

# Judges 02 - Imitating the Enemy; Obeying the Enemy; The Death of Joshua; Introduction to the Cycles of Apostasy and Deliverance

I. Israel deteriorates due to her failure to drive out the Canaanites (Judges 1:1—3:6)

(2) Spiritual failure (Judges 2:1—3:6)

(A) Angelic announcement of judgment (2:1-5)

(B) Godly conquest generation dies (2:6-10)

(C) Judges cycle described (2:11-19)

Judges 2 summarizes the events from Judges 3:1 to 16:1, 1434 BC to 1100 BC, a period of 331 years.

## Judges 2

(2) Spiritual failure (Judges 2:1—3:6)

(A) Angelic announcement of judgment (2:1-5)

**1** Now the **angel of the LORD** came up from **Gilgal** to **Bochim**. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you,

**1** Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you,

**1** Some time later, the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim and announced to Israel, "I brought you up from Egypt and led you into the land that I promised to your ancestors. I had told them, 'I'll never breach my covenant with you.

**1** And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

- "...angel of the LORD" - a Theophany; a visible and bodily appearance of the second person of the Trinity (before incarnation)

— Prominent during the time of Moses (Ex 3:2-15; Num 22:22-35) and Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15). Also appeared to Gideon (Judges 6:11-24) and to the parents of Samson (13:3-

21).

— He was Deity for He was called YHWH (Josh 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-24; Zech 3) and God (Gen 32:24-32; Ex 3:4), with divine attributes and prerogatives (Gen 16:13; 18:25; 48:16). Yet He was distinct from YHWH, thus indicating a plurality of Persons within the Godhead (Cf. Num 20:16; Zech 1:12-13).

— NT allusions suggest that the Angel of the Lord in the OT was Jesus Christ (Cf. John 12:31; 1 Cor 10:4; John 8:56; Heb 11:26)

— Note the 1st person grammar in this passage ("I," "my")

- This (v1-5) is the first of three confrontations between Israel and God in Judges (6:7-10; 10:1-6)

— These all show that Israel's failure to take the Land, as described in Judges 1, was not God's fault, but Israel's fault, due to disobedience

- "...Gilgal" - the last place He appeared (Joshua 5:13-15)

— This was not merely a geographical migration but also a spiritual one. Gilgal was where He appeared to Joshua, where God was with the Israelites due to their obedience in circumcision and keeping of the Passover

- "...Bochim" - means "weeping"

— Sin *a/ways* causes sorrow. Refusal to do battle with the Canaanites in our own lives always leads to Bochim: the place of sorrow and weeping.

- "...I will never break My covenant with you" - this is possibly a reference to the Land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, or a reference to the Mosaic Covenant, which stated that enjoyment of the Land was conditioned on obedience

2 and as for you, you shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; **what is this *thing that you have done?***

2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?

2 As for you, you must not make any treaties with the inhabitants of this land. Instead, tear down their altars.' But you haven't obeyed me. What have you done?

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

- In light of the three things God had done for Israel (v1), Israel had two obligations:

(1) Do not make a covenant with the Canaanites

(2) Break down their altars

— However, Israel failed in these obligations, in disobedience to God

- "...what is this *thing that you have done?*" - a rhetorical question, with a note of indignation; the sense is, "how could you have done this after everything I have done for

you?"

3 Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out from you; but they will become *like thorns* in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you.'"

3 Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become *as thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'"

3 Therefore I'm now saying, 'I won't expel them before you. Instead, they'll remain at your side, and their gods will ensnare you.'"

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

- Israel failed to rid themselves of two things that will now become a problem to them:

(1) They failed to get rid of the Canaanites, and now the Canaanites will become thorns to their sides

(2) They failed to break down the pagan altars, and now these will become snares to draw them into idolatry.

- As a result of this judgment, God will:

(1) God will cease working on Israel's behalf to drive out the Canaanites

(2) He will allow the Canaanites and their gods to have their way with Israel

— This judgment was a fulfillment of the threat found in Ex 23:20-33; 34:1-11, where God warned Israel that, if they did not obey God, He would not drive out the Canaanites. Instead, they would face an increasingly hostile Canaanite population.

4 Now when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people raised their voices and wept.

4 When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

4 Because the angel of the LORD said these things to all of the Israelis, the people wept out loud,

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

5 So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

5 which is why they named the place Bochim. And there they sacrificed to the LORD.

**5** And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

- The fact that the Israelites sacrificed at Bochim doesn't mean the tabernacle was there; it remained in Shiloh

— Normally the tabernacle would have been the location for sacrifices, however since the Angel of the Lord was a Theophany, the Shekinah Glory, the visible manifestation of God's

presence, was there, it was permissible to sacrifice

— This action will be repeated in Judges later (6:20,26,28; 13:16-20; 2 Sam 24:25). Any place where a Theophany, a visible manifestation of God appeared, it was permissible to perform a sacrifice at that place

— This further shows that the angel of Jehovah is indeed God Himself. However, Israel's revival was very short-lived.

### **The 4th of Four Stages of Failure: Obeying the Enemy**

The sin in our lives we fail to conquer will eventually conquer us. The people of Israel found themselves enslaved to one pagan nation after another as the Lord kept His word and chastened His people.

(B) Godly conquest generation dies (2:6-10)

6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went, each one to his inheritance, to take possession of the land.

6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.

6 After Joshua had dismissed the people, the Israelis returned to their respective inheritances to take possession of the land.

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

7 The people served the LORD during the entire lifetime of Joshua as well as the lifetimes of all the elders who outlived Joshua and who had observed all the great deeds that the LORD had done for Israel.

7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

- The purpose of this interruption to summarize Joshua's success and his death, was to provide recap the results of the wars with the Canaanites, and contrast the age that just passed with the one that was about to come.

— From the high spiritual content of the Book of Joshua, things progress to the apostasy evident throughout the Book of Judges

— From the generation of Joshua and the elders who knew the Lord, things move to the generation that did not know the Lord, either in salvation or in seeing His mighty works.

8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110.

8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.

8 But then Nun's son Joshua, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in **Timnath-heres**, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

9 They buried him in Timnath-heres, within the boundaries of his inheritance in the mountainous region<sup>6</sup> of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

- "...Timnath-heres" - elsewhere called Timnathserah; located about 18 miles north by northwest of Jerusalem

10 All that generation also were **gathered to their fathers**; and another generation rose up after them who did not know the LORD, nor even the work which He had done for Israel.

10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

10 After that whole generation had died, another generation grew up after them that was not acquainted with the LORD or with what he had done for Israel.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

- "...gathered to their fathers" - denotes a reunion in *Sheol* with those who have gone on before

- Three generations are noted in this passage:

— The generation of Joshua, a time of God's great works; they served God

— The second generation of elders, who had a memory of God's great works; they continued serving God

— The third generation, during the days after the surviving witnesses; they did not know of God's great works, and did not serve God. This is the result of the Joshua generation not teaching their children spiritual things (Deut 6:4-7; Joshua 4:19-23; Cf. Eph 6:4).

(C) Judges cycle described (2:11-19)

**11** Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the **Baals**,

**11** Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals,

**11** So the Israelis practiced what the LORD considered to be evil by worshiping Canaanite deities.

**11** And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

- "...Baals" - plural form is used, to denote all Canaanite deities

12 and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods from the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them; so they provoked the LORD to anger.

12 and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

12 They abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods from among the gods of the nations who surrounded them. They bowed down in worship of them, and by doing so angered the LORD.

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

- The Israelites actually bowed down before the foreign gods, expressing subjection to them, becoming their servants

13 They abandoned the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

13 As a result, they abandoned the LORD by serving both Baal and Ashtaroth.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

- Previously they had served God, now they directed the same activity toward these other gods

- The worship of Baal and Ashtaroth would have included temple prostitution, but did not require the rejection of Jehovah. It was an addition of Canaanite nature worship to the worship of Jehovah.

- Both Baal and Ashtaroth were carved stones representing phallic figures
- This worship was in direct violation of the Israelites' commitment recorded in Joshua 24:14-24

14 Then the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He handed them over to plunderers, and they plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around *them*, so that they could no longer stand against their enemies.

14 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around *them*, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

14 So in his burning anger against Israel, the LORD gave them into the domination of marauders who plundered them. The enemies who surrounded the Israelis controlled them, and they were no longer able to withstand their adversaries.

14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

- Two results (judgments) for their apostasy:

— God gave them over to the power of the plunderers

— God sold them into the power of their enemies, and Israel could no longer defend herself against them as they did in the days of Joshua

15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and just as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

15 Wherever they went, the LORD worked against them to bring misfortune, just as the LORD had warned, and just as the LORD had promised them. As a result, they suffered greatly.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

- God had become Israel's enemy

- Israel forsook what the Lord had said, so they forfeited what the Lord had promised. After succumbing to sin, they became enslaved by sin.

- Ps 106:34-42 is a poetic paraphrase of Judges 2:11-15

### **Five Reasons for Israel's Religious Failure**

(1) The fragmentation of the tribes led to an abandonment of Shiloh as the only center of worship.

(2) As the tribes moved into new territories, rather than defeating and destroying their enemies, they tried to establish peaceful coexistence with them, thus exposing themselves to Canaanite religions and cultural influences.

(3) Worshiping Baal, the god of fertility, began to look increasingly attractive as Israel tried to farm the rocky mountains while the Canaanites retained the fertile valleys (Cf. Jer 44:17-19).

(4) Proximity empowered the always-sensuous appeal of temple prostitution.

(5) Political association led to religious syncretism.

**16** Then the LORD raised up **judges** who **saved** them from the hands of those who plundered them.

**16** Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

**16** Then the LORD raised up leaders, who delivered Israel from domination by their marauders.

**16** Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

- "...judges" - *shaphat*, to save, rescue, vindicate, govern

— To put right what was wrong. This book will chronicle 13 of those "judges" (leaders); all diverse; all with limited victories; but, nevertheless, spelling out a symphony of defeat...

— Note that God was the One who raised up the judges...

- "...saved" - *yasha*, delivered, liberated; physical salvation, not spiritual

17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they committed infidelity with other gods and bowed down to them. **They turned aside quickly** from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do the same *as their fathers*.

17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do *as their fathers*.

17 But they didn't listen to their leaders, because they were committing spiritual immorality by following other gods and worshiping them. They quickly turned away from the road on which their ancestors had walked in obedience to the commands of the LORD. They didn't follow their example.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

- Israel's response to the divine provision of their human rescuers: first, they did not listen

— Israel tended to respond when the judge first appeared, but quickly fell into apostasy and idolatry when the judge died

— Israel acted like a prostitute: Israel is the Wife of Jehovah, and the gods of their new worship were lusty fertility gods, whose worship included erotic, cultic rituals

- "...They turned aside quickly" - portrays their enthusiasm, as if they could hardly wait to settle the Land so they could attach themselves to these exciting gods

18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who tormented and **oppressed** them.

18 When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

18 As a result, whenever the LORD raised up leaders for them, the LORD remained present with their leader, delivering Israel from the control of their enemies during the lifetime of that leader. The LORD was moved with compassion by their groaning that had been caused by those who were oppressing and persecuting them.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

- This verse describes the deliverance of the judges; this book will chronicle 13 of them (12 men and one woman)

— Rescuing people was not only the beginning of the judge's role, for as long as the judge judged, God kept Israel safe

- "...oppressed" - *lachat*, "to squeeze" or "to pressure"

— The Israelites were squeezed and pressed upon, thus oppressed

19 But it came about, when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their obstinate ways.

19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

19 However, after the leader had died, they would relapse to a condition more corrupt than their ancestors, following other gods, serving them, and worshiping them. They would not abandon their activities or their obstinate lifestyles.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

- Once the judge died, Israel turned back from their previous repentance and commitment, and "corrupted themselves more than their fathers"
- Each generation outdid the previous generation in their sinfulness

This verse sets the stage for interpreting the following narratives. Israel is depicted as increasingly Canaanized, spiraling downward into ever-worsening apostasy. There is indeed a cyclical pattern in the period of the judges of decline and rise, but the cycles themselves devolve on a downward pattern. The patterns repeat themselves, but, the behavior of the Israelites intensifies so that each new repentance does not reach the spiritual level of the previous ones.

Over the course of time, the apostasy grew worse until the judges, such as Jephthah and Samson, themselves become part of the problem if not the cause of the problem, as with Gideon. The judges, then, represent a stop-gap intervention by God into the unending process of Canaanization. They temporarily put up a dam to stop the apostasy, but each time the dam breaks and the iniquity rushes forth with greater force than before. For the author of Judges, the ultimate solution is a good king and a central government.

(D) Test as reason for Canaanites being left in the land (2:20—3:6)

20 So the anger of the LORD burned against **Israel**, and He said, "Because this nation has violated My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice,

20 So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice,

20 In his burning anger against Israel, the LORD said, "Because the people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their ancestors to keep, and because they haven't obeyed me,

**20** And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

- God's indictment of Israel...

- "...Israel" - *ha-goy ha-zeh*, God calls Israel by a term that shows God's alienation from Israel

— The term *goy* (nation, Gentile) is seldom used of Israel, but when it is, it often carries the concept of reprimand for becoming like a Gentile nation (a nation that does not have a covenant relationship with God)

— God accused Israel of violating the Law of Moses ("transgressed my covenant")

21 I in turn will no longer drive out from them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

21 I'm also going to stop expelling any of the nations that remained after Joshua died.

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

- The cessation of God's preemptive assault on Israel's enemies

- God places a moratorium on His own involvement in the execution of holy war against the Canaanites

- Throughout Judges, in all the wars, there is never a conquest of new territory. With the overthrow of an oppressor or the occupation of territory, there is only a regaining of an area Joshua had already conquered.

- Any "new territory" taken is only a part within a denoted tribal territory, which the tribe had failed to capture, like the Jezreel Valley. But there is no expansion of Israel's borders.

- This is not a contradiction of Ex 23:29-30 or Deut 7:22. There is a difference between not exterminating the Canaanites all in one year and not exterminating them at all.

- Earlier, God said He would not clear the land right away, but step by step, so the land would not become despoiled. So one motive has to do with the well-being of the land; but the other has to do with the provision of divine discipline. All this shows the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant.

- The threat here was not the suspension of wrath, but of any further extermination. The implication here is that the Lord will not exterminate any more of these nations in the Land, as long as Israel persists in idolatry. But, if Israel repents, the program of extermination will continue.

- It reaffirms the fact that the enjoyment of the Land was conditioned on obedience

22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

22 That way, I'll use them to demonstrate whether or not Israel will keep the LORD's lifestyle by walking on that road like their ancestors did."

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

- The reason for God's moratorium is that He planned to use enemy nations in His judgment of Israel

— Thus, there were two reasons for God's not driving the Canaanites out: (1) To punish Israel for her sin and, (2) to test Israel: Will they repudiate idolatry and keep the Law of Moses?

23 So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and **He did not hand them over to Joshua.**

23 So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

23 So the LORD caused those nations to remain and did not expel them quickly. He did not give them into Joshua's control.

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

- "...He did not hand them over to Joshua" - this shows God's control over the destiny of nations

— If Joshua did not finish the task of driving out the enemy, it was because God had not delivered them into his hand

— The reason for this was to allow God to "test" Israel (v22)