

July 26, 2026 Consequences**Session 8 Judges 2:11-23**

The book of Judges covers a period of about 300 years. After Joshua died God appointed judges from eight different tribes. No judge came from the tribes of Ruben, Simeon, Gad, or Asher. The leadership of the judges was not constant but occasional. They were raised up and inspired by the Spirit of God to do a particular service to Israel when the people cried out to God.

Background: Even though the Lord had given all of the promised land to the Israelites when Joshua died, there were still areas in their tribal allotments where they needed to go in, drive out their inhabitants, and possess the land. The Israelites were not supposed to make agreements with the Canaanites and coexist with them, but they did. This reminds me of the old saying “one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.” The book of Judges contains accounts of Israel’s repeated abandonment of God’s commands and following their own desires. When the judgment from God came as the result of their disobedience, they realized their folly. Then they would cry out to God to relieve them from the punishment they were under. Sadly, their repentance was only temporary. As soon as life got easier again, they went back to choosing their own path. The Israelites did not value their relationship with God as they should have. As a result, their repentance and renewed obedience did not typically last long after the punishment was removed. If they had remained faithful, God would have helped the Israelites successfully remove the Canaanites. However, their disobedience had led to God’s judgment. They had turned away from God, and God left them with the consequences of that decision.

Consequences are real (Judges 2:1-4) read in Bible

Israel enjoyed the privilege of particular messengers sent to them by God, as needed to rebuke, correct, and instruct. They also had the written word from God. Judges chapter two starts out with an angel of the Lord coming to preach to the Israelites! Wow, that is a big deal. All Israel needed the rebuke and warning given here.

Vs. 2 God told the Israelites what to do. “You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land: you shall tear down their altars.” They disobeyed God and kept worshiping the Canaanite gods. It is our human nature to sin, and we need God’s forgiveness. **Romans 3:23-24** “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” God tells me to make no covenant with this world and to tear down the things that interfere with my relationship with Him.

Vs. 3 God always does what He says He will do. Because the Israelites disobeyed God and did not uphold their end of the covenant, He withdrew His

support. After hearing the angel's sermon, the people "lifted up their voices and wept," but there is no indication that the people reformed their behavior.

New generation (Judges 2:10-13) read in Bible

The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel. And that is what happened. After Joshua died, the next generation was not obedient to God. They were so completely wrapped up in the world, so concerned to satisfy themselves and to take things easy in a life of self-indulgence, that they had no time for the one true God. They were readily drawn aside to the surrounding false gods and their detestable practices. Do you see this today in the USA?

The Evil (Judges 2:11-15) p. 75

All actions matter to God. The whole of Scripture boils everything down to two choices: Obedience or disobedience. Faithfulness or faithlessness. Life or death. For God or against God. The book of Judges illustrates the results of rejecting God—choosing disobedience and faithlessness instead of walking with Him.

Vs. 11 The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight. It did not take long after the Israelites had entered the land before they started abandoning God and His commands. While it is easy to condemn the Israelites for this failure, we must acknowledge that Israel was demonstrating typical human behavior. The Israelites abandoned the Lord. The Hebrew word translated *abandoned* is often used to indicate a change in the status of a relationship. It is the same word used to describe a man switching his primary allegiance from his father and mother to his wife when he gets married. The message is clear: the Israelites changed their allegiance, favoring a new relationship with the pagan gods of the Canaanites over their relationship with the Lord. Note that if the Israelites had obeyed God in the first place, these peoples and their gods would not have been present in the land and the temptation would have been avoided. This abandonment was particularly heinous. The people of Israel had an established relationship with the Lord that went back a long time. They had witnessed God's saving acts on their behalf. They had every reason to be faithful to Him. Yet they chose the gods of the other peoples—gods with whom they had no relationship at all, gods who had done nothing for them. This evil goes beyond individual acts of disobedience; it describes relational betrayal. The Lord saw their sin. Just because the people of God took their eyes off of the Lord does not mean He took His eyes off of them. The Lord saw their sin. The Lord sees all sin. **Hebrews 4:13** *"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."* All sin must be atoned. Praise God. Jesus has paid for all sin on the cross. Before Joshua, Moses pleaded with the Israelites to worship the Lord. **Deuteronomy 30:19** *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing*

and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...

Baal and the Ashtoreths Who were these pagan gods? *Baal* was a Canaanite god that was worshiped in various forms among the peoples of Canaan and further north. He bore certain similarities to the Greek god Zeus, being associated with the sky and with thunderstorms. He was believed to give rain to the earth so that it could bear fruit. *Ashtoreth* was the Canaanite goddess of love and war. What a combination to be a god of. Because different aspects of her character were emphasized in different places, the Bible often refers to her in the plural. *Baal* and *Ashtoreth* were also often listed together, which indicated that they were viewed as a divine couple. The false religion of the Canaanites promised its adherents material prosperity while incorporating flagrant sexual immorality into its manipulative practices.

Vs. 14 As a result of Israel's betrayal, the Lord's anger burned against His people. Sin requires punishment. The betrayal was personal, and the Israelites' punishment was appropriate. The Lord would not stand by idly as His covenant people committed spiritual adultery against Him. Whenever Israel went out to fight against their attackers, the Lord was against them and brought disaster on them. The Israelites fell victim to groups who would defeat them and then cart off their food and worldly goods. Ironically, the marauders and enemies around them were the same people whose gods the Israelites had chosen to worship instead of their own God. Their abandonment of the Lord brought about the dire consequences of which they had been warned.

The Cycle (Judges 2:16-19) p. 77

This section of Judges chapter 2 provides an overview of the way the rest of the book of Judges plays out because of the Israelites' tendency to betray God. There is a repeating cycle: Israel fell into sin and betrayed the Lord, God allowed Israel to be oppressed as punishment, God provided rescue from oppression through a judge, and Israel fell into sin and betrayal once again. Judges were often temporary and often charismatic, military leaders. God would appoint these leaders to deliver Israel from the power of their marauders when the people cried out and showed repentance for abandoning Him. Sadly, the repentance was almost always short-lived. While oppression made their lives difficult, they would turn to the Lord. Soon after He delivered them from their oppressors and life got easier again, they would once again rebel and abandon their God. The emphasis is on God's compassion for His people as they suffered from His discipline and on His power to raise up deliverers who saved them from those who attacked and plundered them.

Vs. 17 The people often failed to listen to their judges that God provided. Even during the redemption part of the cycle, the Israelites failed to fully commit to

God. They prostituted themselves with other gods. The language is intentionally strong and captures the idea of relational abandonment and betrayal. One does not abandon a spouse to sleep with a prostitute for any other reason than self-gratification. The selfishness of the Israelites of this era set them apart from their ancestors who did stay faithful to the Lord. The primary difference between Israel and the patriarchs was obedience to the Lord's commands.

Such adherence to rules showed a devotion to God. This was something the Israelites during the period of the judges lacked. It is amazing how quickly the Israelites turned back to the false gods. Remember after 9/11 there was a short revival? It lasted from a few weeks to a few months.

Vs. 18 The Lord repeatedly raised up judges to deliver His people from their adversaries. When the people groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them, the Lord heard their cries and sent a judge to deliver and protect the people from their enemies. There is no indication the Israelites ever repented of their sins against God. It seems they cried out because of their affliction, not because of conviction of their sin. God's desire was for the people to return to Him. He accepted even the smallest of movements in that direction by the people. The Lord was moved to pity whenever they groaned, and His compassion for His people was immense. God has never delighted in the suffering of His people, even when that suffering is a result of their betrayal of Him.

Vs. 19 In spite of God's provision and mercy, as soon as the judge that helped deliver Israel from their oppressors died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their ancestors and got progressively worse. Each new rebellion and venture into idolatry took them deeper and deeper into sin. By the end of the book of Judges, the Israelites had very little in common with the faith of the patriarchs. After each act of redemption by God and His appointed judge, the people would return to their evil rejection of Him with gusto. As soon as their oppression was relieved, they did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways. The downward trend continued as the Israelites strayed further and further from the Lord. This trend had an increasingly negative impact on the relationship with God and with each other. By the end of the book of Judges, the Israelites do not remotely reflect the character of God, and they were actively destroying each other.

The Declaration (Judges 2:20-23) p. 79

God reasserted His anger with Israel, "Because this nation has violated My covenant." A covenant is a formal agreement between two parties in which each party agrees to certain actions and responsibilities. Keeping the covenant led to blessings and peace. A breach of this contract had serious consequences—punishments, sometimes known as covenantal curses. Biblical covenants were

relational; they centered around the relationship between the two parties involved. Even though the covenant was made with the ancestors of the current generation of Israelites, the people were still responsible for the covenant agreement.

Vs. 21 “I [God] will no longer drive out before them [the Israelites] any of the [Canaanite] nations.” Canaanite groups still remained in the land after Joshua died. In Judges chapter one, many of the tribes of Israel did drive the Canaanites out (vs.21-35). **Judges 1:28** *“And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.”*

Money or tribute has been a reason to disobey God. It may have been a reason to not finish the work of driving the Canaanites out of the promised land. The Israelites’ primary sin against God was disobeying what He had commanded them to do. While they followed God in a limited sense, they failed to see a problem with limited commitment to Him. God’s people adopted the pagan idea that one could worship other gods while still worshiping the one true God. God’s response to the Israelites’ disobedience was to give them what they wanted. They would have to live with the pagan peoples and beliefs that had captivated them. Sometimes the worst thing that can happen to us is to get what we want. The Canaanite peoples that remained after Joshua’s death had been left as a test of Israel’s faithfulness. The Israelites had a chance to prove that they were fully committed to loving God by being obedient to Him, but they failed the test. To keep the Lord’s way is to live in a manner that is consistent with God’s own character and heart. All of one’s actions are governed by a love for God and desire to please Him. While viewing the Lord’s way might be thought of as following a set of rules, it has more to do with how those rules reflect the underlying relationship between the believer and the Lord. The idea of being in a consistent day-to-day relationship with God is described as walking in the way of the Lord.

Vs. 23 Instead of leading Israel into battle and giving them victory, God left them to their own devices. The nations that were a threat to Israel would remain in the land of Canaan. They would have a corrupting influence on the Israelites and turn them further from the Lord. Israel went from God leading them in victory to self-induced victimhood. The rest of the book of Judges plays out this sad story. God’s people must guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for them. Believers can be assured that God’s faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours. Believers can expect their obedience to God to be tested. We have the freedom of choice, but we must choose. Let us not just do lip service to God. Let us proclaim as did Joshua: **Joshua 24:15b** *“...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Questions to ponder

What negative cycles do you have in your life?

Do you have something that tempts you to ignore God's commands, and do you subsequently need to repent of it?

Do you find yourself only turning to God during difficult times and then forgetting Him when life gets easier?

The Declaration (Judges 2:20-23) p. 79