

Judges 1–3

Day 1

Compromised Obedience. Read Judges 1:1–6

1. Compare Judges 1:1 with 21:25. What happened to the people's focus during the years of the Judges?
2. How did the people start out after Joshua's death (1:1)? How did the Lord respond (1:2)? What would you say about this?
3. What did Judah do (1:3)? How close was the location of these tribes? See Joshua 19:9.
 - What did the Lord do (1:4)?

FYI: "The tribes of Judah and Simeon were blood-brothers (Genesis 29:33–35) and are uniformly depicted as acting in the closest relationship." (Cundall) – David Guzik

4. How did Judah and Simeon treat the king of Bezek (1:5–6)? Whom were they imitating (1:7)?

FYI: "That was obviously both a very effective and brutal way of ending his military career; he could handle neither bow nor sword against him. But mutilation was a pagan practice, not a biblical one, and the men of Judah were under command to put him to death. They were drawing their standards from people around them, adopting Canaanite practices. Judah's obedience was only partial." – Gary Inrig (18)

5. After victories with so many Canaanites (1:6–18), what weren't they able to do (1:19)?
 - Should this have been a problem for them? What had happened before (17:17–18)? (See also Numbers 14:9, Deuteronomy 20:1; 31:6 and Psalm 20:7.)
 - By contrast, what was Caleb able to do (1:20)?

FYI: Chariots of iron "This spoke more to Judah's lack of full trust in God than it did to Canaanite military superiority. Chariots were no problem for God's people when they were trusting God (see Exodus 14:7–29, Joshua 11:1–8, and 1 Kings 20:21). Their attitude should have been like that reflected in Psalm 20:7: Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." – David Guzik

"Joshua 10:40 reports that Joshua had 'utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded' (note also Joshua 11:14,15; etc.). In the early part of his conquests, Joshua evidently swept rapidly through the southern cities, destroying everyone he encountered. However, there presumably were many who escaped by hiding in the hills or elsewhere. Furthermore, the conquest of the more northerly and westerly regions was never completed, and the remnants of the various Canaanite nations either retained or regained enough strength to cause great problems to Israel during the period of the judges." – The Defender's Study Bible

6. In verses 1:19–33, note the names of the tribes and the phrase “*did not drive out*” or “*did not take possession.*” What happened to the Canaanites in each case (if given)?

- 1:21
- 1:22–26
- 1:27–28
- 1:29
- 1:30
- 1:31–32
- 1:33
- 1:34–35

7. What would you say about the changes from the descriptions in 1:30 to 1:32 to 1:33 to 1:34? What danger would living “among” the Canaanites present?

FYI: “At the end of Joshua’s life, when the nation had inherited a major portion of the promises given to Abraham, they needed to understand at least two things about their newfound homeland. First, the reason why they had conquered so much was due to God’s faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to Abraham. [See Genesis 12:3] Second, the reason so much was left to be conquered was due to their own faith or lack of the same in the promises of God. In summary we might say: The conquest and settlement of the land fulfilled God’s promises in proportion to the nation’s obedience.”

– Dr. Chris Miller

8. Who appeared to the people after this (2:1)? What does the first person singular “*I brought...I led...I swore...I said...*” say about His identity? (Compare Genesis 18:1,3; Judges 13:21–22.) (For significant events at Gilgal see Joshua 4:19–5:12.)

9. What did God say He would never do (2:1b)? What had the people done (2:2b)? What does this indicate about the reason for their difficulties in conquering the land?

- What promises and covenant had God made with Abraham concerning the nation of Israel? See Genesis 12:2–3; 15:18.

FYI: “The Abrahamic covenant is extremely important. First, God always keeps His promises. He doesn’t reveal hidden conditions or add later requirements. There are no ‘ifs’ and ‘maybes.’ He does exactly what He says He will do...How do we know our sins are forgiven? He said so. How do we know we have eternal life? He said so. How do we know we are part of His family? He said so, and He never goes back on His word. We can trust the Word of God because the God of the Word stands behind it.”

– Gary Inrig (22)

10. What consequence would their disobedience bring (2:3)? (Crossref. Numbers 33:55 and Joshua 23:12–13.) What spiritual and military danger did this present to the people?

- How did the people react (2:4–5)? What does that reveal about the heart of this generation?

Food for Thought: “The situation we see Israel in at the end of this passage did not come about suddenly. It was the result of a slow process that began with one act of compromise. Doing something that is inconsistent with being faithful to God can always be made to sound reasonable, but it is always wrong. In our own day the temptations to do so are legion, and often very subtle. Under the pressure to act “kindly” (1:24) , to be tolerant, we can begin to compromise our commitment to the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the gospel, especially in the pluralistic context in which most of us now live, in which truth is relativized and tolerance is promoted as the supreme virtue. But, of course, it is all a lie. Tolerance is a relative, not absolute virtue. Whether or not it is good depends on what is tolerated. To tolerate evil, however it is attractively packaged, is to bed with the devil and make a covenant with death...
The world offers us infinite opportunities for compromise. Israel’s world was Canaan, with its false gods and beguiling culture. Ours is the fast-paced, hedonistic, pluralistic, consumer cultures in which everything is possible and nothing is forbidden except intolerance. The opportunities to compromise are well-nigh overwhelming; the pressure to do so is immense.” - Barry G. Webb (35,36)

- ✂ **Applying the Word:** What are some spiritual dangers that you face by because of compromises that you have made in your walk with the Lord? What sins do you entertain that feel are like “chariots of iron” that you cannot drive out?

Day 2

Second Generation Failures. Read Judges 2:6–3:4

11. How well did the first generation do (2:6–7)? What leadership and experiences had they had? What does this indicate about how well Joshua had trained up other leaders?
12. List the phrases that describe the attitude and actions of the 2nd generation. 2:10–13
– *neither knew the Lord or what He had done*

FYI: abandoned/ forsook OT:5800; *azab*; to loosen, i.e. relinquish, permit, etc:

“It is strange that anyone would want to trade a personal, real, living God for a false god that is the figment of man’s imagination. Yet there is something within man that is afraid of the exact God we need; we would rather serve a god of our own creation than the real, living God whom we can’t control. The gods we create are the gods wanted by our sinful desires... The Canaanite idol Baal was...thought to be the god over the weather and nature for the Canaanites...In an agricultural society people served Baal because they wanted good weather for abundant crops and flocks. One might say that the bottom line with Baal was the bottom line; he was effectively the god of personal wealth.”
– David Guzik

13. In 2:12a, what past actions on God’s part serve as a contrast? What kind of accountability did this give to the nation?
14. How had God instructed the 1st generation about the second? See Deuteronomy 6:7–9.
- What warning did God give in Deuteronomy 6:10–12?
 - Although we are not told, why do you think the 2nd generation did not know the Lord or what He had done? e.g. apathy, forgetfulness, ingratitude, neglect of God’s word In what sense do you think they did not “know” Him?
15. In the following, write out the phrases describing the thinking and attitudes of people who forsake the Lord.
- Jeremiah 7:24
 - John 3:19
 - Romans 1:21
 - Romans 1:28
 - Romans 3:18
 - 2 Timothy 3:3
 - 2 Timothy 3:4
16. What consequences did the second generation have for their unfaithfulness (2:14–15)? What was God trying to do with them?
17. What did God do in answer to their distress (2:16)?
- List the response of the people to these judges (2:17).

Digging Deeper

What is Israel’s unfaithfulness graphically compared to in Jeremiah 2:20; 3:2, See also Ezekiel 16:15,20–21,25–26.

FYI: “The name [Judges] refers to the gifted men (plus one woman, Deborah) whom God raised up to lead and govern Israel between the times of Joshua and Samuel. Altogether, fourteen of these judges were named in the book, including Deborah and Barak, who served as sort of co-judges, but not including Eli and Samuel, who judged Israel later.” – The Defender’s Study Bible

“These ‘judges’ had no courtroom, wore no robes, received no salary, and set no laws. Although they may have had some civil functions, the judges are military rather than judicial figures...they are leaders who deliver from the hand of those who plundered them.” – Gary Inrig (46)

18. How were judges appointed (2:18a)?

- What did God do through the judges (2:18b)?
- Why did God raise them up (2:18c)?

19. What happened again and again (2:19)?

FYI: ‘The Israelites...did not stop speaking of Yahweh or forget Him entirely. Rather, they borrowed the rites, practices, and idols of Canaanite paganism and grafted them into their existing worship in a new syncretistic religion. They were tolerant of that which God commanded them to destroy. They accepted what God called them to hate, and they compromised when God called them to wholehearted obedience.’
– Gary Inrig (42)

“A simple two-dimensional cycle doesn’t clearly convey the concept. We’ll have to somehow picture the idea that things are getting worse and worse and worse. Perhaps the best way to capture the concept in a static picture is a downward spiral. With each successive story of the judges in chapters 3—16 the spiritual and moral level of the society sinks lower and lower, until we come to the climactic ending of the final two stories.”
– Dr. Chris Miller



20. How did the Lord deal with continued rebellions (2:20–21)?

- For what reasons did He do this (2:22; 3:2,4)?

FYI: “The Lord uses...difficulties to teach us how to wage spiritual war. He wants to shake us out of our apathy and teach us to trust Him. Often it is only when the enemy has run all over us and our resources are gone that we develop a teachable spirit.”
– Gary Inrig (36)

“At this period of time, the tribes of Israel at their best experienced incomplete victory; at their worst they simply surrendered to and accommodated the enemy. This makes us value the complete and glorious victory of Jesus Christ on our behalf all the more. There was *nothing* left incomplete in the victory He won for us on the cross and through the resurrection.” David Guzik

21. In Judges 2, list the words and phrases that describe their sins. (See different translations.)

- 2:2b
- 2:11
- 2:12
- 2:13
- 2:17
- 2:19
- 2:20

22. What does God’s continual rescue teach you about His heart?

✂ Applying the Word: When you look at your family’s history, what kind of spiritual legacy do you see passed down? What are you doing to build upon or change that legacy? What do you think God can accomplish with one faithful generation?

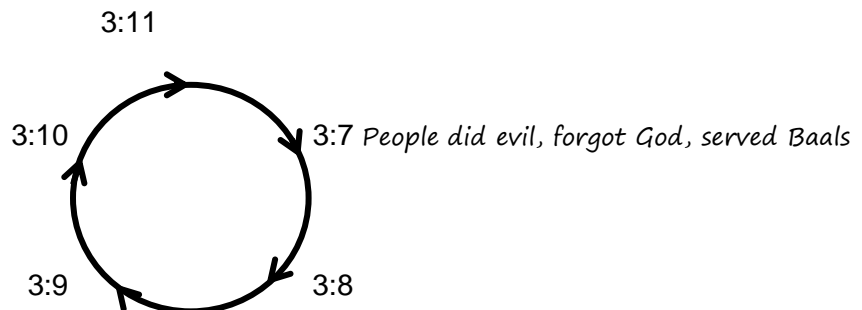
Day 3

. Read Judges 3:5–11

23. How far down did the people go in transgressing God’s commands (3:5–7)?

FYI: **forgot** (3:7) OT:7911 *shakach*; to mislay, i.e. to be oblivious of, from want of memory or attention

24. Read through the cycle of behavior and God’s response given in 3:7–11.



FYI: This cycle has been labeled with the words “sin, servitude, sorrow/supplication, salvation.”

25. Write the phrases in 3:9–10 that describe what the Lord did and what Othniel did.

- What would you say about Othniel’s character from Judges 1:13? (This same account is recorded in Joshua 15:16–17.)
- How long were the Israelites subject to Cushan-Rishethaim (3:8)? How long did God give them peace under Othniel (3:11)? What kind of changes do you envision that making in their daily lives?

FYI: **Cushan-Rishathaim** Strong’s OT:3573; *Cushan* of double wickedness

“**eighteen years.** The listed periods of servitude in the book of Judges total 111 years, and included times of subjection to no less than nine different nations. Israel’s periods of apostasy were costly.”
– The Defender’s Study Bible

26. What happened after Othniel died (3:12)? What does this say about the power of leadership?

FYI: “Judges is a well-structured book that easily divides into three important sections... The first (1–3) introduces the book and explains why things are going to proceed downhill very quickly. When you read the first three chapters you should have the same feeling of terror you get the moment your roller coaster just makes it to the peak of the first hill. The second section (3–16) is the only place where the actual Judges really show up and their stories are told from Othniel to Samson. The final section (7–21) tells two perfect stories. They’re not perfect in a good sense, but in the perfect storm sense. They perfectly carry the theme of the book and they are as ugly a picture of Israelite culture as you’ll find anywhere in the Bible.” – Dr. Chris Miller

☞ **Applying the Word:** Why do you think it is easy for people to forget God? What powerful motives or desires tend to pull us away from Him? What makes passing on the truth to the next generation challenging?

Day 4

Ehud and Eglon. Read Judges 3:13–31

27. Who joined with Eglon the king of Moab to invade Israel (3:13)? See a historical confrontation with the Amalekites in Exodus 17:8–16.
28. What do you learn about the Moabites from Genesis 19:30–36?
29. How did the Moabites treat the Israelites as they traveled on their way to the promised land? See Numbers 22:1–6.
- From Numbers 25:1–3, what happened later with the Moabites?
 - What judgment did the Lord make on the nation of Moab in Deuteronomy 23:3–4?
30. How long were the Israelites subject to Eglon king of Moab (3:14)? Why do you think it took them even longer this time to cry out to the Lord? (Compare 3:8b.)

| **Interactive Maps:** See: “The Judges” <https://ibiblemaps.com/map-index/>

31. In 3:15–16, what do you learn about Ehud? (How would being left-handed give him an advantage in a fight?)

32. What did the Israelites want Ehud to do (3:15b)?

- What did he do instead?
 - 3:17–21
 - 3:26–29

33. How brave would you say Ehud was? Whose plan do you think he was following?

34. What would you say about Ehud's faith in God (3:28)? (Compare Joshua's words in Joshua 10:19.)

- What did God do and for how long did the nation peace under Ehud? 3:30 What does this indicate about Ehud's influence?

35. What does God's ability to find and raise up these leaders and the fact that many people were willing to follow, say about the state of the hearts of many of the people even during these times of apostasy? Compare Elijah's complaint in 1 Kings 19:14,18.

36. From whom and how did Shamgar save the Israelites (3:31)?

FYI: "Shamgar was a man of great accomplishment, yet only one verse describes his work. It is possible that so little is said about Shamgar because his story was so well known...He may not have been a judge after the usual pattern but just a warrior who effected this one local stroke of valour against a nation who afterwards became Israel's principle oppressor.; (Cundall) There was nothing spectacular about an ox goad...Shamgar was merely a laborer doing his job; but he took what was in his hand when prompted by God and he rescued the people of God from their enemies."
– David Guzik

✎ Applying the Word: Who has a powerful influence on your life to follow the Lord? What makes it so powerful? What do you think about God's ability to use just one person's faith to change the hearts of others?