

BIBLE BRIEFING

“What We Have Here Is A Failure To Comply”

JUDGES 1:1 - 3:7

Introduction

We're all too familiar with movie sequels. Very rarely is a sequel anywhere near as good as the original!

Judges is the sad sequel to Joshua:

1. In Joshua, the heavenlies are typified; in Judges, the earthlies are typified.
2. Joshua rings with the shout of victory; Judges echoes with the sobs of defeat.

Judges is a book that repeats a sad cycle:

1. Rebellion: Israel sins.
2. Retribution: Israel is brought into servitude to her enemies.
3. Repentance: Israel turns to God in supplication.
4. Restoration: Israel is saved.

If you wanted to summarize the problem Israel had during the period of the Judges, you'd use the word **Compromise**. Israel failed through compromise. Every page of the book contributes to driving home this central point.

How did it all begin? The opening chapters highlight the areas of compromise leading to failure.

Before we get to the text, let me give a little factual background:

1. The author of the Book of Judges is unknown. Some have suggested it was Samuel, who was considered to be Israel's last Judge and first prophet.

2. The events described in Judges span about 335 years – from just after the death of Joshua until the beginning of the monarchy. The recurring phrase, [in those days Israel had no king](#), seems to indicate it was written during the monarchy.
3. The Hebrew word which is translated [Judges](#) comes from a word meaning *to exercise authority*. The Judges were ordinary people whom God empowered to act with His authority to save His people from their oppressors.

The Judges were not a regular succession of leaders or rulers, but occasional deliverers raised-up by God. The Elders had authority in their respective tribes. The Judges were empowered over them to act on behalf of God.

The Judges themselves were often crude, even vulgar. All the more do you see the miraculous intervention of God on the behalf of His people. Israel was forced to recognize God, Whom they'd forsaken, and return to Him.

These returns were short-lived. Israel, through compromise, quickly sinned and the cycle began all over again.

Which brings us back to compromise. Just how did they compromise? If we can determine Israel's failures, maybe we can avoid some of our own failures through compromise.

In the opening chapter you are told that the nine and one half tribes that settled in Canaan did not destroy or even drive out the Canaanites (as they were commanded and enabled to do). They allowed them to remain – a sad compromise with their enemies.

(The other two and one half tribes had already compromised, some years earlier, by choosing to remain on the other side of the Jordan River. They had not gone in to the Promised Land, but settled short – because they liked the territory).

[Judges 1:1](#) Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"

[Judges 1:2](#) And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand."

Israel made a good start. Even though promised victory, they still sought the Lord for the particulars.

It is the bane of the Church that we fail to really seek the Lord. God gives us His Word, and wisdom; but they do not cancel-out the need to seek the Lord personally and corporately for His specific direction.

Judges 1:3 So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him.

This band of brothers fought side-by-side. It's good for us to be together, ministering side-by-side.

Judges 1:4 Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek.

Judges 1:5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

Judges 1:6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

Judges 1:7 And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather *scraps* under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

What goes around, comes around! Poetic justice was meted out upon this evil king. This, however, was wrong of them. Mutilation was a pagan practice. They were already borrowing from their enemies.

Judges 1:8 Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

Judges 1:9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland.

Judges 1:10 Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

Judges 1:11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.)

This was the Old Testament equivalent of shock-and-awe. Their military campaign was incredibly successful.

The narrative pauses to finish up a story from the Book of Joshua:

Judges 1:12 Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife."

Judges 1:13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.

Judges 1:14 Now it happened, when she came *to him*, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?"

Judges 1:15 So she said to him, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

We took a longer look at this in a previous study. The mention of Caleb here reminds you of the victory of an uncompromising life. It tells you that total victory over the local enemies was not only possible, it was necessary.

The mention of a son-in-law and daughter tell you that the victory of an uncompromising life can be passed down to the next generation. Too often we set up our kids to fail and fall by describing their world as too difficult to overcome.

Judges 1:16 Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which *lies* in the South *near* Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

The **City of Palms** was Jericho. This is a genealogical note. There were those among the Israelites who were not Hebrew, but who were not enemies, either.

Judges 1:17 And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

Judges 1:18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory.

Judges 1:19 So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron.

Could not means **did not**. Chariots of iron were nothing to God. David would later declare in Psalm 20:7, **Some boast in chariots... but we will boast in the name of the Lord our God.** They could have

and should have driven out these [mountaineers](#). They compromised, and fell short, because of the supposed difficulty.

It's interesting that this conquest was occurring at the beginning of the Iron Age. It was a new and different time in the world. Their forefathers had not dealt with this new technology.

Again, I suggest that we sometimes believe that our age, our times, are fraught with difficulties that no other believers have ever had to face. While that may be true on the surface, it does not at all diminish the plan or power of God to grant us victory over our enemies!

[Judges 1:20](#) And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak.

[Judges 1:21](#) But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

Caleb was old school, and he expelled the toughest enemies of them all. He should have inspired the younger generation to press forward. Instead, the Benjamites compromised with their enemies.

[Judges 1:22](#) And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them.

[Judges 1:23](#) So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.)

[Judges 1:24](#) And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy."

[Judges 1:25](#) So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go.

[Judges 1:26](#) And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which *is* its name to this day.

These guys weren't very good spies! They couldn't figure-out how to gain entry into the city. To be fair, the city was probably locked-down, in siege mode. Still, they compromised in order to get the information they were after.

Nothing wrong with showing mercy – if there is repentance! This guy went out and established his own city!

[Judges 1:27](#) However, Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants* of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its

villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.

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.

God's people met with greater and greater resistance. It was to be expected – so that they could grow as their trials increased. Instead, they fell short.

Putting their enemies under tribute was a terrible mistake. We make this mistake today by borrowing supposed insights from the world. Christians do this with secular psychology. It's a terrible mistake.

Judges 1:29 Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Judges 1:30 Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

Judges 1:31 Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob.

Judges 1:32 So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

Judges 1:33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

The Israelites didn't start out to forsake God. They decided to settle for less and through compromise set themselves up to fail.

Judges 1:34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley;

Judges 1:35 and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute.

Judges 1:36 Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward.

It all fell apart as they met with resistance. Having failed to destroy or drive them out, they put their enemies under tribute – a thing God had explicitly forbid.

This marks a further compromise – with God's Word.

Chapter Two describes the rapid downward spiraling of Israel.

Judges 2:1 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.

Judges 2:2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?

Judges 2:3 Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"

The Angel of the Lord here is clearly God Himself, appearing in a human form - Jesus Christ appearing to the people of Israel before His incarnation in Bethlehem. We know this is Jesus for two reasons:

1. First, because the Angel of the LORD here claims divinity by saying that He is the one who led Israel up from Egypt, made a covenant with Israel, and personally called Israel to obedience.
2. Second, because this person, appearing in human form before Israel, cannot be the Father, because the Father is described as *invisible*

Before God ever calls us to obedience or confronts our sin, He reminds us of His great love and faithfulness to us.

Jesus confronts Israel in love: you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? The question is stinging in its simplicity; there is never a good reason for our disobedience.

Jesus announces that He will allow the work of possessing the land to go unfinished, as a means of correction to a disobedient Israel. If they had thought that God would do it all for them anyway, they were wrong.

We often wish that God would do the work of Christian maturity for us; that we would wake up one morning and a certain besetting sin will just be gone. Sometimes God grants such a miraculous deliverance, and we praise Him for it. But more commonly, He requires our partnership with Him in the process of Christian growth. Our partnership is important to God because it shows that our heart is where His heart is; that we are truly growing close to God.

Judges 2:4 So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.

Judges 2:5 Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD.

This was good. Sacrifice was required under the Law. Still, obedience is always better than sacrifice after the fact.

The writer pauses and takes us back to the death of Joshua.

Judges 2:6 And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

Judges 2:7 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

Judges 2:8 Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died *when he* was one hundred and ten years old.

Judges 2:9 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

Judges 2:10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

A generation arose that did not know the Lord nor His work. How does that happen? Responsibility is on both the parents and their kids:

1. It happens that kids don't know the Lord if parents fail to evangelize their kids; and if they fail to walk empowered in front of their kids.
2. It happens that kids don't know the Lord's work if they fail to build upon the solid foundation good parents lay for them

Each situation is unique. Do your part.

Judges 2:11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals;

Judges 2:12 and they forsook 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 2:13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Their compromise was going to destroy their kids. Because they did not destroy or drive out the enemy, but thought they could rule the enemy; the enemy was in their midst.

Christians duplicate this when they are delivered from some evil, but then introduce it in moderation – all while their kids observe.

The rebellion/retribution/repentance/restoration cycle of the Book of Judges is summarized in the next set of verses:

Judges 2:14 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.

Judges 2:15 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 2:16 Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

Judges 2:17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so.

Judges 2:18 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; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

Judges 2:19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

Stubborn (also translated as *stiff-necked*) is a word that was also applied to Israel many time during the Exodus. A change of location - even coming into the Promised Land - didn't necessarily mean a change of heart for Israel. We should never count on sanctification by relocation; wherever you go, you take you with you. A new environment doesn't always mean a new attitude.

Judges 2:20 Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice,

Judges 2:21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

Judges 2:22 so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not.”

Judges 2:23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

We must guard constantly against setting our hearts on sinful things; we may get to the point where God may allow us to have them - thus bringing sin, bondage, and pain into our lives.

You might object that God leaves some enemies; or leaves you in enemy territory. He knows if you are Caleb, or compromise. Caleb kept overcoming his enemies, right into old age. He didn't complain about their existence, or size. He knew God could destroy them.

You will face enemies within and without until you see the Lord face-to-face. See them as tests you can pass, not fail.

The first seven verses of Chapter Three form a fitting conclusion to our opening study:

Judges 3:1 Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan

Judges 3:2 (*this was* only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it),

Judges 3:3 *namely*, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath.

Judges 3:4 And they were *left*, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

You want a better life for your kids, and that's great. Spiritually, they need to be evangelized. They need to see you overcome by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And then you need to help them put their faith into practice, in the little tests that come their way.

Judges 3:5 Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Judges 3:6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

Judges 3:7 So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.

This is why you can't compromise. Even if you can handle your enemies, you're settling for less. But even worse – You're setting your kids up to fail completely.

Conclusion

We could perhaps make our own specific list of “pagan territory” in our lives; such a list is helpful because it forces you to identify your enemy.

God doesn't just instantly change every area of our lives. He wants our relationship with Him to be *proved* and *improved*; so that we will live a life of true partnership with God.

Collectively, the Judges are a picture of Jesus:

1. They save their people.
2. They bring peace to their people.

They are also an anti-type, in the sense that their rule ultimately fails – highlighting our need for a righteous king.

Including the Book of First Samuel, a total of seventeen Judges are named:

1. Some are warrior-rulers, who prefigure a king.
2. One is a priest (Eli).
3. And one is a prophet (Samuel).

Thus you have the three offices of king, prophet and priest – all fulfilled by Jesus Christ.