A Generation That Knew Not Jehovah

Intro: Judges 2:8-13 “And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew 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: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.”

In the pursuance of this study it is imperative to our understanding that we notice the background of this declaration. It is found in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt and their possession of the land of promise: Canaan.

1. At the death of Joseph a new king arose over Egypt that oppressed the Israelites.
2. God delivers His people by Moses.
3. At Moses’ death Joshua is chosen as Israel’s leader and under his guidance they possess Canaan and flourish as a mighty nation.
4. But, after Joshua’s death the next generation “knew not the Lord.”
5. Verses 11-13, their apostasy is described.

I. WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL’S APOSTASY?

A. Priest.
   1. Deu. 31:9-11 “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.”
      a. Every seven years they were to read the complete law.
      b. A boy of seven would hear it again at 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, 49, etc.
   2. It is hard to conceive of ignorance if this were faithfully performed.

B. Elders.
   1. They were the governing body of the Israelites.
   2. Deu. 31:9-11 “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.”
      3. It was their responsibility to oversee: to see that the Law was read.

C. Parents.
   1. Deu. 4:9-10 “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”
   2. They were required to teach their children at home.
   3. Their failure would naturally produce ignorance and apostasy.

D. The people themselves.
   1. They should have desired the reading of God’s Law.
2. They owed their deliverance, blessings, and thus their allegiance to Him: thus, they should have desired His way.

E. All these were responsible as they failed in meeting their obligations.

II. THE APPLICATION: OUR RESPONSIBILITY UNDER CHRIST.

A. There are outstanding lessons to be learned from this Old Testament narrative (Rom. 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”).

B. Establishes the fact that God’s people can apostatize.
   1. Many scriptures attest to this fact.
   2. So also does secular history: where are the churches today recorded in the Bible?
   3. We should take warning: the church has been flourishing perhaps stronger than at any period since the first century.
   4. But, what about the next generation? What about the church tomorrow?
   5. What assurance do we have that the church will remain faithful even in this state or vicinity? Do you not see:

C. The next generation’s faithfulness is largely dependent upon this generation’s loyalty.
   1. Priest.
      a. All Christians are such; 1 Pet. 2:5,9 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;”
      b. Thus, we all are teachers of God’s law. Are we faithful teachers?
   2. Elders.
      a. Acts 20:28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
      b. 1 Pet. 5:1-3 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”
      c. They are to be watching for our souls; Heb. 13:7, 17 “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.... 17Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”
   3. Parents.
      a. Eph. 6:4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
      b. How faithfully are we discharging this duty: what of the next generation?
   4. Christians as a whole.
      a. 1 Pet. 2:2 “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”
      b. We too owe all to the Lord and should desire to please Him above all else.
Conclusion: The success of the coming generation depends upon this generation accepting its responsibilities. Yea, our own success depends upon it; 1 Cor. 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”