

# Judges 2:16 – 3:31

## Companion Scripture:

### Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

If you would open with me to Judges 2 and 3. We are going to look at chapter 2 verse 16 through chapter 3. Before we get started let's review what all has been going on with the people of Israel. Joshua and the elders who served with him during the conquest of the promised land have all died. The people have since strayed from the Lord and began worshipping other gods. The Lord's anger has been stoked, and he has turned them over to their enemies and the people of Israel were doing what was right in their own sight.

Let's go to our text to see what the Lord has for us tonight.

### **Judges 2:16 - The LORD Raises Up Judges**

**<sup>16</sup> Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup> 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.**

It's not a pleasant thought to consider but did you know every generation is one generation away from forgetting the LORD. Verse 10 of chapter 2 shows us that despite faithful fathers the following generations failed to follow God. We are told in multiple passages that it is the responsibility of parents to teach their children about the LORD.

- **Deuteronomy 6:6-7 & 11:19 (ESV):** instruct parents to diligently teach God's words to their children throughout daily life, covering times of sitting, walking, lying down, and rising.
- **Ephesians 6:4 (ESV):** Addresses parents (specifically fathers) to raise children in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord".

- **Proverbs 22:6 (ESV):** Encourages training a child in the right path, suggesting it establishes a foundation for their adult life.
- **Psalms 78:5-7 (The Command):** Highlights the duty to teach the next generation so they do not become stubborn, rebellious, and forgetful of God.

Being a faithful parent and teaching your kids the right way is not a guarantee that your children will follow the LORD. We are told that it lays the foundation for them to build on it. It is ultimately their responsibility to accept the Lord, but we must still teach them.

- **Philippians 2:12:** Says to “**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**”. This verse is a call for believers to actively live out the implications of the salvation they have already received, not to earn it.
- **Romans 14:12:** "So then, **each of us will give an account of ourselves to God**". This emphasizes that faith and life choices are personal and each person is individually accountable.

**In the book of Joshua, we saw the Lord commanding Israel to do something to serve as a reminder of what the Lord had done for them. Do you remember what that was?**

In Joshua 4 we saw that they set up memorial stones in a few different places so that when the children passed by, they would ask about them. This would be an opportunity to share with them what all the Lord had done for them. I believe it's important for parents to share their testimony with their kids. Children need to know that we have experienced the grace of God ourselves. If we are not careful, teaching our children about our faith with can seem more like a 'do as I say' lesson instead of a 'let me tell you what I have seen the Lord do for me.'

**<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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, <sup>21</sup> I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, <sup>22</sup> 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." <sup>23</sup> So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.**

**Why does it say that God raised up Judges?**

He had pity on His people when they cried out. God is good and merciful. It is two of the defining attributes of God. He is not only good sometimes, he is good all the time. Even in his wrath, he is good. He is never consumed with anger and is merciful even when his wrath is being poured out.

I'll never forget the times of correction my brothers and I received as a child from my dad. He would never whoop us out of uncontrolled anger. He would send us to our room so that he had time to calm down and was correcting us with the proper motive...We must have made him pretty mad sometimes because it seemed like it took forever for him to come back. Often the waiting was worse than the whooping. God doesn't need that time of adjusting. He is justified in his wrath and he is good, loving and merciful all the time to all people.

Psalms 145:9 says the Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

### Why were the remaining Canaanite people not driven from the land?

It was the unfaithfulness of the people that caused God to stop giving Israel victories. There are dozens of examples and scriptures that show us that it was not Israel who was winning the battles. It was God giving the victory. The old covenant was conditional and temporary. It relied on obedience and any covenant that relies on human obedience is doomed to be broken. This is why we needed a new covenant. One that does not require anything from us. The new covenant is fulfilled and guaranteed through Jesus and his work at Calvary.

- **1 Corinthians 15:57 (NIV):** "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".
- **Deuteronomy 20:4 (NIV):** "For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory".
- **2 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV):** "But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession...".
- **Psalms 108:13 (NIV):** "With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies".
- **1 John 5:4 (NIV):** "...everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith".
- **1 Kings 20:13 (NIV):** The Lord says, "I will give you victory so you will know that I am the Lord".

- **Romans 8:37 (NIV):** "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us".
- **1 Samuel 17:47 (NIV):** "...for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands".

**<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>6</sup> And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.**

**According to verses 1 and 2 why did God leave the remnants of Canaanites in the lands?**

To test Israel and to teach them war. Have you ever noticed that God does not really ever remove every obstacle from our lives? There always seems to be something around us that might cause us to stumble. This is the very case with Israel. They were disobedient to God, and he left a test for them.

Do you think it strange that today's world of watered-down Christianity, we hear a lot about being passive and tolerant, and everything is love, love, love yet we see God leaving the Canaanites to teach them war? This love, love, love theology is a gross misapplication of New Testament teaching designed to limit and suppress the gospel. We see Jesus himself confronting the Pharisees and false teachers in the New Testament.

**Matthew 23** contains severe public rebukes, calling them hypocrites, blind guides, and a "brood of vipers" who prevent others from entering the kingdom (Matthew 23:13-15, 33)

Jesus identified false leaders as wolves in sheep's clothing in **Matthew 7:15-20**, and he directly challenged their spiritual lineage in **John 8:44**. He also criticized them for withholding true spiritual knowledge in **Luke 11:52**.

**In Matthew 21:12-13**, "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves"

**Ephesians 6:10-18** instructs believers to "put on the full armor" to stand against spiritual evil.

There are a lot of passages that tell us to stand firm and to be ready to give an account. This is not passive language. We are told to be ready for war. We are also told to live peaceably with all men, if at all possible, in Romans 12:18 but this does not mean we should stand our ground. We pursue peace but need to be prepared to go to war in defense of our faith.

Let's now look at the first of the 3 judges mentioned in chapter 2.

### **Othniel**

**<sup>7</sup> And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. <sup>8</sup> Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim (koo'-shan rish-aw-thah'-yim ) king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim (koo'-shan rish-aw-thah'-yim ) eight years. <sup>9</sup> But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup> The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim (koo'-shan rish-aw-thah'-yim ) king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. (koo'-shan rish-aw-thah'-yim ) <sup>11</sup> So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.**

### **Who was Othniel?**

Caleb's nephew and son-in-law. We were introduced to him in chapter one. We know he was an experienced warrior as he conquered the city of Debir to gain the hand of Caleb's daughter. Though he was an experienced warrior, the victory does not belong to him.

### **Who do we credit the victory to?**

Verse 10 says the Lord gave the king into Othniel's hand. There are 2 common repetitive themes we will see throughout the book of Judges. The first we see in chapter 3 verse 7, that the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. The second being that the Lord was with the judges giving them the victories. Verse 18 of chapter 2 says that the Lord raised up judges and that He was with them.

The might or capabilities of the judges were never to be the focus. They were meant to bring the people of Israel back to the Lord. It was He that was providing the victory.

Have any of you ever read or studied a passage multiple times believing you've derived from it all the Lord intended only for the next time you read it, he reveals another sliver of truth?

I found one of these slivers this week when I was asked why do you think God used a foreign nation like Mesopotamia to discipline Israel instead of a local Canaanite nation. I had no idea because it never crossed my mind, but I believe God is intentional in everything he does so I had to start looking into it.

God uses Mesopotamia for the first judgement. They were an external invader to the land of Cana. Many scholars note that “Cushan-Rishathaim” likely means something like: “Cushan of Double Wickedness” so God was using a ‘far off’ nation that was ‘twice as bad’ as Israel to deliver judgement upon them. A little irony there.

Later we see the local Canaanite nations being used to deliver judgement. They were pagan nations and were just as evil but a lot closer to home. In the end we see civil conflict being used as judgement and it splits the nation. Israel was not above evil, it was doing what was evil in the Lord’s sight.

It’s a very similar pattern we see in the letter to the Romans. Paul begins speaking about the evils of the unrighteous (those outside of Israel) but then in chapter 3 he gets to the crux of it all...there is none righteous, no not one.

The pattern of judgement shows not only that we all need a redeemer, but that Lord is patient and desires us to repent and come to Him.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

## Ehud

**<sup>12</sup> And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms. <sup>14</sup> And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.**

I want to pause just a minute to point out here God’s love for his people.

## Why were the Israelites able to conquered by the Ammonites and Amalekites?

It wasn’t that the Israelites were weak or that the Ammonites and Amalekites were simply stronger. They had victory over Israel because God gave it to them. It says that God gathered the Ammonites and the Amalekites to himself and went to destroy Isreal. God will correct his people. If we never face God’s correction in our lives, we may need to consider if we are truly part of His people.

- **Proverbs 3:11-12 (NIV):** Encourages us not to despise the Lord's discipline, noting that He disciplines those He loves.

- **Hebrews 12:5-11 (NIV):** Reinforces that discipline is a sign of being a true child of God, rather than an illegitimate one. It notes that while discipline is painful, it is for our good, producing a "harvest of righteousness".

Continuing on.

**<sup>15</sup> Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. <sup>16</sup> And Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes. <sup>17</sup> And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. <sup>18</sup> And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who carried the tribute. <sup>19</sup> But he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he commanded, "Silence." And all his attendants went out from his presence. <sup>20</sup> And Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat. <sup>21</sup> And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. <sup>22</sup> And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung came out. <sup>23</sup> Then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them.**

**<sup>24</sup> When he had gone, the servants came, and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, "Surely he is relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber." <sup>25</sup> And they waited till they were embarrassed. But when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them, and there lay their lord dead on the floor.**

**<sup>26</sup> Ehud escaped while they delayed, and he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Seirah. <sup>27</sup> When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was their leader. <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, "Follow after me, for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and did not allow anyone to pass over. <sup>29</sup> And they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men; not a man escaped. <sup>30</sup> So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.**

This is a very graphic passage of scripture. Its one of those passages that usually appeals to young men. A detailed story of war, espionage, blood, and guts. While reviewing commentaries on this passage, lots of writers claim they will not speculate on the cause of Ehud being left-handed only to go on to make several speculations.

**What do we know about Ehud?**

He was the son of Gera, a Benjamite, and he was left-handed. To state factually beyond this is speculation.

- Some claim he was left-handed because he was from the tribe of Benjamin. Judges 20:15–16 highlights that out of 26,000 soldiers in the tribe of Benjamin; there was a specialized elite corps of 700 left-handed men who could "sling a stone at a hair and not miss".
- Others claim that he was left-handed because of a disability because the word used for left-handed, literally translates as 'shut of the right hand' or 'bound of the right hand'.
- Either way is plausible but not the point of the passage. Ironically, the name Benjamin actually means 'son of my right hand'.

The king Eglon had been receiving tribute from Israel and had gotten fat from the blessing of the land that the Lord had intended for Israel. Again, we see the people crying out to the Lord and him coming to the rescue again.

With every generation we see things get worse and worse. Israel cries to God. God redeems them. They are conquered by someone. Then they cry again. This time it took them 18 year to cry out to God. Think this is a sign of a lot of hardened hearts amongst the people?

- Don't think for a minute that this behavior is unique to Israel. We see it in America today. When tragedy comes to our shores, we see a surge in church attendance followed by a sharp drop, as soon as the perceived danger is over, often larger than the surge brought in. Whether it's a natural disaster or an act of terrorism, with each event we see the response of turning to God being less and less as our nation grows further and further from him.

Ehud slays king Elgon and slips away to the mountains and rallies the people to overthrow the Moabites. Ehud acknowledges the hand of God behind it all in verse 28. They go on to kill 10,000 Moabite warriors and had peace for 80 years. This would be the longest time of peace the Israelites would know during the time of the judges.

### **Shamgar**

**<sup>31</sup> After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an ox goad, and he also saved Israel.**

To follow-up the very detailed account of Ehud, we have the one sentence story of Shamgar. The only other mentions of Shamgar are found in Judges 5:6.

We don't know much about Shamgar but the Lord included him here, so we know there is value. We also don't know if this 600 men was slain all at one time or cumulative over weeks, months, or years.

What we do know is that Shamgar is not an Israelite name. Neither was his father's, Anath. An ox goad is long staff used for driving oxen much like a cattle prod. One end had a sharp metal point used to motive the oxen and was also used as an agricultural tool to clean out the plow.

Some assume this means that Shamgar was a farmer and use the passage to say God can use anyone, even this lowly farmer. It's possible but it's speculation. We know that any people who have been conquered will not be allowed to have weapons so we cannot assume that just because he used this tool that he was a farmer.

Shamgar might have been a mighty man, possibly a proselyte or his mother might have been an Israelite. He may have despised the Philistines and only used what God provided him, even the unlikely weapon of an ox goad to fight the Philistines.

Whether we say it was an unlikely hero or an unlikely weapon, it is always God that provided the victory.

### **Conclusion:**

The thing I hope we take away tonight is that in every passage of scripture, we see God's sovereignty on display. We see him strengthen his people to win battles they could not on their own. He disciplines his people out of love. He hears us when we cry out to him and forgives us. His promises to fulfil his covenants are trustworthy.

The people of Israel rejected God's leadership time and time again. They wanted what the world had. They wanted an earthly king. As was read in the opening scripture tonight, Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...he is on the throne of David...and he has established it and will uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

God is the ultimate King. He provided the ultimate sacrifice and priest in Jesus. We do not need the Lord to raise up judges today to bring us back to himself. We have a complete and final victory in Jesus we must only place our faith in him.

Let's pray.