Conquest, Judges, and Kings

Joshua 1:1–9; Judges 2:6–23; 2 Samuel 7:8–17

The Big Idea: God faithfully fulfills His promises, even when His people repeatedly fail Him. Through the conquest of Canaan, the cycle of the judges, and the establishment of Israel's monarchy, God prepares the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, the perfect and eternal King.

Introduction: From God's Presence to God's Promised Kingdom
In our previous lesson, we studied how God established His covenant with Israel, gave them His Law, and instructed them to build the Tabernacle so His presence would dwell among them. But God's redemptive plan was not finished. Centuries earlier, God had promised Abraham three things:

1. A land — A place where his descendants would dwell.
2. A people — A great nation descended from Abraham.
3. A blessing — Through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Now, as Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land, God's promises begin to unfold in a new way. The historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings reveal three major developments in God's redemptive story.

Conquest — Joshua (God fulfills His promise to bring Israel into the land.)

Judges — Israel's Rebellion (Israel repeatedly turns away from God, revealing humanity's need for righteous leadership.)

Kings — God's Promise to David
God establishes a royal covenant pointing toward the eternal reign of Jesus Christ.

I. The Conquest: God Fulfills His Promise; Joshua 1:1–9

After forty years in the wilderness, Moses died, and Joshua became the leader of Israel. A new generation stood at the edge of the Promised Land. God commanded Joshua to lead His people across the Jordan River and take possession of the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

A. God's promises do not die with His servants; Joshua 1:1–3.

- Moses was gone, but God's plan continued. God reminded Joshua that the land was already promised to Israel. Their responsibility was to trust Him and obey His instructions.
- God's faithfulness does not depend upon the lifespan, ability, or strength of any human leader.

- Key Truth: God's servants change, but God's promises remain.

B. Courage comes from God's presence; Joshua 1:5–9.

- Three times, God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous. Joshua's courage was not to come from his military ability, leadership experience, or the size of Israel's army. It came from God's promise: He would be with Joshua.
- The same God who had delivered Israel from Egypt and guided them through the wilderness would now lead them into the Promised Land.

C. Obedience to God's Word was essential

- God commanded Joshua to meditate on the Book of the Law day and night and carefully obey what was written in it. Joshua's leadership was to be grounded in God's revealed Word rather than human wisdom.
- Biblical success was measured by faithfulness to God's calling, not merely by military or material achievement.

D. God fulfills His covenant promise; Joshua 21:43–45.

- The book of Joshua records that God gave Israel the land He had promised to their ancestors. However, Israel's possession and settlement of the land remained incomplete in important respects, and further conflicts continued.
- The larger point is unmistakable: God had been faithful to His covenant.
- The conquest also reveals God's holiness and judgment. Scripture describes the judgment of Canaan in connection with longstanding wickedness (Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:4–5). These were particular commands in Israel's covenant history, not a general authorization for God's people to wage religious war.

II. The Judges: The Tragic Cycle of Sin; Judges 2:6–23

After Joshua and his generation died, Israel entered a spiritually unstable period lasting several centuries. Rather than remaining faithful to the Lord, the people repeatedly turned toward the false gods and practices of the surrounding nations.

A. A generation arose that did not know the Lord; Judges 2:10–12.

- One of the most sobering statements in Scripture appears in Judges 2:10: another generation arose that did not know the Lord or the works He had done for Israel.
- The faithfulness of one generation did not guarantee the faithfulness of the next.
- Israel's failure to pass on the knowledge of God resulted in widespread spiritual compromise.

- Deuteronomy 6:4–9. God had commanded His people to teach His Word diligently to their children.
- Key Truth: Every generation must personally know the Lord. Faith cannot merely be inherited from parents or grandparents.

B. The recurring cycle of the judges

- The book of Judges follows a repeated pattern: The pattern repeats throughout Judges, although not every account follows every stage exactly. God raised up judges such as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson to deliver Israel from its enemies. But these deliverers were temporary, imperfect leaders. Even after periods of peace, Israel repeatedly returned to rebellion.

C. The fundamental problem was the human heart

- The book of Judges concludes with a revealing statement. Judges 21:25. "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (ESV)
- Israel's greatest problem was not simply the absence of a human king. It was their rejection of God's authority.
- The repeated failures of Israel reveal a truth that applies to all humanity: external rules and temporary deliverers cannot permanently transform the sinful human heart.
- Jeremiah 17:9 and Romans 3:10–12.

D. The judges point toward a greater Deliverer

- Each judge provided a temporary rescue from oppression, but none could permanently deliver Israel from sin. Jesus Christ accomplishes what the judges could not: He delivers His people from the power and penalty of sin and establishes a kingdom that will never end.
- Hebrews 7:23–25.

III. The Kings: Israel Demands a Human King; 1 Samuel 8:4–9

After the period of the judges, Israel demanded a king. The people wanted to be like the surrounding nations, with a human ruler to lead them and fight their battles.

A. Israel rejects God's kingship

- God told Samuel that the people's request represented a rejection of Him as their King.
- The desire for kingship was not inherently contrary to God's plan (Deuteronomy 17:14–20), but Israel's demand revealed misplaced trust and a desire to conform to the nations.

B. Saul: A king who failed to obey

- Saul became Israel's first king. Although he began with great potential, his reign became marked by disobedience and self-reliance.
- 1 Samuel 13:13–14 and 15:22–23.
- Saul's failure demonstrated that outward appearance and human strength are no substitutes for obedience to God.

C. David: A man after God's heart

- God chose David to replace Saul. 1 Samuel 16:7, 11–13.
- David was not selected because of his outward appearance or human status. God looked at the heart.
- David would become Israel's greatest king, yet he was still a sinful and imperfect man who needed God's mercy and forgiveness. Nevertheless, God chose David as the recipient of an extraordinary covenant promise.

IV. The Davidic Covenant: God's Promise of an Eternal King; 2 Samuel 7:8–17

This passage is one of the most significant turning points in the entire Old Testament. David desired to build a permanent house (temple) for the Lord. But God responded with an astonishing promise: rather than David building a house for God, God would establish a house—a royal dynasty—for David.

A. God reminds David of His grace; 2 Samuel 7:8–9.

God reminded David that He had taken him from tending sheep and made him ruler over Israel. David's position was the result of God's grace and calling.

B. God promises David a lasting dynasty; 2 Samuel 7:11–16.

- God made several promises:
  1. A lasting dynasty: God would establish David's royal house.
  2. A royal descendant: David's offspring would succeed him.
  3. A kingdom: God would establish the throne of David's descendant.
  4. A father-son relationship: God would relate to the Davidic king as a father to his son.
  5. An enduring throne: David's throne would be established forever.
- The promise had an immediate fulfillment through David's son Solomon, who succeeded him and built the Temple. But Solomon was not the ultimate fulfillment. He sinned, and the later Davidic kings also failed. Eventually, Jerusalem fell, and the monarchy came to an end. Yet God's promise of an everlasting kingdom remained.

C. The promised King would come through David's line

- The prophets continued to proclaim that God would raise up a righteous King from David's descendants.
- Isaiah 9:6–7 and Jeremiah 23:5–6.

- The promised King would rule with righteousness, justice, and peace.

D. Jesus Christ fulfills the Davidic Covenant; Luke 1:30–33.

- When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary, he declared that Jesus would receive the throne of His father David and reign forever. The connection is unmistakable.

God's promise to David	**Fulfillment in Jesus**
A descendant from David's family	Jesus is descended from David (Matthew 1:1).
A king over God's people	Jesus is the promised Messiah and King (Luke 1:32).
An everlasting kingdom	His kingdom will never end (Luke 1:33).
A throne established forever	Christ reigns as the exalted Lord (Acts 2:29–36).

- Key Truth: God's covenant with David was not ultimately about establishing a temporary earthly dynasty. It pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the eternal King whose kingdom will never end.

V. The Big Picture: God's Redemptive Plan Continues

The events of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel are not disconnected historical stories. They reveal the progressive unfolding of God's plan to redeem humanity through Jesus Christ.

1. Abraham — The Promise; God promises a land, a people, and blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:1–3).
2. Moses — Redemption; God delivers Israel from slavery and establishes His covenant with them (Exodus 12–20).
3. Joshua — The Land; God brings His people into the Promised Land (Joshua 21:43–45).
4. Judges — The Need; Israel's repeated rebellion reveals the need for lasting salvation and righteous leadership (Judges 2:11–23).
5. David — The King; God promises an everlasting kingdom through David's descendants (2 Samuel 7:12–16).
6. Jesus — The Fulfillment; Jesus is the promised descendant of Abraham and David, the greater Deliverer, and the eternal King (Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32–33).

The same God who promised Abraham a nation and a land also promised David an everlasting kingdom. Both promises find their ultimate redemptive fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Key Takeaways

1. God is faithful to His promises. The conquest of Canaan demonstrated God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham.

2. Obedience flows from trusting God's Word. Joshua was called to courage, faith, and obedience.

3. Humanity repeatedly turns away from God. The cycle of the judges reveals the seriousness of sin and the need for lasting redemption.

4. Human leaders cannot provide ultimate salvation. Even Israel's greatest kings were imperfect and sinful.

5. God promised an eternal King through David. This covenant pointed forward to Jesus Christ.

6. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. He is the greater Deliverer, the promised Son of David, and the King whose kingdom will never end.