

Rebellion and Rescue

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[0 : 00] Let's worship God. We sing to his praise from Psalm 89, Scottish Psalter Psalm 89. That's on page 344, but we're singing from page 345, Psalm 89 on page 345.

The Scottish Psalter Psalm 89, we can sing verses 13 to verse 17 of the psalm. Psalm 89 verses 13 to 17.

Thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in might, and thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height. Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

Mercy accompanied with truth shall go before thy face. Psalm 89 verses 13 to 17. To God's praise. Thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in might, and thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height.

Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

[1 : 40] Mercy with truth shall go before thy face.

O Spirit bless, O Christ, o Christ, o Christ. O Christ, O Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ. My Son, O Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ.

A Defense and judgment of thyongs, O Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ. O Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ, O Christ, o Christ, O Christ, o Christ, o Christ, o Christ.

am revenuesme Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 50] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. And we come to you and we confess that there's so much in our lives this past week, this past hour. There is so much in ourselves as we look to ourselves.

We think and we ponder and we say to ourselves that there is nothing worthy of us here. There is nothing we can offer you. As we look to ourselves, we see our own uncleanness, our own failings, our own faults.

As we come and offer our worship to you, we know we bring these faults and these failings to this place too. We give you praise as we as your people, those here this evening who know and who love you.

As we meet just now to worship you and sing your praises. For we offer our worship through the finished work of our Saviour. He who takes our words, who takes our prayers, who takes our small and at times our useless offering.

[5 : 18] And he makes it glorious. It's in his name we gather this evening. It's in the confidence of being called his own precious people we come just now.

We come just now as brothers and sisters around your worship. Brothers and sisters just now before our God. Before the one who has called us your own. As we've been hearing in past weeks.

You have known your people from before time itself. From before creation itself. We were known to you. We were loved by you. You set your love on your people.

So that in time, in space. That at one certain time and one certain day you would come and rescue us from death and destruction.

And call us your own. We give you praise this evening that those of us here who know and who love Jesus. That we are here this evening as living testimony of a God.

[6 : 18] Who redeems those who were once lost. We are living witnesses of a God who forgives great sin. A God who brings to life those who were once dead.

Help us Lord we ask in our witness. Help us in our day to day lives as your people. At home and at work. In places of study. Help us in our village here to be glowing witnesses.

To be examples of what it is to be salt and light in this world. We know we seek to serve you in a place and an age and a day. In an island and a nation.

Where there is so much darkness. Where there is so much spiritual blandness. Where we ask you to help us to be salt. Help our conversation to be so full of the person and the work and the love of our Saviour.

That those we talk with would have no other option but to ask us about who he is. And why he is so special. Help us we ask in our conduct of our families and our friends.

[7 : 25] Those we are closest to. Help us in our witness. Help us in our actions. In our thoughts. In our words. In all that we say and think and do towards those who are so close to us.

Help us to be good witnesses we ask. We confess it as often to those who are closest to us. That we find ourselves failing so easily. And failing so quickly to be witnesses.

We find tempers grow so short. Lord we find the evidence of our saved reality to be so far away from us at times. Help us Lord we ask.

We pray especially just now for those who are close to us. Our family members. Our friends. Those who we love. Those who we bring so often to the throne of grace.

That we bring them one more time this evening. We ask that you would draw close to them. Lord we ask for salvation for those who we love. But who feel so far away from you.

[8 : 28] Those who we have spent many years praying for. Who as of yet have no care for their own souls. Lord we ask you bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself.

We pray for our gathering this evening. Lord help us to concentrate on your word. We confess there are so many things which distract us just now. We bring these things to you.

We bring the stresses and strains. Perhaps even the agonies of this past week. We bring the anxieties and the burdens of this coming week.

We bring these things to you just now. Confessing that we have so little ability to do anything about anything. We find our power and our strength so small and so weak.

And we come just now laying these things at the foot of your throne. That place where you promise we will find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

[9 : 28] We do pray Lord for that mercy just now for ourselves as a congregation. We thank you for the ongoing witness we have had in this village for many years now. We pray that as the years go on you would if it's your will you would keep a witness in this place.

We also remember the same witness of our brothers and sisters next door. We thank you for them. We pray for them especially just now Lord as they mourn one connected to their congregation.

But also Lord one connected to this wider community as a whole. We do pray for our mourning family. We ask you to come alongside and draw close to them Lord.

Help us we ask as a community. Lord both congregations together. Lord we know humanly these days feel so far away from us perhaps. We feel Lord that's an impossibility.

We know that nothing is impossible with you. As we find ourselves serving you in an increasingly darker day. As we find ourselves seeking to serve you in a country which cares less and less for you.

[10 : 35] Lord we ask you give us days of gospel opportunity. Help us to be bold we ask. But in boldness to be gentle. Help us to be zealous we ask.

In a right way. But in that great zealousness help us to be careful. Help our words to be salt and light yes. But help us Lord not to be despised.

If we are to be despised let it be despised for the sake of the gospel and not for ourselves. Help not our own pride. Our own attitude. Help not our own person to put anyone off the gospel.

Help us Lord to be salt and light. To be a careful witness to this community. We do ask for this community especially this evening. For those in this place who as of yet have no gospel understanding.

Who have no idea as to the danger of their souls that are in even this evening. Lord we pray just now with heavy hearts. With those who are around us.

[11 : 40] Our neighbours and our friends. Our family members in this place. Who have as of yet no understanding as to the danger of our souls in. Lord we ask that even this evening.

Even this evening your word as it goes out. It would not return to you void in this place. We pray the same prayer for some even here this evening. Some who have attended the means of grace for many years.

But who as of yet have not listened to your word. Who as of yet have not seen for themselves or sought for themselves even. The safety.

The salvation. The hope. The joy. The love that is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask of this evening. That he would be known to them.

He would no longer just be there in theory. No longer just there in mere words. But this evening that some here would even know him for the first time themselves.

[12 : 40] No longer know him as judge hanging over them. Who would come to know him as elder brother. As saviour. As friend.

And as king. I know we ask that. It's beyond our ability. We know that we can save nobody. But you and your wonder working power can save all who come to you.

Crying out for that salvation. As always. As we remembered in the morning. We also remember once more this evening. Our persecuted brothers and sisters.

As we remember China in the morning. We remember once more. For India. For India. For India. For India. This evening. Especially the area of northern India. Lord. You know the details. We pray Lord for your people there.

Those without homes. Those without villages. Those without church buildings. Those who have lost loved ones. Because of the ongoing carnage.

[13 : 39] In that part of the world. Lord. Those who are willing to even put their lives on the line. For the sake of the gospel. Because they would not renounce their service.

Nor their love towards Jesus. Lord. We ask to be with them. We cannot share. Or begin to understand their suffering. But we Lord know that you are with them.

Where we cannot help. You are there present. And leading them and guiding them. We pray Lord that. Through the destruction and pain and sadness. Of that place. We would see gospel fruit.

Springing from the most unlikely of sources. That those who try and persecute. And put a stop to the gospel. Would themselves be transformed. By that very same gospel message. Lord go before us we ask.

We come just now confessing sin. We come to you a holy God. And in your holiness we are so aware of our unrighteousness. So aware of our own darkness.

[14 : 38] We come confessing that darkness just now. That we in and of ourselves have no right to be here. That in and of ourselves we have no right to call upon your name. But we do so this evening.

Because of the finished work of our saviour. It's in his finished work we hope. It's on his name we call. It's in his name we ask all these many things.

Amen. Let's turn to read in God's word. As we said in the previous weeks. We're beginning a new series. In the book of Judges.

So we turn to God's word. Judges chapter 2. Judges chapter 2. That's on page 188. Of the church bibles. Judges chapter 2.

On page 188. Judges chapter 2.

[15 : 40] Let's again hear the word of God. Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bohem. And he said, I brought you up from Egypt.

And brought you into the land that I swore to give your father. I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with inhabitants of this land.

You shall break down their altars. But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? 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. As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

And they called the name of that place Bohem. And they sacrificed there to the Lord. When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land.

[16 : 47] And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua. And all the days of the elders who had lived Joshua. Who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.

And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-Heres, in the hill county of Ephraim, north of the mountains of Gash.

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.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. 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 people who were around them and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreth.

[17 : 59] 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 they could no longer withstand their enemies.

Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 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. 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. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going back after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them.

[19 : 21] They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he said, Because this people have transgressed my covenant, that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not.

So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua. Amen and so on.

We give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word. Let's again sing to God's praise, this time from Sing Psalms.

Sing Psalms in Psalm 57. Sing Psalms, Psalm 57.

That's on page 74 of the psalm book. Sing Psalms, Psalm 57. On page 74, we can sing verses 1 down to verse 5. Have mercy on me, Lord.

[20 : 47] To you my soul holds fast. Your covering wings will shelter me until the dangers pass. I cry to God most high, to God who answers me, for he fulfills his purposes for me most perfectly.

Psalm 57, verses 1 to 5. God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Symphotis. Jesus, O recorded, Amen. Amen. God's praise. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

[21 : 49] I'm sorry, I'm sorry. For he who fills the purpose of his, For me, God's perfect in.

He sends his help from hell And save me from heaven.

Renew me, Lord, to save my life. God sends his truth and love.

I live with sound of peace. I dwell with pride on stone.

With men who speak with gifts she words I shine so his set turn Upon the night's end.

[23 : 29] O God, that's not good. I love you, Lord.

The air, we love. This thing you have to see.

Let's for a short time turn back to the chapter we had. Judges chapter 2. Judges chapter 2.

We've taken the whole chapter this evening, But we can take perhaps verse 11 as at least one of the summaries we have.

I can summarize this chapter well. Verse 11. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, And served the Baals. Perhaps before a two week holiday isn't the best time to start a brand new study, Which is why this evening this will just be an introduction to the series.

[24 : 52] We have plenty of series before, since we started together. And not every series needs an introduction. But sometimes we do. And if we're beginning a series in the book of Judges, It's one of these books, One of these accounts of the history of Israel, That does need a short time before we start to establish where we're going.

And to see what this book is about before we delve into it. The truth is, for those of us who have read Judges, At least read parts even of Judges, We all know the big stories.

We all know the Gideons. We all know the big names perhaps that appear. But as we spend time in this book, We begin to see that this is not a book of course of heroes.

This is not a book that is perhaps suitable in its fullness for many Sunday school classes. This is a book which deals simply and plainly and bluntly with the reality of what we are as people.

This is a book that deals with sin. And you might think just now, Why this book? Why are we going to spend the next few weeks, The next several weeks, Dealing with a book that talks about ancient kings and tribes warring together?

[26 : 26] Why are we spending precious time together, Looking at a book that deals with awful warfare, And evil and bloodshed and killing and pain?

Why are we spending time, Or so much time dealing with pretty grim topics? Or perhaps if we just rejig the question slightly, It begins to make a bit more sense.

We could also ask, Why are we spending time looking at a book which deals with an idolatrous people? A people obsessed with idols, And who will do anything to worship those idols?

Why spend time looking at a book, Where we see what they like to live in a day, Where there is no real leadership? Why spend time looking at a book, Where we see what it is to live in a day, Where there is no real faith to be found in the land?

Why spend time looking at a book, Where we see a people who are so desperate, And so needing rescue? Perhaps we ask these questions, We see that the days of the judges, If we are being very honest, Are almost a carbon copy of our own day.

[27 : 53] And in the weeks to come, With the Lord's help, Quite worryingly, As you begin studying this book, You will see, I hope, Parallels to our own day, That should shock us.

We perhaps read these accounts of these awful things, We think, What savage people, What evil people they were back then, With all their sin, And all their rebellion, And idolatry against God, Who loved them, And who saved them, Who rescued them, And they kept messing things up.

We're not like that. We're nothing like that. And you begin to read, You think, Oh, actually, We're quite a lot like that.

And we'll see that more, As the weeks stretch on ahead for us. Just some historic background for us. It's good for us to place the accounts of these books in living history.

Of course, I know we know this, And I often say this, But we often say it with the New Testament. We said it with the Mark series quite often in the morning. These are not just accounts that are there to fill in space.

[29 : 09] These are real people. These are real situations. This is the Lord dealing with people who experienced life, Perhaps different to we experience it, But they are people with thoughts and feelings, With experiences and emotions, With good days and bad days, With sin and with faithfulness.

These are real people. Who lived in a real time. So just to help us set the scene, The book of Judges is roughly based, As we read, Between the death of Joshua, And the rise or the start of the kingdom age, We could say, The kings of Israel.

So between Joshua and the times of Samuel and Saul onwards. Roughly dates are very rough, But roughly between 1350 and 1100 BC.

So before Jesus. So about one and a half thousand years, Give or take, Before the Lord was born. And Judges deals with a timeframe of about 250 years, Give or take a few years.

So we are dealing with 250 years worth of life for these people. 250 years worth of sin and rebellion.

[30 : 37] This is the life and the story of the people of Israel. Now before we begin our study in the next few weeks, There is one overarching rule for us.

One overarching reminder for us. And we'll keep coming back to this again and again. And we'll see why it's so important that we grasp this. That simple rule is, Just because something is included in the account of Judges, Just because something is mentioned to have taken place, That of course does not mean that God condones that act.

That sounds quite obvious to our atheist friends, And I need speaking personally to my own friends, Who will oppose scripture, And who will point to scripture not being real.

They'll often point to Judges and say, Look at the awful things that your God does. Look at the awful things which take place in that book.

The grim realities, The awful situations. And they miss the fact. Just because it's recorded in scripture.

[31 : 58] It does not mean it's condoned by God. In fact, as we go through the book together, We'll see it's quite the opposite. We ask, well, if God doesn't condone it, Why does he record it in his word?

Because as we said before, God is, of course, honest. God is, of course, truthful. And if we're saying Judges is a genuine reflection Of what this people lived like for 250 years, Then God will show us exactly the truthfulness of the situation.

Every sin, Every backsliding moment, Every idol they worshipped and sacrificed to. It's shown to us.

Every murder, Every conquest, Every killing of a people they shouldn't be going near. It's recorded. Not because God condones it, of course.

But it's recorded to show us just the level of evil that we are capable of sinking to. We see that throughout scripture. So often we see things recorded for us that are there to show us our own hearts.

[33 : 13] That's the first rule of Judges. Just because it's there, it doesn't mean it's being condoned. It's there because God is honest. And he shows the reality of what we are like. And the second rule is, We cannot detach ourselves from the book of Judges.

As we said this before, When we saw the Pharisees in our morning series, We saw the Pharisees in our morning series, We saw even like the Jonah as we started together.

We like to detach ourselves from these people. And look at them coldly from a distance. When it comes to the book of Judges, We have the reminder perhaps of Calvin.

And that quote he gave us. The human heart is an idol factory. And brothers and sisters, And friends, Not just the Christians here, But all of us together.

The sad truth is, And we might not believe this, Or admit to it, But I think scripture makes it quite clear to us. Each one of us here, Each one of us here, Has the possibility, Indeed the seed, Of committing any one of the sins we find in this book.

[34 : 34] Any one of us here. The possibility of committing any of the sins we find in this book. We can't afford to say, I would never think that way, Or do that thing. That misjudges our own level of fallenness.

At the same time, We come to look at a book, Where we see hope, Even in the middle of great darkness. Looking briefly at our chapter just now, To give us a summary of what's ahead of us.

There are four themes we see in chapter 2. And it's four themes that, That really are reflected throughout the whole of the rest of our studies. The same four themes we find again and again, But in different ways, of course.

Rebellion, A lack of leadership, Unfaithfulness, And rescue. Rebellion, A lack of leadership, Unfaithfulness, And rebellion.

These are the four themes we find in chapter 2, But the same themes we find, The next few weeks together. First of all, A brief look, And it will be brief, At rebellion, In this chapter.

[35 : 47] We see that in verses 1, Down, Roughly to verse 5. The story of Judges is of course one of, Of constant declension.

It's one of constant degrade. Israel starts off, Presumably, Seemingly, Quite well. If you have time this evening, You read chapter 1, And you see the end of Joshua, Of course Joshua passes away there, And things are perhaps, Looking up for Israel.

Things look quite promising, You could say, For Israel. But now, By chapter 2, And chapter 2 is a summary, Of what's taken place, In a recent history.

We see things, Have not gone well. What was once great promise, Joshua leaves Israel, On a good footing, To go forward, And serve the Lord well. It's declension.

It's degradation. Things have declined, And declined. And we go, From seeing the Israelites, From just flirting on the edges, Of almost worshipping the gods, Of the Canaanites.

[37 : 00] They go from just being slightly too close, To the Canaanite neighbours, To almost, It seems instantly, Almost overnight, In a few short weeks, If not months, Definitely not years, They go from being, A bit too close, To being, Fully engaged.

Fully engaged, In all the worship, Of the pagan nation, They were told, To remove, To remove, Out of, The land.

Rebellion. The whole of chapter one of Judges, Can be summarised, In one word. Failure. Failure. Utter, Failure.

Failure. As it's not tonight's lecture, But just, If you look even at chapter one, And verse twenty seven onwards, Even the subtitle here, The subtext in the ESV, It captures it well.

Failure to complete the conquest. God has promised them, This land of, Milk and honey. God's promised them, This land of, Of peace.

[38 : 09] If only they do one thing, Remove from the land, The Canaanites. The Canaanites had been doing, Horrendous things, Sacrificing their children, And all the rest of it, Will cover in the weeks to come.

So the instruction was clear, Remove them from the land. And as, Verse twenty seven of chapter one onwards, That goes through all the tribes of Israel. And what do we see?

Again and again, The same pattern. Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, They did not drive out the Canaanites. They did not drive out the inhabitants.

They did not drive out the inhabitants. Again and again, They failed to do the one thing, They were supposed to do. But worse than that, They didn't just not force them out.

They didn't just not drive them out. They started copying, What these people did. They started copying the practices, Of this nation.

[39 : 12] We see in verse one and verse two of our chapter, Chapter two, The covenant God made with the people. It was clear. God would give them this land.

God would give them the land. He promised to their fathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you. But note, Where they've gone wrong.

And you shall make no covenant, With the inhabitants of the land. You shall break down their altars. The command is simple.

Break down the altars. Do not engage with their foreign pagan practices. They worship a God, And gods who seek death and destruction, Have nothing to do with them.

I have rescued you to serve me, The one true living God. I rescued you from Egypt. I rescued your fathers from Egypt. I have taken you this far.

[40 : 15] And all you have done, Is go against me again, And again, And again. The covenant is clear. But of course, The people of Israel, They go against the simple, Clear command of God.

And we see that in verses three, Down to verse five. The rebellion. It wasn't unknowing. It wasn't unwilling.

And we see, of course, There is remorse. At the end of verse four and verse five. The second that the Lord shows them, And reminds them of just how much they failed him.

They have remorse. They are sorry, of course, What they've done. But we see that remorse is so short lived. It's not genuine repentance.

Because we see that the rest of the book of Judges follows. That they get worse and worse and fall deeper and deeper away from the Lord.

[41 : 24] Israel was given a clear command. Trust in the Lord. Follow the Lord. Serve the Lord. They didn't trust the Lord.

They didn't follow the Lord. And they certainly did not serve them. Instead they began, as we said just now, To serve every other false god apart from the Lord.

And we'll see that more in the weeks to come. The variety of false gods they chose to worship is almost impressive. If it wasn't so sad. They almost go out of their way to worship as many different deities and so-called gods as they possibly can.

There are people who are in rebellion. But also there are people who don't have a leader. Of course verses 6 down to verse 10 we see that.

This is the next theme we see again and again. They are a leaderless people. Now under verses 6 to verse 8 we do see that under good leadership.

[42 : 31] Of course there was some less than encouraging moments perhaps in Joshua's leadership. But in general under good leadership. The people did maintain some form of decorum.

Some form of faithful service to the Lord. And we often hear the phrase and Knox often repeated it. I don't know if Knox coined it.

I don't think he did. But Knox often repeated that a nation receives the leader it deserves. A nation receives the leader it deserves.

And how often that is true. Whilst the people of Israel at least sought to be faithful. They had a faithful leader over them. But the days of faithfulness had gone.

Joshua is gone. The elders who followed Joshua who also worked hard to try their best to serve well had gone.

[43 : 37] And the days of unfaithfulness have truly begun for Israel. That is true for nations. And we'll see as we go on the point can be made.

But it's also true for congregations indeed for denominations. But often we get the leaders and the leadership direction that we as a people deserve.

Or at least that we desire after. God is often more than happy to give us what we want. We want our own way. We want our own way. And we see that in Israel here.

God is often quite happy to let us have our own way. If they wanted to worship false gods. God let them do that. If they wanted to be led and guided by the Canaanite kings instead.

God let that happen. But also he let the consequences that followed that also happen. They had good leadership.

[44 : 38] But note the change of tone as we come to verse 10. Things were good for a while, but Joshua is buried. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers.

fathers and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work they had done for Israel. Now we have to be careful. We never say that the generation before us were holy and we are not. The generation before us would be appalled if they heard us saying that.

And I know we often look back with such rose-tinted glasses to days of refreshing and days of gospel blessing and indeed perhaps the days before our times were in some ways more blessed by the Lord.

But the days before us also looked back to the days before them. And if you even begin to read some of the history of even Scotland itself, forget the rest of the Lord's work in the world, even our own nation, even our own island. You go back not so far and you find a much darker day than our own.

I know we think things are tough today, but go back not too far and you find a much, much darker day than our own. We're not preaching or teaching that we must follow the old ways because the old ways were always right. Biblically true, historically not. We've heard that in the mornings.

[46 : 13] We've seen that before and again and again in the mornings. But the truth here is not saying they were right because they were somehow old or no, but they were right because they sought to follow the ways of the Lord. And the new generation of Israel in verse 10, they didn't know the way of the Lord.

They didn't know the work of the Lord. The question is, why didn't they know? Why didn't they know? Well, quite simply, it stands to reason they weren't properly taught the way of the Lord.

They might well blame the generation that came after them for the ruin, but they weren't taught properly the ways of the Lord.

And we know the Lord is clear that one generation must teach the next. And if we see a rebellious and ungodly and uncaring generation following after our own, we must be willing to ask the question, have we truly shown the following generation what it is to know and to love and to serve Jesus?

Have we done that well? It's all good bemoaning the godlessness of our own day if we ourselves perhaps haven't looked to ourselves and seen or asked the question, how well have we taught the generation?

[47 : 39] We see often in Judges, Israel pines back to the days of old again and again. And we'll see later on, the Lord scorns them for that. The Lord reprimands them for that and reminds them that they are living in the day they are living in and that is the time they must serve in.

And that's for a future sermon in this book. But they're leaderless days, they are aimless days. And quite simply, they are unfaithful days.

Verses 11 down to verse 15. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

It goes downhill so quickly. Joshua is gone and the people, they decline and decline. And sin increases. And they begin to serve.

Note the wording there. Not just worship, but they served the Baals. They abandoned the Lord and they served instead the Baals.

[48 : 51] How horrifying, I thought. In one generation, the living God, who they knew, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, who had taken them this far.

They turn away from the living God to serve idols they can see and touch, are made out of wood and metal, are carved in the rock.

They can see the reality of they're just dust and stone and wood. And yet they'd rather serve that. And the question is why.

Because the Baals don't answer back. The Baals don't hold them accountable. The Baals give them whatever they want. Because really when we worship idols, we're worshipping ourselves.

But more worrying than that. There is a certain level of truthfulness to these false gods. We might think false gods are just stone, are just wood.

[49 : 54] And in one sense that's true. But false gods are not just wood, are not just stone. And we'll see this in Judges. Because false gods are, in one sense, real.

Because you worship idols, you're worshipping Satan. And he is happy to receive worship. Whatever form you're happy to worship him in. And we'll see that more as Israel goes on and on throughout the pages.

As they decline more and more. And just as the Lord God predicted, they begin to worship the idol. And we come to the terrifying conclusion of verse 15 that leads to unfaithfulness.

Verse 15. God is merciful.

God is merciful to generation after generation after generation. But God is also holy. And he is righteous.

[51 : 21] And he is perfect. And God will not and he cannot tolerate sin forever. And the people of Israel found that out. After generation and generation of faithfulness.

Of God preserving them and keeping them despite ongoing rebellion. The day came and the time came. The Lord God said, you get what you wanted all this time.

You wanted to serve these gods to do your own thing. I will give you that. You wanted to go your own way. You can go your own way. You wanted to see these gods protect you and serve you.

Let these gods now protect you. And serve you. And see what takes place in the life of you and your people. And if the story ended at verse 15.

We'd have no hope this evening. But God is merciful. And God is faithful. And the truth is when God keeps his covenant.

[52 : 31] He truly keeps his covenant. Even when we go against him. And don't keep up our end. As we're off the covenant. God keeps his end. Because he's a holy and faithful and righteous God.

And we see that in our final brief section here. There is rescue. The theme of rescue. In the book of Judges. Verses 16 to the end.

Just to summarize these verses. This final section. Verses 16 to 23. It just summarizes for us where we're going in the rest of the book. The Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

The judge. We perhaps hear judge. We think judge is just a legal thing. We know of course the judges in Israel were there as. Essentially functioned as kings of a sort.

And we'll see this more as time goes on. It requires more explanation. But as part time kings. They were there to lead the people physically. In terms of warfare.

[53 : 40] In terms of spiritual matters. They were there to be God's representative for a time over the people. In verse 18 and verse 19.

It encapsulates the rest of the book. God gives the people a judge. He hears them crying out. God gives them a judge to rescue them.

To keep them. To save them. The people are rescued from the situation. The judge's time ends. The people then have a very short memory.

And they go back to doing the same things again. Back to the same old sins. The same old idol worship. They rebel again. And God sends another judge.

God maintains his covenant promise. Of keeping his people. Regardless of their ongoing rebellion. And the question all the way through the book is.

[54 : 39] Where is the help? Where does any of this ever actually end? The constant rescue of God to his people. And the constant rebellion of God's people against him.

It is almost tiring at the end of the book. You're so exhausted at the people. You're saying. What is wrong with you people? You keep rebelling the same ways again and again.

It's been 200 years. And you haven't learned your lesson. And God is still being faithful. God is still giving judges. God is still rescuing you.

And it's in that frustration. It's in that ongoing pattern. We see the beauty of judges. In all the darkness and sin and rebellion.

We'll have to cover that. But behind the scenes we see the ongoing beauty. What is that? That God rescues his people.

[55 : 38] And every time he sends a judge to rescue, to save his people. We see in these judges. We see in these judges.

Sometimes we see it in their positive actions. Sometimes in how they get things wrong. We see what the coming Messiah will and will not be like.

We see glimpses as to the final judge. The final rescuer of his people. Who despite ongoing rebellion still comes to save us.

Who despite ongoing hatred towards him still comes to rescue us. Who despite us constantly going after other gods.

Still sets his sight to come and to save a people from themselves. And from their own sin. The question of judges is.

[56 : 35] Where is the Messiah? Where is the final help? As we read judges. We read it knowing that he is coming.

Every failure of God's people. And every rescue that God gives them. We get one year closer. Ten years closer. A hundred years closer.

To the coming Messiah. Of course we read judges looking back. Knowing that he has come. But we also read judges.

And as we said at the start. We will read judges. We pray with an open heart. With an honest heart. As we see ourselves perhaps in the pages of this book.

We should be growing. We should be growing in not just our horror at sin. But also growing in our understanding and our love. To a saviour who rescues us.

[57 : 31] Again and again. Who pulls us out of the disaster we make for ourselves. Again and again. Who despite what we would say.

If we could tell him. Jesus you have done it too many times. We don't deserve it anymore. I've messed up too many times. I don't deserve it anymore.

We see a saviour. Who rescues his people. Who sets his love on his people. We see a Jesus. Who features in every account of this book.

As the coming Messiah. Who would be the final. Perfect. Perfect. Judge. All the rebellion. Yes. All the sin. Yes. All the darkness.

Yes. But there is hope. And there is light. That is found in Jesus. And in him alone. And that's our hope. Over the next few weeks.

[58 : 27] We spend time in this book. Not just we learn the history of Israel. It's important to do so. But also we learn. The level of depravity.

That we are capable of. Also important. But all of that. We are reminded. As to the goodness. And the care. And the love of God. That is shown ultimately.

In the personal work. Of our glorious. And exalted saviour. The Lord. Jesus Christ. Let's bow our heads now. A word of prayer. Lord.

We come this evening. We thank you. Once more. For your word. We come at the start. Of this. New series. And we ask you. Lead us. And guide us. In your word. We give you praise. That the power is not.

In the jars of clay. Lord. To stand up here. Lord. Indeed. We ask for anything. That was said. Not in accordance to your word. It would be forgiven. That over the next few weeks. You would lead. And guide us.

[59 : 23] Through these chapters. To see. Not just the depth. Of our own depravity. But to see. The height. And the wonder. Of the care.

And love. And preservation. You have. For your people. Despite. Our undeservingness. Of it. Help us. Lord. This new week. To not just be hearers.

But to be doers. Of your word. To put into practice. All we heard today. From your word. To live this week. As ambassadors. For you. Knowing we go out. To serve you. In a world.

That is full of darkness. And is full of hatred. For you. But is so full of sin. And evil. But also a world. Where the fields of harvest. Are ready. Where there is so much harvest.

But there is so few workers. Help us to be faithful workers. We ask. Let's call these things in. And through. And for Jesus. In his precious name's sake.

[60 : 21] Amen. Let's bring our time this evening. To conclusion. By singing to God's praise. From the psalter. Scottish psalter. In Psalm 113.

Scottish psalter. Psalm 113. Sing the whole psalm. To God's praise. Praise God. You servants. Of the Lord. O praise.

The Lord's name. Praise. Ye blessed be. The name of God. From this time. Forth always. From rising sun. To where it sets. God's name. Is to be praised. Above all nations.

God is high. Above heavens. His glory. Raised. Psalm 113. To God's praise. Praise. Christ.

Father's praise. In Psalm 113. Amen. God is high. God is high. O praise the Lord in peace.

[61 : 25] Yea, blessed be the name of God. From this time for all is.

From rising sun to where it sets. God's name is to be praised.

At the bondage of God is high. The penises do be raised.

And to the Lord, O God, that is. On high to come, God, here.

And set that hand it brings to see. In heaven and heaven, the Lord.

[62 : 40] Ifram, the gospel, we serve you. That filled the joy of God.

Ragnar hum■ That he be high in perseverance, and with the princesses, with those that God his people are, that she in princesses, with those that God his people are, that he is, that he is, that he is, that he is.