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# **Here Come the Judges**

**# 727-A**

**Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)**



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# Here Come the Judges

*Father,*

*What a privilege to see You at work around the world, to see You take just regular folks, fill them with Your Spirit, send them on their way and watch miracles take place. What a precious God You are.*

*Now, take this Word we pray, this morning, remove the teacher, and just allow the Spirit to take control. You be our teacher, and may the end result, Father, be something we can personally apply to our own lives to such a degree, that we're not ever the same again.*

*In Jesus' Name we ask it,*

*Amen.*

Well, here we go again. We continue our journey through God's Living Legends, and as we look behind us, we see a footprint, and that footprint seems to be an indelible impression that was left on the sands of time by a man named Moses. We've watched this man week, after week, after week, and finally, last week, the curtain came down on his life, and the meekest man on all the earth crawled up into the arms of God. We know he was at home there, because he spent so much of his life there.

Now what? Here's Israel. Their leader is gone. From a human perspective, they're leaderless, but, of course, they're not, because the mark of a real leader is to train a leader to take his place; to train a man as II Timothy 2:2 says, who would be able to teach others also. Moses spent the bulk of his life pouring his life into Joshua. It's a tremendous study. We did it once before in this class. We took the relationship between Moses and Joshua and the discipleship, mentoring relationship that took place, the prayer relationship that took place, the training relationship that took place and we saw how God so prepared his follower that when Moses stepped aside, Joshua, in essence, had the Spirit of God, through the spirit of Moses.

So now they could enter and possess the land that had been promised. It was a land they already owned. But the scary thing was, and we start the lesson this way, Joshua comes to the people.

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And he has a congregational meeting and the people hold up their hands and they make this statement, “We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses.” Now, if I was Joshua, I would have gotten on my Honda and headed out of town, because you can imagine, if he was expecting that kind of obedience, what he could expect. But at any rate God was gracious. I have a feeling that the Word that was entrenched in Joshua’s heart was this.

Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.  
(Joshua 1:9)

Now, I want to warn you this morning before we begin, that much of this morning’s lesson is just reading Scripture. And if some of you are like me and you are always struggling to find Scriptures to memorize, look no further. If you’ll just take the verses that are in this passage this morning, it ought to cover you, at least, through the first part of 1997, or whatever year, or the next year. I’ve learned not to use numbers in lessons, because they end up on tape or something five years later. And then somebody says, “Oh, that thing is so old, I’m not going to listen to it”, but I already did it, so, whatever the next year is.

Anyway, we’re going to pass over Joshua’s life, and the reason is, because we did sometime ago, teach a whole series on Moses’ and Joshua’s relationship to each other, we are going to move on to a new chapter in the life of Israel called, “Here Come the Judges.” But we can’t really do that without at least going quickly through the highlights of Joshua’s life, and in particular, to his speech at the end which was much like Moses’ speech so many years before. In Joshua 3:5, you can almost see the beginning of his life begin to blossom when he told the people,

Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.  
(Joshua 3:5b)

What a great memory verse to go to bed with at night. “Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, the Lord will do wonders among you.” Then you see Joshua as he leads his people to the banks of the Jordan and they pass over on dry land. And I have to give you one more time—you know, I’m going to hit it at least every week, that at the end of that time he told the people, “By the way, build a memorial so you won’t forget when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean’, you can say to them, ‘Aha! Glad you asked.’” That’s in the original Hebrew.

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that when your children ask their fathers in time to come,  
saying, What mean ye by these stones?

Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of the Jordan  
were cut off...and these stones shall be for a memorial unto  
the children of Israel forever. (from Joshua 4:6,7)

So those stones were put there as a reminder, “Don’t you ever forget what your God has done for you.” And then we see Joshua as the Captain of the Lord’s Host and He confronts him in chapter 5 and he meekly responds, loosening the shoes from off his feet because he stood on holy ground. And then we see God’s people with their strange battle plan, marching around Jericho and the trumpets blew and the walls come tumbling down. And we see him deal with the sin of Aiken, and we see God come to his rescue. We see this giant among men lead the armies into battle, taking victory after victory, in the power of God. What a life! And we get excited because at last, the children of Israel are in the land. They are living in victory. They are defeating the enemy.

Now, on that high, we come to chapter 23, and, as with Moses, Joshua gathers the people around him and he gives a final address. I’m not sure how many of us do that anymore. Maybe we don’t have the kind of notice he had, but, I think sometimes it would be neat if some of our senior citizens, before they went home to be with the Lord, could kind of wrap up who God is, and what He has done in their life, and put it on paper, or at least share it with us.

But here’s a life characterized by walking with God and we read in chapter 23, that there was rest in the land. The people were walking in victory and they were living in victory, but the problem is, he was afraid they would be lulled into a false sense of victory, if they didn’t understand the perils that face success, and that’s what he decided to do. He gave them a *clear warning*. He talked about *the clarity of the grace, the clarity of the choice* and then *a clear reminder*. And his clear warning is very similar to Moses’, but I want to remind you of it.

- 1- Let’s remember the past. Don’t forget. (vss 1-3)
- 2- Let’s remember the promises. (vss 4,5)
- 3- I want you to remember to obey. (vs 6)
- 4- Don’t forget about the enemy. He’s hanging around just waiting to get you. (vss 7-11)
- 5- And then lastly, he said, by the way, if you do forget, you’re

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in big trouble. That's a loose translation. (vss 12-16)

But I don't think he was just talking to them, folks. I think he was talking to us. There is some personal application wrapped up in this lesson today that I think could change the way some of us live and the rest of our lives could be affected.

He starts out by saying, "Don't forget what God has already done."

And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that [and this is my favorite verse] Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. [I can relate to that one.]

And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age.

And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you. (Joshua 23:1-3)

He reminds them once and for all, "Don't you ever forget what He has done. He parted the Red Sea of salvation for you. He brought you across the Jordan to a land of spiritual riches. Write it down, remember it, don't forget it." Then he said, "Not only that, but He's made provisions for you to live the rest of your life in victory." Don't kid yourself, that's God's plan for you. And this is how he said it,

Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

And the LORD your God, [guess what?] he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you. (Joshua 23:4,5)

So, the promise of victory was clear. It was not what they did, it was what God had done. He said, "All the land is prepared for you, the title is in heaven." As Peter said,

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

[by those of you] Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time [days]. (1 Peter 1:4,5)

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So, what God was saying is, “I’ll take care of the enemy and I’ll give you the land. The battle is not yours, it’s God’s, but there is something you have to do.”

Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; (Joshua 23:6)

“The victory is yours, the land is yours, if you’ll stay in the Word and obey what it says.” Very simple. We like to make it complicated. We like to write books about it. We like to make big presentations about it, but it’s a very , very simple life. “You obey. Find what the Word says to do, and do it, and I will give you victory.”

God says, “I don’t need your wisdom, I don’t need your power, but I do need your obedience. I think Joshua is remembering his memory verse.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, [day and night, day and night], that thou mayest observe to do [what?] according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: [why?] for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. (Joshua 1:8,9)

If you never memorize another passage in your life, please memorize that one this week.

God is saying, “Don’t make life so complicated. Just get into the Book and get the Book into you, and whatever the Book says to do, do it. I’ll give you the power. You’ll have the victory.”

But He does say, “I want you to remember there are enemies in the land. Now, you have two choices, you get rid of them, or you suffer the consequences.” God says, “I am bigger than the enemy, but if you settle down and leave him alone and coexist with him, this is what will happen.” And then He begins talking in verse 7, and He says this,

That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods [You work on that one for a while. There’s some deep thought underneath that one.], nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

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But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. (Joshua 23:7-9)

And the next verse is a memory verse I want you to have, don't fret over the odds.

One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. (Joshua 23:10,11)

In other words, you can't fathom the spiritual power that is yours over the enemy if you don't settle in and accept the enemy as your roommate. You drive him out completely. "But," he says, "if you refuse to do that, they will become traps and they will wrap you in bondage, and you'll pay the price."

Else [and here it comes] if ye do in any wise go back [turn around, backslide, change your mind, change your priorities, remove your commitment], and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: (Joshua 23:12)

"I want you to know something," God says, "this will never change."

Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. (Joshua 23:13)

"I'm going to keep my Word," God says. "I always have, and I always will. That's My part. Your part is to obey. But, if you allow the enemy to develop strongholds in your life, this is what will happen." And then in Verse 14, Joshua says:

And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth:

In other words,

...it is appointed for a man once to die... (Hebrews 9:27)

and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls,

(vs 14 cont.)

And I love this verse. Memorize this one, too. You've got to.

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...that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

(Joshua 23:14)

Isn't that true? Has God ever failed to deliver anything in your life He promised? What a promise.

Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

(Joshua 23:15-16)

“The victory will be gone.” That’s what he’s saying. So he closes his ministry by saying, “Folks don’t mess around with the enemy.” And then God gives His clear provision of grace. Another great memory verse. You’ve just got to memorize this one.

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

(Joshua 24:13)

Folks, He said, “It’s all of grace. You didn’t deserve it. And you didn’t do it. But I love you.” And there it is. And then in verse 14, we get to the crux of it.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. [Great verse for your children to memorize.]

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

And the people answered and said [Amen! Preach it, brother! Loose translation.] God forbid that we should forsake the LORD to serve other Gods.

For the LORD is our God, he it is that brought us up out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great

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signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way wherein we went and among all the people through whom we passed:

And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

And Joshua said unto the people, “Ye cannot serve the LORD, [in other words, in the flesh] for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God;

If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt [he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins]; and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

And the people said unto Joshua [Joshua, don't worry about it. Don't fret.], Nay; but we will serve the LORD.”

And Joshua said unto the people [Okay, but...], Ye are witnesses [today] against yourselves that you have chosen you the LORD to serve Him. And they said [Amen, brother.], We are witnesses. [Hallelujah!] (Joshua 24:14-22)

And they sang 30 verses of “Just As I Am” and they all went forward and made a profession of faith.

Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north

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side of the hill of Gaash.

And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.  
(Joshua 24:23-31)

So, God has planted some clear pictures of what was expected. It may seem a little redundant, but don't tune Joshua out. God is building a foundation. He says, "At last you're living a life of victory; what you always prayed for. You are in the land of milk and honey, the enemy is under control, and you are enjoying the favor of God."

Some of you here can relate. Maybe you're in the spiritual highlight of your life. Maybe you're in a church you love, you've got a fruitful ministry, you're having great fellowship, the enemy seems under control. Everything seems to be just going great. There are others of you here, who maybe have enjoyed that kind of life and you've kind of lost the joy. You've lugged around those Texas-sized grapes and you've enjoyed the spiritual victories that are yours but they've kind of slipped away and the power is not there anymore. And there may be some others here who have just longed for that kind of relationship with Christ and you've never quite found it.

What we are going to see this week and next week and the week or so to come is that Satan has a formula for robbing us of that joy. Judges chapter 1, the next book in the Bible, begins,

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.  
(Judges 1:1-3)

Joshua now has joined Moses in heaven. From a human perspective, they are leaderless. They do the right thing. They go to the Lord and say, "Lord, what now?" And they say, "Which tribe gets first called to go up against the enemy?" And He said, "Well, first of all, I don't know if they wanted to know who got to go first or who had to go first, but anyway, He said, "Judah, the strongest

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tribe can go and Simeon the weakest tribe can go with him into battle together.”

What a perfect picture of the way the body of Christ is supposed to work. We just scratch Simeon and say, “They don’t have what it takes.” But what the Scripture is showing us here is that the strong are supposed to take the weak alongside. Anyhow, we read the children of Israel, a tribe at a time, went on in and won these battles. And Judah fought against Jerusalem; took it, set it on fire, you remember. And they took the Canaanites on into the mountains and they declared war on those in Hebron and Debir. And the Scripture says the Lord was with Judah. And isn’t this a good place to end this lesson and say, “Amen?” Isn’t it great to live in victory, but verse 19 is what I want you to look at. And don’t look at it just historically, but personally.

And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

(Judges 1:19)

Now, can you imagine that God had a problem with chariots of iron? I don’t think so. He could have turned their high-tech tanks into two-cylinder go-karts if He wanted. He could have blinked His eye and they would have turned to rust. Something happened to Judah’s faith. But that isn’t where it ended. It never does.

And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

(Judges 1:21)

Do you begin to see some Mid-East problems developing?. Sure you do. And on an on, verse 27.

Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

(Judges 1:27-28)

And they decided instead to tax the Canaanites and take their money instead. Bad move.

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in

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Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them. (Judges 1:29-33)

Let them stay. One by one the children of Israel gave in and gave a toe-hold to the enemy, the very same enemies they were told to keep on fighting until they totally subdued them. And as soon as they got temporary relief, they forgot they were enemies. They left them alone and one by one, the other tribes said, "If they can do it, we can do it." And they all began to coexist. They changed God's standards by democratic rule. But, beloved, the Gospel, the Word of God, is not a democratic rule.

God had been clear about it. He said, "There is one thing you must not do. You don't coexist with the enemy. You drive them out. You destroy them completely." God says, "I don't take it lightly if you don't." And sure enough He didn't.

And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. [Right? Amen.]

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? (Judges 2:1,2)

Has God ever said that to you recently? "Why have you done this? What are you thinking about. My Word is clear."

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up

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their voice, and wept.

(Judges 2:3-4)

Boy, they were good at that. Mucho Kleenex, not much repentance. God says, “You dug a hole for yourself. I’m going to have to let you reap what you’ve sown.”

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.  
(Judges 2:11-13)

Now, their original decision, beloved, was only not to drive the enemy totally out. They never intended to forsake God. They never intended to worship the gods of this world. But, if you had said to them—God did—but if you would have said to them, “You know a year from now you are going to be bowing down and worshipping Baal”, they would have laughed at you. Right? You see, that’s always what happens when you give Satan a little rope. He takes a toe-hold and turns it into a stronghold until he gets a stranglehold and double-mindedness and finally defeat, becomes the lot in life.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.  
(Judges 2:14)

They couldn’t win a battle if they tried.

Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.  
(Judges 2:15)

Ever been there? They lost the victory. They lost the joy. The milk and honey was still there, but it didn’t taste good at all. They were entrapped by snares and thorns and these who were destined to be victors, became the vanquished. God didn’t give up on them.

Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they

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went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.  
(Judges 2:16-19)

So, here come the judges, God's delivery men to rescue His children from disaster. We're going to look for the next few weeks, at the spiritual principles of what spiritual warfare involves.

Chapter 2 ends with an unusual message,

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.  
(Judges 2:20-23)

Now God's choice for Israel was very simple. It's the same as His choice for you and me. It was for us to enter the land, drive out the enemy and live in total victory. Israel's choice was to enter the land and then little by little make light of the enemy's presence and presume upon God by disobeying specific instructions. Instead of driving the enemy from their midst, they settled down alongside and decided you couldn't take the Word of God so literally.

God kept his Word. Their compromise turned and devoured them, became a snare, and a trap like thorns in their eyes. It dimmed their vision of God and sent them pain and tears instead. So, God sent judges to lead them to repentance. When the judges

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lived, the people repented. When the judges died, the people rebelled. It was a roller coaster kind of life, over and over and over. What a tragic turn of events.

Here was a people destined by God for greatness. And, beloved, so are we. And before we close today, I think it's terribly important that you and I make the spiritual switch; that we take and look at three basic applications to this story, and focus, if you don't mind, on the last of the three. I'll only mention the first two.

### 1- The principle of unequal yoking.

That was what was behind the whole problem. "God says, you are a believer and they are not." I know it looks easy and you think,

Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.  
(1 John 4:4)

Next Lord's day, we're going to look at that principle and find out why it doesn't work in this situation. It was never intended to. But, the truth of the matter is the Scripture says,

What fellowship can light have with darkness? What fellowship can the Spirit of God have with the spirit of Satan?  
(II Corinthians 6:14 paraphrase)

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)

And the principle is written in the fabric of Scripture. Marriage with unbelievers, dating unbelievers, entering into any kind of partnership with unbelievers, joins the body of Christ with the body of Satan. It's equal to spiritual suicide. Now, if you are a Christian or you become a Christian and you're married to a non-Christian that's the will of God for you. God will work it together for your good, for His glory, and often times for your mate's salvation. But, young people, any young people listening, *dating unbelievers is never the will of God*. It will become a snare, a trap and a scourge. It will become thorns in your eyes until you cannot see the will of God. So principle number one, beloved, is do not become unequally yoked. You can justify it like the Israelites did, but it won't change the consequences.

### 2- The principle of entanglement.

No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen [called] him to be a soldier.  
(II Timothy 2:4)

I just want to remind you the difference between involvement

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and entanglement. It seems minor but it's not. When the things of this world become more important to you than people, whether you realize it or not, you are entangled. You can justify it, but you can't deny it. The choices we make speak louder than the sermons we preach. What we do with our time, what we do with our money, what we do with our heart, is where our treasure is and the Scripture says,

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Matthew 6:21)

### 3- The principal of our personal battlefields and enemy strongholds.

But I want to close by focusing on principle number three that says to enter the land that God has for you as a land meant to be lived in victory. There are areas in each of our Canaan where the enemy dwells and warfare is inevitable. Those are our personal battlefields. And my friend, the enemy is not a dummy.

He has chosen to gain control through subtlety, just as he did with the children of Israel. His course of action is to quiet down and live in peace for a while, so you will come to believe he's no longer a threat. Because of that atmosphere of peace (and I'm not driving at the peace that's trying to take place in Israel today), but the same principles occur. We will leave him a little room in which we can coexist and say he has been rendered helpless because we are growing spiritually. Have you ever heard it? And when we get down a little bit, we tend to believe a certain amount of compromise is necessary in the Christian life.

This part of Satan's army has chariots of iron and it's just meant to be our cross. That's a lie. So, Satan lies dormant but he's alive. And we get so used to having him around in that one area of our lives, we forget he's a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). He's a raging destroyer looking for lunch. And one day, when the time is right, God will take care of him.

Meanwhile, we say, "He's kind of harmless." Right? He may lodge in your heart in the land of impure thoughts. Maybe it's something you figure everybody does, and therefore, because everybody does it, God can handle it. And besides, "I am producing so much for the Lord, He understands. And someday, I'm going to deal with it." So, we leave him in that little room. It may be some kind of bitterness over your family, or how you were raised, or what your parents were like, or that trauma that took place in your life

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that seems to have ruined your life from man's perspective. And the bitterness goes deeper but you hide it and gloss it over with a lot of spiritual cliches, but it's there. And when nobody is around, you are angry. Maybe it's some kind of a spirit of discontentment. You never quite get enough. You're grateful for the new Porsch, but boy, two of them would be great. Or maybe it's a spirit of lust, or greed. And we leave him there, and occasionally we entertain him.

We feel a little bit guilty, but nothing seems to happen, so we say, "Okay, God. You understand we're not perfect." And then, one day, when you least expect it, and your guard is down, the enemy attacks and he uses that seemingly unnoticed stronghold as a base of operation and just at the time of greatest weakness in your life, he will spring forth like the roaring lion that he is, and you'll be ravaged by sin and you'll do something or say something, or explode in some way that you never thought you could do. And you know what we do?

We presumptuously cry out to God and say, "Deliver me!", but nothing happens. Why? Because God, through His Word, has been asking us to drive him out. Day after day, week after week, and we ignored His every cry. And now God says, "You will not drive them out. Neither will I. I will use this enemy to purge you and discipline you and teach you, but it wasn't necessary." Sometimes no one else knows where the enemy lives in our lives. Most of the time that's true. There are caves that have been dug in the flesh where he gained entrance at our invitation and we look at or listen to or engage in some practice that encourages him to settle down and stay. And nobody knows but us. Sometimes our families know, but no one else knows. And he needs no encouragement.

I believe the best thing we could do, beloved, for new Christians, is the day they come out of the baptismal water, sit them down and say, "Let me tell you about the warfare that you are going to be engaged in and how to have victory. Let's sit down and make a list of these areas in your life in which you've struggled in the past and we're going to stay with you until you gain the victory." But, we don't do that, do we?

Through counsel, prayer, fasting and meditation, Satan can be defeated. But sometimes we can't help them because we can't help ourselves. So, occasionally God has to send judges into our lives, doesn't He? And some of them come through the Word,

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through preaching and teaching, through the counsel of friends and hopefully, we repent, but, we are so much like the children of Israel. If you're like me, when the heat is off, and it cools down, we forget and back we go and we seal the enemy back off in that little room and say, "Now, don't you come out again, you bad boy."

Beloved, we're not supposed to quit until he's plum dead. The enemy may not have the same strongholds in your life that he has in mine, but you know where they are and so do I. The question is, do we dare to ignore him one day longer until he becomes a snare and a trap, or isn't it time once again for some of us to declare war this morning and say, "We're not going to quit until that area of my life has been cleaned up and the enemy is dead."

We're going to be looking in the next few weeks at how the enemy behaves and how God, through His judgment, delivers us. We'll be looking for the things God does to annihilate the enemy and how to apply them to our lives. It won't be pleasant, perhaps. Wars never are pleasant, are they? But isn't the victory neat? And that's what it's all about. The victory is worth the gunfire and the bombs and the wounds we get on the way to the victory circle. God said, "I wanted Israel to have the victory." And, beloved, He's looking at you and me this morning and He's saying, "Oh, my child, I want you to have the victory, too." So, hang on folks, *Here Come the Judges!* With this we close.

### HERE COME THE JUDGES

Here come the judges!  
Oh, Israel, can't you see,  
Had you but driven the enemy out,  
They'd never have to be?

They are God's delivery men  
To save us from despair;  
We've harbored enemies so long  
We scarcely know they're there!

But they have robbed us of our joy;  
This cunning, evil band,  
We've let them coexist with us  
We've left them in the land.

Now, they've become but snares and traps,  
They're thorns to blind our eyes;

## Here Come the Judges

They've tricked us into leaving them  
Through cunning, crafty lies,

Until our guard was down and  
We allowed the war to cease,  
And Satan's evil troops arose  
And stole away our peace.

"Drive them out," the Word demands,  
"Drive them from your sod.  
They cannot coexist in peace  
On land that's owned by God."

"Drive them out completely,"  
Our Joshua's heard to say,  
"And you'll have victory in the land  
Day after day after day."

Is that what we want? Can you say, "Amen"? Let's pray.

*Our Father and our God,*

*The victory is ours in Jesus Christ. By Your grace, may we  
not stop again until the enemy has been defeated and we're  
living in that victory that is already ours.*

*To Jesus, the Victor, be praise and honor and glory, forever,  
Amen!*

### For Focus and Application

1- Try to imagine that God called you this morning and said, "This is the last day of your life. What do you have to say to those you leave behind? What words of warning and of encouragement would you like to leave as a legacy to the generation who will follow in your steps?" Based on: a) The Word of God, b) God's work through your life, and c) What you have seen in other lives, both good and bad, *what words would you leave with them?* Why not take an hour or two today and sit down and pretend that is true? Write it out. Then take that list and use it as *your* list of priorities *until the day God does call you home.*

2- Joshua's warnings and admonitions were carved in the granite of his soul from years of walking with God, first as a disciple of Moses and then as the leader of God's people. He experienced it all. Yet in a practical sense, virtually every experience he had, we have. Let's look at just three of his statements, one at a time, and

## Here Come the Judges

apply them to our own lives.

*a- Joshua reminded them not to forget what God had done.* We have spent a great deal of time encouraging one another to begin a book of remembrance or a section in a prayer notebook that chronicles the things God has done, both great and small in our lives. Is yours current? Do you read it regularly and stop to praise God? If not, why not covenant with God today to do that?

*b- Joshua reminded them that the battle was not theirs, but God's.* He led them to remember that the promises were all there in concrete. It was their job to take God at His word. Period. Oh, how well we know that, but how often when the heat of the battle gets intense, we take the reins of responsibility into our own hearts and begin to fret and worry, as though it were up to us. When we do, the enemy assaults us, our guard is down, and we lose the victory. Ask yourself, "Am I resting in God's finished work and in His plan for my life?" Or are you testing Him at every turn, fretting over the uninvited intrusions He allows into your life?

*c- Joshua reminded them that allowing the enemy to remain in the land of your heart, even in seemingly harmless places, eventually leads to ruin.* Here is the crux of this lesson. It is only when we pursue the enemy into the recesses of the secret places and do *whatever it takes to eliminate that toe-hold before it becomes a stronghold*, that we stand a chance of lasting victory.

Are you willing to take one hour today and make a list of the "secret" sins in your life where the enemy has been allowed to maintain a quiet foothold, though nobody knows but you? Seek out someone in Scripture who toyed with that sin and see how their life turned out. Now add to that list the seemingly "harmless" sins that you refuse to deal with because "everybody else does it". Those two lists make up an inventory of the enemy armies that camp in your heart. You have two choices: Leave them there and eventually they will rob you of the victory that is yours, or deal with them today, decisively and wholeheartedly. Beloved, the children of Israel had no other choice. Neither do we.

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