

**Week 14**  
**April 6/7, 2019**  
**A Kingdom Stumbles**  
**Judges 2:11-23; 21:25**

**Summary and Goal:**

The book of Judges is about the circular “Sin Cycle” period that occurred after the Conquest Era. As we look at the Sin Cycle in the book of Judges we will find that it is comparable with our own sin cycle that we deal with every day. The Sin Cycle includes four distinct stages: 1) Rebellion 2) Ruin 3) Repentance 4) Rescue.

**Main Passages:**

**Judges 2:11-23** *March 31<sup>st</sup> (pg. 346-347) in The Chronological Bible*

**Judges 21:25** *April 6<sup>th</sup> (pg. 377) in The Chronological Bible*

**Session Outline:**

1. **Rebellion (Judges 2:11-12)**
2. **Ruin (Judges 2:14-15)**
3. **Repentance (Judges 10:15-16)** *April 3<sup>rd</sup>, pg. 361 in The Chronological Bible*
4. **Rescue (Judges 2:18)**

**Session in a Sentence:**

In this session we will discover Israel’s circular sin cycle, and we will see their need for an ultimate deliverer to rescue them from their rebellion and ruin.

**Kingdom Connection:**

The Judge that God raised up was not a judicial judge. Instead, these Judges would help to deliver the people of Israel from their bondage and sin. These Judges governed their region. At the end of the book, the people of Israel have no national king, which sets the stage for God’s King who would be charged to lead the people and deliver them from their enemies. The Kingdom of God is fulfilled in Jesus as He is our Leader and our Ultimate Deliverer.

**Missional Application:**

The Book of Judges is exhaustive in its treatment of the rebellion and ruin that comes when life is disconnected from God. Relief comes and the cycle of sin is broken when repentance is evident. The book of Judges encourages us to be hesitant to sin and quick to repent.

## **Introduction: Drifting in the Sea of Culture**

When I was young our family went on a vacation with my grandparents, uncles, nieces, and nephews to Destin, Florida! We were very excited to get alone together as the entire family in the middle of the summer. It was incredibly fun! We would grill hot dogs in the evening, search for sand dollars throughout the day, and laugh at my grandfather as he scavenged the beach with his metal detector. At that point, I had never been to the pristine white beaches of Florida! All I knew was the murky brown beaches of Galveston. Our family is Irish, so we came excited ...and left sunburned.

Our first day on the beach we set up camp with all our lawn-chairs, towels, tents, and coolers. My Dad and I rushed into the water as fast as we could. It was incredible! I could see my feet below me. We swam out further and further. We could see dolphins cresting out of the water, so we swam out to where they were. We decided to head back to our camp on the shore, but we couldn't see our camp. We couldn't even find our condo tower on the beach. During all the excitement we took our eyes off our camp and lost track of where we were. We realized we drifted almost a half mile from our campsite.

In the book of Judges, that's where we find the nation of Israel. In the sea of culture, they drifted and eventually ended up gasping for air to the point of drowning! The people of Israel drifted away from the commandments and the character of God. Human pride would like to tell us that we tend to get better as time goes on. Although, we may advance in technology, science, and our understanding of how things work, morally we trend downward. The Bible will demonstrate in the Book of Judges that as time goes on without God anchoring our lives, we drift out and eventually drown in the sea of culture.

As we continue with the Chronology of the Bible through 14 Eras. We have been through the Creation Era, the Patriarch Era, the Exodus Era, and the Conquest Era. We have spent more time in some Eras than others. But one thing we have seen over and over is the *consistency* of God and the *inconsistency* of God's people. In each Era, we have seen God's people drift, but never more clearly than in the Judges Era. Though the two books which make up the Judges Era are Judges and Ruth, we will focus on the book of Judges this week.

Judges takes place throughout 350 years, starting at the death of Joshua ending on the cusp of the Kingdom Era and the coronation of Saul as the King of Israel. The book of Judges consistently follows a cyclical pattern: it is often referred to as "The Sin Cycle." The Sin Cycle is comprised of 4 stages: 1) Rebellion 2) Ruin 3) Repentance 4) Rescue.

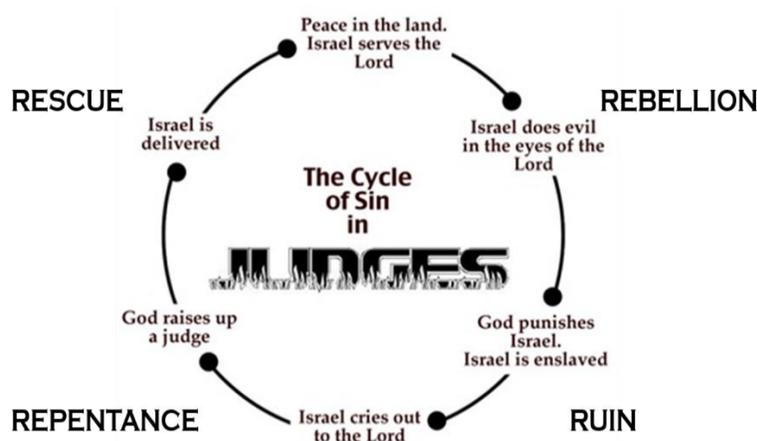
## Setting:

As the Conquest Era in the book of Joshua ends, and the Judges Era begins, we realize that the people of Israel failed to complete the conquest. God commanded the people of Israel to rid the Promised Land of all the other nations and tribes. Why did God command this? God is all-knowing, and He knew that if the people of Israel lived with other cultures, they would adopt the culture, then they would take on the worship practices and idols of the culture which is idolatry. Jim Rohn has famously said, *“You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”* My High School football coach used to yell at us, *“If you roll with the dogs, you are going to get fleas!”* And the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:33 *“Do not be deceived, Bad company corrupts good morals.”* God wanted His people to be set apart, to be holy people in the midst of an unholy world. The nation of Israel was to be the light that would pierce through the darkness.

Repeatedly at the beginning of the book of Judges, you read *“Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of the land (Judges 1:27)... Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of the land (Judges 1:30) ... Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of the land (Judges 1:31)... Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of the land. (Judges 1:33)”*

Israel drove out some of the people, but they failed to drive all of them out. Incomplete obedience is disobedience in the Lord’s eyes. Israel failed to separate themselves from the culture, instead, they embraced it and they adopted their false worship practices. Let’s look at how the sin cycle in the book of Judges unfolds.

The section we are going to look at in depth today is the summary of the book of Judges. It doesn’t capture everything that happens but gives us the big picture of the direction of the book and the over-arching theme. The cycle we look at is repeated every single time there is a new judge.



1. **Rebellion** – *“And they forsook (abandoned) the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.”* – Judges 2:12 (March 31<sup>st</sup>, pg. 346)

The people of Israel progressed in their rebellion toward God. We notice from the text that rebellion starts with abandonment. The Hebrew word for abandon means leave or to forsake, but behind the word, there is a word picture of a farmer who would loosen the ties of his animal or detach it from its yoke. Most of us Houstonians can't really imagine that. I don't have that much experience with farms. But it's similar to when we let our dogs off of the leash. The first step toward rebelling against God is disconnecting ourselves from His guidance, goodness, character, and direction from our lives. It may not even seem intentional, but it is incredibly dangerous. All of us have the propensity to disconnect from God and we are tempted to do it. For some of us it comes during a busy season at work when the deadlines are coming up quick, we can easily disconnect ourselves from a morning quiet time, so we squeeze in more time at the office. For some people disconnecting from God looks like staying up all night Saturday binging on Netflix and oversleeping for Bible Study and Sunday Worship. All of us feel the tugs on our heart every day to disconnect from Jesus and His Word.

Robert Robinson was a pastor and songwriter in the 1700s when he penned one of the church's most profound and powerful hymn *“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”*. His words are biographical of the human experience, *“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to Leave the God I love.”*

It's dangerous to disconnect from God because when we unhook ourselves from His commandments and character of God, we cling to counterfeit gods. The heart is like a sponge. It will absorb whatever it is around. If we don't present our hearts with the truth of God's commandments and character, then our hearts will absorb anything and everything else and form an idol out of it. Charles Spurgeon said, *“The heart is by nature restless as old ocean's waves; it seeks an object for its affection; and when it finds one beneath the stars, it is doomed to sorrow.”*

For the people of Israel when they disconnected their hearts from the One True God, their hearts attached to the gods of the nations. The text says, *“They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.”* The gods of the people around them primarily consisted of Baal and Ashtaroth. Baal was the male deity who was the sun god; while Ashtaroth was the moon goddess. Both gods had an intense following and their religious rituals consisted of temple prostitution. The Israelite people espoused these gods and

goddesses. They formed their own idols, erected altars to them, and participated in the surrounding culture's religious practices. This *"Provoked the Lord to anger."*

In the Old Testament, the relationship that God had with His people was different than the relationship that any of the surrounding nations had with their gods. God made a covenant with His people and His people made a covenant to be with Him. God was not just the ruler of the nation of Israel, He viewed Himself as their Husband.

*"For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth."- Isaiah 54:5*

For God, Israel's idolatry was more than the act of presenting themselves to fake idols. When God's people commit idolatry they are participating in spiritual adultery.

Today, we are not necessarily crafting images for our homes or bowing down at altars for fake gods and goddesses. But we can be very involved in our own version of our lives. Tim Keller, in his book *Counterfeit Gods*, gives us a great definition of idolatry and how it flares up in our own lives. "What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. An [idol] is anything so central and essential to your life that should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living." What makes idolatry so dangerous and accessible to us today is that anything and everything can become an idol.

The people of Israel in the book of Judges share a lot in common with us. They were practicing the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath, but they were still worshipping God at the same time. The religion of the day for the people of Israel was syncretism. They wanted to mix worship with false gods with the worship of the true God. In 2019, it seems like things are still the same. We are tempted to worship our careers and Jesus. We are tempted to worship family and Jesus. We are tempted to worship positions and recognition and Jesus. But God does not accept second place. He does not operate on a podium; He rules from a throne. Anything less than being exclusively devoted in worship to Jesus is idolatry. Idolatry and rebellion always lead to ruin.

2. **Ruin** <sup>-14</sup> *And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.* <sup>15</sup> *Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.*— Judges 2:14-15 pg.346

When the Israelite people abandoned God and pursued other idols their lives came to utter ruin. The Bible shows us that idolatry is never harmless and it is never innocent. Man's idolatry will always flare up the wrath of God. The inhabitants of the land that Israel refused to clear out of the land became the very thing that brought destruction, pain, and heartache for them. That's how sin works.

For decades, the two illusionists Siegfried and Roy have headlined shows in Las Vegas. They mix magic, charm and white tigers together and produce breathtaking shows. They train white tigers from when they are kittens to perform and obey. They establish relationships with them based on trust and love. In October 2003, Roy was attacked on stage during a performance in Vegas by one of their white tigers. The audience was shocked and so was Roy. The tiger grabbed Roy by the neck and pierced major arteries. It was an act of God's grace and mercy that Roy lived. Although the audience and the handlers were stunned that a 9 ft., 500 lbs., carnivorous tiger would attack a man, they shouldn't be. That is what white tiger's do! It's in their nature. No matter the fondness and affection that Siegfried and Roy showed toward this tiger, nobody should be surprised that the tiger acted this way.

In the same way that's the nature of sin. It's in the nature of all sin to bring about death, ruin, and destruction. The Bible tells us in the book of James, "*Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.*" --James 1:15

Here in the book of Judges, we see sin taking its normal course of action: viciously attacking anything and everything it touches. God's wrath is kindled toward the Israelites and He disciplines them.

God primarily disciplines His people in two ways:

**First, The Passive Discipline of God-** He lets His people persist in sin and lets us reap the natural consequences of them. – "*He delivered them into the hands*" (v.14) The Israelite's lived with people who did not value God or them. So, God allowed for the natural consequences to occur and prevented Himself from intervening on behalf of the Israelites. The people of Israel were plundered and oppressed by the people they were supposed to drive out.

**Second, The Active Discipline of God-** God punishes us to call us back to Himself. "... *the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity*" (v.15) When the people of Israel marched out into battle, God was not on their side. He caused them to suffer great defeat because they were rebelling against God. He would not let them prosper on the battlefield, because they did not surrender to Him first. It didn't matter what type of strategies the Israelite generals came up with, it didn't matter how many soldiers Israel

had on the battlefield. Their opponent was not who stood across from them. The Lord was against them.

Israel was in shambles. They were oppressed by foreign powers. They were losing every battle, and idolatry plagued their tribes. Israel was completely shattered, ruined and desperate. Ruin always has the opportunity to lead to repentance.

3. **Repentance** – “15 And the children of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.” <sup>16</sup> So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” – Judges 10:15-16 April 3<sup>rd</sup>, pg. 361

During Israel’s rebellion and ruin, they came to a moment of repentance. In Christian culture, there is a lot of talk about repentance. There is a big emphasis on the act of repentance. But what is repentance?

Repentance is not just regret. Repentance is not just guilt over what we have done wrong. Repentance isn’t merely confessing so that God gets off your back.

Repentance is:

- A) acknowledgment of sin before God
- B) deep conviction over sin
- C) turning away from that sin and towards God

The people of Israel got to a point beyond indifference when it came to idolatry. God’s desire for our lives is not to live a life of indifference but a life of response to His heart.

If the Sin Cycle is going to be broken it will require repentance. Notice that the Israelites did more than just feel guilty and cry. Instead, they moved into action because true biblical repentance always requires movement away from sin and movement towards God. Repentance has a tough reputation. Typically, when people think of repentance, they think of “turn or burn” street preachers. But God’s design for repentance is not for shame or condemnation. In the Book of Acts, Peter preaches his greatest sermon ever, he says, “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19)

Repentance always leads to a season of forgiveness, restoration, and refreshing from the Lord. Repentance leads to rescue.

4. **Rescue** “And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge;” -Judges 2:18a

Whenever the people repented of their rebellion, God rescued them from their ruin. God would send a judge to help the people of Israel. When we typically think of a judge, we think of somebody who sits in a black robe, with a gavel. But these are not the judges that God sends. Think less of Judge Judy and think more along the lines of Clint Eastwood. A judge was a special individual that God raised up to deliver His people from the oppression of foreign enemies and foreign gods. Some of these individuals were godly (Gideon), and some of them were not (Samson).

The Book of Judges is unique in the fact that it shows us that the Judge had nothing in and of themselves that could help deliver people, but it was God's Spirit that rested upon the Judge that would be the ultimate deliverer. The Judge was just the tool in the hand of God. This helps put us in our proper perspective. When God uses us to do great things for His Kingdom; whether it is leading a Bible Study, leading Vacation Bible School, imparting an encouraging word to somebody or providing a Gospel witness; we must remember that the power and ability come from God. We are only tools in the hands of God.

The book of Judges, quite frankly, can be a little disappointing and frustrating. Whenever the Judge would die the people would jump back into the Sin Cycle. They would continue to rebel against God, then they would live ruined lives, then they would repent and cry out to God and He would send another Judge to the proverbial rescue. Verse 19 tells us clearly, " *But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.*" The frustrating thing is that the people did not advance, they did not pull their selves together. In fact, they got worse and worse.

Ultimately, here's what the book of Judges screams to us about the human condition.

**First**, we are more sinful than we like to believe.

**Second**, we continually search in every form of idolatry for meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

**Third**, repentance touches the heart of God.

**Fourth and Finally**, we need an ultimate Rescuer.

The People of Israel didn't just need somebody to save them from their enemies. They needed somebody to save them from their ultimate enemy, themselves. Human institutions, programs, and deliverers no matter how powerful can't bring about ultimate rescue and deliverance. The book of Judges points to our biggest need. We don't need our circumstances to change as much as we need for our souls to be loved and

transformed by God. The book of Judges is an arrow pointing to our ultimate Judge that would come: Jesus. He will take rebellious, ruined, repentant lives and rescue them, forever.

The last sentence of the book of Judges is perhaps one of the saddest in all of scripture. After 350 years of this Sin Cycle the lessons were not being passed to the next generations. The last sentence reads, *"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* Judges 21:25 April 6<sup>th</sup> pg. 377

The nation of Israel was tired of temporary relief and permanent disappointment, not realizing it was because of their own choices. They were ready to have a king that could lead them; just like other countries had kings. Next week will begin to look at the Kingdom Era and the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel.