

Listen to God's Judges

Key Verse: *"Yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so."*
—Judges 2:17

Selected Scripture:
*Judges 2:11-19;
21:25*

AFTER THE DEATH OF THE Israelites' great leader Joshua and those of his generation, "there arose another generation after them, which knew [observed] not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." (Judg. 2:10,11) "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."—chap. 21:25

Such was the part of Israel's history commonly referred to as the period of the judges. This period was later referred to by the Apostle Paul, when he said,

"He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet." (Acts 13:20) Although God had expected Israel to follow him as their leader, they continually forsook him, seeking after other gods. Because of this, God allowed them to be delivered into the hands of their enemies time and time again. Whenever this happened, only when they were in the most dire condition, did they finally turn back, albeit temporarily, to the LORD. For this purpose, and in his great

mercy, “the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.”—Judg. 2:16

Our Key Verse indicates that, after being delivered by their judges, the Israelites did not listen to their counsel and quickly returned back to the heathen gods around them. The account further states, “Yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.”—vss. 17-19

These verses identify one of the key shortcomings of the Israelites, which in a sense mirrors the shortcomings of mankind in general—“They ceased not from their own doings.” God expects those who are striving to be of his chosen people to endeavor to the best of their ability to seek and do his will in all things. This means to cease from doing one’s own will. Apostle Paul describes this as entering into the rest of God. “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (Heb. 4:10) If the Israelites had been more faithful in ceasing from their own doings, they would have enjoyed the favor of God and the resulting rest and peace which it affords. However, because they continually wanted to do things “their way,” they found themselves in trouble time after time, with deliverance coming only at the hand of the judges God had mercifully provided. ■