

## WHAT HAPPENED TO GOD'S PEOPLE?

### Judges 1-2

As kids, we used to go down to the Pike in Long Beach and ride the "Jackrabbit Racer"  
—one of the fastest and fanciest roller coasters in the world (in its day there were only two like it!)

Then, they opened Disneyland. The Matterhorn became the roller coaster to ride.

Knott's Berry Farm got the Mine Ride and the Log Ride.

Each time, we'd get off the ride, run around and get in line again.

After a while, those ups and downs get to be familiar.

We've "been here and done that" before!

That's the way it was in the history of Israel.

You can't really consider the lifestyle of the next group of people who walked with God until you consider *what happened to God's people?*

As we read their story, we naturally keep asking ourselves: "What happened to them?"

How did they get so far off so quickly?

They keep repeating the same old cycle of ups and downs.

They make a commitment to walk with God—for a day or two—and the excitement of walking with Him is great!

Then they decide it might be more *fun* to follow the pagan gods in the neighborhood for a while.

*That's what everybody else is doing!*

It isn't long before their life is a mess—it isn't as much fun as they thought it would be.

Soon they long for "the good old days" again, and call out to God for help.

### Do YOU know that feeling?

Have you gone up and down on that roller coaster?

Trying to live for God one day and enjoying the thrill of serving Him?

Then, getting distracted by all the "fun" our neighbor is having?

Until you find out the hard way it isn't really so much fun after all?

**Examples** —seeking the same kind of pleasures

—charging our credit cards to the max to get bigger and fancier toys.

—living for greater prestige and power—trying to impress the crowd

. . . Only to discover that ultimately those thrills don't really satisfy?

[ Israel began well . . . ]

### INITIAL FAITHFULNESS TO FOLLOW GOD Josh. 24:31; Judg. 2:7

Following the conquest of Canaan and division of the land, Joshua dies.

He charges each tribe to govern its own affairs

and to eliminate the remaining Canaanites from their territory.

Political and geographical factors isolate the tribes from one another.

Local tribes feud with each other.

There's no strong national leadership to inspire or direct the people,

so every individual begins to do as he pleases.

[ Judges begins in spiritual victory. ]

**Joshua leaves the nation on a spiritual (high) mountain top,**

*reconfirming their loyalty to Yahweh*

*and their submission to His rule over them.*

**Israel makes a commitment to follow the Lord.**

They vow to serve Him—to live by His commands.

**That generation is faithful to their commitment. 24:31; 2:7**

Judges opens with the people seeking God's direction, to be faithful to His commands. 1:1

[ It didn't take long for them to fall from that peak. . . . ]

**TWO FAILURES LEAD TO THEIR SPIRITUAL DOWNFALL 1-3:6**

**1. FAILURE PRODUCED BY PARTIAL OBEDIENCE**

**They failed to obey God's orders to eliminate the Canaanites totally.**

God desires total trust, submission and obedience.

**PARTIAL CONQUEST OF GOD'S LAND 1-2:5**

God orders them to destroy the Canaanites living in the land.

In obedience to His command, the people ask for direction as to who should move first (1:1).

Following this positive beginning, Israel only partially obeys God's instructions (1-3:6).

**Judah and Simeon's conquests 1:1-20**

Judah begins the conflict, as God indicated they should.

They start well, but fail to drive out the Canaanites (1:19).

The other tribes follow their example and fail to drive them out.

**Partial failure by other tribes 1:21-36**

Benjamin's failure 1:21

Joseph 1:22-29 1:22, 25, 27-29

Zebulun 1:30

Asher 1:31-32

Naphtali 1:33

Dan 1:34-36 1:34-35

Each tribe either . . .

**fails to trust God to defeat the Canaanites  
or decides to keep them around as servants,  
or decides to be nice to them and become friends.**

Instead of eliminating the Canaanites, they only partially conquer them.

Eventually they decide to coexist rather than fight.

[ They fail to realize that . . . ]

**Partial obedience is really disobedience!**

Partial obedience really isn't obedience at all!

**Resulting thorns and snares 2:1-5 2:1-3**

The angel of the Lord speaks to them about their failure.

God ordered them not to make covenants with the Canaanites.

They were to destroy the people and their religious system.

Since Israel failed to obey God's commands,

**He will not drive them out of the land.**

**They will remain in the land and continue to afflict Israel.**

[ 1<sup>st</sup> failure produced by partial obedience . . . ]

## **2. FAILURE PRODUCED BY LACK OF TEACHING Deut. 6:4-12**

**Initial faithfulness 2:6-9**

**Joshua's generation serves the Lord during their lifetime.**

**2:7**

Following Joshua's death, the people still serve the Lord.

**Ignorant generation 2:10**

**They fail to instruct their children in God's ways**

Pagan, perverted customs are adopted.

Intermarriage follows, which leads to further idolatry and perversion.

The Lord is soon forgotten. **2:10**

**Another generation arose which did not know Yahweh.**

[ These two basic failures lead to their downhill slide. . . ]

## **RESULTING CYCLE OF DISOBEDIENCE 2:11-3:6**

Their incomplete obedience regarding the Canaanites, leads to making alliances with them.

## **OCCASIONAL OBEDIENCE OF GOD'S LAW**

**Cycle Introduced:** In addition to their partial obedience in the conquest of the land, Israel enters a cycle of rebellion and discipline in their spiritual walk and lifestyle.

### **1. Idolatrous disobedience 2:11-13**

That generation begins to decline spiritually.  
 They disobey God and worship pagan gods of surrounding nations.  
 They want to look like everybody else in the neighborhood.

## **2. Corrective discipline 2:14-15**

In order to draw His people back to Himself,  
 God sends oppressive nations against them to correct them.  
 [ The discipline creates discomfort, which leads to . . . ]

## **3. Crisis repentance**

Their suffering motivates people to repent and to call on God.  
 Under the weight of oppression, they call out to God to deliver them.

## **4. Liberating leadership**

God sends a liberator to deliver the people from their affliction. **2:16, 18**  
 After God gets them out of their mess,  
 they refuse to listen to their leader. **2:17**  
 They go back to life as usual.  
 [ Their deliverance leads to prosperity and comfort, which leads to . . . ]

## **5. => 1. Repetitious rebellion 2:19**

Once crisis passes, people gradually forget about God and return to former practices.  
 As soon as the judge dies, they return to their rebellion.  
 They don't *want* to change.

## **2. Oppressing nations 2:20-3:6 2:20-22 => 3:6**

God continues to send oppressive nations to disturb Israel.

### **The cycle continues repeatedly:**

- 1. Disobedience**—idolatry/rebellion
- 2. Discipline**—Oppression
- 3. Cry for help**—Repentance, turning back to God, calling on Him
- 4. Deliverance**—Salvation—deliverance from oppression  
 Leads to prosperity and comfort which leads to =>
- 5. => 1.**

Cycle is repeated throughout the period of the judges.

Next few weeks we're going to consider the life of some of these judges (liberators, deliverers) in our "*Walking with the Saints*" series.

### ***LESSONS TO BE LEARNED***

#### **1. Importance of total obedience all the time.**

**Partial obedience is disobedience.**

**Partial obedience *never* brings blessing.** (Contentment/satisfaction)

**Power to obey God comes from His Spirit**,—not from trying harder next time!

**but God wants us** to use that power **to live for His glory all the time!**

## **2. Importance of teaching our kids to walk with God.**

It's not enough just to walk with Him ourselves—that's what the elders of Joshua's day did!

We must teach our children *why* we live a godly life.

We must model godly living in front of them.

## **3. Danger of following the cycle.** —Instead of following God!

If we get on the roller coaster of spiritual living—up one day and down the next—we will spend our life struggling with the consequences of sin and the corrective rod of God.

If we want to enjoy life more, we must make a commitment to walk with God each day,

and allow His Spirit to control our life and produce His fruit in our life everyday.

## **4. Value of a consistent walk with God.**

**Examples** of choices we face to follow the cycle, or to walk with God.

When our computers and our cable televisions are bombarded by pornographic invitations, are we going to join the crowd that pursues sensual pleasure, or are we going to make personal purity our priority?

When our neighbors work longer hours to earn more, and buy more expensive toys, going deeper and deeper into debt, are we going to submit to the social pressure for more things, or are we going to invest our energy in living for God?

When other people are cheating on tests, plagiarizing the work of others, copying music that isn't theirs, avoiding taxes we owe, are we going to "go with the flow," or are we going to do what's right?

**Will we teach our kids to make the same choices?**

***Will we model what it looks like?***

Fundamental two questions we all have to answer for ourselves:

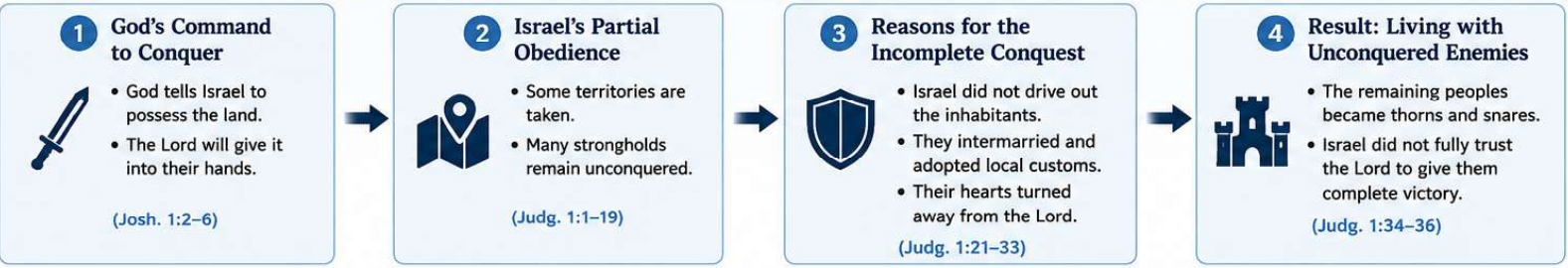
**Will we walk with God consistently *ourselves*?**

**Will we teach our kids to follow in our footsteps?**

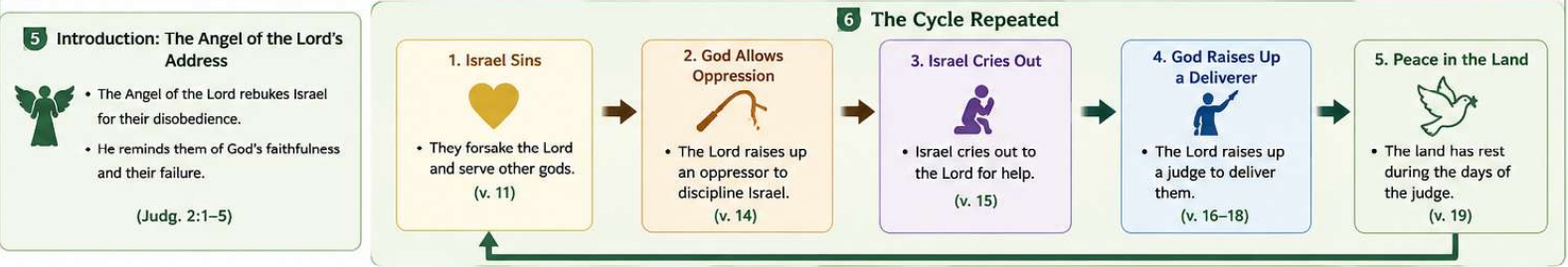
# THE LOGICAL FLOW OF JUDGES 1-2

*From the Incomplete Conquest to the Cyclical Pattern of Israel's Disobedience*

## JUDGES 1 — THE INCOMPLETE CONQUEST



## JUDGES 2 — THE CYCLE OF ISRAEL'S DISOBEDIENCE



### 7 Summary Statement

- Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord.
  - They forsook the Lord, served Baal, Asherah, and other gods.
- (Judg. 2:10-13)

### 8 Conclusion: The Cycle Continues

- This pattern continued throughout the time of the judges.
  - It reflects Israel's persistent unfaithfulness and need for God's mercy.
- (Judg. 2:20-23)



### OVERALL THEME

Judges 1-2 shows the consequences of incomplete obedience. Israel's failure to fully trust and follow the Lord leads to a repeated cycle of sin, oppression, and deliverance—revealing their need for wholehearted faithfulness.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Obedience to the Lord must be total and continual; anything less leads to spiritual decline and repeated failure.