

Judges 2:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

This verse occurs in the crucial second chapter establishing the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy. The Angel of the LORD's covenant lawsuit exposes Israel's violation of covenant obligations despite God's faithfulness. The cyclical pattern introduced here—sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, silence—repeats seven times through Judges, demonstrating both human depravity and divine mercy.

The theological significance includes understanding God's character as both just judge and merciful deliverer. When Israel sins through idolatry and covenant breaking, God's justice demands judgment, bringing foreign oppression. Yet when Israel cries out in repentance, God's mercy provides deliverance through judges. This cycle reveals human inability to maintain faithfulness (the need for divine grace) and God's patience in dealing with persistent rebellion.

The phrase "the generation that knew not the LORD" (2:10) emphasizes the critical importance of intergenerational discipleship. Joshua's generation served the LORD, but failed to adequately pass on covenant faithfulness to their children. This failure resulted in spiritual amnesia—the next generation forgot both God's mighty

acts and covenant requirements. Application to modern believers is clear: faithful transmission of biblical truth to the next generation is essential for maintaining covenant faithfulness.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about the covenant lawsuit and cyclical pattern of apostasy reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	יָצְאוּ	יָד	יְהוָה	הִיטָה
H3605	H834			H1961
Whithersoever they went out				
	H3318	the hand	and as the LORD	
		H3027	H3068	
בָּם	לָרָעָה	כָּאָשֶׁר	יְהוָה	יְכַאֲשֶׁר
H0		H834		H834
was against them for evil				
	H7451	had said	and as the LORD	
		H1696	H3068	
נִשְׁבַּעַ ע	יְהוָה	לָהֶם	וַיִּצָּר	לָהֶם
H7650	H3068	H0	H3334	H0
had sworn and as the LORD				
		distressed		
מְאֹד:				
unto them and they were greatly				
	H3966			