



## The Cycle of Bondage and Deliverance Judges 2

### Introduction

It has been said that those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. In Judges 2, we have a most valuable history lesson.

- Failure and Compromise

Despite His promise of victory (Deuteronomy 7:1-6), none of the tribes had succeeded in driving the Canaanites out from their midst. Their failure was due to compromise, loss of vision, and lack of leadership. They thought that somehow it would be all right if they did not obey God completely. Surely He would understand their situation. There was just one flaw in this reasoning: it did not take into account God's holiness which cannot be compromised (Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48).

- Cause and Effect

The consequences of sin and disobedience are severe. Punishment may even come through the offense itself. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap* (Galatians 6:7). Sowing and reaping are basic facts of nature and of the spiritual nature as well. (See Romans 1:18-19, 24, 26, 28.) God has put into the creation natural laws to show that we live in a universe that is rational as well as moral. Cause and effect are not suspended for our convenience. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

- Wrath and Mercy

Christ's death atones for our sin, which shields us from the full consequences of our disobedience and rebellion. Jesus Christ took the consequences of our sins and accepted God's wrath in our place. *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Only by faith in Christ can we escape the wrath and righteous judgment of God. Today, the world is bearing severe consequences of hundreds of generations of sin, in the form of wars, cruelty, inhumanity, violence, disease, crime, and godlessness. As much as people may try to ease their consciences by blaming God in order to explain away the mess, He is not to blame for man's compromise and failure.

- The Cycle and Us

Judges 2 gives a synopsis of the cycle of cause and effect that became the history of the nation of Israel for over three hundred years. It is important that we study it, understand it, and learn from it. It is a true and vivid picture of the course of human events and the mercy of God. In speaking of Israel's early history, the apostle Paul said, *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

### Outline of Judges Chapter 2

- I. A Message from the Lord - Judges 2:1-9
- II. A Cycle of Despair and Deliverance - Judges 2:10-19
- III. A Response from God - Judges 2:20-23

#### I. A Message from the Lord - Judges 2:1-9

- A. The Angel of the Lord - Judges 2:1-3

1. Appearance in Judges

*Then the Angel of the Lord came up...and said, "I led you up from Egypt."* God's messenger came from Gilgal to deliver a message from God. For us the whole Bible is a message from God. The Angel of the Lord appears frequently throughout the Old Testament from Genesis to Zechariah, and nowhere more than in the book of Judges where He is mentioned twenty-two times! (For more on The Angel of the Lord see [Nave's Topical Bible](#)).

2. A Messenger

"Angel" and "messenger" are the same word in Hebrew, "malak", as in the name Malachi. Sometimes the "malak" is a prophet, a priest, a supernatural being, or even the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. Angels are so common in Scripture that only a few short books do not mention them: Ruth, Nehemiah, Esther, and the letters of James and John.

- B. A Message of Reproof - Judges 2:4-5

What message did the Angel of the Lord bring?

1. Reminder

*I led you up from Egypt.* We need frequent reminders of God's past blessings to encourage us in the present, and keep us on track.

## 2. God's covenant with Israel

*...and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, "I will never break My covenant with you."* God will not break His word. Indeed, He cannot. This is what Scripture says.

- *That by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us* (Hebrews 6:17-18).
- *The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever* (Isaiah 40:8).
- *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My word will by no means pass away"* (Matthew 24:35; See also Matthew 5:18 and Psalm 119:89).

We may make God's word seem to be broken or untrue by not believing it, or not understanding it. Then our unbelief comes between our soul and the truth, and it seems to us that He does not keep His word. The fault is ours, not His. Jesus' strength came from prayer, trust in God's Word, and the Holy Spirit's guidance, without reservation or hesitation. Will you commit yourself to belief in God's word as true? No one has ever been disappointed by doing so.

## 3. Repeated command

*"You shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars."* Their covenant was with God, not with the ungodly. Likewise, we are not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers, or to depend on them for our happiness and security (2 Corinthians 6:14).

## 4. Rebuke for Disobedience

*"But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?"* Why indeed! This is God's question to everyone. Why have we not obeyed His voice? His commands are clear.

## 5. Result

*"Therefore...I will not drive them out before you, but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you."* The effect was twofold. God would withdraw His power from them and they would be surrounded by temptation to idolatry. The cause of their

predicament was their own failure and compromise.

## 6. Response of the people

*The people...wept.* They cried in remorse and made a sacrifice to God. Nothing is said of repentance. The place was named Bochim ("weeping") for their tears. Do you take your tears to God? He cares for you, and He alone can truly help.

## C. To Joshua's Generation - Judges 2:6-9

### 1. Three things concerning Joshua's generation - 2:6-7

#### a. They settled the land

*And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.* This verse repeats Joshua 24:28. Is this a rebuke to Joshua's generation for settling down in comfort and not completing their assignment, or seeing to it that their children completed it?

#### b. They served the Lord

That generation is given credit for serving the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who outlived him (2:7). They had started well to conquer the land and had made it possible to settle there.

#### c. They saw God's great works

They were the ones who had seen the great works of the Lord in defeating their enemies and giving them *a land flowing with milk and honey* (Exodus 3:17).

### 2. Joshua's death and the passing of that generation - 2:8-9

Joshua's death was described with full honors at the close of the Book of Joshua. It is repeated here in transition to a new generation to emphasize the passing of a great generation which accomplished much. Some generations are more noteworthy than others. During the 20th Century USA, when this lesson was written, we had the Depression generation, two World War generations, the so-called Silent generation of the Fifties, and the Beatles generation of the Sixties. So far, the 21st Century is looking to be the Digital generation. Each generation has its own character, and characteristic accomplishments. Leadership and events shape a generation. We may wonder which is more crucial, personalities or events. Joshua's personal faith and courage led his generation to greatness. The conquest gave historical significance to his faith and courage.

David is another of whom it was said, *he had served*

*his own generation by the will of God* (Acts 13:36). For what will your generation be known? Will it be known for godliness? How are you serving your generation to lift it above the scrap heap of history?

## II. A Cycle of Despair and Deliverance - Judges 2:10-19

### A. A New Generation - Judges 2:10

*Another generation arose after that who knew not the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.*

#### 1. Need for education

“Christianity is always one generation from extinction” (Dr. Bill Bright, President, Campus Crusade for Christ). Knowledge passed from generation to generation is vital for progress. Education preserves knowledge, builds self-esteem, and fosters wisdom. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, before Christ, said, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Proverbs 1:7).

#### 2. Parental duty

Moses spoke for God in saying, *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... ,You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates* (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

God’s commands, statutes and judgments were meant to be a natural part of living, the very warp and woof of daily existence. To this day Jewish children are taught the scriptures from their earliest years. It has been the secret of their identity and cohesion, when for almost two thousand years they were without a homeland or nation. Is God’s word an integral part of your home and family life?

### B. Cycle Capsulated - Judges 2:11-19

Like the overture to an opera or a preview of coming attractions, the pattern for the next two or three hundred years of Israel's history is flashed across the screen of our mind. This will make it easy to recognize it as it occurs again and again in Judges. The major events in order of their appearance are:

#### 1. *The children of Israel did evil...and served the Baals*

##### a. Doing Evil

How did they “do evil”? It probably began in little ways, such as lingering at a pagan feast or ritual

out of curiosity, joining in the activities of Canaanite neighbors, lessening or ignoring the worship of the Lord, giving God less, rather than their best. Do you give God your best?

##### b. Serving the Baals

Baal worship characterized Canaanite religion. From archeological discoveries in recent years, we know that Baal worship was sexually obscene. The exposure to Canaanite idols seduced Israel for eight centuries until exile removed Israel from the land. The Baals and Asherahs were believed to be gods and goddesses responsible for the fertility of the earth. Human reproduction was considered linked to Baal's favor, and so sexual activity was part of the rituals.

These concepts and actions were very enticing to many “straitlaced” Israelites who were not close to God. Is life similar today? Even people with high moral standards can be tempted by the sensual world of indulgence and pleasure. Christians must be rooted and grounded in Christ and God's word and yielded to the Holy Spirit so that desires are satisfied in healthy ways.

##### c. Forsaking God

Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. One will be loved and the other hated (Luke 16:13). The closer the Israelites came to the Canaanite culture, the further they moved away from God. The more involved they became in Canaanite customs, the less involved they were with God. When this happens, eventually the conflict becomes intolerable. Are you more involved with God or the world?

#### 2. *They provoked the Lord to anger - 2:12*

God is a jealous God. He must have first place in the hearts of His people. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength* (Deuteronomy 6:5). There is no room for self-indulgent activities.

#### 3. *He delivered them into the hand of plunderers - 2:14*

In just three generations, God’s people went from slavery to freedom to slavery again. Their external defeat was evidence of their inner weakness. Lacking the moral fiber of godly devotion, they were unable to resist oppressors. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul describes our spiritual armor with which we resist the enemy. He says, *put on the breastplate of righteousness* in order to guard our heart and emotions (Ephesians 6:14). We need *the whole armor of God* (Ephesians 6:11,13).

The French philosopher, Voltaire, who was not a believer,

said, "The history of civilization is the hob-nailed boots going up the stairs, and the velvet slippers coming down." There is always a bully nation waiting to gain advantage over a weaker one. According to Edward Gibbon, (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire) "The Roman Empire was never conquered from without, it simply crumbled from within." According to this view, how are we faring as a nation?

4. *And they were greatly distressed* - Judges 2:15

With God's hand against them, due to their own choices, the people were miserable and cried out to God. It is always impressive to see how devout people can be when things go wrong. In World War II this was called "foxhole religion" because the soldiers in the foxholes, hiding from the enemy, anxious and with time to think, prayed and became more spiritual. Later, when they came home and things were better, many forgot the vows made in the foxholes.

5. *The Lord raised up judges who delivered them...* - 2:16

God's mercy is seen in His response to their cry. His answer was to raise up, call, and empower "judges" who delivered them. These were heroes and one heroine. Some had handicaps. Some felt unworthy or unable. But they were willing to be used, and they were victorious. From Othniel to Samuel they rescued their people from oppression to freedom, proving what God can do through one individual. God looks for availability more than ability.

6. *Yet they would not listen to their judges* - 2:17

Instead of being thankful and listening to the judges God provided to deliver them, *They played the harlot with other gods*. Instead of bowing down to God in gratitude, they bowed down to the pagan gods. Instead of following in the footsteps of the faithful generation, *They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers*

*walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so.*

What a waste when we do not learn from experience! No experience is wasted if we learn from it. Are you listening to what God is trying to teach you from your present experience so that you will not have to repeat it?

7. When the judge was dead they reverted and behaved more corruptly - Judges 2:19

*They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way* (2:19). They learned nothing from their hardship.

### III. A Response from God - Judges 2:20-23

A. God's Hot Anger Against Israel - Judges 2:20-21

God's anger was His righteous response to Israel's continuing sin and rebellion.

B. God's Purpose in Allowing Enemies to Remain - Judges 2:22-23

God, in His incredible power and holiness, uses even bad things for good. He would use the entrenched enemy to test Israel's faithfulness.

### Applications

1. Is God allowing some entrenched person or circumstance in your life to test your obedience? How will you show that you trust Him?
2. Do you notice any cycles of sin and rebellion in your life? What ungodly habit do you have that is so entrenched that you keep going back to it? Do not follow the example of the Israelites! Be thankful to God for all He has done for you. How will you show Him your gratitude through obedience to Him?



**DAY FOUR: Read Judges 3:12-25.**

9. Fill in the blanks.

Israel again \_\_\_\_\_ in the sight of the Lord. The Lord strengthened \_\_\_\_\_  
king of \_\_\_\_\_ against Israel. So Israel served him for \_\_\_\_\_ years

10. a. Who was the deliverer God raised up?

b. What tribe was he from?

c. What made him different from most other people? Do you think this was a disadvantage?

11. a. What did this judge do to deliver Israel?

b. Do you think that he was a wise man and used good judgment? Why or why not?

**DAY FIVE: Read Judges 3:26-31.**

12. Complete the following statements about Ehud.

a. He \_\_\_\_\_ to Seirah in Ephraim.

b. He \_\_\_\_\_ in the mountains of Ephraim.

c. He came down from the mountain with the children of Israel and \_\_\_\_\_ them.

d. He said “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

13. a. Find the area where the Moabites were located on your map. What are the names of any nearby seas or rivers?

b. What do you learn about the Moabites who were killed?

c. How long did Israel have rest after this?

14. a. What was the name of the next judge?

b. What did he do?

c. Find the area of the Philistines on your map. What are the names of any nearby seas or rivers?

15. Which judge so far has impressed you the most? Why?