

Spoiler alert: These verses essentially tell the entire story of the book of Judges. We see the same cycle repeated throughout:

**Rebellion:** The Israelites spurn the Lord.

**Retribution:** He uses their hostile neighbors to chastise them.

**Repentance:** They cry to Him and He provides a deliverer.

**Rest:** A period of peace follows, but does not last.

But, like Ezekiel's wheel within a wheel, these cycles turn within larger ones. There is a general decline in the spiritual condition from the beginning to the end of the book, when we compare the earlier judges to the later ones – the flawed Jephthah and Samson.

The dispensational framework for interpreting the Bible recognizes similar cycles of repeated failure by man. The book of Judges takes place during the dispensation of Law, where man is judged by his ability to keep the Law of Moses (and fails to do so). But at the end of every dispensation God introduces a new "economy." Law, for example, is followed by Grace with the Lord Jesus' death on the cross.

But there is no new general revelation from God in Judges. The judges are military leaders, not prophets. The Lord clearly intends for the time being that His people succeed or fail by the instructions given to them through Moses and Joshua. Each deliverance is incomplete. Mr. Kelly notes that this is the way of God: To provide only partial relief until full redemption is found in Christ.

Note that the punishments inflicted on the rebellious Israelites are also temporary and partial. We read in verse 14 that their enemies are raiders and plunderers rather than conquerors. The Israelites never lose their promised land during this period, only their peaceful enjoyment of it. It is the same for us when experience God's discipline. We never lose our salvation but can lose the peace and

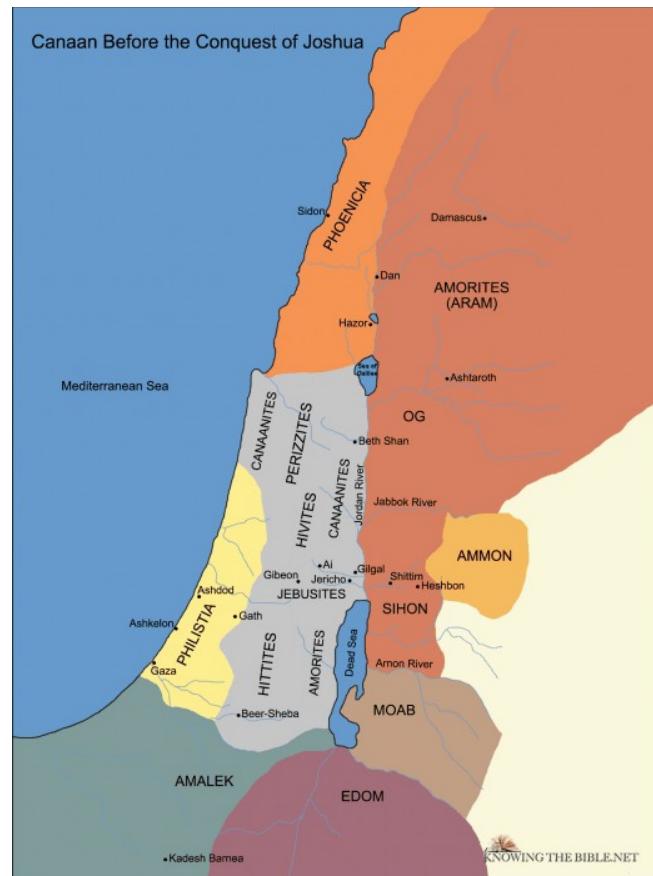
joy that should accompany it – until we repent and are restored.

### Notes:

**2:11** *Baal* means lord and can mean any of the Canaanite gods.

**2:13** *Ashtoreth* (plural *Ashtoroth*) is a Hebrew form of the Persian fertility goddess Astarte, who appears in many forms around the Middle East. Not to be confused with *Asherah*.

**3:5** See the map below.



### Questions:

1. Verse 10 says that the new generation knew nothing of what the Lord had done for Israel. Should they have known, and how? Find verses.

2. Do your children know what the Lord has done for you?
3. Do these verses give any clues as to why the Israelites came to serve false gods?
4. Verse 19 says that the Israelites followed the judges only as long as they lived, then they returned to idolatry. Why, do you think, would the Lord not establish an unbroken dynasty, through Caleb and Othniel for example, instead of sporadic appointment of judges?
5. What are God's purposes in allowing the attacks on his people? What does it tell us about God's discipline in general?
6. In what ways might our own time be similar to the era of the judges? Does God raise up judges today?