

Every Sunday evening at [Bible Explorer](#) we will explore the question

'What does this book from the Bible mean for us today?'

• **Judges**

- 12 Judges: 2:16 "... and the Lord raised up Judges"
- Othniel 3:7-11, Ehud 3:12-30, Deborah (and Barak) 4 and 5, Gideon 6-8, Jephthah 10:6-12:7, Samson 13-16, Shamgar 3:31, Tola and Jair 10:1-5, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon 12:8-15
- God's people take a wrong turn: away from God and loyalty to him and towards downfall and near destruction
-this is not the way so do not walk in it!
- a witness to human frailty and the need of a 'Saviour'

• **Deborah**

The story of Deborah is inextricably linked with Barak, Sisera and Jael. Two men and two women of different cultures all linked by the overarching will of God at a time when the Israelites had again been heavily oppressed by the Canaanites and had been brought to a low point where they were once more prepared to cry out to God for help.

The people

Deborah – prophetess and judge respected and trusted by others.

Barak – called by God (through the prophetic ministry of Deborah) to lead an army to defeat the Canaanites

Sisera – commander of the large Canaanite army

Jael – wife of Heber the Kenite, ally of the Canaanites

The story

Deborah hears from God and instructs Barak that he is the one to gather an army and destroy the Canaanite oppressors. Barak accepts the command but with the proviso that Deborah goes with him. Deborah agrees but advises Barak that the honour of victory will not be his but a woman's. The armies are set to face each other and it is Deborah who gives the command to Barak to strike as the Lord has prepared the way. All the Canaanite troops under Sisera are killed but Sisera flees taking refuge in what he imagines is a safe refuge in the tent of Jael. After giving refreshment to Sisera and allowing him to sleep off his exhaustion Jael takes a tent peg and hammers it through his skull, killing him. Thus the prophetic word of

Deborah is fulfilled. The Song of Deborah and Barak offers the victory to God acknowledging his role in the victory.

For us today *What role does the prophetic play in our leadership and guidance? Looking at the different gifts God equips his followers with we need to be mindful of what each of us can bring to a task and graciously accept and acknowledge the gifts of others if it is for another to fill that function. God can and will use others outside the fellowship of the church and we should be able to work alongside them in fulfilling the plans and purposes God has for us in this place.*

- **Gideon**

His call - and complaint!

- *The Lord is with you mighty warrior! 6:12....yet....Gideon's 'I's' and 'Buts'! 6 v12 – 36*

His victory – glorious and hollow!

- *7:17- 18 "watch me " follow my lead... for the Lord and for Gideon"filled with the Spirit....yet..... v24 "I have but one request"...an ephod of self indulgence!*

- **Samson**

The miracle of birth: *Judges 13: Samson's birth is both astounding and miraculous. It serves to remind us that our own 'new birth' is also astounding and miraculous. 1 Peter 1:3³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you. Just as Samson was, we have been set apart to God (Judges 13:5) from our new birth. We are reminded to never squander what God has so freely given us.*

Temptation: *known for his immense strength, he was exceptionally weak. He knew the power of the Spirit resting upon him (Judges 14:6). But he fell into temptation and we are reminded that we too unless we are careful can do the same. St Paul exhorts us to take a very practical step: ⁵We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (2Cor 10:5 RSV).*

We are all tempted and to be tempted is not sin. There is a saying that goes like this: 'you can't stop the birds flying over head but you can stop them nesting.'

It's too easy to listen to the lies of the enemy – don't be fooled by him. Judges 14: 16 - "You hate me! You don't really love me. Let's be aware of the lies we can fall prey to

Sexual Awareness: *Sadly Samson's downfall was illicit sexual relationships (Judges 16:1) When it comes to sexual morality, 'the bar is very high for Christians.' It's probably true that no Christian today really enjoys the constraints placed on his sexual freedom by God's*

requirements. The single person doesn't like having to wait for sex until marriage, married people don't always like having to be faithful within marriage, and the homosexually orientated person doesn't like having to live a celibate life. But no one is given 'carte-blanche' to be sexually active on the basis of simply 'expressing his or her feelings'. It's too easy to despise Samson, but sexual sin has beset the very best of men and women. Clergy, together with politicians, always hit the headlines for their indiscretions. The illicit office affair destroys relationships. In every situation husbands, wives, partners and children are devastated beyond measure. We are called by God to take great care in the area of our relationships.

Never abandoned despite our limitations The story of the destruction of the Philistine temple may seem shocking to us, but it also hints at some really important truths.

God will not ultimately abandon us – Samson was set apart to God from birth to bring about deliverance of Israel from the Philistines

Samson had treasure – the Spirit of God - but he squandered it

The lesson for us is that "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2Cor 4:7)

It's important for us to know and understand our own limitations but we have been given something of ultimate value that we should always treasure.

Weakness Samson's weakness and indiscretion nearly destroyed him, but God did not abandon him. In our 21st century Britain, weakness is not something that is looked on very favourably. But if we are to deal with spiritual reality we need to understand that it's a different kind of strength that we need. In the words of St Paul - "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

Set Apart: Ultimately we, like Samson, are to be a people set apart, that means that we have to deal with all that's wrong with us and the church, for we are called to be like a bride – pure and spotless. There is for us all a long way to go, but we are to be a people set apart Here is St Paul's vision of the church: ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Eph 5:25 – 27)

We are to be one body a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.