

Place: Lurgan Baptist 29:10:2002

Reading: Judges 2:1-23

## HEARTS OF IRON, FEET OF CLAY

### 2. HERE WE GO AGAIN

In 1745 Charles Edward Stuart suddenly appeared at Glenfinnan in the Scottish Highlands. He was a tall, good looking young man and an exciting dynamic leader. The heir of the Scottish kings and queens, Stuart had returned to Scotland to recapture the throne. George the second, the British king was an arrogant, cruel man who spoke only German, and the Scots hated him. The Highlanders loved their Prince Charles and committed themselves to follow him and dethrone the foreigner.

At first they were successful in battle. But suddenly, *at the Battle of Culloden* their dreams came to an abrupt end. The Scots were crushed by the English army, and, although Charles escaped, his troops were slaughtered.

The Prince found his way to France to plan and dream about the day he would return and to take his ancestral throne. But he never did. In fact, to meet Charles twenty years later was to confront a tragedy. *He had become a hopeless alcoholic, his body and health broken.* His life had become a record of disgrace and shame, a long trial of broken marriages, discarded mistresses, and public scandals. His former friends wanted nothing to do with him. The Scots may still sing about their "*Bonnie Prince Charlie,*" but there

was little that was "*bonnie,*" about Charles at the end of his life. The life of Charles Stuart is the story of a great beginning followed by a tragic downward spiral into the slavery of sin. His life seemed to be one cycle of sin after another, taking him lower and lower and lower. You see, sin unchecked, in our lives has a way of doing that to us.

It is possible to *begin brilliantly and end ignominiously.* Some believers are like the Russian satellite that went up on the back of a rocket, but came down like a rock and required a team of searchers in Northern Canada to find the fragments. My .... a good start does not assure a successful conclusion. But this downward spiral of sin does not only operate in the lives of individuals. Its also operates in groups and nations, and its vividly illustrated for us in the nation of Israel during the period of the judges. Here were a people who had experienced a great beginning as God worked mightily in their midst but as time went on, they moved further and further away from the Lord into the quicksand of sin. Eventually, they bore almost no resemblance to the people God had liberated from Egypt, kept in the desert and through Canaan in victory. Now in our introduction to this book we touched upon four things. We noted (1) *The History of the Book:* (2) *The Morality of the Book:* (3) *The Relevancy of the Book:* and (4) *The Summary of the Book.* This second chapter of Judges gives us a summary of the entire book of Judges, indeed this chapter makes us look in three directions. In ( 2:1-5 ) we look *Upward to God:* in ( 2:6-10 ) we look

*Backward to Joshua*, then in ( 2:11-23 ) we look *Forward and see the nation*. That's the way I want to divide this section.

### **(1) AN INTERVIEW WHICH PRESENTS A FAITHFUL GOD**

Right away we have an indication of God's faithfulness.

Look at ( 2:1 Gen 12:1-3 ) God keeps His promises. He does what He says. He does not add all kinds of conditions and " *if*," or " *maybes*," no, God keeps His word. Indeed the theme of the Book of the Judges revolves around two great themes.

1. *The Faithfulness of the Covenant Keeping God:*
2. *The Unfaithfulness of His Covenant Breaking People:*

" *But ye have not obeyed my voice.*" ( 2:2 ) This is an interview with a faithful God. Now there are several things that we need to note about this interview. Note,

#### **(a) THE PLACE OF IT:**

Look at ( 2:1 ) Now Gilgal is a place of great importance in the Book of Joshua. Do you recall when Israel miraculously crossed the river Jordan they encamped at Gilgal. ( Jos 5:10 ) It was here at Gilgal they obeyed the Lord. Circumcision was renewed, the Passover was kept. It was at this very spot that the Lord of Hosts appeared to Joshua, and informed him that He was the Commander in Chief, and that He

would lead Israel into victory. My .... Gilgal was the place of victory and blessing. Is that where you are in your spiritual life ? In contrast Bochim means " *weeping*." ( 2:5 ) And when The Angel of the Lord moved from Gilgal to Bochim He was spelling out the cost of Israel's compromise. It was as if the Lord was saying, " *At Gilgal, you trusted Me, you knew victory. Now that you have turned from Me, your home will be Bochim the place of weeping and judgement.*"

Do you realise that the path of partial obedience leads to Bochim ? Have you discovered that you are most miserable when you're not fully committed to the Lord ?

That was true in the time of Judges and it's true today. If we as believers try to walk the tightrope of compromise we'll not know victory and blessing. Rather our home will be Bochim, the place of bitterness and defeat. (a)

#### **(b) THE PERSON OF IT:**

" *An Angel of the Lord.*" ( 2:1 ) Now in any study of the Old Testament you'll discover that from time to time the Lord appeared to His people. These appearances have been called " *Theophanies*," or " *appearances of God*," but they are better called " *Christophanies*," because they are really the appearances of the second person of the Trinity. These are pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord Jesus. Of course these theophanies cease with the incarnation of the Saviour.

Now we look at the Book of Judges for a moment we'll

find at least three theophanies in its pages.

### 1. The FIRST Christophany is in Judges Ch 2:

Look at ( 2:1 & 2:4 ) Now did you notice what this " *angel of the Lord,*" said ? " *I made you.*" The angel did not say, " *the Lord brought you from Egypt.*" No !

" *I made you .... I swore .... I said.*" In other words, " *the angel of the Lord,*" was God Himself appearing to His people. Will you turn back for a moment to Exodus Ch 3 ? Look at ( 3:2 ) " *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him.*" Now look at ( 3:4 ) So " *the Lord,*" and " *the angel of the Lord,*" and " *God,*" are interchangeable terms, because the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is Christ, the One who was appointed Mediator of His people. But turn back to Judges Ch 2 ! Look at ( 2:5 ) Now that's interesting. The appearance of Christ is linked to sacrifice, for when the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to men He always leads them to the Cross, for the Cross is the climax of Divine revelation, and the apex of saving grace. But there is something else here we should note. After this theophany or appearance of the Lord Jesus there is the Coming of the Spirit of God ! Look at ( 3:10 ) *Christ came first, then came the Cross, and then came Pentecost.* My .... there is no way to Pentecost in your life but by knowing Christ, and you can never know Christ unless you come to the Cross, then from the Cross you can go to the Upper Room for empowerment for service.

### 2. A FURTHER Christophany is in Judges Ch 6:

Look at ( 6:11 ) Now notice how Gideon addresses the angel. ( 6:13, 15 ) Do you see what happens after this appearance ? ( 6:24 ) Now look at ( 6:34 ) So you have the Christ, the Cross, and the Coming of the Holy Spirit.

My .... do you see exactly what these Christophanies are teaching us ? There is no way to God but through Christ. There is no way to God but through a crucified Christ. " *We preach Christ crucified.*" But through that Cross and finished work, and glorious resurrection, we are brought to an Upper Room, where the Spirit of God empowers His people, to do the work of God and thwart the enemies of the gospel with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

### 3. A FINAL Christophany is in Judges Ch 13:

Look at ( 13:3, 17 ) If that been just an angel, the angel would have said, " *you will not do me honour. There is only one person that you will honour and that is God Himself.*" But the angel of the Lord did not say that. He just said, ( 13:18 ) Or as A.T. " *Seeing my name is Wonderful.*" My .... who is Wonderful ? The Lord Jesus. " *His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor.*" ( Is 9:6 ) But notice what happened in ( 13:19 ) The Wonderful Christ does wonderful things. Is this not your testimony ? " *He hath done all things well.*" ( Mk 7:37 ) But one thing here look at ( 13:25 ) Now that is (a) (b) but look at:

**(c) THE PURPOSE OF IT:**

Do you know why the Lord permitted the heathen nations to be left in the land ?

1. To PROVE Israel:

The Lord says, " *I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died, that through them I may prove Israel*

*whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein.*" ( 2:21-22 )

2. To PROVIDE Israel with Experience in Warfare:

" *Now these are the nations which the Lord left .... only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war.*" The Lord left these nations also:

3. To PREVENT the Land from Becoming a Wilderness:

" *And the Lord thy God will put out these nations from before thee by little and little, thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.*" ( Deut 7:22 ) Do you see now why the Lord permitted these nations in the land ? Finally,

4. To PUNISH Israel:

Look at t ( 2:3 ) Israel was going to suffer adversity from which they could not be delivered apart from the Lord's intervention, thus they would be forced to seek

His help. My .... do you know something ? The Lord knows how prone we are to forget Him. " ***Prone to wander ....*** " Don't we so easily forget the Lord especially when things are running smoothly. So what is the Divine Strategy ? What is God's Strategy ? Sometimes He allows things to stand in our way .... a sick baby, an unfair employer, unpleasant neighbour, an unfaithful friend .... why ? In order to keep us close to Himself.

**(2) A REVIEW WHICH PRESENTS A FRUITFUL LEADER**

You see ( 2:6-10 ) reviews the past and brings before us Joshua one of the great leaders of the Old Testament.

Now if you look closely at this section, you'll notice that there are two salient points that the Lord is underlining.

1. *When Joshua was alive the people served the Lord:*

2. *When Joshua died the people became complacent:*

Think of:

**(a) *The INFLUENCE that was WIELDED by Joshua:***

1. On His FAMILY:

Do you recall his famous words in his farewell message ? " *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" ( 24:15 ) Now please notice what Joshua does not say, " *As for me and if my children agree to it we will serve the Lord.*" Nor does he say, " *Well, if its in*

*keeping with family consensus we will serve the Lord." No ! No ! " As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." " I will administer in my home the rule of God." Do you know what's wrong with so many fathers ? They are jumping every time their children whimper, or mumble, but how different Joshua was. You see, when we apply God's rule in the home we don't need to get up tight when we gather the family together and say, " in this home no T.V. on the Lord's day," or " this home will be in the Lord's house on the Lord's day." You see, we set the home in the direction of the Lord, and we say this is the direction we go under the Lordship of Christ.*

*" But Daddy John's parents allow him to stay at home on Sunday morning." No, this is the direction we go under the Lordship of Christ. Of course there comes a time when our children become adults, and they have to choose whether they are going to serve the Lord or the Devil. Do you know what grieves me ? To see fathers out on Sunday morning on their own ? They cannot even get their Christian wives out with them and what about their children ? Do you want to know how God feels when you feel to exercise your kingly role ? Well, study the life of Eli ! Oh, that we had an influence for God like Joshua on our families !*

## 2. On His COUNTRY:

Look at ( 2:7 ) Now Joshua was not perfect, and Scripture is enough to record his failures. But God used him because he trusted the Lord and ordered his life by the Word of God. As a result, God did great

deeds for His people through Joshua. That's the thrust of ( 2:7 ) Joshua kept Israel in the place of God's blessing. You see, one man committed unreservedly to God and His Word can make an enormous difference in the lives of God's people. My .... if you trust God and build your life on His Word you can have a godly influence on your family, assembly, country. But Joshua died ( 2:8 ) And the (a) gave way to:

### ***(b) The INDIFFERENCE that was WITNESSED after Joshua:***

Look at ( 2:10 ) Now that is not a reference to intellectual ignorance. They were not uninformed of the events of the Exodus or the Conquest of Canaan. Theologically, they had a great deal of information about the Lord. What they had not seen with their eyes, and mind you many of them had seen through children's eyes, the crossing of the Jordan River, and the fall of Jericho, but what they had not seen with their eyes, they had heard with their ears, it was not facts they lacked.

They knew about the Lord. They knew about His deeds. But they did not know Him or acknowledge Him. *They had become complacent about the living God, and they had forgotten how to walk in fellowship with Him.* They had lost touch with God. You see, instead of being filled with wonder that the Lord had reached into Egypt and delivered His people by the blood of the Lamb, instead of being moved to praise God when they heard the history of Mount Sinai, the crossing of Jordan, the fall of Jericho, they simply

yawned with boredom. " *Aw, we've heard all that before.*"

My .... do you know what this is ? **Its the second generation syndrome ?** It is a lukewarmness, a complacency, an apathy about amazing biblical truths, that we have heard from our childhood or from our Bible teachers. My .... whether we like it or not its very much part of 21st century Christianity, as we begin to leave out first love for the Saviour. Is that where you are spiritually ? Somewhere along the way you've lost you're passion. A Christian was driving home from church. The wife was sitting in the front seat on the far left side.

Her husband was in his usual place behind the steering wheel. Seemingly a large gulf separated them. With lonely eyes she looked at him and said, " *Dear do you recall when we first met how close we used to sit to each other ?*" *You used to put your arm around me. What happened to those days ?*" With one hand firmly attached to the steering wheel, and the other resting on the empty space between them, he said, " *Well, I haven't moved.*" The distance was not because he had moved. A separation had resulted because she had moved away. She had left her first love. Is that where you are spiritually ? Someone once said, " *Hate is not the opposite of love, apathy is.*" My .... do you really know God ? Or are you marked by apathy ? " *I've heard it all before.*" (1) (2)

### **(3) A PREVIEW WHICH PRESENTS A FORGETFUL PEOPLE**

Do you recall what I said about the Book of Judges ? Its like being on a merry go round. Its the same cycle that's repeated at least six times in the book. ( 3:7, 12 4:1 6:1 10:6 13:1 ) Time and again we read these words, " And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord."

The cycle began with:

#### **(a) SIN:**

( 2:11 ) The Hebrew text is far more strongly worded. " *The children of Israel did THE EVIL.*" They threw themselves into the supreme sin, the sin of all sin. Look at ( 2:13 ) Now Baal and Ashtaroth were false deities in the Canaanite pantheon of gods. Baal was the god of the storm and rain who rode on the clouds and was responsible for the crop watering rains. Astaroth Baal's consort was the goddess of war and fertility. Now in Canaanite religion the fertility of the land depended on the sexual relationship between Baal and his partner. In other words the sexual union of these gods in the heavens was to result in an abundant harvest. But you see, the Canaanite faithful did not sit back and say, " *Let Baal do it.*" No ! Instead their watchword was, " *Serve Baal with gladness all ye glands.*" They practised sacred prostitution as part of their worship. A Canaanite man would go for example to a Baal shrine and have sexual intercourse with one of the sacred prostitutes serving there. The man would fulfil Baal's role, the woman would fulfil Ashtaroth's.

***Streams of mercy, never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise."***

The idea, you see, was to encourage Mr. and Mrs. Baal to do their thing, thus the rain, grain and wine would flow again. My .... can you see why the Israelites were drawn toward Baal worship ? Do you see why God wanted His people to drive them out ? ( Deut 20:16 ) That they might be protected from contamination. ( Deut 18:9-12 ) But " *they did not utterly drive them out.*" ( 1:28 ) The result ? They were overcome by them.

Why ? There was no distinctive separation. Do you know something ? God's call to separation is for our preservation ! " *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.*" ( 2 Cor 6:17 ) Do you think that you can form deep relationships with the ungodly and not be effected spiritually ?

Do you believe that you can frequent places where God is not welcome and it won't harm you ? Do we think that we can watch questionable films and it will not affect our daily walk with God ? Paul says, " *Be not conformed to this world.*" ( Rom 12:2 ) Or " *Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould.*" (a) And then:

***(b) SUFFERING:***

Or servitude. ( 2:14-15 ) We could have entitled this series on Judges, " *Prone to Wander.*" Do you know that hymn ?

***" Come Thou fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace***

It's a great hymn of praise to God, but there's a story behind it. Some years ago two strangers were riding in a coach, a miserable looking man, and a lady with a radiant countenance. She was reading this hymn. She showed the hymn to her unknown companion, and told him how much the words meant to her. The man looked at the hymn and broke down. Sobbing he said, " *Madam I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds if I had them to enjoy the feeling I had then.*" Robert Robinson had drifted out of fellowship with the Lord, and he knew the awful bondage that sin brings. You see, the Lord promised victory to Israel if they trusted Him. ( Jos 1:5 ) But when they turned from the Lord they were condemned to bondage and defeat. Six different times for a total of 114 years they knew foreign bondage. My .... sin brings servitude .... that's the fact of Judges ! (a) (b) then:

***(c) SUPPLICATION:***

Look at ( 2:18 ) Or, " *The Lord was moved to pity by their groaning.*" Five times at least in this Book of Judges, the people cry out to the Lord. ( 3:9,15, 4:3 6:6 10:10 ) Is that not just a picture of us ? Even as Christians sometimes we leave the Lord out, until finally all the threads begin to unravel, and then in our desperation with our backs against the wall we cry out to God. We beg God to intervene, put the pieces back together again. Do you know something ? That prayer

can be a shallow or superficial call for help which we forget as soon as things improve. The amazing thing is this. No matter how deep or shallow our prayer is, the Lord hears us ! In this very Book each time His people call, the Lord hears and intervenes, then there is:

**(d) SALVATION:**

Look at ( 2:16 ) Now three significant facts about the judges are stated in ( 2:18 )

1. God raised them up: They were Divinely Appointed.

2. God was with them: Indeed we shall see their ministry was empowered by the Spirit of God.

3. God worked through them: they were the channels of His power !

Did you notice as long as the judge was alive, there was victory, when the judge died there was bondage. ( 2:19 )

Why did the Lord raise up these judges ? It would have been much easier to discard a people like this, but you see God does not break His covenant, the Lord does not desert His people. To this people who richly deserved judgement, we read, " *The Lord was moved to pity by their groaning.*" ( 2:18 ) What a beautiful insight into the heart of God. We rebel, sin, disobey Him, but God's love keeps reaching out.

Someone has said that the Book of Judges provides a miniature history of man, the story of our human race with its ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies. But its

also the Revelation of Divine Intervention in the affairs of mankind. And just as God intervened in the past, so the Lord will intervene in the future. Our God is not an " *absentee landlord,*" the universe is not a closed system defying His intervention. History is not drifting along without design or purpose. God is in control. My ... ***History is His story !*** God will have the final say ! And just as He intervened in the past ( Judges ) to deal with the nations and Israel so He will intervene in the future to deal with the nations and Israel. The's nations Sin has led to their Suffering ( Deut 4:27 ) But one day their Supplication will lead to their Salvation. " *They shall call on My name and I will hear them, I will say it is my people and they shall say the Lord is my God.*" ( Zech 13:9 ) " *And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.*" ( Zech 14:9 ) " *Jesus shall reign we're the sun.*" My ... in the light of these soon coming events, " *what manner of persons ought we to be.*" ( 2 Pet 3:11 )