

Judges 2:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

Analysis

That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

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

לִּמְ עַן	נִס וֹת	בְּ מ	אֶת	ל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	ו	שָׁמַר	הֵם
H4616	That through them I may prove	H0	H853		Israel		did keep	H1992
	H5254				H3478		H8104	
אֶת	דִּבְרֵי	יְהוָה	לִלְכָת	בְּ מ	רַכָּשׁ	ו	שָׁמַר	
H853	the way	of the LORD	H1980	H0	H834		did keep	
	H1870	H3068					H8104	
	אֲבוֹתָם	אֵם	לֹא:					
	therein as their fathers	H518	H3808					
	H1							

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 8:2 (References Lord): And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deuteronomy 8:16 (Parallel theme): Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

Deuteronomy 13:3 (References Lord): Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Proverbs 17:3 (References Lord): The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Genesis 22:1 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.