

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#41 Nov. 14, 2018: Gilgal to Bochim

The Book of Judges has a very important place in the plan of divine revelation.

It expresses a truth of great importance, and a lesson of deep and solemn moment, namely, "the danger of spiritual decline or moral deterioration after great spiritual blessing."

The Book of Judges tells of the failure of Israel after they had entered the land of Promise, a failure that lasted not forty years, but four hundred years.

Spurgeon: "If you turn aside from God's words by a hair's breadth you know not where it will end. The rail diverges but a little where the switches are turned, but before long the branch line is miles away from the main track. Backslide a little and you are on the way to utter apostasy. You cannot say to sin, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The beginning of sin is like the beginning of strife, and that is said to be as the letting out of water: no man knows what a flood may come when once the banks are burst. So Israel went aside farther and farther from God because they regarded not their way, and did not in all things obey the Lord."

Judges 2:1aThe angel of the LORD came up from GILGAL to Bochim,

1. After they crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land, they encamped at Gilgal before they conquered a single city.
2. They set up 12 memorial stones to remember and commemorate this event. When future generations would see the memorial, they would REMEMBER what God had done.
3. Everywhere they looked, they can see their title-deed to the whole of their inheritance. What's next?
4. "Make thee sharp knives." Gilgal is the place of circumcision of our hearts. [Joshua 5:2]
 - ❖ Costs us our pride, self-exaltation and self in all its forms. Cut away by the Holy Spirit
 - ❖ If we are to walk as victors and conquerors, the badge of the world and the flesh has to be cut away. Only the cross of Christ can do that.

The Apostle Paul stated the two sides to Gilgal: Phil 3:10 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection (memorial of stones at Gilgal) and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (the circumcision at Gilgal) and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.'

Major Ian Thomas in 'If I Perish, I Perish' says 'Fulfilment comes with the realization that you do not have in yourself what it takes. Death to all that you are in your own inadequacy is the only gateway through which you may enter into the fullness of all that Christ is, so that you may live miraculously in the power of His resurrection, crying out from your heart "Lord Jesus, I can't, but you can, and that is all I need to know - let's go!"

"The cross of Christ for a victorious believer is not merely a title and not merely a badge of freedom, but it has become an emancipating weapon now, and he is cut loose from the power of the world, and from the energy of the flesh."

5. Joshua 5:10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month [Nisan 14] at even in the plains of Jericho.

Note: The writer states the Angel of the Lord "came up from Gilgal" [Judges 2:1] to connect the Angel's appearance here with His last recorded appearance at Gilgal [Josh. 5:13-15]. On that occasion the Angel appeared after the people had consecrated themselves to God. He promised to lead them in victory against their enemies.

6. Joshua 5:13-15 Joshua encounters the Captain of the LORD'S Hosts who has come to take over. On holy ground - Now ready for spiritual warfare
7. They went up from Gilgal and faced Jericho, followed God's instructions and Jericho's walls fell down flat.

Gilgal Is The Starting Place For All Spiritual Progression

1. Gilgal is not simply the place where they first camped.
2. It is the place they constantly returned to and used as their base for all operations.

Josh 5:10 *On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.*

Josh 9:6 *Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal...*

Josh 10:13-15 *The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.*

Josh 14:6 *Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him...*

3. Remember: Gilgal speaks of my death and resurrection with Jesus Christ.
4. Gilgal, the place of blessings, victories and surrender to God, is a place of obedience and triumph.
5. Every victory in my life starts from this place of dependence.
6. "They would go forth from Gilgal, win their victory, and come back to Gilgal to enjoy its fruits and be kept in the attitude which makes new and fresh victories possible."
7. We must return and abide at Gilgal. No matter how long you have been a Christian, you do not have the strength within you to start from any other place.
8. God wants you in the place of dependence upon Him - based at Gilgal.

Legacy of Joshua: A man who walked by faith and dependence upon the living God and one whose victories stemmed from the significance of having his base at Gilgal.

Judges 2:1a The angel of the LORD CAME UP from Gilgal to Bochim,

The people in Judges are not ready to meet God at Gilgal. He has an appointment to meet His people at Gilgal, and He is ever ready to meet them. In His grace, the angel of the Lord comes up from Gilgal, where God is. He comes up to a far different place. Notice that little word "up." It marks the distance between Gilgal and Bochim. The place of lowliness has been forsaken, and

high ground and a lofty attitude has been assumed. It is only too easy to make this ascent. Spiritual pride and self-confidence are in it. There are knives and humility at Gilgal.

Judges 2:1-2 THE ANGEL OF THE LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, 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. ² 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?

1. His rebuke begins with a reminder of the Lord's great work at the exodus when He delivered them from bondage, defeated the most powerful army on earth at that time and brought them to the land He promised. [Judges 2:1a]
2. He made a covenant that He would never break. [2:1b]
3. He instructed His chosen people not to enter into any other covenant with the people of the land which they were to possess.
4. They were to annihilate them and Tear Down Their Altars, but they did not obey.

God charged the people to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan so that they would not be tempted to serve their gods and abandon Jehovah and replace Him with worship and service to false gods who are really no gods at all

Warnings in Deut. 7:3-4

- You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.
- They will turn your sons away from following Me to serve: Other gods!!! = Idolatry

Result: They sank deeper and deeper into sin. 340 years of absolute total defeat follow. Why? They believed the lie of the enemy.

Spurgeon: Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity. It was certain that they could learn no good from men whom the Lord had condemned to utter destruction. Few would wish to go to the condemned cell for learning, yet Israel sat at the feet of accursed Canaan, and rose up proficient in every abomination.

Judges 2:2c Why Have You Done This?

John Hunter: The awful truth of the reason why they had not driven out the inhabitants and destroyed their altars and their worship was simply this: they did not WANT to drive them out. They CHOSE to allow these people with their evil, lustful ways to remain. Something in God's people wanted what they saw in that world. Their fallen human nature responded to the wild degrading dances of the heathen worship. The prospect of involvement with male and female prostitutes made their blood tingle with excitement. That was a totally new way of life and all that was in them cried out for this new culture. So it was that no one drove out anyone. So it was not really because they were afraid of iron chariots, etc... The truth is that they did not want to drive out the enemy because the lusts of their flesh and the lusts of their eyes

were attracted to the world when they should have been attracted to Jehovah.
["wife of Jehovah"; entered into a covenant]

Ps. 106:34-37 They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, But they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, And served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons.

1. The Israelites eventually became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn't seem sinful any more.
2. They became interested in how their neighbors worshiped.
3. They mingled among the heathen and learned their works that seemed innocent diversions. They thought they would never join with them in their worship, but by degrees they served their idols and practiced their rites.
4. They thought they would never be guilty of sacrificing their children to the dead gods, but at last they came to that.
5. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

Why, in the epistle to the Romans, is there such a terrible arraignment of man's corruptions set before us in the first chapter?

Rom. 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

³¹ Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

1. Did not like to retain God in their knowledge
 - If men lose the knowledge of God, depart from Him and corrupt Him, ...
 - God will give them over to a reprobate mind
 - Result: all the unutterable vices of heathenism flourish.

Gaze with the prophet Ezekiel through the hole in the wall, into chambers of imagery in the idol's temple. See the almost inconceivable horrors portrayed there; human corruption in its lowest forms. [Ezek. 8:9-18]

Go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

¹⁰ So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

¹¹ And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

8:12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

8:13-14 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. ¹⁴ Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

8:15-16 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

¹⁶ And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

How could a people think that these acts are religious worship?

1. They turned away from Jehovah God.
2. They made a god of their own imagination.
3. They give free vent to the lusts of their own hearts.

Consider: If you or I depart from obedience to God and begin to serve a god of our own imaginings: God will give us up to the desires of our own corrupt hearts.

Leaving Gilgal: Away from the Lord

1. Friendship with the world

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

2. Leads to being spotted by the world

James 1:27 ...to keep himself unspotted from the world.

3. Leads to "love the world"

I John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

4. Leads to become "conformed to this world"

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,...

Why Have You Done This? Result of Disobedience

Judges 2:3-5 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. 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.

⁵ And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

- Bochim = mourning or weeping

1. Judgment pronounced upon the Israelites for their unfaithfulness and disobedience.

- Their problem was not that the enemy was too numerous or too strong for them to defeat.
- Problem: They would rather coexist with the Canaanites than kill them.
- Problem: They did not trust God nor keep His covenant with them.
- Consequence: God will not drive out the Canaanites from before them; leave them in the land as a snare.

Note: God kept His covenant by bringing upon them those things He which He had warned them.

- The presence of the Canaanites among the Israelites was a manifestation of divine discipline.
- Reaction: Shocked; Weep; Offer sacrifices; call this place Bochim

The Terrible Consequences Of Partial Obedience, Of Sin & Erosion of Spirituality

1. Partial obedience takes us from rejoicing to weeping
2. Halfhearted obedience is the path of misery.
3. Living at Bochim because you have compromised with sin and the truth of God's Word
4. Most miserable people are professing believers who will not fully commit to the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. If you try to walk the tightrope of compromise and partial obedience, you will not know spiritual victory. You will know the bitterness of defeat and frustration in your life

Ray Steadman: How foolish these Israelites were not to obey the commandment of God!

Don't we settle for less than complete victory over our sins and bad habits?

"Well, yes, I do have a problem with anger (or gossip, or swearing, or impure thoughts, or alcohol, or tobacco), but it's just one little bad habit! I mean, we all need one small vice, don't we?" No! God says that it is these little things that we accommodate ourselves to and compromise with that eventually defeat us and destroy us!

We cannot afford to settle for anything less than complete victory.

Consider: What is the cost of being a nominal Christian?

Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray,
It'll keep you longer than you ever thought you'd stay,
And will cost you more than you ever dreamed that you would pay!

Are you living in Bochim 'the place of weeping'? It is the place where your eyes are focused on yourself and your situation from an earthly point of view.

Some of us can look back upon an experience that humbled us even into the very dust of death. Do you know what it is to live there? You have been on your face before God.

The cross has come in in judgment. You have been down in the very dust and have seen the complete condemnation of self.

Then God lifted you up, and you have gone out and won your victory in the power of the Spirit. When you dwell at Gilgal, the peace of God will fill your heart and mind.