**The Story of the Old Testament**

**Lecture #4 – Joshua, Judges, Ruth**

**The Continued Progression of Fulfillment: The Promised Land**

1. **Worship**

*Forever* by Kari Jobe.

1. **Quick Review of the Covenants**

Does anyone remember the **6 covenants**? Let’s review them. You will find me repeating myself over and over again on the main parts of the story because that is the only way that I can learn and, I believe, that anyone can learn (unless you have a photographic memory, and, in that case, I don’t like you very much!). So, here they are:

* **The Adamic Covenant (#1) – Genesis 2**
* **The Noahic Covenant (#2) – Genesis 9**
* **The Abrahamic Covenant (#3) – Genesis 12, 15, 17**
* **The Mosaic Covenant (#4) – Exodus 19-24**
* **The Davidic Covenant (#5) – 2 Samuel 7**
* **The New Covenant (#6) – Hint in Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:22-32, Deut. 30:6**

1. **Joshua** (takes about *2 hours* to read for the average person)
   1. *Placement on the Storyline*

As we start the book of Joshua, we pick up the story where we left it off as we came to the end of the book of Deuteronomy.

*Land* - We have a new generation of Israel who will finally take possession of the Land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – a new leader, Joshua, who will lead the new generation into the Land of promise, and particular description of the Land of promise.

*Numerous Offspring* – The Lord has fulfilled this promise as we have over 600,000 adult males ready to go to battle and take possession of the Land of Promise!

*Worldwide blessing* – We are closer than we ever have been before. The Lord has entered into a covenant with his people Israel and promised that they are to be, if they walk in obedience to his revealed will, his treasured possession and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation through which the blessing of his presence will be mediated to the nations! Presumably, this mediating role of Israel will begin after they take possession of the Land of promise.

This is an incredibly exciting moment in the story!

* 1. *The People of Promise Enter the Promised Land (Joshua 1-5)*

As the Lord encountered Moses with a command to free his people in Exodus, the Lord encounters Joshua with a command to go and take possession of the Promised Land: “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.” (Joshua 1:2) And, just as the Lord promised to be with Moses in the great task he was given, so he also promises to be with Joshua in the great task before him: “Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave or forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5)

The Lord’s presence and faithfulness to his covenant promises are the source of Joshua’s hope, strength, and confidence: “Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:6) But, as we have seen over and over in this story to this point, the Lord’s presence and partaking in his promises is experienced only as his people walk in grateful obedience to his revealed will. As a result, the Lord commands Joshua to be careful “to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:7-8)

In response to the Lord’s command, Joshua gathered up the people and instructed them to prepare for the conquest before them: “Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.” (Joshua 1:11)

As Moses sent spies into the Promised Land in Numbers 13, Joshua sends spies to scope out the Promised Land. (Joshua 2:1) Apparently learning from the past, he only sent 2 spies (the number of spies who gave the good report)! Somewhat shockingly, however, the spies find their way into the home of Rahab, a prostitute in Jericho. (Joshua 2:1) The king of Jericho was told of the spies’ presence and commanded Rahab to give them up. But Rahab hides the spies and lies on their behalf. (Joshua 2:2-7)

The reason for Rahab’s actions is clearly set forth in Joshua 2:9-11: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”

This reality captured by Rahab’s confession points the reader back to Exodus 9:15-16: “For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” The glory of the Lord, through his actions on behalf of his people Israel, as indeed been proclaimed among the nations! This proclamation requires a response: faith or rebellion. Rahab responded in faith, but this response is unique as the rest of Jericho responds with rebellion. Rahab’s faith-filled response results in salvation for both herself and her family. Jericho’s rebellious response results in judgment through complete destruction. (Joshua 2:14)

In contrast to the faithless report of Moses’ spies (save for Joshua and Caleb), the spies sent by Joshua brought back a faith-filled report: “Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt way because of us.” (Joshua 2:24)

As the Lord parted the Red Sea to complete Israel’s liberation from slavery in Egypt, the Lord parted the Jordan and allowed Israel to cross on dry ground so that they could take possession of the Promised Land. (Ex.14; Joshua 3:7-17) As Goldsworthy notes: “This is a sign that God is with them and that he will drive out the inhabitants of the land.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

As the people were to remember the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from the 10th plague (death of the firstborn) through the Passover, so the people were to remember the Lord’s parting of the Jordan through memorial stones placed on the shore: “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.” (Joshua 4:20-24)

In the wake of Israel’s Jordan crossing, we see another echo of Exodus 9:15-16’s fulfillment: “As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.” (Joshua 5:1)

As Abraham obediently circumcised all the males in his household in Genesis 17:22-27, so Joshua obediently circumcised all the males of Israel in Joshua 5:2-9. The generation of Israel that was born and raised in the wilderness had not yet been circumcised. Further, as Numbers 9:1-14 recorded Israel’s obedient observation of the Passover in the wilderness, so Joshua 5:10 records Israel’s first obedient observation of the Passover in the Promised Land. As we have seen throughout the story several times, only those who respond in grateful obedience to the Lord’s commands are able to experience his covenant faithfulness.

As we end this first section of Joshua, the people are finally in the Promised Land, ready to take possession of it in faith!

* 1. *The People of Promise Take Possession of the Promised Land (Joshua 6-11)*

While Israel has experienced battle on the east side of the Jordan, their battle with Jericho, in Joshua 6, is the first battle in the land of Promise. The battle of Jericho is “rehearsed in some detail . . . because it is paradigmatic . . . [T]his is no ordinary battle. . . . He has given the victory to Joshua and Israel (6:2, 16).”[[2]](#footnote-2) The victory is pronounced before the battle begins: “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.” (Joshua 6:2)

But, the means of victory is quite strange: “You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus you shall do for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of ram’s horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.” (Joshua 6:3-5) As Schreiner, notes, “The bizarre strategy confirmed that Israel could not attribute victory to its own military prowess. Their victory was a gift of grace-an astounding work of the Lord.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The people did as the Lord commanded. For six days, the people marched around Jericho. On the seventh day, the people raised a collective shout of faith and the walls of Jericho “fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.” (Joshua 6:20) Then, the people appeared to devote everything and everyone to destruction (except for the silver and gold, which was put into the treasury of the house of the Lord) pursuant to the Lord’s instructions, except for Rahab and her family because of her faith-filled response to the Lord’s display of his glory through his acts on Israel’s behalf. (Joshua 6:22-25) As Schreiner notes: “Apparently, the evil of the Canaanites was so pervasive that it warranted their complete annihilation.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Schreiner then cites to Genesis 15:13-16, in support of this observation. Recall that Genesis 15 records the covenant ceremony between the Lord and Abraham where the Lord alone walks through the torn animals to make the point that his covenant faithfulness will overcome the covenant unfaithfulness of his people. Right before the Lord passed through the torn animals in the form of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, he revealed to Abraham the future of his descendants (that we are seeing fulfilled!): “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” It is a truly amazing expression of the incomprehensible and all-encompassing sovereignty of the Lord that the exact moment of Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land to take possession of it is the exact time of the completion of the Amorite’s iniquity that was foretold in Genesis 15!

But, Achan disobeyed the Lord and took some of the things that the Lord commanded Israel to destroy and “the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.” (Joshua 7:1) We have seen the theme throughout the story to this point that blessings flow from obedience and curses from disobedience. Achan’s rebellion against the Lord was no small thing and severe judgment followed:

* the people of Israel were defeated at Ai with about 36 men dying in battle,
* the hearts of Israel melted from solid faith to absolute fear.
* Joshua himself, reminiscent of Moses’ honest prayers when things looked like they had past the point of no return, cried out to the Lord: “Alas, O Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?” (Joshua 7:7-8)
* Achan’s entire family was put to death (Joshua 7:25-26)

Through this significant event of judgment, the Lord made it clear to Israel that that they “would experience the same fate as the inhabitants of Jericho if they violated the provisions of the covenant”:[[5]](#footnote-5) “Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.” (Joshua 7:11-12)

After the Lord’s holy justice was satisfied through the judgment imposed upon Achan and his family, the Lord graciously turned Israel’s defeat into victory: “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king.” (Joshua 8:1-2)

After Israel’s victory of Ai, we see Joshua leading the people to obey the command of the Lord set forth in Deuteronomy 28. Recall that in Deuteronomy 28, the Lord commanded the people to divide themselves with some tribes going to Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessings that would flow from obedience and some tribes going over the Mount Ebal to pronounce the curses that would flow from disobedience to the Lord’s revealed will. In Joshua 8:33-35 we see this command come to life: “[A]ll Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”

In Joshua 9 we encounter the story of the Gibeonite deception. While the majority of the peoples in Canaan responded in rebellion to the revelation of the Lord’s glory through his awesome acts on behalf of his people (Joshua 9:1-2), the inhabitants of Gibeon responded like Rahab and made a covenant with Israel so that they would not be destroyed by them. (Joshua 9:3-21)

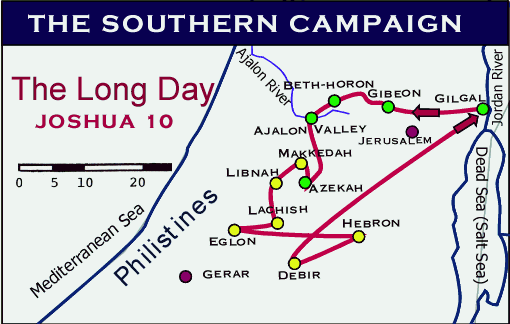
Unlike Rahab, however, the inhabitants of Gibeon deceived Israel and tricked them into entering into the covenant with them. When the deception is uncovered, Joshua asks the inhabitants of Gibeon why they acted in such a manner. Gibeon’s response is telling: “Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you-so we feared greatly of our lives because of you and did this thing.” (Joshua 9:24) Again we see the fulfillment of God’s purpose of his purpose in Exodus 9:15-16, namely that the glory of the Lord would be proclaimed among the nations!

Despite the apparent faith behind the Gibeonite deception, Israel’s entrance into a covenant was in violation of the Lord’s instructions to them. The author of Joshua makes the point to note that the leaders of Israel who entered into the covenant with the Gibeonites did not ask counsel from the Lord before they entered into the covenant. (Joshua 9:14) Further, the Lord warned the people back in Exodus 34:12 against making such covenants: “Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst.”

In Joshua 10, the Lord’s warning in Exodus 34:12 comes to pass as Israel is, because of their agreement with Gibeon, pulled into a war between Gibeon and “the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.” (Joshua 10:5)

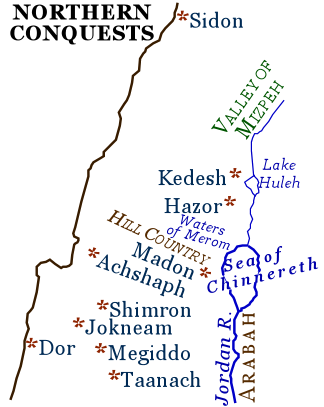
But, the Lord’s grace triumphed over Israel’s disobedience, for the Lord tells Joshua: “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.” (Joshua 10:8) And, the Lord did give Israel victory through supernatural means. For, “the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel . . . [a]nd they fled before Israel . . . the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them . . . and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.” (Joshua 10:10-11) Israel triumphed over Jericho by walking around the city and shouting in faith and, now, they triumph over the Amorites through the Lord’s provision of a hailstorm. Israel, and the reader, is left with no doubt as to the source of Israel’s victory![[6]](#footnote-6)

As Joshua 10 continues, we see Israel defeating *Libnah* (Joshua 10:29-30), *Lachish* (Joshua 10:31-32), Horam king of *Gezer* (Joshua 10:33), *Eglon* (Joshua 10:34-35), *Hebron* (Joshua 10:36-37), *Debir* (Joshua 10:38-39), and “the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but devote to destruction all that breathed, just as the Lord God of Israel commanded. And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza, and all the county of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.” (Joshua 10:40-42) The following map graphically illustrates the Southern campaign:[[7]](#footnote-7)



After Israel conquered the Southern portion of the Promised Land, it focuses on the conquest of the Northern portion. The conquest of Northern Canaan is described in Joshua 11. When the Northern kings learned of Israel’s victory in the South, “they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.” (Joshua 11:4-5) As Schreiner notes: “The opponents of Israel thought that they were saving themselves by warring against Israel, but in fact they were destroying themselves . . . .”[[8]](#footnote-8)

To battle against the Lord’s people is to battle against the Lord. That is not a battle that is wise to enter. This fact is shown in the Lord’s proclamation of Israel’s victory before the battle began: “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel.” (Joshua 11:6) And, the Lord was true to his word and “gave them into the hand of Israel.” (Joshua 11:8) The Lord’s blessing of Israel through Joshua’s leadership was dependent upon their obedience, which was clearly noted in Joshua 11:15: “Just as the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” And the end of Joshua 11, we encounter profound words of fulfillment: “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.” (Joshua 11:23) The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the Land of Canaan. This promise finally became a reality in Joshua 11:23! The Northern campaign is graphically set forth below:[[9]](#footnote-9)



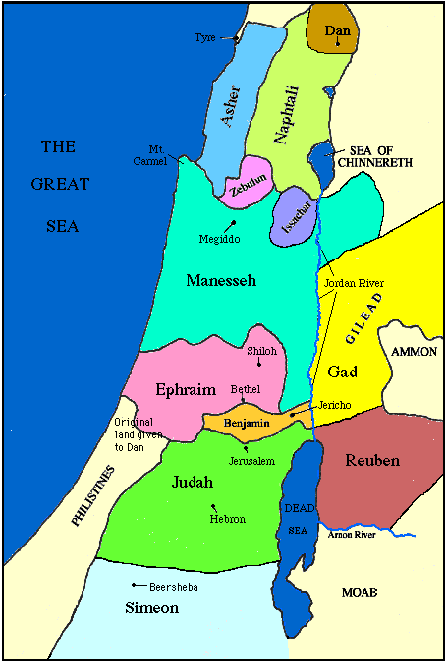
* 1. *The Promised Land Becomes Home (Joshua 12-22)*

As we enter Joshua 12, we enter into the third major section of the book, as we are dividing it up for the purpose of our overview. In the first section, Joshua 1-5, we saw the people of Promise enter the Promised Land. In the second section, Joshua 6-11, we saw the people of Promise take possession of the Promised Land through military conquest. In this third section of the book, we see the people of Promise begin to dwell in the Promised Land as their home.

Though it appears at the end of Joshua 11 that all of the Promised Land had been taken by Israel, we learn in Joshua 13:1 that “there remains yet very much land to possess.” But, Joshua is now “old and advanced in years.” (Joshua 13:1) Thus, the Lord declares: “I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel. Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you.” (Joshua 13:6)

Half of the tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites, and the Gadites had already received their inheritance on the East of the Jordan. Thus, Joshua was commanded to divide the land of Canaan “for an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.” (Joshua 13:7-8) However, the tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance in the form of a portion of the Promised Land because “[t]he offerings by fire to the Lord God of Israel are their inheritance. . . .” (Joshua 13:14)

The remainder of Joshua 13-19 records Joshua dividing the land among the tribes pursuant to the Lord’s instructions. The people of Promise have not only taken possession of the Promised Land, the particular tribes have now been given their inheritance and given ownership of the Promised Land! The allocation is visually set forth below:[[10]](#footnote-10)



As we near the end of this portion of the book of Joshua, we encounter these significant verses of fulfillment in Joshua 21:43-45: “Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled their. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.” As Schreiner notes: “Joshua features, then, the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promises. . . . Yahweh fulfills his promises. What he swore to the fathers becomes a reality under Joshua’s leadership (21:43-45).”[[11]](#footnote-11)

* 1. *The Lord Graciously Dwells with His People in the Promised Land (Joshua 23-24)*

As we enter Joshua 23, we enter the last section of the book, consisting of Joshua 23-24. In Joshua 23, we see Joshua giving some final instructions to the leaders of Israel. He reminds them that:

* they have possession of the Promised Land because the Lord fought on their behalf (Joshua 23:3);
* that he allocated a portion of the Promised Land to the respective tribes as an inheritance pursuant to the Lord’s instructions (Joshua 23:4);
* that the Lord will drive out the peoples that still remain in the Promised Land so that they can fully come into their inheritance (Joshua 23:5);
* they must “be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left” so that they (a) don’t become led astray by the surrounding nations and (b) can continue to “cling to the Lord your God” and “[b]e very careful . . . to love the Lord your God” (Joshua 23:8-11);
* if they turn from the Lord and cling to the gods of the nations then they will experiences the curses set forth in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 (Joshua 23:12-13, 15-16);
* “not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.” (Joshua 23:14)

The faithfulness of the Lord expressed through his miraculous works on behalf of the people of Israel is to be the constant reflection of the people of Israel. As Goldsworthy notes: “Notice how consistently the gospel . . . of the saving acts of God is presented as the one way to make sense of the Israelite’s existence.”[[12]](#footnote-12) The people of Israel are currently experience a high point of the Lord’s blessing, which, as Schreiner notes, has been frequently referred to as “rest”: “Several times in the book the fulfillment of the promise is described in terms of the rest . . . that Yahweh promised to give to Israel (1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). The word ‘rest’ suggest that life in the land is delightful and refreshing, the place where Israel can enjoy Yahweh’s gracious presence and his reign over them. . . .”[[13]](#footnote-13)

But, the certainty of curses in the wake of rebellion is also to be on the mind of the people of Israel, as well. This is why the curses are recounted in great detail and Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and, once again, brought to the attention of the people in Joshua 23. If they rebel, they will lose the rest they currently enjoy and experience the promised curses. Recall, that Israel enjoys a covenant relationship with the Lord, which we have defined as: “a bond that establishes an all-encompassing relationship. . . . [A] claim on someone’s total loyalty and allegiance. . . . with ongoing obligations, blessings, and curses.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

In Joshua 24 we see Joshua recounting the Lord’s progressive fulfillment of his redemptive promises. Starting with Abraham and ending with their current possession of the Promised Land, Joshua recounts the Lord’s faithfulness to the people of Israel in Joshua 24:2-13 (this is a large chunk of Scripture – but it is worth it!):

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in the Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Grigashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat of the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.’

In light of the Lord’s relentless faithfulness to his gracious and redemptive promises, the people of Israel are called to obedience: “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14)

Joshua highlights the choice before the people, and the choice that he himself has made, in Joshua 24:15: “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua is saying here, if you want to experience the curses that flow from rebelling against the good and gracious God who has acted so mightily on your behalf, knock yourselves out! But, the blessing and presence of the Lord through a life of grateful obedience to his revealed will is the path that I have chosen. Which path are you going to follow? You can only be on one path. You will either be with me and walking in the ways of the Lord (experiencing blessing) or walking in the ways of the surrounding nations (experiencing curses).

The people unequivocally proclaim their intent to serve the Lord and be faithful to walk in grateful obedience to his revealed will. (Joshua 24:16-18) Rather than responding with excitement at the people’s intent to walk with the Lord, Joshua makes it clear that the people will turn away from the Lord and experience the curses that naturally flow from their rebellion. (Joshua 24:19-20) The people still don’t believe Joshua and reject his claim that they will turn from the Lord. (Joshua 24:21) The covenant between the Lord and Israel was then renewed and the people were sent away to dwell within their allotted inheritance in the Promised Land (Joshua 24:25-28)

The book of Joshua ends with Joshua’s death and a very positive summary of the state of Israel under his leadership: “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.” (Joshua 24:31) Then, connecting to the Genesis narrative, the author records the burial of the bones of Joseph that had been carried with the people for all the years of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land! (Joshua 24:32)

But, for all of the optimism of these last few verses of the book, Schreiner notes that not all is certain as we leave Joshua: “The book concludes on an ambiguous note (24:31-33). On the one hand, God had fulfilled his promises. Israel was in the land, and Joseph’s bones, just as he requested, were buried in Canaan (cf. Gen. 50). The generation of Joshua continued to serve the Lord. On the other hand, the book ends with the death of Eleazar suggesting that a new day was coming-a day when Israel would not be faithful to the Lord. Perhaps Howard is correct in suggesting that the close of the book intimates that Israel was lacking a godly leader to replace Joshua, that they needed a king to rule them.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

* 1. *Where are We As We Leave the Book of Joshua?*

As we finish the book of Joshua, were are we in the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to Abraham of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing?

* *Land* – we are finally in the Promised Land, this promise has been fulfilled!
* *Numerous offspring* – we are an exceedingly numerous people, this promise has been fulfilled!
* *Worldwide blessing* – this promise has begun to be fulfilled in the sense that the people of Israel are currently walking in grateful obedience to the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant and are thus, enjoying the reality of being his treasured possession and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation through which the blessing of his presence will be mediated to the nations! We have already seen this in part with Rahab and the Gibeonites!

1. **Judges** (takes about *1 1/2 hours* to read for the average person)
   1. *Placement in the Storyline*

We pick up the narrative in Judges with a reference to the death of Joshua. (Judges 1:1) We left the book of Joshua with two-thirds of the promises made in the context of the Abrahamic promises having been fulfilled. The nation of Israel had grown from 70 people to a great people. The nation of Israel possessed a good portion of the Promised Land and the Lord had promised to drive out the remainder of the people from the Promised Land so that the tribes could enjoy the fullness of their respective portions of the Promised Land as an inheritance.

Progress in the fulfillment of the third promise of worldwide blessing appears to have picked up some steam as well with the nation of Israel poised to bless the nations through the mediation of the Lord’s presence (blessing) through their priestly function (they have been called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation).

b. *The Cycle of Rebellion, Judgment, Repentance, and Salvation Introduced (Judges 1:1-3:6)*

Judges begins with a continuation of the positive tone of Joshua. The tribe of Judah and Simeon are seen triumphing over 10,000 Canaanites and Perizzites at Bezek, taking Jerusalem, experiencing victory in the hill country, the Negeb, the lowland, Hebron, Debir, Zephath, Gaza, Askelon, Ekron, the sons of Anak, and Bethel (Judges 1:4-26). But, there are hints of trouble embedded within these stories of victory:

* The tribe of *Judah* couldn’t “drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron.” (Judges 1:19)
* The tribe of *Benjamin* did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. (Judges 1:21)
* The half-tribe of *Manasseh* did not drive out the inhabitants of several spots and “the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land” (Judges 1:27-28)
* The half-tribe of *Ephraim* did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer “so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.” (Judges 1:29)
* The tribe of *Zebulun* did not drive out the Canaanites from Kitron or Nahalol so “the Canaanites lived among them.” (Judges 1:30)
* The tribe of *Asher* did not drive out the Canaanites from Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob so “the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out.” (Judges 1:31-32)
* The tribe of *Naphtali* did not drive out the Canaanites from Beth-shemesh, Beth-anath “so they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land.” (Judges 1:33)
* The tribe of *Dan* did not drive out the Amorites from Mount Heres, Aijalon, or Shaalbim, so “the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.” (Judges 1:34-36)

The Lord warned the people of Israel back in Exodus 34:11-16 that if the Canaanites continued to dwell among them when they came into the Promised Land, there would be a good chance that their hearts would turn away from him. As Schreiner notes: “They [the people of Israel] are, in a sense, given the same mandate as Adam. Just as Adam was to rule the garden for God’s glory, so Israel was to rule the land of promise for his glory. Adam was to remove the serpent from the garden, and Israel was to remove the Canaanites (the children of the serpent) from the land of promise.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Seven of the twelve tribes are mentioned in the last half of Judges 1 as failing to complete the task of driving the Canaanites from their respective portions of the Promised Land. Trouble is in the horizon.

The trouble anticipated in Judges 1 is made reality in Judges 2:1-3 where the angel of the Lord confronts the people of Israel: “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, 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? 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.’” Schreiner helpfully notes: “When Israel departed from the covenant, they experienced the curses of the covenant.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Or, as Dempster notes: “The Israelites experience ‘Egyptian’ oppression all over again, only this time on their own soil.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

The rebellion of the people of Israel was not in isolated pockets but pervasive throughout the entire nation. Judges 2:7 restates the conclusion of the book of Joshua by noting that the people of Israel 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.” But, in Joshua 2:10 we learn that “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.” The generation that experienced the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea died in the wilderness, the generation that experienced the crossing of the Jordan and the taking of the Promised Land also died, leaving another generation who had experienced neither of those times and who had already forgotten the works of the Lord. As Schreiner notes: “Apparently, the Deuteronomic ideal of teaching children to love, fear, and hold fast to the Lord had failed (see Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20). Israel was in the land but not in the Lord.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Since this new generation did not know the Lord or what he had done for them, they “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 peoples 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 Ashataroth.” (Judges 2:11-13) Since Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are fresh on our mind, we are bracing for the imposition of the devastating curses pronounced in those scary chapters. As Schreiner notes: “The book of Judges dashes any hopes that worldwide blessing would come soon through Israel.”[[20]](#footnote-20) In Israel, the folly and tragedy of rebellion is seen in its fullness.

And, the promised curses do, indeed, come: “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. 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.” (Judges 2:14-15)

We saw in the books leading up to Judges, over and over again, it foretold that once Israel took possession of the Promised Land, they would rebel against the Lord who gave the Promised Land to them, and experience the promised curses.[[21]](#footnote-21) And, sadly, we see this prophecy lived out in the life of the new generation who inherited the Promised Land.

The remainder of the book of Judges is captured by Judges 2:16-19: “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 after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.”

These verses explicitly set forth the pattern repeated over and over again in Judges. The people of Israel:

* *Rebel* against the Lord;
* Experience *judgment* in the form of the promised *curses* that flow from that rebellion;
* *Repent* and call upon the name of the Lord; and
* Experience the Lord’s *deliverance* and *restoration* through a judge/savior.

This repeated pattern is colorfully presented in great detail over the remaining 19 chapters which represent a period of history stretching out over about three hundred years.[[22]](#footnote-22)

* 1. *The Cycle of Rebellion, Judgment, and Salvation Recounted (Judges 3:7-16:31)*

Judges 3:7-16:31 recounts Israel’s experience of the cycle of rebellion, judgment, and salvation through the series judges that the Lord graciously provides to bring deliverance to his people:

* Othniel (Judges 3:7-11)
* Ehud (Judges 3:12-30)
* Shamgar (Judges 3:31)
* Deborah (Judges 4:1-5:31)
* Gideon (Judges 6:1-8:35)
* Abimelech (Judges 9:1-57)
* Tola (Judges 10:1-2)
* Jair (Judges 10:3-5)
* Jephthah (Judges 10:6-12:7)
* Ibzan (Judges 12:8-10)
* Elon (Judges 12:11-13)
* Abdon (Judges 12:14-15)
* Samson (Judges 13:1-16:31)

The book of Judges gives some judges a single verse and other judges several chapters. But, through all of the judges presented in these chapters, the pattern set forth in Judges 2 is recounted and set before the reader again and again – *rebellion*, *judgment,* *repentance, and restoration*. The cyclical nature of Israel’s rebellion and the temporary leadership of the judges points to the need for a *king*. Schreiner puts it this way: “As the story goes on in Judges, it becomes apparent, despite the victories won by the judges, that they are weak and fallible. . . . The faults of the judges whom Yahweh raised up to deliver Israel indicate that Israel needed a king-a man after God’s own heart.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

We have already seen several hints in the story to this point that the Lord’s plan is to provide a king to rule over his people and fulfill his redemptive promises.[[24]](#footnote-24) The need highlighted here is picked up with the following books of the Old Testament, which supports this view of the narrative in Judges. Schreiner puts it this way: “[T]he author thinks that Yahweh’s rule over the people will be mediated through a human king, seeing a fulfillment of the prophecies found in Gen. 49:8-12 and Num. 24:17. Yahweh’s rule will be realized through the offspring of the woman (cf. Gen. 3:15). Such a view fits canonically, for the promise of a human king is picked up in the books that immediately follow Judges. The book of Ruth promises a future king from Boaz’s line, and 1-2 Samuel features the fulfillment of that promises. Indeed, 2 Sam. 7 pledges that David’s dynasty will never end, that it will last forever. In light of the canon, then, Judges too looks forward to the coming of the Christ.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

The narrative of the judges itself also explicitly picks up the theme of kingship at several points. The people ask Gideon to be their king in Judges 8:22: “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” But, Gideon refuses the offer by saying: “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” (Judges 8:23) But, why would Gideon refuse to be king if we have already seen that it is the Lord’s plan to bring about his restoration through a king? For example, we read in Deuteronomy 17:14-15: “When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me.’ You may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as a king over you.”

Goldsworthy helpfully offers the following explanation: “Israel’s kings must fear the Lord, keep his law and not lift up their heart above their brethren. In other words, kingship for Israel is defined by the covenant. Unfortunately the people don’t always see it that way. Rather than taking the covenant as the model of kingship, they undoubtedly desire the benefits that appear to come from the autocratic rule of the Canaanite and Philistine kings. Thus, the request for a king . . . is born of the desire to imitate the pagan nations. This was indeed a rejection of the covenant model and, therefore, a rejection of God’s rule.”[[26]](#footnote-26) The request for a king was not in error, but the type of king that was being requested was.

The people of Israel get their request, however, because Gideon’s evil son through a concubine, Abimelech, killed 69 of Gideon’s 70 other sons (yes, 70!) and was made appointed as king. Abimelech did not seek to be a king within the covenant parameters and purpose. And, rather than experience the covenant blessings, Abimelech experienced the covenant curses. Abimelech’s rule was only three years long and was cursed by the Lord and marked by bloodshed with Abimelech dying through a woman crushing his skull by tossing a rock at him from a tower and then his servant’s sword to finish the job. (Judges 9:1-57) The Lord’s plan was to have a king bring about the fulfillment of his promised restoration, but the king would not ultimately be the choice of the people, for they were not seeking a king for the right reasons.

The chapters setting forth the exploits of the Judges is anything but boring. As Schreiner notes: “The narrator often calls attention to how unusual [the judges] were, indicating that they are unexpected saviors . . . . Yahweh was ‘realizing his providential designs by means which completely overturn human expectations.’”[[27]](#footnote-27) We have seen in the story to this point that the Lord often picks leaders that don’t seem to be the best choice from a human perspective. We see this theme played about in the book of Judges, as well.

While we do not have time to walk through each of the accounts of the judges, a couple of highlights will suffice for our purposes:

* *Ehud* (left-handed!) delivered Israel by first stabbing Eglon the king of Moab (who was very fat) while he was going to the restroom causing “the dung” to come out. Eglon’s attendants “waited till they were embarrassed” and then went in to find him dead. Once the fat king was dead, Ehud led Israel in battle against the Moabites and defeated them (Judges 3:12-30);
* *Shamgar* killed 600 Philistines with an oxgoad[[28]](#footnote-28) (Judges 3:31);
* *Sisera*, a general on a Canaanite army, was killed by a tent peg being driven through his head while he slept (Judges 4:21);
* *Gideon* famously asks, twice, for a sign by laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor (Judges 6:36-40);
* *Gideon’s* army was reduced from 32,000 to 10,000 with every fearful person having the opportunity to go home and then reduced from 10,000 to 300 based upon how they took a water break. Then, the “army” of 300 defeated a great army by blowing trumpets, shouting, and smashing jars (Judges 7:1-25);
* *Jephthah* bizarrely made a vow that he would sacrifice “to the Lord” the first person who came out to greet him from his tent which led to the killing of his only child (Judges 11:29-40)
* The Spirit of the Lord of the Lord rushed upon *Samson* and he tore a lion in pieces with his bare hands and then several days later ate honey from the lion’s carcass (Judges 14:5-6)
* *Samson* burned the fields of the Philistines by catching 300 foxes, and connected flaming torches to the tails and set them free (Judges 15:4-5)
* *Samson* killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:14-17)
* *Samson* is eventually taken down through his relationship with Delilah and her deceptive cunning. The Lord left him and “the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles.” (Judges 16:20-21) But, the Lord’s presence returned to him as “the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved” and in his last act killed 3,000 Philistines by breaking down the pillars of the house in which they were gathered to worship their god. (Judges 16:22-31)

The battle of the line of restoration and the line of rebellion is nothing short of bizarre in Judges. The judges/saviors that the Lord raises to deliver the line of restoration are not always models of moral behavior. However, the author of Hebrews characterizes the judges, as a whole, as men who were commended through their faith.[[29]](#footnote-29) No doubt, a faith that was imperfect and plagued with serious and egregious failings. But, as Schreiner notes: “Even though the failings and frailties of the judges also receive attention in the Judges, the NT shines the light upon the faith of the judges. Such a perspective corrects a possible misperception of the OT witness. The weaknesses of the judges may lead us to think they are fundamentally failures, but the NT actually confirms the main story that we read in Judges itself. The judges trusted in God and acted on that trust and thereby delivered Israel from its enemies. In other words, the judges should be remembered *primarily* as people of faith, not as those who disobeyed the Lord.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

But, since we are arguing that all of the Old Testament speaks of the person and work of Jesus in some manner,[[31]](#footnote-31) it is fair to ask how the extended stories of these Old Testament judges (particularly in light of their significant faults and failures!) speak of him.

Goldsworthy helps us greatly here: “We need to distinguish between the *pattern of events* and their *perfection*. The events of saving history in the Old Testament *prefigure and demonstrate the pattern* of the one true and perfect saving act yet to come. They do it well enough to point the people of that time to the way of salvation by grace through faith. God is not playing games with Israel for the sake of us who come afterward. His promises are true for them, and the way of salvation is made plain. Yet the failures of the saving figures, the prophets, the priests, and the kings, as well as the overall failure of Israel, all point to the fact that the real saving event still lies in the future. . . . . Thus, we not only distinguish between the pattern and the perfection . . . but also between the *inadequacy of the Old Testament type* to save and its function of pointing forward to the *only true basis of salvation in Jesus Christ*. The epistle to the Hebrews shows us that a principal point of *unity* between the two Testaments is the *pattern of redemption*, while the *real distinction* lies in the fact that *only the saving work of Jesus suffices to save anyone*.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

In other words, the judges/saviors raised up to bring victory to the line of restoration over and against the line of rebellion point to the ultimate and only sufficient savior who brought about the substance of the victory of which the judges were merely a shadow. They were imperfect; Jesus is perfect! They brought about temporary victory; Jesus brings about eternal victory!

* 1. *The Downward Trajectory of Israel’s Cycle of Rebellion is Highlighted (Judges 17:1-21:25)*

Judges 17:1-25:25 close out the book of Judges with two disturbing stories that reflect the disturbing and progressive state of rebellion and depravity that characterized the people of Israel during the time of the judges. As Schreiner notes: “Israel was supposed to be the offspring of the woman, but they were virtually indistinguishable from the offspring of the serpent.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Or, to put it in the terminology we are using in this class, the line of restoration was eerily similar to the line of rebellion. They were in a state of rebellion against the Lord and breaking the covenant requirements. The author of Judges identifies the root of the rebellion in Judges 17:6: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Judges 17-18 tells the story of the great-grandson of Moses being installed as a priest, but not to the Lord. Rather, as Schreiner notes, “it was a priesthood devoted to the worship of idols.”[[34]](#footnote-34) The great-grandson of the one who gave the commandment against worshiping idols is the one who is facilitating and fostering the worship of idols. The ideal for the nation of Israel has been turned upon its head.

Judges 19-21 concludes with the tragic story of the Levite and his concubine and the drastic consequences that flow from the story. In Judges 19:1-2 we are introduced to a Levite who takes a concubine who was unfaithful to him and returned to her father’s house. The Levite, remarkably, went after her “to speak kindly to her and bring her back.” (Judges 19:3) That would not have been my first response. The Levite is reunited with his concubine and after a short stay at her father’s home begins the journey back to his home. On the way the Levite and his company with him lodged at Gibeah, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. But, no one in Gibeah opened their homes to the Levite and his company so they sat down in the city square. (Judges 19:4-15)

An old man who was sojourning in Gibeah finally invited the Levite and his company into his home so that they would not stay in the city square. (Judges 19:16-21) But, the men of Gibeah, like the men of Sodom in Genesis 19, came to the old man’s house and asked him to bring out the Levite so that they could “know him.” (Judges 19:22) The Levite throws his concubine to these wicked men instead and they violated and abused the concubine all night so that she died in the morning. (Judges 19:23-28) The Levite then took his dead concubine home and, unthinkably “took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. And all who saw it said, ‘Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak.’” (Judges 19:29-30)

These events are nothing short of the stuff of a horror film. The end of sin is never as attractive as its beginning. Francis Chan tells of his experience of having the deceptive attractiveness of certain sins being taken away when he was doing inner-city ministry in San Francisco. In the suburbs, Alcohol abuse often looked like having a few too many drinks while watching the football game and feeling bad the next day. In the inner-city it looked like a homeless man passed out and sleeping in the streets with an empty bottle of wine in his hand and urine soaked through his pants. In the suburbs sexual sin looked like inappropriate chat with a person of the opposite sex on Facebook or looking at inappropriate images on the internet. In the inner-city, sexual sin took a much darker turn that I won’t talk about in this class. The events recorded in Judges 19 were a wake up call for Judges. May, by the grace of the Lord, we not allow the sin in our lives to find the end to which it is pulling us. Let us respond to his grace and repent today, as long as it is called today.[[35]](#footnote-35)

In the wake of the graphically evil sin of Gibeah, all of the people of Israel gathered and asked the Levite what had happened. The Levite recounted the events and Israel gathered against Gibeah to repay it for the evil it had done. But, the tribe of Benjamin, in an utter act of insanity, gathered together and went out against the rest of the tribes of Israel to do battle. After some preliminary victories by the tribe of Benjamin, “the Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel.” (Judges 20:1-48) Judges 21 concludes the book with the bizarre means through which the tribe of Benjamin was not completely cut off and destroyed. As Schreiner notes, “the entire account called into question whether Israel was truly the people of the Lord. Indeed, Benjamin as a tribe was almost wiped out, signifying what would happen to Israel if they defected from Yahweh.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

The closing verse of Judges, Judges 21:25 again restates the root of the evil that had come into full bloom in the life of Israel: “in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” The hope that characterized the book of Joshua has been drowned out by the tangible and all-encompassing darkness of the book of Judges.

So, as we leave the book of Judges, where are we in the progression of the Lord’s promises to Abraham of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing?

* *Land* – the people of Israel are still in the Promised Land, so this promise is still in a state of fulfillment.
* *Numerous offspring* – the people of Israel are still exceedingly numerous, but the tribe of Benjamin has been greatly reduced and was almost cut off.
* *Worldwide blessing* – the partial fulfillment of the promise of worldwide blessing through the mediation of the Lord’s presence by Israel being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation has completely evaporated. There are many adjectives that could be used to describe the nation at this point of the story, but holy would not be one of them. As Schreiner notes: “Instead of being a blessing to the world, Israel seemed to be cursed along with the world.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

1. **Ruth** (takes about *12 minutes* to read for the average person)
   1. *Placement in the Storyline*

The book of Ruth does not progress the storyline of the Old Testament. We learn in Ruth 1:1 that the story of Ruth is set in the dark time of the Judges: “In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land. . . .” As Schreiner notes: “The famine in Israel (Ruth 1:1) was an indication that the people were experiencing the Deuteronomic curses of the covenant (Deut. 28:48; 32:24).”[[38]](#footnote-38)

* 1. *Naomi Leaves Israel Full And Returns from Moab Seemingly Empty (Ruth 1:1-22)*

The story begins with Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons leaving Bethlehem and seeking refuge from the famine in the land of Moab. The Moabites have already been identified in the story to this point is part of the line of rebellion, so the reader is on alert.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Things do not go well in the land of Moab for these Israelites. Elimelech dies. The two sons die, but not after taking Moabite wives. (Ruth 1:5) Naomi’s loss within the first five verses of the book is staggering. But, why did all this hardship come upon Naomi? How are we to make sense of all of this? Naomi helps us here. Naomi explains her calamity by noting that “the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.” (Ruth 1:13) And, by telling the women of Bethlehem upon her return: “I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?” (Naomi 1:21)

Schreiner gives us insight into the deep faith and understanding behind Naomi’s words: “Naomi’s theology here is quite sophisticated, anticipating the book of Job. She does not maintain that her sufferings are the result of her sin, nor does she argue that what happened to her was outside of the Lord’s control. Yahweh brought calamity upon her. His hand was stretched against her. He made her bitter. And yet Naomi was not suggesting that the Lord was defiled by any evil in what he did to her; the Lord was just and good despite the evils that Naomi experienced from his hand. The Lord remained King even in the midst of difficult times. Naomi did not minimize the evils that she experienced; she did not give a saccharine response that was contrary to the depth of human experience. She lamented and grieved over the pain that had come her way.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

But, not all was lost for Naomi, for one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, clings to her in her distress. (Ruth 1:14) Naomi urged Ruth to return to her people and her gods as her sister-in-law had done. But, Ruth continued to cling to her and then uttered some of the most faith-filled words in the Bible: “Do not urge me to leave you are to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

Schreiner provides helpful insight into Ruth’s words: “Clearly, Ruth had put her faith in Yahweh, the God of Israel. This was illustrated by her “clinging” to Naomi (1:14) The word “cling” . . . is a covenantal term, denoting the responsibility to cling to one’s wife (Gen. 2:24) and, even more profoundly, the covenantal obligation to cling to Yahweh (Deut. 10:20; 11:22: 13:5; 30:20). Ruth’s devotion to Naomi demonstrated her covenantal attachment to Yahweh, the God of Israel . . . . Ruth was not only devoted to Naomi, she was forsaking her people and ethnic background (Moab) and her gods, and attaching herself to Israel and declaring her devotion to Yahweh, the God of Israel.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

Ruth’s faith in the God of Israel points back to Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho, and her faith in the God of Israel and Gibeonite’s response to the Lord’s revelation of himself through his great acts on behalf of his people in faith. As Schreiner highlights this theme as follows: “The story of Ruth, like the account of Rahab (Josh. 2), anticipates one of the major themes of the covenant of Abraham. The blessing promises to Abraham is not reserved for Israel alone; it belongs to the whole world and includes all people groups. Even though Ruth was, as she says, a ‘foreigner’ (2:10), she was now a citizen of Israel . . Because she trusted in Yahweh, she took refuge under his wings. . . . All those who trust in Yahweh are rewarded for looking to him as their God and King.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Goldsworthy continues this line of thinking: “Now let us remember the last element of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 – all nations will be blessed through his descendants. The one nation, a priestly nation, will mediate God’s blessings to all the nations of the world. . . . In this theological context comes the book of Ruth . . . . It tells of a Moabite woman’s devotion to God. This woman finds acceptance in Israel, is redeemed by a kinsman, and becomes an ancestor of King David.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Despite the tangible darkness captured and explicitly set forth in the book of Judges, the book of Ruth presents a ray of light shining in that darkness and the nation of Israel actually brining about, if even in small measure, blessing to the world as evidenced by Ruth’s faith in the Lord.

Upon hearing that the “lord had visited his people and given them food,” Naomi returns with Ruth to Israel to find refuge and comfort from the great loss she experienced in her sojourning. (Ruth 1:6) The tone of the story appears that it is about to pick up for Naomi and Ruth “came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.” (Ruth 1:22) The Lord had indeed visited his people and given them food!

* 1. *Naomi and Ruth Find Refuge and Blessing in Israel (2:1-4:22)*

As we enter the second chapter of Ruth, we see Ruth working diligently in the fields of Boaz, who is a close relative of Naomi and Ruth and “one of our redeemers.” (Ruth 2:20) When Naomi refers to Boaz as one of their redeemers, she is pointing back to Deuteronomy 25:5-6 where rules were established to continue the name of a man who died without a son. In essence, these verses provide that if a man dies without a son, his brother was to marry his brother’s widow and the first son born from such a union would carry forward the name of the deceased brother. Boaz was related to Naomi and Ruth in such a way that he was to act in furtherance of Ruth’s deceased husband.

Boaz is presented as a righteous man. He treats is workers well and blesses them. (Ruth 2:4) He protects, blesses, and generously provides for Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2:8-23) The story of Ruth has turned from staggering loss to unexpected blessing. The ray of hope shining in the midst of the time of the book of Judges begins to shine even brighter!

Naomi instructs Ruth to go to Boaz during the evening and ask him to exercise his obligation as one of their redeemers. Boaz communicates that he is willing to do so, although he notes that there is a redeemer closer than him. If that redeemer does not fulfill his duty, Boaz makes it clear that he will do so. (Ruth 3:1-18)

Boaz ends up serving as Ruth’s redeemer and she becomes his wife. (Ruth 4:1-10) The blessing of the people who witnessed these things upon Ruth and Boaz is profound in light of what follows in the story of the Old Testament: “Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, ‘We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like *Rachel and Leah*, who together built up the house of Israel. . . . [M]ay your house be like the house of *Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah*, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.” (Ruth 4:11-12)

Recall that Rachel and Leah were Jacob’s wives and mothers of 8 out of the 12 male children of Jacob who became the twelve tribes of Israel.[[44]](#footnote-44) Recall also that Judah was the chosen tribe through whom the promised restoration would ultimately come.[[45]](#footnote-45) Significantly, all of the individuals referenced in the blessing of the people are included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ! In Matthew 1:1-3 we read: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar. . . .” Thus, their blessing functions to include Ruth, Boaz, and their descendants in the line of restoration through whom the promised offspring of the woman would come and crush the head of the serpent and bring about the restoration of everything that was lost in the Fall!

The verses that follow drive this point home even further, for Ruth bears Boaz a son, who is none other than Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David! Indeed, the book closes with the genealogy of David: “Now these are the generations of Perez:

* Perez fathered Hezron,
* Hezron fathered Ram,
* Ram fathered Amminadab,
* Amminadab fathered Nahshon,
* Nahshon fathered Salmon,
* Salmon fathered Boaz,
* Boaz fathered Obed,
* Obed fathered Jesse, and
* Jesse fathered David.” (Ruth 4:18-22)

This is the exact genealogy that we find in Matthew 1:3-6 (with some significant commentary added!):

* Perez the father of Hezron, and
* Hezron the father of Ram, and
* Ram the father of Amminadab, and
* Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and
* Nahshon the father of Salmon, and
* Salmon the father of Boaz *by Rahab*, and
* Boaz the father of Obed *by Ruth*, and
* Obed the father of Jesse, and
* Jesse the father of David *the king*.”

Did you catch the significance of the additional commentary provided in the commentary? Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho who gave refuge to the Israelite spies because her faith in the Lord is included in the genealogy along with Ruth, the Moabite. And David is not just listed by name in Matthew, he is listed by his significant title – *the king*!

The theme of the Lord bringing about his restoration through a king is becoming increasingly important at this point of the narrative. So, also, is the blessing of the nations through the people of the Lord and the lasting significance of such inclusion as the story goes forward. Rahab and Ruth are not only included in the people of the Lord by grace and through faith, but they are highlighted as members of the direct line of restoration through whom the promised seed of the woman would come and bring about the complete restoration of all things! As Schreiner notes: “The line of Ruth and Boaz was the line from which the promised offspring would come (cf. Gen. 3:15). He would crush the serpent and his offspring, and he would bring many Gentiles like Ruth under his wings. The promise given to Rachel and Leah and to Tamar and Judah was becoming a reality. History, with fits and starts, with moves backward and forward, was going somewhere. The Lord would reign over the earth, and he would do it through a king, and that king would trace his ancestry to Ruth and Boaz.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

* 1. *Where Are We As We Leave Ruth?*

Despite the heavy and dark tone set by the book of Judges, the book of Ruth “shines the light on some who are righteous and godly in Israel.”[[47]](#footnote-47) The story of Ruth shows us that there are still some in Israel who are aligned with the line of restoration rather than the line of rebellion. Most significantly, the book of Ruth “concludes with a genealogy. Here child, Obed, is in the line that will lead to David the king.”[[48]](#footnote-48) It is becoming more clear that the promised restoration through the offspring of the woman, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, will be through a king. There have been hints in the story to this point, but now the reality of restoration through a king is coming into focus.

It is true that not all was well during the time of the judges. It was, for the most part, a dark time. But, it was equally true that the Lord was still working toward the progressive fulfillment of his covenant promises! As Schreiner notes: “The sovereign plan of the Lord, though hidden from human beings, is operating.”[[49]](#footnote-49) And, similarly: “Yahweh’s purposes and plans are hidden but become evident as time elapses.”[[50]](#footnote-50) With these great truths in mind, the placement of Ruth in the order of the Old Testament is significant. For, this often imperceptible working of the Lord on his extended timeline is captured in the story of the Old Testament as it unfolds through the progression of the Old Testament. In this vein, Schreiner notes: “The theological significance of Ruth’s placement between Judges and 1-2 Samuel is . . . instructive. . . . Judges focuses on Israel’s need for a king, a ruler who will guide the nation in accord with God’s will. Ruth closes with a genealogy that culminates with the man who will serve as Israel’s king, David. The books of 1-2 Samuel pick up form Ruth by rehearsing the story of how David became king and served as king. Ruth fits nicely, then, as a bridge book between Judges and 1-2 Samuel.”[[51]](#footnote-51)

So, as we leave the book of Ruth, were are we in the progressive fulfillment of the Lord’s redemptive promises made to Abraham in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant?

* *Land* – the people of Israel are still in the Promised Land, so this promise is still in a state of fulfillment.
* *Numerous offspring* – the people of Israel are still exceedingly numerous, and a ray of hope has been given to the dark description of the people in the book of Judges.
* *Worldwide blessing* – the partial fulfillment of the promise of worldwide blessing through the mediation of the Lord’s presence by Israel being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation that was completely evaporated in the book of Judges has been somewhat revived through the ray of light and hope provided by the book of Ruth. The fact that the promised worldwide blessing would come through a king is coming into focus, and the book of Ruth ends with the name of Israel’s famous king, David. While all is not well, the Lord is still working to fulfill his covenant promises!

1. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also Joshua 10:12-14 where this point is made emphatically! [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Taken from [www.foundationsforfreedom.net](http://www.foundationsforfreedom.net) (last visited October 22, 2014 at 11:01 a.m.). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Taken from www.soniclight.com (last visited October 22, 2014 at 11:01 a.m.) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Taken from: [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org) (last visited October 22, 2014 at 10:57 a.m.) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology In the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), \_\_\_. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 119-20 (quoting Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove: InverVarsity, 2003), 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See, for example, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 4 and 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Sailhamer, NIV Compact Bible Commentary, 202. See, also, Judges 11:26. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See, e.g., Genesis 49:8-12 (the blessing of Judah), Numbers 24:17 (Balaam’s oracle regarding a king from Judah that will crush the head of Moab), Deuteronomy 17:14-20 which provide laws for when the kingship is established in Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. An oxgoad is a large pointed stick used to poke to ox to make it move. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Hebrews 11:32-39. See, also, Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 125. (emphasis added) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See, e.g., Luke 24:27, 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 161-63. (emphasis added) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Hebrews 4:1-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Numbers 24:17: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.” See, also, Deuteronomy 23:3: “No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out to Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.” [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Genesis 29:1-30:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Genesis 49:8-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)