

JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

Lesson 3: Covenantal Righteousness

Key Verse: And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.~ Judges 2.11

Micherre Fox of New York City committed herself to mining for the diamond she would use in her engagement ring. After spending 3 weeks in a tent, with “a shovel and a mission”¹, she did it! She mined her 2.3 carat diamond that is being placed in her engagement ring! Her successful story illustrates the power of whole-hearted devotion in overcoming trials that destroy zeal and tests that reveal fragility and broken humanity. In every test and trial, Ms. Fox decided to do what it took, and it took a LOT, to realize her dream of mining the diamond used in the ring she is using to enter a **covenant** of whole-hearted devotion with her soon-to-be husband². Under Joshua’s leadership, God’s people had a likewise mindset and zeal about God’s ability to fulfill His promise to lead them into His promised real estate. However, over time future generations failed their God-ordained tests revealing their unwillingness to remain wholeheartedly devoted to God. This placed them in trials that revealed their fragility, resulting in their rebellion against God. And so, God came to them as the **Angel of the LORD** to pronounce His judgment of their rebellion. However, buried within God’s judgment God mines a priceless diamond: His compassion and grace.

Compassionate God, forgive us for our rebellion. Gracious God, enable us to willingly choose to drop practices that lead us to rebellion. Merciful Father, reveal our stubborn ways. Savior God, increase our faith so that we will serve You alone, with wholehearted devotion. Strengthen us in tests. Empower Your Spirit in us to be our strength when trials reveal our fragility and brokenness. Give us the courage to choose Your Son, our Savior, Jesus in the small, boring, menial, daily tasks to the grand moments of Your abundance. Keep us set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1.1).

Judges 2.1-3.6 Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “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, **2** and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? **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.” **4** 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. **5** And they called the name of that place Bochim. And they sacrificed there to the LORD.

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. **7** And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. **8** And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. **9** And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. **10** And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers.

And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. **11** And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. **12** And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. **13** They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.

14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. **15** 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.

16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. **17** Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. **18** Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. **19** But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

¹ [A New York woman dug for 3 weeks to find her own engagement ring diamond.](#), August 20, 2025

² “She said that she was trying to find a physical object to embody the promise she wants to make to her partner about who she’s going to be in a marriage. A person who shows up, who works really long, hard, unglamorous, sweaty, smelly hours behind the scenes at problems that may not be solvable. ‘If you take giving up off the table, the only thing left is to keep moving.’”

20 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, **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, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not." **23** So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

CH 3 Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. **2** It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before. **3** These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. **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.

5 So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **6** And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.

Diamonds: The author of Judges has not lost his mind and sense of time between Judges 2.1-5 and verses 6-10. Rather, the author is providing historical context for how God's people have departed from idol-disposing, land-clearing servants of God into idol worshipping, good neighbors of people with interesting ideas and fun festivals for worshipping gods in nature.

1. Contrast God's people from this same bird's-eye view using Judges 2.2 and Judges 2.7. What did Joshua's generation do in Judges 2.7? Now, many generations later, what are the people doing in Judges 2.2?

The transition from wholehearted, godly servants to unfaithful, pagan-following community members wasn't a toggle switch that rapidly flipped. It took generations, and it wasn't completely the fault of the previous generation! A more careful reading of Judges 2.10b-13 reveals that we cannot blame parents for the willful decisions of their children. This truth is a great relief for some, but nerve-racking for others!

Apostasy is the *abandonment* of a religious (or political) belief. In order to abandon a belief, one must know the belief they have abandoned. A careful reading supported throughout scripture of Judges 2.10 reveals that the phrase, "who did not know the LORD or the work He had done for Israel" is found in describing the two sons of Eli in 1 Samuel 2.12. These were God's own priests, who were *very* well-educated in the LORD. According to Dr. Dale R. Davis, the same phrase is used to describe these two priestly sons. "That does not mean they did not know *about* Yahweh (obviously they [Eli's two sons] did) or that they were ignorant of His mighty acts according to Israel's creed (surely, they were not). Rather, it means that they 'had no regard for' (RSV) or that 'they cared nothing for Yahweh' (JB)."³ His conclusion is that subsequent generations chose not to acknowledge Yahweh and His history with His people. Knowing God and His history "didn't matter to them, [nor] had influence over them."⁴ As Dr. Webb states, "The next generation were no less ignorant of their calling as a nation than Samson was of his calling as a Nazirite (Judges 16.17)". Thus, the generations of God's people after Joshua's generation made choices that eventually led them to apostasy.

The best example of parents who taught their children the ways of God and yet saw one fall into apostasy are Adam and Eve. "Adam and Eve had Abel, whose offering pleased God, and Cain, who murdered his brother."⁵ (Genesis 4.1-10) "And what solace is there for godly parents who see a dearly loved child walk away? No consolation is offered in this passage, which speaks only of apostasy and God's anger. But there is hope – slim perhaps, but real nonetheless – in the place of passage in the book. It is not the end! There is more to Israel's story than is told in these verses, and more to God's character than His anger. So those who must bear the pain of seeing others abandon the Lord are not alone. They stand with others who suffer as they do. And they stand with God, who has been abandoned as they have. And they hope in Him."⁶

2. Perhaps you personally are experiencing this pain (we are deeply grieved alongside you). Perhaps you are convinced that what you have done to teach your children about God and salvation in Jesus guarantees their personal salvation (it doesn't). Perhaps this doesn't apply, but you can see the hurt and fear behind the eyes of your

³ Davis, pp. 35-36

⁴ Davis, p. 36, in this Dr. Davis is referring to Robert G. Boling's work, *Judges*, The Anchor Bible, p. 158

⁵ Webb, p. 45

⁶ Webb, p. 50

sisters-in-Christ. As you are willing, please share a name of someone your group can commit to praying for this year (no need to share the story):

From Judges 2.16 and V 18, God mined a two-carat diamond for His people at that time and for us today. From these two verses God gives us two full carats of truth about Him:

The first carat: In these two verses, God reveals Himself as more than a one-dimensional God who is looking for perfection in His people to be with them, protect them, and bless them. In our study of Leviticus, we mined the emotional depths of God's pain-filled response to evicting His hand-made masterpieces from His Presence (Genesis 3.23-24). In Judges 2.14a,16, and 18, we again encounter God's perfect emotions. A direct translation of Judges 2.14a reads, "Yahweh's nose became hot against Israel!"⁷.

3. What opposite emotions from His anger in V14a does God display in His responses to His people's distress in Judges 2.16 and 18? (Freely read Judges using additional translations to get a fuller picture of God's emotions towards His people⁸.)

The second carat: Only three times in the Old Testament is the Hebrew noun for "groaning" (V 18) used, and two of those times are to describe His people's groans while enslaved by the Egyptians (Exodus 2.24 and 6.5). This is "a 'groaning' that God hears – and He remembers His covenant and delivers them. The very word in Judges 2.18 should carry our minds back to Exodus. So, when we read that 'Yahweh was sorry on account of their groaning' it is as if the text is saying: 'See! Yahweh is still the same in 1100 BC as in 1400 BC' (dates approximate!) *His mercies never come to an end! Hundreds of years do not cool the warmth of His compassions.*"⁹

4. What is most encouraging and/or comforting to you about God in this second carat of truth?

5. How does the two-carat diamond God mined for you shape your understanding of Him (Questions 3 & 4)? Is there something new, deeper, or simple about Him that He is teaching (or reminding) you?

Judges 2.20 through 3.4 provides God's summary reason for the cycle His people enter through the judges referenced in Judges 2.14-19.

6. Before we enter the story of the first judge (Lesson 5), try to depict what God's people looked like as a nation according to Judges 3.5-6? If you are able, go back to Lesson 1 ("Ruin of Sin") and find the verse(s) you chose from Question 7. How does the verse(s) you chose help you find hope even in your depiction of God's people in that time period?

⁷ Webb, p. 48

⁸ We recommend The Message, Amplified Bible, and New Living Translation. These additional versions are available for free through Biblegateway.com

⁹ Davis, p. 40

Deity: Angel of the LORD¹⁰~ (Judges 2.1-5) Through the consistent use of the personal pronoun, “I”, the Angel of the LORD in Judges 2.1-5 suggests that He is God Himself. In addition, the response of the people to sacrifice “to the LORD” (V 5) provides another confirming clue that this is a “a messenger like no other in the Old Testament”.¹¹

The question we all ask is whether the people’s tearful response and offering to the LORD were an act of repentance (Judges 2.4-5). The angel’s rebuke of His people is found in His rhetorical question at the end of Judges 2.2, “What have you done?”. This “echoes [the essence of] the question God put to Adam [and Eve] in the garden of Eden.”¹² (Genesis 3.11-13) And so, just as the sin of Adam and Eve brought life-ending consequences and separation from God, so too do the sins of God’s people here in Judges. Their willful rebellion and intentional breaking of the covenant is not a matter of repentance, but of God’s discipline. “The weeping Israelites offered sacrifices to God there (V 5), but it was too late. Sacrifice is no substitute for obedience...”¹³ As some say, the Israelites were COOKED!

7. This is such a difficult truth that we see play out in our lives today. Repentance is available through Jesus (Thank You, Lord!). However, we still suffer the consequences of our sins, or even worse, the consequences of the sins of others. Consider a time when this difficult truth played out in your life. What two-carat diamond-like lesson did God mine through that time? Perhaps you are in the midst of this difficult truth today. What two-carat diamond-like hope are you mining in God?

“...the Old Testament presents the angel of Yahweh as Yahweh and yet also distinct from Yahweh.” A better direct translation of the word, “angel” is “messenger” “...because this title denotes the function or office of the individual, not His nature.” Finally, John in John 1.18 reminds us that, “No one has ever seen God”, but that Jesus is next to God and has “*exegesis*” (explained, exposed, interpreted, elucidated) God. Through appearances in the Old Testaments unlike what is humanly possible, God reveals His Son as His “messenger”, or Angel of the LORD.

The Angel of the LORD is divine because:

- His name is interchangeable with God’s name (Genesis 16.7-13, 21.14-21, 22.9-18, 31.10-13, 48.15-16; Exodus 3; Judges 6.11-24, 13.2-23)
- The angels’ promises were God’s promises (Genesis 16.7-13, 22.9-18)
- Yahweh’s name is used in the name “angel of Yahweh” (Exodus 23.20-25)
- Sacrifices to the angel were offered in response to the angel’s presence (Genesis 22.9-18; Judges 6.11-24, 13.2-23)
- “As the predicted angel (‘messenger’) of the covenant, He would be ‘the Lord’” (Malachi 3.1)
- Those who saw the angel recognized His divinity (Genesis 16.7-13; Judges 6.11-24, 13.2-23)
- “The angel could forgive sin” (Exodus 23.21; Zechariah 3.3-4)
- “The angel claimed to be ‘God’” (Genesis 31.11-13; Exodus 3.2-6)

“In terms of Christ’s eternity, deity, triunity, and responsibility, the biblical evidence overwhelmingly confirms that the ‘angel of the LORD’ episodes in the Old Testament unquestionably involved the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ.”

Doctrine: Covenants¹⁴~ (Judges 2.1-3) A covenant is a formal binding agreement or sealed promise. Covenants are accompanied by a sign or a legal guarantee. Like covenants, promises are legally binding. However, a covenant is superior to a promise. To illustrate, the promise of marriage is inferior to getting married (a covenant). Marriage involves not only a promise but a ceremonial sign that seals and guarantees the promise (the exchange of rings). Likewise, the Holy Spirit

¹⁰MacArthur & Mayhue, pp. 195-196, 241, 722

¹¹Webb, p. 33

¹²Webb, p. 35

¹³Webb, p. 35

¹⁴DeYoung, Kevin, *Daily Doctrine*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2024) pp. 133-136

seals and guarantees God's promise of eternal life with Him (2 Corinthians 1.21-22, 5.5; Ephesians 1.13-14, 4.30).

8. The promise, or covenant, referenced in Judges 2.1 by the Angel of the LORD is chronicled throughout God's history with His people. God's promise in this context is an *unconditional* covenant. Each of the listed verses details what God promised to His people. Read **one** of the listed verses from which to share with your group members the details of God's promise(s) to His people:
 - a. Genesis 13.14-17
 - b. Genesis 15.7-21
 - c. Genesis 17.3-8
 - d. Genesis 28.10-15
 - e. Genesis 35.11-12

The laws God gave His people through Moses at Mount Sinai remind us of a covenant's legal nature. The Law, or Mosaic covenant, was a *conditional* covenant. The requirements of God's Law carry consequences for obedience (blessings), as well as the consequences for disobedience (Genesis 20-23; Leviticus 26). The Law was given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai. It was a spectacular event (Exodus 19.16-20): the mountain was on fire with thick, billowing smoke, a sound like a trumpet (God!) was so raucous that it struck terror, eardrum-puncturing thunder surrounded the mountain, and lightning brighter than new cars headlights pierced their eyes. Shockingly, while God's people were waiting on Moses to return from God's awesome Presence, they grew impatient and abandoned God with the help and support of Moses' brother, Aaron! This proves the disappointing reality that sin's ruinous grip tempting us away from obedience to God did not begin in the generations we will study in Judges.

9. What was the people's response as they waited for Moses to return from God's extraordinary, frightening, and powerful Presence (Exodus 32.1-6)?

10. God's response to His (shockingly) rebellious people's betrayal of Him is equally shocking. After God rightly pronounces the consequence for their rebellion and betrayal (Exodus 33.1-6), He reveals the depth of His character in Exodus 34.10. How does God respond, and how does His response in Exodus 34.10 reveal God as more than an angry, judgmental, lightning-bolt throwing God?

Going beyond renewing His covenant promise to His people, God manifests His Glory, becoming an Architect who designs the place where His rebellious people can enter His Presence! (Exodus 33.7-40.33). This tabernacle, or meeting place, proves God's intentional pursuit of His rebellious, adulterous people. Even as they will suffer His consequences for their rebellion, He will not leave them without the option of returning to Him. God obligates Himself to His *unconditional* promise through His covenant! (Thanks Be To God!)

11. What does Exodus 40.34-39 through Leviticus 1.1 teach you about God's desire for His people? (When you read Leviticus 1.1, replace the word "offering" with the word "worship" as they are interchangeable.) What in God's response to His rebellious people just knocks your socks off? What surprises you, and/or what comforts you?

There are at least six widely agreed upon covenants documented in the Bible. Five of these covenants are unconditional, while the Mosaic covenant [or the Law] is conditional and temporary. It ended with the death of Jesus (Matthew 5.17-19; John 19.28-30). In Genesis 1-2, God obligates man to worship and serve Him, man's Creator. Yet God obligates Himself through His promises to sinful man. In fact, God uses His covenants to man as His plan through which His kingdom purposes unfold.¹⁵

12. **(Bonus Question)** Paul laid the foundational introduction of Jesus as the promised Messiah who fulfilled the Law (or Mosaic covenant) in Romans 1.1-17. If you can, review your answers to Questions 7 and 8 from Lesson 2 ("Righteous through Gospel Power"). In light God's character and passion revealed through His covenants, how do your answers from either or both of those questions teach you about the importance God places on covenants?

¹⁵ MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) pp. 870-880

***Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:** This week we have identified questions that may help you continue to pursue Scripture-Soaked Prayers. Review your answer in those questions to spur your prayer before Your covenant-keeping God in this section:

- From Question 6, *How does the verse(s) you chose help you find hope even in your depiction of God's people in that time period?
- From Question 11, *What in God's response to His rebellious people just knocks your socks off? *What surprises you, and/or what comforts you?

Lecture Outline:

Aim: True believers must never forget the mighty deeds of God.

- I. Forgetfulness (Judges 2.1-11) **T1:** Remembering God's mighty deeds guards against covenant-breaking actions.
 - a. Which truths about God do you need to recall to guard against spiritual amnesia?
 - b. How could a deeper understanding of your covenant relationship with God change how you live out your faith?
- II. Faithlessness (Judges 2.12-3.6) **T2:** Remembering God's mighty deeds fuels faithfulness to Him.
 - a. What are you doing or thinking that reveals unbelief or worldliness is creeping into your walk of faith?
 - b. How might God be testing your faith through your current struggles or difficulties?
 - c. Which mighty deeds of God do you need to meditate upon to fuel your faithfulness to Him?

Davis, Dale Ralph, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Great Britain: Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, 2000) pp. 29-43
Schneider, Tammi J., *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000) pp. 25-37
Van Pelt, Miles V., *Judges: ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2021) pp. 534-543
Webb, Barry G., *Judges and Ruth: God in Chaos* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015) pp. 33-63