



Judges 1-2

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By Chuck Smith

CHAPTER 1

The book of Judges covers the historic period of the nation of Israel from the time of the death of Joshua, to the beginning of the kings. Just how long a period of time that actually was is a matter of dispute among the scholars. But it is generally accepted that the period of time is about 300 to 400 years.

There were thirteen different judges that God raised up in the time of spiritual declension. As God would raise up the judge, there would be spiritual revival. During the times of spiritual declension, the nation of Israel would go into captivity. During the time of spiritual revival, God would give them victory over their enemies. And inasmuch as there were thirteen judges, you see the yo-yo that we're on: thirteen declensions and thirteen revivals, thirteen periods of captivity, thirteen periods of being delivered from the oppression of the enemy. But what lessons there are to be learned in the book of Judges.

The book of Judges begins much like the book of Joshua. Joshua begins: *Now after the death of Moses*. The book of Judges begins: *Now after the death of Joshua*. The book of Judges, in chapter 2, records the death of Joshua. And the book of Judges is a little difficult because it does not follow a precise chronological order. It begins: *Now after the death of Joshua*. Then it tells you of the death of Joshua in chapter 2. So we go back and pick up a little bit of the book of Joshua: Caleb's capture of the city of Hebron, and all.

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

Now, how did the Lord say this? They asked the LORD, "*Who shall go up first?*" Joshua had led them into the conquest of the land. He had apportioned out the various territories, but they had not totally driven out the enemy. They had not yet possessed all of the territory that God had given to them. "So now, after the death of Joshua, let's go on and let's take the land." "*Who shall go up first?*"

The LORD spoke to them through the Urim and the Thummim that was worn by the priest. They would ask a question that could be answered yes or no. So as they would go through, "*Who shall go up first*, the tribe of Benjamin?" "No." "The tribe of Ephraim?" "No." "The tribe of Manasseh?" "No." "The tribe of Judah?" "Yes." "Will you deliver the enemies into their hands?" "Yes." And so they were "yes" and "no" answers by which they inquired of the LORD. Just how the "yes" or "no" was ascertained is something of speculation. We do not know for sure what the Urim and Thummin were used. The Hebrew is, "lights and perfection's." But just what it is, is only a matter of speculation. But somehow, by the priest, they would inquire of the LORD and get directions concerning their battles.

We find David doing this quite often: seeking the counsel of the LORD as to the battles and what the outcomes of the battles would be.

So, it was indicated by the LORD that Judah should go up first, and that God has delivered the land into his hand.

[Now, immediately, the tribe of Judah shows a lack of faith.] *They said to Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we might fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with you into your lot. So Simeon went with him.*

So, immediately he seeks the hand, or the arm of flesh, to help him. God says, “*Judah go up: I have delivered the land into his hands.*” And so he says to Simeon, “Come and help me.” It is interesting how that so often we seek the arm of flesh for our help. God gives us a promise of victory. God gives us a promise of deliverance, and immediately we turn and rely on the flesh rather than relying upon the Word of God, the promises of God; and going in and claiming to that which God has promised. We turn immediately to the arm of flesh for help or for strength.

Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

Now, Bezek must have been a good sized city to have ten thousand fighting men within it. Interestingly enough, Bezek is a city that we as yet do not know where it was. There are still a lot of towns that have not been excavated in Israel. Whenever you go over to Israel, you always get the urge to get a pick and a shovel and start picking away at some of those tells. You don’t know what treasure trolls lie under that mound of dirt and what you might discover. There’s always that fascination of uncovering some kind of a treasure troll or something in one of those ancient cities, that are today, those mounds of dirt that are called “tells.” The Tel Avisa is, no doubt, there, but it hasn’t been excavated. So the location of Bezek has not been ascertained for certain.

And they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. [“Adoni” in Hebrew means, “lord”] And they found the lord of Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and so they pursued after him, and they cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

The purpose of cutting off their thumbs was to make sure it was impossible for them to use their bows. With their thumbs cut off, they really can’t fight in war anymore. You can’t really grasp your sword, and you can’t pull back on your bow. And in cutting off the big toes, you slow a person down in his flight or in trying to run. You can’t really run as fast with your big toes missing. Your big toes are a big part in balance when running. And so the purpose for taking off their big toes and thumbs was to incapacitate them for battle.

Adonibezek said, There have been seventy kings, who had their thumbs and great toes cut off, who ate their meat at my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

So Adonibezek was not an innocent man. What had been done to him, he had done to seventy people, or kings, in past times. There’s an interesting law of God: Paul says, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” We reap in kind. This is a basic law of God that He established to keep order in the universe. Our whole world would be a chaotic mess if this law were not established by God. “*Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.*” You sow corn seed, you will reap corn. You plant the wheat seed, you’ll produce wheat. Part of God’s order. Think of the chaos if this wasn’t so. The farming industry would be totally catastrophic if this law of God had not been established. Now, we understand that law in the physical world around us, but that law also holds in the spiritual world. “*He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows of the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*”

I believe that in the world that we are living in today, it is extremely difficult not to sow to the flesh.

Television makes sowing to the flesh such a simple, easy thing. It's so easy to flip on the TV and get involved in some drama, or mystery, or some program that really has no spiritual value at all. It ministers to your flesh. It's exciting. You know they always have the chase. The fancy driving, shooting the tires, and oh, you know you're into it. That's not really of the spirit, though. It doesn't feed your spirit at all. It only feeds the flesh. *"Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."*

Now, a lot of times people think that they're getting by with their evil because God is so patient with us. You're not. Ultimately each man will say his little Adonibezek, *"As I have done, so it has been done to me."* You can't escape it. It's the law of God.

But the law of God doesn't need to be a terror. It's a blessing if you are sowing to the spirit. If you are sowing love, kindness, mercy: then you will reap love, kindness, mercy. So people say, "Oh, you're gonna reap what you sow." No, no. It's only if your sowing rotten seed that you need to shudder. If your sowing anger, jealousy, strife, malice and all - then you'd better shudder, it's gonna come back to you. But if you're sowing kindness, gentleness, peace: then you're going to reap. And reaping is in kind with the law of God. An inescapable law of God, which should be to us a strong impetus to sow unto the spirit, and not unrighteousness.

Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and taken it, and they had smitten it with the edge of the sword, and they set the city on fire.

They conquered the city. However, interestingly enough, they didn't drive out the inhabitants of the city: the Jebusites. They allowed them to stay there. They didn't destroy them. And the net result is, ultimately, the Jebusites took control of the city and they were able to control it until the time of David - living among the tribe of Judah. Though the city had once been taken, because they did not obey the law of God and utterly destroy the enemy, but allowing them to remain, Jerusalem, again, came under the control of the Jebusites until the reign of David. *So they took the city of Jerusalem, set it on fire.*

Afterwards the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew [the three giants] Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. And from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher: And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off from her donkey; and Caleb said to her, What do you want? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for you have given me a south land; now give me also springs of water. And so Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of the palm trees [which is Jericho] with the children of Judah to the wilderness.

So, we have this already in Judges: in order to get a wife, you usually had to pay a dowry. It was customary, you know, you go to the girl's father, and you dicker with him, and you offer him 'so many' camels, 'so many' sheep, and so forth; and you pay the dowry for your wife. The father, then, was responsible to keep that dowry in tact, to increase it, if possible, through investments, and all. Women, in those days, had no rights. Any time a husband got tired of a woman he could just write her a bill of divorcement; hand it to her, and say, "Out the door, woman." She couldn't do anything about it. So the idea of the dowry came up to protect the women. Dowry was, actually, alimony in advance in case the jerk kicked her out, then the father had enough money to support her from the dowry and she didn't have to go on welfare. So it wasn't a bad custom, really; it protected the women in a time when women had very few

rights.

Now, if a fellow didn't have any money to buy a bride, he was in big trouble. He had to be celibate or single. So, a lot of times the father would throw out a challenge; he wanted something, he wanted 'this city,' "--whoever takes the city, can marry my daughter." So Othniel, inspired by the challenge, took the city: and that was his dowry.

And so, Caleb gave his daughter a field, and so, she said to Othniel, 'Hey, ask my dad to give us some springs also so we can water the fields.' He evidently didn't want to ask Caleb for anything, so she came to him and said, 'Well, you don't want to ask my dad - I will. So, she came to Caleb--and that's probably smarter anyhow. I'm more apt to give things to my daughters than I am to my son in laws any day. And so she came to her dad, and he says, "What do you want, honey?" And she said, "Well, you gave us the field but how about giving us some springs?" And he said, "Sure, take the upper spring and the lower spring." And so, the gift of Caleb to his daughter.

Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, --

You remember Moses asked his brother in law to go with him because, 'you guys are desert wise. You know how to find water, you know how to track, you know how to survive in the desert.' And Hobab says, "Nah, we don't want to go with you guys, you've got a rough time ahead of you." But evidently, they changed their mind and came because they are still with the children of Israel at this point. They were in the city of palm trees, which is the city of Jericho; but being Nomadic desert kind of fellows, when they started down toward the desert area: Beersheba, Arad, and all - these guys went on down because that's the area that they would like to inhabit because that's more like the area that they came from down in the Sinai peninsula.

And so the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, came out of Jericho and went with Judah to the wilderness, that lies to the south of Arad; --

Arad is in a pretty desolate wilderness area: it's probably 12 miles as a crow flies from Arad to the Dead sea. It's another 20 miles south from Arad to Beersheba. It's a rocky, desolate place; and this is the area where these fellows could graze their sheep, and all.

Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza [which, of course, is on the south coast, the Mediterranean] with the coast thereof, and Askelon [which is north of Gaza towards Tel Aviv] with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. [They are three of the Philistine cities.] And the LORD was with Judah; he drove out the inhabitants of the mountains; but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

Now, that probably isn't a totally correct statement. "*He could not drive them out because* [he didn't have enough faith in the LORD, because] *the enemy had chariots of iron.*" You see, God had promised to deliver the enemy into their hands. Had they had enough faith, had they really gone out to fight them, God would have delivered them. God said, "*I have delivered the enemies,*" there was a promise of God; but they were not acting upon the promises of God. They were stopped by fear: they saw the chariots. A chariot, in those days was like a tank this day: it's a decisive weapon in a battle of the infantry troops. When the tank moves in, there's not much the infantry can do against the tanks. And the people had the chariots there in the valleys and so they, no doubt, were fearful; and it was the fear that kept them from conquering - not the chariots themselves, but their fear of the chariots: they did not, then, press in to take the promise that God had given unto them.

How many times we stop short of what God would do for us because we get hesitant, and we get fearful? I'm certain that God has so much more for all of us. But we begin to back away when we see the power and the entrenchment of the enemies. "Oh, we can't do that. Look at what they've got, look at it." And we look at the powers that are with the enemy and we back off. But they could have taken it, I'm certain, had they trusted in God and gone.

And so they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled from there the three sons of Anak. [Who are names in the previous verses.] Then the children of Benjamin [so now the tribes are moving in to take the various areas that have been apportioned to them] the children of Benjamin [pardon me. The note: Judah did not take all of the territory that God had promised; they did not utterly drive out the inhabitants of the land which they were commanded to do. They came short of full victory. I want to make that point because we're going to find this all of the way along] so the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin unto this day. And the house of Joseph, [which is, of course, Ephraim and Manasseh] they went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.) And the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew you mercy. And when he shewed him the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all of his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and he built a city, and called the name of it Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

So, it is interesting that a lot of those ancient cities had sort of secret entrances to them. And the secret entrance was usually the route along the path from which they got their water. In Megeddo you can hike down into the area of the springs from which Megeddo once got its water supplies. Knowing that there was an invading enemy coming, they dug this tunnel through the rock from within the city to the springs. And then the water from the spring came through this rock tunnel to, sort of, a well. And they sealed up on the outside, with rocks, the entrance to the spring from the outside of the city, and they made this tunnel through the rocks within the city so that they still had their water supply, though the city was besieged.

In Jerusalem, you have the very same thing at the spring of Gihon. When Hezekiah knew that the Assyrian army was coming, because the spring of Gihon was outside of the city walls, they started to dig a tunnel through the rock from Gihon under the city walls to the pool of Siloam. Other diggers started at the pool of Siloam, and digging through solid rock, some 1,700 feet, they finally met up with the tunnels. And it's possible to go through that tunnel, wading through the water out of the spring of Gihon, and to go through that dark tunnel from the spring of Gihon to the pool of Siloam, (which was dug in order to make a water supply within the wall of the city of Jerusalem), so that when the city is besieged you're not driven out because of your lack of water. And then you cover over the outside of the spring, you disguise it. But usually there was that secret entrance.

And so, they got hold of this guy, and they said, "Look, show us the entrance to the city, and we won't kill you and your family." And so, he showed them the secret entrance to Bethel. And they conquered the city, but they left the guy alive who moved out, and built another city, named it after the city of Luz, which was the name of Bethel before it became Bethel.

Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean --

Bethshean is north of mount Gilboa. Fabulous ruins at Bethshean today. In fact, they're doing a lot of excavation right now at Bethshean. They've just uncovered a huge theater. The amphitheater in Bethshean

is actually much like the amphitheater in Caesarea; but right next to the amphitheater, they have just uncovered a beautiful theater that goes back to the Roman period. Bethshean is the place where the Philistines hung Saul on the wall after they killed him. And, today it is a modern Israel village, but the ruins are quite spectacular in Bethshean. So this city dates way on back to the time of Joshua, and all. We have cities in the United States celebrating their 100th birthdays, and their 200th birthdays but, man, these cities go way back.

Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean [you see, they did not obey the command of God: they left the inhabitants there] nor of Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor, nor of Ibleam, nor of Megiddo: but the Canaanites would dwell in the land. It came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they taxed them, [they put them under tribute] but they did not drive them out. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, or of Zidon, the Asherites dwell among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: they did not drive them out. Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, or Bethanath; but they just taxed them.

Now, the tribes did not totally possess the land, they did not totally wipe out the enemy. And I keep emphasizing this because this became their thorn in their sides. And this is exactly what Joshua said. His prophecy was fulfilled. “If you do not drive them utterly out, then they will become thorns in your sides; they will be a snare unto you.”

We are talking in a spiritual sense, now, of the promises that God has given to you of a full, rich life in the Spirit. In order to come into that full, rich life in the Spirit, we have to gain victory over the flesh life: for these two are antagonistic and opposed to each other. “*The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary.*” It is a battle that goes on, a never ending battle it seems, that goes on between our flesh and our spirit. And they are rivaling for the mastery of your life that you be either ruled by the flesh, or ruled by the Spirit.

Now, it is possible to begin to conquer over those areas of the flesh; and again, we can’t do it in ourselves. But God has promised victory. And the Lord has promised to go before us, and fight the battles for us; and through the help of God, I can gain the victory over the life of the flesh. I don’t have to be ruled by my flesh. And if I will go in by the power of God’s Spirit, I can see God’s hand of deliverance.

But if I allow or tolerate an area of the flesh to remain, though I have known victories in the Spirit, and glorious experiences of God’s victory in my life, it is possible for me to be caught up again in the area of the flesh and to be defeated. It is important that we continue to move on into the realm of the Spirit -- not stopping, not making an alliance with the flesh, not allowing the flesh to remain, but to continue on in our victory and in our conquest over the areas of the flesh life. It’s a never ending battle: as long as I am living in this body, I am going to be problemated with my flesh.

But, thank God, I don’t have to be ruled by my flesh; and God doesn’t want me to be ruled by my flesh, He wants me to be ruled by the Spirit.

But to give an area for the flesh, to tolerate the flesh, is only to court disaster and defeat. And this is the main lesson of the book of Judges: their incomplete victories. Their deciding just to allow the inhabitants of Canaan to remain there: ‘We’ll just tax them, and let them remain here,’ is like an alliance that people make with their flesh: “Well, that’s just a part of my flesh life, and I just have a bad temper: and you don’t like it, I’m sorry. There’s not much I can do about it.” And we give in to it rather than going on in and pressing into the victory of the Lord, and asking God to deliver us from that nasty attitude, from that cutting spirit,

from that critical bent that I have. Recognize, that's part of the flesh, that's that ugly flesh life: I don't want to be ruled by that. I don't want that to destroy me. "God, give me help. Give me victory, Lord." And I press in until God gives the victory over those areas of the flesh: one by one I take, I conquer. And I continue on until the territory becomes mine, not making allowances for the flesh. "*Make no provision for the flesh,*" Paul said, "*to fulfill the lusts thereof.*" Don't make a provision to live at peace with your flesh, you'll never be able to do it.

[Now the tribe of Dan, unfortunately, just didn't even take their land.] *The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not allow them to come down to the valley: and the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: and the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going of Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.*

So, they did not obey the command of God: they did not utterly drive their enemy.

CHAPTER 2

So the angel of the LORD [and quite often this angel of the LORD in the Old Testament is in actuality Jesus Christ] came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, that I will never break my covenant with you. But you shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; you shall throw down their altars: but you have not obeyed my voice: why have you done this?

So, the angel of the LORD -- and I do believe that it is Jesus Christ because the language is speaking for Jehovah in the first person: "*I brought you out of Egypt, I brought you into the land which I swore to give to your fathers; I said I would never break my covenant with you. But I commanded that you were not to make a league with the inhabitants of the land; you were to throw down their altars: but you have not obeyed my voice: why have you done this?*" So, they're not conquering, they're not taking the complete victory; the angel of the LORD is now rebuking them for that.

Wherefore as I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you. [‘You haven’t fulfilled your part of the bargain. Therefore, you’re going to have a problem from here on out.’] And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voices, and wept. And so they called the name of the place [“Weepers”] Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

Great! They cried, had an emotional experience, sacrificed unto the LORD - but did nothing about their condition. You see, they didn't go back and drive out the inhabitants. Often times when a person is under the conviction of the Spirit, God is dealing with them on the issues of their life, they see their failures, and they have an emotional experience: they weep; but weeping is of no value if you don't change. And, unfortunately, a lot of people say, "Well, I cried so long over that." Yeah, but what did you do about it after you cried? Did you change the circumstances? Did you repent? Did you change? "No, still doing the same thing. But, man, I really cried over it, you know?" And so this was the condition of the children of Israel: they had a weeping time, they offered sacrifices, but there weren't changes.

God, later on in their history, said unto them, "*Rend your heart, and not your garments.*"

When a time of great emotional distress, a person, to show how emotionally distressed he was, he'd tear his clothes: "Oh, how I am so upset!" And it was a common practice to show extreme grief, sorrow, and remorse: ripping your clothes. God said, 'Hey, don't rip your clothes -- rip your heart. Not just an outward show. I want something happening within that will change your life.' And I think that it is possible to, actually, weep away the conviction of the Spirit upon our hearts. You know, just because God deals with us on an issue, I have a great emotional experience: I weep, I cry before the LORD, I say I'm sorry - but I don't do anything about it. So nothing's changed. God wants changes.

And because they just wept, but there were no changes, these people did become a thorn in their side. Their gods became a snare unto them, and they were drawn into worship the gods, as we will soon see.

[So, "They called the name of the place ("Weepers,") and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.] *Now when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man to his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all of the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen the great works of the LORD, that which he did for Israel.*

So, as long as this generation was alive, they served the LORD. These men who saw the marvelous miracles of God, and the works of God in the wilderness, who were able to relate to them their eyewitness accounts, as long as these guys were there, they served the LORD. But, when these guys did off,-

When Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being a hundred and ten years old. They buried him in the border of the inheritance of Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all the generation were gathered to their fathers: there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Tragedy! It shows a failure on the part of the parents to adequately communicate to the children what God had done. Now God said that you were to gather the children, rehearse it in their ears. They had all kinds of memorials: the pile of stones down near Gilgal next to the Jordan river. 'In time to come, when your children say, Hey dad, what's that big pile of stones there? Son, those stones came right out of the middle of the Jordan river. When we were ready to cross over, God stopped the Jordan river. And the river was stopped in flood time, until all of Israel passed over, and then the river overflowed its banks again, and those stones came right out of the center of the river. And God was with us.' And the whole idea was to rehearse to the children the marvelous works of God. But somehow they failed to communicate to their children.

And this is a very unfortunate thing: that rarely does revival go into the second generation. God works among a generation, among a people: there's a powerful, glorious work of God, but rarely does that work of God go into the next generation, which is a sign of the failure of the parents to really pass on the heritage to their children of the wonderful works of God.

Even in the early church we find the same thing happened. That when the apostles began to die off, the love began to grow cold. And the Lord said to the church of Ephesus, "*You have left your first love.*" And this, so often, is the case.

And here, the failure of the parents to adequately communicate to the children the power of

Jehovah whom they served, not to fully obey God in driving out all of the inhabitants of the land, their settling for something less than total victory, brought, then, the great sorrows unto them, --

As the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they began to serve Baalim: [which is the plural of Baal. 'im' in Hebrew is the plural; and so the various gods of the people] and they forsook Jehovah God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods, the gods of the people that were round about them, and they bowed themselves unto them, and they provoked Jehovah to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and they served Baal and Ashteroth.

Which, of course, is the plural of Astoreth, the goddess of the Ephesians. And so, they began to worship these male and female deities of the people of the land that they had conquered. Tragic, isn't it? It didn't go into the next generation. Somehow there was a failure of the transmitting of God's power.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. [They deserted God, God deserted them.] And whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto the judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: and they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of the enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; and they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

So, the tragic, tragic story of these people. And this is, sort of, the prologue, now, to the book. This is giving you a view into what we are going to be looking at as we cover this sad period of history where they would go into the worship of the false gods, God would deliver them into the hands of their enemies, God would raise up a judge who would inspire the people spiritually to turn back to the LORD, and during the lifetime of that judge there would be spiritual revival. When he would die, they would turn back to these other gods, go back into captivity; and this is that cycle, now, that we're going to follow now: the tragic cycle of the history of the nation of Israel.

And so the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; he said, Because these people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, they have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: ['okay, I'm through: I'm not going to drive out any more. You've disobeyed, you've broken the covenant.' And so, God withdraws His support and His strength] that through them they might be tested, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; and neither did he deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

So, the prologue now: we start with chapter 3, the first apostasy, the servitude, the first judge,

and the second apostasy, the second judge; and we get some pretty gory stories in chapter 3 when Eglon gets his message from the LORD. But, we'll take chapter 3 next week, and chapter 4. We're just not moving as fast as I was hoping to, but we've got plenty of time.

What did you learn tonight? Total victory -- no compromise with the flesh. Let's live completely after the Spirit. Whatever we sow, we're going to reap. As we have done, so it will be requited unto us by God. And so, let us make sure that we are sowing seeds of love, mercy, goodness: that we might reap the same.

God bless you, give you a glorious week as you walk in fellowship with the LORD; and may God lead you into victory over those areas of the flesh that have held sway over your life for so long. --Don't make a covenant with your flesh. Don't decide that you're just going to have to live with certain characteristics of your flesh. Though you've been troubled for a long time, and though you've tried so hard, turn it over and let God help you. Claim the victory through the power of God's Spirit, and begin to walk fully after the Spirit: that rich, full, abundant life that God wants you to know as you walk in fellowship with Jesus our Lord. So, may it be a beautiful week. May you experience His presence, His love, His power working in your life, --in Jesus' name.