

Why Do Some Persist In Disobeying God?

International Bible Lessons

Judges 2:11-19

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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

“Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them” (Judges 2:18—NRSV).

“Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them” (Judges 2:18—ESV).

“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” (Judges 2:18—KJV).

Following the death of Joshua in the Promised Land, and before God granted the Israelites’ request for a king, God ruled His people through judges He appointed. The Book of Judges shows that when the people did not have a God-appointed leader they abandoned God to worship the gods of their neighbors. Unhappily, even when God raised up judges, “they did not even listen to their judges” (Judges 2:17).

Why did they remain stubborn and continue to worship idols? One explanation involves the realization that the God of the Bible requires moral accountability from those who call Him their God. Through Moses, God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments and other rules for daily living and worship. God expected them to obey Him for their own good (see Isaiah 48:17 and Jeremiah 32:39). Unfortunately, their neighbors tempted them with worship services that involved pleasures and practices that brought harm to themselves, to others, and dishonored God; for this reason, God forbade these practices and called them sins.

Though the Israelites suffered the natural consequences of disobedience, they did not return to God; therefore, God punished them as He had warned them. When God saw how much they suffered, because God loved them He took pity on them and saved them through a judge who fought their enemies. However, only a few remained true to the Lord after the judge died, and the Israelites “would behave worse than their ancestors” (Judges 2:19). — © Copyright 2011 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. In what ways does the Book of Judges illustrate the need to teach the whole Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament?

2. In what ways do some people or groups today repeat cycles similar to the cycle the Israelites repeated? Why do these cycles seem inevitable? How can those who follow the true God help their families avoid becoming enslaved to these cycles?

3. In what ways does God punish people and groups today that they may not recognize as God’s punishment? What needs to happen so people will see that their suffering is the result of God’s punishment for their sins?

4. How might you respond to someone who said to you, “Your suffering is the result of sin in your life. You need to repent of your sins, and turn back to God, and then you will be healed or saved from your suffering?” What might Jesus have said if someone had said this to Him or given Him this advice?

5. Why are good leaders so important? What are the qualities of a good leader?

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