

Judges 1-2 - Skip Heitzig

Well, I'll confess that in one sense, I'd love to completely erase the Book of Judges from scripture, because it is the story of the failure of God's people. And it is a sad piece of history, but true nonetheless.

So I say on one hand, I'd like to erase it. I want to quickly say on the other hand, I want to elevate it. I want to elevate it, because there's an old saying that probably never is proven more true than in the Book of Judges that says those who fail to learn from history are doomed to relive it. So we have the history of the failure of God's people in this book, and it serves to us as a warning.

Now, in my prayer I mentioned this is not a book that we frequent a lot. If you are depressed, I would not recommend you go searching through the Book of Judges to find comfort. There are plenty of other places in scripture to do that. This is a book that might just drag you down a little bit further. But there are some vital lessons to be learned in this book.

You see, the nation of Israel were God's people. They were God's unique people, His nation. To use the parlance of Americanism, we would say they were one nation under God. They had the freedom of having a unique covenant with God and walking with God from the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt, marching across the Jordan River into a land that was uniquely theirs that God gave them to inhabit, to be able to settle in it, raise their families, worship God.

But they left that. They strayed from that. They disobeyed the Lord, even as Joshua had indicated that they probably would.

The very last part of the Book of Joshua, the 24th chapter of that book, the page or two right before the Book of Judges, Joshua tells them in Chapter 24, Verse 14, now therefore fear the Lord. Serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord.

And they kept saying, oh, we will serve the Lord, we will serve the Lord. And Joshua tells them in Verse 21, the people said, no, but we will serve the Lord. And so Joshua basically says, look, you've got one or two choices. You keep saying you're going to serve the Lord. If you do, then turn away from all of those false things and false gods and goddesses that you and your forefathers worshiped and serve the Lord. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. But Joshua indicated, intimated that they would have a tendency to want to go back, which is exactly where we are taken in this story.

The Book of Judges is a period of history between the entrance of the land under Joshua and the monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon. It's a period of about 350 to 450 years, let's just say a 400 year period. During that period, there was no central leadership. There wasn't a Moses. There wasn't a Joshua. It had reverted back to tribalism, the 12 tribes of Israel all kind of trying to settle and manage their own estates in this land.

So during that period, where it was up and down, up and down, God raises up 13 judges, they are called. Now, don't think of a judge sitting behind a bench in a robe with a gavel, not that kind of a judge. Take it out of the legal parlance, out of that kind of an idea, and think more in terms of deliverers. These are judges-- let's call them champions, sometimes political, often military. God raises them up and uses them to deliver the children of Israel out of a very specific local problem.

There are 13 mentioned in this book. 12 of them are men. One of them is a very strong and really cool woman by the name of Deborah. We'll meet here in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Now I warn you, the book is rated R, for raunchy, for rebellious, for recalcitrant. And there is material in the book that makes us blush. It's disturbing. By the time we get to Chapter 19 and we get the story of the Levite and the concubine and how he cuts her up into pieces and sends a piece to the different tribes, it's like, what, what, this is the Bible?

So it's warning. It's at a very low moral period of their history, a period of anarchy, which makes the Book of Judges so contemporary.

I found a little piece from a historian, a Scottish historian named Alexander Tytler in the 1700s, who wrote this. The average age of the world's great civilizations is about 200 years. All travel through the same sequence, from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from great courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to leisure, from leisure to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependence, from dependence to weakness, and then back to bondage.

According to his words and another little article that I was reading, the final stage in the demise of a culture is political anarchy. And we see that in the Book of Judges. We'll get this haunting phrase toward the end, where it says, and there was no King in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. Purely mechanistic, purely relativistic. They just sort of made up their own rules as they went along. Everyone one does what is right in his own eyes.

So the theme of the Book of Judges is from conquest to compromise. They conquered the land. Joshua led them into it. They sort of settled it, but not completely. They didn't possess their possession. They didn't really take it. They still allowed enemies to come and populate, and it became a problem.

In Chapter 1, Verse 1, it says now after the death of Joshua-- I pause, because that is how the book of Joshua opens up. Different name, now after the death of Moses. And then we're introduced to Joshua.

Here we are in this book. It says now after the death of Joshua, and there's no one. There's no strong successor that will follow Joshua. And there won't be until we get to the monarchy written about in the Book of Samuel, with King Saul, then King David, then King Solomon.

Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?

Now just a little background on the term Canaanite. Canaanites were inhabitants of the area called Canaan. There were different groups. It is a catch all phrase to describe numerous indigenous populations within that landmass. Some were Philistines, some were Amarrites, some were Jebusites. There's a whole bunch of different people groups, because the way the land was divided in those days is that there were regions, but there were city-states. And every city called a city-state had its own king.

And so they had people groups in areas, but they had city-states that were managed in those areas. So it's a generic catch all phrase, Canaanites, of those peoples who lived west of the Jordan River.

But they said, who will go up for us against the Canaanites and fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up. Indeed, I have delivered the land into his hand.

Now, I don't know if you do this when you read the scripture, but I like to ask questions of the text. You know, we read and it says the Lord said, and we just sort of take it for granted. But the question is, how did the Lord say? How did they ask the Lord? Was it just one dude just kind of lifted his head up toward heaven and go hey, God? You up there? I've got a question.

Well, we're not told. In this case, it just says, they asked the Lord and the Lord answered. Now, my belief, because it was in vogue at the time, was through a very interesting manner that God had set up in the Pentateuch.

There was the priest, and there was a high priest. And the high priest wore a special garment. He wore a breastplate with 12 stones, one representing each of the 12 tribes of Israel. And in a pouch behind the breastplate were two stones-- do you remember what they were called? You are Bible scholars, man. The Urim and the Thummim, the Urim and the Thummim, a black stone and a white stone, some think.

The words Urim and Thummim mean lights and perfections. And it is believed that the priests, the high priest would discern the will of God using these two stones.

So there is no Joshua, there is no Moses. There are still these people. What do we do? Let's ask the Lord. The only way they would have known to ask the Lord is find the high priest. He would have used the Urim and the Thummim.

Now, we don't know how it worked, but it seemed to be a very straightforward binary system, where they would ask a question and they get a yes or no back, a black or a white back.

And so do you want us to go up and fight? Yes. OK, so should Reuben go first? No. Should this tribe go first? No. Should Judah to go first? Yes.

So the Lord said, yes. And probably the next question is, will we win? I'd want to know that I wouldn't stop with that. Will you deliver them into our hands? Yes. OK, good. That's-- now we're good to go.

So they asked of the Lord, probably through the Urim and the Thummim through the high priest. The Lord said go. He said, Judah shall go up. Indeed, I have delivered the land into his hand.

I like the fact that Judah is going first. I like the fact, because of the prophecy in Genesis Chapter 49 that says that the eventual King and leader of the tribes will be Judah. Our Lord Jesus Christ came from the tribe of Judah. So the firstborn doesn't go, but the fourth born tribe from the lineage of Jacob is the first tribe to go to war in the Book of Judges.

Also, what I like about it is the name Judah means praise. And if you fight a battle, that's how you start the battle. That's how you enter into the battle, with worship, with praise. You want to bring that up to the front. You don't want to-- you don't want to succumb to fear.

No matter what is going on around you in the world, Christians do not give in to fear. And the best way to conquer fear is faith. The best way to engender faith is the Word of God and praise, worship. So praise led the procession.

But Verse 3 says, 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, a lot of commentators see this as a wonderful exercise in cooperation. Maybe. Or it's an exercise in cowardice. Because after all, if the Lord said Judah, you go and I'll deliver them into your hands, that's all you need to know. If the battle is won because God has given us the victory,. I don't need backup

It could be that he said, you know, I just want a buddy. But they had an army, right? But the Lord just said, Judah should go. Judah wasn't happy with that, so he got the tribe of Simeon to go, as well.

Then Judah went up and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand. And they killed 10,000 men at Bezek. Bezek is a town probably south of Mount Gilboa. I realize not everybody knows where that is, but I also know that those who have been to Israel with us know exactly where that is. You can see it in your mind.

By the way, whenever we take a tour to Israel, people who are our Wednesday night regulars get far more out of a tour to Israel than anybody else, because you know the words so well. You know the story so well. Whereas people who are just kind of the Sunday morning crowd, they don't kind of know the history and the background the geography. But those who are Wednesday nighters, it's just so enriching.

So Gilboa, just a little bit south of Gilboa, was Bezek. And they found, Verse 5, Adonai-Bezek in Bezek, which is where you would expect to find Adonai-Bezek, in Bezek. Because Adonai, even though you are familiar with that Hebrew word Lord, Adonai can mean Lord of Bezek, or in this case, just simply the King of Bezek or the Prince of Bezek, the leader of Bezek. That's the idea.

They found the leader of Bezek in Bezek. They fought against him and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And Adonai-Bezek fled, but they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes. I told you it was rated R.

What I like about the Bible is it doesn't try to kind of paint a little flowery picture. It just tells you what really happened. It's honest.

So the idea of cutting off thumbs and big toes, that sounds really barbaric, and it is. But it's also pragmatic in battle, because in battle, you can't grasp a sword and you wouldn't be able to run and have stability, so you wouldn't really be good in a battle. So it incapacitates a person. That was the idea of doing that.

But this is sort of interesting to me. Adonai-Bezek said after they did that to him, he said, 70 kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather their food under my table. So he said, yeah, I've done that too. I did it 70 times. As I have done-- now watch this-- so God has repaid me. Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

There is a law in the scripture that whatever you reap, or whatever you sow, you will also reap. Be not deceived, Paul said, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap. And if he sows to the flesh, he will reap corruption. If he sows to the spirit, he'll reap everlasting life.

So here's a guy who said, you know what? I'm guilty, and this is payback. I did it to 70 other dudes, so now God is doing it to me.

Now, I'm not going to try to examine his theology and his superstition, but that happens to be a spiritual law. You've heard it before, that you reap in kind. If you sow wheat, you're not going to get lemons. You're going to get wheat. s Whatever seed you sow, you're going to reap in kind.

So if you sow to the flesh, you're going to reap of the flesh corruption. It's going to come back to you.

Now unfortunately, you hear that scripture quoted in a negative sense. Oh, you better watch it, man. You're going to reap what you sow.

Well, it's true. You are. But it can also be positive. If you plant, if you sow good things, you can expect good things to come back. Give, Jesus said, and it will be given to you, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall the Lord give into your bosom. Be generous. God will be generous back to you, reaping and sowing.

So yeah, you should shudder if you do bad things and you are cantankerous and mean and you sow bad seed. But if you sow love and kindness and mercy, you're going to get back love, kindness, and mercy. You're going to reap what you sow. Same principle.

They brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 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.

Now hold that thought, because Jerusalem won't be totally conquered for another 400 years. They conquer it, but they let the Jebusites hang out there. They don't really do much except burn it up. They settle sort of in it with the Jebusites, but it won't be until the time of David when David will take this city from the Jebusites by crawling up the water shaft-- he won't do it. A guy named Joab will do it, so hold that thought, if you don't mind, for a couple of books.

And afterward, the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains in the south, or in the mountains, comma, in the south, comma, and in the lowland.

Now, do you see those three phrases? Those happen to be the three main topographical geographical areas in Israel today.

The mountains is the central spine. One thing you notice in Israel is there's this spine of mountains that runs from north all the way down south. Judah is down south. Samaria is in the middle. Of the Galilean mountains and Ephraim mountains are up in the north, but there is a central spine of mountains that runs all the way from north to south.

Then you have the south area. It says in Verse 9, in the south-- the Hebrew word is the Negev. The Negev is the desert. From Hebron down, it's all desert. Once you get down past Hebron, which is up in the highlands in the mountains, it goes down into the desert. It's just a vast, open, Rio Rancho-like desert down in the south.

And in the lowland-- another term for that is the Shfela. The Shefla is between the mountains and the beach, and it's a set of rolling hills where there were a lot of settlements. And most of the battles in the Old Testament took place in the lowlands, in the Shefla. So you have three geographic areas all set out in that verse.

Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. Now, the name of Hebron was formerly Kiryat Arba.

Now, I hope you don't mind me explaining some of these words to you, but Kiryat is a Hebrew word for town or village, still commonly used in Israel today. Arba means four in Hebrew. Arba, that's how you say four, Akhat, Shta'im, Shalosh, Arba. Arba means four. So it literally means the village or the town of the four.

Either it was named after a coalition of four leaders, four kings, or it was named after a guy who founded the city named Arba, because he did. So there's a dispute as to that. I don't think it's important to us that we understand which is which. That's just the background. And they killed Sheshai, Achiman, and Talmi.

Now, Hebron is an important city for you to remember. Some of you already remember it. You go, yeah, I remember Hebron. Abraham dwelt by a terebinth tree in Mamre, which is in Hebron, in Genesis, Chapter 15. Genesis, Chapter 18, he's there again.

His wife, Sarah, dies in Hebron. And he buys-- Abraham buys a cave called the Cave of Machpelah, and buries Sarah. And Abraham is buried there. And by the way, you can go to Hebron today-- it's a little dangerous, but it's

good to go see it.

And you can see the original cave of Machpelah, where Abraham, the patriarch, Sarah are all buried. And there's even a walled enclosure built by Herod the Great himself 2,000 years ago, well-preserved, to guard it. So Hebron became very important to Abraham, number 1.

Number 2, it becomes very important to David because it becomes the center of David's throne when he rules the kingdom for seven years. He first made Hebron the capital before Jerusalem. So it will eventually be Jerusalem, but at first, for seven years, it was Hebron.

But before David got there, Caleb got it. Remember Caleb? There was Joshua and Caleb. Those were the two spies that believed that God would give them the land. So Caleb is the one that gets Hebron.

From there, Verse 11, they went against the inhabitants of the name of Debir, was formerly Kiryat Sefer. Now, Sefer in Hebrew means book. So it's the village of the book, or the village of writing, some translated. It could simply be that there was a collection of books there, a library there, a local library. So it was the village where the books were kept.

And Caleb said-- now, this is Caleb. He's old, right? When he's 85 years old, he's the guy who said, give me this mountain, and he took it, Hebron.

Caleb said, he who attacks Kiryat Sefer and takes it to him, I will give my daughter Achsah as wife. So it says in Verse 13, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.

Othniel is introduced. He's introduced here, because in Chapter 3, he becomes the first judge, first deliverer, the first champion. It's Othniel.

It's a little interesting story here that we have a guy offering up his daughter-- you know, whoever takes over that town and wins the battle, you can have my daughter as wife. You might think that's a little odd, but it's really not, culturally speaking.

Here's the simple background. In those days, when your daughter got to marriageable age, you want her to get married. And they were looking for the right husband.

Now typically, a husband would enter into negotiations with a father of a bride, and they would negotiate over the bride price, it was called, the dowry. The dowry was money or goods given to the father of the bride for his daughter.

So the young man would say, hey, I've got a few camels and I've got a bunch of sheep, and I'll give you the camels and sheep for your daughter. Good, good deal. They'd shake on it. Deal was done.

You say, well, that's kind of crude and mean to women. Actually, it was a form of protection for the woman. Because you see, in those days, women had no rights. And if a man wanted to divorce his wife, all he had to do was write a certificate of divorce, go to the city gate, bring a couple witnesses, and it's like hit the road, chick, and she was gone.

So that's where the dowry came in. It was paid to the father of the bride in case a jerk like that let his wife go, divorced her, and she had nothing. She could always go to dad, who had kept the dowry for her. And if he was a smart dad, he would have invested the dowry and it would have grown. So it would be sizable for him.

So really, a dowry was simply alimony in advance. It was to protect the woman from that. But in a case where you couldn't have a dowry, like if the guy was a poor kid, so he would go, I guess I'm going to be single my whole life, well, he could perform a feat like this and dad would say, you can have her.

So Othniel did that. Now, Verse 14. It was so when she came to him that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey and Caleb said to her, what do you wish?

The Septuagint version and translates it a little bit differently. Our version says, she urged him to ask her father for a field. In the Septuagint, it says, he asked her to ask her father for the field.

So we don't know. It could have been both. It could have been simply, hey, Othniel, you're a mighty warrior. You got that village taken care of and squared away. Ask my dad for a field. Ask my dad for something. No, I don't

want to do that. Your dad's intimidating. You ask.

Which it could have been that simple. And by the way, it's much wiser for her to ask her father, because any father would give his daughter something way before he'd give his son-in-law anything. It's my daughter, man.

So she dismounted from her donkey and Caleb said, what do you wish? So he said, give me a blessing. Since you have given me land in the south, give me also springs of water. They're down in the desert and they need water rights. So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Now, the children of Israel, now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law went up from the City of Palms-- the City of Palms is the ancient name for Jericho. Jericho really was the Palm Springs of Israel. Well, tomorrow the high in Jericho in Israel will be 112 and then 113 the next day. So it's like Phoenix, or like Palm Springs, below sea level and very hot.

So the children of the Kenite, Moses, now do you remember his name, Moses' father-in-law? Jethro. Jethro was a Kenite. The Kenites were an ancient nomadic desert-dwelling people, go all the way back to Genesis. I think Chapter 15, they're first mentioned.

So they're dwelling with the children of Judah. They went up from Jericho, the City of Palms, with the children of Judah to the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the south near Arad. Arad is down by the Dead Sea, about 15, 20 miles away from it. And they went and dwelt among the people.

And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who dwelt in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

Also, Judah took Gaza, which is still a city in that part of the world, with its territory Ashkelon, with its territory, and Ekron with its territory.

Now, look again at the name of those three cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron. They're going to keep coming up in the Old Testament books, Samuel and Kings. And those three are part of a-- will be part of a coalition of five Philistine cities. This is where the Philistines will inhabit the land later on.

So it says Verse 19, the Lord was with Judah. And they drove out the inhabitants of the mountains, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. Now hold that thought-- not for two books, but just for a few verses.

Chariots of iron, man, they had the technology that the children of Israel did not have. A chariot in those days was like a tank, and a chariot of iron, right, is like a Merkava tank, man. It's like vicious. Chariots of iron.

And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. They expelled from there the three sons of Anak. The three sons of Anak. Anak was a person who lived there. He had three sons. If you have a whole bunch of those relatives, they were called the Anakim. That's the plural in Hebrew, -im ending, Anakim.

Now, the Anakim, or the sons of Anak, the relatives of Anak, were the ones that when the 12 spies in Numbers 13 and 14 came to the land to spy it out, they came to Hebron, they came to this area. And it's what intimidated 10 of those spies, right?

They had a little recon mission, and 10 saw the giants, these big, tall dudes, and said, man, there's some big dudes over there. And they're huge, and we're not. And. And we were grasshoppers in their sight that's what they said.

That wasn't the truth. The truth was, we were grasshoppers in our sight. And with their sight. They weren't considering how big God is next to the children of Anak. They only measured the difficulty of the situation by the size of the inhabitants of the land rather than by the size of their God.

So the 10 said, they're huge. And Joshua and Caleb said, they're not huge. God is way bigger than them. God gave us the land. Let's take it. This will be fun. But the one report that prevailed was the one of unbelief, and so they wandered around, as you know, for 38 more years.

Verse 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 until this day. And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, middle of the country, and the Lord was with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel.

Now, the house of Joseph is whom? Two tribes, Ephraim and Manasse. The name of the city was formerly Luz. And when the spy 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. So he showed them the entrance of the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword. But they let the man and all his family go.

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

We read these verses. They sound a little odd, because the entrance to the city, all you have to do is look at any old walled city, you would think and see a gate that goes to it, there is the entrance to the city. But they weren't looking for the main entrance. They were looking for a hidden entrance.

You see, when cities were built back then, the problem was often a water supply. So when they would find a water supply, they would often quarry right through the rock from the water supply to an area within the city, build a well at that site so they could within the city walls get the water, whose spring may be outside the city walls. And then they would cover over that site.

So for example, when you come with us on a tour to Israel, we'll take you to Megiddo. And you'll go to Megiddo and you'll see these civilizations, but you'll come to this place where they dug the spring out outside the city walls, and they have a rock shaft that we walk through from inside the city all the way to the outside of the city, and then we walk out.

So they would dig that shaft, and then they would cover it over, the well part of it, the source of it with rocks and then bushes, so it looks like nobody knew where it was. But if you could get to that spring, you could go right into the city and take it over. That's how Jerusalem was taken by David.

David said to his men, whoever climbs up the water shaft will be commander of my forces. Joab said, I'll do it. And he scurried up the water shaft, got into the city, and helped the children of Israel overtake it.

So they're looking for the secret way in. The guy tells them how to get in. They conquer the city.

Verse 27, however, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beit She'an and its villages. Now, Beit She'an is up north, a little bit northeast of Mount Gilboa.

I keep mentioning Gilboa. Gilboa is where King Saul will die and the people will hang his body from the walls of Beit She'an.

We always take people to Beit She'an, because today you can see the New Testament city, the Roman city, and then in the background, the Old Testament city, all still there.

So the Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beit She'an and its villages, or Ta'anak and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Eblaim and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages, for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.

Notice that phrase, the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. Your flesh, your old habits is determined to dwell in that land. It doesn't go easily.

It came to pass when Israel was strong that they put the Canaanites under tribute, that is, they taxed them. They had to pay a fee, but did not completely drive them out, nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwell in Gezer, so the Canaanites dwelled in Gezer among them, nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol. So the Canaanites drew all among them, and were put under tribute. Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco. I wish I could tell you about Acco. One of my favorite places to go. We never take tour groups there, though I used to hang out there when I lived in Israel. It's a old Phoenician seaport on the upper coast of Israel, but we have to move on.

Or the inhabitants of Sidon, this is all the Phoenician territory in the upper coast of the land, or of Ahlab, or Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. I have no idea exactly where those are. I just know the general area. So the Asherites dwell among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out, nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh-- It's down south-- inhabitants of Beth-anath. They dwell among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath were put under tribute.

Now we have a series of defeats, or a series of almost taking the land, but settling for less. So God gave them the land, but they let the Canaanites live in the land. They didn't kick them out of the land. And Joshua had told them, the Lord told them, and in the Pentateuch, and then Joshua reminded them, if you let them stay in the land, they're going to become thorns in your sides, and snares to you.

Well, you say they had excuses. They have chariots of iron. We don't have chariots of iron. Wait a minute, didn't God say to Judah, I'll give you the land, just take it. Now, you can stand there and go, yeah, but they've got chariots of iron, sort of like your forefathers said, there's giants in the land.

If God said take the land, take the land. He wouldn't tell you to take it unless you could have the victory for it. And by the way, by the time we get to chapter four and five, the only strong one among them is a woman named Deborah, who becomes a judge and defeats the enemy with who have 900 chariots of iron, but she knew the Lord.

Oh you cowards, you guys, you won't do it. I'll do it. Takes a woman to do this, I'll do it, me and the Lord. And she let that brigade, 900 chariots of iron. By the time we get a few chapters ahead of that, or after that, there's a guy named Gideon. He has 300 men against 135,000 Midianites. He starts off with 10,000, and God says you have too many men. He said, too many men? We have 10,000 and there are 135,000. Yeah, but there's still too many men for me to deliver them into your hand, because if 10,000 men take over 135,000 people, you're going to say, boy we're really a good fighting force.

But if 300 men wipe out 135,000, you'll be forced to say it was the Lord. So there's too many. So God gave the victory, though they were outnumbered. Psalm 20 says, "Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God."

That's a principle in spiritual warfare. Verse 34, "Then the Amorites, and the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down into the valley. The Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres in Aijalon in Shaalbim. Yet, when the hand of the house of Joseph became stronger, they were put under tribute." Now the boundary of the Amorites is from the ascent of that name from Sela and upward, Akkrabbim.

Dan didn't even take any of their territory. They just hid it in the mountains till later on. We get to chapter 18, and they scurry from the allotment that God gave them down south all the way up north. We'll get to that later. I won't even tell you the story. We'll get to the story, so don't worry. But look at chapter 2 verse 1. "Then the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And said."

Now, notice it's not an angel of the Lord, it's the definite article "the." The-- and then is "The Angel" capitalized in your Bible? That's mean to give a commentary on it. It's because the translators are identifying the Angel of the Lord with the Lord himself. Follow me here. So the angel of the Lord says 'this, "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land, but you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed my voice. Why have you done this?" Or it could be translated, look what you've done.

"Therefore, I also said, I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be thorns in your side, and their God shall be a snare to you. So what 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."

Now, the angel of the Lord, I believe, is what theologians call a theophany, a theophany, an appearance or a Christophany, an appearance of Jesus Christ before his incarnation. Whenever we read of the Angel of the Lord in the book of Genesis, and a couple of times, even in this book, the language that the angel of the Lord uses is the language that only God himself can use.

I delivered you. I am the one who did this. So here's a messenger, that's with the word angel means, a messenger of God, but the messenger of God says I'm the one who did it. I'm the one who delivered you, when the Bible says God did it. So we're forced to make an interpretation, who then is the Angel of the Lord? Well, it's the same as in Genesis chapter 18, when three visitors came to Abraham. We find out later on two of them are angels. One of them is the Lord himself, but they're in some human form.

It's the same in the book of Joshua chapter 5, when Joshua sees the commander of the Lord's army. He sees a guy with a drawn sword, a man, a soldier, and says, are you on our side, or their side? And that person says, I'm not on either side. I'm the commander of the Lord's armies. You better get on my side. That was the Angel of the Lord at the burning bush.

The bush spoke and it was an apparition, and it speaks of the Lord's Angel. The Angel of the Lord speaking to him there from the burning bush. So I believe it's a pre-incarnate form of Jesus in the Old Testament. It is the Lord Himself showing up. So if you wonder where Jesus is in the Old Testament, many scholars will point to this christophany or theophany, that this is one of them.

But notice what the people do after the angel of the Lord says this. It says, "They lifted up their voice and wept." They got all emotional. And they call the name of that place Bochim. Weepers. And they sacrifice there to the Lord. Boy, that sounds promising, but they cried, oh they cried, oh, they had a deep emotional experience, and a wonderful worship service, but they did nothing to change their behavior.

They'll leave the worship service. They'll leave their emotional experience, and they will not trust the Lord. They will not take the land. They will revert to disobedience, and the rest of the book from this point on shows how it goes from bad to worse. Now, oftentimes, when Lord deals with us, when the Lord deals with a person over an issue, it can become a very emotional thing.

You know, we feel it in the core and in a person will weep and cry and go, wow, what happened? Well, the Lord touched me. Did you change? No, I'm still doing the same behavior, but boy, did I have a good cry. Sometimes you can weep away the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And you just get satisfied with having an emotional experience with no heart change, with not putting into practice the principles that change behavior. That's what the Lord is after.

Later on, God will say, book of Joel, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." You rip your-- oh, I'm having an emotional experience with God. Rip your heart, man. Get changed deep down inside. Rend your heart, not your garments.

"When Joshua dismissed the people, the children of Israel when each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So the people serve the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen the great works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel. Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord died when he was 110 years old. " That's about time. "And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath-heres, in the mountains of Ephraim in the Northwest side of Mount Gaash. 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. "

Now, remember I said this is the end of strong central leadership? It was Abraham. There was Isaac. There was Jacob and then there was Joseph that the Lord raised up. Then they went into Egypt, when the Lord raised up Moses. And after Moses, Joshua, and after Joshua, you got like 400 years of floundering, and now the author of this book, whom I believe is Samuel by the way, the prophet Samuel, gives a summary of the rest of the book.

In the verses that follow in chapter 2, he gives a summary of what I call the sin cycle. Seven cycles of behavior that take us downward. It's like they served the Lord while Joshua was alive, and while those elders were alive who experienced that firsthand experience of greatness with God in the wilderness, and crossing of the Jordan. But once that generation died, the next generation didn't follow.

And it's an interesting thing, revival rarely makes it into the next generation, unless those children themselves have their own personalized encounter with the Lord. You can never live off what your parents went through and saw and did. You have to have your own. Christianity is always one generation away from total extinction. We see it all the time.

Children who are raised in the church, but they go to college, and you know, all they got was a couple of youth group jubilees from time to time, and great experience. But then they get into the real thinking environment, they walk away from the faith. So it's incumbent upon the older generation, as best they can to live it and pass it down to the next generation.

But the sin cycle is like this, rebellion, first phase, after rebellion comes retribution. God allows them to suffer at the hand of their enemies. They become enslaved by the enemies whose gods they worship to begin with, because they were tired of the Lord. And then, there's repentance, they call out, oh, God, please forgive us, and then there's restoration. God hears them. Sends them a judge, a champion, a deliverer, delivers them, and they're back on top with God. And then it goes all through the same cycle again. Seven times outlined in this book with different judges.

"So when all that generation had been gathered to the fathers and another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord, nor the work which he had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of

the Lord, and served the Baals." I'll explain that next week, who they are. "And forsook the Lord God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and 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. "

"They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth." Again, I'll explain who they are next time. "The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So he delivered them into the hands of plunderers, who despoiled them, sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so they could no longer stand before their enemies." This is the second phase of that cycle, retribution.

"Whenever they went out, wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity. As the Lord had said, and the Lord had sworn to them, and they were greatly distressed." After that, comes repentance and restoration. "Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. They would not listen to their judges." Again, judges, these are like guys and a gal who went on military expeditions, they were champions.

"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 which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord. They did not do so. 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. And when it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more correctly 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, and 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 is not heeded my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died. 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. Therefore, the Lord left those nations without driving them out immediately, nor did he deliver them into the hand of Joshua. "

Last week when we gathered together-- and this is all recovering this chapter 1 and 2-- Last week we told you that originally, the map of the land that God granted to Israel was 300,000 square miles. And that at their peak under King David and Solomon they only occupied 30,000 square miles. They only took a tenth of what God really wanted for them. That's because they were promised the land and they conquered the land, but they never occupied the land. They didn't possess their possessions. So the corollary is this, we are given the Bible says Ephesians chapter 1, "Every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus in heavenly places."

I am convinced there is so much more God wants us to experience than we are presently experiencing. You say, well, what's the problem? The problem often is we let the enemies, the flesh, dwell in the land. The flesh is determined. The bents, the habits, the old ways of doing things and, we make excuses for them. Oh, I'll just make a covenant with them. Look, I'm just Irish, man, I'm hot headed. That's just who I am. You don't like it, tough. Or I'm Hispanic, man, I'm a scrapper.

If you start making those kind of excuses, you're simply saying, I'll let the propensities, the proclivities, the bents of my flesh live, take root, and flourish. God wants you to live not by the flesh, but in the spirit to conquer those propensities, proclivities, bents of your flesh. You and I are to be more than conquerors. And so that's why I say the Book of Judges will prove to be very contemporary, but we're out of time, more to be said, save it for next time when we cover the next couple chapters.

Father, thank you for the opportunity to be able to look through the lens of Old Testament history and find how honest this report is of your people. Your covenant people, the people of God, the chosen people, who made the wrong choices. What they chose was not what you had in mind for them. And they never took all that you really wanted them to enjoy.

Father, I pray that those enemies, those sins of the flesh, that we may find victory for a while, but we give into them, and they can dominate our lives, would be subdued by a powerful work of your Holy Spirit, moving in and through us your church.

Thank you, Lord, that we are saved completely by grace through faith not of ourselves. We don't work for it, you accept us the way we are. But it's also true you love us too much to leave us the way we are. You want us to grow and you have so much for us. I pray we would apprehend that and occupy. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's all stand.