

9. What tribe was oppressed by the Canaanites who dwelt among them?
10. What part of its allotted land did this tribe occupy?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1- 5 *The assembly at Bochim.* The people of Israel were met by the angel of the Lord at Bochim. They were rebuked for their wicked ways, and they wept sorely as their sins were brought to their attention. For this reason, the place received the name *Bochim* which means "weeping." Along life's pathway, God's people often come to places of weeping, but "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Corinthians 7:10).
- Vv. 6-10 *A recollection of Joshua's death.* Although it was stated that the conquest led by Judah began after Joshua's death, reference is made in this second chapter of the death of Joshua. The book of Judges is introduced by a general resume of activities which surrounded the death of Joshua, and this important event is recalled again at this point.
- Vv. 11-15 *The apostasy of the people.* Israel rebelled against God. They turned from the worship of the one true and living God to a worship of the gods of the Canaanites who dwelt around them. These pagan nations had both male and female deities, and Israel forsook the Lord to serve these false gods. As a result, we read, "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel" (verse 14). He delivered them into the hands of the enemies round about them, and this

JUDGES

formed the background out of which came the judges to champion righteousness and to deliver the people from those who oppressed them.

Vv. 16-23 *The rise of the judges.* When Israel sinned, God did not leave them without any help. These judges were not men who sat on benches in courts of law, but they were men who challenged the people to reach the ideals which had been set before them in the laws of the Old Testament. They punished the evil doers and led the people of Israel in war against their foes. They were a group of leaders, peculiarly equipped, to rule Israel during the period from the era of Joshua until the monarchy was established under Saul.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Our days are full of labor and strife.* The Psalmist declared that even though our years were extended beyond the threescore and ten until they reached fourscore years, yet would their strength be labor and sorrow (Psalms 90:10). Jesus found life on earth to be filled with tears. He wept over Jerusalem and at the tomb of Lazarus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was in agony. Such was the lot of the Israelites, especially as they sinned and rebelled against God. Such is the lot of Christians, but they do not sorrow as those who have no hope.
2. *Sinners in the hands of an angry God.* When it is said that "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel" (verse 14), attention is called to the fact that God does not always allow men to continue in sin without punishment. It may be true that a sinner will escape the

punishment for his sin through many years, but eventually he will be called to give an account of his deeds done in the flesh whether they be good or evil. It is stated that Jonathan Edwards, a preacher in New England in the early days of the history of the United States of America, spoke so clearly and described so vividly the punishment of sinners in the hands of an angry God that he was able to persuade many souls to turn from their waywardness to the ways of the Lord. The example of Israel's being punished in the days of the judges should make it clear that no nation can long escape the penalties of sin when its people are lost in this sin.

3. *The Lord is full of mercy.* "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The God of the Old Testament is not different from the God of the New Testament. Even though the Lord's anger was hot against Israel, He did not forsake them. He raised up judges who delivered them out of the hands of those who spoiled them. It is said, "the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (verse 18). In His infinite mercy, God has provided for all to be saved if they believe on His Son.

CHAPTER TWO

Angel of the Lord Rebukes Israel 2:1-5

And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.

1. Who is the "angel of Jehovah"? 2:1

The angel of Jehovah is not a prophet, a messenger, or some other earthly servant of the Lord, either Phinehas or Joshua, as the Targums, Rabbins, and others assume. Rather, the angel of the Lord is a visible manifestation of God Himself, not in the fullness of His being, but in one aspect of His person. No angel mentioned in the historical books is ever said to have addressed the whole nation or to have passed from one place to another. The prophets always distinguish between themselves and Jehovah, by introducing their words with the declaration "thus saith Jehovah." In his address the angel of the Lord identifies himself with Jehovah (cf. Joshua 5:14; 6:2).

2. Where was Bochim? 2:1, 5

Bochim was evidently near Bethel, in the hill country of Ephraim. The situation of this place is altogether unknown today. The rendering of the LXX, *epi ton Klauthmona kai epi Baithel kai epi ton oikon Israel*, gives no clue whatsoever. *Ton Klauthmona* merely arises from a confusion of *bochim* with *bebaim* in II Samuel 5:23, which the LXX also rendered *Klauthmon*. *Epi ton Baithel . . .* is an arbitrary interpolation of the translators themselves, who supposed *bochim* to be in the neighborhood of Bethel.

This was merely because they thought of *Allon bachuth*, the oak of weeping, at Bethel which is mentioned in Genesis 35:8.

3. *In what way had Israel failed to obey?* 2:2

God had ordered the people to make no league with the inhabitants of the land into which they came. In the days of Moses, He had said, "thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them" (Deuteronomy 7:2). Israel had been tricked into making a league with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), and whenever a tribe of Israel was unable to drive out the inhabitants living in the land which was assigned to them, they made them to be tributaries—they made some kind of arrangement for these people to live among them and pay tribute to them. They also were commanded to throw down the altars of these people. Through Moses, God had especially commanded the Israelites to "overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place" (Deuteronomy 12:3). This Israel had failed to do. In fact, she, herself, had turned to worship the Baalim and Ashtaroth.

4. *What was Israel's punishment?* 2:3

God said that because Israel failed to obey Him completely, He would not drive out the nations before them. He left the nations to be as thorns in their sides. He further stated that since they had not overthrown their altars these pagan gods would be a snare to Israel. Ultimately, these people in their false worship brought the downfall of Israel.

5. *What was the reaction of the people?* 2:4, 5

The people realized God had spoken the truth about them. As a result, they lifted up their voice and wept. Their weeping was of such nature that it gave the name

Bochim to the place . The word, *Bochim*, means "weepers." At that time, they also sacrificed there to the Lord. They accepted the Lord's punishment and turned to Him for help.

General Religious Characterization of the Period 2:6—3:6

The Death of Joshua 2:6-10

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all the generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

6. *When had Joshua let the people go? 2:6*

Joshua had dismissed the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites from Shiloh when the period of the conquest was ended. He allowed them to go back to the land which had been promised to them by Moses (Joshua 22). He then called the elders of Israel to him at Shiloh and delivered the charge which is recorded in Joshua 23. Finally, he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. He called for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their

officers. On that occasion, he delivered his famous challenge and urged them to choose whom they would serve. After this thrilling event, it is recorded that "Joshua sent the people away, every man unto his inheritance" (Joshua 24:28). This introduction to the book of Judges harks back to that meeting and sets the stage for the situation which demanded the raising up of the judges.

7. *In what sense did they serve God?* 2:7 .

They served God most of all, but also followed pagan superstitions. They had expressly failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land and thus failed to serve the Lord completely by obeying this commandment which He had given them. They also had failed to throw down the altars of the Canaanites into whose land they had come. Generally speaking, however, they had served God. This syncretism continued to plague the people of Israel when the Northern Kingdom was finally carried into captivity by the Assyrians. The prophet recorded, . . . "they did after their former manner. So these nations feared Jehovah, and served their graven images, their children likewise, and their children's children, as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (II Kings 17:40, 41).

8. *What was the exact site of Joshua's grave?* 2:9

In Unger's *Bible Dictionary* are notes to the effect that *heres* of Timnath-heres is "Serah" spelled backwards. It is located twelve miles from Lydda. No place by this name appears on maps, and the spot which Unger favors is presently called Tibnah. Dr. Eli Smith, as reported in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, suggested the site be identified with ruins of a place some twenty miles northwest from Jerusalem. At this point, there are, in a higher hill opposite, sepulchers hewn out of the rock equal in size and decoration to the tombs of the kings at Jerusalem. Since the site is evidently lost, we have also lost any identification of the tomb of Joshua.

9. *Why did the younger generation not know the Lord?*
2:10

The younger generation did not know the Lord because they chose not to follow in the footsteps of their fathers. They certainly knew who the Lord was. They knew of His wonderful works, but they were like the rebellious sons of Eli, who despised the Lord's offerings and lived in a sinful way (I Samuel 2:13). They had heard how the Lord worked wonders on behalf of Israel, but they chose not to let these lead them to faith in Him.

Israel's Apostasy 2:11-15

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

10. *What were Baalim?* 2:11 cf. 3:7

They were Canaanite gods, including Dagon, Baal-berith, Baal-zebub, and others mentioned specifically. The word *Baalim* is a transliteration of a plural form of *Baal*.

Such a reference suggests the Israelites had not only forsaken God, but they had embraced a multitude of pagan deities. Such was the heinousness of their sin.

11. *What was the nature of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth?* 2:13

In this case the singular *Baal* is connected with the plural *Ashtaroth*, because the male deities of all the Canaanitish nations, and those that bordered upon Canaan, were in their nature one and the same deity, viz. *Baal*, a sun-god. *Baal*, as such was the vehicle and source of physical life and of the generative and reproductive power of nature.

Ashtaroth, from the singular (*Ashtoreth*), which only occurs in I Kings 11:5, 33, and II Kings 23:13, in connection with the Sidonian (*Astharte*), was the general name used to denote the leading female deity of the Canaanitish tribes. She was a moon-goddess, who was worshiped as the feminine principle of nature embodied in the pure moonlight and its influence upon terrestrial life. She corresponded to the Greek Aphrodite, whose celebrated temple at Askalon is described in *Herodotos* 1, 105. In 3:7, (*Asheroth*) is used as equivalent to *Ashtaroth*, which is used here (see 10:6; I Samuel 7:4; 12:10). The name *Asheroth* was transferred to the deity itself from the idols of this goddess which generally consisted of wooden columns, and are called ("Asherim") in Exodus 34:13. (See also Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). On the other hand, the word *Ashtoreth* is without any traceable etymology in the Semitic dialects and was probably derived from Upper Asia, being connected with a Persian word signifying "a star."

12. *When had God said that He would be against Israel?* 2:15

Moses had especially warned the people against falling away from the Lord. He told them that if they turned

their backs on Him they would suffer, although He held out to them many blessings if they obeyed God. Moses also told them how disobedience would bring an equal number of curses (see Leviticus 26). He had repeatedly warned them in this manner. His last speeches were especially filled with statements about how God would be against them if they turned away from Him (see Deuteronomy 28). The theme of Joshua's addresses was of similar nature. In his farewell address, he had warned them to be faithful to God. He told his people that when they turned their backs on Him, God would be against them (see Joshua 23, 24). It is an everlasting principle which all nations need to learn that God will be against them when they turn away from following Him.

13. *What action did God take? 2:14, 15*

God allowed the enemies of Israel to overcome them. As the Scripture records, "there were spoilers that spoiled them." God "sold them into the hands of their enemies." This was evidenced as they were no longer able to win victories in the field of battle. They were no longer able to overcome the temptations which were presented to them by the surrounding pagan nations. Everything Israel tried to do seemed to fail.

Ministry of the Judges 2:16-23

16 Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so.

18 And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

23 Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

14. *Who were the judges?* 2:16

Judges who governed Israel were not men who presided over courts of law. They did not go about attired in long, black robes sitting on what we call "benches." They did not pound gavels to demand order in courtrooms. Rather, these men were men who were filled with the Spirit of God. In almost every instance, it is stated that the Spirit of God came upon these men. Aroused as they were, when they witnessed the depressed state of their country, they achieved deliverance. They continued in office as defenders of religion and avengers of crimes.

The people, when they saw that God's Spirit was upon them, received them as God's men for the hour. They submitted to their sway. Such a condition resulted in the land having rest. It is stated, however, that in general the people were still rebellious. "They would not hearken unto their judges" (verse 17). Conditions continued to deteriorate, and the people then asked for a king.

15. *Were the judges local magistrates?* 2:17, 18

Edersheim in the work *Israel in Canaan* (p. 107) says that the judges ruled only over one or several of the tribes, to whom they brought special deliverance. Accordingly, he felt that the history of some of the judges overlaps others. Such a conclusion seems to fly in the face of the oft-repeated statement found in the account of several of the judges, such as these: "Jephthah judged Israel six years (12:7) . . . and after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel (12:8), . . . after him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years" (12:11). Notice that in each case it is stated that the man judged Israel, not a particular tribe.

16. *In what sense did God repent?* 2:18

God was grieved in His heart when He saw the rebellious ways of the people of Israel. This same kind of statement was made in the days of Noah when we read, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:6). God had not sinned. He was not repenting in the same way in which a man repents of his wickedness. This is an anthropomorphic statement—the putting of God's thoughts and actions in words which describe similar thoughts and actions on the part of man. God's repentance is similar to man's in the sense that it caused Him grief, but it is dissimilar inasmuch as God had no sin for which to grieve.

17. *What final judgment did God render on Israel? 2:21-23*

God decided not to drive out any more of the nations which were left in Israel at the time of the death of Joshua. He had been patient with the people. He had given them express commandments to obey, and they had failed to keep them. In a sense, His Spirit was no longer striving with them (see Genesis 6:3). Israel needed to learn how the king's business demanded haste. They should have fought with alacrity to drive out all the Canaanites so that the Promised Land might be theirs and theirs alone.

18. *Was the suspension of extermination a change of plan? 2:20-23*

The thought expressed here was that Jehovah would not exterminate the Canaanites before Israel any more, to try them whether they would keep His commandments. He had previously caused the people whom He brought out of Egypt to wander in the wilderness for forty years with the very same intention (Deuteronomy 8:2). Such action is not at variance with the design of God, expressed in Exodus 23:29, 30, and Deuteronomy 7:22, not to exterminate all the Canaanites all at once, lest the land should become waste, and the wild beasts multiply therein, nor yet with the motive assigned in 3:1, 2. The determination not to exterminate the Canaanites in one single year was a different thing from the purpose of God to suspend their gradual extermination altogether. The former purpose had immediate regard to the well-being of Israel; the latter, on the contrary, was primarily intended as a chastisement for its transgression of the covenant. Even this chastisement, however, was intended to lead the rebellious nation to repentance and promote its prosperity by a true conversion to the Lord. Had Israel not forsaken the Lord its God so soon after Joshua's death the Lord would have exterminated the Canaanites who were left in the land much sooner than He did.

JUDGES

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. Where did the angel of the Lord appear?
2. Where had His early appearance been made?
3. What is the meaning of the name given to the place where the angel appeared?
4. How old was Joshua when he died?
5. Where was Joshua buried?
6. What was the name given to the male gods whom Israel served?
7. What was the name of the female goddesses whom Israel served?
8. What was the name of the leaders whom God gave Israel?
9. Did all the people always listen to the judges?
10. Why did God leave some of the Canaanites among the Israelites?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1-7 *A list of the remaining Canaanites.* Chapter three opens with a listing of the groups of the Canaanites left in the land. Special notice is made of the five lords of the Philistines, since these were the perennial enemies of Israel. Notice is also made of the Sidonians who lived at the north boundary of the land, as well as the Hivites who centered around the Lebanon mountains. Throughout the land were scattered the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These were the pagan peoples among whom the Israelites made marriages and whose gods they served.
- Vv. 8-11 *The career of Othniel.* The first judge was a man from the tribe of Judah. His career is summarized in these verses. Notice is made of