



Study Guide: Judges – Chapter 15

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Judges Chapter 15 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Judges Chapter 15 presents a dramatic episode in the life of Samson, one of Israel's last judges before the establishment of monarchy. This chapter highlights Samson's extraordinary physical strength and his complex relationship with the Philistines, who were oppressing Israel at the time. It reveals themes of vengeance, divine empowerment, and the consequences of personal choices. This study guide will explore the chapter's narrative, theological insights, and practical applications for believers today.

Context

The Book of Judges records a turbulent period in Israel's history characterized by cycles of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. Samson, a Nazirite dedicated to God from birth, is raised to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Chapter 15 follows the events of Samson's marriage and the riddle incident in Chapter 14, where his wife was given to another man. This chapter shows Samson's escalating conflict with the Philistines, illustrating both his human flaws and God's sustaining power. Chuck Missler's commentary emphasizes that Samson's story reflects the tension between divine calling and human weakness, revealing how God uses imperfect vessels for His purposes.

Outline

Judges 15 can be divided into several movements. It begins with Samson's visit to his wife, only to discover she has been given to another man, igniting his anger. Next, Samson retaliates by burning the Philistines' crops using foxes with torches tied to their tails. The Philistines respond by burning his wife and her father. Samson then attacks them with great strength, killing many. The chapter concludes with Samson being captured, breaking free from his bonds, and receiving water from God while in the wilderness. These movements demonstrate escalating conflict and divine provision.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1-3: Samson visits his wife, only to find she has been given to another man. His response is one of deep personal offense, leading him to burn the Philistines' grain fields. This act of vengeance shows his impulsive nature and the beginning of open hostilities.

Verses 4-5: Samson catches 300 foxes, ties their tails in pairs with torches, and sets them loose in the Philistines' standing grain, vineyards, and olive groves. This clever tactic causes widespread destruction and economic damage to the Philistines.

Verses 6-8: The Philistines retaliate by burning Samson's wife and her father. In response, Samson strikes back fiercely, killing many Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey. This episode highlights his superhuman strength and fierce commitment to avenging wrongs.

Verses 9-13: After the battle, Samson is thirsty and calls out to God for water. God miraculously provides water from a hollow place in the ground, demonstrating His care and provision even amid conflict.

Verses 14-17: The Philistines come to capture Samson. Bound with new ropes, he breaks free and kills a thousand men with the jawbone. His victory is a testament to God's empowerment despite human limitations.

Verses 18-20: Exhausted, Samson names the place where God provided water "En-hakkore," meaning "the spring of the one who called." He leads Israel for twenty years during a time of Philistine oppression, underscoring his role as a deliverer.

Key Themes

One major theme is divine empowerment. Despite Samson's flaws and impulsive actions, God grants him extraordinary strength to fulfill His purposes. Another theme is vengeance and justice, illustrating the complexities of personal retaliation within the broader context of God's judgment on Israel's enemies. The chapter also explores human weakness, showing Samson's emotional responses and how God works through imperfect individuals. Lastly, God's provision is evident in the miraculous water supply, symbolizing His sustaining presence in times of need.

Cross-References



The story of Samson's strength and battles can be compared with other biblical accounts of God empowering individuals for deliverance, such as Gideon in Judges 7 and David's victory over Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. The theme of God providing water in the wilderness echoes Exodus 17, where God provides water for Israel through Moses. Samson's use of the jawbone recalls the use of unconventional weapons by God's servants. The cycle of sin and deliverance in Judges 15 parallels the broader pattern found throughout the Book of Judges.

Application

This chapter challenges believers to trust in God's strength rather than their own, recognizing that God can use flawed individuals for His purposes. It also warns against allowing personal anger and vengeance to lead to destructive behavior. Samson's story encourages reliance on God's provision in times of physical and spiritual thirst. Christians are reminded to seek God's guidance and strength in conflict and to respond with faith rather than impulsiveness. The narrative invites reflection on how God's power can be evident even amid human weakness and difficult circumstances.

Summary

Judges Chapter 15 reveals the intense conflict between Samson and the Philistines, marked by acts of vengeance, divine empowerment, and God's provision. Samson's story illustrates the tension between human frailty and God's sustaining power. Despite his flaws, Samson fulfills his role as a judge and deliverer, demonstrating that God's purposes prevail through imperfect people. This chapter invites believers to reflect on trusting God's strength, seeking His provision, and navigating conflict with faith and wisdom.