

Religious vs. Relationship

Judges 2:1-5

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A. A True Relationship Never Forgets (v. 1):

1. Angel of the Lord – The Angel of the Lord spoke with the same authority as God but is yet a messenger from God and, therefore, could be the Lord Jesus Christ.

a) The Angel of the Lord was not merely “an angel”; He was a theophany—an appearance of the second Person of the Trinity in visible and bodily form before the Incarnation. Prominent during the time of Moses (Ex. 3:2–15; Num. 22:22–35) and Joshua (Josh. 5:13–15), this divine manifestation also appeared during the period of the Judges to Gideon (Jud. 6:11–24) and to the parents of Samson (Jud. 13:3–21). The Angel of the Lord was Deity for He was called Yahweh (e.g., Josh. 5:13–15; Jud. 6:11–24; Zech. 3) and God (e.g., Gen. 32:24–32; Ex. 3:4), and had divine attributes and prerogatives (cf. Gen. 16:13; 18:25; 48:16). Yet this Messenger of the Lord was also distinct from Yahweh, thus indicating a plurality of Persons within the Godhead (cf. Num. 20:16; Zech. 1:12–13). New Testament allusions suggest that the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament was Jesus Christ (cf. John 12:41; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 8:56; Heb. 11:26). ^[1]

2. Angel of the Lord – The Angel of the Lord did not need permission or did not need to be invited. The Angel came unannounced and, with authority, executed what will take place one hundred and sixty years after Joshua passed away.

3. Camp up – The Angel of the Lord, by saying He traveled from Gilgal to Bochim, exposes how purposeful His journey was to address the pressing issue at hand.

a) “Gilgal” was where the Israelites first camped after they crossed the Jordan. There they were circumcised and dedicated to covenant faith and obedience (Josh. 5:2–12). Gilgal was near Jericho and perhaps should be identified with Khirbet al-Mafjar, about one and one-half miles northeast of Old Testament Jericho. The “oak of weeping” near Bethel (Gen. 35:8, ^{NIV} marg.) has been suggested as a possible site for “Bokim” (“weepers”), but that location remains uncertain.

4. Came up – When the Lord decides to speak, it is when He decides it is necessary. We must intentionally put ourselves in a place where we are ready to listen and obey.

5. Said – The angel of the Lord continuously persistently verbalizes God’s history with Israel. He is repeatedly highlighting the Lord’s faithfulness to His covenant.

6. I brought you up – The Angel of the Lord reminded the people of Israel that He and He alone got them into the land they now enjoy and that is only because of His covenant with them.

a) Although Israel had experienced the power of God during the period of the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, they soon forgot the covenant they had made with God at Sinai. Idolatry was tolerated among them, and intermarriage with the Canaanites became commonplace. ^[2]

7. I brought you up - The Lord is our deliverer.

8. Led you into the land – The Angel of the Lord made a way out of no way to get them out of Pharaoh’s powerful, brutal grip to the land of freedom and plenty. All they did was respond to the way that the Angel of the Lord created.

9. Which He swore to your fathers – The Lord made an oath that He is totally obligated to complete what He promised. Not only did the fact He made the oath is evident because they are now firmly established in the land; despite the walls of Jericho and all their enemies, He has faithfully fulfilled all He said He would do.

a) While the promise of land to Abraham represented an early element in the patriarchal blessing and can be traced back to Gen 12:1–9 and 15:7–21 (note the reference to the Canaanite tribes), strictly speaking, the only reference to Yahweh’s oath in the Abrahamic narratives (Gen 22:14–18) concerns progeny, not land. The present association of the oath with the promise of the land of Canaan,

however, occurs in the reiteration of the Abrahamic promise to Isaac (Gen 26:3), in Yahweh's self-introduction speech to Moses (Exod 6:8), and repeatedly thereafter. ^[3]

10. Which He swore to your fathers – God never breaks His promises. There are 7,000 promises in the scriptures.

11. I will never break My covenant – Because they are still in the Promise Land and have not gotten into servitude to another ruler, and the Lord has not expelled them, God has exposed His faithfulness to His covenant. This is a covenant that the Lord honors forever. It is not about losing the relationship with the Lord; the emphasis should be more about how we can consistently demonstrate a true devotion to Him.

12. I will never break My covenant – The Lord's faithfulness describes His nature (Deuteronomy 32:4).

B. Being Religious Causes Us to Forget (vs. 2-3):

1. You shall make no covenant – With God's powerful deliverance and faithfulness to support them, despite their unfaithfulness, there is no way there should be any desire to cut God off from ratifying a covenant with the very inhabitants they were supposed to illuminate.

a) As a result of Israel's disobedience, the divine aid by which Israel would have driven out the Canaanites was withheld (cf. 2:20–3:6). Intermarriage with the Canaanites led to tolerance of and even participation in their idolatry. The form of their disobedience which incurred divine wrath, became, in turn, the form of the punishment placed on them. The snare of Canaanite idolatry anticipated the cycles in the days of the Judges. ^[4]

2. You shall make no covenant – As faithful as the Lord has been, it is amazing that the 'Angel of the Lord' has to stop the people of God from developing a covenant with an ungodly population.

3. You shall make no covenant – When we compromise God's Word, we automatically entertain other gods or follow the desires of the flesh (Romans 8:9-12).

4. You shall make no covenant – Our commitments should never interfere with our commitment to the Lord.

5. You shall tear down their altars - Every effort should continuously demonstrate their commitment to the Lord by endlessly destroying the altars of non-Jewish inhabitants of the land.

a) Unlike other nations, whose gods neither see nor hear nor speak, Israel's God has spoken. The Israelites were never left guessing the will of their God (cf. Deut 4:1–8). In His grace, Yahweh entered into a covenant relationship with them, and in His grace, He had revealed His will. The injunction to resist all alliances with Canaanites or to tolerate their religious practices was not Moses' or Joshua's idea. In violating these commands, they were not defying human will but the revealed will of their God. The question *mah zzō 't âšîtem*, "What is this you have done?" is an effective rhetorical ploy, forcing the Israelites to reflect on their actions and their implications for their ongoing relationship with Yahweh and their personal futures. ^[5]

6. You shall tear down their altars - We must constantly be intentional about keeping high places (anything, person, our ambition that takes our attention away from God) out of our lives (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 3:13-16; 5:6-11). This includes denying ourselves (John 12:23-26; Luke 14:25-33).

7. You have not obeyed – Even though the Lord's people should be vividly demonstrating their commitment to the Lord, who has been very faithful to them, they refuse to listen. Their unwillingness to not to provide the Lord full attention has caused the 'Angel of the Lord' to confront them.

8. You have not obeyed – When our commitments and the altars we erect create a major distraction in our lives, , our obedience to God is forfeited. This is why it is absolutely necessary to live an intentional life before God (Hebrews 12:1-3).

9. What is this you have done? – Their attitude to the 'Angel of the Lord,' when the Lord has faithfully accomplished so much for them, creates the question, 'What makes them put so much time and effort into gaining knowledge of the pagans in the land and then obligate themselves to comply with their ways?' It is unthinkable to the 'Angel of the Lord' for them to turn their attention to other gods.

10. What is this you have done? – When finding time and energy for the Lord becomes so great a challenge, we begin to neglect Him, and we have made something or someone else our God.

11. What is this you have done? – Having a passion to grow in our knowledge of God exposes the nature of our hearts. If our passion grows, our love for Him becomes obvious. If we are easily distracted, it exposes that our hearts are not fully surrendered (Psalm 25:4-5; 51:6; 86:11; 119).

12. Therefore, I also said – Because of their actions, the ‘Angel of the Lord’ is completely committed to the judgment He will execute toward them.

a) The burden of the angel’s remonstrance was that God would inviolably keep His promise, but by their flagrant and repeated breaches of their covenant with Him, they had forfeited all claim to the stipulated benefits. Having disobeyed the will of God by voluntarily courting the society of idolaters and placing themselves in the way of temptation, He left them to suffer the punishment of their misdeeds. [\[6\]](#)

13-. I will not drive them out – Because the Jews did not obey the Lord and remove the inhabitants of the land and then sought out to become obligated to their gods, the ‘Angel of the Lord’ executes His divine wrath by refusing to empower them to remove those who will now become a pain to them, as is evidenced today.

14. I will not drive them out before you – When we do not intentionally seek to obey God, those things we should have grown to overcome become a hindrance to us. The longer they remain in our lives, the greater the possibility they would one day control us or become a nuisance (Romans 8:5-8).

15. They will become a snare - Everything seems completely normal. Still these same individuals will endlessly become an entrapment that will lure them into sinful threats that will eventually ruin them, like an animal being lured into a jaw-dropping cage.

16. They will become a snare - When we are not intentionally seeking to develop our lives in the manner the Word of God has directed us, but yet we live each day in a world that is becoming more and more godless, it is very easy to be lured into the traps of the world and to eventually not serve the Lord faithfully (Romans 7-8, 12; James 1:12-16).

C. Genuine Worship Erases Religion (v. 4):

1. When the Angel of the Lord spoke these Words – The people clearly understood, especially what the ‘Angel of the Lord’ verbally communicated through the prophetic Word of God. They also clearly and in detail understood the authoritative nature of this message.

a) When the Israelites observed the prosperity of the Canaanites, the latter’s gods seemed to offer so much: fertility, prosperity, and security. But Yahweh, because of this turns their twisted theological thinking against them. Rather than finding new freedom in the religious structures of the Canaanites, the Israelites would be caught in the trap of their gods, like a fly in a spider’s web. ^[7]

2. Lifted up their voices – They independently, without any influence from the ‘angel of the Lord,’ collectively sought forgiveness from the Lord. They did this continuously.

3. Wept – They became highly emotional, distressed, and full of grief, basically overwhelmed with sorrow and remorse as they cried loudly, seeking the forgiveness of God.

4. Wept – True repentance leads to genuine worship. It must be consistently taught to those around us, or it will be lost (Judges 21:25).

5. They called the name – Loudly, distressfully weeping before God based on His reputation as the Lord God ‘who is slow to anger and abounding in love,’ did not produce the results they expected. The Lord knew that they would eventually, because of the influences of the pagan people in the land, do what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25).

a) On the surface, this seems to be a positive response to God’s Word. But as we continue to read the book, we will see that it was an empty gesture because there was no change in their lives or their attitude towards God. ^[8]

6. They called the name – The Lord instructs us to call upon His name (John 16:23-24), especially in times when we may have lots of questions.

7. There they sacrificed – They knew how to call on God and continuously persistently sacrifice to the Lord God, but did not do so in a manner of true worship.

8. There they sacrificed – Many times, we seek the Lord to bless us rather than allow Him to develop our lives for the purposes He died to provide; life and life abundantly (John 10:10), and to become our friend (John 15:13).

9. Sacrificed – When the world and all its influences get the best of us, our worship of the Lord is neglected (1 John 2:15-17). Unfortunately, our lives must be seriously impacted before a desperate need for Him to elevate our passionate desire to worship Him sincerely .

[1] Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Judges](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 381). Victor Books.

[2] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#) (Jdg 2:1). Moody Press.

[3] Block, D. I. (1999). [Judges, Ruth](#) (Vol. 6, pp. 112–113). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[4] Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Judges](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 382). Victor Books.

[5] Block, D. I. (1999). [Judges, Ruth](#) (Vol. 6, pp. 114–115). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[6] Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Joshua–Esther](#): Vol. II (p. 74). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

[7] Block, D. I. (1999). [Judges, Ruth](#) (Vol. 6, p. 116). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[8] Robinson, S. J. (2006). [Opening up Judges](#) (p. 12). Day One Publications.