

Judges Ch 2

A Couple of weeks ago we basically took a look at and established the pattern that we're going to be seeing all throughout the book of Judges. The nation of Israel starting off well, walking into sin, becoming enslaved by sin, and as a result of that being found sorry for their sin, they cry out to God and God saves them from their sin by raising up a judge or a leader to lead them out of their captivity. Then throughout the duration of that judges lifetime they serve the Lord but as soon as that personal accountability is removed they go right back into that old lifestyle and slide back into sin. And thus one of the reasons why it's so important for us to have accountability in our lives of a personal nature, that's why we need to have a church we call home, a Pastor and leadership that we feel accountable to and not get into the tragic fad that we as Christians seem to have fallen into by and large of church hopping. Because the problem with that is that we have no accountability in our lives, no one really knows how things are going, because you're here and then you're there, you stay somewhere until you feel you've been offended and then you go somewhere else. And the problem with the church-hopping thing is that you've removed yourself from the position that the scriptures take of church structure; you don't really have an overseer and I have people tell me from time to time when we're speaking and I say, "where do you fellowship?" And they say, "Oh, here and there, I just like to go to all sorts of places." And they make the inference in not so many words that they don't really have a church home they just consider the body of Christ in general to be their home. Well, in a perfect world that might work, and in the millennial reign of Christ we'll be able to operate in just that fashion, we'll all be one big happy family. But until then there's a major problem with that philosophy and the problem is us, we're sinners, and we gravitate naturally towards the flesh and the things of the flesh. But we have to cultivate through discipline a life led in the Spirit, but when we have no accountability there's really no discipline and there's an unhealthy freedom there to just sort of take advantage of the environment that you've created for yourself. You can stay home when you feel like it and no one will ask any questions because they just assume you're at the other place or at another place that week when in reality you're no place. And through circumstances and events a pattern begins to be established and the next thing you know you're not going anywhere and you've begun to re-establish roots in the world. You say, "Well, God's my accountability" then do what God says and don't forsake that gathering together of the saints and establish accountability of the scriptural structure of the church in your life. Because God was Israel's accountability as well, but when the human instrument and vessel that God had placed before them wasn't around any more what happened? They began to backslide and find themselves associated with the world again, the same thing happened to the fellow there in vs 24-26 of ch 1 that showed the Israelite spies the entrance into the city that they were to spy out, they destroyed the city but saved him alive, God saved him. But what did he do? Did he join the people of God like Rahab and begin to cultivate a new life in the Spirit? No, he left the "congregation" of Israel and rebuilt his old city in another place, he went to another area of the country and rebuilt his old way of living, re-established a life that was absolutely no different then it was prior to his "salvation".

How many people do just that, they realize that destruction is coming their way, they do what they need to do in order to be spared that, but then as soon as things ease up and they feel relieved or the pressure is off, they go right back into that old lifestyle as though nothing ever changed.

And it's an absolutely tragic ordeal; the ch closed by exposing to us the fact that Israel didn't utterly destroy or drive out the inhabitants of the land and because of that it's going to be a snare to them all the days of their lives. You know if you don't allow the Lord to purge you completely, if you still try and hang on to just a few of those old habits that aren't that bad I'm just telling you they're going to be a snare to you you're whole life. And what you thought you could control will wind up controlling you; we see it time and time again throughout the scriptures. Well, Ch 2 is kind of another rehearsal or reiteration of what happened during the transition from right before Joshua died until the time that he did die and right after that what it was that began to happen.

Vs1-2

So here we see a manifestation of the "Angel of the Lord" who is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. We see here another of what we refer to as a theophany, which is an OT manifestation of Christ prior to His physical entrance into this world to accomplish the work of atonement for the sins of the world. How do we know that it's the Lord, well #1 what angel ever made an everlasting covenant with the nation of Israel? But over and over again we see the Lord having established His covenant with Ab in Gen 17:7-8 where God said to Ab, "*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*" That's sort of where it all began, and from there Ab had Isaac, who in turn had Esau and Jacob whom had his name changed by God to Israel. Now Israel had 12 sons, which became 12 tribes and we don't have the time to get into the division with how Ephraim and Manasseh figures into it all through Joseph. But these guys went down into Egypt because of a drought and Joseph who at that time due to various seemingly unfavorable circumstances was actually the 2nd in command to the Pharaoh who was the most powerful man on the earth. God taking what men meant for evil and used it to His glory to birth and protect and provide for what would become a nation, the nation of Israel. And you know the story after Joseph died things went well for a while but when the children of Israel were multiplying in Egypt the Egyptians didn't really know what to do with them and there arose a generation who didn't know Joseph and so they just figured hey, lets make slaves of them and that's what they did. And when they began to weep and cry out to God, God heard their cry from heaven, raised up a deliverer for them by the name of Moses to lead them out of bondage into a Land flowing with milk and honey, a good and sweet land, (which in reality is another type and a great lesson from which to draw the gospel of Jesus Christ out of) but it was the Land of which He had promised to Ab all those years ago and that's where they're at now.

And God is reminding them, Hey, I've kept My end of the deal, an angel had no part in that, this is the Lord here. And he's come up it says from Gilgal to Bochim, which means, "weeping" and we'll see why in a minute, but He says I've done My part, I've upheld My end of the covenant but you've brought about a breach in the deal. Because the part of the deal that depended upon you in order for Me to keep My part was that you were to make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; and you are to tear down their altars. In other words don't associate with them, be friend them or find out how it is that they worship their gods; nothing just wipe them out. Look at Duet ch 7 Vs 1-8

So you see they were utterly destroy and drive out these pagan inhabitants of the Land, lest they learn their ways and become like them, I've said it over and over bad company corrupts good morals, that's what the bible teaches.

The 1st step away from the Lord is "friendship with the world", which leads to our being "spotted by the world", then we begin to "love the world", become "conformed to this world" which in the end brothers and sisters can lead to being "condemned with the world". The bible says that friendship with the world is enmity or war with God, that's why Jesus said you're either for Me or against Me, there is no in between. They were to alleviate, eradicate and eliminate all worldly influence from their lives, but notice what the Lord says to them (and by the way, the very fact that it's the Lord Who's personally delivering this message should show them the severity of how serious things have become in Israel) (read last ½ vs 2).

A confrontation of Love, you know one thing that's left up to the reader when it comes to the scriptures is the vocal inflections behind what's being said, was this said in an angry tone? I believe it was more from a tone of compassion and concern, even as when Adam had sinned and the Lord was crying out in the garden "Adam, where are you?" How was He speaking that was it like, "I can't believe what you've done!" Or was it more like, "oh, no, Adam, where are you, what have you done; now there's a separation between us". And it was from the position of grief and compassion, there is a stinging simplicity in this question and how many times have you heard the Holy Spirit say this same thing to your heart when you've blown it. And you know that He told you in advance not to do what you're getting ready to do but you persevere right into sin only to hear "*you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?*" And you just want to weep (Bochim) because you know that you've grieved the heart of God and there's been a separation that's taken place. And there's no such thing as a good reason for doing what you've done, you can't even feel ok in trying to give a defense because there is no defense. And anytime you sow, you reap, there are always ramifications to our choices in life, and so next the Lord announces the fact that sense they refused to obey Him and drive out the wicked inhabitants that He would give them what they wanted, they want the people to stay fine they'll stay alright.

God is always faithful to His word; we've spent some time on that in a couple of Sunday morning studies, when He says it He's going to do it. Now, that can either work for you or against you depending on where you're at. On the side of God's favor and blessing or discipline and chastening and now that Israel has breached the contract so to speak there's going to be a change in their relationship. He's going to allow these various groups of people to stay in the land and they're going to wind up being a snare to the nation, now whether you're on the side of blessing or chastening either way God's motive is love. Heb 12:6-8 *"For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*" So if you have a hard time getting away with sin then rejoice because it stands as evidence that you belong to God, but if you never get busted and you think you're doing ok because you always get away with it then you might want to be concerned with where you're at with God. I'm not positive but I believe it was Charles Spurgeon who said that God wouldn't allow His children to sin successfully. Why, because He loves you and even as you would desire your own children to make wise choices and do the right things because you know that unwise choices and wrong actions bring about ramifications in life that will be harmful if not detrimental to them. So out of love for them you set up parameters for them that have repercussions if they violate them, well, if you are wise enough and loving enough to make supervision for your kids how much more is God going to take measures to watch out for the eternal best interest of His kids?

Now God had already warned them what would happen if they failed to obey Him and yet they didn't listen, so now God is simply keeping His word. Israel was looking to the Canaanites for pleasures but instead would only get to experience in the end, pain. And that's the way it is with us, so often we look to sin for fleshly pleasure, but in the end it always brings hurt, pain and separation from God. Everyone seems to enjoy sowing the seeds, but no one likes harvest time, but we will always reap the harvest of the seeds that we sow, that's why it's so critical to sow to the Spirit. Israel would seek freedom, seek to expand their way of life, cease being so narrow minded only to find themselves enslaved by what seemed to be so free. 2 Peter 2:19 *"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage."*

Vs4-5

Now was this genuine repentance? I don't think so, it sure looks good but you need to understand that weeping doesn't necessarily indicate repenting. And not to belittle an inward wrenching of our hearts but again as Spurgeon said, "A drop of genuine repentance is more precious than a torrent of weeping." Well how can you tell what's really going on? I have found that many times in the moment you can't, but time will reveal the heart of a person because true repentance will evidence itself in a changed life. Not that they'll never stumble again but there will definitely be a breaking of the pattern of that certain sin cycle whatever it may be.

And Israel just kept going back and going back really only evidencing the fact that they were sorry due to the *consequences* of their sins rather than *convicted* due to the wickedness of their sin. As Warren Wiersbe writes, “it was a shallow and temporary sorrow that never led them to true repentance.” Because being sorry for your sin isn’t a bad thing, it’s a good thing but are you truly sorry for your sin or sorry over the consequences of your sin. I’ve seen many people come into this place and weep over the things that are taking place in their lives only to walk out those doors to return right back to it, did they repent? 2 Cor 7:10 says, “*godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*” You see there’s a difference between godly sorrow and selfish sorrow and godly sorrow leads to repentance, and causes a change, something that we don’t see happening in Israel during this season of their history. And the sin that we fail to conquer will eventually conquer us.

Vs6-10

What are we seeing here, as long as Joshua was around, as long as they had a leader who was godly and leadership around him who were aware of what God had done and had a personal working relationship with the Lord, things went well. There was godly accountability and structure in their lives, someone to keep them in check and seeking the Lord. But when all the people of that generation under Joshua’s leadership who had witnessed all these things died, what happened? Another generation arose who did not know the Lord, and let me just tell you that anytime you read something along these lines in the scriptures, nothing good is going to follow it. Now even though they were personally responsible for their actions, in this case and in this context it wouldn’t be right for me to stand here and just rail on them, why? Why didn’t they know the Lord, where (at least in part and more than likely a major part) did the problem lie? Deut 6:6-7 “*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*” They were supposed to be passing this stuff on, teaching their children to know the Lord.

Teaching them what He had done for them, sharing the testimony of deliverance with their kids. So the priests and the parents had a major part in this, because once you forget the word of God, you’re in grave danger of forgetting the God of the word. But we also know the true Christianity isn’t biologically transmitted, you don’t make it to heaven just because you’re parents are believers; you are to cultivate a *personal* relationship with God. And allow Him to do a work in your life as well that you might pass on to the next generation, so they failed to pass on the word of God, they *forgot* what the Lord had done, which in turn caused them to *forsake* what the Lord had said, and so by default they *forfeited* what the Lord had promised.

Vs11-13

Which were the pagan gods around them, Baal being the male figure, Ashtoreth (which a few languages later became synonymous with Easter) being the female figure. Now Baal was more or less the agricultural type god, (they both had to do with fertility of some sort) but Baal was sort of the rain god dealt with the storms and all (and being an agricultural type people you see the temptation of influence there). And Ashtoreth was his female counterpart who was the goddess of fertility, the rabbit and the egg being her symbols. So they forsook righteousness and gave themselves over to immoral sensuality. Now, you kind of wonder what it was that caused them to do the things they did, how it was that they were so seemingly persuaded. But in reality it probably wasn't much different then the way things are today, maybe they wanted to be accepted by their friends or neighbors, you might call it peer pressure, and I'm just speculating but I'm not sure. But how many times have we been tempted or pressured and persuaded to compromise and do things we know we shouldn't do simply because we might be worried about how we look to other people if we stand out as the odd ball. And through various circumstances we sucked right into a pattern and cycle of compromise that we never should have but because we were worried about what others thought we blew it. But you find that God would often reserve His most severe punishment and criticism for those who worshipped idols. Why, think about it, it violated the 1st 2 of the 10 commandments Ex 20:3-6 *"You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."* God wants and is worthy to be the priority of your life and when He's not He gets jealous, remember we're not talking about people in general, but rather people who are supposed to be Christians, those who claim to follow and serve Him placing other things ahead of Him in their lives.

Vs14-15

In other words they lost their battles when they went up against the enemy because the Lord wasn't with them. What did Jesus say? With out Me you can do nothing, you will not win any battles apart from the Lord fighting them for you, wherever they went out calamity was upon them because had said it, therefore it was done.

Vs16

That little word there "nevertheless" is a wonderful word, it's much like those two little words that offer the only hope that mankind has in a dark and desperate world "but God." So many times in scripture you see things going south, getting worse and worse and then by His grace you read, "but God" and the whole thing changes. God in His mercy would raise up judges, or deliverers to bring them out of bondage.

Now I'm not going to run with this but we could easily draw a parallel to our circumstances in life, being filled with calamity. Being in bondage to sin and greatly distressed, but nevertheless God in His mercy sent and raised up Jesus Christ to deliver us from the hand of the enemy who was plundering us.

Vs17-19

Did they learn their lesson here? Unfortunately not, God was trying to teach them a few things in this, #1 it doesn't pay to serve any other God than the 1 true living God because there is no other God. #2 He was trying to teach them obedience and that disobedience brought ramifications that were serious penalties to their health and well-being. But what we see here is a pattern of people walking into sin, only to become enslaved to it, seemingly waking up or at least not liking the results of their actions, the consequences of their sins and so God in His mercy delivers them. But as soon as the judge dies they revert right back to the same old cycle, as Warren Wiersbe puts it "the people wasted their suffering" they didn't learn the lessons that God was trying to teach them through it and profit by His chastening. Listen, I don't know what you're going through tonight but don't allow your suffering to be wasted, to be in vain, don't suffer for nothing. The bible tells us that even Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered. So suffering isn't always synonymous with disobedience, Job could tell you that, but if you're going through the refiners fire tonight allow it to purify you and make you as gold. Because the same fire that purifies the gold consumes the chaff, if God is trying to teach you something, be it obedience, trust, dependence or whatever, seek to glean from Him what you can while you're there, don't waste your suffering, allow it to take you deeper into the heart of God.

Vs20-23