

Don't Judge Me, Lead Me: The Book Of Judges

Judges 2:11-15

"That They Might Know Thee"

Psalm 139:1-16

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

God knows you Israel. God loves you Israel. God knows you follower of Jesus. And He loves you.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What do you think the spiritual implications—indeed, your change of heart—might be if you were to fully embrace the truth in Psalm 139? Please know, as you meditate on God's knowledge of you and love for you, that His truth is deeper than the ocean—you will never reach the bottom of it!

While we study today's passage, in the back of our minds, we will be asking: Since we know that God knows and loves the Israelites—does Israel really know and love God?

Let's find out.

To gain context for this week's Scripture passage, let's review Judges 2:10 from last week:

Judges 2:10

And also all that 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.

So we are dropping into the narrative here after Joshua, along with all those who had witnessed the Lord's victorious exploits through Joshua, had passed away. A long time has

passed and a new generation is coming up with a clean slate—and not for the better. They knew not the Lord nor His past mighty works for Israel. So, was the Lord then not with this new generation? And because of their ignorance of God, were they then free to transgress?

Since the beginning, God has placed eternity in our hearts. With our senses and our sensibilities and conscience, we can know that God is clearly real and gloriously demonstrates not only His existence but His majesty as King of Kings:

Psalm 19:1

For the director of music. A psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Romans 1:20-21

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

And He gave us Jesus:

John 3:16

For 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 14:5-6

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 20:30-31

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

And I could go on and on about how God's knows us because He created us and how He has made Himself known to us through creation all around us, and our consciousness of good and evil within. But even with all the Scriptural truth I just laid on you, this week's passage throws a wrench in the machinery. Beloved, we have a problem. Let's begin here:

Judges 2:11

(KJV) And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

(NIV) Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.

God sees all evil for all time:

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

God sees Israel worshipping all the local manifestations of Baal. Listen to Webster's Dictionary description:

BA'AL, n. An idol among the ancient Chaldeans and Syrians, representing the sun. The word signifies also lord, or commander; and the character of the idol was varied by different nations, at different times. Thus Baal Berith is supposed to signify the Lord of the Covenant; Baal Peor, or rather Baal Phegor, the Lord of the dead. Ps. cvi, Baal Zebub, the god of flies, &c.

The Israelites, by worshipping Baal, have already disobeyed the first two commandments:

Exodus 20:3-4

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

So the Israelites are not off to a good start!

STUDY POINT: Write down in one column the names of six idols identified in the Old Testament, along with Scripture references. Then in a parallel column list idols people worship in our day instead of God, and six Scriptures from the New Testament that infer these idols. By doing this written exercise, what can you surmise historically and spiritually about humankind's bent towards worshipping gods instead of the one true living God? Provide Scripture references as you study this out.

Judges 2:12

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) They 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

Judges 2:13

(KJV) And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroath.

(NIV) because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

The Israelites are also serving Ashtoreth? From Smith's Dictionary:

Ashtoreth

Ash'toreth. (a star). The principal female divinity of the Phoenicians, called Ishtar by the Assyrians and Astarte by the Greeks and Romans. She was, by some ancient writers, identified with the moon. But, on the other hand, the Assyrian Ishtar was not the moon-goddess, but the planet Venus; and Astarte was by many identified with the goddess Venus (or Aphrodite), as well as with the plant of that name. It is certain that the worship of Astarte became identified with that of Venus, and that this worship was connected with the most impure rites is apparent from the close connection of this goddess with Asherah. (1Ki 11:5; 1Ki 11:33; 2Ki 23:13.)

Forsaking God. Forgetting their favoured inheritance and blessed ancestry. Worshipping the foreign gods of their neighbours whom they allowed access to their land. So, why on earth would God be angry? Here's a clue:

1Peter 2:9-12

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

God's people are to set the example for His love and goodness on the earth, that all would come to a saving knowledge of Himself and His Son. This is only possible as we stay intimately connected to Him as branch to vine (John 15:1-8). As long as Israel, or any one of us today following Jesus, harden our hearts to God (Hebrews 3:12-13) and begin to compare our righteousness to our neighbours or the world system (Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 2:15-17) we have likely already fallen into idolatry. God's Word is the glorious standard by which we will each be judged (see Hebrews 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Okay, so I think you see the disconnect between God and His children here.

*STUDY POINT: Find two New Testament Scriptures (verses/passages) that you believe will encourage you to look up beyond the deceptive gods of this world system (1 John 2:15-17) to find clarity, truth, and hope in heaven. Make an effort to hide these specific encouraging words in your heart (Psalm 119:11).

Judges 2:14

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) 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.

Judges 2:15

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) 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.

These spoilers/raiders were bands of enemy robbers that plundered the Israelites of their produce and their possessions. And as for the promised land—it was still theirs. Hooray! But by their disobedience they basically invited their enemies to the party. And now the party is over, and their enemies won't leave!

So not only were the Israelites experiencing the consequences of their previous compromise with partial disobedience of God's clear commands, but now God is allowing these consequences to punish them and bring them to repentance. We could say Biblically that God uses hardships in our lives as Fatherly discipline to bring us back to Him, time and time again:

Hebrews 12:7

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

If you are a child of God through Jesus Christ, remember that God is not watching what you do so much as who you are—your heart, your character. Because God is love (1 John 4:8), He is 100% committed to this one thing: growing and shaping you more and more into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. Oh, that you might know Him more today, beloved! And He shapes who you are through what you experience in life. God also knows that we seldom grow in character when all is calm and smooth going. Sorry to share this, but look at our passage today! God's Word is teaching us what kind of Father God really is!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever regarded difficult circumstances you were going through as hardships God allowed as discipline? Why or why not? How do you think adopting and believing God's perspective on hard times will how you navigate through them?

So if I were to distill all of today's teaching into a concise take away for you, it would be this:

John 17:3

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland