



A Study of the Book of Judges

Lesson 3: The Second Prologue... Judges 2:6-3:10

Two weeks ago, we began a new study or exposition of the Book of Judges. During the first lesson, I spent most of my time talking about the structure of the book. I even asked you to commit to memory a pithy little phrase I made up in order to help you keep the structure in mind. Does some willing student want to remind us what that phrase was? If not, here it is.

Two beginnings and two endings with seven judges on a seesaw in between and Gideon in the middle¹.

TWO BEGINNINGS...

AND TWO ENDINGS...

WITH SEVEN JUDGES ON A SEESAW
IN BETWEEN...

AND GIDEON IN THE MIDDLE.

Now I know that seems like a strange little phrase...but really...it encapsulates the whole structure of the book. Now the reason I wanted you to keep the phrase in mind is because as we work through the book that little phrase will help you keep you place as to where we are in the overall structure of the book.

Now the phrase starts off with the words **"two beginnings."** That is because Judges has a very unusual introduction...it seems like it starts for awhile...goes for a chapter or so and then starts over again.² Actually, it has a double introduction...you can tell that by the fact that the character Joshua dies twice in the beginning chapters of Judges. His death is recorded in the first verse...and then recorded again in Judges 2:8. Now the thing I want you to realize is that that there is a reason for that.

Now last week, we looked at the first introduction or prologue and saw how it outlined the nature of Israel's failure regarding the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

Now I don't want to be slippery about what their failure was. God had commanded the Israelites to go in and to completely dispossess the Canaanites and by that I mean, that God had commanded the Israelites to go into the land and either kill the Canaanites or drive them out.

Now that was His command...and there is no sense in trying to be politically correct about the nature of His command...He fully intended to dispossess the people of the land of Canaan by bringing them under His divine wrath and judgment. And if you go back and look at the inhabitants of the land it is not hard to understand why...if you go back and look at their culture

archaeologically, I think it is obvious that they were a vile people. They were awful and they had from the time from of Abraham to come to a state of repentance...but had never done that.

Therefore God sent the children of Israel into the land of Canaan to dispossess the Canaanites from the land...but, alas...that is not what happened.

What actually happened was the very thing that God had forbidden.

Here's what I mean by that. In failing to possess the land, the Israelites did the very thing God had warned them not to do. That is, the Israelites went into the land of Canaan and carved out a place for themselves in the midst of the Canaanites rather than actually getting rid the Canaanites.

We saw that grim fact last week in the repetition of a particular phrase...so if you have your Bibles open to Judges Chapter 1 and we'll simply zip through a few verses so you can get a sense of the repetition of this particular phrase.

Look for example at the first part of Judges 1:21.

^{NIV} **Judges 1:21**...The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites...

Then at Judges 1:27...

^{NIV} **Judges 1:27**...But Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth Shan or Taanach or Dor or Ibleam or Megiddo...

Then at Judges 1:29...

^{NIV} **Judges 1:29**...Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer...

Then at Judges 1:30...

^{NIV} **Judges 1:30**...Neither did Zebulun drive out the Canaanites living in Kitron...

Then at Judges 1:31...

^{NIV} **Judges 1:31**...Nor did Asher drive out those living in Acco or Sidon...

And so the Book of Judges goes on, repeating the same sad line over and over again. Each tribe failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land from the area they had been assigned.

Now what we saw last week is that the failure of the Israelites to dislodge the inhabitants of the land eventually led to them assimilating the Canaanites into their lives. Now that occurred in stages.

At first, they intermarried with the Canaanites and you can see the logic they used. The Canaanite women were attractive and they owned property and land. Intermarriage with the Canaanites would effectively increase their wealth...and they were attractive³.

Of course, once that occurred, they began quickly to incorporate their culture and lifestyle.

Ultimately they worshipped the gods of the Canaanites and that led them into judgment...the judgment of God Almighty.

And you can see that in the text.

Let's just look again for just a moment at Judges 2:1-5.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:1**...The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, ² and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? ³ Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be *thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you." ⁴ When the angel of the LORD had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud, ⁵ and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the LORD.

Now what I am saying is that the first prologue or introduction to the Book of Judges, Judges 1:1-2:5, explains the historical failure of the Israelites to drive out the Canaanites from the land while the second prologue or introduction explains the theological implications of what that failure led to.

Another way to say that is that the first prologue of the Book of Judges relates the historical reality of Israel's failure to obediently dispossess, to drive out, the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

The second prologue to the Book of Judges deals with the theological reality or basis of Israelite's failure to dispossess the Canaanites and why that put them into conflict with God.⁴

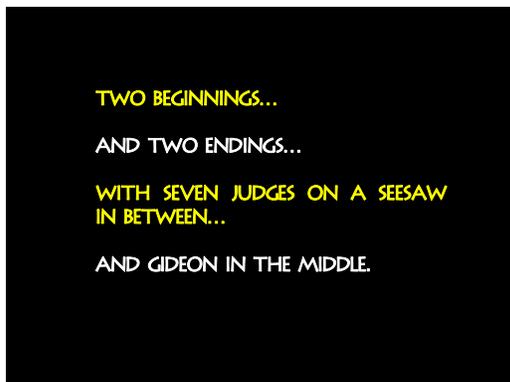
Now I have hammered that point repeatedly and I have done so for a purpose.

It is important to me that you understand that the stories in the Book of Judges were not just put there to entertain. They are not simply morality tales. No, they are stories told from a particular theological perspective that is intended to impact the reader and to instruct the reader on the reason why it is important to live obediently. They reflect the grim theological reality of the fact that disobedience to God's commands leads to judgment and disaster.

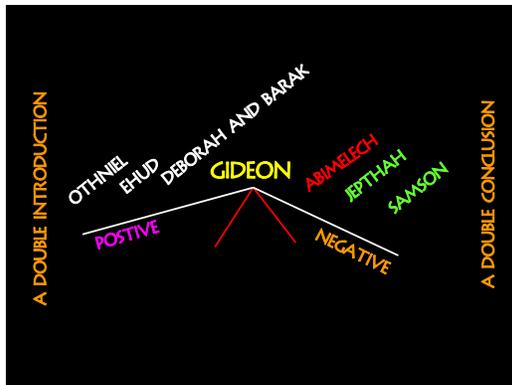
That, of course, is not a terribly popular message today.

That is why understanding the structure of the Book of Judges will help you to get a handle on the message of the Book of Judges.

That is why I have repeated this little phrase so often...



It is also why I've shown you this slide repeatedly...because it is a physical representation of the structure of the book.



You see the object lesson of Judges is that obedience to God's commands brings blessing while disobedience to God's commands brings disaster. We will see that in the individual lives of the Judges displayed.

In fact, using this particular slide you can see that Othniel, Ehud and Deborah head upward on the seesaw or are viewed positively while Abimelech, Jephthah and Samson are viewed negatively or at very least tragically.

So the story of Judges is like a seesaw...and Gideon is the central transitional figure.⁵ Every thing goes up until Gideon and everything goes down after Gideon. That is why the beginning of the book is so positive and the ending of the book is so dark and gloomy.

You see, in Judges everything goes uphill until Gideon. After Gideon everything goes downhill. Gideon is the transitional figure.

Now that tells me that Judges was written to encourage the nation to obey the Lord for its own well-being. But the question is, **"At what point in Israel's history was it written? To what end was it written at that point?"**

I think it was written during the time of the early kings. Specifically, I think it was written during the time of the conflict between David and King Saul, when God had removed His hand from Saul and had placed it on David⁶. You will remember in the Book of Samuel when the young nation of Israel fell into civil war and Saul tried to kill David and David went into hiding until God determined the proper time to make him king of the nation.

I say that for a number of reasons.

First the end of Judges repeats the phrase, **“In those days there was no king and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** It repeats that phrase four times. Now the repetition of that phrase implies that when the book was written there actually was king.

But the book also contains some important temporal markers such as...

^{NIV} **Judges 1:21**...The Benjamites, however, failed to dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the Benjamites.

Now that verse tells you that at the time of the composition of that section, Jerusalem was still occupied by the Jebusites.

Yet we know that David later defeated the Jebusites and made Jerusalem his capital. Cf. 2 Samuel 5:6, which implies that the Book of Judges or at least that one verse in Judges was written before David defeated the Jebusites and took over Jerusalem. Of course, modern scholars would scoff at the idea of taking the text so literally and would argue for recensions and revisions and editorial manipulations to the degree that some would have the Book of Judges still being

written today but I think we ought to let the text speak for itself. And when you do the facts may help explain why the Book of Judges on the whole portrays the Benjamites negatively and the Tribe of Judah positively. I think it probably polemical arguing for the kingship of David and against the kingship of Saul.

I think it written to encourage the people to covenantal faithfulness to David and to David's God, YHWH.

Now this morning we are turning to the second prologue and in case you have any doubt that it really is a second prologue, I want to point out that the section we are going to look at this morning starting in Judges 2:6 has Joshua the great leader who replaced Moses when the Israelites first entered the land die all over again.

In other words, the section we are about to look at has Joshua die a second time in the Book of Judges.

Now the best way to understand that is that the first time the author has Joshua die, he concerns himself with the historical failure of the nation to drive out the Canannites. The second time he has Joshua die he concerns himself with theological implications of that failure.

Now with that in mind let's look at the text.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:6**...After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. ⁷ The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. ⁸ Joshua son of

Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

Now I pointed out last week that this section is almost an exact repetition of a passage from the Book of Joshua and you can see the point, I think, that the author is trying to make that during Joshua's life the children of Israel obeyed the Lord and he gave them a measure of success, Apparently, as long as Joshua was in command, they followed the Lord and had victory over their enemies. When they obeyed the Lord and followed Joshua they disposed the Canaanites and the Lord gave them all that He had promised.

Now what basically happened is that Joshua and the nation entered the land at Gilgal, swept through the nation killing as many Canaanites as they could and then met at Gilgal some ten years later where Joshua commanded them as individual tribes to finish taking the land that had been assigned to them as an inheritance.

But they failed to do what Joshua commanded. Under Joshua they had had success...but after Joshua died and the tribes spread out to take possession they were characterized by failure. You can see that in Joshua 2:10.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:10**...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.

I have to tell you that that is an extraordinary verse.

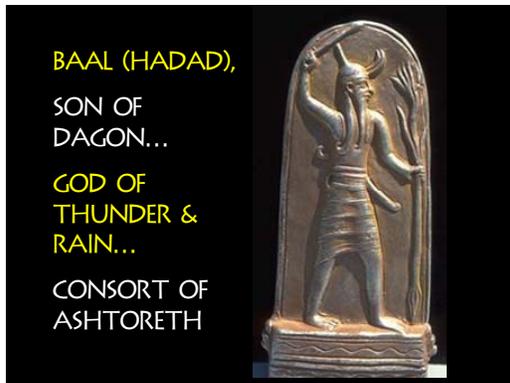
Now I don't think that it meant that they no longer knew the stories. I think they knew the stories about Moses leading them out of Egypt and Joshua leading them into the land of Canaan...they knew that they had come into the land and had spread out as a nation to take possession of the land...but they knew those stories intellectually and not experientially.

I think they knew who God was, that is they knew who He was in historically but He meant nothing to them individually or experientially.

Now because that was true, we see the theological implications of their having lost their experiential knowledge of God. We see that God acted in history to get their attention. Look at verse 11.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:11**...Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹² They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Now I thought I ought to take a moment and talk about Baal and the Ashtoreths. I think I ought to do that because they come up quite often in the text and it's important that you have some understanding of who and what they were so you will know why they appealed to the Israelites and why God forbade their worship.



The name Baal means pretty much the same thing as the Hebrew word **“adonai.”** That is, it means **“Lord.”** Because of that it was often applied to many ancient Gods. So in a sense, the name Baal can be used to speak of almost all of the ancients pagan deities that plagued the land of Canaan. You can see that in the way the Bible refers to particular cities or towns by the attaching the name Baal to a particular place such as Baal-Peor, or Baal-Gad or Baal-Meon. When it does that it is referring to a particular local deity in a particular place...that is, it is referring to the God of Peor or God of Gad or so on.

The word Baal is sometimes used to describe a particular deity. For example there was an ancient pagan deity know as Baal-zebub, which means **“Lord of the Flies”**. It is hard to know exactly what was meant by that whether it was a god to whom the ancients appealed to get relief from flies and biting bugs or whether it was deity who revealed himself in the buzzing of flies. Both aspects seem to be included in ancient texts.

I find that second idea particularly strange that someone could receive an ecstatic utterance or revelation from the buzzing sound made by flies but apparently there were those that claim that they did.

The ascription "Baal-zebub" is even carried over into the New Testament (it is used 7 times) and is a name given to the devil himself.

^{NIV} Matthew 12:24...But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons that this fellow drives out demons."

In another sense, the term Baal was used to speak of one particular deity, the God of Thunder, also referred as the Storm Rider, etc. He was sometimes called Hadad or Addu, which helps you to understand name like Ben-hadad in the Bible...which means more or less Son of Baal.

Now this particular god...Baal...was perceived to be the god of plenty. That is, he was a god of fertility and you can see how that connection might have occurred, He was connected with thunder and storms which means he was connected with rain. Because the land of Canaan is an arid land, drier even than Texas, the inhabitants of the land worshipped and paid homage to the gods they thought sent the rain...that is, they worshipped Baal.⁷ Now when you understand that, it gives a whole new sense of meaning to the great conflict that will occur later on 1 Kings 18 when Elijah meet sup with the prophets of Baal.



Now the Asherahs, or Ashteroths or the singular Ashtoreth was also a god of fertility, rather a goddess of fertility.

In the Canaanite's religion, she was the goddess of fertility both of livestock and children. She was often worshipped by the setting up of Asherah poles which I take to have been something like a totem pole. Such poles were often placed by altars dedicated to Baal because Baal and Ashtoreth were viewed as sexual consorts.

Now it is difficult to know exactly what these poles looked like. I suspect that they were particularly wicked but it is hard to know for sure. Some scholars think they took the shape of a date palm tree...and were sometimes referred to as the tree of life but it is hard to know. What we do know is that they were often placed by altars of Baal and that YHWH found them particularly offensive and that he ordered them to cut down and burned whenever they appeared.

They will play a prominent role in the story of Gideon later on...when the Lord commands Gideon to go and throw them down and Gideon does so but by night when no one is watching because he is so fearful.

Now the point of all this is to let you know that the Israelites became caught up in Baal worship as a result of their failing to drive the Canaanites out of the land. They worshipped Baal and the Ashteroths because they believed that doing so would bring them fertility...bring them prosperity. Sometimes they worshipped Baal and the Ashteroths by themselves and sometimes they combined them in their worship to YHWH and they worshipped both at the same time equally. And you can see, I think, the pragmatic side of doing that. They were thinking,

“Let us worship all of the gods of fertility and maybe we’ll hit the right mix or combination along the way.”

Of course, God forbade any such kind of pragmatism. God was and is a jealous God and He demanded to be worshipped alone. That is why He demanded that they drive the Canaanites out of the land...that they might not be ensnared by their gods.

No place is that more obvious than in Deuteronomy 28. Turn there for just a second. This is the word of the Lord given to the Israelites just before they were to go into the land.

Now I want you to see this passage. It is very important, I think, to understanding the historical books of the Old Testament. You see God promised them prosperity in the land upon the condition of their obedience. Of course, He also promised them poverty and despair upon the condition of their disobedience.

Notice first the positive...

^{NIV} **Deuteronomy 28:1**...If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. ² All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: ³ You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. ⁴ The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock-- the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. ⁵ Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. ⁶ You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. ⁷ The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

⁸ The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. ⁹ The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. ¹¹ The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity-- in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground-- in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you. ¹² The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.

That is the promise for obedience. But if you skip down just a few verses you can see the promise for disobedience. Notice how negative it is...

^{NIV} **Deuteronomy 28:15**...However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ¹⁶ You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. ¹⁷ Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. ¹⁸ The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. ¹⁹ You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. ²⁰ The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. ²¹ The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. ²² The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. ²³ The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. ²⁴ The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed. ²⁵ The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. ²⁶ Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. ²⁷ The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. ²⁸ The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. ²⁹ At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be

oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you. ³⁰ You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit...³⁴ The sights you see will drive you mad.

Now does that seem plain enough to you?

God is telling the Israelites as His special covenantal people that if they obey Him and follow Him wholly, wholly of heart that He will bless them in a special way and yet when they get to the land of Canaan they seek instead to find prosperity in an easier way by turning to the gods of Canaan...Baal and the Ashteroths.

Now can you see how that might have been particularly offensive to the Lord?

That is what the Book of Judges is about.

The Israelites wanted prosperity the easy way. They wanted to be prosperous apart from obedience so they turned to the Canaanite fertility gods...the Baals and the Ashteroths.

Now having said that let's turn back to Judges 2:14 and pick up what God is going to do in Judges. First let's look at His righteous judgment.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:14**...In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. ¹⁵ Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

Now when we talk about the story of God's righteous anger and judgment of their sin we have to remember that that is not the whole story. Verse 16 relates the story of God's covenantal love and faithfulness. He doesn't leave them alone...that is, He doesn't abandon them totally. He cannot...His covenantal faithfulness will not permit Him to do so.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:16**...Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands.

But the sinfulness of the Israelites was deeply embedded. Verse 18 relates the cycle that is going to be repeated again and again all the way through chapter 16 of Judges. Follow along as I read it.

^{NIV} **Judges 2:18**...Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

The verse 20 indicates again the beginning of the cycle of judgment...

^{NIV} **Judges 2:20**...Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and said, **"Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, ²¹ I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. ²² I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD and walk in it as their forefathers did."** ²³ The LORD had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua.

Now chapter 3, verse 1 describes the nations God used to test and chasten the Israelites.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:1**...These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan ² (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): ³ the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. ⁴ They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses. ⁵ The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁶ They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

That is the cycle that is going to occur over and over again in Judges.

And then starting in chapter 3, verse 7 we are introduced to the first judge. The author of Judges is finally going to get to an actual, historical judge. As he does so, he repeats the idea of the cycle that was mentioned in the previous section and it will come up again many times in Judges...the awful cycle of sin...suffering...repentance and deliverance.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:7**...The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. ⁸ The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.

Now what happened?

They worshipped the gods of the land and God sent a raider into their midst as an instrument of judgment. Now the character that God uses here, Cushan-

Rishathaim, is a strange character. No one knows exactly who he was or where he came from.

Aram Naharaim means the **“land of two rivers”** which may mean that he came from the land where Abraham had come from...modern Iraq.⁸ That phrase **“Aram Naharaim”** is mentioned earlier in the Book of Genesis.

^{NIV} **Genesis 24:10**...Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor.

Now if that is the case he would have been some sort of Semitic raider from the Babylonian...Assyrian area...the land from which Abraham came.

His name, Cushan-Rishathaim, is also a very strange name. It means literally...the dark, double evil one...what a great name for an enemy.⁹

Now the point of the passage is that this dark, double evil one from an extraordinarily wealthy land...a land populated by enormous numbers of people...cannot persevere against God's deliverance of His people. In that respect this character so foreboding and powerful is meant to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh.

Now as the people repent under the oppression of Cushan-Rishathaim, God gives them a deliverer...and guess what tribe he is from.

He is, of course, from the tribe of Judah. Now one other note...as far as the text is concerned this is the best deliverer (in terms of not having any flaws) the nation will ever have¹⁰.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:9**...But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel...

You will remember that he has already been mentioned in the first introduction. He was introduced when Caleb promised a reward to whoever would conquer a certain area of land.

^{NIV} **Judges 1:12**...And Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher."

Othniel was the one who conquered than land and gained Acsah's hand.

The point is that we already know a little bit about him. He is brave, resourceful and ambitious. He wants to serve the Lord and to reap the benefits of serving Him. So the Lord raises him up as a deliverer. Look again at verse 9.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:9**...Othniel, son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them.
¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.

Now that is a remarkable phrase...he overpowered him...he out-powered him. Now remember the one he overpowers is the dark double evil one...perhaps even the king of Assyria.¹¹ At any rater, he was a very powerful man...and yet,

Othniel overpowers him because he could not stand against the deliverer God sent for His people.

^{NIV} **Judges 3:11**...So the land had peace for forty years...until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

Now that is a phrase you have pay attention to whenever it comes up because the idea is that it represents an entire generation. The point is that that generation had an experiential understanding of the deliverance and salvation of the Lord. They had been under bondage for eight years but were delivered for forty years. Now I ought to make one observation right here. As the Book of Judges goes along the length of time the Israelites will be in bondage...the length of time they are oppressed will get longer and longer as the book unfolds while the length of time they will be free will get shorter and shorter.

Remember the image of the seesaw. The first half of Judges goes up...the second half goes down. When we get to the end of the book and to Samson there is no sustained deliverance at all. Samson will simply begin to deliver the Israelites.

Now I want to stop right there. But let me ask you before we close, **“What applications would you draw from this story?”**

I think the most important application that we can draw from this passage is that it is possible for our children to grow up and not have for themselves an experiential understanding of the salvation we have.

The thing that we ought to pray for and the thing we ought to seek is that our children might have the same heartfelt affection and love for our Savior that we do. Their salvation needs to encompass more than an academic response to our faith. The need to have a genuine experiential understanding of salvation which means we are obligated to tell them over and over again how the Lord has been gracious to us.

We are obligated to do that time and time again...to woo them to the Lord...to let them see the glory and the kindness of the Lord.

And dads, you must lead the way here and I encourage you to commit to do that because it only takes one generation to step from belief to pagan idolatry...just one. They can know all the facts intellectually and yet not know a thing experientially...and God forbid that we let that happen because we are indolent or asleep at the switch.

Let us commit to remind our children and this new generation over and over again of the kindness of our God.

Do you have questions or comments?

Let's pray.

¹ J. Cheryl Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges" in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Exum, J. Cheryl. "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges" in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 52 Number 2, July 1990, 413. Exum writes, "Judges begins with a double introduction, balanced by a double conclusion often misleadingly called 'appendixes' or 'additions.' Though Caananites are (surprisingly) still in the land after Joshua's death, events begin propitiously with YHWH promising victory to

Judah...Successes and failures intermingle, but the overall impression is increasingly negative, a pattern mirrored in the Book of Judges as a whole.”

² Leon Wood, *The Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1975), 39. Wood writes: “The first division makes its contribution to the general rationale as an introduction of the idea of Israel’s sinfulness. The initial section tells of a particular sin of the people, namely their deficiency in land occupation. The people did not occupy all the land allotted to them, as God had clearly instructed. The mention of this deficiency at this initial point is significant, not only because historically the sin occurred first, but it also provides an immediate clue to the stress that is made throughout the Book. The second section is introductory in the sense that it speaks generally of the sin of the period and the resulting need for the judges. It also identifies the time when this great defection of the people began and tells of the result of their initial sin in not clearing the land of the former inhabitants, as God had commanded.”

³ Andrew R. Fausset, *Judges* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 38. “A lion is in the way always, to the spiritual coward (Prov. xxvi. 13; conlxast xxviii. 1). Covetousness too suggested that gain might be made by sparing the Canaanites, even at the cost of offending God. Compare Saul’s sad case (1 Sam. xv. 3, 9, 15, 21-23). But what real gain can the professor promise himself in sparing his lusts, at the expense of his undying soul? (Job xxvii. 8; Matt. xvi 26).”

⁴ J. Paul Tanner, “The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 Ap-Je 1992, p 149. He writes: “The Book of Judges may be viewed as having a two-part introduction (1:1–2:5 and 2:6–3:6) and a two-part epilogue (17:1–18:31 and 19:1–21:25). Parallel ideas and motifs link the first introduction (1:1–2:5) with the second epilogue (19:1–21:25), and in like manner the second introduction (2:6–3:6) with the first epilogue (17:1–18:31).

The main body of the book (3:7–16:31) evidences structural arrangement by recurring words and phrases that have been labeled *stereotyped formulae*. Most notable of these is the phrase, “**And the sons of Israel again did evil in the eyes of the lord,**” which heads up nearly every narrative block within the main body. These stereotyped formulae suggest that a narrator skillfully wove the accounts together for the purpose of making a theological point.

Within the main body of the book, seven major narrative blocks can be noted. Moreover, there are certain parallel features between these narratives so that the entire book reflects a carefully worked symmetrical pattern.”

I should note that Tanner credits D. W. Gooding, “The Composition of the Book of Judges,” *Eretz Israel* 16 (1982): 70-79, for the identification of this overall scheme.

⁵ Daniel I. Block, “Will the Real Gideon Please Stand Up? Narrative Style and Intention in Judges 6-9” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 S 1997, p 353-366.

⁶ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume 2...Joshua-2 Samuel*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 247-8. They write, “We have a firm *datum* for determining more minutely the time when the book of Judges was written, in the statement in chap. i. 21, that the Jebusites in Jerusalem had not been rooted out by the Israelites, but dwelt

there with the children of Benjamin" *unto this day.*" The Jebusites remained in possession of Jerusalem, or of the citadel Zion, or the upper town of Jerusalem, until the time when David went against Jerusalem after the twelve tribes had acknowledged him as king, took the fortress of Zion, and made it the capital of his kingdom under the name of the city of David (2 Sam. v. 6-9; 1 Chron. xi. 4-9). Consequently the book was written before this event, either during the first seven years of the reign of David at Hebron, or during the reign of Saul, under whom the Israelites already enjoyed the benefits of a monarchical government, since Saul not only fought with bravery against all the enemies of Israel, and "delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them" (1 Sam. xiv. 47, 48), but exerted himself to restore the authority of the law of God in his kingdom, as is evident from the fact that he banished the wizards and necromancers out of the land (1 Sam. xxviii. 9). The talmudical statement therefore in *Bava-bathra* (f. 14b and 15a), to the effect that Samuel was the author of the book, may be so far correct, that if it was not written by Samuel himself towards the close of his life, it was written at his instigation by a younger prophet of his school. More than this it is impossible to decide. So much, however, is at all events certain, that the book does not contain traces of a later age either in its contents or its language, and that chap. xviii. 30 does not refer to the time of the captivity (see the commentary on this passage)."

It would be dishonest for me to say that this is the major view today. It is not. But it seems to me to follow the text precisely. I think the most common view today is that the book was written after or during his exile.

⁷ A. H. Sayce, "Baal" in ISBE. He writes: "As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive. In the Old Testament this is euphemistically termed "passing" the victim "through the fire". The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities which worshipped him. Each locality had its own Baal or divine "Lord" who frequently took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Hence, there was a Baal-Zur, "Baal of Tyre"; Baal-hermon, "Baal of Hermon"; Baal-Lebanon, "Baal of Lebanon"; Baal-Tarz, "Baal of Tarsus." At other times the title was attached to the name of an individual god; thus we have Bel-Merodach, "the Lord Merodach" (or "Bel is Merodach") at Babylon, Baal-Melkarth at Tyre, Baal-gad in the north of Palestine. Occasionally the second element was noun as in Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven," Baalzebub, "Lord of flies," Baal-Hamman, usually interpreted "Lord of heat," but more probably "Lord of the sunpillar," the tutelary deity of Carthage. All these various forms of the Sun-god were collectively known as the Baalim or "Baals" who took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim. At Carthage the female consort of Baal was termed Pene-Baal, "the face" or "reflection of Baal."

⁸ Robert G. Boling, *Judges in the Anchor Bible Commentary Series*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1981), 82. Boling does not like idea of Aram Naharim being Syria or Mesopotamia preferring rather to re-point the text and make his home the "Fortress of the Mountains." Personally, I like the idea of Othniel kicking the fire out of the Mesopotamians.

⁹ Arthur E. Cundall, and Leon. Morris, Judges & Ruth. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 73. They speculate that the name was not a real name but was made up by the Israelites after his defeat to cast shame upon him. I like the name...I was thinking of naming my dog...if I ever get one...the same thing.

¹⁰ Exum, 413. "Othniel (3:7-11) conforms so completely to the pattern that many scholars view him as an editorial fabrication, created to provide a judge from the South. He illustrates precisely what we have come to expect; the Israelites do evil in the eyes of YHWH; YHWH's anger is provoked and YHWH sells them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim, whom they serve for eight years."

¹¹ George F. Moore, *Judges* in the ICC Series (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895...reprinted in 1976), 87. Moore suggests the man was a Nubian...and gives him the name "Cushan of Double Dyed Villany."