

Beginning where Joshua leaves off in the death of Joshua (Josh. 24:29). Covering almost 450 years, Judges tells the story of how *spiritual compromise* turned victory (blessing) into defeat (curse). “Another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD” (2:10). Creating a world of such chaos where, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

### **Objectives:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, we will:

- Learn that God’s sinful people break His covenant;
- God calls His people back to Him through times of testing;
- Discover how in His grace, God raised up judges to lead His people back to Him.

### **Setting the Stage:**

God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants forever. However, being sinners, God’s people could not keep their end of the covenant. In his eternal foreknowledge, God knew this would happen. That is why, even before the beginning of time, He determined to send His only Son to die for our transgressions (Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20). In the Old Testament, just as in the New, God was at work. Through discipline and times of testing—for Old Testament believers often at the hands of foreigners—God called His people to repentance. Through His means of grace—for Old Testament believers, through the Word, circumcision, atonement sacrifices and the Passover meal—He directed sinners to Christ’s future atoning sacrifice, the once for all (Hebrews 10). Now that Christ has come, God still calls us to repentance and faith in our Savior, through the Law and through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Today we will look at the continuous theme throughout Judges; God shows his mercy and grace and saves his people, yet Israel continues to compromise, fall into apostasy and serve other Gods.

### **A Generation That Did Not Know God: Read Judges 2:1-23**

Under Joshua’s leadership, God had led a new generation into the Promised Land with military victories to prove His kingship to the people of Israel (you can read a list of God’s successes in Joshua 12:1-24). God used Joshua and this new generation to accomplish His will. As we read in Chapter 1 of Judges, the successes, of God, continued for a while. However, it was not long after Joshua’s death that things deteriorated.

As is so often the case, when faced with a choice between their fathers’ God, who has promised them every grace and blessing on Mount Sinai and demonstrated it, and the “new” and seductive gods and goddesses that promise such immediate and pleasing fulfillment of desire the children are often easily led astray. Such is the case in Canaan. The Canaanites’ gods seem so appealing and the Israelites allowed themselves to be led astray. God had warned their parents, “Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you” (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). Sadly, the warning fell on deaf ears.

*What else did the generation after Joshua fail to do that led to their children being led astray? (2:10)*

*In God’s eyes, why is this failure as important as that of not “driving out” the Canaanites, and avoiding the false gods?*

Read Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; and 32:46. *God told the Israelites not to “forget the things that your eyes have seen” (4:9). What did God mean? Why is this important?*

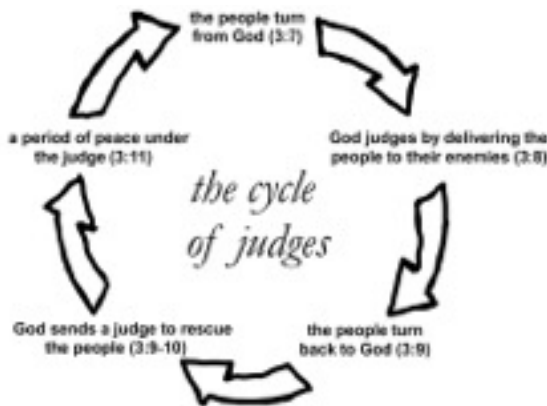
*Read Proverbs 22:6. God wants us to pass on our beliefs to future generations. What is really at stake here? What are some ways that we fail in this work today?*

**The Israelites Break God’s Covenant: Reflecting on 2:6-13**

*Give examples of how Israel broke God’s covenant (esp. 2:11-13). What do Israel’s actions say about their perception of the 1 Commandment?*

*What are ways that we transgress the Will of God? (Though we live under the New Covenant, in Jesus blood, which cannot be broken.)*

**Cycle of Sin and Salvation in Judges: Read Judges 3:1-12**



Many scholars note a cycle in Judges describing Israel’s relationship with God.

- ➡ Israel disowns God and goes after false gods.
- ➡ God disciplines his people by removing his blessings, resulting in Israel’s oppression
- ➡ In their misery Israel repents
- ➡ God calls a judge to deliver His people from oppression
- ➡ Israel experiences a period of rest following their deliverance

*How does a similar cycle appear in our own lives?*

**The Judges:**

First Oppression, Judges 3:7-11:

- Sin—Idolatry
- Cause—Apostasy
- Punishment—Eight years
- Deliverer and Judge—Othniel

Second Oppression, Judges 3:12-31:

- Sin—Immorality and Idolatry
- Cause—Apostasy
- Punishment—Eighteen Years
- Deliverer and Judge—Ehud & Shamgar

Third Oppression, Judges 4-5:

- Sin—Departed from God & Laziness
- Cause—Apostasy
- Punishment—Twenty Years
- Deliverer and Judge—Deborah & Barak

Fourth Oppression, Judges 6-8:32:

- Sin—Departed from God
- Cause—Apostasy

Punishment—Midianites for Seven years  
Deliverer and Judge—Gideon

Fifth Oppression, Judges 8:33-10:5:

Sin—Departed from God, Sex Immorality  
Cause—Apostasy  
Punishment—Civil War, etc.  
Deliverer and Judge—Tola and Jair

Sixth Oppression, Judges 10:6-12:15:

Sin—Idolatry increased  
Cause—Apostasy  
Punishment—Philistines & Ammonites, Eighteen Years  
Deliverer and Judge—Jephthah

Seventh Oppression, Judges 13-16:

Sin—Departed from God  
Cause—Apostasy  
Punishment—Philistines, Forty years  
Deliverer and Judge—Samson