



---

# Reflections From The Judges

---

The Cycle From  
Bondage to Freedom

---

Sergio R. Tangari

---



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES

My goal in writing reflections from Judges are the following: First, to encourage you the reader that if you will pay attention to the words on the page and listen carefully you will mine a lot of truth for life without the need of a commentary or any secondary source. That is, “take up and read” to enrich your soul Christian.

Second, I write to give you a model of how observations can be done in scripture that do not read into the text something foreign to the author’s intent. This will help you experience the joy of discovery and increase your confidence in your ability to comprehend God’s word.

Third, by doing the above my hope is that you will be able to hear God’s voice all the more clearly and follow Him all the more closer. For, it is the word of God that is forever settled in heaven, and not our subjective impressions however valid they may be. That is, we have a more sure word of prophecy according to Peter—meaning the inscripturated word of God—then a glorious experience we may claim to have (2 Peter 1:16-21). Too often we Christians have bizarre ideas of what “God” is supposedly speaking to us and when it contradicts the Bible, be assured we are not hearing his voice.

### JUDGES 1-2: A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE FORSAKE THE GOD OF THE COVENANT

Joshua the son of Nun is dead (2:8), most of Israel does not take complete possession of the land (1:27-34), because they had forsaken the God of the covenant and wandered in their hearts to worship and serve the gods of the nations they had conquered (2:1-5). Israel continuously served the Baals, thus forsaking the LORD, the God of their fathers and thus provoked God to anger (2:11-13).

Just as the LORD fought for Israel against her enemies, now He was in a sense Israel’s enemy and would fight them (2:14-15). God’s anger rightly burned against Israel because they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the worship of created things—“gods”—which are no gods at all but rather demons leading them astray from worshipping the one true God. Thus, God gave them over and yet, in their rebellion, God still sends them judges to rescue them from their enemies (2:16-18).

But the cycle of unbelief returned on the death of these judges and Israel's wickedness would increasingly outdo the previous generation's unrighteousness because they forsook the LORD:

*"<sup>19</sup> But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. <sup>20</sup> So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice, <sup>21</sup> I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died" (2:19-21)*

When rebellion is at an all-time high God's anger will be kindled against unrighteousness and would result in God no longer fighting for Israel in order to test whether or not Israel would be faithful to the LORD:

*"<sup>23</sup> So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua." (2:23)*

Forever God's word is settled in heaven, thus what He promises to do, will be fulfilled whether or not it's favorable to us (2:1-5). His faithfulness which springs from his holiness is such that God will always keep His promises (even if it hurts His people for a time). This is because from Him, and through him, and back to Him are all things. God's the author of the drama, people are the players in this redemptive story and when God's own forsakes Him, death awaits—except for mercy.

This scenario of rebellion and restoration, sin and salvation, and victims becoming victors is a biblical theme. It reminds us that when the God of creation decrees a thing and chooses a people, there's never a dull moment because the choices people make are significant and thus have real life consequences. (SDG)

### **JUDGES 3-5: THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY BRINGS BONDAGE...YET MERCY**

In these chapters the persistent theme is that of God testing Israel's faithfulness to Him by the pagan nations that surrounded them:

*<sup>7</sup> The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. <sup>8</sup> Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-*

*rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. <sup>9</sup> When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup> The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. <sup>11</sup> Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. (3:7-11)*

This pattern repeats itself over and again. First, Israel is indicted for worshipping demons, not the one true God (3:12; 4:1-2) and God sells them into the enemy's hands:

*"Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD." (3:12)*

*"Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim." (4:1-2)*

If we don't worship the Deliverer, He will deliver us into the hands of our tormentors. This is exactly what Paul argues for in (Rom.1:18-32) where God gives over those who exchanged His glory for the creatures: He *gave them over in the lusts of their hearts* (1:24), *gave them over to degrading passions* (1:26), and *gave them over to a depraved mind* (1:28). The heart, passions and mind were all affected. It happened then, it happens now.

Second, when God's covenant people cry out for rescue, He hears their sobs and acts through sending Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah in order to save them (3:9, 15; 4:4).

Third, their slavery to these foreign "gods" and nations is never more than the rest they receive in the land by God's hand (3:8 eight years of bondage, forty years of rest 3:11), eighteen years of servitude (3:14) followed by eighty years of rest (3:30), twenty years of bondage (4:3) followed by forty years of peace (5:31). When one generation's sin plunders them into bondage because of idolatry, the LORD's rest given to the people is far greater than the time of servitude.

I think this shows us that where sin abounds, God's grace does much more abound toward vessels of mercy. God's mercy endures forever, his wrath is but for a moment.

(SDG)

## **JUDGES 6-8: THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY AND BONDAGE...CONTINUE**

The same old song and dance continues as Israel participates in “doing evil in the sight of the LORD” (6:1), their oppressors cruelty is unbearable (6:2-6), and God again responds to Israel’s cry for rescue (6:7) by sending them a prophet (6:8-10) foretelling what God would do (6:11-7:25). What results? Israel again experiences peace for forty years until they again forsake the LORD (8:1-35).

Israel’s faithfulness was abysmal, absolutely horrid. But the cycle is very predictable: forsake the LORD God by neglecting His word, forget therefore His past tender mercies through acts of power, and the result is death. It’s always death. God’s word was not heeded by our first parents Adam and Eve that resulted in the death of all mankind (Gen.3); God’s word was not heeded over and again in Hebrew history and the result is always death. Why?

Perhaps it’s because the Designer knows best how the creation best flourishes. Perhaps it’s because the soul that’s created to delight in the Creator ultimately instead choses to delight in the creature ultimately, that the problems predictably snowball.

NOTE: usually the cycle of peace and bondage lasted a generation or two. Each generation has the responsibility to pass on God’s word to their kin and friends, when that is neglected, death is embraced. Solomon wrote that those who despise wisdom love death and this theme is repeated a billion times over daily in the lives of broken human beings.

May we as believers not emulate Israel’s idolatry o God!  
(SDG)

## **JUDGES 13-16: DO UNBRIDLED PASSIONS BRING LIFE OR DEATH?**

These chapters speak of Samson and his family. As I read the account it’s clear that Samson’s strength came from the LORD rather than muscles depicted in many cartoons (14:6, 19; 15:14). The sad reality however is that Samson wasted his calling (his strength) by being man-centered not God absorbed and was thus characterized as a bratty womanizer. How many in God's kingdom have sadly destroyed their lives and those around them because of such desire?

His life’s call was to be Israel’s deliverer from the Philistines. However, the wretched reality is that this call was short lived and mostly wasted because he was a man of unbridled passions (16:1-31) who played the harlot with another harlot and thus his strength became compromised:

*“...But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him”*  
(16:20)

Dabbling with sexual promiscuity and illicit sexual pleasures is nothing new, momentarily delightful but utterly disastrous. The LORD is said to have “departed from Samson”. The way this term is contextually used, it seems that what it means is that God’s presence to bless him and through him was removed. This certainly goes along with what happened to Samson after this account.

Today the pleasures of promiscuity and pornography have a whole generation bound by its rotten morsels. It tastes good for a while, but in the end it dehumanizes persons and fragments the soul. Unbridled passions ruined Samson and continue to ruin millions of men and women through the passage of time. When we hear of pastors having to step down from their positions of ministry because of sexual promiscuity, our hearts ache, our families are marred and our witness often dismissed.

So, believer, if you are bound in the arms of sexual promiscuity, pornography, or same sex attraction: flee! Run to Christ who is there to embrace much of the loneliness and fear that catapults you into said states and enjoy fellowship with the real lover of your soul (Christ). Guard your eyes and your mind from wandering into traps of temporary pleasure that will eventually leave you numb to God and may prove to be the shipwreck of your faith.

May we as believers teach a new generation of men and women young and old to pursue You LORD not the dainty morsels hell sends our way. May we not waste our lives by polluting our hearts and forfeiting your power LORD with this world’s death-traps. LORD, give your people a vision of you!  
(SDG)

## **JUDGES 17-21: WHEN TRUTH IS DEAD AND GOD FORSAKEN RELATIVISM RULES!**

What a sad dreadful account of a people who have forsaken the LORD and thus, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (21:25). Twice is the following refrain found in this account of Israel’s history:

*“...There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes”*

After the account of Samson’s life, this book recounts the idolatry of a mother (17:3-6), the cruelty done to a concubine (19:22-30), and the war among

Israelites. It's as if being leaderless (no king) leads Israel into lawlessness (21:25) which ends in the unbridled slaughter of many—anarchy.

This book is a reminder to me that when the Creator is forsaken, human flourishing does not obtain, but dehumanizing acts against image bearers result. This happens incrementally and gains momentum to the point that cruelty is out of control and mayhem is the fallout.

(SDG)