

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2

JUDGES

CHAPTER 2

Judges 2:10-11, *“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. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.”*

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 flashed back to the time when Judah claimed the land inheritance allotted to them, and also sadly recorded that the tribes had not fully complied with the commands of the LORD their God – that they should utterly destroy all the Canaanites. In the opening verses of Chapter 2, the LORD expressed His displeasure and disappointment with Israel. Under the leadership of Joshua, the children of Israel obeyed and stayed true to the LORD. But the present generation “forgot” about the LORD and became the “prodigal nation”.

The LORD gave them over to the ways, which Israel chose to go even though it was self-destructive. The LORD permitted this so that Israel would learn her lesson the hard way. However, the LORD would be true to His covenant-promise and in His own time and ways, Israel would be brought back to Him. In the meantime, the restraint was removed and the slippery slide of Israel’s spiritual decline began. Time and again, the children of Israel then went through a cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, restoration and rest. This vicious cycle lasted more than 350 years. They enjoyed peace for a period and when the judge, who ruled them died, they slid back to their sinful ways.

A sad cycle of never learning and able to come to the knowledge of the truth ensued for Israel. A promising start ended swiftly with a failed and rebellious generation that spawned generations of spiritual decline and deaths.

OUTLINE

- a) The LORD’s visit and rebuke (2:1-5)
- b) A New Generation Arose (2:6-10)
- c) Covenant Broken – (2:11-13)
- d) The LORD expresses His wrath (2:14-15)
- e) The LORD keeps His covenant (2:16-18)

f) The LORD tests Israel
(2:19-23)

The faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God and the unfaithfulness of His covenant-breaking people begin in this chapter.

The LORD's Visit and Rebuke
– 2:1-5

An “angel of the LORD” came up from Gilgal to Bochim (v.1). This was an appearance of the “angel of the LORD.” The precise nature of the appearance is not described, except that it was in human form. The first identity of the “angel of the LORD” can be correctly inferred from what He said. He did not say, “God made you to go up out of Egypt...” but He said: “*I* made you to go up out of Egypt.” He used the first person throughout: “*I* swear... and *I* said, *I* will never break **my** covenant with you.... have not obeyed **my** voice.... wherefore *I* also said, *I* will not drive them out from before you” (italics for emphasis, added). This means that the “angel of the LORD” was none other than The LORD Jesus Christ! For the LORD to appear temporarily in human form to men must have meant that it was very important. This was certainly true of this incident.

The fact that the LORD came from Gilgal to Bochim was not a mere choice. Gilgal was a place where great and important events transpired between the LORD and the children of Israel. It was the first place where the children of Israel set foot on the

Promised Land proper after the miraculous crossing over the Jordan River (Joshua 4:14-17). It was there that the LORD told Joshua to erect a memorable pillar of twelve stones (Joshua 4:1-8). It was there when the LORD told them to circumcise the men, and they obeyed, and after which they renewed the observance of the Passover. It was there that the LORD Himself appeared to Joshua as “captain of the host of the LORD” promising victory in his conquest of Canaan (Joshua 5:14-15). Gilgal was a place of blessing and victory.

Bochim (pronounce, *bo-keem*) means “weeping”. After the LORD rebuked the children of Israel, they wept. The LORD reminded them of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and the fulfilment of His promise to bring them to the land, which they now lived. The LORD reassured them that He would never break His covenant-promise with them. The LORD also reminded them of His commands that they should not have any treaty with the Canaanites and also to break down their pagan altars. The LORD rebuked them for their disobedience to His commands. The LORD then pronounced His judgement upon them that He would not drive the inhabitants off the land, but they would be as “thorns in your [their] sides” and that their gods would be a snare to them (v. 3)¹. Note that

¹ The LORD just reiterated the command He gave at Mount Sinai (Exodus 23:32): Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they

the charge was about the failure of the children of Israel to drive out the Canaanites; it was about their disobedience to His commands. In view of the fact that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD, God did not turn His back on His people. The LORD appeared to them at Bochim not to tell them He was going to break His covenant with them, but to rebuke them so that they would repent and return to obey His commands.

If children of Israel chose to disobey the LORD and to live according to their own ways, then they had to live with the consequences of that decision. The LORD told them that He would not drive the Canaanites out of the Land. The LORD used two images to describe the consequences of their disobedience and unbelief. The inhabitants of the land would be “as thorns in your sides” and “their gods shall be a snare” to them. A thorn does not immediately cause serious damage, but it is a constant irritant that detracts and wears a person down. A snare catches a person off guard when he least expects it, imprisoning him suddenly and completely.² The children of Israel had to experience the eventual consequences of compromise.

make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

² Harris, Brown & Moore, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, p.152.

When the people realised what the LORD was saying, they began to weep. They then offered sacrifices to the LORD. The children of Israel had a second chance provided their weeping and the offering of sacrifices were the expression of true and real repentance. The children of Israel did the things that God expected them to do — weep in repentance, and offer sacrifices to the LORD. But they would continue to do what they had been doing. Outwardly they showed a form of godliness that paid lip service to the LORD God, but denied the power thereof. God cannot be mocked for a man shall reap what he sows.

A New Generation Arose – 2:6-10

This section looks back to the time when Joshua was the military and spiritual leader of Israel. The Land had been conquered and the children of Israel went to the portion of land, which had been allotted to them. The people served the LORD during the time when Joshua was with them. This is a great testimony of Joshua. It does not refer to his military skill as a strategist, or his gifted administrative skill as an organiser. But it testified to his effort to keep the children of Israel in the place of God’s blessing, for the people served the LORD all the days of his life. This was also true of the elders who outlived Joshua and who had witnessed all the stupendous and miraculous works the LORD had done for Israel. Joshua died at the ripe old age of 110 and was buried in Timnath-heres in the mount of Ephraim. All that

generation who had been with him had also passed away.

Now a new generation of Israelites emerged who did not “know” the LORD. They did not also “know” the works, which He had done for Israel. This intimates that there was a breakdown in transferring of the knowledge of the LORD their God to the new generation of people. The priests who lived among the twelve tribes had the responsibility and duty to teach the people the “whole counsel of God.”³ The fathers of the people had the sacred duty of reaffirming the work of the priests.⁴ Apparently they had failed to do it. This new generation had not forgotten Israel’s basic confessional statement of faith: “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4). They had not forgotten the LORD. Rather they refused to acknowledge Him as their LORD and God.

The apostasy of the children of Israel had nothing to do with the geography and economy of the Land. They had forgotten the LORD their God. They compromised with the inhabitants of the Land because they rejected God’s truth and His holiness. They had become complacent about

³Leviticus 10:11 And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

the only One, Living and True God. They refused to walk in fellowship with Him. They took many things for granted. It took only three generations from Moses to the present, for the children of Israel to suffer from “spiritual amnesia” and to surrender their rich religious heritage.

Covenant Broken – 2:11-13

Israel’s apostasy became full bloom. They were not truly repentant when they wept and offered sacrifices before the LORD. Their repentance was superficial. And Israel sinned “in the sight of the LORD.” This was the height of disrespect for the LORD. They did the very thing that the LORD had warned them not to do. They had been commanded not to worship and serve other gods and not even to bow down before them. The children of Israel were guilty of these very sins, and these deeds were “evil” in the sight of God. They worshipped and served Baalim.⁵

The children of Israel forsook the LORD their God and followed other gods. They were insane to commit this abominable sin. The LORD had delivered them from Egypt where they endured the most grievous oppression, and were subjected to the most degrading servitude from which they could never have rescued

⁵ The name ‘Baalim’ is the plural form of ‘Baal’. It means ‘lord’, or ‘master.’ It is the general name of the gods of the Canaanites. Normally, the word is used with another word to give a more specific meaning, like, Baal-peor, Baal-zebub, Baal-berith, Baal-zephon.

themselves. And the LORD with a display of stupendous power, justice and mercy, delivered them. And they forgot and forsook Him! They “followed” the gods of the people round about them, and “bowed themselves” to them. What could be more foolish!

The gods were idols, the products of a craftsman, made from wood, stone or iron. *They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them* (Psalm 115:5-8). When the new generation of Israelites did not “know” the LORD, apostasy set in. The Canaanite gods were attractive to them. They could see the idols, which they placed on altars high above the ground. The Canaanite gods appealed to their senses. Baal was the sun-god their protector. Ashtaroth, the Canaanite goddess of fertility and sex, was the consort of Baal. Syncretism had rapidly crept in to suffocate Israel’s monotheistic worship.

The LORD Expresses His Wrath – 2:14-15

The children of Israel provoked the LORD to anger because the LORD is a holy and jealous God. The LORD pronounced His judgement upon the children of Israel delivering

them into the hands of the raiders who would periodically attack and plunder their goods. The LORD sold them to their enemies who were to be their masters instead. They were no longer strong and mighty as when the LORD had been with them. They became weak and prey to the people around them. Wherever they went, the LORD would not bless them. The hand of the LORD which once protected and gave them power over their enemies, was now turned against them. The LORD used the Canaanites on all sides to chastise the children of Israel until they acknowledged Him and cried to Him for deliverance. The LORD was not only *not* with them but was also against them.

The LORD Keeps His Covenant – 2:16-18

“Nevertheless” is a word of relief, of mercy in the present context. The LORD raised “judges” who would deliver His people from their raiders and enemies. These “judges” were not like the modern judges. They were chosen and specially appointed by the LORD to deliver the children of Israel from their adversaries. The LORD their God is both merciful and long-suffering, not desiring that any should perish, but they all would come to repentance - about turn from sin and turn back to God.

The children of Israel listened to God when the judges were alive. They persisted in “whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them” after the judges were gone.

Worshipping gods other than the LORD God is termed as spiritual adultery, fornication and whoredom. Israel was guilty of committing these sins against the LORD. They deserved the death penalty. But “it repented the LORD” (v.18). The LORD changed His purpose not to punish them because of “their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.” They cried to the LORD to deliver them from their enemies. And for the duration of the governorship of the judges, the people followed the LORD. Yet, when the judge died, they returned to their old corrupt ways. They were a stubborn people.

The LORD Tests Israel – 2:19-23

Rebellion quickly occurred again. Their evil practices and ways were even more corrupt than their fathers (v.19). The LORD was angry again towards the children of Israel because, once again, they sinned against Him by breaking His covenant and disobeying Him. The LORD resolved not to drive out the remaining inhabitants of the Land which were left for the individual tribes to destroy.

Instead, the LORD allowed these people to live among the Israelites in order to test them whether they would keep the way of the LORD and walk therein (v.21). The father of the prodigal son gave to his son all the inheritance due to him and his son left him. It hurts the father but the hope of the father is that his son might learn

the truth and return to him one day. The son had to learn the truth the hard way. The LORD was doing the same to Israel, His chosen people. They had rejected and followed the ways of the Canaanites and had to learn the hard way.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The special revelation given about the LORD our God is that He is a long-suffering and merciful God. God Himself assures that He will never, *never* break His covenant-promise which He made with the children of Israel. If Israel is faithless, He will still remain faithful. Now, how do we know that our sins have been forgiven? We know because God declares it in His Word. How can we know that we have eternal life and a place in His everlasting Kingdom? We know because God said so in His Word. He never goes back on His Word and we can completely trust it. There is however one important thing which we need to ensure. While God is true to His Word, are we true to our confession about God and all that He says in His Word about us?

Gary Inrig in his commentary on this chapter writes about this second generation, which he terms the “Second-Generation Syndrome”. He says the second generation has a natural tendency to accept the status quo and to lose the vision of the first generation. The parents’ fervour for the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the children’s formalism and the

grandchildren’s apathy. This syndrome is illustrated in the book of Judges. Already in this chapter, when Joshua and all the elders who were his contemporaries passed away, the next generation who knew not the LORD began to stray away and compromise with the beliefs and practices of the other peoples that were diametrically against the LORD their God. Sin has a way of desensitising our mind, heart and will. If it is left to its encroaching influence, the person would gradually and eventually self-destruct.

We thank God that He is Sovereign. Sometimes He allows us to make our own choices including those choices that would hurt us. But He is still in control. He lets us go through the pain and suffering so that we will learn what is good and acceptable to God. He accomplishes His purpose in this way. So it was with the children of Israel. God allowed the Canaanites to be a thorn in their sides and a snare in their path so that they would learn that the LORD was their most powerful, just, holy, loving and caring God.

For the church to have mature believers, its members must know God and His will through diligent and intense study of His Word. We have read how the “new generation” of Israelites fell away and sinned against God, and suffered pain and great loss. If we the church and all her members are to be strong and to be in the favour of the LORD our God enjoying His blessings, we must be serious about studying His Word in order to

know and experience Him. The pastors, elders, deacons and other leaders of the church have a sacred duty to impart the Word of God to the next generation. They must set the example. In this regard, this is also true of all Christian parents who want their children to know God and walk in His ways. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 2:1-5; Joshua 5:1-15, 1 Samuel 15:22.

TUESDAY: Judges 2:6-10; Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 2:11-15; Malachi 2:17; Romans 1:25.

THURSDAY: Judges 2:16-18; 2 Timothy 2:13; Psalm 106:34-45.

FRIDAY: Judges 2:19-23; Daniel 4:17; Acts 17:28.

Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn about the relationship between blessings and God’s approval of us?

2. What important message did the Angel of the LORD tell the Israelites in 2:1-3, and how did they respond (2:4)? Do you think that this emotional reaction indicates repentance? Why/why not?

3. How could a generation grow up and not know the LORD and His works, which He had done? What could possibly be the cause of it?

4. In Judges 2 what steps of downward spiral can be learned that lead to the moral collapse of any society or nation?

5. Why does God permit people whom He loves to hurt themselves?

6. What specific judgement upon Israel did God express in 2:20-22? What reasons did God give for it?

7. What important truths are revealed about God's character and personality in this chapter?
