

## Judges 1-2 Disobedience and Deliverance

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to the OT book of Judges. and I'm calling this series "Disobedience and Deliverance", because this is what we see throughout this entire book.

We just finished the book of Joshua last week, and you'll recall that Joshua consists of 24 chapters, and covers 30 years.

Yet the book of Judges is 21 chapters long and covers a period of about 350 years. During those 350 years Israel had 14 judges. Thirteen of them are discussed in the book - and according to tradition, the 14th judge, Samuel, was its author.

The years after Joshua's death could've been a "golden age" for Israel - but instead it became one of the darkest periods in the nation's history. At the end of Joshua's life, Israel had the enemy on the run - but rather than finish the job, and drive out the Canaanites - the Hebrews tolerated the enemy, worshipped their idols, and compromised with sin! All because the Hebrews refused to wholly obey God

Judges is critical to the history of the nation, because of the 1,000 years of OT history for the nation of Israel, the book of judges spans over 30% of it.

During this period of the judges, there was no standing "office" of national leadership. Israel had no king, no president, and no prime minister on earth – only God in heaven. Israel was to be a theocracy, a nation governed by God Himself.

Yet at the necessary and appropriate times God in His faithfulness brought forth a leader for the nation. For the most part these leaders would rise up, do his (or her) job, and then return to

their obscurity. This required that the people of Israel maintain a real, abiding trust in God, which over the long run, they failed to do.

These national deliverers, the judges, weren't elected like our judges are. The judges also didn't come to leadership through royal succession. Rather they were people who were specially gifted by God for leadership in their times, and the people of God recognized and respected that gifting.

As we'll see countless times through our study, the book of Judges reveals we're often our own worst enemy. When we put ourselves, and our own interests ahead of God's will, it causes us to miss out on opportunities to receive God's best. And this is what happened to Israel.

The last verse in Judges sums up the whole book... **Judges 21:25**  
**In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**

The title of tonight's message is Disobedience and Deliverance.

Let's pray...

**1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"** God empowers wonderful human leaders to accomplish His work on this earth, and it's always a difficult time for believers when Godly leaders pass away isn't it? Think about Pastor Ed and our fellowship here, when he moved to eternity 10 years ago.

The tendency for those who remain who worked with that godly leader is to dwell and live in the past, wishing that leader was still with them, thinking that their best days were behind them.

But here the Israelites do the absolute best thing after Joshua's death. They keep forging ahead and seeking the Lord as they do it. With Joshua gone, they weren't left without a leader; they were simply called to a renewed trust in God.

2 And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand." When Israel sought the Lord, God guided and instructed them. This is a consistent pattern we'll see throughout the Book of Judges. God never failed to deliver and help His people when they sought Him.

Jesus expressed the same idea in **Luke 11:9 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

When we ask of God and seek Him in sincerity, we should expect that He will answer us. Now His response may come in an unexpected way and at an unexpected time, but His response will come.

3 So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him. " Now this is interesting. God said send Judah, but Judah apparently doesn't think they can handle the battles on their own. So they recruit the tribe of Simeon to fight...

4-7

4 Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. 5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

7 And Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.” Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. Judah and Simeon capture a man with the grizzly habit of amputating the thumbs and big toes of the kings he conquered. This was a form of humiliation and was Adoni-Bezek’s signature. A man without a big toe has a shaky foundation... Without a thumb a man can’t hold a weapon - or even a fork. In ancient times, thumbless and toeless meant helpless.

Verses 8-20 describe Judah’s victories in the southern part of the land given to Israel

8 Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. Here it’s recorded that the city of Jerusalem fell to Judah. It was occupied for a time, but we’ll read in verse 21 Jerusalem fell back to the Jebusites. It won’t be until the leadership of King David that Israel will conquer Jerusalem, some 400 years later in 2 Samuel 5

9-11

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South,<sup>[fn]</sup> and in the lowland. 10 Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.)

Now this is reminding us of what we saw back in Joshua 15 as Caleb gives away his daughter.

12 Then Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.” 13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. 14 Now it happened, when she came *to him*, that she urged him[fn] to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?” 15 So she said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.”

And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. Again we studied all of this in Joshua 15.

16-18

16 Now the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which *lies* in the South *near* Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. 17 And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. 18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. 19 So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. Shockingly, Judah couldn’t defeat nations that had the latest military technology: chariots of iron.

And this is tragic!! Were the iron chariots too strong for almighty God to defeat?

These verses demonstrate more of Judah’s lack of full trust in God than they do to Canaanite military superiority.

We’ve seen in the past chariots were no problem for God’s people when they were trusting God **Joshua 11: 4 So they went out, they**

and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots.

5 And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

6 But the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.”

And this is a reminder for us to remember the words of Psalm 20:7: Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;

But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

20 And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak. 21 But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. This was a case where the battle had already been won according to verse 8; the tribe of Benjamin simply had to enter into what was already theirs. It would certainly take effort, but the critical battle was over. Jerusalem belonged to them. But they failed to possess it.

22 And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. 23 So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.) 24 And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, “Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy.” 25 So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. The house of Joseph—the combined tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh seemed to use the events surrounding

Rahab and the conquering of Jericho as a pattern, and here it worked in the conquest of Bethel.

26 And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which *is* its name to this day.

27 However, Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages;* for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. 28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. At first there were pockets of Canaanites that these tribes were unable to push out of the land. But when the 12 tribes eventually grew strong enough, they compromised with those Canaanites and thought they could use them to their advantage by putting the Canaanites under tribute-made them serve Israel.

So notice the pattern. First lack of faith, leads to disobedience, leads to compromise.

29 Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

31 Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. 32 So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. Each tribe who failed made it easier for the other tribes to also fail. So we see several tribes fail to drive out the caananites. Yet in Asher it was even worse; it was the Asherites who dwelt among the

Canaanites. The sinful progression of disobedience is allowing for more and more wickedness through compromise.

33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; 35 and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute.

36 Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward. The lesson of Judges 1 is very clear. The people of Israel chose deliberately to only partially obey God. Rather than following the LORD wholeheartedly, they compromised. They went part way, and that compromise meant inevitable catastrophe.

In the Pentateuch, the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the OT, we read of God preparing the chosen people to live under His theocracy in the Promised Land. In Joshua, we saw Him establishing them in the land, so they could function as a theocracy. In Judges we see Israel, for the first time, in the position to live under theocratic rule in the land. But tragically, from the very beginning of Judges, we see that they failed to take advantage of their great privilege to be a unique nation in the world.

They failed because they would not trust and obey God consistently and completely. They chose to allow the Canaanites to remain in the land that God wanted them to occupy by themselves.



## CHAPTER 2

1 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. 2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? The issue, both at the beginning of the Book of Judges and throughout the book, is whether Israel will be faithful to the covenant they made with God—we saw it last week again in Joshua 24.

The word “Angel” means “messenger”. And notice, this messenger speaks of God in the first person, “I will never break My covenant.” It’s a messenger from God, but it sounds like God Himself...

Notice too, the angel doesn’t come from heaven, but Gilgal – Israel’s base of operation throughout the conquest...

We talked in Joshua 5 about the Commander of the Lord’s Army who Joshua met at Jericho. It was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Its possible Jesus stayed in Gilgal, throughout the conquest of Canaan, and directed the effort. Now He rebukes Israel for not trusting Him and fully possessing the land.

3 Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side,[fn] and their gods shall be a snare to you.’” Here the Angel repeats what God predicted in Joshua 23 and Numbers 33.

Numbers 33:55 ‘But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. If the people tolerate sin and its sources – the sin will greatly affect them.

4 So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 Then they called the name of that place Bochim;<sup>[fn]</sup> and they sacrificed there to the LORD. 6 And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land

A person can weep and outwardly show remorse without ever inwardly repenting. This is why the Lord challenged Israel in **Joel 2:13: So rend your heart, and not your garments;**

**Return to the LORD your God,**

**For He is gracious and merciful,**

**Slow to anger, and of great kindness;**

**And He relents from doing harm.**

The next few verses review the death of Joshua which we studied last week in Joshua 24

7 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. 8 Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died *when he* was one hundred and ten years old. 9 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. 10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. Joshua's death exposed a spiritual generation gap in Israel. Unlike their fathers, the generation that came after Joshua didn't know God or His works. As long as Joshua and his elders were alive, the people served the Lord. But as soon as they died off... Verse 11 tells us

11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.[fn] The Canaanites worshiped Baal as the sun god and as the storm god—he is usually depicted holding a lightning bolt. They believed Baal defeated enemies and produced crops. They also worshiped Baal as a fertility god who provided children.

Baal worship was rooted in sensuality and involved ritualistic prostitution in the temples. At times, appeasing Baal required human sacrifice, usually the firstborn of the one making the sacrifice as we see in Jeremiah 19. The priests of Baal appealed to their god in rites of wild ceremonies which included loud, ecstatic cries and self-inflicted cutting according to 1 Kings 18.

Ashtoreth was a fertility goddess. She was worshipped because it was thought she brought fruitfulness to families and farms. She was worshipped by lewd and immoral sexual practices.

So we can imagine how it grieved the heart of God that His people, Israel, had forsaken His revelation, and His miraculous acts of deliverance - to depend on idol worship.

Notice again verse 7, Joshua knew God personally. His elders knew the works of God. Their offspring knew neither. The third generation had no faith at all. This is a pattern we'll see in Israel's history.

David followed God with his whole heart. His son, Solomon, had a halfhearted devotion. But his son, Rehoboam had no heart for God at all.

Obviously, second hand experiences of God only go so far.

This is why every generation needs its own experience with God. All true Christians are first generation Christians. God has no grandchildren-only children. Everybody needs to encounter God and experience Him personally...

This is one of the biggest things missing from homes today. Parents too often just impose their convictions upon their kids, instead of helping their kids cultivate their own walk with God. Think about how parents in our country prioritize sports and social activities for their kids over church, then wonder 10 years later why their child doesn't walk with the Lord anymore?

The greatest responsibility a parent has is to motivate our kids to seek the Lord and develop their own relationship with Him.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

16 Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. The Judges were common men and women with no credentials other than the call of God. These judges will become Israel's heroes and patriots.

We see a summary of what takes place in the book of judges.

17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. 18 And when

the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Notice the cycle gets repeated – but each generation is worse than the last. Notice verse 19, they “behaved more corruptly than their fathers”.

20 Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, 21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, 22 so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not.” 23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua. This response of God to the unfaithfulness of Israel was no surprise. He specifically promised that He would do this in the covenant He made with Israel, which was characterized by blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (as in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28).

Now it’s important to remember that as Christians, we serve God under the terms of a different covenant, what the bible declares is a better covenant. **Hebrews 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

When we forsake God and don't abide in Christ, things often go badly for us, but that's not because God has actively set His hand against us as He did to Israel under the Old Covenant.

When we don't abide and things go badly, it's simply because our actions have consequences and we reap the bitter fruit of not obeying.