

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

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That Place Bochim Judges 2:1 - 5

The book of Judges begins with Israel continuing their conquest of the land under the direction of the Lord (see Judges 1). It is interesting to note that not all the inhabitants of the land were driven out (1:19, 21, 27 – 35) by the various tribes. Sadly this would have major ramifications in the life of the nation. Judges begins with the people seeking the Lord for guidance (1:1), but the book ends with the people doing what was right in their own eyes and stresses the point that there was no king in Israel (21:25). The decline in the people's spiritual condition and the elimination of God as their King is at the heart of Judges. The book of Judges demonstrates to us the vicious cycle of sin and proves the point made by James, that "... *desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*" (James 1:15).

Judges is also about God's gracious dealing with Israel in spite of her sins and persistent rebellion. This spiritual decline and recovery process reverberates throughout the book. The judges were appointed by God to help Israel recover and to keep them walking in the right path before God. One commentator has said that the book of Judges shows us our potential for greatness and our capacity for catastrophe. I don't particularly agree with the description of us as having greatness or achieving greatness, but I do agree that Judges demonstrates the catastrophe that comes to all who don't deal with sin. The ultimate tragedy, of course, is hell and the Lake of Fire.

If anything, the book of Judges demonstrates that we indeed have feet of clay, yet we can serve God with hearts of steel. Such men were the Judges. As you read the book of Judges you cannot help being impressed by the simple efficiency of some of the Judges and the startling humanity of others. Success and failure seem to exist in their lives.

Judges 2:6 – 10 speaks of the death of Joshua in detail (see 1:1 referring to events after his death.). Joshua dies at the great age of 110 (2:8). As long as Joshua was alive and the elders were alive Israel served the Lord (2:7). Their loyalty was because they had witnessed the great acts of God. After Joshua and the elders had died, another generation came around who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done on behalf of the nation (2:10) What a terrible situation! This only goes to prove that the faithful recounting of the ways of God from generation to generation has a major impact on the next generation. When we complain that our generation does not know God, perhaps it is because we have failed to demonstrate the ways of God to them and before them. This is why the Word of God is so vital to the life of the Church – it recounts the ways of God with sinners from generation to generation.

Judges 2:1- 5 introduces us to the Angel of the Lord. This is a theophanic appearance of the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ (compare also Ex. 3:2 – 15; Num. 22:22 – 35; Joshua 5:13 – 15). We are introduced to a familiar biblical theme – that God is a faithful covenant-keeping God. At the same time we find that Israel was a covenant breaking nation. God's instructions to Israel were that they were not to make any covenant with the inhabitants of the land, lest those very inhabitants captivate Israel and drive them away from God. This is precisely what Israel did. God's covenant stipulated that they were not to engage in any relationships with the Canaanites, but they disobeyed God (2:2; see also Ex. 23:32, 33; 34:12 – 16; Num. 33:55; Deut. 7:2, 5,16; 12:3). They disobeyed the voice of God. The Angel of the Lord questions Israel as

to why they have been disobedient (2:2). The result of this disobedience is that God states that He will not help them in the future with driving out the Canaanites (2:3).

We should not minimize what this means. It means that in the past, God had helped Israel drive out the nations. He did require them to act and work, and He promised that He would work at the same time on their behalf. If they failed to engage the enemy, God would reprove them for their disobedience. Their failure to respond to God's warnings brings the serious rebuke and judgment in verse 3. God states that He will no longer help them, and that the Canaanites would become thorns in the side of the nation, and that the gods of the Canaanites would be a snare to Israel. Any failure to deal with sin can bring the delivering of a person over to their sin to learn the bitterness of sin. From enjoying the pleasure of sin, God gives us a full taste of sin, in order to see the bitterness of it. This is what the Captivity periods would do, many years into the future for Israel.

The ungodly who persist in their rebellion and sin against God maybe handed over by God to their sins and its full measure (see Romans 1:18 – 32). From such a position there seems to be no recovery. This is the awful situation known as apostasy (compare 2 Peter 2 & Jude).

The location of Bochim is uncertain in Judges 2. The Angel of the Lord goes up from Gilgal to Bochim. Gilgal was the place where the Israelites first camped when they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The name Bochim means “weepers”. The Angel of the Lord spoke to Israel in this location known as Bochim. He speaks as Yahweh – this is how Israel understands the Angel of the Lord. The Lord's question points back to their failure to deal with the Canaanites (see 1:28, 30, 32, 33, 35). These verses indicate that the Canaanites lived among Israel, and that Israel lived among the Canaanites. I'm not sure if we could say one is worse than the other, but the result was the same. There would be influence from the Canaanites upon Israel. It was not the other way around. This indicates the prevailing persistence, subtlety and stubbornness of sin.

As believers we know about our sin, and how dogged it is. It hounds our every path and step. What do we do about this situation? If we are spiritually sensitive we will mourn and weep over it. This was the response, it seems of Israel. When they heard the rebuke of God, they wept, but every indication is that this was mere outward repentance and not inward change. Even their sacrifice offered to the Lord seems to have been a mere external rite to be observed (2:5), and not an expression of faith. We say this because of the indications prevalent in Judges. The people continued to sin and do what they wanted against God.

It seems that the Lord was indicating that when Israel was at Gilgal, they submitted to Him. They consecrated themselves. They prepared themselves spiritually. But at Bochim, they had turned away from God. Gilgal was a place of renewal, but Bochim was a place of rebuke. The solution to Bochim is to go back to Gilgal.

Bochim is the fruit of bitterness and rebellion. It spells our frustration for the people of God. They stubbornly persist in sin, and God brings His rebuke upon them. He won't go with them or help them. It is fortunate for us that the grace of God in Jesus Christ has come to us. Our Savior can take us from Bochim to Gilgal at anytime. He brings help to us if we seek Him. He aids us in our weaknesses (Rom. 8:34) as does the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26). God calls each believer to a life of fruitfulness and faithfulness. This is not easy, but the strength does not lie with us, but with Jesus. Whole-hearted obedience always brings rest and peace, whereas half-hearted obedience (keeping the Canaanites in the land – keeping sin in your heart) yields sorrow and weeping. I don't like Bochim – I have been there – it is not a pleasant place. I far prefer the sweetness of Gilgal (Calvary) where I can renew myself over and over again at the feet of Jesus. He ministers joy and relief always. Beware of that place Bochim!

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