



### Time to Reflect

- Are we totally faithful to God in our daily living? Are there areas where we are currently struggling?
- After all they had experienced, and the faithful leadership that they were offered, why did a change of leadership prove so devastating for the Israelites?

Last week we looked at Judges 1 and were reminded just how important it is to seek God, and then be faithful to the guidance that He offers us. We were also encouraged to spend time in God's Word and be faithful in applying it to our daily lives. This week we turn our attention to Judges 2 and we encounter themes of disobedience and defeat. We see how far the Israelites drifted from God, how they embraced 'friendship with the world,' and how the Book of Judges becomes structured around a pattern that we could describe as a series of ever-decreasing circles.

**"...the faith and courage of the judges should encourage us to live for God in this age of faithlessness and compromise."**

(Simon. J Robinson, *Opening Up Judges* p13)

### Specifics

- Judges 2 begins with a visit from the angel of the Lord. This manner of appearance is often referred to as a theophany, a visible manifestation of God.
- In the Old Testament, the 'angel of the Lord' is generally interpreted to be the Lord himself. The fact that this appearance occurred, and the nature of the message that was proclaimed, highlight to us just how serious things had become in Israel.
- (v1-2) compare the faithfulness of God with the faithlessness of the Israelites. Note how the message began. "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give your ancestors." This is followed rather swiftly with the beautiful declaration, "I will never break my covenant with you."
- Here we see the faithfulness of God. But our attention is quickly drawn to the Israelites. Despite all that God had done for them we are told, "Yet you have disobeyed me." This reality check is followed by a soul-searching question. "Why have you done this?"
- Warren Wiersbe writes, "The Lord had kept His covenant with Israel; not one word of His promises had failed (Josh.23:5, 10, 15; 1 Kings 8:56). He has asked them to keep their covenant with Him by obeying His law and destroying the Canaanite religious system...But Israel disobeyed the Lord and not only spared the Canaanites and their godless religious system but also began to follow the enemy's lifestyle themselves.<sup>1</sup>"
- At the very beginning of this week's passage we are challenged to reflect on our own relationship with God and our faithfulness to Him. Remember how Mother Teresa once said, "God didn't call me to be successful, He called me to be faithful."

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Available: Judges* (Colorado Springs: David. C. Cook, 1994), p25.

- The message that the Israelites received was both clear and challenging. Having been exposed in their failure to be faithful to God, the consequences of their action was highlighted (v3). The nations in the land of Canaan would become thorns that would afflict Israel and traps that would ensnare them.
- This led to the people of Israel weeping aloud (v4) and they moved to offer sacrifices to God (v5). Simon Robinson refers to this reaction as crocodile tears. He writes, **“On the surface this seems to be a positive response to God’s word. But as we continue to read the book we will see that it was an empty gesture, because there was no change in their lives or their attitude towards God.”**<sup>2</sup>
- At the beginning of Judges we had a sense of optimism. The new generation sought the Lord (1:1) and appeared to be ready to face the challenge of consolidating Joshua’s conquest of the Promised Land. But within the first two chapters we are left focusing on news of faithlessness, defeat and despair – a pattern that will become all too familiar in the Book of Judges.
- (v6-9) set the context for what will immediately follow. We are reminded of the faithful generation of Israelites, those who had fought with Joshua and conquered the Promised Land. Note (v7), **“The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord has done for Israel.”**
- How quickly the faithfulness of Joshua, and the elders who served alongside him, was forgotten. Warren Wiersbe reflects, **“At that point in Israel’s history, Joshua stood next to Moses as a great hero, and yet the new generation didn’t recognize who he was or what he had done.”**<sup>3</sup>
- The Israelites appear to have forgotten what the Lord had done (v6-10). It is so important to remember the faithfulness of God, to praise Him for all that He has done, and allow these experiences to encourage us when we find the journey of life to be challenging.
- The Israelites also forsook what the Lord had said. Did they have any recollection of the ‘farewell speeches’ of Joshua (Josh.23-24)? If they had any understanding of those speeches, the Israelites would have recalled the Law of Moses. In his final messages Joshua drew the attention of the people to their covenant with God and the responsibility that they had in keeping that covenant.
- (v10) is a heartbreaking indication of how far the Israelites had drifted from God. **“...another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”**
- Wiersbe offers a challenge. **“When you forget the Word of God, you are in danger of forsaking the God of the Word which explains why Israel turned to the vile and vicious worship of Baal.”**<sup>4</sup>
- The remain verses of our passage (v11-23) show the development of a pattern of behaviour that was embraced by the new generation of Israelites. This pattern appears time and again throughout the Book of Judges.
- The people of Israel break their covenant with God and they turn to idol worship. They are punished by God and after a period of suffering they cry out to God for help. He hears their prayers and sends a judge (an upholder and administrator of God’s law) to deliver them. No sooner has the judge died than the people return to idol worship and the same pattern of events occurs, although with increasing severity.
- This pattern is severe, heartbreaking and all too familiar. So often in our world today, people turn to God in times of crisis but their faithfulness soon dwindles when their challenges pass.
- This week the Book of Judges challenges us to look at our own lives, our own walk with God. Are we truly faithful to God and His Word? Are there areas in our lives that need attention?
- We are encouraged to embrace faithfulness as opposed to engage in compromise.

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<sup>2</sup> Simon Robinson, *Opening Up Judges* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), p13.

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, *Be Available: Judges*, p26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p27.