

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy
Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges
A. Addressing An Apostate Era's Spiritual Blindness
(Judges 2:6-3:6)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Great ideological and spiritual blindness afflicts the world, a fact we can readily illustrate:

(1) The Wall Street Journal "Notable & Quotable" September 17, 2015 column, p. A15, ran two quotes: the first was Monya Baker's August 27, 2015 article from Nature magazine ("Over half of psychological studies fail reproducibility test") that told how in "the biggest project of its kind, Brian Nosek, a social psychologist and . . . 269 co-authors repeated work reported in 98 original papers from three psychology journals, to see if they independently came up with the same results," but that "only 39 of the 100 replication attempts were successful." She concluded: "Don't trust everything you read in the psychology literature. In fact, two thirds of it should probably be distrusted."

However, in the next quote, the journal cited a September 15, 2015 Executive Order from President Obama that "(e)xecutive departments and agencies" implement "behavior science insights" and "recruit behavioral science experts to join the Federal Government" to achieve this objective!

(2) The journal's September 18, 2015 "Notable & Quotable" column (p. A13) then ran two quotes from the now Senator Ted Cruz, the first given in July 20, 2005 for the National Review where he claimed, "John Roberts is undoubtedly a principled conservative" and the other in the Republican presidential debate September 16, 2015 where he said, "I've known John Roberts for 20 years . . . (I)t was a mistake when he was appointed at the Supreme Court . . . (W)e're frustrated as conservatives. We keep winning elections, and then we don't get the outcome we want."

(3) We Christians also face spiritual blindness at the local level: in a current Christian book catalogue, I found a book on "Four Blood Moons," or four lunar eclipses in a year, what allegedly predicts major world events to occur as if the idea is Biblical when it is not! Another book asserts that the Jewish 7-year Sabbatical year observances predict notable world events like the Great Depression and the 911 terrorist attacks -- another unbiblical idea!

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "How should we productively respond to today's great spiritual blindness?!"*

- I. **Judges 2:6--3:6 begins the history of the era of the Judges with a spiritual summary explanation of that era, for that age of encroaching apostasy differs from the significantly more godly tone of Joshua's time.**
- II. **Accordingly, Judges 2:6-10a briefly recaps Joshua's closing admonition to Israel to heed God's Word (Joshua 24:1-28 with Judges 2:6), adding that Israel's people then served the Lord for the duration of the lifetimes of Joshua and of the elders of Israel who served with him, men who had seen God's great past works in Israel's behalf to bring her into possession of the Promised Land, Judges 2:7-9.**
- III. **Yet, Judges 2:10-11 presents a failure in spiritual blindness that came after the passing of Joshua's era:**
 - A. After the deaths of Joshua and the elders of his generation, Judges 2:10 claims that a generation arose in Israel that did not "know, consider, know well" (*yada'*, Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 367; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 393-395) the Lord nor the works that He had performed for Israel.
 - B. The Hebrew text at this verse uses the particle, *gam* ("yea, moreover," Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 168-169) **TWICE** in Judges 2:10 to emphasize either the word or the entire sentence that follows it (Ibid.), and in this verse, both of the particle's appearances highlight God's great works to bring Israel into the Promised Land:
 1. The particle *gam* appears before the words, "all that generation" in v. 10a KJV to emphasize the Judges 2:7 generation that saw God's great works for Israel in bringing her into the Promised Land, Ibid., Kittel.
 2. This particle appears *again* in v. 10b KJV before the phrase, "the works which He (God) had done for Israel," again highlighting God's great Judges 2:7 works by which He brought Israel into Canaan, Ibid.
 - C. The "great works" of Judges 2:7 in turn lead us to recall Israel's Joshua 4:20-24 ceremony at the west bank of the Jordan, and that event recalled the great works of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan:
 1. When God had miraculously backed up the Jordan for Israel to cross it on dry ground, Joshua had told a man from each tribe to carry a stone out the riverbed to the shore where they would lodge, Jos. 3:1-4:3, 20.
 2. Joshua then set up these 12 water-smoothed stones and told Israel's people to use them as an object lesson and evidence to their children of how God had parted the Jordan for them to cross on dry ground so that they could even bring such stones up onto the riverbank, that their descendants might know how God had shown His greatness before the world as a God Who was superior to all false pagan gods, Joshua 4:21-24.

3. The fact that these stones would **also** be on the **WEST** bank would give evidence that God had parted the Red Sea for Israel to leave Egypt and get to that *side* of the Jordan **in crossing it from east to west** (Jos. 4:23b), and **that** in turn would tell of God's great works **from Egypt to the west bank of the Jordan**:
 - a. Not only would these stones testify of God's power in parting the Red Sea and the Jordan, but they would show God had led Israel to be freed from Egypt to have to cross the Jordan to the **western** shore.
 - b. Also, later generations would realize God would then have had to provide for Israel's livelihood to get her across a huge wilderness to the Jordan's **west** bank, indicating His power to supply the supernatural sustenance of her shoes and clothes (Deut. 29:5), the manna for her daily food (Deut. 8:3), water to drink (Ex. 15:22-27) and protection from poisonous animals (Deut. 8:15) and enemies (Exodus 17:8-16).
 4. Finally, all these provisions supplied across the wide expanse of land ranging from Egypt to the west of the Jordan indicated Israel's God was not a mere local deity like the pagan gods, but that He was the God of the entire universe (cf. pagan Rahab's testimony in Joshua 2:10-11). Since God had shown His great power to sustain Israel's livelihood needs all through the wilderness in vast superiority to the Baal fertility gods of Canaan, the **stones** Joshua had set up on the western shore of the Jordan gave evidence to future generations of God's greatness that they might **resist Baal worship** and be **devoted** to the **Lord!**
- D. However, **there was a FAILURE in the EDUCATING of following generations on the SIGNIFICANCE of God's great past works for Israel as seen in the stones on the western shore of the Jordan, so the later generations in Israel did not "know" the Lord, but were spiritually blinded to Him, Judges 2:10.**
- IV. **This "blindness" was NOT a TOTAL blindness, for Judges 2:20-22 reveals God planned to leave the still unconquered Canaanites in the land not only to punish Israel for turning to idolatry, but to test her willingness to return to Him in trials caused by the Canaanites, meaning Israel still knew ABOUT God!**
- V. **Judges 2:11-3:4 thus describes repeat cycles of trials in Israel followed by temporary repentance and God's use of a judge to deliver Israel only to see her later fall back into greater apostasy, Judges 2:19.**
- VI. **Indeed, in COMPLACENT BLINDNESS, Israel in the era of the Judges eventually dwelt among the pagan peoples of Canaan, she intermarried with them and then served their pagan gods, Judges 3:5-6.**

Lesson: *The failure in the education of future generations of Israel on God's mighty works coupled with a complacent attitude in those ensuing generations led God to leave troublesome Canaanites in the land to produce trials that would force Israel to become discerning and thus to return to the Lord.*

Application: *To offset ideological and spiritual blindness today, (1) may we trust in Christ to have eternal life and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, our Great Divine Spiritual Teacher, John 3:16; Romans 8:9b; John 14:26. (2) Then, (a) may we rely on the Holy Spirit to learn God's Bible truths (Gal. 5:16) (b) and teach them to others (Jos. 4:20-24). (c) If professing believers become complacently spiritually blind about heeding Biblical truths, WHEN God arranges for them to face instructive trials, may those believers who still faithfully heed the Lord and discern be ready to minister to their needs when they rebound, providing encouragement, insight and support, Galatians 6:1.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

According to Bible prophecy, this sermon's lesson is especially applicable to our era of Church History.

In the Revelation 3:14-22 KJV message of Jesus to the Laodicean Church, our current era of Church History, Christ presented Himself in verse 14 (among other things) as "the faithful and true witness," a reference to Jeremiah 42:5 within its context. In that context, Judah's people had told God's prophet, Jeremiah, that God would be a "true and faithful witness" against them if they did not heed the message God gave to Jeremiah. However, when Jeremiah later gave God's message, but it was not what the people expected to hear, they went in a direction that violated God's will. Their disbelief of Jeremiah's words had grown out of their distrust for a past civil leader in Gedaliah (cf. Jer. 40:1-41:18), which distrust they errantly transferred to God's prophet. In the end, the people faced God's judgment!

Remarkably, heeding Scripture could have kept these people out of God's judgment: Jeremiah had told the people of Judah to stay in the land of Judah and to rely on the Lord by faith versus fleeing from Babylon's king to Egypt (Jeremiah 42:7-16), what agreed with God's Bible directive under Moses in Scripture at Deuteronomy 17:16.

Accordingly, we each need to be careful to discern the truth as defined by Scripture, and watch over our own hearts and minds to guard them that we heed God's truth from His messengers versus tragically rejecting it as false!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, as believers, may we rely on the Holy Spirit to obey, learn and teach God's Word. When we see other spiritually blind or complacent believers face severe "wake up" trials, may we help them by carefully, kindly giving them God's truth that they might mature in the Lord.