

Bible Survey - OT 7.1 - Judges

A. INTRODUCTION:

1. Refer to the introduction of Joshua for general introduction of all the early prophecy writings.
2. The Book of Judges describes the period and events between the end of Joshua and the beginning of the Prophet Samuel.
 - a. The 'Judges' refers to the leaders who God raised up to guide Israel in her early formative years in Palestine. These leaders arose in times of crisis and need to preserve the fledgling nation.
 - b. Though Joshua led the people into the Land, they did not conquer all the peoples present at that time. They conquered some of the people God marked for destruction, and made enemies of the remainder they did not yet dislodge. With the Hebrew Tribes occupying parts of the Land, they began to learn to live as a proto-nation that would become Israel in the time of the Monarchy. This Book provides a rather sketchy summation of some of the key events of the time.
 - c. The main problem that would emerge and haunt Israel until the exile in Babylon, was Israel's inability to remain true to Yahweh and succumb to engaging in the idolatry of the surrounding peoples. Forgetfulness, compromise, and apostasy followed by God's allowing the neighbors to pressure and remind Israel of their need leading to conviction, repentance, and renewal would become a major repeated theme. The repeated cycle is best presented by Lasor, Hubbard and Bush as -
 - i. The people do evil by serving other gods.
 - ii. Yahweh tests His people by sending a nation to oppress them.
 - iii. The oppressed people in time repent and cry out to Yahweh.
 - iv. Yahweh raises up a deliverer at their time of desperate need.
 - v. The oppressor is defeated.
 - vi. The people have rest.
 - d. This cycle is repeated because the people forget and fall back into apostasy. It is apparent that the state of "rest" is what God intended for His people to enjoy, but the people's faithlessness prevents them from remaining in the state of rest.
3. Most Biblical scholars accept that the text was developed in several stages:
 - a. The earliest form was a collection of deliverer tales, which were drawn from and supplemented the oral tradition.
 - b. These tales were collated and organized under early Prophetic guidance prior to the rise of the Monarchy.
 - c. The final rough form as a Book was likely accomplished during the Monarchy, and polished and preserved during the exile.
 - d. Much of the early Scripture took its shape during the David-Solomon reigns under their inspired guidance.

B. OUTLINE OF JUDGES:

1. Thematic Outline (Brian Morgan):

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- a. Settlement of the Land - First Generation - 1:1-2:5
- b. Abstracted Pattern of Israel's History - First Generation Prior to the Monarchy - 2:6-3:6
 - i. People move toward sin and forget their God - 2:11-13, 19
 - ii. Plunderers are allowed by God - 2:14-15
 - iii. The people groan and God has compassion - 2:18
 - iv. God sends a Judge to deliver the people from oppression - 2:16-18
- c. Abstracted Pattern is recurrent - 3:1-16:31

	<u>Plunderer</u>	<u>Judge</u>	<u>Reference</u>
i.	Arameans	Othniel	3:7-11
ii.	Moab	Ehud	3:12-30
iii.	Philistines	Shamgar	3:31
iv.	Canaan	Deborah-Barak	4:1-5:31
v.	Midian	Gideon-Tola-Jair	6:1-8:35
vi.	Ammon	Jephthah-Ibzan-Elon-Abdon	10:6-12:7
vii.	Philistines	Samson	13:1-16:31

- d. Appendix - 17:1-21:25
 - i. Israel's debased standard of faith - Micah & the Danites - 17-18
 - ii. Israel's debased moral standards - the Levite's violated concubine - 19-21

2. Chiasitic Structure (Bruce Waltke) - the integrity and authority of the Book is demonstrated in this Chiasitic structure - there is little question this was done deliberately:

A. Introduction 1: Judah/Israel versus Canaanite dismemberment - 1:1-2:5

B. Introduction 2: Israel forsakes God for Baalim - 2:6-3:6

C. Othniel: an Israelite wife is the secret of his success - 3:7-11

D. Ehud: takes 'message' to a foreign king; slays Moabites at Jordan - 3:12-31

E. Jael: slays Sisera and ends war - 4:1-5:31

X-Center: The personal story of flawed Gideon [leading to Abimelech] - 6:1-8:35

E' A woman slays Abimelech and ends war - 9:1-56

D' Jephthah: sends messages to a foreign king; slays Ephraimites at Jordan - 10:1-12:14

C' Samson: his foreign woman is the secret to his downfall - 13:1-16:31

B' Epilogue 1: Idolatry is rampant - 17:1-18:31

A' Epilogue 2: Israel/Judah versus Benjaminites and dismemberment - 19:1-21:25

NOTES:

- a. From Gideon onward the behavior of Israel's leaders [Abimelech, Japhtheth, Samson] become progressively more questionable and debased. This progressive spiral to decadence follows the theme of progressive decadence of humanity after the Fall as preserved in Genesis. Conclusion - humanity is fundamentally flawed.
- b. God occasionally raises up a leader of sincere heart and love for God - as with King David... though he too was far from perfect.

- c. God finally reveals the perfect example - the Messiah who is God in the flesh - and everything changes.
- d. The narrator perceived the “tribes” as one people, and the name “Israel” occurs more frequently in this book than any other of the Hebrew Bible. This obviously points toward an integrated identity:
 - i. All Israel - all the sons of Israel - 2:4; 8:27; 20:1
 - ii. Men of Israel - 7:8, 23; 8:22
 - iii. Hand of Israel - 3:30; 11:21
 - iv. Camp of Israel - 7:15
 - v. Misery of Israel - 10:16
 - vi. Daughters of Israel - 11:40
 - vii. Border of Israel - 19:29
 - viii. Inheritance of Israel - 20:6
 - ix. In those days there was “o king in Israel”

3. Story Outline (LaSor/Hubbard/Bush):

- a. Summary of the conquest of Canaan - 1:1-2:5
 - i. Judah and Simeon - 1:1-21
 - ii. House of Joseph and Bethel - 1:22-26
 - iii. Canaanite enclaves - 1:27-36
 - iv. Angel of God at Bochim - 2:1-5
- b. Israel in the Judges era to the death of Gideon - 2:6-8:35
 - i. Death of Joshua; the new generation - 2:6-10
 - ii. Reason for the Judges - 2:11-19
 - iii. Reason for leaving the Canaanites in the land - 2:20-3:6
 - iv. Oppression by Cushaan-rishataim; deliverance by Othniel - 3:7-11
 - v. Oppression by Eglon; deliverance by Ehud - 3:12-30
 - vi. Shamgar & the Philistines - 3:31
 - vii. Oppression by Jabin; deliverance by Deborah & Barak - 4:1-24
 - viii. Oppression by Midian; deliverance by Gideon - 6:1-7:25
 - ix. Ephraimite anger against Gideon - 8:1-3
 - x. Other events involving Gideon - 8:4-21
 - xi. Gideon’s rule over Israel - 4:22-32
- c. Brief reign of Abimelech - 8:33-9:6
 - i. Jotham’s fable - 9:7-15
- d. Israel in the era of the Judges and it’s close - 10:1-12:15
 - i. Tola & Jair - minor judges - 10:1-5
 - ii. Jephthah’s rule - 10”6-12:7
 - iii. Ibzan, Elon, Abdon - minor judges - 12:8-15
- e. Philistine oppression and the exploits of Samson - 13:1-16:31

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- i. Birth of Samson - 13:1-25
- ii. Samson and the woman of Timnah - 14:1-15:20
- iii. Samson and the harlot of Gaza - 16:1-3
- iv. Samson and Delilah - 16:4-31
- f. Events closing out the era - 17:1-21:25
 - i. Micah and his priest - 17:1-13
 - ii. Migration of the tribe of Dan - 18:1-31
 - iii. Outrageous act at Gibeah - 19:1-30
 - iv. War between Benjamin and Israel - 20:1-48
 - v. Reconciliation of the tribes - 21:1-25

C. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - see introduction to Joshua for extensive background:

1. Ancient Israel of the era of the Judges - approximately 1350 to 1050 BC.



2. Canaan had been a land of independent city-state kingdoms. The geography of shallow plains surrounded by mountains and hillsides was particularly well suited for small independent kingdoms that cooperated during times of mutual need. This same geographical tendency made it very difficult for the early Tribes to become an integrated and cohesive people.
3. Besides the occasional marauders and opportunists, the major threats to the tribes of Israel were the Arameans to the North, the Ammonites to the East, the Moabites to the South-East, and the Philistines to the South-West.

4. Historically the era of the Judges was during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. Though iron was developed by the Hittites as early as 1400 BC, it didn't become wide spread until much later. The Hittites traded with other cultures including Egypt, but in Palestine it was monopolized by the Philistines during the era of the Judges. Bronze was the principal metallurgy until Iron which did not become plentiful in the region until about 1200 BC, and iron became a significant factor exploited by King David around 1000 BC. References to iron wheeled chariots and other iron weaponry were quite fearsome, as they would easily break the softer and more brittle bronze weapons of the Israelites. As iron became the metal of choice for weaponry, bronze use was relegated to art and coins.
5. Historical-Cultural Connections in the Ancient Near East - there were parallels with neighboring cultures which should be expected as these cultures did not emerge in a vacuum. Israel's "Judges Era" of 1350-1050 BC bore similarities to Greece's "Heroic Era" of 1230-1100 BC.
 - a. Political Organization :
 - i. Greece - the relatively well ordered authority of the Mycean III B period broke down and was replaced by the disorderly period of the Achaeans in Mycean III C.
 - ii. Israel - the centralized government present during the Moses-Joshua leadership decayed into the tribal anarchy of the Judges Era.
 1. Individual tribes refused to subordinate themselves to the leadership of any one group or faction.
 2. Local tribal government was run by an assembly of elders who maintained sole authority in their domain.
 3. Judges leadership was occasional and based on the charismatic leader and their military prowess. However, their leadership was limited, temporary, and non-hereditary.
 - b. Writing:
 - i. Greece - writing was used fairly frequently in Mycean III B, but only sparingly in Mycean III C. No writing of the Philistines has been discovered.
 - ii. Israel - in the time of Moses and Joshua writing was the normal means of communication, not unlike it had been in Egypt.
 1. Little writing has emerged from the Judges Era other than this collection of stories.
 2. Oral communications through messengers replaced the written message approach.
 3. The oral tradition was a preferred means of communication for many people, and it developed into an art form to communicate history and theology in localized communities.
 - c. Religion:
 - i. Greece - the ordered community of the gods and the structured responses of men in the earlier era, decayed into decentralization of the religion prevalent in the later era.

Anthropomorphic deities with their own 'abode' in localized regions are more reflective of the Heroic society favored by the Greeks.

- ii. Israel - during the Moses-Joshua era there was centralized and organized religious observances with an integrated theology. With the tribal dispersion the integration broke down both in theology and in practices.
- d. Sociology:
- i. In both Greece and Israel tribal identity replaced the more cohesive national identity.
 - ii. As tribal societies turned inward and blood ties more localized, regional law and order broke down.
 - iii. The breakdown of national identity was replaced by a personal identity - thus national consciousness was replaced by individual consciousness. This gave rise to personal honor which replaced national honor... and personal wrath for wrongs which replaced national wrath - with heroes demonstrating this change.
 - 1. In Greece - the anger of Achilles in the Iliad.
 - 2. In Israel - the anger of Samson.
 - 3. Human strength and exploits became more bestial, and less constrained by human dignity.
 - iv. Hero worship had similarities:
 - 1. The object of battle was to defeat the leaders rather than destroy the military forces.
 - 2. Classic battle involved champions pitted against each other... like Menelaus vs. Paris or David vs. Goliath.
 - 3. Heroes became known by their feats of strength - usually led by an aristocratic portrayal.
 - 4. Craftiness and wit were as important as courage and strength - the former being the difference maker in an even fight.
 - 5. Virtue became success in exploits, not necessarily because of one's integrity or compassion.
- e. Archaeology:
- i. The Philistines are thought to be of ancient Greek origin, most likely from Aegean-Crete origin. Ancient references to the Philistines depict them as fearsome and war-like sea people. They had 5 principal city-states along the coast, and most likely numerous smaller settlements along the foothills and likely colonies extending to the south from Joppa.
 - ii. Tel Qasile - a 'Tel' is a man-made hill usually created for religious reasons. In this case, this Tel has successive layers of temples built and buried one on top of the other over a period of some 200 years. Because one is built upon the other the preceding layers are well preserved including pottery and some artifacts... all were built with a common floor plan.

1. **Tel Qasile is a Philistine settlement with a Temple built facing east - presumably in relation to the rising of the sun. Of Philistine religion, Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible says:**

There is little evidence available with which to reconstruct Philistine religion. The three gods known to us from the Bible are Dagon, Ashtaroth, and Baalzebul... but these are the Hebrew names given them. Through Biblical/historical source criticism we know there were temples of Dagon in Gaza (Judg 16:21, 23-30), Ashdod (1 Sam 5:1-7), and probably also in Beth-Shan (1 Chron 10:10; cf. 1 Sam 31:10); temples of Ashtaroth in Ashkelon (Herodotus I. 105) and prob. in Bethshan (1 Sam 31:10); and a temple to Baalzebul in Ekron (2 Kings 1:1-16). Sacrifices were made to Dagon by the lords of the Philistines (Judg 16:23), and warriors wore small portable images of Dagon into battle (2 Sam 5:21). There were priests and diviners from whom advice was sought to remove a plague (1 Sam 6:2-9). The Philistines' experience with Israel's Ark revealed their belief in the existence of Israel's God and of His extra-territorial jurisdiction (5:1-6:18). The Philistines also earned a reputation regionally for soothsaying (Isa 2:6).

2. **The excavation of the temple at Tel Qasile has demonstrated a floor plan with 2 central columns that supported the roof structure as depicted in the story of Samson. Also found were temple worship vessels depicting lions - no doubt prized for the strength and ferocity. The tale of Samson tearing apart a lion by its jaws was no doubt a polemic on the strength of Yahweh and the relative weakness of Philistine idol worship.**

- iii. **David as a young boy killed an impressively large Philistine champion named Goliath. Goliath was from the city of Gath... one of the 5 principal cities. The Bible refers to Philistines in a derisive and uncouth manner. There were undoubtedly a dour, brutal, and ruthless culture... not the sort of neighbor Israel would have chosen. Ironically, something about them seemed to bring out the best (and sometimes worst) of Israel.**

D. BREIF REVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF JUDGES:

1. The Deborah-Barak Narrative - 4:1-5:31:

- a. **Deborah was an Ephraimite woman of great faith in God. She was a prophetess and Judge and her leadership foreshadowed that of Samuel (Sam 3:19-21; 7:15-17). She was convinced of the power of God that would deliver Israel from the threat of Sisera and his army (4:9). Her song of praise (5:1-31) is one of the most ancient writings circulated at the time.**
- b. **Barak was from the tribe of Naphtali was a weak willed, indecisive, fearful leader who was distrustive of Deborah's prophetic oracle against Sisera (4:8). The contrast of Deborah and Barak suggests that God will use whoever is open and attentive to Him to accomplish His will and purpose. Other great women of Scripture include Ruth, Esther, Mary and Elizabeth, and Mary Magdalene among many others.**

- c. While Barak had previously demonstrated his competence in battle against Jabin king of Canaan, his faith is shown deficient in this tale. This tale is not necessarily a polemic about a feminist role model; rather it displays the deficiency of the male leadership in Israel and the continued degeneracy of Israel. This story sheds some light on the modern “male chauvinist-feminist” debate in that gender confusion and Godly leadership dependency are necessarily intertwined.
 - d. In “Deborah’s song” the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, Makir, Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali are commended for participating under Deborah’s leadership, while the tribes of Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher are derided as non-participatory (5:13-18).
2. The Gideon Narrative - 6:1-8:32:
- a. Gideon is at the center of the leadership cycle in the Book of Judges - those before him though deficient in many ways did reasonably well; those who follow him do progressively worse. In the center of the Gideon tale is his own personal struggle to believe God. This struggle illuminates the character of the preceding judges as better [positive & strong] to worse [negative & weak]. The following Abimelech narrative is a foreshadowing of what lays ahead for Israel and its need for a radical paradigm change - both in leadership and faith. By the end of the Book of Judges it is painfully clear that the era of the charismatic Judges cannot lead or deliver God’s people effectively, and a new leadership paradigm is necessary leading to kingship/stewardship.
 - b. Outline of the Gideon narrative - please review the “Interpreting Scripture” portions for more information on this - Part 2 page 25 deals with the genre of prophecy, and part 3 pages 1-6 deal with structural analysis of the texts:
 - i. Chiastic pattern:
 - a. Introduction to Gideon - the evil situation at the time of his call to serve - 6:1-10
 - b. Gideon’s call to deliver - 6:11-32
 - x Gideon’s personal struggle to believe God - 6:33-7:18
 - b’ Gideon delivers Israel from Midian - 7:19-8:21
 - a’ Conclusion to Gideon - evil situation at the time of his death - 8:22-32
 - ii. Concepts revealed in the Chiastic pattern:
 - 1. At the center [x] is the heart of the problem - the focus is Gideon’s flawed character rather than his function as deliverer. Gideon receives a call and a promise, but has difficulty accepting that God will use him to do what He said. The heart of most leaders ranges from arrogance to self doubt - it was true then and still is. There is a balance that leaders must find in their own walk of faith, and the question is not a once and done matter but a continued cycle of struggle and dependence... do we doubt God or our self? Do we question God’s word or if we heard it properly? To have a divided mind is to doubt and not act as God has decreed, and that is sin for a leader.

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2. The a. and the a' - frame the problem - and because of Gideon's personal failure in the end... Israel continues in idolatry.
 3. The b. and the b' - frame the gifts and calling of God without repentance. In spite of Gideon's shortcomings...he achieved a great outcome when he believed God's promise and acted upon it.
- iii. Additional concepts revealed in structural patterns - parallel and chiastic:
1. Introduction to Gideon - the evil situation at the time of his call [parallel]
 - a. Israel's apostasy results in the Midianite affliction - 6:1-6.
 - b. The prophet of God rebukes Israel failure to worship God alone - 6:7-10.
 2. Gideon's call to deliver - 6:11-32 [parallel]
 - a. The angel of the Lord commissions Gideon to deliver Israel from Midian despite Gideon's hesitation and concern for his death - 6:11-18. [Note that Moses also hesitated and tried to avoid God's call (Ex 3:10ff)]
 - b. Gideon builds an altar and names it "the Lord is Peace" after realizing the angel's identity - 6:19-24
 - a' The Lord commissions Gideon to destroy the Baal altar despite his fear - 6:25-27
 - b' Joash renames Gideon as Jeru-baal after discovering Gideon's identity as the Baal altar destroyer and desires to put him to death - 6:28-32
 3. Gideon's personal struggle to believe God's promise - 6:33-7:18 [chiastic]
 - a. A Spirit-led Gideon mobilizes 4 tribes to confront the Midianites, though he lacks confidence in God's promise - 6:33-35
 - b. Gideon seeks a sign from God with the fleece to confirm God's promise that He will deliver Midian to destruction - 6:36-40
 - c. Will the fearful Israelites departed, God instructs Gideon to go down to the water to have his force thinned again - 7:1-8
 - c' Fearful Gideon goes down to the enemy camp to overhear their discussions - 7:9-11
 - b' God provides Gideon a sign in a dream to confirm the promise that he will destroy Midian - 7:12-14
 - a' A worshipping Gideon mobilizes 300 men for a surprise attack against Midian, finally confident in God's promise - 7:15-18
 4. Gideon's deliverance of Israel from Midian - 7:19-8:21 [parallel]
 - a. Gideon's initial attack on the unsuspecting Midianite camp puts the enemy to flight. Ephraim joins the pursuit and captures & kills the 2 leaders of Midian - 7:19-25
 - b. Gideon settles contention with the Israelite men of Ephraim through diplomacy and flattery - 8:1-3
 - c. The cities of Succoth and Penuel refuse to cooperate with Gideon in his

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pursuit of the 2 Midianite Kings - 8:4-9

a' Gideon's final attack on the unsuspecting Midianite camp puts the enemy to flight. Gideon's band pursues and captures the 2 Midianite kings - 8:10-12

b' Gideon settles the contention with the Israelite men of Succoth and Penuel by severe retaliation - 8:13-17

c' Gideon's eldest son refuses to cooperate with him in slaying the 2 Midianite kings - 8:18-21

5. Conclusion of the Gideon narrative - 8:22-32 [parallel]

a. Gideon declines the offer to rule [denoting kingship/stewardship responsibilities], but fabricates an ephod [denoting priestly responsibilities] after which Israel "plays the harlot" in falling back into idolatry - 8:22-27

b. Conclusion to the Midianite problem and Gideon's legacy for Abimelech - 8:28-32

Note: the structure here demonstrates the confused leadership and religious practices of the judges. During the monarchy the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King are made clear and perpetual... and ultimately lead to Messiah who is the perfect combination of the three.

3. Brief Content Review and Reflections:

a. Introduction:

- i. 2:10-13 - demonstrates the problem inherent with humanities response to God - it only took one generation for God's people to forget what He had done for them and fall back into apostasy and idolatry.**
- ii. 2:14-15 - the result of apostasy and idolatry was oppression, and God periodically raised leaders [Judges] to free His people and return them to the proper worship of God.**
- iii. 2:16-23 - Demonstrates God's cause against Israel's continued and persistent unfaithfulness. The cycle of "sin/oppression/deliverer/rest/return to sin" continues throughout the period of the Judges, and throughout the Old Testament.**

b. Gideon:

- i. 6:12-17 - Gideon receives a supernatural visitor and calling, but questions the Lord's command upon him, demonstrating his reluctance to accept God's call.**
- ii. 6:18-23 - Gideon receives a supernatural sign demonstrating it is the Angel of the Lord - whom Gideon believes that any human that sees him must die as a result.**
- iii. 6:24-30 - Gideon still proves his reluctance to stand on God's call. Gideon's father is shown to be a priest of the Baal cult, and Gideon demonstrates his timidity by removing his father's Pagan altar at night. The Pagan's wanted him dead and threaten his life.**
 - 1. Vs 25-26 - God instructs Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal & Asherah, and to build a proper Altar to God. Gideon obeys, but does it at night**

because he is afraid. While he seems to desire to do what God asks, but he does it in a way that will not offend those God desires to confront. In our society that is so politically and socially correct, we don't want to offend but we often lose the power to confront. It takes wisdom and grace to confront in a Godly manner to prompt change.

2. Vs 30 - the threat of death was given to Gideon... perhaps he knew this and that is why he did it at night? Or perhaps had he been bold enough to do it in the daylight, God would have done something more wondrous?
- iv. 6:31-32 - is a key piece to the author's argument... "If Baal is god, let him deal with Gideon (now called by the idolaters 'Jerub-Baal')." It is a major theological error in thinking that man has to defend God's interests or His reputation. Jihad or 'Holy War' is God acting directly against humanity in defending Himself, not humanity having to defend God because He is incapable of it. This later is what is suggested here and in the Elijah conflict with the Baal Pagans - 1 Kings 18:18-39.
- v. 6:34 - the Spirit 'came upon' Gideon... this was not a common occurrence in the OT, but something that occurred through God's specially chosen envoys or ambassadors. The word translated as 'came upon' may also be translated as 'clothed.'
 1. In Numbers 24:3 the Spirit 'rushed upon' [clothed] the Mesopotamian prophet Balaam... which might indicate that there was no particular spirituality of the individual chosen. It may be another example of God's using those who were open, but not completely committed... or it could be like the prophet Jonah who refused God having no desire to go to Nineveh.
 2. In the NT we know the Spirit is available not only to come upon but to remain with [indwell] God's people. This is a completely different quality of Grace.
- vi. 6:36-40 - again demonstrates Gideon's lack of faith... not unlike Moses when he was asked to go to Pharaoh (Ex 3:10-12ff). But God doesn't seem to have a problem with the request of Moses or Gideon, and Jesus didn't seem to have a problem with the request of a sign from the Pharisees (John 2:18-19).
- vii. 7:1-9 - God demonstrates that He doesn't need a hoard to conquer a vast army, only faith and commitment of a chosen few.
- viii. 7:10-11 - God demonstrates that He knows Gideon's fear - and suggests he go down with his servant to hear the conversations of the Midianite camp. Gideon overhears the Midianite fear of defeat and takes strength from it. God doesn't ask us to more than we are capable of, but rather to yield what we are and what we have for His use... not unlike the young lad who yielded to Jesus 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish to feed 5,000 (Matt 14:15-21).
- ix. 7:22 - A reminder that we are not expected to fight every battle ourselves, but we should allow the Lord the honor of going before us and fighting the battle. Our job is to walk with Him in His ways.

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- x. **8:16-21 - Gideon takes vengeance against his fellow Israelites... he is the first judge to kill his own people.**
 - xi. **8:22-23 - Gideon is asked to rule over the people, but demurs and correctly observes that it is God who is to rule over them.**
 - xii. **8:24-27 - At this seeming high point of faith Gideon asks for golden earrings from the people he was asked but refused to rule. He then fashions it into an “Ephod” which is a priestly garment.**
 - 1. **Zondervan’s Expository Commentary explains:** With the gold Gideon surprisingly made an ephod that was to lead Israel further into idolatry. The high priest wore an ephod, an apron like garment made of linen, various colors of yarn, and gold thread (Ex 39:2-5). The breast piece attached to it contained the mysterious Urim and Thummim (Ex 28:28-30), through which the High Priest consulted God to understand His will (1Sa 23:9-10); this may have been Gideon's original purpose in making a golden replica. However, Gideon seems to have wrongly assumed priestly functions [not unlike King Saul who offered sacrifices 1 Sam 13:7b-14]. The ephod eventually served an idolatrous purpose and is described in the same terms as the gods of Canaan (2:2, 17). Gideon, who had boldly broken up his father's altar to Baal, was now setting a trap for his own family.
 - 2. **Gideon fails his calling because he refused to be a responsible ruler, and chose instead to be a Pagan priestly king. Gideon retires to his estate in Ophrah and lives a life suitable for the powerful and wealthy rulers of his era... though with no further effort to help the nation or even his own tribe. He instead directs Pagan divination while his son Abimelech decides to assume the power of king that his father refused.**
- c. **Abimelech:**
- i. **8:33-34 - Israel was called to serve God and hate Pagan idolatry. Israel decides to serve Baal instead of God.**
 - ii. **8:35 - Abimelech usurps the kingly power and falls under God’s anger. Jephthah opportunistically takes power under God’s mercy.**
 - iii. **Parallel Outline - 9:1-57**
 - a. **Abimelech gains financial support from his brother through his mother - then hires “worthless and reckless men” and murders his brothers (Gideon’s sons) - 9:1-6**
 - b. **Jotham’s fable - 9:7-21 -- is a thinly veiled argument about the worthless king (bramble) seizes kingship, while the chosen fruitful king refuses. This indicates that the monarchy was actually God’s plan. It is a polemic for worthless and fruitful leaders in Israel as well as in the Church. It also gives additional insight to king David’s refusal to seize power from king Saul; and Absalom’s desire to**

seize power from king David.

a' The Shechemites revolt against Abimelech, who is killed along with thousands others - 9:22-55

b' The narrator's evaluation - 9:56-57

iv. Conclusion - there was a positive move trending toward monarchy during the period of the Judges which God seems to have initiated. The last 5 chapters of Judges seem to be in harmony with the previous 16 - there is a stabilizing view of monarchy as opposed to the anarchy of each person or tribe doing what they thought was right which could have prevented the chaos Israel sustained without centralized Godly leadership.

d. Jephthah - 10:6-12:7

i. Chiastic outline:

a. Israel serves 7 gods and God sends 7 oppressors - 10:6-16

b. Jephthah's ascent as 'head' and 'commander' - 10:17-11:11

X Jephthah sends grievance against Ammon - 11:12-28

b' Jephthah's downfall through the sacrifice of his daughter - 11:29-40... begs the question, who did he expect to come out? His dog? His wife? His wife's lover? A goat? It is a bizarre turn of events.

a' Jephthah destroys the Ephramites - 12:1-6

Ending - 12:7

ii. This passage is weird because such strange things are going on. The original writers observe that Jephthah was a man of talent and standing, however they were trying to make a point about the nature of Jephthah's character. The Bible is unique among ancient writings in that there is a constant standard based upon God's decrees for life, while exposing humanities inability to consistently live up to the standard.

1. Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites is placed in the context of his rash vow promising a sacrifice... note Matt 5:33-37.

2. Canaanite Pagans often offered their own children to purchase benefits from their deities. It was a Quid-pro-quo transaction [this for that], not a celebration per-se [joyous outpouring]. There is a purposeful dissonance here.

3. Since his daughter was his only offspring and he had no other heir to continue his bloodline, Jephthah was not only sacrificing his greatest treasure now, but his entire future as well. Another purposeful dissonance.

a. Jephthah laments his own loss, not necessarily his daughters'.

b. His daughter laments her loss in remaining a virgin, not necessarily her loss of life or her future.

iii. In many ways these stories are reflections of the dysfunction of Israel in particular, and of humanity in general. It is part of the "Canaanization of Israel" - they forget their calling to be different as the "People of God, a Holy nation, a kingdom of priests"

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- **not unlike the calling of the Church... note 1 Peter 2:9** - “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

- iv. **In this sense there is thematic agreement with Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah and Samson. In later tales of the monarchy, king Saul is seen as a talented but disturbed leader who knows he will fail and be replaced by David as king. David is obviously a talented leader who loves God fiercely, but who is also a flawed human being. David’s succession family dynamics are indicative of the problems with Israel - Absalom wanted to usurp the throne and is willing to commit murder and fratricide to further his goals. Solomon also commits fratricide and leads Israel into its golden age of success, and also into the decline of faith in idolatry and Paganism.**
 - 1. **Through all of these tales, the Bible displays God at his loving best and humanity in their confused weakness... when we are seeking and dependent upon God things go well, when we cease to make God our primary focus and depend upon ourselves things go badly. This theme lands in the New Testament in “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given you as well” - Matt 6:33.**
 - 2. **Moral ambiguity and ethical compromise pretty much always precede the fall. We substitute the standards and purity God has established, for the institutionalized standards of a fallen organization.**
 - 3. **This section leaves the reader longing for a “king after God’s own heart” - one like David but more importantly and ultimately like the Messiah... one whose character is perfect and who walks continually in the power of the Spirit... one who leads God’s people into a new life with God in eternity.**
- e. **Samson - 13:1-16:31 -- the Samson story is another chapter in Judges where the leader of Israel demonstrates the deteriorating character of God’s chosen people. It is the last major character that is presented. God makes His revelation clear to a Danite wife who remained childless in Judges 13:3-5 - The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, “You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”**
 - i. **Nazirites - were set apart for service to God, usually for a short period of time (Numbers 6:8). There are three examples of Nazirites chosen from birth - a negative example - Samson, and two positive examples - Samuel and John the Baptist. The callings for these three were unusual and life-long.**

1. A more conventional Jewish expression is the example of Paul (Acts 18:18) who cut his hair in fulfillment of a Nazirite vow... this vow was in response to a calling from God but was for a short duration only. When the vow was fulfilled the calling ceased. These types of vows Jesus discouraged because humanity is limited in what action we can undertake on our own... we are not independent of God, though many act as they are. In Matt 5:33-37 Jesus taught that it is offensive to God to make vows as we cannot keep them without God's power. Paul's example in this passage was more a means of resolving an offense with the Jews in a manner they would understand and accept to diffuse a volatile situation, rather than establishing a paradigm for the Church.
 2. Nazirite restraints included prohibition from contact with anything dead, from all wine and strong drink, and from shaving or cutting the hair. The calling was occasional in response to specific supernatural events. The concept of a Nazirite was a calling on someone who would appear spontaneously, would be subject to ecstatic behavior, and at times indistinguishable from the primitive sort of prophet.
 3. Samson repeatedly breaks the Nazirite vow:
 - a. By touching a carcass - 14:5-9; 15:15
 - b. Drinking wine - 14:20
 - c. Cutting his hair - 16:17
 - d. Engaging in illicit sex
 4. Samson as a Nazirite was intended essentially as a "sacred Spirit imbued charismatic warrior." This was the highest of callings, but not unlike the calling upon Israel. However, Samson's character is demonstrated to be fatally flawed. Instead of purity as required, his life was an example of excess and debauchery... which ultimately led to his undoing.
 5. Samson had the highest calling from God and was supernaturally equipped for ministry with super-human strength, but failed because he was over matched by his animal passions.
- ii. The Lord God is known by the author and reader to be the guiding force in the story.
1. Samson is shown to be center stage in the story; but it is God who is the power underlying the events.
 - a. The angel of the Lord demonstrates God's calling and direct involvement.
 - b. Samson and his family reflect the deteriorating spiritual condition of their people; and God works through them despite their degenerative state.
 - c. The story gives notice that God is involved in the events as they unfold - 13:24; 14:4; 16:20.

- d. God's providence is secretive... as Samson's parents don't know 14:4; Samson doesn't know 16:20; and the Philistines don't know.
 - e. God's providence in providing is an example of "Hessed Love" - the enduring quality of God's favor for His people. It is evidenced even amid the moral and spiritual ambiguity of the people.
2. The Spirit of the Lord grips Samson - 13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14.
- a. Before the adventure begins it is shown that God's providence and the Spirit's presence is assured - 13:24-25.
 - b. In the Old Testament the Spirit usually comes unexpectedly upon the person God has chosen to work through. In the New Testament the Spirit has a more voluntary/collaborative quality coming consistently through prayer and worship, and strengthened by the Word of the Lord [Scripture].
3. When Samson finally turns to God in prayer... God answers - 13:8ff; 15:8ff; 16:28-30.
- a. Prayer is resorted to in critical moments and in crucial situations... this is not reflective of the love of the believer for God demonstrated in the Psalms and the New Testament writings.
 - b. When engaged, the Lord intervenes immediately evidencing His trustworthiness.
 - c. Prayer is shown to supersede the ultimate victories.
 - d. Samson's great strength is seen in contrast to his moral and ethical weakness... it does not enable him to live or to die.
 - e. Samson's final prayer results in the destruction of his enemies in revenge for the loss of his eyes, not for the love of God or for accomplishing God's purposes in bringing relief to Israel.
- iii. 16:20 - Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.
- 1. What a bitter realization it must have been for Sampson when he came to be aware that God had left him. We all too often take God for granted, and expect that He will bail us out of the problems we create.
 - 2. When what we take for granted "what has always been there" and it suddenly disappears, it is both shocking and dismaying, but God's love for us will not allow us to remain in our wayward condition. Those who have been called and sealed God will pursue and redirect as evidenced in the following passages. God's long term plan is always His Kingdom in eternity, not our temporal environment.

iv. 16:26-28 - Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."

1. Recent excavations have demonstrated that the Philistine temples had a common floor plan, with two central columns that supported an expansive roof that covered the structure. When Samson pushed against these pillars and they gave way, the collapse would have killed most of the occupants.
2. Though God answered Samson's prayer, it is noteworthy that it was less than penitent and that he was more concerned with his revenge rather than God's purpose. The event did demonstrate that God is greater than the false deities of the Pagan cultures.

v. Samson is a flawed saint:

1. Samson is a saint - Heb 11:32.
 - a. He is elected from conception.
 - b. He is conscripted to serve God.
 - c. His uncut hair is a sign of his covenantal relationship with God.
2. Samson is a deeply flawed and tragic hero:
 - a. He chooses Philistine women but rejects their gods... demonstrating that he floundered in the conflict between Eros and charisma.
 - b. He rejects his parents but accepts Philistine women... his passions and appetites are out of control. His parent's vow cannot constrain him... he rejects them to follow his appetites.
3. Insight - Sampson had a plan, then he prayed, and then he acted in faith. Compare with Proverbs 16:1-4. Samson knew where his strength came from, and though he failed miserably in maintaining his character before God.

4. Development of the Theme of the Progressive Decline of Israel:

- a. Spiritual precedes social and political decline:
 - i. As judges begins - Judah goes up against the Canaanites and Adoni-Bezek is dismembered.
 - ii. As Judges ends - Judah goes up against the Benjaminite's and Levite's concubine is dismembered.
 - iii. They have moved from outward fighting to inward fighting among the tribes.
 - iv. A Priest [Levite] with a concubine is a serious sin.
- b. Spiritual decline results in the intensification of sin:
 - i. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord - 2:11; 3:7; 6:1.

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- ii. The children of Israel continued to do evil in the sight of the Lord - 3:12; 4:1; 10:6; 13:1.
- iii. The people do not learn from their mistakes, and make even greater ones even as God bails them out. History repeats itself and degradation intensifies.
- c. Intensification of sin provokes God's anger and judgment - God uses people less righteous than His own to chastise His people - 2:14; 3:8; 3:12; 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 13:1.
- d. The loosely organized tribes are incapable to keep God's Covenant:
 - i. Politically - Israel needs a Godly monarch to maintain order and peace... the Judges system isn't working.
 - ii. Spiritually - Israel needs a leader who loves God and keeps His covenant... the Judges prove that holiness is necessary; not any personal combination of charisma, strength, or power.
 - iii. Human relational disharmony is the result of the Fall; Spiritual disharmony is the result of the sin-curse on Satan and earth.
 - iv. God's patience with humanity is strained but not broken - Hessed Love perseveres in spite of humanities failings.
 - v. Oppression from the surrounding nations was one of the symptoms of Israel's underlying problem that the Judge's dealt with. However, God's desire was "Spiritual reform" which they could not accomplish.
 - vi. The institution of the priest/prophet/monarch model of leadership set the groundwork of what led ultimately to the solution of humanities core problem with the coming of the Messiah Jesus and a greatly superior New Covenant. The Old Covenant demonstrated that the Law and institutions could not remedy humanities problems... we needed a Spiritual change of heart and mind which came at Pentecost. This change had resounding resonance that reverberated forward and backward through time encompassing all of humanity.
 - vii. God made numerous pleas for Spiritual reform – through the "Angel of the Lord," through the prophets, and through the testimony of Scripture that recounted humanities continual degradation from the Fall in Genesis 3-11 mirrored in the Judges continual degradation. The result was the obvious conclusion that Fallen humanity could not righteously stand on their own before a perfectly righteous God.
 - viii. God's covenant [Moses & Sinai] stipulated that "Living in the Land" required "obedience to preserve" and "faith to redeem" – and Fallen humanity could do neither. The human confrontation was obvious, but the Spiritual confrontation was the main cause of disharmony that was perpetuated by Idolatry.
 - ix. Idolatry has several forms... all of which remain in play today and throughout history:
 - 1. It is substituting faith and dependence on a revealed God for magic/sorcery processes and manipulations that promise control of what is fundamentally uncontrollable.

2. It is dependence on anything other than God to gain control of life.
 3. It is any aspect that holds to a lesser view of God than what God says of Himself.
 4. The cure for Idolatry is Jesus the Messiah through whom we engage in “Worshipping in Spirit and Truth” – John 4:21-26.
 5. It is important to understand that idolatry is offensive to God – humanity was created for relational intimacy with God. Idolatry is placing anything in the rightful place God belongs. It is offensive because it destroys intimacy with God.
 6. There is a common misconception that God demands our worship and adoration... it is not as if God needs anything from us to validate Himself. Instead, it is the rightful understanding of God that brings us to Him in praise and worship. Relating to God in this fashion is joyous and natural.
 7. Idolatry involves worshiping a man-made fabrication instead of the Self-revealed God of Creation.
5. Development of the Theme of the Spirit:
- a. Although the Old Testament is not as specific as the New Testament, the OT does provide evidence of the Trinity from the Creation and throughout its pages. The NT is very clear as to the existence of God as Trinity – Father, Son & Spirit... One God in Three Persons. Trinity as “One” is a difficult concept, but one that reverberates throughout Scripture. Please see “Biblical Literacy/Theology/Theology 1 – The Trinity” for a more detailed discussion of the Scriptural concepts on the Trinity. The following summation traces evidence of the Spirit in the OT.
 - b. CREATION:
 - i. The Creation story is told in poetry (chapter 1) and in narrative (chapter 2). In remarkable poetic drama the Spirit is described as “hovering over the waters” – heightening anticipation of what is about to occur – Gen 1:1-2.
 - ii. The process of creation is threefold:
 1. To bring light out of darkness.
 2. Order out of chaos.
 3. Life out of emptiness.
 - iii. It is not coincidental that “Spirit” and “Word” are linked together throughout Scripture – Proverbs 1:23; 2:1=10; Ezek 36:27; Eph 1:13.
 - c. PATRIARCHS:
 - i. Dreams and visions were a common means of the Spirit to communicate with people.
 - ii. Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams was a supernatural revelation empowered by the Spirit. Gen 41:38 states “can we find a man like this in whom is a Divine Spirit?” The narrative takes for granted that the Spirit knew God’s plan and revealed it to His servant.

d. MOSES:

- i. The ministry and manifestations of the Spirit establish God's plan for Israel and the Law:
 1. The directions and technical concepts in building the Tabernacle which we latter learn was patterned after God's Heavenly throne room and served as the pattern for the Temple – Ex 28:3; 31:3; 35:31.
 2. Moses was certainly naturally gifted in many ways and the privileged life as a prince in Egypt insured that he would gain a first rate education. However, there are Supernatural abilities ascribed that enabled leadership, administrative, and judicial renderings – Num 11:17, 25; 7:18.
 3. Spiritual ecstasy was a result of the Spirit upon a worshipful prophet – Num 11:25.
 4. Vision and prophecy were the supernatural gifts of the Spirit – Num 24:2ff.
- ii. The Spirit chose recipients to present God's message – Moses, Joshua, elders, etc. The Spirit even communicated through a Pagan diviner and a donkey – Num 22-24.
- iii. The gift of the Spirit was not permanent in the OT, but came as the need or occasion required. In the NT the indwelling of the Spirit is a birthright of all disciples of Jesus.

e. JUDGES:

- i. Ministry and manifestations were appropriate for the age in providing military prowess and protection – 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25.
- ii. While recipients were sovereignly chosen, there was no clear connection between the Spirit's gifting and the moral character of the gifted – i.e.: Gideon, Jephthah, & Samson.
- iii. The success of the chosen was at least partially conditioned by their faith – 6:34-7:15; 11:29f; 16:20, 28.
- iv. The Spirit's presence and gifts were always temporary, and didn't necessarily improve the character of the person chosen or prevent them from tragedy – 8:27; 16.

f. EARLY MONARCHY:

- i. Ministry and manifestations included:
 1. Military prowess – 1 Sam 11:6.
 2. Ecstasy – 1 Sam 10:6, 10.
 3. Power in word and deed – 2 Sam 23:2.
 4. Revelation – 1 Chron 28:12.
- ii. Recipients were sovereignly chosen, individual character was not necessarily a factor – 1 Sam 19:20. Occasionally larger numbers were included rather than the traditional individual – 1 Sam 10:10.
- iii. Calling and gifting was discretionary and not permanent. In the case of Saul an evil spirit [Demon] possessed him when the Spirit departed – 1 Sam 16:13-14; Psalm 51:10.

g. THE AGE OF THE PROPHETS:

i. Pre-exilic Prophets – 750-600 BC:

- 1. The Spirit is the source of all prophetic ministry – Is 30:1; Micah 3:8.**
- 2. In the “Age to Come” [Messianic Age] the Spirit will work to conform individuals in producing justice and righteousness – Micah 4:1-6.**
- 3. The “Greater Son of David [Messiah] will rule the Kingdom of God by Word and Spirit – Is 11:2ff.**
- 4. The Spirit will enable God’s people to turn away evil – Is 28:5-6; and to provide justice and abundance for God’s people – Is 32:15.**

ii. Exilic Prophets – 605-530 BC:

- 1. The Spirit is the source of revelation – Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12.**
- 2. The Spirit will endow the “Servant of the Lord [Messiah] to bring justice on the earth – Is 42:1-4; 49:1-5.**
- 3. The Spirit will give God’s people a “New Heart” [to know and commune with God in love] with the ability to obey God [Spirit empowered righteousness] – Ez 11:19-20; 36:26-27; 39:29.**
- 4. The Spirit in the “Age to Come” [after Pentecost] will be given without measure endowing all God’s people with the power to alter creation – Joel 2:23-32.**

iii. Post Exilic Prophets – 538-430 BC:

- 1. The Kingdom of God will not be established by human effort, but by the Spirit.**
- 2. “Not by might or power... but by My Spirit” – Zechariah 4:6.**

h. THE NEW TESTAMENT – THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT – the Spirit is mentioned 78 times in the OT [37 times in the prophets]; and 244 times in the NT... proportionately 16% of the references to the Spirit are in the OT, and 84% are in the NT. It is apparent from this NT saturation that something radical and wonderful happened at Pentecost!

i. Mathew & Mark:

- 1. Jesus is presented as endowed with the Spirit in fulfillment of OT prophecy – Matt 3:16; 12:18.**
- 2. Jesus teaches that the Spirit was the active agent in OT prophecy – Matt 22:43.**
- 3. Jesus confirms the Spirit as the power at work in His miracles – Matt 12:28.**
- 4. Jesus teaches that the ongoing priority of faith will be through the Spirit and humanity would do well to respect and revere Him – Matt 12:31-32.**

ii. Luke & Acts:

- 1. The birth of Jesus as God/man coming into the world was so dramatic and wonderful that manifestations of the Spirit accompanied it – Luke 1. The responses of Elizabeth, Zecharias, and Mary confirm it.**
- 2. The Birth of Jesus is accompanied by an Angelic celebration – 2:8-20.**

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3. The presentation of Jesus at the Temple... is confirmed by the Spirit through Simeon – 2:25-33; and the prophetess Anna – 2:36-38.
 4. Jesus ministry was in the Spirit... the same Spirit as Elijah – Luke 3; 4:14, 18.
 5. Jesus' disciples pray for the Spirit – Luke 11.
 6. Joel's prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out – Acts 2.
 7. The Church ministered in the power of the Spirit – 58 times it is referenced in Acts alone! Jesus and His disciples would overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by the Spirit.
- iii. John:
1. Jesus is endowed with the Spirit – 1:32.
 2. Each person must be regenerated by the Spirit – 3:5f; 7:39.
 3. The Spirit is the source of true worship and power – 4:24; 6:23.
 4. The Spirit will be given to disciples and He will testify about Jesus – 14:15-26; 15:26; 16:13.
- iv. Paul:
1. The ministry of the Spirit is the distinguishing characteristic differentiating the NT from the OT – Rom 2:29; 2 Cor 3.
 2. The Spirit indwells all believers through faith – 1 Cor 3:16; Gal 3:1; Rom 2:29; 1 Cor 6:19.
 3. Ministries and manifestations of the Spirit include:
 - a. Justification and sanctification of believers – Rom 8; Gal 5:18, 22-25; 1 Cor 6:11.
 - b. Illumination [insight into Scripture and application into life] and revelation [truth made known and understood] – 1 Cor 2; 2 Cor 3.
 - c. Baptism into Christ's Body [the Church] – 1 Cor 12:13.
 - d. The sealing of the Spirit is a permanent gift – Eph 1:13.
 - e. The diversity of Spiritual gifts for the edification and health of the Church – 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:4; Rom 12.
 - f. The indwelling of the Spirit ["filling out" not "filling up"] manifests itself in joyful expression or worship and song – Eph 5:18.
 - g. The Spirit unifies the Church as an "Eschatological people" – Though we live in the present, we also live in the future by means of the Spirit.
 - h. In Paul's theology the gift of the Spirit and the resurrection of the Spirit-filled deceased are the two primary events that marks the "end of the age."

SEE DIAGRAM BELOW:

THE ERA OF THE CHURCH
The Last Days

