

Judges 4–9

Day 1

Deborah and Barak. Read Judges 4

1. Who and how powerful was the next oppressor (4:2–3)? How long was Israel oppressed by him?
 - From Deborah's song in Judges 5, what was the state of the nation (5:6–8) under this oppression?
 - What had happened to Hazor earlier? See Joshua 11:10–11. What does this indicate about the resettlement of the enemy in the land?

FYI: Pictures of Hazor: <https://www.bibleplaces.com/hazor/>

“HAZOR Through God's power the Israelites defeated these armies, killed all the people of Hazor, and burned the city (Josh 11:1–14). The city regained its strength during the time of the JUDGES. Because of Israel's sinfulness, God allowed the armies of Hazor to oppress the Israelites for 20 years (Judges 4:1–3).”
– Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

“These iron chariots represented state-of-the-art military technology. They made it almost impossible for the Israelites to defend the valleys and plains, and so they were pushed into the hills. They were outnumbered, outgunned, and out-positioned. They not only lacked iron chariots they lacked virtually all irons weapons. (5:6)”
– Gary Inrig (65,66)

2. What do you learn about Deborah's leadership abilities from the following verses?
 - 4:4–5
 - 4:6–7 (See also 5:6.)
 - 4:8–10
3. Why do you think God chose a woman to be a judge when the nations faced such a difficult military threat?
4. What does Barak's wanting Deborah to go with him (4:8) say about his respect for her? What favor with the people might this have brought?
 - What does it say about Barak's faith? What was the consequence for his reluctance to obey (4:9)?

Digging Deeper

What unusual things did the following women risk for the Lord?

Exodus 2:1–10

Joshua 2:1–6

Esther 4:12–16

Matthew 26:6–10

5. How strong a force went up against Sisera (4:10)?

- What did they face (4:13)? Apparently, what didn't they have (5:8)?

6. What two statements did Deborah make about the Lord to encourage Barak (4:14a)? What does this say about her respect for Barak? See 5:9.

- What did Barak's force do (4:14b,16)? How brave would you say they were? Contrast what some of the tribes failed to do (5:15b–17; 23).
- How is said Barak honored in Hebrews 11:32–33?

FYI: "For ill-equipped men on foot to march against the best of Siser' army on a flat plain amounted to mass suicide. In AD 67 the Jews tried this kind of attack against the Romans in exactly the same place and they were slaughtered."
– Gary Inrig (72)

7. What did the Lord do in the battle (4:15)? Compare Exodus 14:24.

- From Deborah's song, how is this battle described (5:4–5,19–21)?
- How successful were the Israelites (4:16)?

8. What do you learn about Heber and Jael in 4:11,17?

FYI: "The **Kenites** were metal craftsmen who may have traced their ancestry to TUBAL-CAIN (Gen 4:22). Around the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt, the Kenites showed kindness to Israel (1 Sam 15:6). Moses' father-in-law, Jethro is called a Midianite (Ex 18:1) and a Kenite (Judg 1:16)...Some Kenites were among those who entered the Promised Land along with the Israelites in the conquest led by Joshua (Judg 1:16)."
– Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1986

9. How was Sisera finally killed (4:18–21)? (Note how the killing of a man by a woman was viewed in Judges 9:54.)

10. What did this battle do to the courage and resolve of Israel (4:23–24)?

11. From the beginning (5:2,3) and ending (5:31) of Deborah and Barak's song, what was the focus?

12. In Deborah and Barak’s song, some tribes were praised (5:14–15a,18) and others were admonished (5:15b–17). How did the hesitancy of Reuben, Gilead (land that was given to the tribes of Manasseh and Gad), Dan, and Asher (5:16–17) differ from the attitudes of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (5:18)?

- How does this disunity compare to Joshua’s day (Joshua 22:1–3)?

13. How long did Israel enjoy peace (5:31b) after this?

✂ **Applying the Word:** Who has been a Deborah in your life to confront and encourage you to action?

Day 2

Gideon’s Calling. Read Judges 6:1–24

14. How and for how long did the Israelites fall into the hands of Midian (6:1)?

- From 6:2–6, what picture do you have of the Midianite oppression, cruelty and strength?

FYI: “Israel’s sin made all their hard work profitless. All their produce and livestock were stolen after they worked hard to bring it to fruition. Sin does this; it robs us of what we work hard to gain. There are many accomplished men who lose everything in life because they won’t stop their sin. All is lost in order to gain what, in retrospect, seems like nothing... This was an example of God’s *grace* and *mercy* to Israel because the oppression would make them turn back to God. It would have been worse if God had just left them alone.” – David Guzik

15. Who were the Midianites? See Genesis 25:1–2.

- Where had they settled? See Genesis 25:5–6.

16. Why did Israel finally cry to the Lord (6:6)?

17. Whom did the Lord send first and of what did He remind them (6:8,9)? Why do you think the Lord sent a prophet first?

- Why do you think they would “fear” the gods of the Amorites (6:10)?

FYI: **fear/worship** OT:337 *yare'* (yaw-ray'); a primitive root; to fear; morally, to revere; caus. to frighten:

Digging Deeper

For the history between Israel and the the Midianites see: Genesis 37:28

Exodus 2:15, 21

Numbers 22:4–6

18. When the angel of the Lord appeared, where was Gideon and what was he doing (6:11)? What would that indicate about his state of mind?

FYI: threshed wheat in the winepress: “This was both difficult and humiliating. Wheat was **threshed** in open spaces, typically on a hill-top so the breeze could blow away the chaff. Wheat was not normally **threshed** in a sunken place like a **winepress**.” – David Guzik

19. How did the angel of the Lord greet Gideon (6:12)? Do you think Gideon was aware of either of those things?

- Since Gideon hadn't fought anybody yet, what do you think the Lord was saying?

20. What part of the angel's message did Gideon challenge in 6:13? (Note the “if, why, where.”) Where did Gideon think the problem lie? What does this ignorance say about the spiritual state of the nation?

- What solution did the angel give Gideon (6:14)?

21. On whose strength did Gideon focus (6:15)? What part of the angel's messages in 6:12,14 did he miss?

- How did the angel define the strength he would have (6:16)? (Compare Moses's commission and his reactions in Exodus 3:11–12a.)

22. What was Gideon's reason for asking for a sign (6:17)?

- What did Gideon want to do before in preparation for a sign (6:18–19)?

- What sign did the Lord give him (6:20–21)?

23. Why was Gideon afraid (6:22) after seeing the sign? How was the angel identified in 6:14,16?

- What assurances did God give Gideon (6:23)?

24. What does Gideon's response say about his faith (6:24)? What does the name of the altar indicate?

✂ Applying the Word: What are some of your biggest insecurities? How do you think God wants you to regard them?

Day 3

Gideon Fights for Israel. Judges 6:25–8:8

25. What did the Lord ask Gideon to do (6:25,26) first? Why would this be important to do before fight the Midianites? (What significance would a seven-year-old bull have? See 6:1.)

- Of whom was Gideon afraid (6:27)? Who had built the altar? What does that say about Gideon's obedience and courage?

FYI: "There are some profound spiritual implications in Gideon's assignment.

1. Baal must go before Midian could go. Before Gideon could be the deliverer of Israel, he had to be the destroyer of the false god Baal...

2. God's altar cannot be built until Baal's altar is destroyed. The Lord will not allow any mixing or syncretism. „Syncretistic worship is not worship at all. He alone must be Lord and King...

3. The place we must start is in our own backyard. Before Gideon could lead his whole nation to faith in God, he had to deal with the Baal in his family.”
– Gary Inrig (109,110)

26. From the reaction of the men of the city, what would you say the state if idolatry had become in Israel (6:28–30)?

- According to Jonah 2:8. what were they doing? How upside down had the notion of right and wrong become (6:30)? (Compare Isaiah 5:20.)

27. How did Gideon's father, Joash, challenge the men's belief in Baal (6:31)? What does that say about his own belief? If he didn't believe in the power of Baal, why do you think he built the altar?

28. How large a force did Gideon muster to fight the Midianites and Amalekites (6:34–35)? See also 7:3. What enabled him to do this?

29. From 6:36–40, how did Gideon test the Lord for a second and third time? What factors would have been feeding Gideon's doubts and fears? In what ways do his requests show his faith? In what ways do they show his lack of faith?

30. What had the Lord already said three times (6:12,14,16)? What does the Lord's response say about His love? See Psalm 145:8–9.

FYI: “ ‘This is an outstanding example of God's gracious patience with a troubled child.’ (Wood) Yet before being too critical of Gideon, we should consider the challenge that was ahead of him. Many of us would immediately refuse such a call, without even considering allowing God to confirm it. Gideon's weak faith was still greater than *no* faith.” – David Guzik

“Gideon had God's clear word. Gideon's problem was not one of knowledge; it was one of faith and obedience...Our deepest fear is often not that we don't know God's will, but that if we follow it, things might not turn out the way we want.” – Gary Inrig (125,126)

31. (Joshua 7 and 8 relate the details of Gideon's fight with the Midianites.) Why did the Lord reduce the number of fighting men (7:2)?
- What do you think the tests (7:3–8) that the Lord gave the fighting men may have indicated about their character?
32. How did the Lord assure Gideon even more before the battle (7:10–14)?
- What was Gideon's response (7:15)?
 - How did the Lord defeat the Midianites (7:20–22)? What part did the army play (7:20, 23)? Compare Joshua 6:20.
33. What do the attitudes of the Ephraimites, the people in Sukkoth, and in Penuel say about how corrupt the nation had become (8:1, 5–6, 8)? How does this disunity compare to Joshua's day?

FYI: 8:9–21 “In the light of what follows, it seems that Gideon has begun to pursue a personal vendetta. It is notable that the Lord plays no part in these events, and on the east side of the Jordan a very different Gideon begins to emerge...He turned his brutality against his own people, in a way that was out of proportion to their offense. The deliverer is acting like an oppressor because he has made himself the issue!” – Gary Inrig (158,161,162)

(8:17) He tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city: The text does not make it clear, but we suppose there was a justification for this severe penalty. Perhaps the people of Penuel were significant supporters of the Midianites and traitors against Israel.” – David Guzik

- ✎ Applying the Word:** Think of the evils that we face in our society today. How has your level of comfort changed with time? What are you willing to tolerate now that you weren't before? Do you see any areas in your life where you have accepted things that go against God's ways in the name of “tolerance”?

Day 4

Abimelech. Read Judges 8:22–10:

34. After the defeat of the Midianites, how did Gideon respond to the people's request to make him their ruler (8:22–23)?

- What did his following actions indicate (8:24–27)? See the purpose of the Ephod in Exodus 28:4,28–30.

FYI: “He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod, an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the high priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God, and not to be itself worshipped. But ah, dear friends, you see here that, if we go half an inch beyond what God's Word warrants we always get into mischief!”
 (Spurgeon) – David Guzik

35. What kind of peace was established under Gideon (8:28)?

36. What did Gideon's lifestyle after defeating the Midianites say about him (8:29–31)? Contrast Deuteronomy 17:17. (Abimelech means “My father is king.”)

- What happened after Gideon's death (8:33–35)? What were the people's attitudes toward God and toward Gidon?

FYI: “With each successive story of the judges in chapters 3—16 the spiritual and moral level of the society sinks lower and lower.”
 – Dr. Chris Miller

37. In spite of what Gideon had said, (8:23), how did his son Abimelech/Abimelek try to gain power and what reasoning did he give (9:1–2)?

- How did the leaders of Shechem respond (9:3–4)? What religion were they practicing (9:4a)?

38. List the actions Abimelech took (9:4b–5)? What does that say about his character and the dynamics of the brothers' relationships?

FYI: “The sad story of Judges 9 is an account of inner division and virtual civil war, as Israel's enemies come from within...Gideon left his nation in a spiritual vacuum. It is ironic that Gideon's original victory was due to the fact that he was obedient to God's Word, but the greatest failure of his life was that he did not consistently practice the Word of God.”
 – Gray Inrig (178,180)

39. How did the one surviving brother, Jotham, challenge Abimelech (9:7–15)?

- In the parable, how did the response of the olive, fig, and vine differ from the bramble? Whom did these represent? Whom did the bramble represent and what was predicted about his rule?

FYI: “These valuable trees...recognized that they already had a king —God...They did not want to rule; they simply wanted to function as God intended them to function. Next, they were all fruit-bearing trees. As long as they were being what God made them to be, they brought blessing to God and man...they had no need to pursue a position to give themselves worth.” – Gary Inrig (185)

“The promise of the bramble, ‘**take shelter in my shade,**’ was intended as ironic and ridiculous. The bramble was a low, thorny bush and offered shade to no one, especially to trees.”

– David Guzik

“The olive tree was considered the most fruitful of all the trees of the land, the bramble the most painful, yet it has often been true—just as in the ancient reign of Abimelech—that national leadership is assumed by the most ruthless of men rather than the best of men.”

– The Defender’s Study Bible

40. Who stirred up trouble between Abimelech and the people of Shechem and why (9:23–24)?

41. What happened to Shechem (9:45)?

- What happened to Abimelech when he tried to fight Thebez (9:51–54)?
- What conclusion is made about the prophetic curse given by Jotham (9:56–57)?

42. After the leadership of Gideon, Tola (10:1–2), and Jair (10:3–5), what happened with the nation (10:6–9)?

✎ Applying the Word: How do you see the temptations that faced Eve (Genesis 3:1,5–6) continuing on in the hearts of people?