

The Minor Judges and Samson's Good Ingredients

Stop and Pray - Lord, help me to understand the beginning of Samson's life. Help me to grasp the many ways You blessed him and me with all that we need for life and godliness.

1. What is one of your own characteristics for which you thank God? Why?

There is very little information recorded in scripture concerning the minor judges. They delivered Israel (Shamgar) as well as judged during periods of rest from their enemies. They served in three groupings, of one, two, and three judges, respectively. We may be able to glean more about them and also the nation of Israel, if we look back over all the judges from Othniel to Samson. To do this, we will study the chart below, divided into five columns: the name of enemy oppressing Israel; the number of years they were oppressed before the Lord delivered them; whether the people cry out to the Lord for help during oppression; the name of the judge; and how long the land rested from their enemies or the number of years that the judge ruled. The name of the enemy and years of oppression are placed in the row above the delivering judge so it will be easier to track. Not every judge delivered Israel from an oppressor.

Name of Enemy	Years Oppressed	People Cry Out	Name of Judge	Years Rested/Ruled
Cushan-Rishan.	8			
		Yes	Othniel	40
Eglon of Moab	18			
		Yes	Ehud	80
Philistines				
		No	Shamgar (Minor)	
Jabin of Canaan	20			
		Yes	Deborah	40
Midian	7			
		Yes	Gideon	40
		No	Abimelech	3
		No	Tola (Minor)	23
		No	Jair (Minor)	22
Phil./Ammonites	18			
		Yes	Jepthath	6
		No	Ibzan (Minor)	7
		No	Elon (Minor)	10
		No	Abdon (Minor)	8
Philistines	40			
		No	Samson	20

Read Judges 3:31, 10:1-5, and 12:8-15.

2. Fill in the chart below with the following information: the name of the minor judge; what tribe or city he was from; whether the judge saved them from an enemy or just led the people; how long he judged; note any family or possessions.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Tribe/City</u>	<u>Saved/Led</u>	<u>Length of Judgeship</u>	<u>Family/Possessions</u>
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a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

3. Do you believe the office of judge was continuing to be an effective method of rule or had it degenerated into something else over the entire period of the judges? Support your answer using scripture and the charts.

Final Thoughts on the Minor Judges: The minor judges served amid the pattern we have been observing in the major judges. The quality of the deliverer, the response of the people, and the effectiveness of the judge's cycle appear to be declining. We will now enter into the story of Samson.

Read Judges 13:1-16:31 to get an overview. Answer question 4 as you read. We will mark our text when instructed as we progress through the study.

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years. The Philistines were a powerful sea people who settled in the coastal strip in southwest Palestine. They set up five main cities, each with its own king: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath. The Philistines controlled the iron monopoly and therefore had a military advantage over Israel (I Samuel 13:19-22).

4. a. What element of the cycle, repeated throughout judges, is missing here?
See Judges 3:8-9, 14-15; 4:3; 6:2, 6; 10:8-10 for previous oppressions.

- b. What was it about the “rule” of the Philistines versus the “oppression” seen in past cycles that would make this cycle element absent here? See Judges 15:9-13.

- c. In what ways have some Christians today become like Israel under the Philistines?

Reread Judges 13:1-25 – Samson’s Birth. Mark your text as instructed.

5. In both the Gideon and Jephthah stories, we saw God make contact with Israel in an attempt to deepen their repentance before raising up the deliverer.
 - a. Instead, what does the angel of the Lord do and say in Judges 13?

 - b. Why do you think God interacted with Israel differently this time?

6. Samson was to be dedicated to God from birth. Therefore, he was instructed to live in a particular way so that all those who observed his life would know he was set apart to God. From Numbers 6:1-12 list:
 - a. The main points of the Nazirite vow -

- b. Why someone would make a Nazirite vow -

- c. How they were to proceed if they broke the Nazirite vow -

- d. How Samson's vow was different than most Nazirite vows -

God was going to use Samson, just as He had used all the other judges, to try to bring Israel back to Himself. Israel had not asked for a deliverer. Israel was also not currently living out the separated life to which they had been called in Exodus 19:5-6. Through Samson's calling, choices, and the consequences of those choices, God would show Israel their need for a deliverer. Then perhaps they would be convicted for abandoning God.

- 7. How does the life and story of Samson parallel and thus represent the way Israel came into existence and was sustained by God? (For now, notice the parallels in chapter 13, but keep this concept in mind as you proceed through chapters 14-16. Feel free to add to this list in later lessons.)

Samson

Israel

Dig Deeper: Samuel, of I Samuel 1-16, was also a judge, born to a barren woman. He lived during the Philistine rule and was also dedicated to God from birth (a Nazirite). Yet Samuel was given over to live with the priests in the temple where his heart became close to God. Samson was not raised in that protected environment, which made it more difficult for him to live the life of a Nazirite. Read I Samuel 1-3 and 7 to see the prophet's impact on Israel, whose heart and life were dedicated solely to God.

Heart Check: Would the world, from observing you, know that you are a Christian? How? Is there anything that you have committed yourself to for God for a season?

8. With what advantages was Samson born that should have given him a victorious life for God?

9. What advantages for a victorious Christian life do we have as born-again Christians?
Ephesians 1:7

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ephesians 1:13-14

John 14:26

Galatians 5:22-23

Acts 1:8

I Corinthians 12:4-7

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Peter 1:3-4

10. Even though we have all these “ingredients,” what often hinders one from living a victorious Christian life?

11. What will you remember the next time you feel you don’t have it in you to live the victorious Christian life?

Final Thoughts: From birth, Samson had every reason to live a victorious life for God that could have stirred Israel back into a right relationship with God. We too have been given everything we need for life and godliness. The question is, what will we choose to do with our God-given ingredients? Will you let God use you in big ways for His glory, or will you focus so much on your own plans that, at the end of your days, there are many wonderful and interesting stories but no fruit for God in your world? Samson had huge potential. Next week we will see what he chose to do with it.

Pray - Thank you for all you have given me in Christ. Help me to use my life to your glory.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 18 — The Minor Judges and Samson's Good Ingredients — Judges 13:1-25

The Minor Judges – Observe your text in your Bible and fill in the chart in your lesson as instructed.

Samson – Observe your text.

Mark your text. Put a box around all time words (e.g. then, now, after). Put a circle around all conditional (e.g. so that, but, therefore). Underline all locations with a brown jagged line.

Underline all references, including pronouns:

- Israel in blue
- Manoah in orange
- God in red
- Manoah's wife in purple
- an enemy in black
- Samson in green

Judges 13:1-25 — Samson's Birth

1 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. 2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children.

3 Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. 4 "Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. 5 "For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name. 7 "But he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born."

9 God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me." 11 Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" And he said, "I am." 12 Manoah said, "Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?" 13 So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. 14 "She should not eat

anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded." 15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you." 16 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD. 17 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?" 18 But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" 19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on. 20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. 22 So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God." 23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time." 24 Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

(Judges 13:1-25, NASB95)