

## Judges Chapter 2 Part 4

Thomas Constable concerning Judges 2:6-3:6 provides a useful overview of Judges 2:6-3:6. Remember, chapter breaks are not inspired. So, from some commentators' perspectives, chapter 3 should have started with verse 7. The same with chapter 2. It should have started with verse 7 based upon the content.

“This section of the book provides a *theological* introduction to the judges' deeds, whereas 1:1—2:5 gives a *historical*, if not completely chronological, introduction. It also further explains the presence of Canaanites in the Promised Land. The first introduction (1:1—2:5) is from *Israel's* perspective, and the second (2:6—3:6) is from God's. The first deals with *military* failure, and the second with *religious* failure.”

Judges 2:1-5 was an analysis of chapter 1 by the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ,

There is now a break in the narrative. This is a flashback. But, it will serve as a transition to the description of the sin routine the Israelites will fall into in chapter 3.

### **Judges 2:6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.**

Note that Judges 2:6-10 is *almost* identical to Joshua 24:28-31. Repetition, as I have said previously, emphasizes the repeated content. In this case, some content is repeated, but Judges modifies the order and a few words. Why? What does that mean? Why do I care?

Let us look at the *almost* part. Will that provide an insight into our passage? Sometimes just asking the question sheds light on what we are looking at.

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**Judges 2:6-9 Versus Joshua 24:28-31**

<b>Judges</b>	<b>Joshua</b>	<b>Common Narrative</b>	<b>Differences</b>
2:6	24:28	Joshua dismissed the people/Israel	Judges adds “went the Sons of Israel” & to possess the land
2:7	24:31	Israel served Yahweh	Judges plural “served the people” versus Joshua singular served Israel  Judges substitutes “known” for Joshua “had seen.”  Judges adds “great” works where Joshua has only works.
2:8	24:29	Joshua died	Joshua adds “after these things” indicating the ending of the book of Joshua
2:9	24:30	Joshua buried	No real difference

As I cover individual verses in Judges, I’ll suggest what the differences may indicate.

Just perusing the table, it is obvious that “Israel served Yahweh” is in a different order in Judges than in Joshua. Who Israel serves is key in the book of Judges.

Judges verse six corresponds to Joshua 24:28.

**Judges 2:6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.**

**When Joshua.** We know from Judges 1:1 that the context of Judges is after the death of Joshua. But now the author takes us back to before Joshua died. Robbie Dean makes the point over and over that ancient

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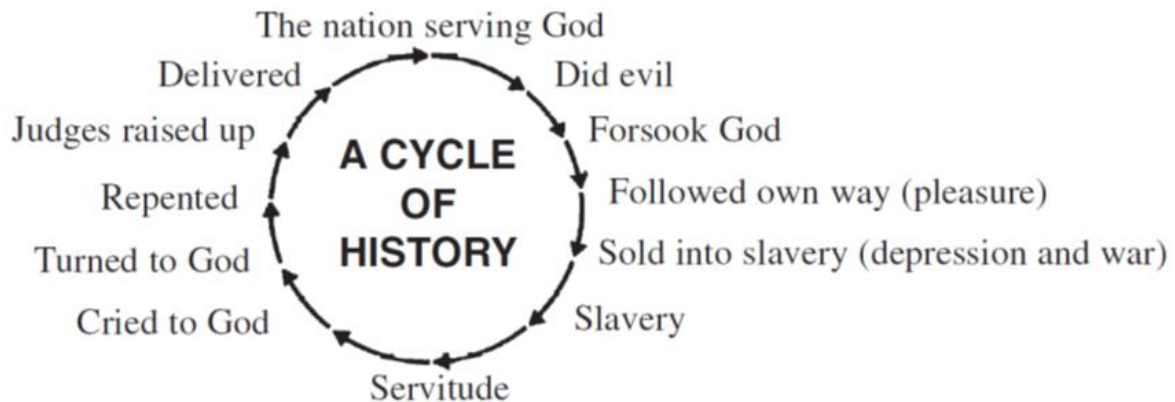
Hebrew writing is a different style of writing than Latin or Western writing.

“The nature of Hebrew narrative is to write first a summary statement: you have a summary and then the writer will come back after the whole overview and fill in the details. We see something of that in the first chapter of Judges. Judges gives a survey of what happens throughout this entire period. There are some events in Judges chapter two that will not take place until the very end of this period of time. If we read the first two chapters from a typical western frame of reference we will be all messed up in terms of sequence and chronology because we are thinking like a western European where everything has to be written in a chronological sequence. But the Jews write from a logical sequence, not just chronological information which doesn't have a unifying theme that really doesn't tie everything together. So history to the Jew is written more logically than it is chronologically so that you are not left hanging, you get to see what the end results are before you get started.”

So in Judges 2:6, the author is going back to the time of Joshua when the people were following the Lord in faith. He is going to move forward in chapter 2 to document in a general way the failures of the people. It documents a routine or paradigm that is repeated multiple times in the book of Judges. Here the routine is documented. Then starting in Judges 3, actual failures that fit that routine will be documented one after another after another.

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Below is the routine as illustrated by J. Vernon McGee:



J. Vernon McGee, <https://ttb.org/docs/default-source/notes-outlines/>

**Had dismissed the people.** The Hebrew word used to dismiss is a word for sending. It is also a Piel which means intensive. “Dismissed” doesn’t do justice to the intent of the Hebrew text. It is parallel to the Greek word *apostello*, to send on a mission or to commission someone for a task. In Joshua, the text just states that Joshua dismissed Israel. Here in Judges, the author adds more to indicate what that mission was. Just as Joshua before he dies commissions the people, so Jesus commissions the eleven (and implicitly all Christians) at the end of Matthew before He departed earth. We have a commission.

**The people.** The people is here singular.

**Went.** The Hebrew word means to walk. “Went” as a translation is OK. But, that may obscure the spiritual overtones of this word in this context. From a physical perspective they are going to their new homes, their inheritance. From a spiritual perspective, they are to walk by faith. The focus of this mission toward which they walk is to take possession of their inherited land. As we have seen from chapter 1, this requires faith. This word, “went,” is not in the parallel passage in the book of Joshua. Here it is in a phrase to indicate what the purpose of the mission they were given by Joshua. In the book of Joshua there was no need to explain

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that. That book was complete. In Judges, we are just getting started. The book is about what the people did after they possessed the land or in some cases after they attempted to possess the land and failed. It is about their spiritual walk.

Do you remember from John chapter 4 that Jesus always saw the world from a spiritual perspective? He spoke from a spiritual perspective. So, do not be fooled that this in the book of Judges is only talking about the physical world. They are walking to possess their inheritance. They are ordering their lives in a manner which should be according to faith in God as king. Instead, they will forsake the Lord and serve the gods of the indigenous people. In the book of Judges, there is a constant repetition of spiritual commentary from God. The book of Judges is about spirituality in the Old Testament. I want that to sink in for a while. It was not something that was foremost in my mind when I first read the book of Judges. I saw the failure of the Israelites in the physical world. But the book is about the lack of walking by faith.

**Inheritance.** God promised them the land. They received the “title deed” through a lot. This allotment was their inheritance which they were to possess, not by means of the flesh nature but by faith reliance on God.

A short review of some words relating to possessing the inheritance from the introduction to Judges:

1. **Allotment:** (TDOT – goral) “The main intention of the “Priestly” authors in Josh. 18-20 is to declare that the distribution and allotment of the land was undertaken by Yahweh himself.”
2. **Inheritance:** (Gesenius – nakhlah) “to receive an inheritance” “taking possession, occupation of any thing”
3. **Possess:** (TDOT - yarash) “Destroy someone so that someone else can possess his property.”

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**Possess the land.** This is “Yarash.” They were supposed to go in and destroy the inhabitants and take possession of the land. It started out OK and then went downhill. The tribe of Dan failed to take possession of his allotment of land. Remember this word contrasts with “Garash” which is simply to drive out.

Verse 7 corresponds to Joshua 24:31. In the book of Joshua, Joshua dies and is buried, which ends the book of Joshua. Here in verse 7 the verse order from Joshua chapter 24 is changed to alert us to something important to get the narrative of this book going. This verse tells us what happened prior to Judges. Judges 2:10 will tell us what happens in the book of Judges which is a contrast to this verse.

**Judges 2:7 The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which He had done for Israel.**

**The people.** This is a plural referring to the people. Joshua uses “Israel” in the singular. Israel is a unity. The people are diverse and as we will see, devious and evil in the book of Judges. Everyone has a sin nature. Under Joshua, the sin natures were not expressed as they were in Judges. This is perhaps a hint of where things are going. As if we didn’t know this already from Judges 2:1-5.

Joshua says “Israel.” Judges says “people.” The context between the two books is different. Remember the chart from Unger’s Bible Handbook:

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<b>Book of Joshua</b>	<b>Book of Judges</b>
• Victory	• Defeat
• Freedom	• Servitude
• Faith	• Unbelief
• Progress	• Declension
• Spiritual Vision	• Earthly emphasis
• Fidelity to the Lord	• Apostasy from the Lord
• Joy	• Sorrow
• Strength	• Weakness
• Sense of Unity	• Declension, Anarchy
• Sin Judged	• Sin Lightly Regarded

Unger's Bible Handbook, p169

In Joshua, there is a sense of unity, Israel. In Judges there is declension, anarchy, the people. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Perhaps I am reading too much into the difference. Maybe. Maybe not.

**Served.** This word is used four times in this chapter. It is important. Here it is in the plural to match “the people,” whereas in Joshua it is singular to match “Israel.” The people serve either the Lord (good) or the Baals (bad). This is where the physical world touches the spiritual world. As believers we have a human spirit and can operate in the spiritual world. But we have a physical body through which we implement our spiritual service.

**All the days of Joshua.** Israel always seemed to fare best when they have a physical leader they can follow. God is their king. But when they do not see Him and His works, they forsake the Lord for idols of wood and stone that they can see.

We serve a God we cannot see. But if you are observant in the spiritual realm, you will see God touching your life every day. Walk by faith and you may see amazing things take place in front of your eyes. Use those blessings that God leaves in your life to remember what God has done

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and to motivate you to stay in fellowship with the Father who loves you. Remember what Herman says: Faith dependence upon the Holy Spirit takes you to the Son who takes you to the Father.

**All the days of the elders who survived Joshua.** So even after Joshua dies and they do not have a leader, there are still people who say they have to see works of the Lord. Like Thomas they had seen and believed and trusted God.

Robbie Dean makes a big deal about who the people serve. Here is Constable's take:

“The key issue was whom the Israelites "served" (or "worshiped" NRSV). The Hebrew verb so translated ('abad) forms an envelope structure around this passage (2:7; 3:6), as well as appearing in its middle (2:11, 13, 19).”

**And had seen.** Again, the emphasis on hearing and seeing.

**Works.** Or can mean accomplishments.

**He did.** The noun works comes from the same root as this verb.

**For Israel.** Israel is God's chosen people. He picked them. He did his work/accomplishments specifically for them. As a Christian, God has done many things for us. Let us benefit from those works by walking in faith.

**Judges 2:8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred and ten.**

**Servant of the Lord.** Joshua just served the Lord faithfully. And because of his constant faithfulness he was rewarded with the title, “Servant of the Lord.”

**Died at the age of one hundred and ten.** It was considered a blessing to have a long life.



## **Judges 2:9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.**

**Buried him.** So why is the fact and place of his burial important? I was about to just pass over this. But then I noticed on the internet that Joshua's burial place is a popular pilgrimage shrine. Per the Complete Pilgrim website:

“His tomb was the last major shrine associated with the Exodus to be constructed. It has the distinction of being one of the most reliably known tombs from the pre-kingdom era, and is thus one of the oldest pilgrimage sites in Israel.”

So why would the Bible include the location of Joshua's tomb? Indeed, the burial places of all of the judges starting with Gideon are also identified in the book of Judges. That surprised me. Let me conjecture a couple of points:

1. Historical: An actual tomb verifies the historicity of Joshua and the judges. It corroborates the Biblical accounts. How many times have you seen some archaeological site defaced with someone's name scrawled on a pillar? Why did they do it? To prove they had been there.
2. Landmark: It is related to history as signpost or marker. This is Israel's territory and in particular it belongs to Joshua's family. Today people do a land survey to identify the boundaries of their property. In this case, the landmark is not necessarily on the border but within the land.
3. Memorial: It serves as a reminder of Israel's history. Perhaps this can be broken down into three categories:

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- a. (Man) Reminder of man's sin: The judges were appointed by God as deliverers as a result of Israelite sin, subsequent slavery and then a call to God for deliverance.
- b. (God) Reminder of God's grace deliverance: The judge was the instrument of God's deliverance. Either overtly or implicit in the actions is the fact that the deliverance came from God and not man.
- c. (Judge) Reminder of a judge's leadership: God worked through His appointed leaders to deliver Israel.

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**Burial Sites Identified in the Book of Judges**

<b>Chapter / Verse</b>	<b>Judge</b>	<b>Burial Site</b>
2:9	Joshua	in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
8:32	Gideon	in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites
10:2	Tola	in Shamir
10:5	Jair	in Kamon
12:7	Jephthah	in <i>one of</i> the cities of Gilead
12:10	Ibzan	in Bethlehem
12:12	Elon	at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun
12:15	Abdon	at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites
16:31	Samson	between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father

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Location of Timnath-heres (shown as Timnath-seres)

Note that these burial sites are scattered throughout Israel. So these memorial sites are available in tribal territories and do not require traveling great distances to visit the nearest one to a particular tribe.

**Judges 2:10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.**

**Gathered to their fathers.** This is a way of indicating their death. I suspect this also means, that if they were gathered to their fathers who were believers, then they also were believers and went to Paradise (prior to the cross).

**Arose.** This means that they are now in charge. After WWII, the “Boomers” arose in the USA. Now that the “Boomers” are dying out, “Millennials” are arising in the USA. The “Boomers” tend to know God

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and have been taught God's deliverance in WWII. The "Millennials" neither know God (in general) nor have they seen or been taught God's deliverance in war.

**Did not know the Lord.** Did the parents not evangelize their children?

**Nor yet the work.** Some people come to know the Lord through evangelization. Others may come to know the Lord through His word or His works in their lives.

As a result of lack of knowledge (they did not know God) they had a lack of success:

**Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

**Isaiah 5:13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst.**

Now let us read Deuteronomy chapter 6. That is pertinent to our study of why the children did not know the Lord or His work.

Note in Judges 2:11-13 the words "served" and "forsook." They are in a type of chiasmic structure. That means they repeat as A-B-C-B'-A.' In this case A and A' are "served" and B and B' are "forsook." This kind of a structure emphasizes what is in the middle, in this case "C." God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Then the Israelites 1) followed other gods, 2) bowed themselves down to other gods 3) as a result the Lord was "provoked."

## **Judges 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals,**

**Israel did evil.** Here is a good explanation of evil from Robbie Dean:

“The word used here for evil is the Hebrew word *ra*. It can mean something that is just destructive, a non-moral sense of something that is just disagreeable, bad or doesn't work; but it also, in most places, has a spiritual sense and it illustrates the violation of the will of God. It is evil because God says it is evil, it is evil in the sight of the Lord. It is focused on idolatry—“and they served the Baals.” The root of all evil is the transfer of allegiance and priority from God to something else in the created order. This is what happens over and over.”

Interesting to note that this includes the definite article: “the evil.”

**In the sight of the Lord.** Literally in the eye of Yahweh. This is an anthropomorphism. The writer gives God a human body part like eye, hand, mouth, etc. to help us understand the function of God. In actuality, God is omniscient, all-knowing. This did not surprise God. He already knows what is going to happen in the Millennium. Later we will encounter the nose of God. You won't see that in the English, but it is there in the Hebrew. Again, Hebrew needs concrete things that can be seen or heard or touched to make something real.

**Served.** The word means to serve or to be a slave. Continue to note this is a spiritual book. Here Israel served in the physical world through idol worship something that is taking place in the spiritual world. Again, this reminds me so much of the Gospel of John chapter 4. Jesus has food that His disciples do not know about or understand. As Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” In this context, “served” means “worshipped.”

**Baals.** This is in the plural to indicate this is not just the Canaanite god Baal, but the whole pantheon of Canaanite gods. Typically, they worship

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idols made of stone or wood. Man-made sticks and stones that can kill spirituality.

**Judges 2:12 and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger.**

**They forsook.** The word means to leave or desert. As we read in Deuteronomy, the parents, the father in particular, was to teach the sons about God. They deserted the God of their fathers, the God that chose them, the God that did amazing things for them.

The “Exodus” generation was witness to some of the most amazing acts of God. But the first generation died in the desert. The second generation, the children, went into the Land. When they died off, their children were not taught about God. Instead, they went after the gods of the land.

**Bowed themselves down to them [gods of the indigenous people].** Bowed down is to prostrate oneself before a monarch or superior. This is worship. They are worshiping an idol, a nothing. But they are in

According to Robert Chisholm, “These deities were especially attractive to Israel, for they promised their worshipers agricultural prosperity, abundant offspring, and national security.”

**Provoked to anger.** That is what the Hebrew means, provoked to anger. This is an anthropathism which is different from the anthropomorphism mentioned earlier. God doesn’t change. He doesn’t get “angry.” This is a human emotion. An anthropathism is attributing to God a human emotion to communicate his His character as it applies

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to this situation. Their actions went counter to God's integrity (His righteousness and justice). As a result, since they are His chosen people, He disciplines them to bring them back into fellowship. Each of us as Christians is familiar with this routine. We sin. We get disciplined. We return to faith dependence.

**Judges 2:13 So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.**

Here is repeated forsook and served in the reverse order that they are presented in verses 11-12 which emphasizes the Exodus work of God.