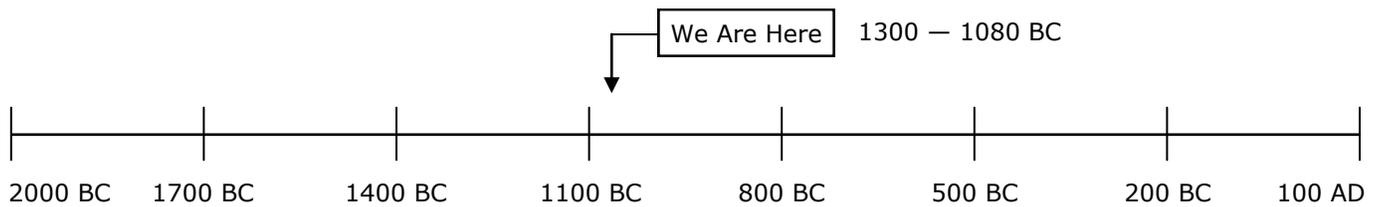


The Great Exchange

BiAY.org | Weekly Reviews

Week 14: April 2-8 — *Judges 7-21; Ruth 1-4*

26.8% Complete — 267 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

For the Sake of the Market (p.165), Common Morality Is Common Sense (p.167)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

After Joshua's death, Israel committed all sorts of abominations in the sight of the Lord. As a result, God allowed Israel's enemies to oppress them; once in bondage, the people turned back to the Lord and cried out for help. In His mercy, the Lord sent judges who delivered them. However, Israel's repentance was short-lived; and, once freed from their enemies, the Israelites continued their evil ways. This era of repeated apostasy (at least 300 years long) was called the period of judges (see chart); it's best described in the last verse of the book, "Israel had no king, and the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes" (21:25).

This week, there was pictured a sharp contrast between two groups — those who betrayed the Lord and those who remained faithful to Him. Though Israel's moral fabric unraveled during the period of judges and its society demonstrated swift decay, there were pockets of people who still loved God. Let's look at these two sides, one which is portrayed best by the disloyalty of Samson, one of the judges, and the other is demonstrated in the story of Ruth and Boaz.

Deeds of the Disloyal: As a whole, the nation of Israel betrayed its covenant (worship God alone, obey His laws); this compromise was evident in nearly every story in *Judges*. For example, Israel worshiped Gideon's ephod, Gideon fell into polygamy, people worshiped Baal, and Abimelech killed his 70 brothers to rule over Shechem. Then, there were stories like the Levite's compromise, the perverted men of Gibeah, and the Danites idolatry. Perhaps the clearest picture of Israel's unfaithfulness was seen in the life of Samson, a judge and Nazirite who compromised his vow of separation.

1. **God Called Israelites to Battle the World Around Them** but Samson befriended it, married into it, and eventually became like it (*Judges 14:1-7;16:1, 4, 5*).
2. **Samson Vowed Not to Touch Anything Dead** but instead he ate of the honey from a lion's carcass (*Judges 14:8, 9*).
3. **Samson Vowed Not to Drink Wine** but instead he held a wedding feast or party for 30 young men in Timnah, where there would have certainly been wine (*Judges 14:10, 11*).
4. **Samson Vowed Not to Cut His Hair** but instead he told Delilah his secret and she soon shaved his head (*Judges 16:17-21*).

Samson is an example of compromise. Although his eyes were gouged out, he was blind long before that; rather than stand against the pagans of his day, he was sleeping with the enemy.

The Life of the Loyal: In sharp contrast to this wayward period of judges were three loyal followers of God — Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Ruth was noted for the quality of faithfulness; she remained loyal to Naomi after the death of her husband, she left her homeland to live in Israel among strangers, she was unselfish, she agreed to marry Boaz, and finally “she was more help to Naomi than seven sons.” Likewise, Boaz honored the laws of God, when it seemed everyone else had forsaken them. He was still taking care of the poor and widowed, and he agreed to fulfill his duty as the “kinsman redeemer.” As a result of the faithfulness of Ruth and Boaz, God blessed them with a place in the lineage of King David (*Ruth 4:18-22*) and the Messiah. *A life of faithfulness is blessed, while the lives of compromisers are ruined.*

- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Jotham’s Parable** (*Judges 9:7-21*): Jotham, the son of Gideon, predicted the dishonorable reign of Abimelech, who was destroyed with the people of Shechem (*9:22-57*).
 2. **Prophecy of Boaz** (*Ruth 4:11-15*): To congratulate and honor Boaz for redeeming Ruth and Naomi, the leaders of the city evoke God’s blessings on him, to make him famous in Bethlehem; little did they know that he was a forefather of King David and the Messiah.

- Pictures of Christ
 1. **Angel of the Lord:** The Lord’s Angel, a pre-incarnate role of Christ, appeared in the Old Testament, this time to Gideon and Samson’s parents (*Judges 6:11-24;13:2-22*).
 2. **Boaz, the Kinsman Redeemer** (*Ruth 2:20;3:9, 12;4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14*): In the Old Testament, a close relative could redeem a family member sold into slavery, land which needed to be sold under economic duress, and/or the family name by virtue of marriage. Thus, in the story of Ruth, Boaz is a picture of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, who redeemed those who were enslaved to sin, who regained all that was lost in the Fall, and who restored all who had been alienated from God (*Rom 6:17, 18*).

- Personal Application
 1. **The Great Exchange:** Like Samson, we so often compromise our commitment to God by seeking worldly pleasures. “The grass is greener on the other side,” or so Satan would like us to think; but never is the situation any better, only the illusion that it is. After being deceived by Satan’s wiles, we will forever regret how we mar our relationship with God. It is what I call the “great exchange.” Read the poem that follows this review.
 2. **A Life of Loyalty:** Although it may be the harder road and the one less traveled, it is the path to God’s blessing. If you can stay clear of the minefield that Satan has set for you and remain loyal to the Lord, you will reap a life of fruitfulness and faithfulness. When it’s all said and done and life is but a memory, how do you want to remember your life — *as one of compromise or commitment?* It’s your choice.

The Bottom Line

We often *exchange* that which is *invaluable* for that which is *valueless*.

Questions to Consider

1. Summarize the meaning behind the poem you read. Do you see yourself in the story?
2. How can we avoid this man’s failure? How should our end reward determine our journey?

A man walked into town one day
With something plain in sight —
Upon his breast a necklace lay
And sparkled in the light.

This piece had been a keepsake now
For almost twenty years;
The thought that thieves might snatch somehow
So fed his utmost fears.

A cross it was, with precious stones,
Four to be precise.
'Twas worth much more than all he owns;
He'd sell for ne'er a price.

'Twas long ago his Father gave
This cross to him at birth,
And ever since, he's set to save
This gift for all it's worth.

He'd never seen the market place;
He'd always stayed at home,
And, thus, he trusted ev'ry face
Wherever he would roam.

So strode he, then, into that town
To market on that day,
And there his doom by what he found
And price he chose to pay.

For ran he into merchants there
Who lied with ev'ry word;
And all who saw his necklace stared
And vied, then, to be heard.

The simple man was much amazed
At what he heard and saw,
As every vendor's voice was raised
And goods were viewed in awe.

At first he set out faithfully
To never touch his prize,
But now he saw so painfully
The wares before his eyes.

And soon it was his heart grew faint
From what he first had vowed,
And now the world would ever taint
What he had ne'er allowed.

A certain seller hooked his ear
With words that pierced him deep,
And told him all he wished to hear,
Of dreams he wished to keep.

He said, "No money have ye, gent?
Come 'ere, why that's alright.
For many have my money spent,
Bought everything in sight!

"Ah, let's see now what you bring
To trade for money's bliss.
For nothing makes your heart so sing
Like buying that and this.

"Now I see you have a necklace;
Those stones they look quite nice.
And to feed your every purpose,
One stone would be your price."

He pondered there for one quick blink;
His mind had not been made.
"A stone for goods is fair I think,"
So quickly, then, he paid.

He took his coins and wandered off
Into the merchants' lair,
While all the wiles were whispered soft'
And robbed him straight and fair.

Every coin was gobbled up,
As every good was sold,
Yet greed was only conjured up;
They bought much less than told.

And now this man who owned the cross
Was wishing back his stone;
For now he felt as wayward, lost,
With goods but all alone.

What he needed, then, was spirits, yes,
A merchant told him flat,
"A taste of liquid happiness
And I can sell you that!"

The trav'ler sat down nervously
To hear this clerk foretell
These bottles quick and easily
Would all his woes dispel.

"But all my money's spent, good sir;
I nary have a price."
"One stone of that there necklace, sure,
Would certainly suffice."

So gave he then a second stone
And walked away well-pleased;
But once again, when on his own,
He sensed that he'd been teased.

For drank he every bottle fast
And stumbled on his way,
'Til all his woes were gone at last,
Forgot, not gone away.

Well, in this merry drunken state
The man again was took;
He lost himself in deep debate
And bought but one small book.

A simple little volume this
The man was tricked to own;
But then another problem is
It cost him one more stone.

It would end all of his questions,
His future now to guide.
But found he no suggestions,
For 'twas empty there inside.

He stopped and cried and sat beside
The path to the market place.
His sinful shame he could not hide;
It wrought such vile disgrace.

Yet, in his weeping hunger grew;
He'd trade his stones once more.
The man remarked, "I never knew
This hunger once before."

But up he stood and off he went
To fetch what food he could;
And now his precious stones were spent,
And his cross 'twas now no good.

His hunger waned for half a day,
But then it grew much worse.
And now he had no stones to pay,
Nor money in his purse.

His stoneless cross, a shameful sight,
Exchanged for all he bought.
A selfish, greedy mess his plight;
He'd given all for naught.

That day in town he'd proudly strode
And traded there with mirth,
But lost his stones for a heavy load
With ne'er a thing of worth.

He never went back home again.
The market long retained
His interest in its sorted sin;
A beggar he remained.