

b. They went a whoring v. 17.

The point here is not only physical adultery, but this is certainly involved, but the point is spiritual. Why? The text says so! They went "after other gods." Spiritual adultery is a heinous sin before God. He is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5; 34:14).

c. They bowed down vv. 17, 19.

Here is an act of worship. Israel so turned from the true and living God that she found herself at the feet of false gods! Wait a minute, friend, for so it is with so many. Their priority with the true God and His Son Jesus Christ is like that of Israel. They worship all sorts of things, places, and persons. The Lord is not LORD! This IS idolatry.

d. They turned quickly vv. 17, 19.

Paul tells of the Thessalonians turning to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9-10). This is just the opposite. The additive "quickly" shows the fickle notions of men. It is difficult to find stable established people!

e. They corrupted themselves v. 19.

The verb here means to act wickedly, to destroy one's way or to pervert. It is a form of self-destruction. The positive side to this is seen in "following" other gods and "serving" them. The point is: Israel did not alone turn from the true God; she positively moved in the wrong direction.

f. They ceased not v. 19.

They did not move from their evil doings nor make any changes from their stiff-necked and stubborn ways. The verb "fall" is used for the idea of "cease." The "stand" of the nation was entirely wrong.

NOTE: This whole list of actions by the people may be summarized in the word of the text: "transgressed" (v. 20). They jumped over the covenant of the Lord.

Conclusion What stands written stands written. Israel is indicted. God is vindicated. The facts are clear. Oh, beloved friend, how do these truths affect you? May your soul not rest without full obedience to Him. Amen.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"The Role of the Judges"

Judges 2:14-23

Introduction

1. God exercised Himself to intervene in behalf of the nation (v. 1). It was He Who sought to bring the people into the land which had been promised unto them.
2. Instruction was given as to how the land was to be occupied (v. 2). But there was failure and rejection of God's obvious plan. This brought problems (v. 3).
3. As a result of the difficulties over the occupation of the land, the people repented (v. 4). Unfortunately, this was not long-lived (vv. 7-11). Their tears of repentance were soon turned to idolatry (vv. 12, 13). It was a sad end for a nation which could have enjoyed so much!
4. Now what happens? God is not idle. He has a purpose to fulfill and does. See how it is done. Here are the facts:
 1. GOD'S HEART--moved vv. 14, 15, 20.

Two items which demonstrate God's distress over the events in the nation are these:

a. His anger vv. 14, 20.

The word for "anger" is the word for "nose." So it is that the "nose" of the Lord manifested its rejection of the behavior of the nation! The verb associated with this means to "be kindled" or "inflamed." This is not an insignificant response from the Lord (Jehovah, the covenant keeping God!). To those who only see God's love, it must be reaffirmed that He is a God in Whom there is perfect justice. This demands righteous anger over sin!

b. His antipathy v. 15.

There it is plainly written. God moved with "evil" against the nation. Rather than the blessing of God, He now allowed the nation to experience His judgment. It must never be suggested that sin does not have its penalty. Here is an excellent illustration of the facts!

2. GOD'S HAND--acted vv. 14, 21, 22, 23.

Several specific actions are noted to show this utter

displeasure of the Lord against the nation.

a. He delivered them v. 14.

Here God is represented as "giving" Israel into the hands of "plundering" enemies. The cognate words are used here: "spoilers...spoil." The enemy was given an advantage over the nation!

b. He sold them v. 14.

Like Joseph, so the nation is sold here. This judgment was so firm that the nation was impotent to resist the enemy. How different this is from the record accomplished under Joshua and the Lord (Josh. 10:42). Failure on the vertical level of relationship resulted in failure on the horizontal level.

c. He left them vv. 21, 23.

This is a matter of insult added to injury. God put the nation into the hands of the enemy. But more than that, He did not allow the nation to overpower the enemy. There was no hurry on God's part to rid Israel of her thorns (v. 3). The hurt done had to be endured! Disobedience ended in distress (v. 15). This verb means "to bind up, bind together." It has the nation being pressed, straightened, and therefore describes her in great trouble. She was in anguish.

d. He proved them v. 22.

The verb "prove" comes from a root meaning to "smell" as if to try by the smell. God's actions are explained in this verse. The intent was to find out whether the nation would respond to His rebuke and keep His way. How often God's ways are misinterpreted! His goal is nearness to Himself. Unhappily, men are often turned more against the Lord by the very means which He intends to draw them unto Himself. It is for us to believe the Scripture goals and not to fall prey to the whims of the human heart!

3. GOD'S WILL--provided vv. 16, 18.

a. He raised up judges vv. 16, 18.

The term "judge" was ordinarily used of a person in Israel who was assigned the responsibility of making a decision between two alternatives (Deut. 16:18). The use

of the word, however, in this book is somewhat more. Here were men who actually served as civil and military leaders in the nation. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that this was a distinct period of Israelite history, the period of the judges (Judges 2:16-19; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam. 7:11; 2 Chron. 17:10; 2 Kings 23:22). It is probably dated 1390 to 1050 B.C. If Eli and Samuel are included as judges, then there were 14 of them. They were God's men for the time. The Lord always has been in the business of raising up leaders for His people and work.

b. He was with judges v. 18.

This is a distinct phrase. It means that the judges did not operate in their own power. When God raised them up, He was with them! That is a good word to mark. When God calls a man, He provides for that man to do His work and will. This is a principle on which to assume the Lord operates because He has recorded it here!

Note: The rationale behind the presence of the judges is indicated as being the Lord's gracious response to what He saw going on in the nation. They were being "oppressed" and "vexed." This grieved Him and He responded with pity and compassion. This state of circumstances moved Him toward the nation. Hence, the judges! Although the situation was brought on by the Lord because of sin, the treatment of the nation by the enemy moved Him toward the nation! This is the same way the Lord "repented" when Nineveh repented (Jonah 3:10). The changed situation with them caused Him to respond in a different mode. Our Bibles have it rendered "repent", but it is in no way a change of mind for the Lord respecting His original intent: judgment. Circumstances have changed and this appears to cause Him to change.

4. GOD'S WORD--rejected vv. 17, 19, 20.

Here is a heart-breaking series of verbs. They show that Israel gave little evidence of response to God and His purpose for them. It was THEY who turned against the Lord despite His overpowering mercy toward them! No matter what He did, they went headlong in disobedience. Look at their record:

a. They hearkened not vv. 17, 20.

Neither the judges (v. 17) nor the voice of the Lord (v. 20) was heeded. This is the crucial and critical issue. When ears are deaf, then feet go astray!