

GODLY LEADERSHIP

WEEK 1

A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

WHAT PROMISE...

In 2002, Austin Scott led his high school football team to a state title as he rushed for 3,853 yards and scored 53 touchdowns. The promising career at Penn State fell short of expectations and Scott was thrown off the team after a sexual assault charge his senior year. Seven years later he was sentenced to prison on a drug-related charge.

Like many reading this, Scott had incredible promise. However, he failed to take hold of what he'd been given. Last Week, we studied how Israel had failed to take hold of Promised Land that God had given to them. Fear, compromise, and sin led Israel down a destructive path. This Week, we see the seeds of that destructive path take root and the pattern of *Judges* emerge.

JUDGES 2 (SELECTED)

¹⁰ And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

¹² And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. 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. ¹³ They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroht. ¹⁴ So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

¹⁶ Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.

¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from 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 afflicted and oppressed them.

¹⁹ 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

What's so bad about the inhabitants of the Land? The simple answer is that they were guilty of capitol crimes including the sacrificial killing of children.

Scan the QR code for an archaeological find that may surprise you. In Judges 1:29, we see that "*Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer.*" The video shows the dig site of one of the Canaanite "high places." It also shows proof of the wickedness that happened there.



DISCUSSION

Why do you think it's so hard to learn from other people's mistakes?

ICEBREAKER

1. How did the new generation differ from Joshua's generation? (2:10, 12a, 13a)

2. How did the Lord try to help Israel? (2:16, 18)

3. What resulted after the death of each judge? (19)

4. Why is it important the leaders invest in the next generation that comes after them? (10)

5. What do you learn about the Lord's character in this passage? (14, 18)

OBSERVATION

6. In what ways does your life in the last week look like a spiritual...

...thermometer?

...thermostat?

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Would anybody in your life be surprised to find out you're a Christian? Is your walk matching your talk? If you have questions or need help, talk to your Coach today!

A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

STUDY NOTES

WHO DID WHAT?

What year did your school win their last championship at your sport? If a championship hasn't been attained since you've been in school, you might struggle to give an answer. It may prove even more challenging to name the starting lineup of that team. Guess what, if your team wins a championship, within a handful of years, they won't remember you either!

Chapter 2 rewinds history to the point when the famed leader, Joshua, is still alive. He commanded the tribes of Israel to go take possession of their allotted lands. They were strongly warned of the dangers if they didn't clear the Land. We know from last Week, they failed in this task.

Once again, fast-forwarding, our passage picks up as Joshua and his generation are laid to rest. At this point in the story, we read the most fateful words in the book of *Judges*, ***“And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.”*** They had heard about God's mighty acts, but they had not personally experienced the Lord's presence nor seen what he had done for Israel.

Notice the twice repeated phrase, ***“they abandoned the Lord”*** (12, 13). Why? ***They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them.*** We cannot simply “manage” our sin—their failure to obey the Lord's command has led them further than they expected.

Verses 14-15 remind us of two important truths about God's character. *First*, blatant sin—especially idol worship—angers God and prompts his discipline. While he is patient and merciful, he refuses to enable his sinful people. Sooner or later, he *will* discipline them. *Second*, God is true to his word. He doesn't issue idle threats. When he says he will confront rebellion, we can be sure that he will. However, we can trust God's character—God is holy and must confront sin. Yet, he is merciful and compassionate, responding to the pain of his people.

WHAT'S THE GAME PLAN?

As we read in Zero Week, this study will follow the stories of leaders ***the Lord raised up*** called “judges.” God sent judges responding to Israel's ***groaning*** because they were ***afflicted and oppressed***. The people ***did not listen to their judges***. However,

whenever the Lord raised up judges for Israel, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers.

This pattern forms a vicious cycle that gets repeated several times throughout the book of *Judges*. Each time it repeats, the circumstances get worse and the next judge is worse than the last. *Judges* has several “major” judges whose stories we will study as well as several “minor” judges to whom little detail is given. Weeks 2–7 we'll be studying the story of several “major” judges.

In Weeks 8–9, the cycle ends and *Judges* dives deep into two stories that form an epilogue to the whole book. Both stories introduce a connection to the city of Bethlehem (you know, the city where Jesus was born), and both stories are horrifyingly tragic.

In Week 10, we'll read another story about another family from Bethlehem in the time of the judges. This literary connection provides the reader with the expectation of idolatry and murder. However, Weeks 10–12 provide a breath of fresh air as we study the book of *Ruth*. Only by studying *Judges* can we truly appreciate the extraordinary uniqueness of Ruth and Boaz. *Ruth* defies every expectation because, in the sea of chaos that is *Judges*, these people shine as magnificent examples of God's faithfulness and honorable obedience.

GODLY LEADERS MUST OBEY (PART II)

What truly sets Ruth and Boaz apart is how different they were from those around them. This is exactly the problem with the generation that we read about in today's passage—they became exactly like those around them.

God has called his people in every generation to be thermostats and not thermometers. A thermometer simply reflects the temperature of a room whereas a thermostat changes it. Let me ask, does the spiritual temperature of a room change when you're in it?

We may not be chasing foreign gods like Baal, but that doesn't mean we aren't absorbing and reflecting our culture more than the Lord. We'll see the devastating consequences of “fitting in” if “fitting in” means abandoning the Lord and what he says is best. Godly leaders obey, even if that means they stand alone in a sea of chaos.

