

## Judges 2:14 – 3:6

**Introduction** – “The people of Israel forsook the God of Israel, and gave that worship and honor to the dunghill deities of the Canaanites which was due to him alone.” – Matthew Henry. As Jeremiah says, “be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder...” They were giving up the fountains of living water for broken cisterns. That’s a good description for a nation that departs from the triune God of scripture for a nameless, faceless religion of unconditional tolerance and pluralism.

**Hot Anger** (2:14-15) – We should learn that anger is not always wrong. There is a godly anger, a godly jealousy. It would be wrong if God didn’t care that the one He had covenanted to love was fooling around with other gods.

**Faithful Consequences** – This godly anger does not produce thoughtless rage from the Lord. He is faithful to His Word. He promised that if they worshipped Him solely and properly, their fruitfulness would be supernatural as would their strength against any enemy (Lev 26:1-13). And if they did not keep this covenant with Him, He had promised these very consequences (Lev 26:17).

**A Judge Who Saves** (vv16-19) – Not only is it the Lord who ‘gives’ them to their enemies. He is the One who ‘saves’ them from their enemies by raising up a judge. The word ‘delivered’ in 2:16 is not the same as that in 2:14. In v16, the word is ‘yasha’ from which we get the name Joshua (and Jesus – see Matt 1:21, also Num 10:9, Deut 33:9).

**Who Were the Judges?** – The judges were civil rulers and deliverers of Israel. Their *normal* work was to act as magistrates for Israel (Ex 18:21ff). Their *special* work was to act as avengers for Israel, specially anointed, destroying God’s enemies and delivering His people, thus foreshadowing the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, the Anointed-Deliverer. This is the emphasis of the stories of the judges in this book.

**Civil Rulers** – We should note that these are the two main purposes for civil magistrates today – to settle disputes in their normal work (Deut 1:16-18), and to protect and defend their people from evil as their special work.

**Some Noted Details** – Judges held their office for life. Their position was not hereditary (in most circumstances). There is evidence that they were in some way elected/confirmed by the people. We also see that they had lawful authority (Deut 17:8-10) and that the authority was to be limited by what God revealed (Num 27:21); it was constitutional and not arbitrary (Deut 16:18-20), but it included the use of capital punishment (Num 25:1-5, Deut 17:12).

**The Terrible Cycle of Sinful Hearts** (v17-19) – They did not listen to their judges. The AV says, ‘they went a whoring after other gods’. God ‘gave them over’ to their enemies and then they would ‘groan’, a word used only in Exodus 2 and 6 before. A return to slavery is in view. They groaned when their sin brought great consequences, but there is no real indication in the summary of the cycle of stories that the people truly repented. The Lord would raise up a man to judge and deliver them, but once the judge departed, the people fell quickly again to their spiritual adultery, and each generation was worse than the one before. Jesus warns of a man cleansed of an evil spirit but left empty (Matt 12:43-45). Sin is not simply something you do. It is a power that holds you in its grip.

**Sins Become the Scourges** (vv20-23) – Because an individual, or a nation, chooses to seek after idols, the Lord gives them over to these very idols, and their peoples. God’s judgments are never arbitrary. Where there is compromise with sin, that sin becomes the means God uses to chastise His children. This is not a reaction of God in an impassioned rage, but a carefully ordained means of revealing to us our sinful stupidity.

**Learning Spiritual Warfare** (3:1-6) – There is no contradiction between 2:22 and 3:2. Israel needed to learn that there was a war; they had grown too quickly accustomed to having the Canaanites around. Then they needed to learn that the kind of warfare God required was not primarily through military tactics, but in learning how to rest solely on the might of God, and to manifest that rest through proper worship and obedience.

**Proper Worship and Obedience** – Which leaves us with some applications to consider...

**The Evils of Pluralism** – There is no such thing as religious neutrality in any society over time. It is one thing to tolerate pagan worship among non-Christians in your midst with an amount of restraint. It is quite another to grant them the status as ‘truth-bearers’ with you in your society. Pluralism in America (and in your home) will be the fall of this country. Already we are a nation growing in our acceptance of all kinds of child-sacrifices (pornography, human sacrifice, even cannibalism). We must recognize our enslavement as judgment from God and cry out for deliverance.

**We Are At War** – We must learn the secret art of war, as Joshua understood it. For our greater Joshua has destroyed him who has the power of death, but has not yet put all things under Himself or His people. A tempting world remains and our corrupt flesh within still must be mortified for complete control (Rom 12:2, Gal 5:24, Col 3:5). We must fight by putting on the whole armor of

God.

**Worship Is Warfare** – When we learn to sing the Word again, when we learn to preach the Word again, and when we learn to respond to the Word again with humble hearts as the Word requires, then we will have learned to wield the sword of the Spirit that can put down any foe and release men from their captivity. Christ, your Anointed Judge, has won for you, and His jealous love will have you. Remember again His mighty works and be renewed.

*Dave Hatcher, November 10, 2002*