

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"Apostasy and Repentance"

Judges 10:6-18

Introduction

1. Minor judge, Jair, died after 22 years of leadership (10:3-5). Israel reverted to her sinful ways (10:6). The cycle of degradation, enslavement, and final deliverance commenced again. Oh, if only Israel would keep her priorities right! The same is the problem for believers today.
2. Up to this hour, God had worked miracles for Israel in her international relationships. From the depths of dreadful subjugation, the nation had time and again been delivered. Peace had reigned. Then sin came tumbling in on her! She had not learned to keep Him always in the imagination of her heart (1 Chron. 29:18).
3. So, here is the chronicle of departure from the Lord again. But there is a turning to Him for help. In mercy He replies affirmatively. He raises up a despised man for their deliverance. What a mighty God we have! He is always so full of mercy! Here are lessons to learn:

1. APOSTASY brings DEGRADATION v. 6.

The general statement is made: Israel did evil in the sight of God. This is backsliding. It is apostasy! The form it took is revealed:

a. They served Baal. This is the Canaanite god of storm and rain. He is the son of El, chief of Canaan. This religion included nature worship, immoral deities, prostitute goddesses, cultic bulls and serpents.

b. They served Ashtaroth. She was the Canaanite goddess of fertility, love and war (2:13). Another female deity was Asherah, wife or consort of El (6:25-28). Anath was also a female goddess and may have been the queen of heaven (Jer. 44:19).

c. They served gods of nations. Those listed included Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistines. In doing all of this, they obviously forsook God and did not serve Him. Their priorities had been abused!

2. APOSTASY brings SUBJUGATION vv. 7-9.

In view of Israel's persistent apostasy, God brought judgment upon them in the form of Philistine and Ammonite pressure. This is described as:

a. Vexation The verb employed (v. 8) means to break or dash into pieces. Here it is used metaphorically to mean harass or oppress.

b. Oppression This verb is related to the previous one and virtually bears the same meaning. The double mention of the thought impresses the matter.

c. Compression The verb "distressed" (v. 9) means to bind together, to roll in a bundle and be hostile to. The adverb "sore" adds the idea of quantity. Israel was surely in a difficult situation.

3. APOSTASY may bring CONFESSION vv. 10-16.

There are some outstanding words of deep heart concern expressed by Israel in the face of their problems:

a. They cried The verb used here means to express a cry of complaint. They implored God!

b. They sinned To sin means to miss the mark. They did this respecting God!

c. They relinquished This is what they did with God. They forsook Him. They left Him! The big thing here is that they admitted it. They gave the affirmative side to this negative: they served Baal!

d. They committed The phrase "do...unto us whatsoever seems good unto Thee" shows that Israel was completely at the mercy of God. They knew it and said so!

NOTE: Israel's confession before God and apparent genuineness brought a "change" in God's attitude toward them (cf. vv. 11-13 with 16). The verb "grieved" (v. 13) means that God's arm was cut short! He had no power (reverently stated) and was weak over the misery or trouble of Israel. It is a unique phrase to show that when men humble themselves before God, He moves toward them in conciliation! Repentance from the heart is acknowledged before a holy God! For a similar situation, see Jonah 3:10.

4. APOSTASY may bring EXAMINATION vv. 17, 18.

Israel had repented. God had moved toward them again in concern. Now came the test. Was Israel really repentant? The test would be given: a battle between Israel and Ammon. The Ammonites were related to the Moabites (Gen. 19:33-38). Their capital city was modern Amman. They now became the primary antagonist to Israel. Would Israel remain in a repentant attitude before the Lord and gain a victory over the enemy? This was the posed question. True godly relationships endure trials!

Conclusion There is an enormous amount of truth to be learned from Israel's erratic history of unbelief (Judges). Certainly primary above all else is this: God is moved by the repentant heart of those who sin against Him. Now, He will receive you on those terms: repent and believe!