




# LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES



# Book of Judges

- Believed to have been written by prophet Samuel between 1050 and 1000 BC.
  - Describes a sad and turbulent period in Israel's history
  - A sharp contrast to the preceding book – the victorious book of Joshua.
  - Judges outlines Israel's failure to conquer their enemies and claim their inheritance
  - Huge effect this had on their life and their relationship with God.
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# The Cycle of Sin

Judges 2: 18 – 19

Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

# The Cycle of Sin

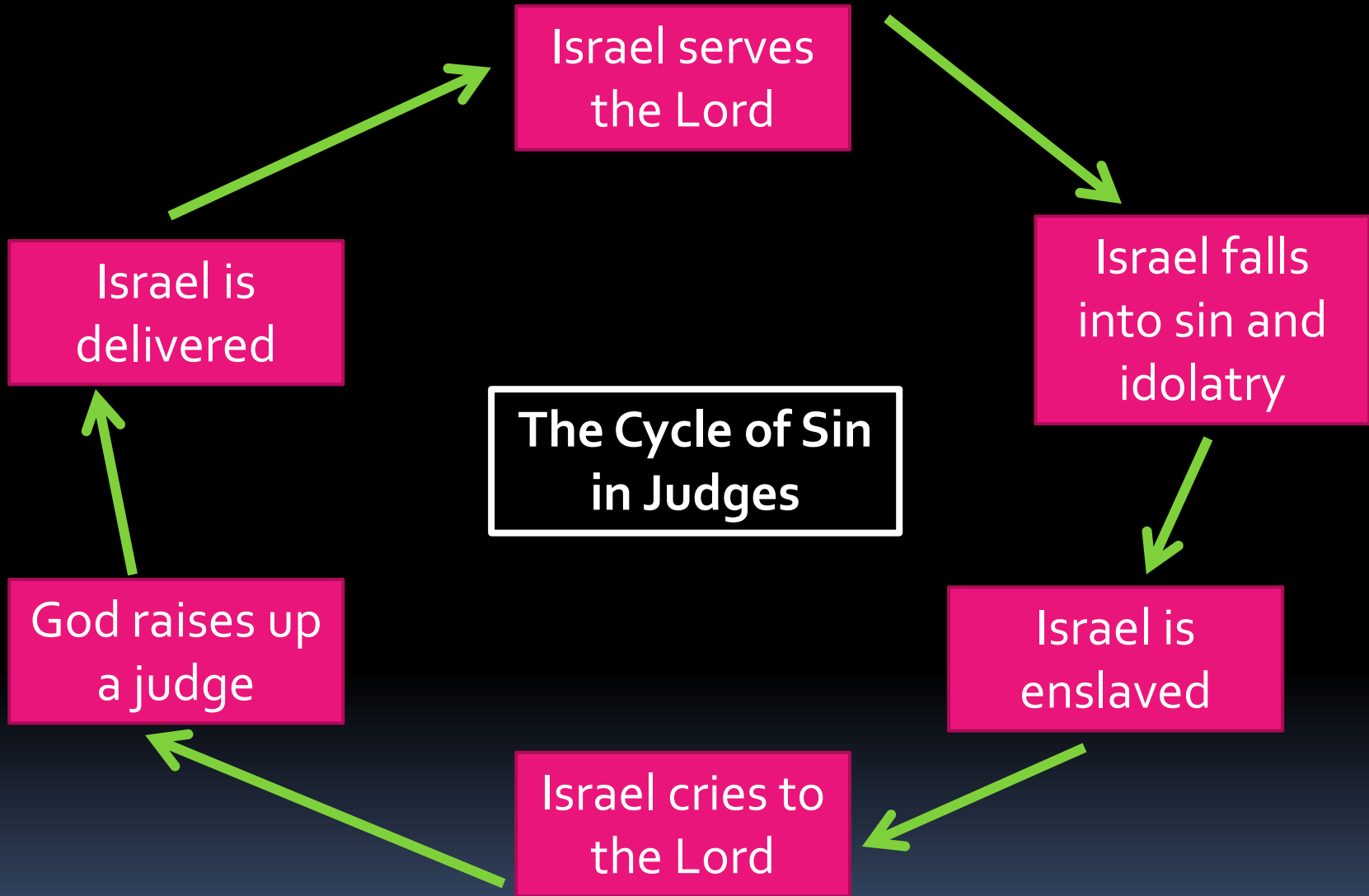
Enemy	Years of Bondage	Judge	Deliverance and Rest	Scripture
Mesopotamia	8 years	Othniel	40 years	3: 7 – 11
Moab	18 years	Ehud	80 years	3: 12 – 31
Canaan	20 years	Deborah	40 years	4: 1 – 5, 31
Midian	7 years	Gideon	40 years	6: 1 – 8, 28
Ammon	18 years	Jephthah	6 years	10: 6 – 17
Philistia	40 years	Samson	20 years	13: 1 – 6, 31

# The Cycle of Sin

- The same phrase is used to begin each section “The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord”
- A repeated cycle of sin, bondage , repentance, devotion – followed by sin and bondage again.
- Israel would follow the Lord when there was a leader who reminded them of the ways in which they should walk

# The Cycle of Sin (continued)

- With the death of the leader, Israel again wandered off following other gods and their own desires.
- God would allow an enemy of Israel to conquer the people so that, through desperation, they would again look to Him.
- This same cycle of sin is unfortunately evident in the lives of many Christians today.



# Not all Negative

- The book of Judges is just a negative book.
- There were long periods of time, while the judges ruled, that Israel did serve the Lord and did have victory over their enemies.
- In most cases the period of time spent serving the Lord was longer than their time in bondage to their enemies.




# The Heart of the Problem – Possessing our Inheritance

- Judges 1:1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, “Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?”
- Each of the 12 tribes was allocated a portion of land as their inheritance.
- Under Joshua many of the enemies that lived in the land were defeated and victory was achieved.
- It was still necessary for each tribe to move into its appointed area and dwell there.



# Lessons for Today

- Christians have an inheritance in Christ that is to be grasped and possessed by faith.
  - Judges shows the failure of God's people to press into the inheritance that God has for them.
  - Even worse, it shows the failure to retain even that which has already been conquered.
  - Judges is a warning of what can happen if we fail to go on, or through compromise allow the enemy to rob us of the benefits of our inheritance in Christ.
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# Compromised Faith in God

- The first chapter of Judges starts off with some promising victories
- But in verse 19 we read: The Lord was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had iron chariots.
- **Did God not know about the chariots when He made the promise in verse 2?**

# Why were the men of Judah unable to win a victory?

See verses 1 – 3 of Chapter 1.

- The heart of the men of Judah was not totally reliant on the promises and strength of the Lord their God.
- Through a lack of faith, they still looked to their own strength and numbers to gain victory.

# Judges 1: 1 - 3

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the Lord, "Who will be the first to go up and fight for us against the Canaanites?"

The Lord answered, Judah is to go; **I have given the land into their hands.**"

Then the men of Judah said to the Simeonites their brothers, "Come up with us into the territory allotted to us, to fight against the Canaanites. We in turn will go with you to fight with you into yours."

So the Simeonites went with them.

# Judah's victories – despite their lack of faith.

- It wasn't all defeat, however.
- Judah did have a number of victories over the Canaanites and Perizzites. They captured their leader, Adoni-Bezek, as well as taking a number of Canaanite cities (Judges 1: 1 – 11)

# The Danites and the Amorites

The Amorites confined the Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down into the plain. (Judges 1: 34)

- The Danites had no desire to confront the enemy.
- Judah did want to gain a victory but they found the enemy 'iron-willed'.
- But Dan gave in straight away allowing the enemy to live in the areas the Lord had planned for them.
- **Are we scratching out a Christian life in the unproductive hill country instead of taking up our inheritance in the plains?**

# Small Ray of Light - Caleb

- Judges 1: 20. As Moses had promised, Hebron was given to Caleb who drove it from the three sons of Anak.
- The sons of Anak were giants, part of the Nephilim, and were the main reasons why Israel did not enter in when they first spied out the land (Numbers 13: 28, 33, Deuteronomy 2: 10)
- Caleb's name means 'wholehearted' and he stands out in stark contrast and opposition to the general slide towards apostasy that unfolds in the first chapter of Judges.



# Caleb – Faith and Commitment

- When he was 40, and faced with the task of entering in and defeating the giants, his message was 'do not fear the people of the land, for the Lord is with us; do not fear them.
- For this wonderful, faith-filled message he was nearly stoned (Numbers 14: 6 – 10)
- Now, 45 years later (Joshua 14:10), he was faced with the same enemy and nothing was going to stop the old man.

# Caleb – Faith and Commitment

- He had followed the Lord fully (Joshua 14: 14) and as he went out to defeat them, he was still going in God's strength.
- 'perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I will drive them out (Joshua 14:12).
- He defeated them and was given Hebron, which means 'communion' (Joshua 15: 13, 14)

# House of Joseph


- Judges 1: 22 – 25
- Now the house of Joseph attacked Bethel, and the Lord was with them. When they sent out men to spy out Bethel (formerly called Luz) the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, “Show us how to get into the city and we will see that you are treated well. ” So he showed them, and they put the city to the sword but spared the man and his whole family.

# Ray of Light – House of Joseph

- The triumph of the house of Joseph over the city of Luz is another bright spot.
- Joseph means 'add thou Jehovah'
- Luz means 'perverse' but Bethel means 'house of God'
- So it is with our lives, in that through grace, that which was perverse has been captured for the Lord and turned into house of God.

# Failure of Manasseh

- Judges 1: 27
- But Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth-Shan etc. .... for the Canaanites were determined to live in that land.
- Manasseh means 'causing to forget'.
- Manasseh could not even drive out the people of Beth-Shan which means 'house of ease or quiet.
- The enemy was not driven out, but continued to live on, right in their midst as a constant thorn in their side.



# Disobedience to the Word of God

Judges 1 : 21, 27 – 35



Tribe	Failed to Dislodge	Outcome
Benjamites	Jebusites	Jebusites live with Benjamites in Jerusalem.
Manasseh	People of Beth-Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo	Pressed Canaanites into forced labour - never drove them out completely.
Ephraim	Canaanites in Gezer	Canaanites continued to live among them.
Zebulun	Canaanites living in Kitron or Nahalol	Remained among them but they did not subject them to forced labour.
Asher	Those living in Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, Rehob	People of Asher lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land
Naphtali	..... living in Beth Shemesh, Beth Anath	Naphtali lived among the Canaanites – those tribes became forced labourers

Tribe	Failed to Dislodge	Outcome
Dan	Amorites	Confined Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down to the plain.
Joseph	Amorites	Amorites determined to hold on to Mount Heres, Aijalon, Shaalbin – were pressed onto forced labour.



# Pattern of Behaviour

- Tribes did not drive out their enemies (verses 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33)
- Having not driven them out, they thought that they might as well carry on and simply live alongside them. (verses 21, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33)
- But the Israelites did have a novel plan. Instead of driving them out, they would keep them under control and make slaves of them and demand forced labour (28, 30, 33, 35)

# Israel's Big Mistake

- This was the biggest blunder Israel could have made and was the key factor in all the troubles that followed.
- God had repeatedly warned Israel that this was not to happen and even went so far as to spell out clearly what would happen if they disobeyed His commands by allowing other nations to continue living in the land.
- (See Exodus 23: 23 – 33)

# God's Rules for Entering and Living in the Land


- They were to make no covenant or agreement with the enemy
- These nations not to be allowed to live in the land
- They would be a snare to Israel.
- [Exodus 23: 23 – 33]

# God's Rules for Entering and Living in the Land (2)

- Israel would be led astray by these nations if they did not drive them out.
- Israel was to tear down their altars, smash their pillars and cut down their Asherim (images of Asherah, the mother of 70 gods, including Baal)
- [Exodus 34: 11 – 16]



# Joshua's Advice

- Joshua 23
  - Joshua's heartfelt plea as an old man.
  - He almost begged them to 'cling to the Lord' and not associate with any of the other nations.
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# Israel knew better

- They felt they were strong enough to keep the enemy at bay and make slaves of them.
- God commanded them not to make agreements with the nations they had to drive out.
- He knew that the ways of the nations would become a snare to Israel and that given time they would even follow the nation's gods.