

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 14 — “Sin, Confession, & Repentance” — August 17, 2025

Introduction: The Noncyclical Judges

The pattern of the major judges involves a cycle of apostasy, oppression, crying out to the Lord, and deliverance. The book also contains brief mentions of judges which do not follow the typical pattern or cycle.

“The noncyclic judges are not random interruptions in...the downward spiral of Israel; they form part of a complex literary pattern...These episodes of relative peace and prosperity come at key points in the narratives, especially as corruption and chaos grow ever more severe...The last five noncyclic judges contrast sharply with the despotic violence of Abimelech who precedes them, the syncretistic leadership of Jephthah that leads to internecine slaughter in the midst of them, and the ineffectual and blatantly immoral actions of Samson who follows them. They diverge markedly from the chaotic civil war that culminates in the double conclusion.”
—Boda & Conway

Main Point: Israel’s cycle of apostasy affords us an opportunity to consider the place that _____ and _____ have in dealing with sin in our lives.

Judges 10:1-18

The reign of the anti-judge Abimelech culminated in the destruction of Shechem and the slaughter of its people. His passions led him foolishly to attack Thebez, where he was ultimately killed. What followed was a period of 45 years under the leadership of two lesser known judges. Israel now had the chance to learn from the failures of Abimelech and to walk faithfully with the Lord.

Exposition:

I. The period following the death of Abimelech was seemingly uneventful and characterized by peace. (vv.1-5)

Observations:

(1) Tola arose and saved Israel from an unnamed _____ and brought stability in the aftermath of Abimelech.

⇒ He was a man of Issachar who ruled from a place in Ephraim. The brevity of the account of his rule is intended to demonstrate the peace and well-being of it in contrast to what came before.

(2) Jair arose after Tola and the account hints that it was a time of _____.

⇒ He was from Gilead and seems to have been a man of wealth and power, particularly in light of the description of his sons.

“thirty sons who rode thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities”

Key Point: God’s people have the chance to _____ and _____ under consistent and careful leadership.

II. Israel failed to take advantage of this time of peace and once again fell into apostasy. (vv.6-9)

Observations:

(1) Israel once again “did the evil thing,” and turned once again to idol worship.

The “_____” — (meaning lord’ or ‘master’) the chief Canaanite storm god and fertility deity; often associated with rain, agricultural fertility, thunder, and war.

The “_____” — (related to the Mesopotamian ‘Ishtar’ and Phoenician ‘Astarte’) goddess of fertility, love, and war. She was the wife of the El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon, but she was also the consort of Baal.

(2) The Lord then handed them over to enemies from both the _____ (Ammonites) and _____ (Philistines).

“crushed and oppressed”

“severely distressed”

III. The people once again cried out to the Lord for deliverance. (vv. 10-16)

Observations:

(1) Their “crying out on this occasion involved a specific confession of sin.

“we have forsaken our God and served the Baals”

“This may refer back specifically to the previous Abimelech cycle when the Baals were openly promoted, or it may refer to the ongoing syncretistic worship of the Israelites that is [mentioned elsewhere in the book].”—Boda & Conway

(2) The Lord responded to them by overviewing His own covenant _____ to them.

“Did I not save you...”

(3) The Lord then rebuked them, telling them they should petition the _____ they had chose to serve.

“Go, cry out to the gods you have chosen...”

“...both of YHWH’s responses—his act of will (his refusal to deliver) and affective response (his anger, dissatisfaction, and misery)—suggest that he views the confession of the Israelites in v. 10 as inauthentic and expedient.”—Boda & Conway

(4) The people responded with yet another confession of sin and with direct action to put away the other gods.

(5) The summary statement in v. 16 leaves us wondering whether or not this repentance is _____.

“...he became impatient over the misery of Israel.”

“...YHWH’s response could be either one of frustration or of compassionate relenting.”—Boda & Conway

Key Points: 1. Genuine repentance is _____, including an acknowledgement of sin.

2. Genuine repentance is _____, involving a change of mind/heart.

3. Genuine repentance is _____, involving a change in how one conducts themselves.

IV. Israel responded to the threat of the Ammonites by searching among themselves for a deliverer. (vv.17-18)

Observations:

(1) Their actions seem to indicate that their repentance was some sort of negotiating _____.

(2) Rather than continuing to _____ the Lord (Judges 1:1), they sought someone who could lead them in battle.

“Whereas their ancestors inquired of YHWH, the commanders of Gilead inquire of each other...instead of acting in accordance with their supposed attitude of repent dependence on their God, they immediately turn from him to each other and choose their own deliverer.”
—Boda & Conway

Key Point: When faced with the difficulties of life, people will look to _____ or _____ as a functional savior.

Applying the Text

1. Repentant _____ is necessary in order to respond rightly to the Gospel message.

Rev. 9:20-21—²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Acts 20:20b-21—...I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 10:9—because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2. Confession and repentance are _____ aspects of the Christian life.

Rev. 3:19—Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 14 — “Sin, Confession, & Repentance” — August 17, 2025

Introduction: The Noncyclical Judges

The pattern of the major judges involves a cycle of apostasy, oppression, crying out to the Lord, and deliverance. The book also contains brief mentions of judges which do not follow the typical pattern or cycle.

“The noncyclic judges are not random interruptions in...the downward spiral of Israel; they form part of a complex literary pattern...These episodes of relative peace and prosperity come at key points in the narratives, especially as corruption and chaos grow ever more severe...The last five noncyclic judges contrast sharply with the despotic violence of Abimelech who precedes them, the syncretistic leadership of Jephthah that leads to internecine slaughter in the midst of them, and the ineffectual and blatantly immoral actions of Samson who follows them. They diverge markedly from the chaotic civil war that culminates in the double conclusion.”
—Boda & Conway

Main Point: Israel’s cycle of apostasy affords us an opportunity to consider the place that confession and repentance have in dealing with sin in our lives.

Judges 10:1-18

The reign of the anti-judge Abimelech culminated in the destruction of Shechem and the slaughter of its people. His passions led him foolishly to attack Thebez, where he was ultimately killed. What followed was a period of 45 years under the leadership of two lesser known judges. Israel now had the chance to learn from the failures of Abimelech and to walk faithfully with the Lord.

Exposition:

I. The period following the death of Abimelech was seemingly uneventful and characterized by peace. (vv.1-5)

Observations:

(1) Tola arose and saved Israel from an unnamed enemy and brought stability in the aftermath of Abimelech.

⇒ He was a man of Issachar who ruled from a place in Ephraim. The brevity of the account of his rule is intended to demonstrate the peace and well-being of it in contrast to what came before.

(2) Jair arose after Tola and the account hints that it was a time of prosperity.

⇒ He was from Gilead and seems to have been a man of wealth and power, particularly in light of the description of his sons.

“thirty sons who rode thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities”

Key Point: God’s people have the chance to flourish and grow under consistent and careful leadership.

II. Israel failed to take advantage of this time of peace and once again fell into apostasy. (vv.6-9)

Observations:

(1) Israel once again “did the evil thing,” and turned once again to idol worship.

The “Baals” — (meaning lord’ or ‘master’) the chief Canaanite storm god and fertility deity; often associated with rain, agricultural fertility, thunder, and war.

The “Ashtaroth” — (related to the Mesopotamian ‘Ishtar’ and Phoenician ‘Astarte’) goddess of fertility, love, and war. She was the wife of the El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon, but she was also the consort of Baal.

(2) The Lord then handed them over to enemies from both the East (Ammonites) and West (Philistines).

“crushed and oppressed”

“severely distressed”

III. The people once again cried out to the Lord for deliverance. (vv. 10-16)

Observations:

(1) Their “crying out on this occasion involved a specific confession of sin.

“we have forsaken our God and served the Baals”

“This may refer back specifically to the previous Abimelech cycle when the Baals were openly promoted, or it may refer to the ongoing syncretistic worship of the Israelites that is [mentioned elsewhere in the book].”—Boda & Conway

- (3) The Lord responded to them by overviewing His own covenant **faithfulness** to them.

“Did I not save you...”

- (4) The Lord then rebuked them, telling them they should petition the **gods** they had chose to serve.

“Go, cry out to the gods you have chosen...”

“...both of YHWH’s responses—his act of will (his refusal to deliver) and affective response (his anger, dissatisfaction, and misery)—suggest that he views the confession of the Israelites in v. 10 as inauthentic and expedient.”—Boda & Conway

- (5) The people responded with yet another confession of sin and with direct action to put away the other gods.

- (6) The summary statement in v. 16 leaves us wondering whether or not this repentance is **genuine**.

“...he became impatient over the misery of Israel.”

“...YHWH’s response could be either one of frustration or of compassionate relenting.”—Boda & Conway

- Key Points:**
1. Genuine repentance is **verbal**, including an acknowledgement of sin.
 2. Genuine repentance is **affective**, involving a change of mind/heart.
 3. Genuine repentance is **behavioral**, involving a change in how one conducts themselves.

IV. Israel responded to the threat of the Ammonites by searching among themselves for a deliverer. (vv.17-18)

Observations:

- (1) Their actions seem to indicate that their repentance was some sort of negotiating **tactic**.
- (2) Rather than continuing to **seek** the Lord (Judges 1:1), they sought someone who could lead them in battle.

“Whereas their ancestors inquired of YHWH, the commanders of Gilead inquire of each other...instead of acting in accordance with their supposed attitude of repent dependence on their God, they immediately turn from him to each other and choose their own deliverer.”
—Boda & Conway

Key Point: When faced with the difficulties of life, people will look to **someone or something** as a functional savior.

Applying the Text

1. Repentant **faith** is necessary in order to respond rightly to the Gospel message.

Rev. 9:20-21—²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Acts 20:20b-21—...I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 10:9—because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2. Confession and repentance are **ongoing aspects of the Christian life**.

Rev. 3:19—Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.