

# THORNS IN YOUR SIDES

## JUDGES 1:1-2; 2:1-4,16

Text: Judges 2:3

### **Judges 2:3**

<sup>3</sup> Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

Introduction:

It does not take very long to discover that the book of Judges is not a very pleasant book. In fact, it is one of the darkest books in the Bible. It describes a period in Israel's history when they were without a strong, godly leader. Perhaps the times and the book are best summed up by Judges 17:6.

### **Judges 17:6**

<sup>6</sup> In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

When man is left to himself, it will not be long before he finds himself in deep trouble. This was the case in Israel as well.

God had birthed them in the furnace of grace and had delivered them from the horrible of slavery in Egypt.

He had led them through the wilderness giving them blessing on top of blessing. They were a favored people. They were the chosen ones of the Lord God Almighty. He led them; He fed them and He protected them. Eventually, He led them into the land of Canaan.

This was their Promised Land. It was a land flowing with milk and honey, and it was given to them by the sovereign will of God. All they had to do was enter the land, destroy the people who were living there and take up residence.

But, Israel denied the Lord, defiled the land and defied the Law. As a result, God was forced to judge this people He loved so very much.

Today our nation is 236 year old free county. There is no doubt that America had an amazing beginning. Our great nation was forged on the anvil of truth with the hammer of the Word of God by men who held tightly to their convictions and who were held in the strong grip of their faith in Almighty God. There is no disputing the fact that America was founded, not as a religious nation, but as a Christian nation! There is no question but that God Himself had His hand in the formation of this country.

Yet, like Israel of old, America has denied the Lord Who formed us. We have defiled the land He gave us. We have defied the Law He established us upon. As a

result, America is no more a Christian nation. We are no longer “one nation under God.” We, like Israel, have turned away from the God Who made us great and we have gone after gods of our own design. We are a nation that has experienced the great and manifold blessings of God in the past; we are a nation that will face God’s hand of judgment in the future!

Notice with me today as Israel move away from the Lord and what happened to them because of their sin.

You may ask what this passage has to do with us.

In these verses we can see a portrait of our nation as it is today and we can get a glimpse of what lies in store for America, if she does not return to God.

We are facing a real crisis in our nation. We have religion, but there is no fear of God. We have civilization and culture, but they are built on the shifting sands of human philosophy and wisdom and not the firm foundation of the Word of God.

Notice:

# 1. A NATION MARKED BY GLORIOUS CONQUEST (VSS. 1-2)

## Judges 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

When Israel entered Canaan, the sky was the limit! God had promised them the land and all they had to do was claim it by faith. Notice what they enjoyed during those early, days of victory.

A. They Enjoyed God's Providence (vs. 2) – "I have delivered"

God was going before them, preparing the way for certain victory. There was no way they could lose as long as God was behind them, ahead of them, above them and all around them.

B. They Enjoyed God's Protection (vs. 19) – "the Lord drove out the inhabitants"

## Judges 1:19

<sup>19</sup> And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

C. They Enjoyed God's Power (vs. 4) – "and the Lord delivered"

**Judges 1:4**

<sup>4</sup> And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

This tells us Who the real power on the battlefield was. He is the God of all power.

**Matthew 28:18**

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

**Ephesians 3:20**

<sup>20</sup> Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

### D. They Enjoyed God's Promises

For hundreds of years, beginning with Abraham, God had been promising to give the nation of Israel a homeland. He is in the process of fulfilling that promise in these verses.

I know that America is not Israel. Some would like to tell us that the promises given to the ancient Israelites have been transferred to us. That is just not true. I don't want to spiritualize these verses, but I do want to use them as an illustration of what the Lord did for America.

You see, just as surely as Israel was a nation formed by God and formed around God; I think the same can be said about the United States of America.

I don't have time to share all the evidence that is available to support that statement, but just let me briefly share a quote or two.

On March 23, 1775 in the Virginia assembly, that golden tongued orator, Patrick Henry lit the flames of the American Revolution when he said, "Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased with the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." But that is not all that Patrick Henry said. He also made this statement, "It cannot be emphasized too much or repeated too strongly that America was founded not by religionists but by Christians, not upon religions, but upon the gospel of Jesus Christ." Many would like us to forget that, but it is still part of our nation's history!

Another great American named George Washington, the first president of our country, the father of America read from the Bible when he was inaugurated. He took his oath of office with his hand upon the Bible and then he leaned down and kissed the pages of God's Word. His first official act as President was to take the entire Senate and the House of Representatives to church. They stayed there for a two-hour worship service. Then

George Washington said this, "It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the counsels of nations and whose providential aids can supply every human defect that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States." And then George Washington said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

America is not an accident!

She was founded on His Word and down through the years, God has blessed America! This nation has enjoyed God's protection, His power, His promises and His provision. Many would love to rip these facts from the fabric our nation's history; but they are true. America was a nation marked by glorious conquest!

Not only do we see A Nation Marked By A Glorious Conquest but note also:

## **2. A NATION MARRED BY GRADUAL COMPROMISE (VSS. 2:1-2)**

### **Judges 2:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. <sup>2</sup> And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

### **Judges 2:7**

<sup>7</sup> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

### **Judges 2:10**

<sup>10</sup> 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.

All did not remain well in Israel.

These verses tell us that the old generation that had seen God move in power and glory died out. A new generation came of age that forgot their heritage and denied the God that had made them what they were. Israel began a slow, steady descent down the slope of compromise.

When they entered the land, they had been commanded to utterly destroy the people of Canaan.

They are warned in those verses that if they fail to drive out the nations, they themselves will be afflicted and that God Himself will turn against them. This became a reality in Israel.

### A. The Canaanites They Feared

#### **Judges 1:19**

<sup>19</sup> And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out *the inhabitants* of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

After some initial success, Judah came up against some people that they feared. They did not drive these people out due to fear.

### B. The Canaanites They Favored

#### **Judges 1:27-30**

<sup>27</sup> Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants* of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. <sup>28</sup> And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. <sup>29</sup> Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. <sup>30</sup> Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

We are told here that many of the tribes did not drive out the people of the land, but merely put them to

tribute. That is, they enslaved the Canaanites and forced them to work for Israel.

### C. The Canaanites They Frequented

#### **Judges 1:32-33**

<sup>32</sup> But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out. <sup>33</sup> Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them.

It gets worse! In these verses we are told that some of the Israelites “dwelt among the Canaanites.” They became accustomed to the vile and wicked ways of the Canaanites and accepted them for who they were.

Note:

This same trend can be seen here in America! We have already taken many of the same steps down that slippery slope that Israel took all those years ago. Remember, the key verse of this book is Judges 17:6 which says, “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” That means that there was no fixed standard of right and wrong. People did as they pleased. They did what they wanted to, without regard for God or what He had to say about the matter. That is where we are in this nation today!

In 1960 a poll was taken that showed that 65% of Americans believed that the Bible was the inerrant, inspired Word of God. Another poll was taken in 1992 and by then only 32% still believed the Bible was the perfect Word of God. In other words, less than one-third of Americans believe that there is a perfect standard for judging what is right and wrong. Judges 2:10 is being lived out before our eyes!

### **Judges 2:10**

<sup>10</sup> 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.

Another poll taken in 1992 asked this simple question: Do you believe that there are moral absolutes? Do you believe that there are some things that are absolutely wrong and some things that are absolutely right?

70% of those who answered that poll said that they did not believe in moral absolutes!

That is scary!

Our children are being taught that there are no absolutes. There are no wrong answers. Nothing is right and nothing is wrong. That is frightening if you follow it to its logical end. It means that abortion, murder, drugs use, alcohol use, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, etc, is all right if you want to do it.

What is even more disturbing was still another survey that found only 57% of professing Christians believed in moral absolutes. We are in a mess in America! With no clear standard for right and wrong, the door is open for people do as they please; just as they did in the days when Israel was sliding into the chaos of compromise.

**Isaiah 5:20**

<sup>20</sup> Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

As they did in Israel, America is busy compromising with the Canaanites of our day. There are some that we cannot seem to overcome. They have “chariots of iron.” We cannot seem to deal with drugs, crime, abortion, immorality, sexual perversion and moral decay. When we face these Canaanites that we fear, we simply adjust to them and accept them as “being part of life.”

Then there are the Canaanites that we favor. Things like legalized gambling, lotteries and alcohol are accepted by society because they are supposed bring revenue into the hands of the community and the government. But what about their enormous cost? What about broken homes? What about shattered innocence? What about a system that preys on the poorest among us? Look at the price America is paying economically for turning away from God and walking off into compromise! Look at our world! People are

playing with vices that are destroying our young! Still we tolerate these Canaanites because they are supposedly working for us!

We fear some Canaanites; we favor others; but there are some that we frequent. That is, we live around sin so much that we begin to get desensitized to it. Instead of maintaining our spiritual purity, we begin to adopt the ways of the world. We talk like them; we walk like them; we do what they do; go where they go; watch what they watch; like what they like; smoke what they smoke; drink what they drink. We have adopted the attitude that sin is not all that bad anymore. We have allowed the walls of separation that existed between the church and the world to erode to the place that it is hard to tell the difference between the two any longer.

We have become a nation of compromisers. We are afraid to take a stand against sin for fear of being labeled “intolerant.” We are so politically correct that we are afraid we might offend someone with our “religion.” We are already paying a high price for our disobedience; but I am afraid that we are slated for far harsher judgment as a nation.

Not only do we see A Nation Marked By Glorious Conquest, and A Nation Marred By Gradual Compromise but note also:

### 3. A NATION MAIMED BY GRIM CONSEQUENCES (VSS. 2:3-4)

#### **Judges 2:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. <sup>4</sup> And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

Because of their sin, Israel faced the Lord's judgment. Notice what happened to Israel, what may await America, if we do not repent.

#### A. They Endured a Divine Sentence (vs. 3)

God vowed to remove His protecting hand from Israel. He would allow the Canaanites they had compromised with to be a thorn in the side of Israel. He would allow the false gods of Canaan to be a snare to them.

America can expect no better treatment. Even now, we can see that our nation is under a sentence of divine judgment.

- Economically we are in serious trouble.

People are struggling as they lose their jobs to China, Mexico and Vietnam. It was said recently that China could bring America to its knees without ever firing a shot, through economic means.

- Culturally, we are fighting a losing battle.

The divorce rates have quadrupled in the past 30 years.

Teen suicide has doubled and violent crime has risen 500%.

One out of every three children is born to a single mother.

In some cities the illegitimacy rates are as high as 80%!

- Morally we are totally bankrupt.

Our government spends nearly 200 million dollars per year teaching kids how practice safe fornication.

They use that same money to attack abstinence based education.

- Spiritually we are in a deplorable condition.

The Bible and prayer have been removed from our schools.

The Ten Commandments continue to be attacked and relegated to the dust bin of history.

Just this week, the Supreme Court came down against a display of the Ten Commandments in a court house.

Some people fear the Ten Commandments. They say they might be dangerous to some child who might read them. I don't know about you, but I would rather take my chances with someone who had been exposed to the bible, prayer and the Ten Commandments; than someone who had been taught that there is no such thing as right and wrong.

- We are under attack in the natural realm as well.

Look at the hurricanes, the earthquakes, the floods, the tornadoes, the fires and fierce storms that are afflicting every part of our country.

These are but a few of the signs that we are facing impending judgment from God. The fact is, our Protector has removed His hand of protection. But, it is not God's fault. We have no one to blame but ourselves.

### **Jeremiah 2:19**

<sup>19</sup>Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

We are reaping the crop that we have been sowing for the last 100 years.

### **Galatians 6:7**

<sup>7</sup>Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

We have sown to the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind!

## B. They Expressed Deep Sorrow (vs. 4-5)

### **Judges 2:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. <sup>5</sup> And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

That generation called on the Lord because of their sins.

Repentance is the only hope this nation has! I am firmly convinced that the only thing holding this country up today is the prayers of a remnant of godly people.

## C. They Evidenced Deepening Sin

### **Judges 2:6-15**

<sup>6</sup> And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. <sup>7</sup> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. <sup>8</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. <sup>9</sup> And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.

The day came when Israel totally walked away from God, 2:11-15.

Their compromise was transformed into wholesale sin and total disregard for the Word or will of God.

For this, Israel paid a terrible price.

Judgment came and they suffered the wrath of God.

Look around America today and you will see a nation that has forsaken God; rejected His Bible and thumbs its nose in defiance of the God Who formed her. God is given mere lip service in the public arena; while the same people who declare His Name in vain deny Him by their works and their walk. This trend is only going to get worse as the end times draw closer. Judgment is coming and America is going to pay a terrible price for her transgressions.

Close:

I realize that this has been a hard message. I love this nation and I want to see America spared the judgment that I think has already begun. I do not want to end on a down note. I want you to look at verse 16.

**Judges 2:16**

<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

I like the word “Nevertheless.” In spite of their failures, God still sent them men to lead them and to speak to them. Sometimes they listened, sometimes they did not. But, it still suggests that God was patient, loving and was giving them every chance to set things right.

Today the challenge is this.

First, I wonder who might feel led to come and pray for our nation, our President and for God to send revival one more time.

Second, there may be some people here who have never trusted Christ as their Savior. He loves you and died for you. If you would like to be saved and He is calling you to come to Him, you can come right now.

Third, some of here have been guilty of walking in compromise with the world and you need to get that matter straightened out with the Lord today.