THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

Date: 01.03.27 | The Pattern Of Disobedience
Scripture: Judges 1-2

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:
God loves us and helps us follow Him.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):
Despite God's people turning away from Him, God continued to show mercy and provide rescue.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):
Israel's repeated sin showed that they needed more than temporary rescue—they needed a Savior. Jesus is our perfect and final Deliverer.

STUDENTS:
Israel's cycle of sin and temporary rescue reveals the deeper problem of the human heart. We cannot rescue ourselves from sin; we need Jesus, the perfect and permanent Deliverer.

ADULTS:
Israel's repeated rebellion exposes humanity's inability to overcome sin through its own faithfulness, while God's persistent grace points beyond temporary deliverers to Jesus Christ, the perfect King who provides lasting rescue from sin and restores His people to God.

MEMORY VERSE



"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What is the law of God stated in the Ten Commandments? You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below - you shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God. Remember the sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet.
New City Catechism Q. 8



BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

The writer of the book of Judges is unknown. The book consists of various blocks of material about different judges, which could have been written by multiple authors over a period of time. Some scholars believe the prophet Samuel wrote portions of Judges, although some events described in the book occurred after Samuel's death, meaning another author would have completed the writing. The events of Judges took place after Joshua's death and before Israel had a king. Judges describes a dark and increasingly chaotic period in Israel's history when, ultimately, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" *(Judges 21:25)*.

At the end of Joshua, things looked very different. *Joshua 24:31* tells us, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel." *Judges 2:7* repeats this truth. God had graciously rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, sustained them through forty years in the wilderness, brought them into the Promised Land, and given them victory over their enemies. Now His people were called to live faithfully in the land He had given them, trusting Him and obeying His covenant.

Judges 1 begins with some encouraging signs. After Joshua's death, the Israelites seek the Lord's direction as they continue taking possession of the land *(Judges 1:1–2)*. Although Israel was often outnumbered militarily, their victories did not depend upon their own strength. God gave them the land and victory over their enemies. However, as *Judges 1* continues, a troubling pattern develops. The Israelites repeatedly fail to drive out the inhabitants of the land as God had commanded *(Judges 1:27–36; Joshua 6:17; 11:14–15)*. Their incomplete obedience reveals a deeper problem: they are no

longer fully trusting the Lord.

In *Judges 2:1–5*, the angel of the Lord confronts Israel about their disobedience. God reminds them that He brought them out of Egypt and into the land He promised to their fathers, and He declares that He will not break His covenant with them. Israel, however, has failed to keep theirs. God had specifically commanded His people not to make covenants with the pagan nations but to tear down their altars *(Exodus 23:32; 34:12–13; Deuteronomy 12:3)*. Instead, Israel allowed the Canaanites and their worship to remain among them. God had warned that these nations and their gods would become a snare if Israel refused to obey Him *(Exodus 23:33; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:16; Joshua 23:13)*.

Israel's calling in the Promised Land echoes humanity's original calling in Eden. Adam was placed in the garden to live under God's authority and rule for His glory. Israel was placed in the Promised Land to live under God's authority and display His glory among the nations. Yet, just as Adam rebelled against God, Israel also failed to trust and obey Him. Their problem was not merely military failure—it was a heart problem. They wanted God's blessings while increasingly rejecting God's authority.

The consequences become especially clear in *Judges 2:10–23*. After Joshua's generation died, "there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel" *(Judges 2:10)*. God had commanded His people to diligently teach the next generation who He was. What He had done *(Deuteronomy 6:4–9)*, but the next generation abandoned the Lord. *Judges 2:11* introduces a phrase that will be repeated throughout the book: "the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" *(Judges 2:11; see also 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1)*.

Rather than worshiping the God who had rescued and provided for them, Israel "abandoned the LORD" and worshiped the Baals and other gods of the surrounding peoples *(Judges 2:12–13)*. Their idolatry provoked the Lord to righteous anger. God had clearly warned Israel what would happen if they abandoned Him, and now He acted exactly as He had said. He gave them over to plunderers and allowed their enemies to defeat them until they were in terrible distress *(Judges 2:14–15)*. These consequences were not evidence that God had forgotten His covenant; they demonstrated that God is holy, just, and faithful to His Word *(Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 26–28)*.

Yet Israel's sin is met again and again by astonishing grace. "Then the LORD raised judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them" *(Judges 2:16)*. When His people were suffering, the Lord was moved by their distress and provided deliverers for them *(Judges 2:18)*. These judges served as leaders—some military and some spiritual—whom God used to rescue His people from their enemies.

But the judges would never solve Israel's deepest problem. While a judge lived, the people might temporarily turn back to the Lord. After that judge died, however, they returned to their idolatry and became even more corrupt than the generation before them *(Judges 2:17–19)*. Their fundamental problem was not simply the Canaanites around them; it was their own sin. They needed more than another military victory or temporary leader. They needed hearts that truly loved and obeyed God.

Judges introduces a recurring cycle that shapes the rest of the book: rebellion against God, retribution from God, repentance toward God, and restoration by God *(Judges 2:11–23)*. Israel rebels and worships other gods; God allows their enemies to oppress them; in their distress they cry out; and in His mercy God raises a judge to deliver them. But the cycle always begins again. Over time, Israel moves from conquest to compromise to chaos. With each generation, their sin becomes increasingly evident, demonstrating that temporary deliverers cannot permanently rescue sinful people.

This repeated cycle points us toward Israel's—and our—need for a greater Deliverer. The judges could rescue Israel from an enemy for a time, but they could not rescue the people from sin's power. Israel needed more than another judge; they needed a righteous and permanent King. Ultimately, God would provide that King in Jesus Christ. Where Adam failed to obey God and Israel repeatedly broke covenant with Him, Jesus obeyed the Father perfectly. Where the judges provided temporary rescue, Jesus provides lasting salvation. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated the enemies we could never defeat ourselves—sin and death—and gives new hearts and eternal life to all who trust in Him.

Judges, therefore, is not simply a story about Israel repeatedly making bad choices. It reveals the seriousness of sin, God's holiness and justice, and the extraordinary persistence of His grace. Israel continually turns away, yet God continues pursuing and rescuing His

people. The cycle of Judges shows that human beings cannot break the power of sin on their own. We desperately need a Savior—and the temporary deliverers God raises throughout Judges prepare us to recognize and rejoice in the perfect and final Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

TELL THE STORY



Judges 1-2

After many years of wandering in the wilderness, God's people were finally living in the Promised Land. God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness, and given them victory over their enemies. While Joshua was alive, the people followed the Lord. Even after Joshua died, the people who had seen all the amazing things God had done continued to serve Him *(Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:7)*.

At the beginning of Judges, things seemed to be going well. The Israelites asked God for direction, obeyed Him, and God gave them victory over their enemies *(Judges 1:1–4)*. Their victories were not because Israel was stronger than everyone else. God gave them victory. But soon, something began to change.
God had commanded the Israelites to drive the Canaanites out of the land and destroy their places of false worship. Instead, the Israelites began letting some Canaanites remain *(Judges 1:27–36)*. This might have seemed like a small compromise, but it was actually disobedience. God had warned His people that if they allowed the Canaanites and their false gods to remain, those things would become a trap for them *(Exodus 23:32–33; Deuteronomy 7:16; Joshua 23:13)*.

In *Judges 2:1–5*, the angel of the Lord confronted the Israelites. God reminded them that He had brought them out of Egypt and into the land He promised to give them. God had been faithful to His covenant, but His people had not been faithful to Him. The people cried and offered sacrifices to God *(Judges 2:4–5)*, but their sadness did not lead to lasting obedience.

Eventually, Joshua's generation died. Then something terrible happened: "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel" *(Judges 2:10)*. God had commanded His people to teach their children about

Him and tell them what He had done *(Deuteronomy 6:4–9*), but a generation grew up that did not faithfully follow the Lord. Soon, "the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" *(Judges 2:11)*.

Instead of worshiping the one true God who had rescued them, the Israelites began worshiping the false gods of the people around them. They abandoned the Lord and worshiped Baal and other idols *(Judges 2:11–13)*.

God was rightly angry with their sin. He had warned Israel what would happen if they abandoned Him. Because they refused to listen, God allowed their enemies to defeat them. Wherever they went, things went badly for them, and the Israelites found themselves in terrible distress *(Judges 2:14–15)*. But even though Israel repeatedly abandoned God, God did not completely abandon Israel.

In His grace and mercy, "the LORD raised judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them" *(Judges 2:16)*. These judges were leaders God used to rescue His people from their enemies. While a judge was leading them, the Israelites might follow God for a while. But there was a problem. When the judge died, the people turned away from God again. In fact, they often became even more disobedient than the generation before them *(Judges 2:17–19)*.

This pattern continued throughout the book of Judges: Israel rebelled against God. God allowed them to experience the consequences of their sin. The people cried out in their distress. Then God graciously raised a judge to rescue them. After some time passed, however, the people rebelled again. Over and over and over, the cycle continued.

The judges could rescue Israel from their enemies, but they could not fix Israel's greatest problem. Israel's biggest problem wasn't the enemies surrounding them. Their biggest problem was the sin inside their own hearts. They needed more than another judge. They needed someone who could rescue them from sin itself. And so do we.

Like Israel, we cannot rescue ourselves from our sin. But God's plan did not end with the judges. One day, God sent the perfect and final Deliverer—Jesus Christ.

Where Israel failed to obey God, Jesus obeyed perfectly. The judges could rescue God's people for a little while, but Jesus came to bring

lasting salvation. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death and offers forgiveness and new life to everyone who trusts in Him.

The story of Judges reminds us that doing what seems right in our own eyes will always lead us away from God *(Judges 21:25)*. We need a King who will rescue us and lead us. Jesus is that King.



REBUILD THE STORY

1. How were the Israelites supposed to live in the Promised Land, and what began to happen when they did not fully obey God? *(Judges 1:27–36; 2:1–3)*

2. What did God remind the Israelites He had done for them, and how had they responded to His faithfulness? *(Judges 2:1–2)*

3. What happened after Joshua and the generation who had seen God's works died? *(Judges 2:7–10)*

4. What did the Israelites do that was evil in the Lord's sight? *(Judges 2:11–13)*

5. What happened when Israel abandoned God and worshiped other gods? *(Judges 2:14–15)*

6. How did God show grace to the Israelites when they were suffering because of their sin? *(Judges 2:16, 18)*

7. What did the Israelites do after a judge died? *(Judges 2:17–19)*

8. What pattern begins in Judges 2 and continues throughout the book of Judges? *(Judges 2:11–19)*

9. Why do you think allowing some of the Canaanites and their false gods to remain seemed like a small compromise at first but eventually became a big problem for Israel? *(Judges 1:27–36; 2:1–3, 11–13)*

10. Judges 2:10 says a generation grew up that did not know the Lord or what He had done for Israel. Why is remembering what God has done—and teaching it to the next generation—so important? *(Judges 2:7–10; Deuteronomy 6:4–9)*

11. What does the repeated cycle of Israel sinning and God raising judges to rescue them teach us about both the human heart and God's character? *(Judges 2:11–19)*

12. Why couldn't the judges permanently solve Israel's problem? How does their repeated need for rescue help us understand our need for Jesus as our perfect and final Deliverer? *(Judges 2:16–19)*



GOSPEL EMPHASIS

The book of Judges begins by showing us that Israel's greatest problem was not the enemies around them, but the sin within them. God had faithfully rescued His people from Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness, brought them into the Promised Land, and given them victory over their enemies. Yet instead of continuing to trust and obey the God who had been so faithful, Israel compromised with the people around them and eventually abandoned the Lord to worship other gods *(Judges 2:11–13)*. Their disobedience brought consequences, but even when Israel was unfaithful, God continued to show them mercy and grace. When His people were in distress, He raised judges to rescue them from their enemies *(Judges 2:14–18)*. However, these deliverers could never solve Israel's deepest problem. After a judge died, the people returned to their sin. They often became even more corrupt than before *(Judges 2:19)*. The repeated cycle of sin and rescue shows that Israel needed more than another temporary leader—they needed someone who could rescue them from the power of sin itself.

Like Israel, our greatest problem is the sin within our own hearts, and we cannot rescue ourselves from it. The judges God raised were temporary deliverers who point us toward the greater and permanent Deliverer God would ultimately provide in Jesus Christ. Where Israel repeatedly failed to remain faithful to God, Jesus perfectly trusted and obeyed the Father. Where the judges could rescue God's people from earthly enemies for a time, Jesus came to accomplish a rescue that would last forever. Through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death and offers forgiveness and new life to everyone who trusts in Him. *Judges 1–2* reminds us that we do not simply need to try harder, behave better, or find another temporary solution to our sin. We need a Savior who can forgive our sin, change our hearts, restore our relationship with God, and lead us faithfully. Jesus is that perfect and final Deliverer and King.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

GOSPEL PRIORITY STATEMENT

I am growing every week through reflective conversations about God's word.

PRAYER PROMPTS



God, help us to keep our eyes on You! Help us to destroy the idols around us that threaten to take our attention and devotion. Help us to trust You alone! Thank you for your graciousness toward us when we don't deserve it. We are unable to break the cycle of sin in ourselves, and we have a desperate need for a Savior! Thank you for sending Your Son, Jesus, as our perfect sacrifice and escape from sin!

THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Judges 6-8