

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

Judges 1-13

Introduction to the Era of the Judges

From the crossing of the Jordan and entering Canaan to the time of King Saul is thought to be from 1451-1095 BC, 356 years. Approximately the last 300 years was the period of the Judges.

As Sammye taught us when we first began the Chronological Bible Discipleship, the Judges Era reveals to us:

- Spiritual declension occurs in the absence of a godly priesthood and the proclamation of God's Word.
- Man, in his pride, will live under oppression for many years before he will humble himself and cry out to God.
- Man would rather live under oppression than to have God reign over him as King.
- God raises up and uses women as prophets, judges, and military leaders. God brings unlikely women into His story.
- God responds to the humble cries of His people.

Before his death, Joshua warned the people of Israel about the slippery slope of sin (Moses also gave this warning before his death—see Deuteronomy 30:11-20). At this point in time, the Israelites have not completely fulfilled God's instruction to destroy all the people of the land, but they have conquered the Land of Canaan (later called Israel). They must also conquer their sinful nature that draws them back to slavery. After the death of Joshua and his generation, "another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what He had done for Israel" (2:10). When there was no leader, "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6).

The book of Judges is a book of heroes—imperfect heroes, but heroes because they obeyed the call of God and accomplished miraculous feats through the power of God. The Hebrew title "Judge" means deliverer or savior. In addition to the judges, this era includes the heart-wrenching and heart-warming story of Ruth—the great grandmother of King David, ancestor of King Jesus. During this period, the nation rides the roller coaster down into sin when their godly leader dies. Then, when they are reaping the deadly fruit of sin and begin to cry out to God, God raises up a new leader, known as a judge, who turns the nation back to God and God pulls them back up, and down they go again. It's a long roller coaster with seven major falls and seven major peaks, all beginning with a gradual turn away from God, a period of oppression away from God, then a sharp turn back to God, and finally the climb out of sin and its oppression. It's no doubt one of those old roller coasters that shakes you half to death along the way. A fitting name might be "Life" and the theme song changes frequently from, "I Did It My Way" to "Wherever He Leads I'll Go."

Like our world today, the generations who lived during this 300-year period had much world news to discuss. The first naval expedition on record occurred during the time of Gideon, and Troy was captured by the Argonauts in 1239 BC—perhaps you've heard the stories of Jason and the Argonauts, Helen of Troy, and the Trojan War. All this while, God was working in the life of a non-Jewish believer named Ruth to bring about eternal change in the course of time, and in the life of a man named Gideon from the weakest tribe to bring about immediate change in the nation of Israel.

As we skim through this book, it will become obvious that individuals and nations who refuse to learn from history and choose to live only for the moment will spiral endlessly down into sin and away from God. Hopefully, even more obvious is the mercy of God to send heroes to restore His people back to Him. Ultimately, although not in this Era, God sends The Hero, the Perfect Judge, a leader whose death lasted only three days, His Only Son, to restore our relationship with Him and lead us with His Words and His Spirit.

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

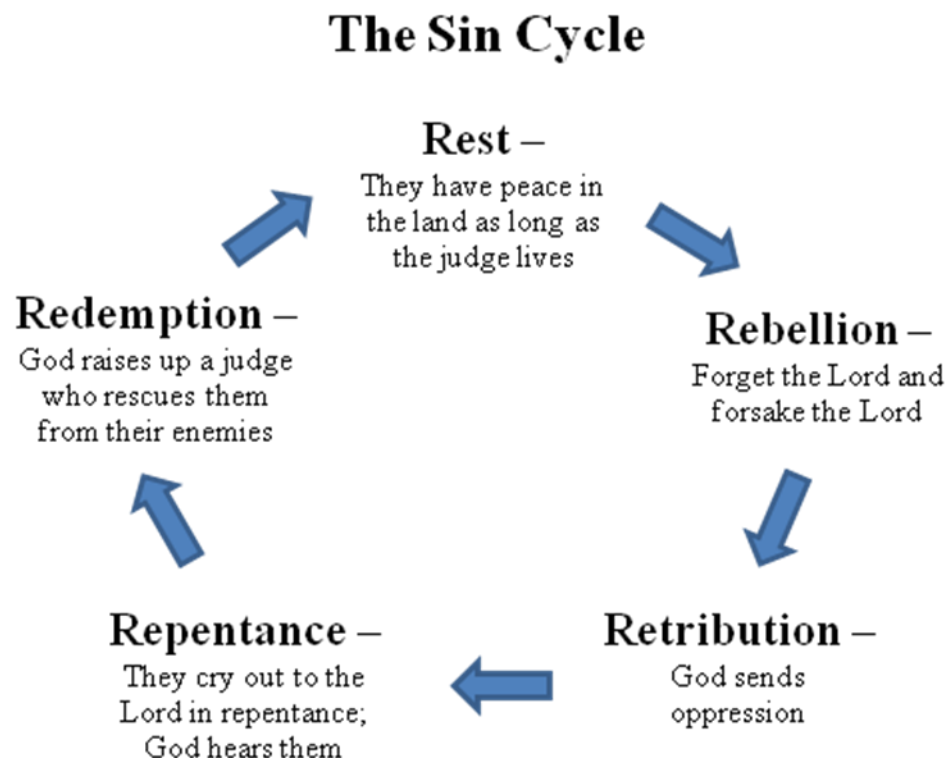
Two major things we can learn about God from the book of Judges that we should never forget:

- God judges sin.
- God forgives sin and restores a relationship when the sinner repents.

Two major things we can learn about ourselves from this Era in history:

- We are either living in sin or at war with our sinful nature.
- Dependence on God and obedience to His commands is our source of victory.

Day One: Judges 1:1-3:6, The Slippery Slope of Sin



The sin cycle is repeated throughout the book of Judges. It begins with one act of disobedience to the revealed will of God, followed by another, then another. Eventually, and fairly quickly, the nation or person is accustomed to living in habitual sin and hardened toward the things of God.

1. What do Judah, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali all have in common?

2. Take a few moments to ask God if there is something He has commanded you to eliminate from your life that you have only partially completed. How has this brought trouble (or how could it bring trouble) in your life?

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

3. Describe the children of Israel’s relationship with God after Joshua’s death? (See 2:10 and 17:6)

4. What are you doing (or will commit to start doing) to make sure this is never the description of your relationship with God?

5. How does God use the remaining Canaanites to teach Israel? What is God using in your life to teach you to walk in the ways of the Lord?

6. What are you doing to help future generations know the Lord and the work He has done for His people?

Prayer: Consider making Psalm 1 and Psalm 139:23-24 your personal prayer to God.

Day Two: Judges 3:7-5:31, The Sin Cycle in Living Color

The good news of the sin cycle is that God accepts our repentance, sends us a deliverer, and gives rest for our souls. As individuals, we get to choose where we are in the sin cycle. The sin cycle also applies to God’s people as a whole, Christians as one body—the body of Christ (Romans 12:5). It may feel like we have no impact or influence as one Christian in a group of many, but Scripture tells us we do. Read Romans 12:5-21.

Scripture has many examples of God raising up and using women for His kingdom purposes. It seems He often does so in the most difficult of times (Miriam, Esther, Ruth and Naomi, Deborah, and Mary the mother of Jesus). Scripture is also filled with examples of the sin cycle. Perhaps that is why God told King Solomon what His people need to do when their nation is in need (see 2 Chronicles 7:13-14). “If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14 NASB).

7. What were the Israelites doing in the first sin cycle that led them to subsequent oppression? What “evil in the sight of the Lord” do you see happening among God’s people in America today?

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

8. How long do the Israelites experience oppression and then peace after their deliverance in the first sin cycle (3:7-11), the second sin cycle (3:12-30), and the next sin cycle (4:1-23, 5:31)?

First _____
Second _____
Third _____

9. During the third sin cycle, God raises up a woman to judge Israel and a foreign woman to slay the enemies' king. What do their roles in Israel teach you about God's view of women?

10. In the song of Deborah, what did they sing in praise to God? According to the song, how does God help Israel win the battle against Sisera?

11. Based on these few chapters in Judges, 2 Chronicles 7:14, and Luke 6:46-49, what can we do to bring our nation back to God?

Prayer: Consider praying Psalm 85 for America and Israel.

Day 3: Judges 6:1-8:28, The Weak Raised Up

After a great victory, the leaders took time to thank the warriors and give praise to God. Later, they fell into sin again and had great need for a deliverer. Gideon, the least of the weakest, had the promise of the presence of God. We, too, have the promised presence of God. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Remember that the story of Ruth happens about this same time as the story of Gideon. We will study the book of Ruth after we complete Judges, but chronologically it happens about this time.

12. Describe the Israelites' oppression in the 4th sin cycle (remember as we study Gideon that he is also known as Jerubbaal).

13. What was Gideon's view of God?

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

14. What does it cost Gideon to step out in obedience to God?

15. What does God have Gideon do which seems totally illogical? What has God asked you to do that seems illogical?

16. How does God validate His promise to Gideon? How has God validated His promises to you?

17. How do you know when you have a word from God and not just a plan of action you've dreamed up on your own? (Consider John 8:31-32, Romans 12:2, James 1:5-8)

Prayer: Psalm 90:16-17

Day 4: Judges 8:29-10:18, People and Politics

As we approach election time in America, perhaps it is good timing to consider the impact of the leader over a nation (and home) and some of the schemes used to lure us into choosing ungodly leaders. Maybe it's a good time to memorize and repeat often the words of Joshua, "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:14-15).

18. Abimelech is Gideon's (also known as Jerubbaal) son through his concubine in Shechem. How does Abimelech influence the people to make him their leader? (See 9:1-6)

19. How is Abimelech portrayed in Jotham's parable? (See 9:14-15 and 19-21).

Week 26

Key Verse: Judges 2:10 NIV After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

20. How does Jotham’s prophecy come to pass? (See 9:50-57)

21. Voting for our leaders is a privilege we have in America. How do you decide which candidate is the best choice?

22. What prophecies and promises have been recorded in God’s Word that we as Christians would be wise to remember and pass on to our children? (Ask God to reveal one or two to you from His Word. Also consider Revelation 1-3)

Prayer: Matthew 6:9-13

Day 5: Judges 11:1-12:15, Failure to Learn from History

What a contrast we see in these Scriptures between the nation of Israel who regularly failed to keep their promise to serve the Lord, and the man Jephthah who made a foolish vow to God and kept that vow even when it meant killing his innocent daughter. Hopefully, in this passage we learn the value of keeping the instructions given by God and resisting the temptation to make vows outside of God’s plan.

23. Who was Jephthah and what did he tell the Ammonites about their god, Chemosh? About the God of Israel?

24. Did Jephthah need to make a vow to the Lord and use his daughter as surety? _____ What would have been an appropriate commitment to God? Consider Deuteronomy 11:8-9 and 1 Chronicles 16:35.

25. Does God expect us to keep vows that require us to break His law? Why or why not? Consider Numbers 30 and Leviticus 20:1-6.

Prayer: Psalm 51