

Judges 2

- We've just begun our study of Judges and we're still working through the background material Samuel provides in chapters 1 and 2
 - Last week in chapter 1, Samuel retold Israel's early stumbles in the land
 - How they began to compromise on the plan God assigned them
 - Instead of driving out the people in the land, as God instructed, Israel began to allow the Canaanite people to remain in the land
 - They opted for convenience over obedience in those early years
 - And in doing so, they violated their covenant with God
 - As Samuel repeatedly stated in chapter 1, each tribe did not drive out the people of the land from their respective territory
 - In some cases, they made them slaves
 - In other cases, they bargained with them
 - And in some cases, Israel simple retreated
 - Had the Israelites persevered in obedience, the Lord was fully prepared to grant the Israelites victory over these people, just as He had done with Joshua
 - In fact, Judah and Simeon were granting victory after victory in the beginning as they did the Lord's will
 - But their obedience was short-lived, as the remaining tribes shrank back from obedience
 - Beginning with Benjamin and the Jebusites in city of Jerusalem
- Today, we move into chapter 2, and as we do, let's remember the structure of these two opening chapters
 - As I said last week (and as your handout reflects), the book of Judges isn't a chronological presentation of events
 - Some chapters within the book will proceed chronologically, but other chapters look forward or backward to provide summaries or explanations

- For example, in chapters 1 and 2, we find background material covering the time before and during the period of judges
- This background is important to interpreting the meaning of all that follows in the book
- Chapter 1 gave the human perspective on how Israel fell into apostasy, and chapter 2 gives us the divine perspective on that same process
 - So now we open with the angel of the Lord commenting on the people's disobedience
 - Followed by another recounting of Israel's entrance into the land under Joshua and their slide into apostasy
 - Take note of how God's perspective on the circumstances differs from the perspective of the people themselves

Judg. 2:1 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you,

Judg. 2:2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?

Judg. 2:3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'"

Judg. 2:4 When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

Judg. 2:5 So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

- This chapter centers on the "angel of the Lord"
 - Those who have studied with me through other books, particularly Genesis, will remember the identity of the angel of the Lord
 - This is no ordinary angel
 - It is commonly a reference to the Second Person of the Godhead
 - It is the Old Testament way of describing Jesus preincarnate
 - Interestingly, the title "angel of the Lord" appears 59 times in the Old Testament, and 18 of those occurrences (over 30%) are in the book of Judges
 - That makes sense, because Judges records the period of theocracy in Israel's history

- During this time the Lord was running His nation through His word and adjudicating sin through judges
- But He was at the helm as captain of His people, making His presence known from time to time
- Just as He appeared to the earlier generation in the desert
- In v.1 the angel of the Lord comes up from Gilgal to Bochim
 - Gilgal is near Jericho, where Israel first entered into the Promised Land
 - This was the last place where the angel of the Lord appeared to Israel, back in Joshua 5
 - In that earlier encounter, the Lord promised Joshua and the people that He would drive the Canaanites out of the land
 - Now at Bochim the Lord appears again, but the message is very different
 - The Lord begins with a statement of faithfulness
 - He made a covenant with the people of Israel
 - And the Lord will never break His word which He gave in His covenant
 - This is the basis for Paul's teaching in 2Timothy 2:13

2Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- The Lord's faithfulness to us is not dependent on our faithfulness to Him, once a covenant is in place
- Once we enter into covenant with the Loving God, His faithfulness to us is assured and never ending
- Men are fickle and our faithfulness will waiver, but praise the Lord, His faithfulness is never in doubt!
 - That's way Paul can say with such confidence:

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- In v.2, the Lord reminded the people that He had ordered them to make no covenants with the people of the land
 - The Lord meant they should make no accommodation for the people
 - Make no covenants
 - Make no agreements
 - Form no partnerships
 - Do not enter into marriages
 - Do not make them your slaves
 - Do not accept their gifts
 - But at the end of v.2, the Lord concludes that the people of Israel did not obey His instructions
 - What is this you have done, the Lord asks?
 - He means consider the consequences of disobeying the Living God
 - In effect, the Lord is saying you do not realize the seriousness of your mistake
 - He says this because this generation of Israel has repeated the sin of their fathers
 - They have disobeyed the covenant in exactly the same way that Israel did when gathered in the wilderness at the mountain
 - Notice in v.2 the Lord also said they were told to tear down the Canaanite altars in the land
 - Those altars were used to sacrifice to false gods, so the Lord wanted the people to root out all temptations to worship false gods
 - But the Lord says at the end of v.2 that they didn't obey Him
 - So the problem wasn't merely that they didn't drive out the Canaanite people
 - They didn't tear down the altars either

- Over time, the people adopted the false worship practices of the Canaanites, just as Moses and Joshua had warned them would happen
- They repeated the sin of that early generation of Israel that wandered in the desert
 - Once again the people of Israel had constructed golden calves of one kind or another for themselves
 - And if the previous generation was condemned to die in the desert for their disobedience, what does the Lord have in store for this generation of Israel?
- In vs.3-5 the Lord pronounces His penalty on this generation of Israel
 - He says the people will suffer the consequence of their disobedience
 - Since they didn't drive out the people from the land, they will have to live with them as a thorn in their sides
 - A literal thorn in the side is a painful irritant
 - It's constantly there, bothering you and causing you to wince in pain
 - It impedes peaceful living
 - It's a distraction
 - That's how Canaanites would be to Israel for many generations
 - Secondly, the gods of the Canaanites will continue to be a snare to Israel
 - Each new generation will face the same challenge this generation failed to confront
 - They will be tempted to worship false gods
 - Some will resist and remain faithful to Jehovah
 - But many others in Israel will be drawn into idolatry
- The Lord's judgment is fulfillment of His words given in the Law:

[Deut. 5:9](#) 'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

[Deut. 5:10](#) but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

- Serving false gods is a sin under the Old Covenant that brought penalties, which lasted multiple generations
 - The Lord wasn't saying that He forced later generations to pay for the sins of the fathers
 - He was saying that the penalty earned by the generation that commits idolatry would reverberate down into later generations
 - Like the old saying, "I'm going to spank you so hard, your grandchildren will hurt."
 - The Lord's penalty delivered to an idolatrous generation will still be felt generations later
- That's what's happening in the book of Judges
 - A new generation of Israel enters the land with a covenant that requires obedience and faithfulness
 - And when this generation entered the land, it started well under Joshua
 - But when Joshua wasn't there, the people strayed from obedience
 - And straying from obedience led to idolatry
 - And idolatry led to judgment for multiple generations
- This pattern brings us to a clear picture of faith in Jesus Christ
 - As many know, the name Joshua is the same name as Jesus
 - And so Joshua is a clear picture of Jesus Christ
 - As Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, so does Jesus led His people into the Kingdom
 - And only by the presence and leadership of Joshua/Jesus, will the people of God remain faithful and obedient

- When you take Jesus out of the picture, the heart is incapable of pleasing God
- We stray from the Living God, and as we stray, we eventually enter in idolatry
- Paul taught about the downward spiral of the sinful human heart in Romans 1

[Rom. 1:21](#) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

[Rom. 1:22](#) Professing to be wise, they became fools,

[Rom. 1:23](#) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

- Judges is yet another example of this truth
- Joshua serves as a shadow of Jesus, the leader who holds the nation to obedience
- Just as we are now are held in the covenant of grace by the power of Christ
- His faithfulness ensures our redemption
- But without that covenant, we would have no hope to remain faithful
- Finally, notice the people are very upset to hear that the Lord had pronounced this judgment upon them
 - Their reaction is understandable
 - And it's reminiscent of what their fathers said after they were judged for their sin in the desert

[Num. 14:32](#) 'But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness.

[Num. 14:33](#) 'Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness.

[Num. 14:34](#) 'According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition.

[Num. 14:39](#) When Moses spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people mourned greatly.

- How did the people get to this place again, especially when they had the example of their fathers to learn from
 - Samuel moves forward to answer that question in the rest of chapter 2,
 - He begins back in the days when Joshua first arrive with the people in the land

Judg. 2:6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.

Judg. 2:7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

Judg. 2:8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.

Judg. 2:9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

Judg. 2:10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

Judg. 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, **Judg. 2:12** and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

Judg. 2:13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.

Judg. 2:14 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Judg. 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

- As we learned in chapter 1, the people of Israel were in a good place as they entered the land
 - They served the Lord all the days of Joshua
 - As long as Joshua lived and for as long as the elders of that generation were around, the people were obedient to the covenant

- The memories of all the Lord had done for the people in the desert kept them mindful of serving the Lord
- But then Joshua died and was buried, as was that entire generation of Israel
 - Now the nation was in the hands of a generation that had not seen nor known the magnificent works of the Lord in the desert
 - This might seem like a significant disadvantage, but remember they had the word of God
 - Faithfulness isn't a matter of what we see in any case; it's a matter of confidence in things unseen
- And so as a result of a new generation coming rising up in Israel, in v.112 we're told that the nation did evil by worshipping Baal
 - They forsook the Lord, which means they rejected Him
 - And instead, they followed other gods, the gods of the Canaanites
 - They bowed down to false gods and angered the Lord
 - The conclusion in vs.14-15 was the fulfillment of the words of the angel of the Lord
 - The people of the land became a painful thorn in the side of the nation
 - The Israelites couldn't live in peace in the land
 - At times, the cities of Israel were plundered by the Canaanites
 - Other times, the people of Israel were captured and enslaved by the Canaanites
 - The people of Israel were never strong enough to oppose the Canaanites by their own might
 - They were a small nation compared to those around them
 - Yet the Lord granted them great military victories as they entered the land because He fought for them
 - Now as punishment, the Lord refused to vanquish the Canaanite peoples

- As He declared in v.3, the people would not be able to stand in the face of these powerful enemies
- What a great burden of fear the people must have known in those generations
 - They were brought into another's land by the power of God
 - And now because of their disobedience, they were subject to these powerful enemies on an ongoing basis
 - It must have felt like they were on a raft in the middle of the ocean surrounded by sharks
 - They were in this place because they forsook the Lord and His covenant
 - As Samuel summarizes in v.15...they were severely distressed because they did evil
- To end the chapter, Samuel summarizes how the period of judges plays out after the Lord's judgment against the people

Judg. 2:16 Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

Judg. 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.

Judg. 2:18 When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Judg. 2:19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

- Even though the people were under judgment for their idolatry, nevertheless the Lord didn't forsake them even as they forsook Him
 - Instead, He raised up judges to guide the people back to obedience and to protect them from the worst of their enemies
 - Proving once again that the Lord remains faithful even when we are faithless

- These judges were ongoing proof to the people that their Lord was still in covenant with His people, preserving them as He promised
- Notice the grace of God at work in v.18
 - The Lord raised up judges and placed His Spirit on these judges to deliver the people from their enemies at least temporarily
 - He did this in response to the groanings of His people
 - They groaned under the penalty they received for their disobedience
 - And in compassion for His people, the Lord would lessen the penalty through judges from time to time
- So how did the people respond to the Lord's faithfulness even in the midst of His judgment?
 - In vs17 & 19, Samuel says the people didn't listen to the judges
 - They continued in their spiritual harlotry
 - They quickly turned aside from the good example set by their fathers
- Even when a judge was given to the people, the people would not obey the Lord for long, if at all
 - As soon as that judge died, the people turned back and corrupted themselves again
 - Not only do they turn back, but in the turning, Samuel says they do even worse things than their fathers
 - The sin spiral gets worse with each generation
- While we shake our heads in astonishment and pity for Israel, be careful you don't take the Lord's faithfulness for granted
 - The Lord showed Israel mercy and grace when He raised up judges in response to their groaning
 - He did so because He was in covenant with them
 - And because He is loving and compassionate despite the sin of His people

- Seeing the people spurn the Lord's mercy may strike us as one too many chances, but have you considered you do the same thing with God's mercy?
- When we sin in our covenant, we are potentially provoking the Lord to anger
 - And though we are saved from the eternal penalty for our sins, we can't expect the Lord to withhold the consequences of our sin
 - If we forsake the Lord in one way or another, disobeying Jesus commands, living in unrepentant sin, what lies in store for us?
 - Are we assuming the Lord will grant us unlimited mercy?
 - Are we any different than those in Israel who knew Him but failed to keep His word?
- John tells us that we can have God's forgiveness and release from the consequences of our sins if we repent

1John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- If you live without a willingness to confess your sin, you are only deceiving yourself
 - But you're not fooling God, since he knows our hearts
 - And therefore, we are called to confess our sins to God
- Confession implies repentance and a sincere desire to move beyond our sinful patterns
 - Confessing our sins to Christ as a Christian means bringing our mistakes out in the open before Him and seeking His forgiveness
 - We are already forgiven from the eternal penalty for sin by our faith in Christ, but John is talking about the temporal penalty
 - We're called to confess in the expectation that we might receive God's mercy here and now, in the same way the Israelites did in the time of Judges

- When we confess sin, the Lord is full of compassion and faithful to His promises, so He will forgive us
- He is just to do so, because His Son has paid the penalty and reconciled us to God by His blood
- But the people of Israel responded in a very different way
 - Instead taking full advantage of God's mercy, they spurned the Lord
 - As the Lord raised up a new judge, the people could have taken the opportunity to confess their sins and recommit to following the Lord
 - And in mercy and faithfulness, the Lord may have brought the nation into a new period of blessing
 - He's done it in past generations, and He does it again in future generations, so we can safely assume He would have done it in this generation
 - But this generation doesn't respond in faithfulness
- So to end the chapter, Samuel summarizes the Lord's response from what He observed in the hearts of Israel

Judg. 2:20 So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice,

Judg. 2:21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

Judg. 2:22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

Judg. 2:23 So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

- As the angel of the Lord declared, the Lord decided to leave the Canaanites in the land as a test of Israel
 - Like all tests in scripture, this test is intended to reveal the hearts of the people
 - Who among the people would go after false gods?
 - Who will remain faithful to God?

- Many will fall to the snare
 - A remnant will remain faithful
 - This test lasts for many, many generations
 - And the concept of a remnant will continue and grow throughout this time, continuing to today
- As Paul teaches in Romans

Rom. 11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

Rom. 11:3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

Rom. 11:4 But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

Rom. 11:5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

- The time of Judges marks the beginning of a period of testing for Israel, when the people are exposed to the sin and idolatry of their enemies in the world
 - And the Lord is using these people to distinguish between the sinful, unfaithful hearts in Israel and the faithful remnant
 - Without this test, how would the people and the world know the difference?
 - Now the difference will be evident in all generations of Israel
 - Until the coming of the True Joshua, the people of Israel experienced this test
 - Hearts tested and exposed
 - Some living faithfully
 - But most are following after the gods of their enemies
 - And the people suffer greatly in their idolatry
 - We are not Israel, but we are in covenant with the God of Israel
 - Let's not provoke the Lord by our own disobedience
 - Let's learn from the example of Judges