

**JUDGES 10**  
**THE DECAY OF A NATION!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 10 as we continue our in-depth study through the book of Judges.

This chapter is kind of an introduction to our next Judge, Jephthah. And yes, there are two Judges mentioned in the opening of Judges chapter 10, but the focus is going to be on the decay of Israel and the bondage that it brought upon them because of their turning from the Lord.

I have called this study – ***THE DECAY OF A NATION!*** And as we go through this we will look at our own nation and see what we can glean from this and hopefully learn some lessons we can apply to our own lives!

Let me share with you the definition of this word, “decay” from the American Dictionary of the English Language by Noah Webster from 1828. This is what he defined this word as,

To pass gradually from a sound, prosperous, or perfect state, to a less perfect state, or towards destruction; to fail, to decline; to be gradually impaired. . . .

- American Dictionary of the English Language by Noah Webster – 1828, p. 56

When I look at our nation today, I see it as being very fragile, it could fall apart very quickly. And the reasons for that we will look at this morning because what is happening with the children of Israel, I believe is happening to us, and it seems that we are moving faster and faster towards destruction!

Let me show you what I mean. This story took place back in 1988, some thirty-two years ago. And what we are going to read is nothing compared to what we see happening today. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Meanwhile, decadence and despair haunt many of America's youth. Perhaps fourteen-year-old Rod Matthews represents the most horrible extreme. Uninterested in baseball or books, Rod found one thing that did stimulate him: death. His curiosity was intensely aroused by a rental video, *Faces of Death*, a collage of film clips of people dying violently. He wanted to see death happen in real life.

So one winter day Rod lured a young friend into the woods and hammered him to death with a baseball bat. At Matthews's trial a child psychiatrist testified that the boy was not conventionally insane. He just "doesn't know right from wrong . . . He is morally handicapped."

- Charles Colson, *Against the Night*, pp. 21-22

Let me ask you this. Have we gotten that depraved that we don't know that murder is wrong, beating someone to death is wrong? And I think that is true, many don't. They call evil good and good evil because they have departed from God and God has given them over to the things that are in their own heart, which are evil.

And yes, we would like to blame movies, books, video games and-so-on, but a nation, a family, a person who turns from God can't blame anyone but themselves for what they have done.

And please understand that I don't want this to be a dark or hopeless study, it is just a reality of what we see and then what we need to do to get back on track. You see, these lessons here in Judges are for our learning so that we don't go down the same path as the children of Israel did. And if we have gone down that path, we can get back on the right path and follow the Lord once again.

I have broken these verses down into three main points. They are as follows,

***A LACK OF THANKFULNESS TO THE LORD – JUDGES 10:1-5***

***REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD – JUDGES 10:6-16***

***NO STRONG LEADERS – JUDGES 10:17-18***

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 10, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at the topic – ***THE DECAY OF A NATION!***

## **JUDGES 10**

### **VERSES 1-5**

In these verses we are told of two more Judges in Israel, and we don't have a lot of information on them. We are never told that they saved Israel from any nation, but just that they Judged Israel.

The first one that is mentioned is Tola, and Tola ministered in the central portion of the land of Israel, in the mountain area of Ephraim. And he judged Israel for twenty-three years after Abimelech had died!

And let me focus on that for a minute. As we have seen in our previous studies, Abimelech was a horrible Judge, he was a train wreck for the nation you might say.

And you can imagine how the people were feeling and wondering what was next for them. And we are told, “**After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola . . .**”

We are not told that there was an enemy that was persecuting them, but maybe Tola came on the scene to save them from themselves. And what I mean by that is they had just come out of all this turmoil with Abimelech and they were probably walking around with no direction, no hope and God sends them this man Tola to get them refocused.

One writer gave us a picture of what Tola was doing with what happened to him, what happened in his own life. He wrote,

Some years ago I belonged to a church that went through a deep crisis that nearly tore its heart out. The career of a pastor who had served us for fifteen years and achieved great things for the kingdom of God ended in circumstances that left us bewildered and discouraged.

Many left the church, and those of us who remained found it hard to see how we could recover. The way ahead, if there was to be one, was very unclear.

In those circumstances God gave us a man like Tola. He was a quiet man. He was not a great preacher, and he had no big vision to cast or great ideas to inspire us with except those of the unchanging gospel of grace and the witness of Scripture to the unfailing love of our heavenly Father.

He and his wife, his true partner in ministry, gathered us together, healed our wounds, and nursed us through a time of grieving and acceptance until we were ready to lift our heads and start hoping in God again and pulling together in his service.

He saved us. He came for a year, but stayed for three or more, and then when we had a new pastor ready to take us on to the next chapter of our life as a church he and his wife quietly withdrew and did the same thing for another hurting congregation elsewhere. People like that are priceless. Their autobiographies may never be written, and there may be no spectacular achievements to record, but their reward will surely be great in Heaven. Such a man was Tola.

- Barry G. Webb, Judges and Ruth – God in Chaos, pp. 172-173

And from this Judge Tola, who Judges Israel for twenty-three years, we move to the next Judge, Jair. Again, we don't know much about this Judge, but we do know that he lived on the east side of the Jordan River in the area of Gilead, in the tribe of Manasseh.

And Jair was a wealthy man as we see that he was able to give his 30 sons, 30 donkeys to ride.

And he too ruled for a long period of time and it would seem that during his time as Judge the land had rest for twenty-two years.

Now let me say this. There is nothing wrong with peace and prosperity, but that peace and prosperity needs to be enjoyed with giving thanks to God.

What happens many times is that we are so caught up with all the prosperity that we have, we are so busy doing things that we forget to thank the One who has enabled us to have these things.

And that is where the problem comes. We forget God and thus we are not thankful to God.

That is my focus on these first five verses here in Judges chapter 10 – ***A LACK OF THANKFULNESS TO THE LORD!***

Complacency can cause us to take our eyes off the Lord and focus on ourselves and we end up wanting more and more, bigger and better things and God, well, He is there but somewhere down on the list of things we have and the things we want to do.

If we have time for God great, otherwise we will just worship the Lord on the golf course or the lake or here or there or whatever!

And there is a danger as we begin a road of not being thankful because it really is just the reality of forgetting about God!

Let me share a few Scriptures with you and show you what I mean about what the Lord desires of our life, that we are to be thankful. And the last verse I will share will deal with being unthankful and what that leads to, and it will lead us into our next point as you will see. There are consequences to being unthankful to God!

In Psalm 118:29 we are told, **“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”**

Again, we can become so complacent in our walk with the Lord that we forget that our God is good, that His mercy that He extends to us is beyond anything we can imagine. But, as we remember these things, that having a heart of gratitude, of thanksgiving should just naturally flow from our lives!

In Psalm 69:30 we are told, **“I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving.”**

Our thanksgiving to all that God has done for us will glorify the Lord! It gets us re-centered upon Him!

Also, in Colossians 3:17 Paul wrote, **“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”**

Why is that so important to us?

I think it helps us to remember that we can't do anything apart from Him. Thus, all that we are doing, all that we are saying we do representing Jesus, which means it is good, and because we could never accomplish this on our own, we give thanks to God for enabling us to do these things. And again, as we do, it brings glory to God!

And in I Thessalonians 5:18 Paul reminds us that, **“in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

Isn't it interesting that the will of God for our lives is to be thankful to God! And again, that should just make sense. All that we are, all that we have, our entire being is a gift from God and thus, with the wonderful gift that He has given to us, including Jesus our Savior, we should be overflowing with thankfulness to Him!

But again, think about this for a minute. When was the last time you thanked God for something?

And I am sure that we are thinking and thinking, and some may have come up with a time, others, maybe not. We just can't remember the last time we thanked God!

And the warning is this. As we become less thankful, we tend to move away from God. We tend to become forgetful of all that He has done and is doing and will do in our lives. And we move farther and farther from God.

If you doubt that, then listen to Paul's warning of what can happen as we move away from God, as we are unthankful to God in Romans 1:18-25. Paul wrote, "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.***"

You see, they knew God, they knew that there was a Creator God, but they refused to glorify Him as God and they were not thankful and because of that, their minds became useless.

Now that may seem harsh but think about it. Look at those who have rejected God and what they believe!

Let me share this with you, it is about one of the most brilliant men in the world, according to the world's standards of greatness. His name is Stephen Hawking's, and before he died the statement that he made in his last book truly shows that apart from God, man is "**futile in their thoughts.**"



The title for this article is, “*Stephen Hawking’s Final Book Says There’s ‘No Possibility’ of God in Our Universe.*” And listen to this most brilliant man in the world and his scientific reasoning to show that there is no God in our universe! We are told,

From his desk at Cambridge University and beyond, Stephen Hawking sent his mind spiraling into the deepest depths of black holes, radiating across the endless cosmos and swirling back billions of years to witness time’s first breath. He viewed creation as a scientist, and when he was called to discuss creation’s biggest puzzles - Where do we come from? What is our purpose? Are we alone? - *he answered as a scientist, often to the chagrin of religious critics. . .*

[Now keep that in mind. The answer he gives to us regarding where we come from, what is our purpose and are we alone is all based on science, and thus, those who believe that God created the heavens and the earth are embarrassed because it proves there is no God. At least that is what we are led to believe here. In reality, I am embarrassed for what Stephen Hawking believed.]

Hawking’s answer - compiled from decades of prior interviews, essays and speeches with the help of his family, colleagues and the Steven Hawking Estate - should come as no surprise to readers who have followed his work, er, religiously.

*“I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science,”* Hawking, who died in March, wrote. *“If you accept, as I do, that the laws of nature are fixed, then it doesn’t take long to ask: What role is there for God?”*

[Now let’s think about that for a minute. Science teaches us that something, like the universe, was created out of nothing! Really? No, science does not teach that. And because there are laws of nature that are a constant, how does that happen by random chance? It doesn’t but God created everything, even the laws of nature and thus, we can apply them everywhere!]

In life, Hawking was a vocal champion of the Big Bang theory - the idea that the universe began by exploding suddenly out of an ultradense singularity smaller than an atom. From this speck emerged all the matter, energy and empty space that the universe would ever contain, and all that raw material evolved into the cosmos we perceive today by following a strict set of scientific laws. To Hawking and many like-minded scientists, the combined laws of gravity, relativity, quantum physics and a few other rules could explain everything that ever happened or ever will happen in our known universe.

“If you like, you can say the laws are the work of God, but that is more a definition of God than a proof of his existence,” Hawking wrote.

With the universe running on a scientifically guided autopilot, the only role for an all-powerful deity might be setting the initial conditions of the universe so that those laws could take shape - a divine creator who caused the Big Bang to bang, then stepped back to behold His work.

***“Did God create the quantum laws that allowed the Big Bang to occur?”*** Hawking wrote. ***“I have no desire to offend anyone of faith, but I think science has a more compelling explanation than a divine creator.”***

Hawking’s explanation begins with quantum mechanics, which explains how subatomic particles behave. In quantum studies, it’s common to see subatomic particles like protons and electrons seemingly appear out of nowhere, stick around for a while and then disappear again to a completely different location. Because the universe was once the size of a subatomic particle itself, it’s plausible that it behaved similarly during the Big Bang, Hawking wrote.

***“The universe itself, in all its mind-boggling vastness and complexity, could simply have popped into existence without violating the known laws of nature,”*** he wrote.

That still doesn't explain away the possibility that God created that proton-size singularity, then flipped the quantum-mechanical switch that allowed it to pop. But Hawking says science has an explanation here, too. To illustrate, he points to the physics of black holes - collapsed stars that are so dense, nothing, including light, can escape their pull.

Black holes, like the universe before the Big Bang, condense into a singularity. In this ultra-packed point of mass, gravity is so strong that it distorts time as well as light and space. Simply put, in the depths of a black hole, time does not exist.

Because the universe also began as a singularity, time itself could not have existed before the Big Bang. Hawking's answer, then, to what happened before the Big Bang is, "there was no time *before* the Big Bang."

***"We have finally found something that doesn't have a cause, because there was no time for a cause to exist in,"*** Hawking wrote. ***"For me this means that there is no possibility of a creator, because there is no time for a creator to have existed in."***

[But, if God is Spirit, and He is, then He exists in a timeless state. He is eternal.]

This argument will do little to persuade theistic believers, but that was never Hawking's intent. As a scientist with a near-religious devotion to understanding the cosmos, Hawking sought to "know the mind of God" by learning everything he could about the self-sufficient universe around us. While his view of the universe might render a divine creator and the laws of nature incompatible, it still leaves ample space for faith, hope, wonder and, especially, gratitude.

"We have this one life to appreciate the grand design of the universe," Hawking concludes the first chapter of his final book, "and for that I am extremely grateful."

- <https://bit.ly/3dKzSE5>

So, one of the greatest minds ever has come to the conclusion, after years of scientific study, *“I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science.”* And notice he is not thankful to God but to a spontaneous generation that gave us life.

And that will lead us to our next point, from *A LACK OF THANKFULNESS TO THE LORD* to *REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD!*

### VERSES 6-16

Here we see that since the children of Israel lacked a heart of thankfulness to the Lord, that they deteriorate into a life that was in *REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD!*

Look at what they are doing now. The children of Israel are worshiping a potpourri or a variety of god’s instead of the true and living God.

And in these verses, we see listed seven different ethnic and national gods that they went after and I think the number is significant.

The number seven speaks of completeness or that they had given themselves over totally to these gods, they had turned from the Lord.

But why did they do this?

Here are the reasons.

First, they were not thankful to the Lord.

And as they deteriorated farther and farther from God, they had to replace the worship of the true and living God with other things that they would worship.

And I truly believe that Israel was attracted to these other gods not because of the beauty of these idols, but because of what was associated with these pagan deity’s.

Baal, the weather god, was associated with financial success.

Ashtoreth, the goddess of fertility, was associated with love, sex, and romance.

As for the other gods of the neighboring nations around them, it was a matter of “*going with the flow*” and doing what everyone else did.

And here’s the thing. When a person turns from the true and living God it is not that he stops believing in everything. He tends to focus on that which satisfies the flesh and that ends up being his god!

That is what Israel was doing and what a sad state of affairs but if we are honest with ourselves, that is what we see happening in our own nation! May we be warned!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Editor: *Once seen as a shining light of hope and prosperity, the U.S. has now become a country of contempt.*

Its people are divided amongst themselves. Morality has declined to a steady beat of deeper complacency. Nothing is considered pure and lovely. Nothing is sacred or enduring. Not even human life.

Lewdness, vileness, filthy language and murder have replaced kindness, decency, integrity and consideration, and it’s accepted, as well as filthy television programming that has demeaned the American family, making it look weak, shallow and perverse. Parents are being blinded to the horrors of sexual immorality in our once shining society.

Men don’t know they are men, women don’t know they are women, and we’re alright with that? The once lovely and sacred intimacies between a man and woman has been degraded to a vile act between two people by just a glance. Our children’s bodies are for sale due to the style of dress put out there by designers who are probably men, particularly for girls. Their innocence is placed daily on a filthy platter of social media.

Shame on those who turn a blind eye to it. This is the road being paved for our future generation – a shame-based society, a shame-based lifestyle, a life of immorality, chaos and filth.

Wake up from your slumber, America. Get your heads out of your electronic devices and look at what is happening right in front of you, in your own households. Don't allow your sons and daughters to place their bodies on display for all to see. Protect their purity. . . .

You would protect your diamonds and jewels by placing them in velvet, covering them so they don't collect dust or get stolen? You place your expensive cars in the garage and under car covers.

We should value our children this same way. They are priceless and so valuable, so special, and they should know this so they learn to value themselves. It makes all the difference, and it will strengthen them throughout their adult lives. I'm hoping other parents and singles feel the same.

Speak up at your schools, speak up at your jobs, speak up in your neighborhoods. Don't settle for substitutes or second best. Demand that our political leaders and school administrators fight for our rights, for the integrity of our children and our communities. Our country was once looked upon as a shining beacon of hope.

I stand up for my country and the foundation it was built upon.

The following is a quote by Dennis Prager. . . .

*“Breaks my heart that a vast number of young Americans have not only not been taught how lucky they are to be Americans, but have been taught either how unlucky they are, or how ashamed they should be. It breaks my heart for them, because contempt for one’s country leaves a terrible hole in one’s soul, and because ungrateful people always become unhappy and angry people. And it breaks my heart for America, because no good country can survive when its people have contempt for it.”*

- <https://bit.ly/2zbBPKy>

Did you hear what he said, *“It breaks my heart for them, because contempt for one’s country leaves a terrible hole in one’s soul, and because ungrateful people always become unhappy and angry people. And it breaks my heart for America, because no good country can survive when its people have contempt for it.”*

Living a life of being unthankful towards God will drive you down, down, down. We see it with individuals, and we see it with this nation.

Remember what this nation was founded upon! It was founded upon Judeo-Christian principles! It was founded upon Jesus Christ! It was founded upon the Bible!

Many today reject that truth, that we were founded upon Judeo-Christian principles and faith, faith in the One True God, Jesus Christ.

But the evidence for it is overwhelming. Just go to Washington D. C. and look at the monuments and what is written on them. Look at the artwork and see the story they are telling. It is all about Jesus!

And yet, today, we are living in a post Christian era. Even many in the church today have replaced the Bible with the world's philosophies and ideas. And in regard to immoral activity, and I will call it what it is, *SIN*, the world as well as many in the church have accepted sin as a normal lifestyle!

Let me share with you just a few of these court precedents and you will see what I mean about how far we have moved away from God. And listen to the dates of these cases, it is interesting to me and you will see the decline of this nation as we move on.

- The purest principles of morality are to be taught. Where are they found? Whoever searches for them must go to the source from which a Christian man derives his faith – the Bible. (*Vidal v. Girard's Executors*, 1844).
- Whatever strikes at the root of Christianity tends manifestly to the dissolution [termination] of civil government. (*People v. Ruggles*, 1811. 2 decades after the first Amendment.).
- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. First Amendment.
- By our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religion and all sects and denominations of Christians are placed upon the same equal footing. (*Runkel v. Winemiller*, 1796).
- The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall; it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government. (Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, January 1, 1802, in an address to the Danbury Baptists).
- Had the people, during the Revolution, had any suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle . . . At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect . . . in this age there can be no substitute for Christianity. . . . That was the religion of the founders of the Republic and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants . . . The great vital and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (House Judiciary Committee Report, March 27, 1854 after a one-year study brought about by a suit to force the separation of church and state).



- Challenges to the Constitutionality of the government being run by Christian principles continued throughout the late 1800's finally arrived at the Supreme Court. In the case of *Reynolds v. United States*, 1878, the court pulled out Jefferson's speech in its entirety and confirmed that Jefferson also said that Christian principles were never to be separated from government. The Supreme Court used Jefferson's speech for the next 15 years to make sure that Christian principles stayed part of government. It remained this way until 1947, when, in the first time in the Supreme Court's history, the court used only eight words out of Jefferson's speech. The first Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. (*Everson v. Board of Education*, 1947).
- There is nothing so absurd but if you repeat it often enough people will believe it. (Dr. William James, *The Father of Modern Psychology*).
- If this court doesn't stop talking about separation of church and state, someone will think it is part of the Constitution. (*Bear v. Colmorgan*, 1958).
- The first separation of religious principles from public education. This is the case that removed school prayer. There were no precedents cited. The court did not quote previous legal cases or historical incidents. A new direction in the legal system – no longer constitutional. (One of the justices, in a stinging dissent, *Engel v. Vitale*, June 25, 1962).
- It is unconstitutional for a student to pray aloud. (*Reed v. Van Hoven*, 1965).
- The Court declared a four-line nursery rhyme unconstitutional because, although it did not contain the word "God", it might cause someone to think it was talking about God. (*DeCalv V. Espain* {could not get the names exactly}, 1967).

- Source Unknown

Do you see how far we have fallen and today, we have leaders who try to tell us that we were never a Christian nation! Folk's, China is not the only nation or few nations that distorts the truth! Wake up America, it is happening here at an alarming rate!

Now, we saw what Israel did and as we read on here in Judges 10:7-9 we see that God was not happy with them.

You see, we are told that God gave them what they wanted. If they wanted to serve these other god's, go for it, but then His hand of protection would be removed from them!

And this oppression was severe as these nations came against Israel, but God did not do this, they forsook the Lord, and this is what happens, they were warned and did not listen! They faced eighteen years of oppression!

When a people and a nation abandon God, God will give you what you want, and that is not a good thing!

Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 1:24-32 regarding what happens when we turn from the Lord. He wrote, **“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”**

Notice that ***“God gave them over”*** and the first is to uncleanness, to do what was in their evil hearts, dishonoring their bodies.

Then “*God gave them over*” to vile passions and that was manifested in the homosexual, lesbian, transgender and whatever other abnormal lifestyles they come up with. And God says it is shameful, and they are accountable before God for what they are doing.

And lastly, “*God gave them over*” to a debased mind and all the wickedness that flows from that is listed for us.

And it is not only doing these abominations before the Lord, it is approving of those that do, you are just as guilty!

Yes, we have come a long way baby, but not in a good way!

And here in Judges 10:10 we see them repent of two sins - *forsaking the Lord* and *servicing these foreign gods*.

Yes, repentance is important for without repentance, without turning from your sin, you are still living in it!

And it is interesting what God does here after they repent. He does not forgive them initially.

What we see first of all is that God is re-capping for them how He had delivered them from the hands of their enemies who serve these so-called gods.

And you have to understand the mentality of the enemy. The gods they served where, in a sense, local gods.

Thus, when you would go to battle and you would defeat your opponent, you would come to the conclusion that your god is stronger than their god!

And God is saying to the children of Israel that no enemy, no god is able to stand against Him, for He has delivered them from all their enemies!

That should not be news to them for they had seen all that God had done for them, but they put it out of their memory and let other things, worthless things replace what God had done.

And then the Lord says in Judges 10:14, **“Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.”**

That seems a little harsh here, doesn't it? I mean they did repent of their sin and yet God tells them if these other gods that you are now serving are so strong and powerful, then let them deliver you from your trouble.

And once again you need to remember that these gods appealed to their flesh, it satisfied those desires. But they were totally ineffective in times of trouble. These gods of pleasure were of no help.

We see that today, as people serve the gods of pleasure, power and wealth. But in times of trouble, can they truly deliver you? No way! It is only the living God that can heal you both physically and spiritually. He is the fountain of living water.

So what is the point here?

I think God wanted them to hate their sin so much that they would truly turn back to Him and not do so just because times were tough. He wanted them to be sick of their sin and I think God will do that with us. If we don't want to let go of the sin, He will give us the full measure of it until we are sick of it and are ready to give it to Him!

And that is what we see them do in Judges 10:15-16, **“And the children of Israel said to the Lord, ‘We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.’ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.”**

These were not empty words by the children of Israel. How do I know that?

Because they told the Lord to do whatever seems best to Him to them, but they just wanted to be delivered. It is a place of ***TOTAL SURRENDER TO HIM!***

Secondly, they put away their foreign god's. In other words, it was not just empty words on their part, their lives reflected what they were saying, that they had indeed turned back to the Lord! That is what repentance is all about. Turning away from the sin you were in and turning to the Lord!

That is what we need to do in America! Return to the Lord and repent of our sins. It is as those famous Theologians, the Beatles, once sang, and we need to ***“Get back to where we once belonged!”***

In other words, we need to come back to the arms of God and allow His grace to shine upon this nation once again. If we don't, this nation will fall, it will come crumbling to the ground. And it is shaking pretty good right now!

And I do know that in the end, the nations of the world will come together in a One-World Government, but I pray that we still have time to save souls before this happens.

But I am concerned for America because it is moving in the same direction as the Roman Empire did before its fall!

In his book, *The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon attributes the fall of the Roman Empire to the following five points and you will see clearly where America is.

**1. *The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society.***

About 40 to 50 percent of married couples in the United States divorce.

(<https://bit.ly/2XH2Hvy>) We see the family unit so messed up people don't know what a family is anymore! A new Pew Research Center study of 130 countries and territories shows that the U.S. has the world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households. Almost a quarter of U.S. children under the age of 18 live with one parent and no other adults (23%), more than three times the share of children around the world who do so (7%). (<https://pewrsr.ch/3dLhHOr>)

**2. *Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public monies for free bread and circuses for the populace.***

Government agencies misspent over \$98 billion last year, \$26 billion more than was wasted the previous year, the Associated Press reports. That was in 2008!

**3. *The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.***

This too is obvious, we are crazy over sports, we can't get enough of them. Several years ago, I was watching the Stanley Cup and it was during the time that the league was cracking down on the fights that break out during these hockey games. And two reporters were saying that was crazy, that is the reason the people come, to see fights! And it is not only that, look at sports that are played seven days a week, even on Sunday's. My kids missed many wrestling matches and games because Sunday's were a day to come and worship the Lord. But there is no time to worship the Lord today, it is not important, and our children are taking notice! We have lost our priorities; we have gone mad over sports!

***4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within, the decadence of the people.***

That is very true. Moral decay is an enemy that you can't fight with weapons. Well, let me rephrase that. You can't fight moral decay with physical weapons but with the sword of the Spirit or the Word of God because it can pierce a person's heart and cause them to repent of their sins and get right with God!

***5. The decay of religion – faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.***

This, to me is so obvious. We have moved away from the Word of God; we are seeing another Jesus being preached. We have become impotent to warn them and guide them. Case in point. Joel Osteen, who boasts of having the largest church in North America was on the Larry King show. Larry King asked him if you needed to believe in Jesus to get to heaven and he said that he didn't know. He was asked by Larry King if Jews and Muslims would go to heaven if they did not believe in Jesus and once again he said that he didn't know and he would let God take care of that, let God sort that out! Some 19 times on this talk show he said that he didn't know when asked questions regarding his faith and yet, he claims to have the largest church in North America! We are truly seeing the apostate church of the last days before our eyes, those who refuse to give the truth because it might offend someone. Folks, if you don't tell them about Jesus, if He is not their Lord and savior, there are bigger problems for them. Yes, you may offend them by what you say, but don't be ashamed to share the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes!

***REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD*** leads to moral decay and when there is moral decay the nation will rot away! God will hold that nation, those people in judgment.

Listen to what we are told in II Chronicles 28:19, **“For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD.”**

Ahaz encouraged moral decline and as I look at our nation and look at political leaders, church leaders, educational leaders, leaders in the home that approve and stand up for immorality, I cringe because I know that the judgment of God for this nation can't be that far away!

But remember that we as Christians are to be salt and light in this world. Salt is a preserving force and thus, as we live out our faith, we should influence those around us. Light dispels the darkness and as we live out our faith people should see Jesus!

And there is one more problem in America today and it is a big one. We see that there are ***NO STRONG LEADERS***, and that is our last point!

#### VERSES 17-18

As Israel gathered together in Mizpah in response to the threat of the Ammonites, they had no leader!

What a sad state of affairs. They had no one to lead them in battle.



J. Vernon McGee gives to us this perspective in regard to leadership. He wrote,

The Israelites lacked leadership. That is always characteristic of men, or of a generation, that has turned from God. Lack of leadership has definitely characterized our nation for the last twenty-five years. In fact, there has been a lack of leadership in the world for many years. We need vital leadership, but we cannot seem to find it. This was Israel's experience. Now they are going to turn to a most unusual man for guidance. Under normal circumstances they would not have turned to him at all.

- J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 69

And Warren Wiersbe gives to us this insight as he wrote,

The people were prepared to act, but from all the tribes of Israel, there was nobody to take the lead. Whether in a nation or a local church, the absence of qualified leaders is often a judgment of God and evidence of the low spiritual level of the people. When the Spirit is at work among believers, He will equip and call servants to accomplish His will and bless His people (Acts 13:1-4).

In his book *Profiles in Courage*, John F. Kennedy wrote, "We, the people, are the boss, and we will get the kind of political leadership, be it good or bad, that we demand and deserve."

What's true of political leadership is often true of spiritual leadership: We get what we deserve. When God's people are submitted to Him and serving Him, He sends them gifted servants to instruct and lead them, but when their appetites turn to things of the world and the flesh, He judges them by depriving them of good and godly leaders. "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart" (Isa. 57:1 NIV).

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, p. 455

Make no mistake about it. We need political leaders, we need family leaders, we need church leaders who will stand up for the things of God and lead people in the direction of God.

We need men and women who are sold out for the Lord and are willing to walk by faith and do what is right and not necessarily what is popular.

In Ezekiel 22:30 we see this sad statement, **“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”**

May we be the ones who will stand in the gap, be those godly leaders in a nation that is starving for godly leadership and they don't even know it!

And I realize that even as we stand for the things of God, as we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to this world that is in darkness, many may not listen, they may mock us. But don't let it stop you. Listen to what we are told in II Chronicles 24:19 and what God did and how the people responded.

We are told, **“Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the LORD; and they testified against them, but they would not listen.”**

Just because you do what is right, doesn't mean people are going to listen to you. That is not our responsibility, that is each person who hears the truth, that is their responsibility. Our responsibility is to share our faith, to be that spokesperson for God!

Look at what we have studied this morning.

***A LACK OF THANKFULNESS TO THE LORD*** – and we saw that with all the Lord has given us, done for us, our hearts should be overflowing with thanksgiving to Him. If we are not thankful, I truly believe it leads to . . .

**REBELLION AGAINST GOD** – and the reason is simple. When you are not thankful to God then you are not walking with Him, you are missing out on all that He is doing in you and through you and thus, as you go farther and farther from Him, you end up rebelling against Him and filling that void in your life with worthless things.

And lastly, we saw that there were **NO STRONG LEADERS** – you need godly men and women who will lead people in the things of God. If you don't have that, then people are going to lead you somewhere and that is not a good thing!

And I know it can be discouraging as we see all that is happening in this world and in our nation. But let me encourage you with these words. We are told,

I heard once of a man who dreamed that he was swept into Heaven, and oh, he was so delighted to think that he had at last got there. All at once one came and said: "Come, I want to show you something." He took him to the battlements, and he said, "Look down yonder; what do you see?"

"I see a very dark world."

"Look and see if you know it."

"Why, yes," he said, "that is the world I have come from."

"What do you see?"

"Men are blindfolded there; many of them are going over a precipice."

"Well, will you stay here and enjoy Heaven, or will you go back to earth and spend a little longer time, and tell those men about this world?"

He was a Christian worker who had been discouraged. He awoke from his sleep and later he said: "I have never wished myself dead since."