

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
1-17-24

Judges 2

The Angel Of The LORD At Bokim – Verses 1-3

¹ The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, ²and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.’ Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? ³And I have also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.’”

2:1-3 This event marks a significant change in Israel’s relationship with God. At Mount Sinai, God made a sacred and binding agreement with the Israelites called a covenant (Exodus 19: 5-8). God’s part was to make Israel a special nation (see the note on Genesis 12: 1-3), to protect them, and to give them unique blessings for following him. Israel’s part was to love God and obey his laws. But because they rejected and disobeyed God, the agreement to protect them was no longer in effect. But God wasn’t going to abandon his people. They would receive wonderful blessings if they asked God to forgive them and sincerely followed him again. Although God’s agreement to help Israel conquer the land was no longer in effect, his promise to make Israel a nation through whom the whole world would be blessed (fulfilled in the Messiah’s coming) remained valid. God still wanted the Israelites to be a holy people (just as he wants us to be holy), and he often used oppression to bring them back to him, just as he warned he would (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). The book of Judges records a number of instances where God allowed his people to be oppressed so that they would repent of their sins and return to him. Too often people want God to fulfill his promises while excusing themselves from their responsibilities. Before you claim God’s promises, ask, “Have I done my part?”

2:1 The angel of the LORD was either (1) a divine messenger sent by God or (2) God appearing in a human form. In either case, the message was so important that God used a special visitation to communicate the seriousness of breaking the agreement with him. Did this angel speak to all two million Israelites at once? One possible answer is that the angel spoke only to the tribal leaders as representatives of the entire nation. (We say, “The president addressed the nation,” even though he doesn’t speak to each individual.) Possibly, by miraculous means, every Israelite actually heard the speech. One way or the other, it is certain that God wanted all the people to know the consequences of their sins.

2:3 No one can escape the consequences of disobeying God. The Israelites not only disobeyed, but often rejected him. Numbers 33: 55 is one of several verses predicting what would happen if Israel disobeyed God. Israel could not say it hadn’t been warned. We also have been warned. We can learn to obey God’s clear warnings in the Bible, or we can experience the devastating consequences of our wrong actions. If we choose to disobey God’s commands, we can be certain that the consequences will be regrettable.

The People Respond With Weeping And Sorrow – Verses 4-6

⁴When the angel of the LORD had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud, ⁵and they called that place Bokim. There they offered sacrifices to the LORD. ⁶After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance.

2:4 The people of Israel knew they had sinned, and they wept loudly, responding with deep sorrow. Because we have a tendency to sin, only repentance is the true measure of spiritual sensitivity. Repentance means not only confessing sins and asking God to forgive us, but also abandoning our sinful ways. But we cannot do this sincerely unless we are truly sorry for our sinful actions. Tears alone are not enough. When we are aware that we have done wrong, we should admit it plainly to God rather than try to cover it up or hope we can get away with it.

Disobedience and Defeat – Verses 7-10

⁷The 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 had done for Israel. ⁸Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ⁹And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

2:7 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua: Joshua's legacy was seen in the godliness of Israel during his leadership. He was truly one of history's great men of God. Israel was also faithful to God in the days of Joshua's immediate successors. But afterward, there arose a generation who had not seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

2:8-10 Another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel: The new generation had no personal relationship with God, and no personal awareness of His power. God was someone who their parents related to and who did great things for their parent's generation.

Israel Falls Into Idolatry – Verses 11-13

¹¹Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹²They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD's anger ¹³because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

2:11-13 One generation died, and the next did not follow God. Judges 2:10– 3:7 is a brief preview of the cycle of sin, judgment, and repentance that Israel experienced again and again. Each generation failed to teach the next generation to love and follow God. Yet this was at the very center of God's law (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9). It is tempting to leave the job of teaching the Christian faith to the church or Christian school. Yet God says that the responsibility for this task belongs primarily to the family. Because children learn so much by our example, the home offers the most effective place to pass on the faith to the next generation.

God's Wrath Upon Their Sin Of Idolatry – Verses 14-15

14 In his anger against Israel the LORD gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. **15** Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

2:14 Baal was the god of the storm and rains; therefore, he was thought to control vegetation and agriculture. Ashtoreth was the mother goddess of love, war, and fertility (she was also called Astarte or Ishtar). Temple prostitution and child sacrifice were a part of the worship of these Canaanite idols. This generation of Israelites abandoned the faith of their parents and began worshiping the gods of their neighbors. Many things can tempt us to abandon what we know is right. The desire to be accepted by our neighbors can lead us into behavior that is unacceptable to God. Don't be lulled into compromise or pressured into disobedience.

2:14-15 God often saved his harshest criticism and punishment for those who worshiped idols. Why were idols so bad in God's sight? To worship an idol violated the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 3-6). The Canaanites had gods for almost every season, activity, or place. To them, the Lord was just another god to add to their collection of gods. Israel, by contrast, was to worship only the Lord. They could not possibly believe that God was the one true God and at the same time bow to an idol. Idol worshipers could not see their god as their creator because they created it. These idols represent sensual, carnal, and immoral aspects of human nature. God's nature is spiritual and moral. Adding the worship of idols to the worship of God could not be tolerated.

2:14-15 God was angry with Israel, and he allowed them to be punished by their enemies. Anger, in itself, is not a sin. God's anger was the reaction of his holy nature to sin. One side of God's nature is his anger against sin; the other side is his love and mercy toward sinners. We cannot fully appreciate God's mercy without understanding his fierce wrath.

The Cyclical Pattern Of Bondage And Deliverance In The Days Of The Judges – Verses 16-19

16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. **17** Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the LORD's commands. **18** Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. **19** But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

2:16 Despite Israel's disobedience, God showed his great mercy by raising up judges to save the people from their oppressors. Mercy has been defined as "not giving a person what he or she deserves." This is exactly what God did for Israel and what he does for us. Our disobedience demands judgment! But God shows mercy toward us by providing an escape from sin's penalty through Jesus Christ, who alone saves us from sin. When we pray for forgiveness, we are asking for what we do not deserve. Yet when we take this step and trust in Christ's saving work on our behalf, we can experience God's forgiveness.

2:16-19 Throughout this period of history Israel went through seven cycles of (1) rebelling against God, (2) being overrun by enemy nations, (3) being delivered by a God-fearing judge, (4) remaining loyal to God under that judge, and (5) again forgetting God when the judge died. We tend to follow the same

cycle— remaining loyal to God as long as we are near those who are devoted to him. But when we are on our own, the pressure to be drawn away from God increases. Determine to be faithful to God despite the difficult situations you encounter. Recognize the importance of maintaining contact with other believers.

God Gives Them Over To Their Sinful Compromise – Verses 20-23

²⁰ Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and said, “Because this nation has violated the covenant I ordained for their ancestors and has not listened to me, ²¹ I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. ²² I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD and walk in it as their ancestors did.” ²³ The LORD had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua.

2:20-23 Why would the people of Israel turn so quickly from their faith in God? Simply put, the Canaanite religion appeared more attractive to the sensual nature and offered more short-range benefits (sexual permissiveness and increased fertility in childbearing and farming). One of its most attractive features was that people could remain selfish and yet fulfill their religious requirements. They could do almost anything they wished and still be obeying at least one of the many Canaanite gods. Male and female prostitution were not only allowed, but encouraged as forms of worship. Faith in the one true God, however, does not offer short-range benefits that appeal to our sinful human nature. The essence of sin is selfishness; the essence of God’s way of life is selflessness. We must seek Christ’s help to live God’s way.