

Spiritual Compromise Then and Now

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[0:00] And if you would open up your Bibles to the book of Judges, it's on page 236 of your Pew Bible.

And if you're not familiar with how your Bible is laid out, the first book of your Bible is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and then we go Joshua, and then Judges. So open up your Bibles to the book of Judges. And I've got a big swath of Scripture to preach to, so I'm not going to actually read its entirety out. I'm just going to work us through it, and we're going to make our way through it in a speedy way this morning. But I want to let you know that Judges 1-36, basically there's two parts to it. 1-1-36, it's kind of a listing. It's a state of affairs of the tribes of Israel. And then in 2-1 through 3-6, you have God's explanation for how the tribes are doing.

[1:11] And what we're going to see is the book of Judges is about God testing His people. We are being tested by God.

Testing isn't anything new for us. If you're a student, you are tested by your teachers of your understanding of a given subject matter. Your kind of understanding of something is exposed, right?

Maybe you're an employee. Your supervisors will test you, whether that is through some kind of evaluation or some kind of review to kind of test your competence as an employee.

If you are a patient, your doctors are going to test your bodies to expose the good or ill health within you.

If you are a parent, your children will test your patience. Do I have an amen? Amen. And if you're a child, your parents will test your patience. Do I have an amen?

[2:18] And if you're a Christian, God will lovingly test you to expose in you who you love, to expose your allegiance, to expose who you're devoted to, to expose who or what is the controlling center of your life.

Will it be God, the Lord Jesus Christ, or will it be something from this world? We live in the world, but we're not of the world.

And how your Bible is described the world throughout it, it's a definition like this. The world is humanity in sinful spiritual deadness in organized rebellion against God.

That's the world. And what God will do is He will test us to find out where our allegiances lie. The book of Judges is a book of God testing His old covenant people, Israel, as they enter the promised land.

Will they walk in Yahweh's way or will they compromise? And as one scholar said, will they Canaanize?

[3:41] Will they become like the nations they are to dispossess? Moses led his people, God's people, out of Egypt.

Joshua leads the tribes of Israel into the promised land. But Joshua doesn't eradicate all the nations in Canaan. No, that's left for the generation to come.

In Deuteronomy chapter 7, this is an important passage to understand what God is expecting of His people as they enter the promised land.

So if you can turn to Deuteronomy chapter 7, 1 through 5, it's on page 179 of your pew Bible. I want to read it so you understand what God's expectation is, was of Israel.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it. This is the law of Moses. He's anticipating His people going into Canaan.

[4:44] And God clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites,

and the Jebusites.

Seven nations, more numerous and mightier than you. And when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction.

That was the expectation. It is hard.

Shall you deal with them? You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. That was God's expectation for Israel, His people, as they went into the promised land.

And you might find yourself saying, this is very distasteful. Why would God ever do that? God answers that question.

[6:02] Why would God use His people as a means of judgment and eradication of these nations in Canaan? In Deuteronomy 9, 4 and 5, we read this.

Do not say in your heart, Israel, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, these nations, that it's because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land, whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you.

Not because of your righteousness nor the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that He may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

So what you need to know from the very beginning as we enter into the book of Judges is that God's call on His people was to enter Canaan and be His means of judgment on these wicked nations that have been rebelling against God.

And brothers and sisters, you've got to understand, judgment is coming for everyone. And so here we have God's expectation on His people, and you can see in Judges 1-1 that Joshua has died.

[7:25] And now the question becomes, will the tribes of Israel, without Joshua as their leader, will they finish dispossessing the land of Canaan, and will they walk fully in the ways of the Lord their God, Yahweh, or will they compromise?

And chapters 1 and 2 answers the question of Judges. Judges. Judges 1. 1-36.

It is a listing of the tribes of Judah and their compromise. And then chapter 2, 1-36.

Is the divine explanation of why they are still dwelling with these nations in their midst. Brothers and sisters, God tests His people.

And though His people fail, God remains faithful. So let's look at this compromised state of affairs. This is chapter 1, 1-36.

[8:40] And what I want you to see first is the listing out of the tribes of Israel. And so it seems like Judges starts off strong.

Joshua dies. The people of Israel inquire of Yahweh. That is really good. And they're like, Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?

We're ready, God, to occupy the land. Who of the tribes should go? And God says in verse 2, Send up Judah. And then Judah says to Simeon, another tribe, Let's go.

Let's go. Let's do it. And so from verse 2 all the way through verse 20, We have the account of Judah and Simeon occupying Canaan.

And then what we see in verse 21, You see the tribe of Benjamin. 22, the house of Joseph. 27, another tribe, Manasseh. 29, Ephraim.

[9:38] 30, Zebulun. 31, Asher. 33, Naphtali. And then what comes up at the end is 34, the tribe of Dan. So here's the listing. You know what this is? This is like a state of the union.

The Israel union of tribes. How are they doing? And in chapter 1, when we look at Judah, Judah takes up a whole lot of real estate in chapter 1.

And you look at it and you're like, man, they're doing great. They went up against Bazak and they defeated with Simeon 10,000 people. And then in verse 8, they go against Jerusalem. And then in verse 10, they go up against Hebron.

And they beat all these people. And then there's this whole thing in Deborah where Caleb is like, who's going to take Deborah? And then Othniel's like, I'll do it. And then Caleb gives Othniel not just

into the hand of the city, but the hand of his daughter.

You keep on reading and eventually they get into Philistine territory. And it looks like Judah is doing really well. But on closer inspection, they're not doing as well as they look.

[10:54] If you look at chapter 1, this whole Bezek scenario where Judah and Simeon go and defeat 10,000 of these inhabitants of Bezek, the king, Adonai Bezek, makes a run for it.

Israel, Judah, tracks him down. They cut off his thumbs and big toes. And you might think, well, that's great.

But you know what that is? Nowhere in the Mosaic law is that required. In fact, if they were to actually devote to destruction the inhabitants of Bezek, the king would have been put to death as well.

What is actually happening is they are taking the practices of the king of Bezek and applying it to the king of Bezek.

Did you notice what he had to say in verse 7? Seventy kings. This is Adonai Bezek, the king of Bezek.

[12:03] Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table. As I have done, so God has repaid me. But what you need to understand is Judah has become Canaanized in its way of treating Bezek.

But it doesn't end there. In verse 19, And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron. And so that little phrase, they could not drive out, we're going to see that repeated in chapter 1. And what it means is they didn't fully, completely do what God required of them.

And the reason given is they had chariots of iron. That's not God's explanation. God wasn't like, oh no, they have chariots of iron. I can't take them. This is Judah becoming unnerved.

Losing sight that it's God who fights for them. And so what you have here is actual compromise in the tribe of Judah.

[13:17] And then, you read in verse 21, But the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites. So the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

So they don't drive them out. And so now these Canaanite people are living in the midst of these Israelites. It's not what God wanted. That's not Deuteronomy 7, 1 through 5.

And then, you read in verse 27, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean. And what happens? The Canaanites persisted in dwelling in the land at the end of verse 27.

End of verse 28, But they did not drive them out completely. Again, they don't drive them out. These people are dwelling in the land with these Israelites. It's not what God wanted. Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites.

So the Canaanites lived in Gezer with them. 30, Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron. So the Canaanites lived among them. 31, Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko.

[14:18] So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites. That's a little change. We're going from Judah doing pretty well to now these other tribes not doing so well.

And now Asher, the Canaanites aren't living with Asher. Asher's living with the Canaanites. 33, Naphtali. They did not drive out the inhabitants.

So they lived among the Canaanites. And then when you get to the tribe of Dan in verse 34, it's the Amorites who drive out Dan.

So what this is, this state of the union of Israel, is full of compromise. Partial obedience.

Not doing what God has required of them. And here's what this means for us. Partial obedience, brothers and sisters, is full-on disobedience.

[15:28] Don't confuse partial obedience with full-on obedience. Partial obedience is full-on disobedience.

It's the sin of omission. It's not doing what God has required. It's like a brother who is giving generously to the Lord, but over here, he's dabbling in pornography.

And he's thinking he's being obedient. It's partial obedience. It's full-on disobedience. The other thing you might want to know about is, okay, why does Judah get so much real estate in chapter 1?

Why do they get so much space from like verse 2 all the way to verse 20? Why is that? Well, if you look at it carefully, Judah is couched between a reference to Joshua and a reference to Caleb. And these are the two guys in the book of Joshua who are filled with the Spirit of God and they are seeking to obey God. So what's happening here is, is Judah's being associated with those two.

[16:37] Do you know why? Judges occupies the historical space between Joshua and the establishing of the Israelite kings in 1 Samuel.

Judges ends with a terrible story about Benjamin. They're almost eradicated like the Canaanites were supposed to be eradicated around them. Do you remember which king came from the tribe of Benjamin?

Saul. He proved to be a lousy king. But do you remember which king came from the tribe of Judah? David.

And do you remember who else came from the line of Judah? The greatest king of all. Partial obedience is full on disobedience.

And now the question becomes, well, what happened? What happened? Why this? Why are God's people disobedient in dwelling with the nations they were supposed to dispossess?

[17:46] What happened? And then in chapter 2, verse 1 through 3, 6, you have an explanation of why. It's actually a three-fold explanation why. The first is in verses 1 through 5.

The angel of the Lord. And when you see the angel of the Lord speak, it's God speaking. First person. Personal pronoun.

I. He comes up from Gilgal. You know what happened in Gilgal? In Joshua? End of chapter 5. Joshua encounters the commander of the Lord's army.

And the commander of the Lord's army says, take off your sandals. You are on holy ground. It's the commander of the Lord's army that fights God's fights for Israel.

And if there's an association along these lines, could it be that the commander of the Lord's army, the angel of the Lord, has shown up to Bochim to address God's people?

[18:50] And he says this, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said I will never break my covenant with you. I delivered you. I saved you.

I rescued you. I made covenant with you. I've held my side up to the covenant. You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land.

You shall break down their altars. That's a reference to Deuteronomy 7, 1 through 5. But then he says this. The angel of the Lord says this.

But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this that you have done? And he's looking at his compromised people.

What have you done? They have broken God's covenant. Their disobedience, their partial obedience is full-on breaking of God's covenant.

[19:51] That the covenant that God made through Moses to the people of Israel coming out of Egypt. And then the consequence of this is in verse 3.

So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you. God will no longer be fighting for them. God will be kind of somehow opposing them.

That these nations that they're living among, they're going to be thorns to them. Their gods are going to be snares to them. Thorns and snares are not good things. This is the consequence of the God of the covenant who loves his people.

He's saying, I love you so much that I'm going to make it very uncomfortable for you so that you come back to me. Look what they do in verse 4.

They, the people lift up their voices and weep. In fact, bochem means weeping.

[20:54] this little passage, one through five, one starts with a reference to weeping and it closes with a reference to weeping. What kind of weeping is this? Is this genuine repentance?

You're going to see in the book of Judges, it is not. The first explanation comes from the angel of the Lord and he is saying, you have broken the covenant.

That's why this is the way it is. The second explanation comes in verses 6 and it goes all the way through verse 19 and this is from the narrator of the book of Judges.

I think there's a good chance this is actually Samuel, the last of the judges and he gives further explanation of why this is the situation these tribes are in.

If you look at verses 6 through 10, there's a comparison made. The word, the name Joshua is dropped three times and it's associated with the generation with Joshua.

[22:02] That these are the people that they knew their God. They saw Him act. They were obeying Him. Not perfect, but they were obeying Him and they were devoting to destruction the nations that they were coming into dwelling among.

That generation passes. Joshua dies. That generation who's seen the works of God. I mean, they were part of the whole Jericho event, gang.

They saw it. And then in verse 10, we read that all that generation was gathered to their fathers. They died.

And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done for Israel. They had major theological amnesia.

They were ignorant to who God was and what God had done, but it's worse than ignorance. Do you know what this is? This is called apostasy. And what apostasy is, is a turning of one's back to the living God to go and serve other gods that are not gods at all.

[23:15] This generation that followed Joshua's generation, they apostatized. They had become canonized.

They turned their backs on the living God. This is why they're in the situation that they're in. And then what we read following this in verses 11 through 19 is a cycle.

It's the cycle that gets played throughout the entire book of Judges all the way through chapter 16 with Samson. And here's how the cycle goes. The cycle begins with Israel's apostasy.

You can see that in verses 11 through 13. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. You will see that line repeated all throughout the book of Judges. Israel turns from their God.

The God who delivered them. The God who covenant with them. The God who said, I am your God and you are my people among all the nations on the planet. They turn.

[24:25] They abandoned him. Look at verse 12. And they abandoned the Lord who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from among the gods of the people who were around them and bowed down to them.

And they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned Yahweh and served the Baals and the Ashtoreth. These are the gods of the Canaanites.

So the first move in the cycle is Israel's apostasy. The second move of the cycle is the kindling of God's anger.

And we see that first reference at the end of verse 12 and they provoke the Lord to anger. And then we see it again in verse 14. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. We see it again in verse 20.

So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And what anger is this? Is this a capricious kind of anger? Maybe you had a dad you just walked on eggshells around him.

[25:23] You didn't know how he was going to react. This anger is a jealous anger. This anger is the anger the jealous anger of a husband for his wife when he sees her flirting with other men.

It's that kind of anger. It's a holy anger. It's an exclusive devotion anger. What Israel was doing was worse than adultery.

Let me point you out. Verse 17. Yet they did not listen to their judges for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them.

The tribes of Israel were prostituting themselves to the gods of the Canaanites. This anger is a holy anger.

It comes out of his devotion to his people. And in his anger what God then does we see it in 14 and 15 is God he actually raises up their enemies the nations around them to oppress them.

[26:36] You see God is the God of the nations. He's sovereign over them all. And he will use the nations to humble his people or use his people to humble the nations.

And they and he makes it really hard for them. At the end of verse 15 we read and they were in terrible distress.

At the beginning of verse 15 whenever they marched out the hand of the Lord was against them for harm as the Lord had warned back in Deuteronomy 7 you know I would do this.

God is being faithful even though his people have failed. So Israel apostatizes God's anger is kindled he raises up to those people to oppress his people so that they would eventually come to an end to themselves and they do.

The cycle goes on is that his people cry out. And we see that in verse 18 in their groaning. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.

[27:46] That groaning language is that of Exodus chapter 2. Israel groaning under the slavery of Egypt and God is moved to action for them.

We see God's anger kindled and we also see his compassion stirred. This crying out that we see it's God's people realizing oh this is awful God deliver us Yahweh rescue us and we see it again and again and again throughout the book of Judges.

the last move of this cycle is that God in his compassion in his mercy his mercy is more raises up a deliverer a judge.

We see this in verse 16 then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the land of those who plundered them. In the book of Judges there are actually 12 judges.

Six are minor judges six are major judges we're going to be focusing this summer on the major judges but there's also one anti-judge Abimelech and Zach gets to preach on him.

[29:19] Over and over again God raises up these human judges and what you need to know brothers and sisters these judges they are savior kings they're savior rulers they rescue then rule and they're all imperfect and as we get through the book of Judges you're going to see more and more oh man these judges they reflect God's people they're imperfect they are digressing into canaanization and not only the imperfect but they provide a temporary salvation in verse 18 and 19 whenever the Lord raised up judges for them the Lord was with the judge and he saved them from the land 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 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 what we have in the book of Judges is not just these cycles of apostasy and God's anger and oppression and then they cry out for deliverance and then God raises up a judge and then they just drop into apostasy it's a digressive spiral all the way through the book of Judges till you get to Samson but then you have five more chapters in the book of Judges and you know what gets repeated there was no king in Israel so they did what was right in their own eyes they become more and more canaanized what canaanization was to Israel is what worldliness is to the church when

Yahweh ceased to be the controlling center of Israel they went canaanization and when Jesus ceases to be the controlling center of God's new people the church we become worldly the third explanation is in verses 20 and 22 it's God himself and he picks up on a lot of the same language from verses 1-5 in the angel of the Lord in verse 20 Israel breaks covenant verse 21 he will no longer leave them go before them but there's something new introduced in this explanation it's in verse 22 21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died 22 in order to test Israel by them by the nations dwelling among them God is going to test his people by those people that were not dispossessed to test what whether they will take care to walk in the way of the

Lord as their fathers did or not they remain to test God's people of who they're going to love of who they're going to live for who they're going to obey who's going to be the controlling center of their lives will it be Yahweh or will it be these gods of the Canaanites that's the test in chapter 3 1 through 6 that testing language is pulled all the way through if you look at verse 1 now these are the nations that the Lord left to test Israel by them and then in verse 4 they were for the testing of Israel to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by

the hand of Moses this is all about testing who is this generation going to love and obey and you know what they fail miserably look at 3 6 please if you can remember Deuteronomy 7 1 through 5 and their daughters they took to themselves for wives and their own daughters they gave to their sons and they served the gods compromise it's God's anger is kindled against them this is the consequence of failure to obey Deuteronomy 7 and so what we have here is in chapter 1 we have this list of compromised tribes going from bad to worse and then in chapter 2 1 through 3 6 we have an explanation of why this is the way it is they've broken the covenant they're apostate and God is now testing them so what does this mean for us we're being tested too God is testing us and even though we're failures and unfaithful to him he remains faithful because he's a God of steadfast love slow to anger this is a very sobering book it can be very dark book and what we're going to be confronted with is a compromised canonized

[35:05] Israel again and again and again and it can be like oh this is you know one sermon is enough but what you also have in this book is God's faithfulness over and over and again God's faithfulness to his people so even though God is testing them and even though his people fail him God remains faithful then and now the book of Judges God has not ceased his plan to bless all the nations of the world through Abraham Judges doesn't put that on hold God is continuing his plan out Judges doesn't stop God's plan for the fullness of time to raise up from the line of Judah the greatest savior and king of all God tests his people fail but God remains faithful here's what that means brothers and sisters we need the book of Judges because the book of Judges points us to Jesus

God has raised up a new and better judge Othniel Ehud Deborah Barak Gideon Jephthah Samson these are all imperfect four of them get named in Hebrews 11 but they're all imperfect imperfect saviors and they they provide a temporary rest a temporary salvation you know what it does as you read through it it makes you long oh there's got to be better there's got to be a better savior and judge and king there's got to be a better it makes you long for the king the perfect savior who provides a permanent salvation that's Jesus Christ God in the flesh never since once and you know what he's still alive and you know what it means because he's still alive his salvation is still alive it's permanent perfect savior permanent rest permanent salvation there's no one like him but you know what it also means we've got a new and better covenant

God's old covenant people Israel God dwelled with them in a tabernacle the people were ethnic Israel and they were devoting other people to destruction the best thing that they could do in order to atone for their sins was the blood of goats the promised land was this strip of land just east of the Mediterranean that's the old covenant how about the new how about the new that this ultimate judge has brought let me tell you about it God dwells with his people now through his spirit we are God's people God's dwelling place it's a better covenant and the people is not an ethnic Israel it's all people who believe in Jesus all people and now we don't devote people to destruction we declare Christ among the nations and you want to talk about a payment way better than the blood of goats it's the blood of the king shed for you and me permanent salvation and you want to talk about a promised land don't don't think now don't think east of the Mediterranean think then a heavenly homeland which will come down from heaven itself the new heavens and the new earth where God's people will dwell with God in God's place forever in perfect peace no more tears better covenant that's our king but you know what we got going on now we've got the old sober warning we can canaanize what canaanization was to

Israel is what worldliness is to the church today again the world is sinful spiritually dead humanity that is an organized rebellion against God the world thinks away they value certain things they have different methods we can't canaanize you know how we not keep from becoming worldly it's not by avoiding it's by adoring by treasuring Jesus above all else by keeping Jesus as the controlling center of our lives when we abandon Christ we will accommodate to the world but when we adore Christ we will stand distinct from the world in the world but not of the world we will light up the world for Jesus we won't think the world's thoughts about sexuality and marriage we'll think God's thoughts we won't value what the world values about expressive individualism by the way if you have not read this book by

[41:06] Carl Trueman strange new world this will help you see the values of the Canaan we're living in we're not going to value that if you're

trying to make a better version of yourself you need to start asking have you been canonized we're not going to use the world's methods politically we're not going to cut off people's thumbs and toes God will test us and we're going to fail but he will be faithful better king better covenant and we're going to keep him as the controlling center the treasured center of our lives just as Israel was tested brothers and sisters we are being tested how do we not fail

God's tests of our hearts how do we walk in the ways of the Lord our God in the midst of this world it's not complicated but it requires daily dying to yourself treasure Jesus above all know him be in relationship with him be in awe of his great works of deliverance brothers and sisters do you know why we need the book of judges because judges points us to Jesus will you pray with me God in heaven we welcome your tests consider it all joy whenever you encounter trials of various kinds because we know you're testing our hearts

God would you help us learn from the book of judges that we would be warned not to be worldly and you would woo us to our king again and again so that we would walk faithfully with you in this place at this time in Jesus name amen so you not but have but I