson returned to reunite with his wife at the time of **wheat** harvest, his wife's father told Samson that he had given her to another. He offered Samson her fairer, younger sister instead. This angered Samson even more.

He caught 300 foxes. Took pairs of them and tied their tails together along with a torch tied to each pair. He used them to burn the corn fields, vineyards, and olive groves of the Philistines. When they found out, they retaliated by burning his former wife and father-in-law. Samson responded with "a great slaughter" of the Philistines.

Next, the Philistines went to Judah and **demand**ed that they **bind** Samson and **deliver** him unto them. The men of Judah told Samson, and he **agreed** to it.

[14] *And ... the Philistines shouted against him: and **the Spirit of the LORD** came mightily*

*upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from [] his hands.*

*[15] And he found a new jawbone of an ass, ..., and took it, and slew **a thousand men** therewith.*

After that super-human feat, Samson was dying of thirst. He prayed to the Lord for water. God gave him water to drink from inside the jawbone, and Samson revived.

*[20] And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines **twenty years**.*

### **Judg.16**

Samson went to Gaza and found a prostitute. The residents found out and plotted to kill him in the morning. Instead, Samson:

*[3] .. arose at midnight,  
and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts,  
and went away with them, bar and all,  
and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a[] hill  
that is before Hebron.*

Later, Samson fell in love with a woman named *Delilah* which means *delicate*.

*[5] And the lords of the Philistines came **up** []to her, and said **unto** her,*

***Entice him**, and see wherein his **great strength** lieth,  
and by what means we may **prevail** against him,  
that we may **bind** him to **afflict** him:*

*and [every one of us] will give thee eleven hundred pieces of **silver**.*

*[6] And Delilah said to Samson,*

*Tell me, I pray thee,  
wherein thy great strength lieth,  
and  
wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.*

Three times he lied to her saying to:

1. bind him with seven green cords
2. bind him with new ropes
3. weave seven locks of his hair.

*[16] And it came to pass, when she pressed him **daily** with her words, and **urged** him, so that his soul was **vexed** unto death;*

[this sounds like relentless nagging to me]

[17] *That he told her **all** his heart, and said unto her:  
There hath **not** come a razor upon mine head;  
for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb:  
if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak,  
and be like any other man.*

[19] *And she made him sleep upon her knees;  
and she called for a man,  
and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head;  
and she began to afflict him,  
and his strength went from him.*

[20] *And she said,  
The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.*

*And he awoke out of his sleep, and said,*

*I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself [free].*

*And he [knew not] that the LORD [had] departed from him.*

[21] *But the Philistines **took** him,  
and **put out his eyes**,  
and brought him down to Gaza,  
and **bound him** with fetters of brass;  
and he did **grind** [at the mill] in the prison house.*

[22] *Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.*

The leaders of the Philistines organized a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They praised their god for Samson to them. Then they brought Samson out to entertain them and mock him and placed him between **the** two main columns of the building.

[27] *Now the house was **full** of men and women;  
and **all the lords** of the Philistines were there;  
and there were upon the **roof** about **three thousand men and women**,  
that beheld **while** Samson made sport.*

[28] *And Samson called unto the LORD, and said,  
O Lord GOD,  
**remember me**, I pray thee,  
and **strengthen** me, I pray thee,  
only this once, O God, that I may be at once **avenged** of the Philistines for my two eyes.*

[29] *And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood,*

*and on which it was borne up,  
of the one with his **right hand**, and of the other with **his left**.*

*[30] And Samson said,*

*Let me **die** with the Philistines.*

*And he bowed himself with **all his might**; and the house fell upon the **lords**, and upon **all the people** that were therein.*

*So the dead*

*which he slew at his death were more than they  
which he slew in his life.*

### **Symbolism (Typeology)**

So, as we considered the story of Samson, did you catch some of those pointers to how his life reflected the ways of Israel? Here are five:

1. As he sunk into adultery, so Israel committed spiritual adultery – worshiping other gods.
2. As he took a lion in a vineyard and killed him, so betrayed the Jews, Jesus.
  1. Jesus is called the **lion** of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).
  2. He is the **Word** of God (John 1:1) which is called sweet (Psalm 19:10; 119:103).
  3. From His death comes new life.
3. As he lied to Delilah, so the Israelites lied to God.
4. As his eyes were blinded, so are the eyes of the Israelites blinded to the gospel to this day.
5. As he ground at the mill in endless circles, we are reminded of God’s covenant sign of circumcision.

And what about those pointers to Christ in his life? Here are ten:

1. His birth was announced by the Lord.
2. His birth was a miracle.
3. He carried a heavy object up a hill as Christ carried His cross up Calvary.
4. He possessed invincible power.
5. He took a Gentle bride.
6. He was betrayed for pieces of silver.
7. He willingly allowed his brothers to turn him over bound to the enemy.
8. He was made sport of in his blindness as was the blindfolded and bound Jesus.
9. He was mocked at his final hour.
10. He willingly sacrificed himself, with his arms spread wide, to **conquer** the enemy.

### **Application**

Who remembers the TV sitcom ALF? My son and I enjoyed watching it and laughing together at ALF’s antics. His hosts had a cat named *Lucky*. Do we have any cat lovers with us today? ALF naturally loved cats – that is, eating them. One day, Kate, the lady of the house, just in the nick of time, opened the microwave – meow!!! and out jumped **the terrified** Lucky. She said, “ALF, how could you?” ALF replied sheepishly “I’m **weak**.”

The Apostle Paul said:

*when I am **weak**, then am I **strong**.* (II Corinthians 12:10)

So it is with each of us that **daily** we face one of the great **riddles** of life. In order to be strong, we must be made weak. It's **only then** that we turn to the One who is the source of all strength.

The Apostle Paul said:

*I can do **all** things through Christ [who] strengtheneth me.* (Philippians 4:13)

What are you depending upon? Is it on your own strength like Samson with Delilah? Or as with Samson in his final act, is your dependence on the Lord? It makes all the difference. Jesus put it this way to his disciples:

*without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:5)

### **Benediction**

*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,  
according to the power that worketh in us,  
Unto him be glory  
in the church  
by Christ Jesus  
throughout all ages,  
world without end. Amen.  
(Jude 20-21)*