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Judges 2:6 - 3:30



Judges - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses Judges 2:6 - 3:30, focusing on the idea that despite being raised hearing about God, many people do not have a personal experience with Him. He highlights that the test of faith is obedience to God when times are difficult, rather than just when things are easy. Gregg also discusses the story of Ehud and Eglon, highlighting the importance of leadership in both the spiritual and domestic areas of life. Ultimately, the message conveyed is that true obedience to God involves more than just giving lip service to the faith, but also a willingness to follow His commandments even in the face of adversity.

Transcript

Let's turn to Judges 2 and verse 6. Last time we took all the verses in Judges up to that point, chapter 1 and the first 5 of chapter 2. And it began in chapter 1.1 about what happened after the death of Joshua. But when we come to chapter 2, verse 6, we read of Joshua again, still very much alive. And we read of his death in the verses following, in verses 7 through 9. So, obviously we're going back again.

We're looking back again. And it looks like this is a second introduction to the book, an alternative introduction, or maybe a supplementary one. I suppose there's two ways to look at the book of Judges, and two introductions show us those two ways.

The first one simply records some of the victories and some of the failures of the people, just as historical record. But the second introduction, the one we're about to read, actually kind of summarizes the whole theological import of the book of the Judges. It's not considering specific cases, but more the whole period, and how the whole period relates to God's attitude toward things.

And so, in one of these introductions, the first one, chapter 1.1 to chapter 2.5, we have an introduction from the death of Joshua, probably considered to be going up to the first judge. Othniel is mentioned in chapter 1, though not his judgeship, only his conquest of the land that got him his wife, the daughter of Caleb. And so we read of Othniel in chapter 1, verse 13, but later we're going to read of his judgeship.

And so, shortly after Joshua's death, there were a number of conquests and a number of failed attempts at conquests, and we're simply given kind of a record of them, probably covering the period essentially from the death of Joshua until the period of the first judge coming, or the first cycle that led to the first judge coming. And so we have historical data there, but in chapter 2, verse 6, we're going to go again to the death of Joshua and the sequel. But the sequel is not going to be treated as particular incidents, but as a summary of the way things went in general.

And it's going to be scanning the whole subject matter of the book from a theological point of view. So verse 6 of chapter 2 says, And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to the rest of the land. This obviously picks it up at the point where they had assembled and drawn lots to determine which portion of the land would go to each of the tribes.

And once that was done, the people were dismissed to go to their homes, and Joshua was done, really. And it says, So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua. The elders would be those probably of the first generation coming out of Egypt.

Joshua died at 110. The oldest person younger than him would have been 20 years younger, I think, so 90 years old. There are some very old men who outlived him a little bit, perhaps, and who were of that first generation that came out of Egypt with him.

I should say not the first, they were the second generation, the generation that was born in the wilderness. Those were the elders, and many of them outlived him because they were younger than he was by at least 20 years. It says of them who had seen all the great works of the Lord which he had done for Israel.

So the deliverance, the provision of the wilderness, the conquest of the land, including the supernatural interventions of God in giving them the land, these had been seen by one generation, but as is often the case, the next generation only knows it by hearsay. And they may believe it, but it's surreal to them. It's not vivid, it's not really something that they saw or experienced, and it's a report that allegedly happened in their parents' days.

And while they don't doubt that the parents are telling the truth, it doesn't in any way correspond to a reality they see, and therefore has a rather surreal aspect to it. And then, of course, before long, it just seems not just surreal, but unreal altogether and unbelievable. And so what happened is eventually generations came along that forgot entirely or didn't believe and didn't know.

It says in verse 8, Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died when he was 110 years old, and they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath-Herod in the mountains of Ephraim on the north side of Mount Gash. Now this exact

information, though not quite verbatim, it's not just lifted and pasted, it's not cut and pasted, but it's with only a few words changed, but the exact same information is found in Joshua chapter 24 at the end in verses 29 through 31. And that information is exactly the same as that which is in verses 7 through 9 here.

So this is not new to us. Verse 10, When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers and he died, another generation arose after them who did not know Yahweh, nor the work which he had done for Israel. At least they didn't know it other than by hearsay.

They had not known it by experience. It was not something that they were aware of from having seen it or known it. It doesn't mean they never heard about it.

There were many monuments that were set up every Passover. The works of the Lord were commemorated through the festival if they were keeping it. But presumably that generation that saw the works of the Lord did keep those things.

And so the next generation and the one after that would probably know the reports of the Lord, but they didn't know the Lord. And that's always a possibility for children raised in a religious home, in the home of parents who actually do know God. Children are raised hearing about God, hearing the stories.

Maybe even giving lip service to Him, not resisting Him, thinking they're true, but not knowing for sure because they don't have any personal experience with God. Which of course everyone eventually needs or else, you know, without that personal experience with God, it's hard to resist the world's pull. If you actually have a relationship with God, there is much more of a grace given to you to resist the pull of the world.

And so the next generation after a revival who has never seen that revival is always at a disadvantage and must hang on to their faith with greater difficulty. Someone who has seen the mighty works of God can lose their faith, but with greater difficulty. Someone who has never seen it and only heard about it can easily lose their faith.

And so it's a greater difficulty to hang on to. And apparently they didn't put out the effort. And so they served the Baals, which just refers to the various Gods, the various Lords.

The word Baal means Lord of the Canaanites around them. They forsook Yahweh, the God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. 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. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths, which are the basically Gods and Goddesses of the Canaanites. 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. 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.

Now, this is not just speaking of the immediate time after the death of that generation only. This is really a summary of the book of Judges, how again and again they did this. And of course, verse 16 says, Then the Lord raised up Judges who delivered them.

Which is not seen in one instance, but the various instances. This is, as I say, an overview of the whole book. And seeing what God was doing.

In the first introduction of the book, we saw what men did. What Othniel did, and what the Benjamites did, and what the men of Judah did, and so forth. But we are now reading about what God is doing.

This is from God's point of view. They left the Lord. God got angry.

God raised up Judges. God did this. God did that.

This is God's action read into the history. So, the Lord raised up Judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their Judges.

Now, that's an interesting statement. Because we get the impression, generally, that after Ehud, or we should say Othniel, or Deborah, or Gideon delivered the people, the people more or less behaved. I mean, these Judges judged Israel.

Which would seem to mean that they governed Israel. And that people heeded them. But maybe that's a wrong impression.

Maybe these Judges judged Israel, that is, that portion of Israel, that remnant that would listen to them. But most of the nation ignored the Judges. Didn't listen to them.

In any case, we know that when the Judges died, Israel quickly went back to their old and evil ways. And so, we could say they didn't listen permanently to the Judges. They didn't take heed to the message of the Judges.

But in general, the Judges did change things for a little bit. It would seem. In measure, for the better.

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.

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 groanings because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

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 ways.

Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. Which is, of course, the beginning of another cycle of affliction. And he said, because this nation has transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not heeded my voice.

I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died. 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.

Therefore the Lord left those nations without driving them out immediately. Nor did he deliver them into the hand of Joshua. And there is more about that very factor in the opening verses of chapter 3. But I just want to point this out.

God made promises to Israel that he would drive out their enemies. But we might say, along with the writer of Hebrews, the promise made to them did not profit them. And not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

The statement there, of course, in Hebrews, chapter 4, is really a reference to the generation that was promised the promised land. And failed to go in because in the days of Moses they were afraid of the giants and wouldn't go in. So the promise didn't profit them.

Because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it, the writer of Hebrews says. But we might say the same thing about this later generation. They didn't have faith.

They didn't stay in the faith. And therefore they rejected the faith. And therefore the promise didn't come true for them.

God had this outstanding promise which they could cash in on at any time they wished. But they just didn't. And I think really of the parallel with the church.

Because many times we just assume that Christianity is an unconditional path to all the privileges. And yet God has never been an unconditional God. He loves unconditionally.

He even loves his enemies, the ones that end up in hell. He loves them. But that doesn't mean that he deals with people unconditionally.

Why? Because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. If you're humble, you'll get one kind of treatment from God. If you're proud, you'll get another kind.

God said, those who honor me, I will honor. Those who despise me will be lightly esteemed. Again, God is dealing with those who honor him differently than those who do not honor him.

The Bible talks about the special benefits for those who have faith. And what the person without faith is deprived of. There are conditions in God's dealings with people, including with Christians.

Now, a lot of times in the warfare we're involved in, we're surprised that we're powerless to drive the enemies out, the spiritual enemies. I don't mean bad people, I mean bad demonic forces. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood.

We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but we do wrestle against principalities and against powers and against the rulers of the darkness of this age and against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. And there are promises that the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds and casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into captivity of the obedience of Jesus Christ. Those are promises.

We have these victory promises. And yet, it's not happening. At this particular moment in many places in the world.

In this place, for example. I don't mean this place where we're sitting, I mean the United States. The demonic powers seem to be entrenched.

The enemies are there. We have mighty weapons, what's wrong? We have promises of God, what's wrong? Well, Israel had promises. Israel had guarantees, but they were conditional.

And when Israel departed from God, God left the enemies intact. He gave them over, in fact, to plunderers. And he would not drive out their enemies.

And I wonder sometimes when I'm actually involved in a specific case of demon possession, for example. Dealing with a demon possessed person. Why do these demons not go out so quickly as they have at some times in the past? There have been demon possessed people that I've seen demons go out almost as soon as they're commanded.

And, of course, I've heard of many more cases than I've seen myself. There's many stories, not only in the Bible, but in Christian history and missionary testimony. And some in my own experience where, you know, commanding a demon to go, it just goes.

And that's the end of it. Those times usually happen in revival or when the church is alive and zealous for God and so forth. When the whole church is more obedient, it seems like the church has more authority to drive the enemy out.

But when the church tends to sink into compromise, it's like God's trying to withdraw us and says, I'm going to leave the enemies where they are. I mean, you can fight them harder if you want. Maybe you'll get some of them out, but it's just not going to be that easy for you because the church is in compromise.

And I wonder sometimes when we actually are dealing, I'm thinking specifically of cases of dealing with demon possession, but even if it's not demon possession, if it's simply just the demonic influences in the society that we're trying to resist by our prayers, why is it that they don't move? Why is it there's promises that we have victory and weapons that are mighty and so forth, but the enemy just stays? The enemy just mocks? The enemy just resists successfully? Well, God says, I'm not going to drive those enemies out because my covenant's been broken. Because there's disobedience. In fact, he even gives his people over to plunderers.

When God gives someone over to their enemies, there's not much hope until they repent. And that's what happened in Israel's case. When Israel repented, when they cried out to God, God sent relief and there would be another revival.

But it had to get pretty bad for them because they weren't going to be obedient to God unless they got chastened severely. And I'm afraid that's the truth with carnal people in general. Now, there are Christians who are not that carnal.

There are Christians who are going to press into God no matter how dark the times, no matter how cold the church. There are people who will get no encouragement from the church. In fact, they almost have to leave the church to stay hot because the church wants to pour cold water on them.

And there will be people who will be faithful to God, but even their victories are diminished by the general disobedience of the body of Christ to which we belong. Because the victories of the church are not for individuals, but for the church corporately, just as with Israel. There might have been some obedient Jews.

I mean, it's hard to imagine a population of three million people who know about Yahweh and every last one of them has given up any faith in him. That's not likely to be true. God always has a remnant.

In Israel at these times, there were no doubt a remnant of people who were obedient against the tide of the culture and against the tide of their own church. But it was the generality of the disobedience of the nation, of God's people, that made even the faithful among them have to endure the humiliation and embarrassment of the enemy's triumphing for a period of time over them collectively. But when the nation more generally turned to God and rose up in faith, then of course the enemies were driven out.

So this really has been true in the history of the church too. There have been revivals

and then there has been the reduction of the spirit of revival. And when the revival is not present, when the mighty deliverance is not taking place anymore, sometimes when people grow cold toward God, they go back into their worldliness, they forget about God, they return to their idolatry of materialism or whatever, and the mighty acts of God are not seen anymore until another generation comes along that just can't stand it anymore and cry out to God and turn to God and then there is another revival.

That's the pattern. It's a pattern in Israel, in the Judges, it's a pattern in the church in history. I find it interesting though, in verse 23 it says, Therefore the Lord left those nations without driving them out immediately, nor did he deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

Now Joshua is dead at this time. We're mainly looking at the cycles of disobedience of the people after Joshua's death. In fact, we're told the people mostly obeyed during the lifetime of Joshua and didn't forget God until he was gone.

But I don't know if this means that God foreseeing that they would be as disobedient as this did not even in the days of Joshua drive them all out. Back when people, Israel was being more obedient, you might think they would have been able to drive them all out, but perhaps because God foresaw these cycles of rebellion against him, he did not allow even Joshua in an age of greater obedience to drive them all out. I'm not sure why Joshua is mentioned here.

It seems like it would be after his time that it's talking about, but Joshua even did not succeed. And part of that was, although the people of Israel were obedient, they weren't fully obedient. They were marching with God, but they weren't marching to the final end of annihilation of their enemies.

And perhaps then it's saying that these problems that occurred after the death of Joshua even occurred in some measure in the time of Joshua, which prevented them from driving them out at that time. Chapter 3 says, Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that he might test Israel by them. And we saw that also, of course, in verse 22, the previous chapter, that he left them in the land that he might test Israel.

That means that God wants people to be tested, his people to be tested. Tested in what way? What's the test? Well, it says in chapter 2, verse 22, whether they will keep the ways of the Lord or not. And so the test is, will you obey God at times when the revival has died down? It's easy to obey God when that's the popular thing to do.

It seems like everybody's getting saved. Everybody's going to church. Everybody's singing the songs.

Everybody's getting filled with the Spirit. I know because I was fortunate enough to be in high school at a time when that was going on. It seemed like it was more common for

people to get saved than for them to not get saved.

Almost anyone at the school, you know, that you thought was not a Christian, you can almost predict, well, by the year's end they'll probably be a Christian. And it's a pretty good, pretty safe prediction down in Southern California in the Jesus movement. I mean, everybody's getting saved.

It's easy to be a Christian at those times because you're kind of in, you're riding the crest of the popular wave. When the revival passes and God lifts it and gives, and uses a time of dryness to test, that's where you find out who will obey the Lord and who won't, when it's going to be a little bit more difficult, when there's not so much moral support, when the world is starting to turn against Christianity. It's so surprising to me that in my lifetime, just the past 40 years, things could change so much as far as the attitude of the world.

In the 70s, there was such a favor upon Christ in the culture. The hippies who weren't Christians, they liked Jesus. You know, they admired Jesus.

They figured he was one of them, I guess. He was for peace, he was for love. He always did pictures with long hair.

People thought he was a hippie, probably. And so the hippies kind of thought he was cool. And of course, thousands of them got saved and became Jesus priests, too.

But so quickly, the same generation that was thinking that way, the people my age who were not Christians, who thought favorably toward him, and now it's like Jesus and Christianity is the most hated, the most disgusted thing. And people can turn so quickly. And so staying hot for God, when the moral support you had in the culture is gone, is the test.

That's the test. Will you cave in when the culture caves in, or will you stand against the culture when you must? And so also, God left these agents of testing in Israel after the wars were over. He left these nations in the land that he might test Israel by them.

That is, all who had not known any of the wars of Canaan. Those who didn't live through that revival time of victory. You know, who just settled into the more ordinary type of life.

They're the ones who, it's easier to forget God in times of peace than in times of warfare. It's even easier to remember God in times of persecution. It may be hard to stand for God in times of persecution, but when you're overtly persecuted, you at least don't forget about God, because he's the one who's causing you the trouble.

That is, he's the one who, your loyalty to him is causing people to hate you, and you're kind of in a position daily to decide, am I going to keep standing against this and

receiving this persecution? Am I going to cave in? The issues are alive, the issues are before your mind, but when there's no warfare, there's no revival, there's no persecution, there's none of those things, and things are just bland. Things are just daily doing the job, paying the bills, you know, raising the family, doing all the ordinary stuff. That's when it's easy for God to just kind of drift off into the back of your mind so far that you hardly ever think about him consciously anymore, because life is reasonably good, life is reasonably boring, life is reasonably routine, and so that's what God anticipated.

There'd be a generation that would come that had not known the war, and people were just settled in, minding their farm, living an ordinary agrarian lifestyle. That's when remembering the Lord is not quite as easy. Now, not that it's impossible.

A farmer certainly would be in a position to have to remember the Lord, you'd think, because you have to trust God for rain, and you have to trust God for the right kind of harvest season, and all that. But it's also easy when you're in Canaan, surrounded by people who have fertility gods and grain gods, to think of all those cycles in terms other than related to Yahweh. All these gods and goddesses of the Canaanites were fertility gods, and they were connected both to child productivity and also crop productivity.

The grain gods were the most common gods to heathen, so a person just in an agrarian, peaceful time could easily forget about Yahweh and attribute things to other sources, when there's no actual miracles going on that have to be attributed to God. Verse 2 says, This was only that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it. Now, it sounds like God felt that it was important for no generation of Israel to become too flabby, too unable to fight in wars when the need would arise.

So, leaving some of those nations there would mean there'd be occasional skirmishes, occasional reasons to have to mobilize again, and never become too flabby, but those nations that had not been part of the wars of conquest should have to know something about warfare. And so, God, again, leaves enemies nearby, and no doubt there is something of that in our own spiritual experience, too. It's hard to know why God would choose to do it that way, but it's not hard to say that he did.

That when we become Christians, why doesn't God just make the devil leave us alone? Why doesn't God just purge us instantly of all of our sins, like the Wesleyan doctrine teaches, that you get entire sanctification and your sin nature is just pulled out of you. You don't have a sin nature anymore when you get entire sanctification, like a second work of grace in Wesleyan theology. Or some people think it happens when you get saved, or something.

Not many who are realistic, but the truth is we wonder, why doesn't God more quickly just remove all obstacles from us in our Christian life, all the enemies within, at least? And the answer may be God doesn't want us to get too flabby, but he wants us to

continue to fight and war and build spiritual muscles, perhaps. It helps us to appreciate our need for him, because there is continuing danger. And that's how he kept things for Israel.

Now the ones that he left in the land, verse 3, are namely the five lords of the Philistines. We've mentioned before the five cities of the Philistines along the Mediterranean that remained there for many centuries unconquered until the time of David. And then all the Canaanites, the Sidonians and the Hivites, who dwelt in Mount Lebanon from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath.

So there's a region up there in the north where there were a lot of Canaanites that still were hanging on to their territory. He says, 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. So it's not just the commandment to conquer the land that they're supposed to be keeping.

All the commandments that God gave by Moses, meaning obviously the religion and the law of Moses, especially that they should not worship other gods. The main requirement of the Mosaic legislation is that you do not worship other gods. And that's what they were tested on.

And that's where they failed, because they did worship other gods. So the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives and gave their daughters to their sons and they served their gods.

Now this is something that was forbidden and it's something that's always in every generation, even for Christians, a concern. And that is what kind of people our children marry. We may raise our children to serve God, but if they marry someone who isn't going to serve God, the likelihood is great that the grandchildren are not going to have quite the same faith we envisaged for them.

At least if our grandchildren have two godly parents, there's a good chance that they'll grow up with Christian teaching and Christian morals, hopefully. And perhaps a greater reason to hope that they'll have a vital faith also. But if they have one parent that's not a believer, then the children are given from day one in their lives two paradigms, two options.

You know, one parent wants them to serve God, the other doesn't. And the one who doesn't might even appear to have a more attractive life, at least to the flesh, and it can draw the children away. Furthermore, it'll draw the godly spouse into compromise too.

Because in the course of managing a marriage, there's all kinds of compromises that have to be made for peace. No two people think exactly alike, and in order to be

peaceable with each other, and live under the same roof successfully, people have to give and take. And often, a Christian, what they have to give in order to live peaceably with a non-Christian spouse are some of the sharper edges of their Christian faith.

The hotter coals of their zeal and so forth have to cool a little bit, or else they'll be in continual conflict with the person who has no interest in those things, or might even be antagonistic to them. You can either have a terrible marriage for a short time that'll explode somewhere, or if you're going to have a long-term marriage or something like that, you have to compromise things. That's not good.

Compromise is not a good thing. And of course, there's always the possibility, but it's remote, that the godly spouse will bring the ungodly spouse to Christ, and that's what the godly person always anticipates. If a person is really godly and seriously contemplates being married to a non-Christian, it's always in their mind, well, I'll just bring them to Christ, certainly, once we're married.

And how often that happens, I don't have the statistics, but it certainly looks to me like it's not very often. Especially if the godly partner is the woman and the ungodly is the man. It's a little more likely that a godly man may lead his family, including his wife, to faith than that a godly wife will lead her ungodly husband.

Although both do happen. It's just that the leadership of a man is more often taken seriously in spiritual matters by a wife than the leadership of a wife in those areas. A man who's not godly often resents the wife who's trying to force religion on him.

He sees it as her usurping his leadership or her pretending to superiority over him. The male ego reacts badly to that kind of thing. So, when a woman who's a godly woman marries a man who's not a godly man, she almost always thinks, well, I can improve him.

But almost always she's wrong. Usually it's her that gets compromised. There was a story I heard about a young couple.

She, a Christian, the young man, not a Christian, they came to the pastor for premarital counseling. And the pastor recommended against marriage because the young man is not a believer. And as usual, the young girl said, well, I believe that he is not far from the kingdom and I think that when we're married, my influence upon him will bring him to Christ.

And so he told the girl to stand on the desk and the young man to stand on the floor and for them to hold hands. And he said, now, you try to pull him up on the desk and you try to pull her down to the floor. And guess who won? The tendency of human nature is down, gravity.

Even Christians have to struggle in a good environment, in an encouraging environment. In a Godly environment, Christians have to struggle against their own downward

tendencies. When they have to try to pull another person up who's not even striving against that downward tendency, well, nothing short of an unusual miracle will make it successful.

It does happen. I've known women who've brought their husbands to Christ, thank God. And some of them have become wonderful husbands and wonderful Christians.

But it is definitely the exception and anyone who is going to try to do that is gambling against odds that are very long. And the problem that happened in Israel here is that there were mixed marriages. That is very possibly the same problem that arose in the world before the Flood, depending, of course, on the interpretation given to those verses in Genesis 6 about the sons of God marrying the daughters of men.

Many believe that's a reference to angels marrying human women. Others believe it's a reference to Godly men compromising in their marriage choices and marrying ungodly women. I actually favor the second of those options.

Most Christians, I know, seem to favor the first. But it would explain why God eventually had to bring the Flood. Because prior to these marriages, there were some who maintained their godliness and no doubt passed it down.

Some remnant among the offspring of Adam and Eve who still knew the God of Adam and Eve and who trained their children to do so and it kept a godly testimony in the world. But when the time came where it says the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful to look upon and took them wives of as many as they chose, it suggests that the reason this particular generation of godly people chose their wives was not on the basis of mutual belief or a common belief or godliness. But they saw that they were beautiful, they married strictly on the basis of their desires, their physical attraction and that, of course, does not usually lead to good choices in terms of character.

In fact, it's often the exception that a woman who's very attractive is also very godly. It's a rare thing. That too occurs, but it's not so common.

A woman who's very beautiful, usually from youth, has been coddled and deferred to and taught to expect to get her way and so forth because physical beauty has a way of twisting people's arms and women often learn how to manipulate that for their own advantage so that they don't need God and don't turn to God as much. So the men who married women strictly based on looks were not necessarily catching the mates that were going to be the most godly and the best mothers for their children to raise them in the ways of God. It would seem possible that in Genesis 6 we're just seeing the same kind of thing we're seeing right here in this passage.

Godly people marrying ungodly people and that's the end of the godly line that children don't come to faith. Now that is the summary from chapter 2, I'd say probably from verse

11 to chapter 3, verse 6. That's the end of the second introduction that shows in general what was going on in Israel repeatedly. And so we begin to have specific cases enumerated in verse 7. The first of the six cycles that are reported, these are the main body of the book.

We've passed from the introduction now to the main section. And our first judge is going to be Othniel and he has already been known to us for his heroism in conquering the city in order to gain a wife because Caleb had offered his wife in marriage to the man who would conquer this city and Othniel conquered it and got a wife that way. But there were more exploits to be done by this man.

Verse 7 says, So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and Asherah. Therefore, the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan Rishithim, king of Mesopotamia.

And the children of Israel served Cushan Rishithim eight years. Now this fellow, it's interesting there is a tradition among the Persians that there were ancient Iranian rulers named Cushan and Cushan something else. And there's even one known from the ancient Persian stories who had a name very similar to this.

It wasn't quite Cushan Rishithim but it was something like Cushan Rithim or something like that. It was similar. And there are actually in the Persian stories legends of these Iranian rulers coming down and conquering Syria and Palestine and other areas.

And that would seem to confirm what this says. From Mesopotamia, that would be up where, that's the region of Babylon and Persia and so forth. Iran and Iraq.

So this man came from some distance and conquered that region and held it for eight years. And when the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel who delivered them. Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

The spirit of the Lord came upon him. Now this is said of some of the other judges too. That the spirit of the Lord came upon him.

It's said of Gideon in chapter 6 and verse 34. The spirit of the Lord came upon him too. Also Jephthah in chapter 11 verse 29.

And it's also said of Samson more than once. In chapter 13 verse 25. And in chapter 14 verse 6 it says the spirit moved on Samson.

So four of the judges it specifically says the spirit of the Lord came upon them. It may be that we are to assume that this happened in each case. And it's simply not mentioned except in occasional instances.

But it was the Lord that raised them up. It was the spirit of God upon them that caused them to do the exploits they did. It's not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord.

Says Zechariah 4.6. And so this man who already had proved himself in battle previously. And got a name for himself. Did Israel another service.

He was filled with the spirit of God. And he ended up being a judge of Israel. He judged Israel.

And he went out to war. And the Lord delivered Cushan Rishitham king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan Rishitham.

So the land had rest for 40 years. Then Othniel son of Kinas died. It does not mention how long.

They had peace in this particular case after his death. But oh yes it had 40 years. It doesn't say when he died.

If he died I guess he died at the end of the 40 years. My mistake. But what we're not told is the details of this battle.

We are told the details of some of the battles coming up. And grueling detail of the next judge's activities. But here we just read that Othniel rose up.

Apparently marshalled the troops. Went out against them and just defeated them. And he did this because the spirit of the Lord moved upon him.

And apparently the spirit of the Lord gave him the victory. But we don't know the details of the plan of battle in his case as we do in some others. We come to the next judge and we read in verse 12.

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. And this is going to be a recurring theme. That again and again and again we read they did evil in the sight of the Lord.

So that began another cycle. They had the cycle where they did evil. Oppression came for 8 years.

They cried out to the Lord. He raised up a judge and delivered them. And they had peace for 40 years.

Now similar thing going to happen in somewhat different circumstances. The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So that the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel.

Because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek. And went and defeated Israel and took possession of the city of Palms.

Now Moab was east of the area of Reuben. Remember on the east of the Jordan. Two and a half tribes had taken their possession there.

Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Now both Ammon and Moab. Two of these three nations were east of there.

So in invading Israel what they first invaded was this Transjordanian section. Of these two and a half tribes. And no doubt swept over and probably conquered them.

But managed to cross the Jordan also. And get into what's called here the city of Palms. Which is almost certainly Jericho.

Jericho is usually called the city of Palms. And so that means that as Joshua had swept through that Transjordanian region. At an earlier time.

And crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. And that was the beginning of his conquest. Jericho was a good place to start your conquest of Palestine.

Because it was central enough to divide the northern and the southern areas. From being able to join forces against you. And you kind of just put a wedge in the country and force your way in.

It was an oasis in the desert too. It was a very nice place to be. And it was basically this egg lung.

Who is said to be king of Moab. He must not have been the only king of Moab. Because when he died we don't read of any ongoing battles or anything like that.

There must have been another king. Because this egg lung set up his headquarters in Jericho. And certainly there was a capital city of Moab further east.

That must have been ruled over by another king. We don't know very much. Except what we are told here.

But he took possession of the city of Palms. Which is where he settled in. That is Jericho.

So he had penetrated into the western part of Israel. West of the Jordan. So the children of Israel served egg lung, king of Moab, 18 years.

We don't know whether he ruled over all the land west of the Jordan. But since he had to pass through the eastern part. East of the Jordan first.

He probably was maintaining control over that region. Probably Reuben and Gad and

Manasseh were under his control. And since he was now on the west side.

He must have been controlling at least some if not most. If not all. Of the land of Israel.

On the west side as well. And that oppression lasted for 18 years. And when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

The Lord raised up a deliverer for them. Ehud the son of Gerah the Benjamite. A left handed man.

The word left handed in the Hebrew actually means weak or limited in the right hand. So he is obviously left handed. His right hand was weaker.

And therefore he was left handed. The Benjamites seem to be characterized by left handed men more often than most. Left handedness is a rare thing in the Bible.

But when it is found. It is often among people of the tribe of Benjamin. As in this case.

For some reason. I don't know why. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to egg lung.

King of Moab. So they had to pay their tribute on a probably annual basis. And Ehud was the guy who led the delegation of the Israelites.

To bring the gifts. The money. To their overlord.

But Ehud had a well planned out strategy of deliverance. It was either very well planned out. Or he was just extremely lucky.

Because in order for his plan to succeed. It required a lot of things to be in place. He had to make sure that he would have a private audience.

With the king. And have none of the king's servants around. He had to be in a place where he could escape out a window.

And run across the field without being spotted from the palace. I mean. He had to really taste out the situation.

Or else he just did a reckless thing. And God blessed him. And everything worked out well.

But it is probable that Ehud made regular. Maybe annual trips. To egg lung.

To bring these gifts with the delegation. And during that time. He had been able to check out.

The lay of the land. And the way the palace was. And the habits of the king.

And so forth. In some measure. So that he could make a plan.

That would work as well as this one did. Now. Ehud made himself a dagger.

It was double edged. And a cubit in length. That is 18 inches.

And fastened it under his clothes. To his right thigh. Now this is why we are told he is left handed.

There is a reason for mentioning it. Because a left handed warrior. Had strength in his left hand.

And therefore he would keep his sword. On his right thigh. I don't even know which is right and left.

Whereas the ordinary warrior. Would have his sword on the left thigh. So he could draw it out by his right hand.

For battle. Now if he is going to sneak a sword. Past the homeland security in Jericho.

They don't have metal detectors. But they will probably pat him down. And they would check for hidden weapons.

On the left thigh. Assuming that almost everybody. Is right handed.

And therefore if they are going to hide a weapon. To draw it out. They are going to have it on their right.

To do that. And yet he was left handed. Which meant he could fight with his left hand.

And he could put his sword on the other side. Where they probably wouldn't check. I mean it was under his garment.

So if they pat him down. They are probably going to be checking. Mostly on the other side.

To see if he has got a sword there. And so he was able to conceal it. Due to his left handedness.

So. It says he made himself a dagger. In most of these cases.

The Israelites were not allowed to have weapons. By their oppressors. And so we read for example.

In the days of Sisera. When he afflicted Israel. That there wasn't one shield or one sword.

Among 40,000 Israelites. They were kept disarmed by their oppressors. But he apparently had the tools.

Or the know-how. To form a sword out of some kind of substance. That he had.

And so he made one for himself. And he hid it on his right side. And when he had finished presenting the tribute.

He sent away the people who had carried the tribute. That is he came with a delegation. And then he sent them on home.

Perhaps to get them out of harm's way. In case his plan went bad. To get them to safety.

And then he apparently returned to Eglon. Afterwards. After Eglon had gone up into his cooling chamber.

As it is referred to. He was a very fat man we are told. And it was a very hot place to live.

And so there was an area up on the roof. Apparently which was a chamber for cooling himself. And so after he had sent away the delegation.

That had been with him. Ehud returned back. From the stone images.

Which were probably pillars. Marking the boundary. Between Israelite.

And Moabite territory. So the. The delegation.

He sent them back to safety. Beyond the reach of the Moabites apparently. And he returned.

And said. I have a secret message for you. And he said keep silent.

And all who attended him. Went out from him. That is the king said keep silent.

Don't speak until. We've got privacy here. It's a secret message.

When he says okay hold your peace. It's best to signal for his servants. Get out because I don't want to hear this.

In your presence. So the servants left. And the door was shut.

And so there was a private interview here. Apparently Ehud had gotten. Eglon's confidence.

Perhaps they knew each other. From several visits over the years. Not friendly visits by any means.

But occasions when Ehud. Had come and brought the tribute. If that had happened many times.

Then it was routine. And there was nothing to expect this man to do anything treacherous. And he had probably been.

Had probably been patted down. As he came in to make sure he didn't have a weapon. So Eguon was defenseless.

And not wary. And it says. Ehud came to him.

Now he was sitting upstairs. In his cool private chamber. Then Ehud said I have a message from God for you.

So Eguon rose. From his seat. That would be the way someone would show respect.

For God or for a king. You would rise also if a king was coming. Or sending you a message.

It's the way of showing respect. To rise to your feet. And Ehud reached.

With his left hand. And took the dagger from his right thigh. And thrust it into his belly.

Even the hilt. Went in after the blade. And the fat closed over the blade.

And he did not draw the dagger out of his belly. And his entrails came out. The man was so fat.

Actually that. The sword just disappeared into him. You know.

And stayed there. And what came out was not the sword. But his entrails.

So the man was dead. Or at least mortally wounded. And soon to die.

Then Ehud went out through the porch. And shut the doors of the upper room behind him. And locked them.

Which just means that he locked the doors. Through which the servants would enter. And the room was not accessible.

Through the hallway. And then he himself escaped out the window apparently. And ran off.

Now. It says when he had gone out. Eglon's servants came to look.

And to their surprise the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said he's probably attending to his needs. In the cool of the chamber.

Actually in the Hebrew it says covering his feet. Which is a euphemism. Used elsewhere in scripture.

For going to the bathroom. So they assumed he was. As it's put more delicately here.

Attending to his needs. They didn't want to disturb the king. When he's going to the

bathroom.

That would be an embarrassing thing. Might be their head. You know.

I mean a man wants his privacy at times like that. So they didn't knock. And they just kind of waited.

Gave him some time. So they waited until they were embarrassed. Like this is embarrassing.

Why would he take this long? And still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened them. And there was their master.

Fallen dead on the floor. But Ehud escaped while they delayed. And passed beyond the stone images.

And escaped to Sirach. And it happened when he arrived. That he blew the trumpet.

In the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel went down with him. From the mountains and he led them.

The trumpet blast would be that. Which was recognized universally. As a call to war.

And apparently. The only thing that had caused Israel. Not to mobilize for it.

No one was going to lead them. The leader would of course be the one. Who if he failed.

Would get the worst treatment. From Eglon if he had failed. So no one had risen up.

And taken that courageous stance. Until now. But as soon as someone did.

There were plenty of men of Israel ready to join him. Because they had been oppressed for 18 years. And they were getting tired of that.

And they cried out to the Lord. So perhaps they were expecting deliverance. And they rallied to him.

In faith. And he said to them. Follow me.

And the Lord has delivered your enemy. The enemy. The Moabites into your hand.

So they went down after him. Seized the fords of Jordan. Leading to Moab.

And did not allow anyone to cross over. This is because there were areas to cross the river. The fords were the crossing points.

I don't know if they were more shallow. Or if they had some kind of structures built. But a ford is a place where you cross a river.

Eglon and his men were on the west side of the river. As were the Israelites. But the Moabites on the east side.

Might come over as reinforcements. To fight and to. Put down this rebellion.

So they had to capture the place. Where the crossing would be. That way all the Moabites that would come across.

To the west to try to fight off the Israelites. I mean they could only come by. In narrow columns to cross the fords.

So they could be fought off more effectively. And so they did not allow anyone to cross over. And at that time they killed about 10,000 men of Moab.

Probably these were all men that were coming across. In all likelihood. To wage war.

But they kept getting killed off. As they got on the Israelite side of the river. 10,000 of them.

They were all stout men of valor. Not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day.

Under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for 80 years. The longest season I think.

That is recorded in the book of Judges. Then we have the story of Shamgar. We will take him quickly because the Bible does.

After him was Shamgar. The son of Anah. Who killed 600 men of the Philistines.

With an ox goat. And he also delivered Israel. We know one other thing about the circumstance of this.

And it is mentioned in the song of Deborah. In chapter 5 and verse 6. Because as they celebrated the victory. A later victory.

They look back on Shamgar's victories as well. And celebrated them in the song. It says in verse 6. In the days of Shamgar son of Anah.

In the days of jail. The highways were deserted. And the travelers walked along the byways.

Now what this means apparently. Is that the main roads were dangerous. And so people did not use them.

They used the byways. The less cleared paths. That led to the same places.

Sort of back roads. Like when the freeways clogged. You try to find back roads to get to where you want to go.

They stayed off the freeways. Because the highways were the places. Where the garrisons of the enemy marched.

And they might harass you. They might rob you. They might kill you.

Israelites were terrorized. And they stayed off the main roads. We are told.

And it may be that Shamgar is one who just. Decided he wasn't going to put up with it anymore. He took the only weapon that was close at hand.

Which is an ox code. An ox code is a long stick with a metal point on the end. And it is usually about 8 feet long.

It makes a pretty good weapon. It is a stout stick. And a man whose depth could easily wield it.

As effectively as any ancient weapon could be wielded. And he did better than most. We are not told.

We are not told that the spirit of the Lord came upon him. But we might assume it. When Samson did similar deeds.

We are told that the spirit of the Lord came on him. And so maybe we are to assume the same here. That this man did what was almost superhuman.

He killed 600 Philistines. Probably clearing the roads. And thus delivering.

He claimed Israel. In the sense that he cleared the roads. They could travel again without fear.

They were no longer oppressed by. In this case Philistines. It would appear that not only.

Invaders from the east. Like Moab. But also from the west.

The Philistines were trying to press in. And afflict the people. But in this case.

This man killed enough of them. To cause them to withdraw back. And to leave Israel alone for a while.

Okay we are going to stop there. That's the bell. You are saved by the bell.