

Unit 8, Session 1: The First Judges

Big Picture Question: God brought consequences to His people for their sins, but He also raised up judges to save them from their enemies. We also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us.

Memory Verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14 – If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Christ Connection: God brought consequences to His people for their sins, but He also raised up judges to save them from their enemies. We also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us from our sins once and for all.

Bible Passage: Judges 3

Find the passages together in your Bibles and read through them together. You could also read the paraphrase of all these passages below in blue. For younger kids, you may want to just read the bolded portions.

Joshua died at the age of 110, leaving Israel without a leader. Rather than cling to God for guidance, the Israelites quickly broke their oath to remain faithful to the Lord and the covenant he made with them. A single generation after Joshua's death was enough time for the Israelites to forget the Lord and all that he had done for them. The older generation had failed to effectively teach the younger generation about the Lord, and it showed. "The Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight. They worshiped the Baals and abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They angered the Lord, for they abandoned him and worshiped Baal and the Ashtoreths (Josh 2:10-13). The Lord tested Israel's faithfulness to him by leaving some of the pagan peoples in the land, the Israelites failed the test miserably when they abandoned their covenant with the Lord (2:22; 3:1-6).

The Israelites failed to remain faithful to God (3:7, 12), but he will always be faithful. He made it clear that he would never break his covenant (2:1), but there are always consequences for man's disobedience. The curses listed in Dt 28:15-68 become reality for the Israelites as they begin a pattern of disobedience and sin. God handed them over to their enemies, bringing the promised curses upon them as punishment (Josh 2:14-15), all with the intention of helping them see their sin and return to God with repentant hearts. He raised up judges to deliver them, and the people returned for a time. However, "whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, following other gods to serve them and bow in worship to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways" (2:16-19).

The reality is that we are no different from the Israelites. It seems so simple, right? Just remain faithful. Stick with God! But we can't do this on our own. We need someone to do it for us, to stand in the gap and take our place. More than a temporary judge, we need a permanent savior. And God, in his gracious faithfulness, gave us Jesus!

After Joshua died, **the Israelites began to do what was evil in the Lord's sight.** The people failed to obey God's law to worship Him alone. **They worshiped the gods of the people who lived near them, and God was angry with their sin. So, God sent a foreign king to capture the people as a consequence.**

The Israelites cried out to the Lord to save them. God raised up Othniel (AHTH nih el) to save them. Othniel was the first judge of Israel, a leader who led Israel to follow God and saved them from their enemies. The Spirit of the Lord was with **Othniel**, and he **defeated this foreign king in battle. God's people turned away from sin and had peace for 40 years.** Then Othniel died.

After Othniel's death, the people went back to worshiping other gods and doing evil in the Lord's sight. So, God sent King Eglon of Moab to attack and defeat His people as a consequence for their sin. Then the Israelites cried out for God to save them from slavery. So, God raised up another judge—Ehud—who would save the people From King Eglon.

Ehud made a short sword and hid it on his thigh under his clothes. He went to visit King Eglon with a gift. When no one else was around, **Ehud used his hidden sword to defeat the king, and then Ehud secretly escaped.** King Eglon's servants returned and found him dead on the floor.

After Ehud escaped, he sounded the ram's horn and all of Israel met him. Ehud said, "The Lord has handed over your enemies, the Moabites." The Israelites fought against Moab and won. Then Israel had peace for 80 years. **Later, God raised up a third judge named Shamgar. He delivered Israel from their enemies, the Philistines.**

If you or your child have questions about what it looks like to follow Jesus in salvation or baptism, Pastor Sam would love to talk with you! Please feel free to contact him at ssievers@lenexabaptist.com.