

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 2

The Second Introduction to the Book of Judges

The cycle of sin that lies at the heart of this Book is given in chap 2. It's the end of an Era and Israel has the **SEDE VACANTE** (seat of leadership is empty) problem where no National Leader is chosen to follow Joshua to unite the Chosen People for the next phase of their history.

1-3 The Angel of the Lord speaks to His People.

This is the Lord Himself manifesting in human form – so this must be another appearance of the pre-Incarnate Christ (remember the Captain of the Lord's Army in Joshua 5:13-15?)

Look at the evidence: I brought you up out of Egypt... and led you to this land...

It was God Himself who did that!

You must make no covenant with the inhabitants of this country... destroy their altars

But you have not obeyed my orders – It was God whom they disobeyed.

- for other appearances of the Lord go to: Gen 18:16-33; 34:24-30 and Judges 13:1-23

- Here the Lord reminded them of His great **Mercy** to them in the Exodus.
 - and of the Covenant they made and ratified with Him.
 - **HE** would **NEVER** break that Covenant, but in the Book of Judges we witness Israel breaking their Covenant many times and having to suffer the consequences.
- Israel's problem was **spiritual**. It was their deplorable spiritual crisis – not their lack of chariots that lay behind their failure to dispossess the Canaanites.

Now for Consequences: I am NOT going to drive out these nations before you.

They shall become your oppressors [thorns in your side KJV]

Their gods will be a snare for you.

So (i) because of their disobedience the work of possessing the land would not be completed.

(ii) It was God who drove out the enemy under obedient Joshua

- but He withdraws His support for that now.

(i.e.) the Captain of the Lord's Army retires from the battlefield! (

(iii) The very enemies you should have conquered will now become thorns in **your** side cf Num 33-55 warned them this would happen:

**But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you,
then it shall be that those whom you let remain
shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides,
and they shall harass you in the land...**

4-6 The People respond with sorrow and weeping

The immediate response to this message was weeping so the place was **called Bochim**

- but this wasn't **true** repentance or conversion – as the rest of Judges will demonstrate...
- sometimes weeping is no more than emotion, which passes.

Lesson

- Real repentance shows itself in action – not just emotion.
Sometimes we can be sorry about **the consequences** of our sin, but not the sin itself.

- This is why the Lord tells us in **Joel 2:13** **rend your hearts, not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in mercy.**
- It has been said that one drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping... one grain of true faith is better than a gallon of tears!

v 5 **They sacrificed there to the Lord.** This was the right response for them. These sacrifices were sin offerings and acceptable to the Lord.

- In our time we have the perfect sacrifice of Jesus to call upon. We call upon His grace to apply the Infinite merits of His Precious Blood and pains to all souls past, present and future.

v 6 **Then Joshua dismissed the people.** It is clear that Judges chap 2 **looks back** to connect the following events to the Sede Vacante period after Joshua's death.

7-10 The New Generation in Israel begins the next phase of their history. Joshua ch 24 is quoted to state that his legacy lasted in the leaders he trained.

vs 8 Joshua is called **the servant of the Lord** – a title only given to **GREAT** men of God, like Moses in Deut 34:5 and in later times King David in Ps 18:1 and some of the prophets in 2 Kg 9:7

vs 10 Gives us warning of trouble to come:

Another generation arose who DID NOT know the Lord NOR the work that He had done for Israel.

- This tragedy has been repeated in our day: the new generation had no personal relationship with God and they didn't **experience** His Power over them or His Mercy. God was just someone **their parents** related to... so they drift away from faith in the True God to whatever is around them in society: idolatry, immorality, etc.

(NB)

- Faith can **be lost completely** in 2 to 3 generations:
generation 1 believes...
generation 2 practices because of their parents... (they are passing nothing on!)
generation 3 **have nothing**

11-13 A Summary of Israel's History at time of Judges: Israel falls into idolatry **The children of Israel** (means the descendants of Jacob) **did evil in sight of the Lord.** It was the new generation that went the way of the world.

Question:

Why would people abandon the True, Living God who is everything we need on Earth for a **lifeless statue**; a false god who represents Satan and immorality - (i.e.) the destruction of body and soul? (read Psalm 115)

Yet it is true that Humanity is afraid of the True God whose standards of life and holiness demand that we live at **the highest** level of our being – not just like animals, on the lowest level... for we are **SPIRITS** incarnated in FLESH, so the battle is always between flesh and spirit. If the flesh wins how can we hope to join the **Spirits** in Paradise? cf Rom 7:14-25 Gal 5:16-18

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Mt 26:41

In our time we have all the helps of Redemption and Pentecost to help us. These people lived more than 1,000 years **BEFORE** Redemption, so this Book demonstrates the **great** need for a Redeemer.

vs 13 **They served the Ba'al and Astarte:** Ba'al was the Canaanite rival to **The Lord God because** 'he' was seen as the one who looked after **THE CLIMATE**, so he was viewed as essential to agricultural success and fertility.

- The people wanted rain at the right time and sun to give the harvest, so 'he' was **useful**
- Unfortunately for Israel **the name Ba'al** means "husband" or "owner" (i.e., "**Lord**"). So the Israelites thought it was the same god as the God of Abraham. They would learn painfully (as we do!) that Satan imitates God to confuse us and lead us (Humanity) to perdition.

ASTARTE or Ashtoreth, Asherah or Ishtar was a female "god" of love, sex, fertility. Variations of the name are found all over Middle-East in Old Testament times

This goddess was honoured with practices of **ritual sex** in temples run by priestesses. They were degraded practices going on which included **child sacrifice**.

They deserted the Lord God for these degrading representations of Satan.

Problem:

Once Israel made a Covenant with God she became the "wife" of the Lord and He became the **HUSBAND** of Israel... so going off to these false gods was a serious breaking of this **SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE** bond which gave the Lord **RIGHTS** over His Chosen Bride, Israel... so Book of Judges shows a Husband trying to get His wife back! A huge struggle ensues.

Ⓝ This was what the Lord warned them about since the time of Abraham, more than 400 years previously... if they didn't clear the Land of idolatrous practices they would fall **into** them.

Today

- The Church is in crisis because Christians have adopted the ways of the Land and follow all kinds of "gods", money, sex, power, false religions... making idols out of sport, success, technology, science, politics, even ourselves, etc.
- With all that Jesus has done for us, we have fallen **lower** than them!
We also commit child sacrifice, by the million in nearly every country today!

14-15

- **They provoked the Lord...** and so do we!
He withdrew grace... they became weaker against their enemies.
We can only prevail against spiritual enemies: (i) with the Lord's Presence
(ii) with His Grace
- In all of this struggle God deals with them according to **the covenant** they made with Him. If they stay in Union with Him they experience the Blessings of the Covenant. If they go into idolatry etc. then they experience the Curses of the Covenant.
cf Deut ch 28 and Lev ch 26

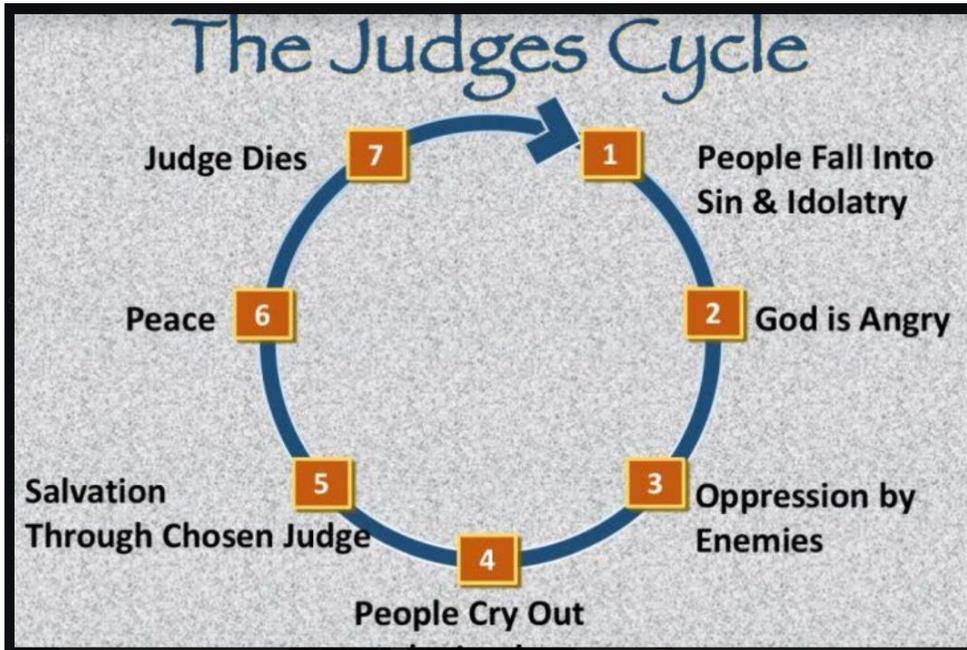
For us: We serve God under the greater Covenant of Jesus (Heb 8:6).

When we forsake the Lord, things may go badly for us **because** the Lord will allow you to experience the consequences of your actions.

He will also create circumstances to call you back to Him: Jude 1:21

- Once Israel became morally and spiritually weak, their enemies moved-in to plunder them and God allowed this **because** in their distress they would cry out to Him again to give Him an opportunity to save them yet again: **Example** parents and children

16-19 The cycle of Bondage and Deliverance in Book of Judges.



- God’s incredible patience and Mercy are now demonstrated in the cycle of sin and deliverance which is the central message of this Book.
- God kept His side of the Covenant so when His people cried out for help He raised up deliverers for them – but this was **NOT** because they deserved it!
They played the Harlot with other gods: since Israel was The Lord’s **Wife** by Covenant, idolatry was spiritually equivalent to prostitution.
- just as prostitution defiles body and soul, so idolatry defiles **our spirit** which becomes blind and dead unable to see or hear the **True God**.
- The Judges whom God inspired to defend His People filled the **VACUUM** of National Leadership to try and unite the 12 Tribes again...
But we shall see that even among **the Judges** that they go from bad to worse until they reach the lowest point with Samson, and under his rule.

How not to pray: We shall see that Israel turns to God only in emergencies, when the other gods fail to deliver or protect them.
They have no **REAL** relationship with God or commitment to Him.

Our so-called “Christian” society is like this today, God is a 999 service, while being blamed for all the evils in the world.

How can God be a **Good** God and do **THAT** to me? (who am innocent, pure, etc.!)

→ This is why so many go from crisis to crisis in their lives, with God hoping they might turn to Him **truly this** time!

→ A **real** relationship with God means LIVING with Him, so you don’t have to limp from one crisis to the next. He is there **all the time**:

cf Jn 5:19 ... **the Son can do nothing by Himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does...**

Jn 10:30 **The Father and I are one.**

v 19 **When the judge died they RELAPSED and behaved worse than their ancestors...**

- Their relapses into sin are more understandable > 1,000 years before Christ.
- Our relapses are not: we have the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us become new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17)

- They **would not give up their practices... nor their stubbornness.**

The Book of Judges is a treatise in SELF-Will – the Human will opposed to the Divine Will and there we see the consequences of pitting the human will against the Divine Will.

- The Bible translates STUBBORN as STIFF-NECKED cf Ex 32:9; 33:3,5
So a change of location (wilderness) does not necessarily mean a change of HEART!
A change of circumstances (e.g. marriage) does not imply this either.

STUBBORN = KAW-SHEH is used in terms of being HARD, so it implies a hard and unyielding heart towards God... this results in a HARD life!!

20-23 God leaves them to the consequences of their hardness of heart.

Since THIS PEOPLE (not My people!) **has broken My Covenant.**

The consequences are that the Lord will discipline and chastise them by means of the Darnel among the Wheat: Matt 13:24-30, 36-43

- God decided to use the Canaanites whom Israel refused to deal with **to test** Israel in its fidelity to their Covenant with Him.

I will no longer drive out any of the nations Joshua left behind.

- God makes it clear that their successes in war were due to His Presence, His involvement and His Power – also with His Permission. Without these Israel can do nothing:

Jn 15:5 **Without Me, you can do nothing.**

23 **So the Lord allowed those nations to remain.**

So the stage is set for the tragic dramas of the Book of Judges

So that we will understand them, the author explains the problem ahead of time.

These dramas show up our own world today and the tragic weakness of Christians unable to resist the powers of the world encroaching on their lives.

For us, too, there must be true sorrow and a true softening of the Heart towards our Saviour so that God can reign on Earth as He does in Heaven!
