

Week #1 | “Return To The Lord” (Judges 6:1-10)

I. ISRAEL NEEDS A DELIVERER, BUT INSTEAD GOD SENDS A PROPHET (JUDGES 6:1-10)

- A. Well, Israel’s cyclical story is playing out once again. Years of peace from a previous father’s righteous life, gives way to the idolatry from sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters leaving Israel under the judgment of God.
- B. This time it’s through the Midianites. But instead of slavery and death, it’s the exploitation of Israel’s crops, animals, and livelihood, leaving them decimated, living in caves mountains cracks and mountain strongholds.
- C. Israel’s past with the Midianites is a mixed bag. The Midianites come from Abraham’s second wife, Keturah (**Gen. 23:2; 25:1-5**). They were a semi-nomadic people from the Sinai Peninsula and Western Arabia. They were the ones who bought Joseph from his brothers, when he was sold into slavery (**Gen. 37:25-36**). The Bible doesn’t really fault them for purchasing Joseph, the sin was on his brother’s part.
- D. But if you remember, Joseph also later sees them as being providential in his life, a people God was using. In the Exodus story, they are painted in a positive light, giving Moses a safe haven when he first fled from Pharaoh and Egypt. Moses’ wife was a daughter of a Midianite priest (**Ex. 2:15-22**). While there in Midian, Moses also received his burning bush call from God (**Ex. 3:1-4:23**).
- E. It was on Midianite soil that God entered into covenant with Israel, and they received the full revelation of His will, the Torah (**Ex. 19-Num. 7**). Moses’ Midianite father-in-law Jethro was also essential in helping Moses take what God had given him, and place it on others (**Ex. 18**).
- F. Well, once again, God is using Midian, and their waywardness to provoke Israel to their first love, their relationship with God, just like they’ve done in the past.
- G. Just when Israel had planted seeds, and they were starting to sprout, the Midianites would come up, with the Amalekites, and the Easterners, and utterly devastate Israel. They wouldn’t just take the crops, they brought their livestock into Israel’s land, and would let them loose to pasture, stripping everything from Israel to feed the flocks of Midian, and then they would launch their raid parties on Israel.
- H. Because God’s name is absent from verses **2-6a**, one might think that Israel’s oppression is simply the result of an opportunistic people in the Midianites. But verse **1** holds the key for us. It says there that Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and because of it, God delivered Israel to the Midianites.
- I. Israel is under the covenant curses of God found in **Leviticus 26** and **Deuteronomy 28**, that if they honor God, it will go well for them, but if they forget God, it will go bad for them.
 - 1. Now, there’s lots of debate about these Old Testament verses. Why so serious? Why so stringent? And are they still binding today? My answer is, yes, they are still binding today, and they are serious, and they are stringent.
 - 2. But it’s hard to see why God did this when you’re up close, but if you step back a little bit, and survey the scene with some distance, you start to understand, it’s not so much about a harsh God cursing His people, but a loving God warning His children.

3. Look, the reason they are still binding today is because when you do life without God, not only does it not work, not only does it ultimately end up in eternal separation from Him, but it also causes our life great injury, hardship and pain, which are all a result of simply doing life apart from the way humans were designed to do life; which is with God!
- J. Israel's hoping that the Midianites would leave them alone, but 7 painful, decimating years later and no end in sight, Israel finally cries out to God for help.
1. How often do we tolerate various things in our lives that hold us captive? How long do we allow the giants in our lives to mock us day and night, to strip you of your destiny before you arise and cry out to God for help, for deliverance?
- K. **Judges 6:6-10** *"So, Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the Children of Israel cried out to the Lord. And it came to pass, when Israel cried out to the Lord...that the Lord sent a prophet...who said to them, thus says the Lord God of Israel: I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of bondage...and gave you their land...But you have not obeyed My voice."*
1. Israel is left impoverished (*small, both economically, and emotionally*). Their weak, crippled, and paralyzed with fear, a people living in terror, and it's taken a toll on their bodies (Ukraine).
 2. This is exactly what satan does in our lives. The threats, the accusation, the shame, the guilt, the negative self-talk, the pre-occupation with things outside of God, it strips us of confidence, it strips us of our standing in Christ, and it leaves us a crippled and paralyzed people.
 3. And look, it wasn't just trouble coming from Midian, it was also the Amalekites, and the Easterners. If it's not one thing, it's the other.
 4. This is intentional from the devil, he loves to throw discouragement our way, not in one thing, but in many things. It's overwhelming, it's daunting, it soon becomes impossible, and satan's hope is that we throw in the towel, give up, give in, quit, walk away, return to the cave.
- L. Look, there's no hint of repentance for their sin, just the cry of pain...*which God also hears...*we can't have reconciliation with repentance, but our cry for help, even from pain, confusion, depression, and disappointment, is a cry God hears.
- M. What was God saying, *"look, I have given Myself entirely to you! It's not too much for Me to ask for all of you! This is all that I want! YOU! I don't want to share you. I don't want to share you with oppression, I don't want to share you with sin, I don't want to share you with doubt, I don't want to share you with unbelief, with past hurts, with past pain, I don't want to share you with your career, I don't want to share you with hobbies. I WANT ALL OF YOU! And it's not too much to ask for."*
- N. But this is where the story gets strange. Israel is crying out to God for help, but instead of sending them a deliver, like He has in the past, He sends them a prophet, with a scathing rebuke! (*This is like sending a philosopher when you called for a tow-truck*).
- O. The prophet tells them *"HEY, God brought you up from Egypt, He brought you out of the salve barracks, He rescued you from your oppressors, He removed the others who inhabited the land and gave it to you, and committed Himself, forever, to be your God!*
- P. The greatest of their rebuke from God, is His words, *"I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD!"* This is speaking of election, of divine choosing! God's sovereign hand upon Israel, but also upon you (**Malachi 1:1-3**).

1. But the reason for this is that Israel needed to know how they got where they were. They assumed God had left them, and didn't care, but in reality, the Midianites were a thorn covered rose God had sent them, to awaken them to their sinful state.
 2. Right now, more than a Savior, they needed a sermon, an exposition of God's previous commitment to them, and a clear message of where they had erred!
 3. Israel wanted out of a bind, but God wanted Israel out of idolatry. God hadn't left Israel, Israel had left God. Midian wasn't judging Israel, God was judging Israel by way of Midian.
- Q. Israel had regret about the consequences of their sins, but they didn't have repentance yet. Regret is sorrow over the consequences of sin, but not regret over the sin itself. Regret is about you, how the sin has affected you, how it's affected others around you. Repentance on the other hand is about God, how our sin has affected God.
- R. The Midianite oppression represents God's just judgment in their lives. They are sidetracked. They are caught up with many other things, and God is wooing them back to Himself, yes, painfully, but wooing, nonetheless.
- S. Look our pain, hope deferred, disappointment, discouragement, pressure, trouble, pain, pre-occupation, difficulty, it all clouds out our ability to see God at work in our lives.