

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #14

"You Shall Be Like God"

Part 2

Our title is taken from the story of the Fall of man in Genesis 3. In Genesis 1, God made man upright, in His own image and likeness and gave him dominion over all God's creation to do as he pleased. But...there was only ONE THING God denied him.

Genesis 2:16-17

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The serpent appears to tempt them to eat of that one fruit forbidden them...

Genesis 3:4-5

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Adam Clarke

The object of the tempter was to persuade our first parents that they should, by eating of this fruit, become wise and powerful as God (because knowledge is power,) and be able to exist forever, independently of him.

The great sin of Adam and Eve was to become like God in that they would no longer depend on God to guide their morality; they wanted the power to define good and evil for themselves. This great sin, that brought about the Fall of the human race, has been committed countless times from then to now.

The Biblical Illustrator

Our first parents tried the experiment and passed along to their children the fatal wish to invent good for themselves rather than seek it in God. The many inventions and schemes which we seek out are continued evidence that we are

the children of those who, even in paradise, planned their own exaltation and thought to be wiser than God.

The Biblical Illustrator

The motive to disobedience was not appetite, but the ambition to be as God. The outward act of eating the forbidden fruit was only the thin edge of the wedge, behind which lay the whole mass -- the fundamental determination to isolate self and to seek personal pleasure regardless of God and His law.

This is the spiritual war being waged in America today.

Theme

Nothing proves the depravity of our increasingly anti-Christian culture more than how it seeks to redefine good and evil apart from the revelation of God.

But there's nothing new under the sun. History repeats itself. God's people have been here before. One example is the nation of Israel in the Book of Judges...

I. America and the Book of Judges

A. Historical Context

1. The Book of Judges contains some of the bloodiest and most shocking stories in the Bible; there are 7 cycles of sin and redemption as God's people slide into idolatry and suffer from the invasion of foreign powers, only to cry out to God, who sends deliverers (like Samson and Gideon) to save them; only to see them fall away from God again.

2. Almost all Bible scholars agree that the last verse in the Book sums up the cause of all the calamities in the Book...

Judges 21:25

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Dr. Thomas L. Constable, "Constable's Notes on the Bible"

This verse summarizes the whole period of the judges surveyed in this book. It forms a fitting concluding statement that explains why life in Israel was as it was during this era. For this reason many Bible students regard this verse as the key verse in the book.

G. Campbell Morgan

It is impossible to read the Book of Judges, and especially the closing part of it, without being impressed with the sad condition of any people who act without some definitely fixed principle. Lawlessness comes from lack of government. But the truth is that Israel had lost its immediate relation to its one and only King.

3. Notice the connection between the political and the spiritual; the lawlessness in the land began when the people departed from God.

Dr. Thomas L. Constable

The interesting thing is that none of Israel's woes began with idolatry or Baal worship. It began with individuals ignoring the law of God, doing what was right in their own eyes, and it led a whole nation into moral collapse.

The Pulpit Commentary

Great evils arise from an excess of individualism amongst men in dealing with the foundations of Society and the State. There is a necessity for some common external bond and rule for life and conduct.

4. When it comes to how we know good and evil, the question for the Christian is the same as it was in the Garden of Eden; will we submit to what God has revealed or will we assume to be 'like God' and seek to know on our own?

5. The lesson of the Book of Judges is simple; where there is no authority, everyone will 'do what is right in his own eyes'; when this happens, you get a chaotic condition known as...

Anarchy

A state of disorder due to the absence or nonrecognition of authority or other controlling systems.

- a. There is no safety on our streets because of a spirit of anarchy.
- b. When powerful politicians defund the police, they remove authority from the streets and men do what is right in their own eyes.
- c. When prosecuting attorneys refuse to prosecute the criminals, there is no fear of justice, and men do what is right in their own ideas.
- d. When the so-called 'social justice' crowd uses bail reform to put 1000's of career criminals back on the streets, you get a mass killing in Waukesha.
- e. This is anarchy; where there is no king (authority) everyone does what is right in his own eyes.

6. All the woes of the world came because man chose to decide good and evil for himself; all the woes of Israel came because 'there was no king...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

7. And history is repeating itself in America.

B. America Is Living As In the Day of Judges

1. Look at these survey results...

Barna Research Group

Of all Americans surveyed, 58% agreed that 'identifying moral truth' is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.

Only 32% disagreed, while 10% said they 'didn't know'.

Barna Research Group

The typical American believes, 'Truth is what I say it is, and no one can tell me otherwise'. Americans believe that right and wrong can only be discerned by each individual, based upon their feelings and circumstances; and that what is right for one person might be wrong for another, but each must have the freedom to make those choices without external judgment.

2. But some of you may be thinking, 'this may be true of America in general, but not among Christians'! What about this?

Pew Research Center

Surveys show that 75% of Americans believe the Bible is the Word of God. But more than 75% of Catholics and a majority of evangelical Protestants favor Gay Marriage and believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

3. Many professing Christians are abandoning their Bibles.

C. Modern Examples of Judges 21:25

1. Judges 21:25 is in America's Christian churches.

Jen Hatmaker

Popular Christian author/speaker/blogger called for the full inclusion of LGBT agenda into the Christian community in 2016, now tells us that, "Gay relationships can be holy."

Father James Martin

This Roman Catholic Jesuit priest didn't offer any biblical rationale at all when he urged Christians to celebrate 'Gay Pride'.

a. In his first book **"Velvet Elvis"**, best-selling Christian author Rob Bell questioned the virgin birth. (The subtitle: "Repainting the Christian Faith")

b. In his latest book "Love Wins", Bell teaches the doctrine of Universalism; that eventually, everyone will be saved.

c. In 2015, on the Oprah Winfrey Show,

Rob Bell

The Church will make itself irrelevant if it continues to condemn gay marriage on the basis of letters written 2000 years ago.

d. Notice Bell's argument: we can't base our knowledge of good and evil on the Word of God because it's old; new times demand new truths! This is what happens when we get away from the Word of God.

Eddie DuTra

It's astonishing how old lies of past ages are being taught by neoliberal preachers and being eagerly accepted by the church today. Far from being innovative, they are nothing but new proponents of old mistakes.

Dr. Thomas L. Constable

The Book of Judges is a wake-up call for a church in caught up in its own self-centered pursuits. Instead of heeding the call of truly godly leaders and letting Jesus Christ be Lord of the church, everywhere congregations and their leaders do what is right in their own eyes.

e. This is why, in his book 'Church of Cowards', Matt Walsh warns us that our greatest danger is from within, not from without...

Matt Walsh

The true danger we face is not cataclysmic and violent persecution but the slow drifting away from the truth. This is what has become of Christendom in the West.

f. Remember, the church is the head and not the tail; as goes the church, so goes the culture.

2. Judges 21:25 in the Culture

1. Much of modern counseling focuses on seeking truth within oneself.

(Examples)

Ilene Strauss Cohen, P.H.D., Psychology Today

Our work is all about looking within, getting to know yourself, and then changing your mindset and beliefs about what truly aligns with your Self. Living your life fully aware of yourself is freedom at its best.

2. Those who turn to mysticism are told the same thing:

Diana Haymond, Psychic Medium

Dip into your own soul. Find your own truth, what calls to your heart, what moves your spirit, what makes your life dance to the song of your own essence.

a. So we see Judges 21:25 in the Church and the Culture; and now we see it in something in-between; a syncretistic mixture of secular and spiritual...

3. Judges 21:25 in the 'Rise of the Nones'

a. The last twenty years have seen a dramatic increase in "Nones": people who do not identify with any specific faith. "Nones" now make up over one quarter of the U.S. population and outnumber even the largest Protestant denominations. Many "Nones" identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious".

b. The 'nones' are the independent seekers who adopt spiritual practices outside the confines of a particular tradition or denomination.

Linda Mercadante, "Belief Without Borders"

The 'spiritual but not religious' tend to be individualistic, trusting their own experience and intuition as a guide. They reject claims that any one religion contains the ultimate, exclusive truth, but they also believe religions possess wisdom and offer 'many paths to the same summit.'

Linda Mercadante, "Belief Without Borders"

They repudiate 'organized religion as a bastion of dogmatism and moral hypocrisy. They often explicitly reject central Christian beliefs. They don't welcome a message that God loves them but will send them to hell for not accepting Jesus. Yet many continue to experiment with rituals and prayers that draw on established religions.

c. What we end up with is a never-ending mixture of 'new religions', but they all have some things in common:

Tara Isabella Burton, Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World

The new religions in this "godless" world imagined by their adherents are moving away from institutional religions toward intuitional religions.

d. The new 'intuitional religions' are composed of people who 'assemble random bits from various parts of their lives to meet the needs formerly filled by religion:

- Physical fitness/Diet and exercise
- Social media/Sexual experimentation
- Video games

e. These never-ending new religions have one thing in common; self is at the center. Instead of the Apostle's Creed, they say this...

Tara Isabella Burton, Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World

Foundational Tenets of Intuitional Religion

I am the only truth I know. My emotions are God-given. They tell me what to do and how to live. To be my truest self I should follow my instincts. My body and my gut know more than my mind. An unjust and repressive society has held me back from becoming my best self. It has warped my faith in my own abilities and my relationship with others.

Foundational Tenets of Intuitional Religion

I owe it to myself to practice self-care. I owe it to the world to perfect myself: physically, spiritually, and morally. There is no objective right or wrong. Different people and different societies have different moral obligations.

f. Many 'nones', the 'spiritual but not religious', have been attracted to the teaching of Baha'i, a branch of Islam originated in Iran in the 19th century. The words of its founder, Abdul Baha, literally drip with the message of Judges 21:25.

Abdul Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Head of the Baha'i faith from 1892-1921

God has created in man the power of reason, whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to imitate blindly his fathers and ancestors. He has endowed him a mind to investigate and discover the truth, and that which he finds real and true he must accept.

Abdul Baha

He must not be an imitator or blind follower of any soul. He must not rely implicitly upon the opinion of any man without investigation; nay, each soul must seek intelligently and independently, arriving at a real conclusion and bound only by that reality.

g. We agree not to rely 'upon the opinion of any man without investigation'; but when it comes to the knowledge of good and evil, we rely on God.

Review: Whether it's Adam and Eve in the Garden, Israel in the Book of Judges, or modern anti-Christian American culture; make up your own moral system until you find one that fits what you want to believe.

Matt Walsh

**The modernist is simply interested in affirming his own lifestyle, choices, and priorities. If he has to deny scripture to secure this permission, he will do so.
(One more point)**

D. "Hath God Said?" It All Begins With a Doubt

1. The first recorded words from Satan, speaking through the serpent, were designed to create a DOUBT about the Word of God in men's minds...

**"Has God said...?"
(NASB: Did God really say you shall not eat...?)**

a. Satan never begins with an outright DENIAL of God's word; he begins sowing DOUBT about God's word.

2. Some of us have watched friends and even family walk away from God and wonder where it began. The answer is that it all began with DOUBT.

The Biblical Illustrator

Doubt and general distrust are being thrown upon religious teachings today: not positive unbelief, but uncertainty. And thus thousands are abandoning old paths--old thoughts, usages, customs, habits, convictions, and virtues.

Elliott Nesch, "Hath God Said?"

When the Bible is approached with doubt and hidden in obscurity, it creates a desire for subjective experiences and spiritual encounters to fill the void.

3. The devil sowed the seed of doubt first: "Has God really said?. Once the seed was sown he moved on from doubt to denial; "You shall not surely die"; and then to the great temptation, "You shall be like God". But it all begins with doubt.

Eddie Dutra

Doubt is at the essence of modern teachings and is considered the highest form of knowledge. They depend on doubt to be able to cause deconstruction of the previous foundations in order to replace them with their new proposals. Within this new Christianity, doubt is regarded as an asset.

Eddie Dutra

Instead of denying the existence of truth, they deny the human capacity to really know the truth. They teach the certainty of 'maybe'. So doubt becomes an instrument to deny absolute certainties about what the Bible says. This is an echo of Eden.

4. Doubt is the devil's doorknob whereby he lets himself into a life. This is why

Eddie Dutra

The postmodern world is based upon rejection of the certainties on which Western life has been structured in the past centuries. There is a rejection of the notion that absolute truths even exist—especially in moral and religious matters.

III. Close

A. You Shall Be like God

1. The greatest sin we can sin is not only to deny God; it is to try take God's place. (You shall be like God).

D.A. Carson

We should not think that the serpent's temptation was nothing more than to break a rule. That is what most people think 'sin' is; just breaking a rule. But what's at stake is something deeper, bigger, sadder, uglier and more heinous. It is a revolution. It makes me god and de-gods God.

2. Once God is displaced, men put themselves in His place and becomes, 'like God'; self is at the center.

The Biblical Illustrator

There is a spiritual snare in becoming to oneself the highest object, the standard to which all other things are to be referred. Man thus becomes a god to himself, and then orders his life by reference to himself instead of to God.

2. Satan's temptation to be 'like God' was in the realm of ethics and morality; good and evil; right and wrong.

Matt Walsh

"The modernist isn't so much worried about theological points. He could take or leave the Trinity, the Resurrection, the Incarnation or the Atonement. His real beef is with Christian morality."

3. There are 2 things we must do:

a. We must set ourselves to yield to God when it comes to moral issues.

The Biblical Illustrator

Once make up your mind to this most certain truth, that what is right in God's eyes is far better for you than what is right in your own eyes, you will have but one care in the whole world; how to please God in making the best use of your present time. In this care, by His gracious assistance, you are sure not to fail.

b. Secondly, we must speak out wherever we see an attack on the truth of God's word.

John Calvin

A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be less than a coward if I saw God's truth attacked and I would remain silent.

Closing Prayer

Title