

# Consequences

AFTER JOSHUA'S DEATH, ISRAEL FELL INTO A CYCLE OF SIN, JUDGMENT, CONFESSION, AND RESTORATION.

## Judges 2:11-23

**11** The **Israelites** **A** did what was **evil** **B** in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals **12** and abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They angered the LORD, **13** for they abandoned him and worshiped **Baal and the Ashtoreths**. **C**

**14** The LORD's anger **burned** **D** against Israel, and he handed them over to **marauders** **E** who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies. **15** Whenever the Israelites went out, the LORD was against them and brought disaster on them, just as he had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly. **16** The LORD raised up **judges**, **F** who saved them from the power of their marauders, **17** but they did not listen to their judges. Instead, they **prostituted** **G** themselves with other gods, bowing down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their ancestors, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commands. They did not do as their ancestors did.

**18** Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, the LORD was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The LORD was moved to **pity** **H** whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them. **19** Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act **even more corruptly** **I** than their ancestors, following other gods to serve them and bow in worship to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways. **20** The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he declared, "Because this nation has violated **my covenant** **J** that I made with their ancestors and disobeyed me, **21** I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. **22** I did this to **test** **K** Israel and to see whether or not they would keep the LORD's way by walking in it, as their ancestors had." **23** The LORD left these nations and did not drive them out immediately. He did not hand them over to Joshua.

### Exploring Key Words

- A** God's chosen people. Before Joshua's death, the Israelites had promised they would follow God completely. However, future generations strayed from that vow (Judg. 2:10).
- B** The Hebrew word (*hara*) indicates moral bankruptcy and spiritual sickness. (See Deut. 4:25-26; 9:18; 17:2-7; 31:29).
- C** The word, meaning "master" or "lord," referred to the primary god of the Canaanites. Baal was a god of weather and crops. Ashtoreth was his female consort and ruled war and fertility.
- D** "Was hot" (KJV); "kindled" (ESV). The wording suggests a blazing anger (see also Ex. 32:10). The Lord told the Israelites that He was a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) and would not tolerate idolatry.
- E** "Spoilers" (KJV); "plunderers" (ESV); "raiders" (NIV). Enemies had their way with Israel since God no longer protected the nation (vv. 15,21).
- F** The Hebrew word *shophetim*, from which the book draws its name. These military leaders delivered Israel from its enemies (Judg. 2:18).
- G** God viewed Israel's spiritual infidelity like an unfaithful spouse (2 Sam. 22:7; Job 20:22; Hos. 5:15). Pursuing other gods was like pursuing a harlot.
- H** The wording describes deep emotion that longs to comfort someone. For God, the Israelites' suffering moved Him to compassionate action.
- I** Conveys behavior that leads to corruption or ruin. Each generation drew closer to destruction than the one before.
- J** The Sinai covenant was the key to Israel's prosperity or oppression in the promised land (see Deut. 28-30).
- K** The Israelites' decisions regarding idol worship would test their faithfulness to God.



NOTES

### **The Evil** (Judg. 2:11-15)

- Despite their earlier pledge to Joshua (Josh. 24:14-24), the Israelites abandoned the Lord and worshiped the gods of the Canaanites following his death.
- Because of their rebellion, God handed His people over to their enemies. They suffered greatly at the hands of their oppressors.

### **The Cycle** (Judg. 2:16-19)

- God had compassion on His people and raised up leaders (called “judges”) to deliver them from their enemies.
- However, when each leader died, the people returned to their evil practices. The Israelites continued in a downward spiral, as each generation acted more corruptly than the previous one.

### **The Declaration** (Judg. 2:20-23)

- Because the Israelites consistently violated the covenant with the Lord, God declared that He would no longer drive out their enemies.
- The Lord did this to test whether Israel would be obedient to Him.

### **Summary Statements**

*After Joshua’s death, Israel fell into a cycle of sin, judgment, confession, and restoration.*

- God’s people must guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for them.
- Believers can be assured that God’s faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours.
- Believers can expect their obedience to God to be tested.

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### **Memory Verse**

*Judges 2:10*

### **Key Doctrine**

*Salvation*

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God.  
(See Luke 3:8; Romans 2:4-5.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

## ENGAGE

**What factors might cause people to break their commitments, and how can we guard against this in our own lives? (PSG, p. 73)**

- Intending to do well doesn't always result in something being well done. We recognize this to be true regarding the people of Israel when Joshua died and the era of the judges began.
- Before Joshua's death, the Israelites insisted they would be faithful to the Lord and never worship the gods of the Canaanites. However, after Joshua and the elders who served alongside of him died, Israel broke their promise.
- As a result of the rebellion, they suffered the consequences of their infidelity to the Lord.

**Bonus: When have you seen someone's good intentions fall flat?**

## EXPLORE

### THE EVIL (JUDG. 2:11-15)

**Bonus: What are some things you never want to forget? Why are they so important?**

- After Joshua's death, Israel did "what was evil in the Lord's sight." Specifically, this "evil" involved an egregious sin against God: idolatry. Rather than following the Lord alone (Josh. 24:14-24), they chased Canaan's gods.
- "Baal" literally means "lord" or "master" and referred to the supreme god of the Canaanites. He was the storm god whose worshipers believed provided rain for their crops.
- Ashtoreth was a goddess of fertility, love, and war. Prosperity depended on the sexual activities of Baal and his consort. So, the false religion incorporated flagrant sexual immorality into its practices. The worship of Baal and Ashtoreth became a snare to Israel until the days of the Babylonian exile.
- Just because the people took their eyes off God does not mean He took His eyes off of them. Israel's unfaithfulness angered the Lord and prompted His judgment. They would experience the consequences of their infidelity.
- Though the enemies are not identified specifically, the Lord raised up "marauders" to plunder Israel. Without God's help, His people were defenseless against these Canaanite oppressors and "suffered greatly."

**What factors contribute to a person or group abandoning God? (PSG, p. 77)**

### THE CYCLE (JUDG. 2:16-19)

**Bonus: When have you felt stuck in a rut? How did you get out of it?**

- While the Lord was acting against the Israelites (v. 14), He was actually working for them. He "raised up judges,"

military leaders who could deliver the people from their enemies. God's compassion led to a demonstration of God's power on behalf of the Israelites.

- Unfortunately, the people did not turn to God permanently. Despite all He did for them, they returned to "prostituting" themselves, serving false gods instead of Him. Their cycle of sin looked like this: (1) abandoning God for Canaanite idols, (2) God sending enemies to oppress them, (3) Israel crying out to the Lord, (4) God providing judges out of His compassion, (5) a period of peace, and (6) a fall into deeper corruption once the judge passed from the scene.

**What does God's providing a deliverer tell us about His character? (PSG, p. 79)**

### THE DECLARATION (JUDG. 2:20-23)

**Bonus: When you hear the word "test," what comes to mind? When can a test turn out to be a good thing?**

- The ancient writer noted again that God grew angry with His people. Their infidelity violated His covenant and alienated them from His protection. God withdrew His hand of blessing from them.
- Ultimately, God did this to "test" the Israelites. He wanted their suffering to draw them back to Him once and for all. So, he continued allowing their cycle of sin to run its course and produce its consequences.

**When and how has God tested you? How is your faith stronger as a result? (PSG, p. 80)**

## CHALLENGE

As a group, talk about the importance of faithfulness to God.

**Discuss as a group how you might help one another guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for you. (PSG, p. 81)**

Challenge individuals to reflect on ways to avoid forgetting God's work in their lives.

**Why is it essential that you always remember that God's faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours? (PSG, p. 81)**

### FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

## BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 80)

Learn more about a person in the Bible.

The “angel of the LORD” appears in Judges 2:1, the first of four times in the book of Judges (see also 5:23; 6:11; and 13:1-24). Many scholars believe this was a “christophany,” an appearance of Jesus prior to His incarnation in the Gospels. Read and reflect on other possible christophanies in the Old Testament, such as Genesis 32:24-30 and Daniel 3:24-25. **Why do you think Jesus appeared in situations like these? How does the presence of Jesus affect your life each day?**

Encourage adults to work on this question in small groups: **Was Jesus in the Old Testament?** After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their responses. Direct the groups to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 80 of the PSG. When they are done, affirm that Jesus was active in the Old Testament. Share that some believe He was the “angel of LORD” in Judges 2.

## OBJECT LESSON: A YO-YO

Prior to the session, secure a yo-yo. If possible, spend some time practicing with it before the Bible study session.

During the session, attract attention by flicking a yo-yo up and down several times. Allow volunteers to show their yo-yo skills as time allows. As you continue playing with the yo-yo, share that in Judges the Israelites were like spiritual yo-yos.

Say: *They would plummet down into sin and cry out to God. God would send a judge to deliver the people, and they would move back up in their relationship with God.* Challenge adults to consider how they are spiritual “yo-yos” at times. Allow a time of prayer and reflection, encouraging the group to talk with God about areas of their lives where they keep slipping into sin. Remind them that sin carries consequences, but God’s grace can free them from any cycle of sin.

## PAGANS IN CANAAN

The book of Judges provides an account of Israel’s struggles with idolatry. The pagan clans living in the promised land presented a formidable temptation to God’s people. The Canaanites worshiped their false gods, and they tempted the Israelites to embrace them as well. Eventually the Israelites gave in to the temptation and betrayed their covenant with the Lord.

Pagans had been living in the promised land for centuries. Even before Canaan was the name of a place, it was the name of a person. Noah had a son named Ham, and he had a son named Canaan (Gen. 9:18). In Hebrew, the name (*kəna’an*) meant “merchant.”

Later on, it came to be identified with Abraham. According to Genesis 15:12-18, the Lord promised the land to Abraham and vowed that his descendants would live there. At that time, ten pagan clans lived in the region: the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites (Gen. 15:19-21).

Following Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, Moses pointed Israel to the promised land, which he referred to as “the land of Canaan” (Num. 32:32). When Joshua followed Moses as the nation’s leader, the Lord directed his steps in conquering Canaan. God intended for Israel’s twelve tribes to settle the land and to wipe out the seven pagan clans who lived there at that time: the Canaanites, Hethites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites.

The Lord commanded the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites and to tear down the altars these pagans had built for their idols. The Israelites did not succeed in getting rid of the idolatry of the Canaanites completely. Generations later, Israel still was breaking their covenant with the Lord by worshiping the pagan gods of the Canaanites (1 Kings 14:23-24; 2 Kings 16:3-4). They even followed the Canaanites in practicing perversions like immorality and human sacrifice. Eventually, their idolatry led to their exile in Babylon.