

## Judges 10

- There's an old, overused saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result
  - I'm not sure if that's a reasonable definition of insanity, but it's certainly an app description of Israel during the time of Judges
    - We've reached chapter 10
    - We're about 250 years into the 300-year period of Judges
    - And the cycle of sin and disobedience is still turning, now for the fifth time
    - So it's appropriate for us to take one day to consider some of the contributing factors driving the pattern
  - Gideon and the aftermath of his family civil war is behind us
    - And last week we heard that two judges followed in quick succession
    - One, Tola, seems to re-establish a sound culture of obedience in the land
    - But that didn't last
  - The second judge, Jair, appears to repeat the mistakes of Gideon barely three decades after Gideon's time
    - Jair took many wives
    - He had many children
    - And he took a position of privilege and status among the people
  - We can evaluate his time as judge based on the legacy he leaves behind
    - And in v.6 we see the aftermath of his time of judge

**Judg. 10:6** Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.

- There's nothing new or surprising here, right?
- This is the cycle we've come to expect in the time Judges
- There is almost a sense that its impossible for the people of Israel to avoid falling away
- Like a moth drawn to a flame, the people can't stay out of idolatry or so it would seem
- What is it about the Israelites or their situation that leads them down this path time and time again?
  - Simply put, Israel is succumbing to Canaanization, that they are coming under the influence of the worldly, pagan cultures around them
    - Israel was surrounded by Canaanites and other nations
    - When Joshua brought the people into the land, the Lord told the people to remove all the Canaanite peoples from the land
    - The people of God were not to seek friendship with the people of the land
    - And if they didn't obey this command, the Lord warned the people they would be tempted by their neighbors to worship other gods
  - The Lord repeats this advice to His people throughout the Bible, because it's true for everyone
    - We can seek a stronger relationship with the world...
    - Or we can seek a stronger relationship with the Lord
    - But we can't do both
    - As James said:

**James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

- Or as Paul taught:

[2Cor. 6:14](#) Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

[2Cor. 6:15](#) Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

[2Cor. 6:16](#) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I will dwell in them and walk among them;

And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

[2Cor. 6:17](#) “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord.

“And do not touch what is unclean;

And I will welcome you.

[2Cor. 6:18](#) “And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”

Says the Lord Almighty.

- The Bible presents us with a simple and powerful rule of thumb
  - The Lord says we are to remain separate from the world
    - Paul commands the believer in New Testament times to live this way
    - And he quotes the word spoken to Israel to emphasize that this has always been God’s expectation for those who follow Him
    - God dwells among us, so don’t try to live like those who do not have the Lord
    - Be separate, distinct, without partnership or fellowship with the world
  - Because when we associate too closely with the world seeking harmony with their values, we don’t “bring them up,” they pull us down
    - Our godliness doesn’t “rub off” on them
    - But their ungodliness will corrupt us over time
  - Obviously, the Church has a mission to pursue them, to reach the world for Christ
    - So we must make some kind of connection with an unbeliever
    - But our connection must seek to highlight our *differences*, what we have that they lack

- We can't win them over to our side if we identify with the things they value
- We lose our distinction when we forfeit our differences by trying to look just like them
- As Jesus said

**[Matt. 5:13](#)** "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

**[Matt. 5:14](#)** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

**[Matt. 5:15](#)** nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

**[Matt. 5:16](#)** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- We impact the world by our distinction, by our light, by our "saltiness"
  - But if we become just like the world, there goes our opportunity to influence it for Christ
  - And the enemy knows that
  - He knew it in Israel's day and he knows it today
  - If he can tempt you and me to identify with the world's values over God's word, then he neutralizes us on the spiritual battlefield
- He causes the world to think crude language, explicit music, and sexual immorality are cool, but what do you say?
  - The world celebrates depravity, brutality, ego and greed, but we practice love, kindness and charity
  - The world worships science, reason, mysticism, and paganism, but we witness to Christ and His word
  - We don't condemn nor judge the world for its ways, but neither do we seek to identify with them
  - It's the *contrast* that our faith affords that give us an opportunity to reach others with a different message

- Equally important, when we maintain distinction from the world, we protect ourselves from the compromises that inevitably follow
  - Friendship with the world is hatred toward God
    - So when we adopt the world's attitudes, speech and behaviors, we become like the world
    - And we move away from God
    - Inevitably we end up in idolatry
  - So when we prioritize pursuing the world above seeking the Lord and his word, we are taking part in the idolatry of our age
    - We found something about the world we liked
    - We began to agree it's worth pursuing
    - And our heart's affection is turned to something other than pleasing God
    - It's the proverbial slippery slope
- That's what's happening in Israel in these days of Judges, they keep sliding down the same path generation after generation
  - In the beginning, they ignored the Lord's instructions to put away the Canaanites' so they could be separated from their influences
    - Over time, generation after generation of Israelites found something about the Canaanite culture they liked
    - They noticed the alluring Canaanite women and took them as wives
    - They sought the profit of trading goods and establishing business with these peoples
    - And they were attracted to the excitement of settling in their large cities
  - Within no time, the Israelites were worshipping the gods of their neighbors
    - In v.6 Samuel says they people are worshipping the Canaanite gods of Baal & Ashtaroth

- Beyond that, they're now worshipping the gods of Syria, Phoenicia, Moab, Ammon and the Philistines
- This is a new low for the people of Israel as they've moved beyond merely the Canaanite gods
- Altogether, Israel has adopted seven false gods just as the Lord promised they would
- What would our list of false gods look like?
  - Ask yourself, what does our world worship today?
  - For the most part the modern world is not bowing down to wooden figures and stone monuments
  - What do they hold in high esteem?
  - What does the world make sacrifices to obtain and please?
- Aren't the gods of today wealth, physical beauty, career, sports, hobbies, or even children or pets?
  - Earthly, temporal things that cannot substitute for the living God
  - Things we've come to appreciate because we are living in and around people who tell us these things matter
  - That these are the things that make life worth living
  - Where have we compromised? Where are we sacrificing Heavenly treasure to obtain the world's treasure?
- In the cycle of Judges, we know the Lord won't ignore the Israelites latest fall, and certainly He doesn't

**Judg. 10:7** The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon.

**Judg. 10:8** They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they afflicted all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites.

**Judg. 10:9** The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

- On this occasion, the Lord disciplined His people with oppressors sent from both the east and west

- The Philistines came from the west & the Ammonites from the east
  - For 18 years the people were afflicted because of their own sins
  - Like a vice, the Lord squeezed the people
  - Until Israel was greatly distressed
  - And predictably, they cried out to the Lord for relief

**Judg. 10:10** Then the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals.”

- The period of oppression led the people into repentance
  - They confess their sins and cry out to the Lord for relief
    - Here we find a second principle of the morning
    - God’s people are best served in their pursuit of godliness when God brings trial and persecution
    - As James says

**James 1:2** Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **James 1:3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

**James 1:4** And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Trials are spiritual condition exercises
  - Some trials come upon us because the Lord desires to grow our faith and strengthen us for greater works of service
  - But other times our trials are discipline brought by the Lord as a result of our sin and disobedience
- But in both cases the Lord is working to draw us closer to Him
  - To expose our weaknesses, our idolatry, our selfishness
  - So we will recognize them ourselves and put them away
  - To bring us back to a dependence on Him

- To a willingness to endure the world's disapproval for following the Lord
- But regret isn't repentance...

[Judg. 10:11](#) The LORD said to the sons of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines?"

[Judg. 10:12](#) "Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands.

[Judg. 10:13](#) "Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you.

[Judg. 10:14](#) "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress."

- The people want relief, but the Lord isn't quick to grant that relief
  - Speaking through a prophet, the Lord rebukes the people for chasing idols again
    - In vs.11-12, the Lord reminds the people He has delivered them from their enemies in the past
    - He lists seven adversaries who oppressed the people in the past
    - Yet God rescued his people when they needed help
  - The list of seven nations oppressing the people creates symmetry with the list of seven gods the people were worshipping in v.6
    - The Lord is emphasizing their short memories
    - They're asking the Lord to grant them relief from their circumstances
    - But those very circumstances are the result of their choice to make friends with the gods of their enemies
    - If they want the Lord to deliver them from their enemies, then first they must forsake friendship with these people
  - The irony is the people were maintaining their relationships with these gods even as they cried out for relief from God's discipline
    - This is repentance in the style of Esau

- They are demonstrating regret over their circumstances, not a willingness to leave their sin behind
- So they continue in their apostasy
- Let's not think we can fool the Lord, for He knows our hearts better than we do
  - If we make friends with the world, we should expect to see the fruit of that apostasy
    - The Lord may put us in a vice at some point to get our attention
    - I've seen it many times...brothers and sisters that assume they've been doing everything right
    - They have the house, the cars, the job, 2.5 kids and a 401K
    - But they're just carbon copies of the world...plus a little church on Sunday unless the Cowboys are playing early that week
    - Chasing the world's definition of success instead of the Lord's
  - But then the cracks in the wall begin to show
    - The shallow marriage
    - The rebellious kids
    - The addictions, the lack of fulfillment, the emptiness inside
    - Maybe worse
  - They're sleeping in the bed they made...reaping a measure of regret from the living like the world and wondering why sharing the world's consequences
    - You can't architect your life to match the world while expecting a different result simply because you know Jesus
    - Israel continued to live in rebellion but expected the Lord to grant relief from the consequences
  - The Lord responds you have chosen to seek refuge in the gods of your neighbors
    - So let them deliver you
    - And of course, He knows they won't be delivered

- He simply gives them more time to learn that lesson
- And once more, a new generation of Israel wakes up to the reality of their situation

[Judg. 10:15](#) The sons of Israel said to the Lord, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day.”

[Judg. 10:16](#) So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

[Judg. 10:17](#) Then the sons of Ammon were summoned and they camped in Gilead. And the sons of Israel gathered together and camped in Mizpah.

[Judg. 10:18](#) The people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon? He shall become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

- The people move to a point of repentance
  - They say we have sinned
    - They agree with the Lord’s assessment
    - They don’t make excuses
    - And they say they will accept whatever judgment the Lord deems appropriate
  - Samuel’s description is short and matter-of-fact, but give a moment’s thought to how this must have taken place within the camp of Israel
    - You have a nation of several million people moved in unison to make this appeal
    - I suspect some were ready to make this move much earlier than others
    - But the Lord kept squeezing the vice until the entire nation was ready to move back to the Lord
    - The Lord isn’t interested in partial obedience
    - He want’s the whole heart of His people
- And secondly, notice the actions that followed their statements
  - In v.16 the people put away their foreign gods

- That doesn't mean they returned the gods to their cupboard
- It means they were sent away
- And they served the Lord, which means they obeyed His word and worshipped Him in action as well as words
- The people did the works in keeping with repentance
  - Words are cheap, and the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, as the saying goes
  - If we feel some conviction about how we're living, how we're prioritizing our lives, then we need to repent
  - And repentance means doing something differently
  - Changing a life can be difficult, yes, but not repenting is much worse
- And then the Lord was ready to rescue them
  - Samuel uses an anthropomorphic description of the Lord
  - He says the Lord could no longer bear the misery of His people
  - This is a human way to understand the timing of the Lord's response
  - We understand the Lord wasn't at a breaking point
  - But He selected His timing to ensure the people were sufficiently motivated to repent and not turn back again
- Then the battle began
  - The Ammonites assemble for a great victory against the Israelites
    - They gather in Gilead, the region east of Jericho in present day Jordan
    - Without supernatural intervention, the nation of Israel would have been crushed by their adversaries
    - So the people of Israel gather on the west side of the river in Gilead

- But they are without a judge or leader to save them
  - Do they ask the Lord to save them?
  - No, they continue to think like the world
  - They seek a human deliverer to fight the battle
  - And they in v.18 they say the person who leads them will be rewarded with the land of the Ammonites
- Years of living with worldly perspective continues to weigh on their view of life
  - They still see solutions among men rather than appealing to the Lord directly
  - The Lord is willing to rescue the people
  - And He will raise up a deliverer
  - But He will do it in unexpected ways to shame the world's wisdom
- Be prepared for the battles that come after you take a stand for the Lord
  - If you would turn away from chasing the world and seek to serve the Lord, be ready for the world to fight back
    - The enemy and his forces will not be pleased
    - And that attack will likely come from your neighbors, those close to you
    - Family and friends will seek to hold you to their way of life
    - And your own flesh will rebel as well
  - But ask the Lord for the strength to hold to your course, and He will give you strength to win those battles
    - And it will come in unexpected ways
    - The solutions to our emptiness, strife and stress won't be more money or possessions
    - It's not more time at spent at work or another drink
    - It will come from seeking the Lord and allowing Him to work