

# **When God Ruled Israel**



**A Study of Joshua and Judges**

**by Gary C. Hampton**

**Lesson 1**

## **A Prophet Like None Other**

**Deuteronomy 34**

It took the death of Moses to evoke the words which serve as our title today. Ironically, that death marks the beginning of Israel's path into the promised land. Moses

had to lay down the mantle of leadership and Joshua take it up for God's people to enter Canaan.

When the people arrived at Kadesh in Numbers 20, they murmured against God and his leaders. Moses and Aaron went before God to learn what he would have them to do in response to the complaints. God told them to take the rod, assemble the people and speak to the rock.

Moses rebuked the people instead of speaking to the rock. He also struck the rock twice and left the impression that he and Aaron were solely responsible for providing water for the people (Psalm 106:33). The two brothers had failed to sanctify God in their actions, though he was sanctified when he swiftly punished the two leaders for their wrong deeds. Moses and Aaron acted like unbelievers when they failed to follow God's will exactly as he had directed, so God denied them an entrance to the promised land.

Moses pleaded with God to let him go into the promised land to see the end of the works he had begun in delivering the people from Egypt. Moses told the people, "But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the Lord said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter'" (Deuteronomy 3:21-29). God did tell him to go up into Mount Pisgah and see the whole land the people would possess. He also told him to charge Joshua with the job of leadership and encourage him in the work he was about to begin.

In Deuteronomy 34, Moses climbs to the top of Mount Nebo, which is also called Pisgah, in the Abarim

range (Numbers 33:47-48). There God showed him all of the land the children of Israel would inherit. Coffman says various writers say that in those times a man who purchased land would take possession of his purchase by surveying it with his eyes. If so, that would certainly make this a good ending to a great man's life. Hebrews 11:23-26 seems to say Moses looked forward to a reward from God beyond what he might receive in this life. If so, he may have felt much like Paul in Philippians 1:23. Certainly, he longed to enter into Canaan and finish the work he had begun with the people of Israel, but he also longed for an eternal home.

Verse 5 of Deuteronomy 34 tells us Moses died "according to the word of the Lord." Leslie G. Thomas says this literally means "by the mouth of the Lord" and the Jewish Rabbis say the meaning is by the kiss of God. In other words, he went to sleep with the kiss of the loving Father in heaven, much like a child goes to sleep at night after the kiss of its father. Then, God took his body and buried it in a place unknown to any man. All that the text tells us is that his burial place was in the valley of Moab near Beth-peor.

Moses had led the people for forty years, from the time he was eighty until his death at the age of one hundred twenty. The text tells us his physical strength never left him nor did his eyesight grow weak. For thirty days, the children of Israel mourned their dead leader, then Joshua took up the mantle of leadership left by Moses, the one he had ministered to for so long.

It is interesting to note that Moses did one day get to enter the promised land. He was not allowed to walk

through Jordan's dry bed but he did go over it to be with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5).

### **Questions**

1. What did the children of Israel do when they arrived at Kadesh the first time?
2. Moses took the rod and assembled the people as God had told him to, so why was he punished?
3. What did Moses and Aaron fail to do before the people?
4. What was God's response to Moses' request to be allowed to enter the promised land?

5. What did God do for Moses at the end of his life?

6. How does scripture say Moses died? What might this mean?

7. Where was Moses buried?

8. Did Moses ever enter the promised land? When?

## **Lesson 2**

# **A Leader for Israel's First Steps**

**Joshua 1:1-9**

Since Moses could not lead the people into the promised land, God had to choose a new leader to direct their steps. God selected another man of faith, Joshua. It was Joshua, along with Caleb, that had spied out the land of Canaan and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." They rejected the faithless report of the ten who saw themselves as grasshoppers in the eyes of the inhabitants of the promised land. Their confidence was based in the Lord and his ability to give them the land (Numbers 13:1-14:10).

When God selected a leader to succeed Moses, it was only fitting that it should be such a great man of faith. Despite his strong desire to take Israel over Jordan, Moses was told Joshua would lead the people (Deuteronomy 3:23-28). God had used a number of different circumstances to prepare Joshua to be a leader. It was he who led the people in battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). When Moses went unto God on the mount, Joshua was with him (Exodus 24:12-13). He was there when Moses came down from the mount with the tables of stone and found the people worshiping the golden calf (Exodus 32:15-20). Joshua also got to see the unselfish nature of Moses when he would not forbid Eldad and Medad to speak for God in the camp (Numbers 11:24-30).

In Numbers 27:15-20, Moses asked God to select a man to be the leader of Israel when he was dead. God had him lay his hands on Joshua to symbolize the transfer of authority, much like laying hands on a sacrifice symbolized placing the sins of the people upon it (see Exodus 29:10-14; Numbers 8:5-13). This was done in front of all the people so they would recognize that the honor of Moses was now on Joshua. So, when Moses died, the people followed Joshua because he was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom

(Deuteronomy 34:9).

Joshua's first instruction from God was to lead the people over the Jordan (Joshua 1:1-9). One author says there are 27 fierce rapids between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Jordan River falls some 700 feet in the space of 60 miles. McGarvey says it plunges with terrific force when it is at flood stage, which it was when Joshua took command. He also said it swells to a width of from one-half to one mile. Joshua was to lead from 2 to 3 million people and their herds across such a swollen torrent.

He did receive God's promise that they would be given all the land they walked on within the boundaries promised to Moses. Notice, the reception of this gift of land from God was dependant upon them meeting God's conditions. The land that was theirs for the taking was from the Arabian desert on the south to the mountains of Lebanon on the north and from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

Just as God had supported Moses in all of the works he did in his behalf, he promised to sustain Joshua. Joshua knew that no man, even powerful Pharaoh, had been able to successfully oppose Moses. God promised none would be able to oppose Joshua either (compare Hebrews 13:5-6). Of course, God's strength would be his only as long as he obeyed his commandments. Prosperity and success actually come from keeping the law which was designed for man's good.

## **Questions**

1. How had Joshua shown his faith when Israel first arrived at the borders of Canaan?
2. What did Joshua do in the battle against Amalek?
3. Name two other things that helped prepare Joshua to lead the people of God.
4. Who chose Joshua to succeed Moses as leader?
5. How did Moses show Joshua was God's appointed leader?
6. What two things are said about Joshua in Deuteronomy



34:9?

7. Describe the condition of the Jordan River at the time Joshua was told to lead the people over.

8. Give the Bible description of the land promised to Israel.

9. On what condition did God promise Joshua strength?

### **Lesson 3**

# **Faith from an Unlikely Place**

**Joshua 1:10-2:21**

Joshua's first actions as a leader were designed to fulfill God's command to get ready to cross over Jordan (Joshua 1:2). Keil and Delitzsch see him taking three specific actions to prepare for the crossing. He first issued instructions to men, serving in overseer type roles, to pass on to the people (1:10-11). The word, which is translated "officers," literally means "to write," according to Coffman, and suggests they were like foreman writing down the directions of the boss and seeing that they were carried out. Everyone was to take no more than three days to prepare provisions to sustain them as they entered Canaan. Then, Joshua reaffirmed the promise of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh to help the rest conquer their land before returning to the west bank of Jordan (1:12-18).

The third thing Joshua did was to secretly send two spies to Jericho to survey the surrounding land and especially the city. These two found a woman of faith in a heathen city. Rahab was a harlot living in a house on the city walls. Keil and Delitzsch think the spies going to her house was at once natural, because it would arouse the least amount of suspicion, and providential, because she had come to believe in the true God due to the great miracles God had worked to deliver Israel.

When the king learned two men from Israel had entered Rahab's house, he sent to have her turn them over to him. She lied by saying she did not know they were men of Israel and that they had left as darkness fell, at about the time the gate would be shut. She urged the king's men to pursue the spies, saying they should be able to overtake them. When they set out down the road to the fords used to cross the river, the gate was shut in case the

spies had not left.

Rahab's faith is seen in her words to the spies on the roof before she hid them under the flax. She said, "I know that the Lord has given you the land," and "the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9, 11). Rahab is also seen as a woman of faith by her works, which is important since James says faith without works is dead because it is by itself. Rahab is mentioned as a woman of faith because she peacefully received the spies (Hebrews 11:31) and sent them out by a different way (James 2:25).

We also learn some other interesting facts from this part of the story. Her drying the stalks of flax tells us it was about March or April and the river was at flood stage, as it was during harvest time according to Coffman. Rahab was somehow involved in the processing of flax and may even have used it to make linen. Further, she was a woman deeply committed to her family, as is seen by her asking the spies to promise her that the lives of her family would be delivered when Jericho was conquered.

She let the spies down by a cord, telling them to go to the nearby mountains and wait three days before going back to the Israelite camp. Coffman says these mountains were about one mile from Jericho and rose from 1500 to 2000 feet above the plain. They are limestone hills full of caves and grottos that would have been well suited to hiding. It was in these caves that the Dead Sea scrolls were found. As they were being let down, the spies agreed to keep their oath to save Rahab's family on three conditions. First, she had to tie the red cord she had let them down by to the window to designate the house in

which she lived. Second, everyone of her family members who wanted to be spared would have to remain inside during the attack. Third, she had to keep quiet about the spies mission in Jericho.

### **Discussions Questions**

1. What was the purpose of Joshua's first actions as a leader?
2. What were the first two things he did?
3. How many spies did Joshua send on what secret mission?
4. What surprising thing did they find inside Jericho?

5. What events does the Bible say produced faith in Rahab?

6. How do we know Rahab had faith?

7. What time of year did this take place?

8. What did Rahab ask for her family?

9. What conditions did the spies place on their promise to save her family?

#### **Lesson 4**

## **The Meaning of the Stones**

**Joshua 2:22-5:15**

When the spies returned from Jericho, they told Joshua all they had learned on their secret mission. Through Rahab, God had told Joshua the victory was assured because God was on their side. (Joshua 2:22-24.) The text does not tell us why Joshua broke camp at Shittim, not more than 6 miles from Jordan, to move closer to the river. Some suggest it was to impress upon the people the fact that they could not cross the river without God's help (Joshua 3:1).

The people were instructed to follow the priests of Levi as they carried the ark of the covenant. Ordinarily, the Kohathites would carry the vessels of the sanctuary after Aaron and his sons had finished covering the sanctuary and its vessels (Numbers 4: 15, 17-20). They had strict orders not to touch any of the holy things or they would die. On this and several other special occasions, the priests themselves bore the ark. This may signify the importance of the role of the priests and underscore God's presence with the people (Joshua 3:2-3).

The people were to stay some two thousand cubits, or about 3,000 feet, away from the ark. They were to follow the ark because they had never been where they were going. Rules of sanctification had already been issued by God and involved washing garments and abstaining from acts that would make one unclean (Exodus 29). Thus, we could say the people only crossed the river by God's power but they were still required to do something to prepare themselves in accord with his desire (Joshua 3:4-6).

God told Joshua to tell the people exactly what

would happen so they would know he was their approved leader. The water did not stand in a heap until the soles of the feet of the priests touched the water. That such a great rushing river ceased to flow at precisely the right moment and did not flow again until all the people had crossed is absolute proof there is a God in heaven and he was fighting for Israel (Joshua 3:7-17).

Before the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had fully passed through the river's bed, Joshua, in accord with God's instructions, had one man from each of the twelve tribes go and pick up a stone to be used in building a memorial. Joshua also erected a twelve stone memorial in the midst of the river in the very place the priests had stood. When everyone had crossed the river, Joshua commanded the priests bearing the ark to finish their crossing. Once the feet of the priests were again firmly planted on dry ground, God caused the river to return to its engorged rush toward the Dead Sea (Joshua 4:1-18).

The people encamped that night at Gilgal where Joshua set up a memorial with the twelve stones taken from the river. When children of later times would ask what the twelve stones represented, they could be told how God worked a miracle so Israel could cross the flooded Jordan. It should be noted that there was one stone for each tribe so that it would be plain God helped all twelve tribes and not just certain ones. Such mighty works should cause children of every generation to realize how great God is and appreciate his ability to deliver his people (Joshua 4:19-24).

Five events of interest are recorded in Joshua 5. First, we learn that the kings of the Canaanites by the sea

lost heart when they learned how the Lord had caused Israel to pass through Jordan on dry ground (5:1.). Second, the Lord required the Israelites to renew the covenant with him by circumcising all the males (5:2-9). Third, Israel kept its first passover in the promised land (5:10-11). Fourth, God ceased providing the manna when the people had eaten of the fruits of the new land (5:12). Fifth, Joshua had a meeting with the captain of the Lord's host (5:13-15). This must have been the pre-incarnate Christ since he accepted worship from Joshua and instructed him to remove his shoes because he was on holy ground. He appeared with his sword drawn because he was ready to fight against the wicked Canaanites.

### **Discussions Questions**

1. Briefly relate the message of the two spies when they came back from Jericho (Joshua 2:23-24.)
2. Who was to enter the Jordan first?
3. Who usually carried the ark of the covenant?



4. By whose power did Israel cross Jordan?
  
5. Did the people have to do anything before crossing?  
If so, what?
  
6. When did the water stand in a heap?
  
7. How many stones were gathered, and by whom, from  
the middle of the river? How many monuments were  
erected?
  
8. What was the purpose of the monument at Gilgal?

#### **Lesson 5**

## **When God Brought**

# Down the Walls

## Joshua 6

When Joshua met the captain of the host of the Lord in chapter 5, he asked him, "What does my Lord say to his servant?" He first told Joshua to take off his shoes, which was a way of requiring reverence from him. Before anyone can serve the Lord in an acceptable way, he must exhibit respect. Nadab and Abihu failed to follow the Lord's command in reference to offering incense to the Lord. After they were consumed with fire, God had Moses tell Aaron, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified" (Leviticus 10:1-3).

Joshua followed the Lord's direction and took off his shoes. We next learn that Jericho had been shut up like a city under siege, with no one going in or out. In 6:2-5, there is a record of the Lord's instructions to Joshua in answer to the question he had asked. Joshua had addressed his question to the captain of the host of the Lord and receives an answer from the Lord, or Jehovah, indicating they are one in the same. God promises victory to Joshua and the children of Israel and then proceeds to tell them how to take the city. The trumpets that were to be blown by the seven priests were the same trumpets that were to be blown for the jubilee (Leviticus 25:9).

Joshua sent an armed force of men first followed by the seven priests with trumpets and the ark of the covenant to circle the city once each day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to encircle the city seven times

followed by the priests blowing on the horns. When the people heard the horns blow, they were to shout and God said the walls would fall down flat. Then, each man was to go straight up before him into the city to conquer its inhabitants. Obviously, the plan outlined by the Lord is not consistent with the way men would conquer a city. Leslie G. Thomas said, "God has seen fit in every age of the world to justify men on the principle of faith, and he has always selected such acts of obedience as would adequately test the faith of those who desired his blessings." He went on to say, "The principle has always marked the difference between those who are pleasing to the Lord, and those who are not acceptable to him. (Cf. Gen. 3:1-6; Mark 16:15, 16; Gal. 1:6-9.)"

Because he was a man of faith, Joshua passed the Lord's commands on to the people and they began to circle the city each day as directed. Joshua 6:8 describes the priests going before the Lord because the ark of the covenant was where the Lord's glory appeared before the people and was therefore symbolic of his presence among them. In verse 9, we learn there was an armed force after the ark as well as before it and the trumpets were blown each day as they marched. The rest of those marching were to remain quiet until the day the Lord told them to shout. That happened on the seventh day after they had circled the city seven times and the trumpets had been blown.

Prior to the last day's march, God had told the people that the city would be accursed, or devoted as is in the margin of the King James Version. The meaning is that it was to be counted as a holy thing not to be touched by men because it belonged to God. Such was appropriate since he was the one who gave the city into their hands.

No devoted thing was to be touched by men but put to death because it belonged to the Lord (Leviticus 27:28-29). Rahab and her household were excepted from this because she had hidden the spies. Also, the Lord directed that things made out of metal should be taken into his treasury.

After they had compassed the walls of the city on the seventh day, the priests blew their horns and the people gave a shout. The walls fell down flat and the people climbed over them to destroy all that was in the city. The two spies, as directed by Joshua, went in and led Rahab and her family out to safety then all living things were destroyed with the sword and the city was burned. Since Jericho was the firstfruits of conquest, it was to be left unfortified for the remainder of its days. The man who laid again a foundation for the walls would lose his firstborn. His last born would die when the gates were set in the walls. This prophecy was fulfilled some five hundred fifty years later (1 Kings 16:34).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why was Joshua told to take off his shoes?

2. Who answers the question Joshua asked of the captain of the Lord's host?

3. Name another occasion the trumpets were to be blown.

4. In what order did Joshua tell them to march around the city?

5. What were they to do each day?

6. What did it take to follow the Lord's directions for conquest?

7. What does it mean when it says Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord?

8. What prophecy was made by Joshua about Jericho? When and by whom was it fulfilled?

## **Lesson 6**

# **A Defeat Because of Sin**

## **Joshua 7**

The Lord had instructed Israel to make Jericho a devoted city, that is, set apart for him. He especially instructed them to place the silver, gold and vessels of brass in his treasury (Joshua 6:17-19). Leslie G. Thomas noted that Satan always began his work to ensnare man in sin right at the start of a new relationship with God. He tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, Cain at the beginning of recorded worship, Nadab and Abihu at the start of Moses' law and Ananias and Sapphira in the early days of the church on earth (Genesis 3, 4; Leviticus 10:1-7 and Acts 5:1- 11). In each case, the devil used some item that was to be devoted to God's service to tempt man to evil. The first recorded sin in the land of Canaan is no exception. The temptation was to take the devoted thing despite God's strong warnings to the contrary.

Joshua 7 opens with the sad fact that Achan took of the devoted thing. 1 Chronicles 2:7 calls him Achar which, as the text tells us, means trouble. He troubled the whole nation by taking of the banned items and thereby robbing Israel of its purity much like an infection in one of its members can bring down the whole body. Apparently, Joshua did not know of the sin and sent out spies to observe the next place of conquest, Ai. Upon their return, they reported that the town could be taken with between 2,000 and 3,000 men. So, Joshua sent out 3,000 confident of victory after the fall of Jericho. They were routed and thirty-six lost their lives in the defeat. Further, the people lost their courage because of the loss to such and insignificant place.

The defeat obviously came about because the Lord had left Israel's side. Joshua began to mourn before the

ark of the covenant until evening when he started to talk with God. His first words might be considered murmuring if it were not for the fact that he goes on and asks what answer he should give for the Lord when those people round about them heard that Israel, God's people, had turned their backs in battle. Naturally, he foresaw the nations around them becoming bold, surrounding Israel and destroying them. The nations, as Rahab had said, had come to recognize the power of Jehovah and the greatness of his name. Joshua did not want the memory of that to be wiped off the earth.

God's answer to Joshua's depression over the defeat of Israel was threefold. First, he should get up (7:6). Second, the people would have to acknowledge their sin in taking the banned items and putting it among their own stuff in violation of God's command. Israel would no longer be able to stand before their enemies until they destroyed the accursed thing (compare Deuteronomy 13:12-18). While God sometimes allowed the people to keep some of the spoils of war, he had specifically told them not to take of the things of Jericho and what items were to go into his treasury (Deuteronomy 20:10-14; Joshua 8:1-2). Third, the people would have to be sanctified. To accomplish this, God had them cleanse themselves that night in preparation for coming before the Lord the next morning. They would come by tribes, families, households and then man by man until the one who had violated God's law was exposed. Then, as he had warned in the original commandment, that man would be treated as a part of the accursed thing and would be burned.

Joshua followed the Lord's instructions and at last Achan appeared before him as the man who had



specifically violated God's will. Thomas says the word "confess" literally means "to say the same thing." God already knew of the sin of Achan and now Achan told the people the same thing. He described his sin by saying he saw, coveted and took the items involved. Other scriptures warn us of the danger of these very actions (1 John 2:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 4:28). In this case, Achan had robbed God because he had taken that which was devoted to him.

Since Deuteronomy 24:16 expressly forbids punishing the children for the crimes of their fathers, we have to assume one of two things. Either Achan's children became accomplices to the crime because the goods were hidden in the tent where they lived, or the plural "them" in verse 24 describes Achan and his things. At any rate, the whole nation participated in the punishment of Achan by stoning and then burning him as God directed. In this way, the people put the evil away from them and were again sanctified in God's sight.

### **Questions**

1. What directions had God given in the taking of

Jericho? In reference to the brass vessels, silver and gold?

2. What did Thomas see as one trap Satan has frequently used? Give two examples.

3. Who violated God's will?

4. What happened to the 3,000 who attacked Ai?

5. What was Joshua's response?

6. What did God tell Joshua to do?

7. Describe the three sins Achan confessed?

8. How was he punished?

#### Lesson 7

## **Pausing for God in the**

# Middle of Victory

## Joshua 8

Often, man holds himself guilty long after God has already wiped away the sin. It seems this was the case after Achan's sin had been removed from the camp. The Lord had to reassure Joshua that there was no need for fear since he had given Ai into the hands of Israel (Joshua 8:1). He also told him to use an ambush to conquer the city.

Verses 3 and 12 of Joshua 8 disagree as to the number of men Joshua set in ambush. The two numbers look very similar in Hebrew, so it may be one of the copyists got one of these wrong. Apparently, 5,000 men were set in ambush between Bethel and Ai. Joshua sent that group out at night so the king of Ai could not know what was behind him. Then, in the morning, Joshua rose up with the rest of the fighting men, marched to the city and set up a new camp.

Early the next morning, the king of Ai came out with his soldiers to attack the armies of the Lord. Joshua had his army flee, which convinced the king of Ai that they would again rout Israel and perhaps put away this menace from the land of Canaan. All of the fighting men of Ai and Bethel went out to pursue and destroy Israel. Then, Joshua raised his spear toward the city as a signal for those lying in wait to rise up and take the city. They set it on fire and the men of Ai, seeing it, realized there was no avenue of escape for them. Indeed, the army of Israel slew every man, not letting one escape, and brought back the king to Joshua. Joshua had the king hung upon a tree for the rest

of day, calling for the body to be removed from the tree at sundown and thrown against the gates of the city where it was covered with a heap of stones. It is interesting to note that Joshua was fully complying with the law of Moses in taking the body down when the sun set (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

Having learned something from the experience at Jericho, the people completely destroyed all of the inhabitants of Ai. They were allowed to keep of the spoils of the city. With victory fresh in their minds, Joshua marched the people to somewhere near Mount Ebal. For those who are not accustomed to following God's commands completely, his next move is a strange one. God's leader caused the people to pause and renew their covenant with God by offering sacrifice and hearing again the law they were to follow.

In strict keeping with God's will as it is expressed in Deuteronomy 27, Joshua had an altar built of uncut stones and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to God. On the exterior of those stones, they put plaster and wrote the law of Moses. All of Israel, including men, women, children and people who were living with them, watched as the law was written. Just as God directed through Moses, Joshua positioned the tribes of Israel with six facing Mount Gerizim and six facing Mount Ebal. The blessings were to be read from Gerizim and the cursings from Ebal. These two mountains may well have been symbolic in this reading since Gerizim is fertile with rich growth and Ebal is barren. When God blesses a man or people, they are richly fertile. When God curses a man or people, his life is barren of that which truly matters. This followed instructions God had given before in Deuteronomy 11:29.

The reading of the entire law of Moses before all the people who were to inhabit the promised land is significant. Not even a child was allowed to miss this important reading of God's covenant. Everyone in the kingdom today, be they newborn babes in Christ or longtime Christians, needs to hear and reflect upon God's will for our lives. They trusted enough in God to take time out from conquest to review his will for their lives and he kept them safe while they did. We need to realize God will not fail to provide for all our needs today if we take time out for him and make the pursuit of his will the most important thing in our lives (Matthew 6:25-34).

### **Questions**

1. After Achan's sin had been removed from the camp,

what was the first thing God told Joshua?

2. What were God's instructions for battle?

3. How did Joshua prepare to attack Ai?

4. Describe the way the battle unfolded.

5. What did they do with the king of Ai?

6. What law did they have to keep in reference to his body? Where is that law found in scripture?

7. What did the people of Israel do after defeating Ai?

8. What did the children do while the whole law was being read to the adults?

### **Lesson 8**

## **Trouble with the Gibeonites**



## **Joshua 9-11**

God had instructed Israel to destroy the Canaanites when they came into the land (Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-17). Their failure to do so would lead to many troubles over the years of their existence. They would be tempted to join in the idol worship of the people who remained and thereby led to sin against the Lord. In the days of David, they suffered a famine for three years that was a result of the failure to kill or drive out the Gibeonites. The treaty that Israel made when they were deceived and did not consult the Lord was violated by King Saul. His actions resulted in the death of seven of his kinsmen to make restitution for his refusal to honor a foolish agreement made by Israel in Joshua's day (2 Samuel 21:1-14).

A weapon often used against God's people is deception. Kings from the three major regions of Israel, the hill country, lowlands and sea coast, decided to make an alliance and go up against Israel. While others were preparing to do battle, the Gibeonites were scheming to save their lives and gain protection from other enemies as well. They resolved to send ambassadors dressed in old clothes, patched shoes, with old sacks upon their beasts of burden, old wine skins that had been bound up and bread that was dry and mouldy. This made them appear to have come from a great distance though Gibeon was only about six miles northwest of Jerusalem (Joshua 9:1-5).

When they arrived at the camp of Israel, they introduced themselves to Joshua and the men of Israel as being from a distant land and asked them to agree to a treaty. Concerned with violating the Lord's will (Exodus

23:31-33; 34:11-16), the men asked how they could make a covenant with them if they were from the surrounding region, so Joshua asked who they were and where they came from. They lied by saying they had come from a far country and had heard of the fame of the God of Israel as he helped them cross the Red Sea and defeat the two Amorite kings. Notice that they carefully omitted the more recent crossing of Jordan, defeat of Jericho and Ai since these likely could not have been reported a great distance off as yet. They offered their bread and wineskins as proof of the distance they had come.

Instead of consulting with God through the use of the Urim and Thummin of the high priest (Numbers 27:21), Joshua and the princes took of the Gibeonites' provisions and made a treaty with them. It should be noted that all treaties were not forbidden, as the laws governing warfare with nations outside of Canaan well illustrates (Deuteronomy 20:11). Within three days, Israel learned the four cities the Gibeonites represented were all within a ten mile radius of Jerusalem. The people murmured, perhaps because they were greedy for the spoil of these cities as some authors have suggested. However, the princes would not compound their error by violating their covenant with Gibeon. Instead, Joshua made the Gibeonites bearers of water and hewers of wood for use in the sanctuary of God (Joshua 9:6-27).

When the king of Jerusalem learned that Ai had fallen and the even more powerful city of Gibeon had made a treaty with Israel, he called upon four other kings to join with him in an attack on Gibeon. Gibeon called for Joshua to defend them, as may have been required by the treaty made with them. Joshua commanded the army to

march all night and was reassured by God of the victory. God is given full credit for the victory over the five kings (Joshua 10:1-10). As they descended the almost 800 feet from upper to lower Beth-horan, God caused large hailstones to fall on and kill more of the enemy than Israel killed with the sword (Joshua 10:11).

When Joshua asked God to cause the sun to stand still, it must have still been morning since the sun was in the east over Gibeon and the moon had not quite set to the west over Aijalon. The people took advantage of the Lord's answer to the prayer and routed their enemies. The five kings were caught and kept in a cave until they got back from pursuing those fleeing. At which time, they were killed, hung on trees and then thrown into a cave and covered with stones. On the day they returned to camp and the days following, Joshua led Israel against many of the surrounding cities in the southern region and conquered them all because God fought for them (Joshua 10:12-43).

Joshua 11 concludes the brief summary of the conquest of the land of Canaan. Jabin, king of Hazor, called for a number of the kings of the north to align with him and attack Israel. God again reassured Joshua of victory. Israel swiftly attacked the allied kings and destroyed them along with all the people in their cities.

### **Questions**

1. How did the Gibeonites avoid being utterly destroyed?

2. What mistake did Joshua make that gave them success?

3. What did Joshua do to the Gibeonites when the deception was uncovered?

4. What did Adoni-Zedek do when he heard of the Gibeonites' actions?

5. How did Gibeon respond?

6. What action did Joshua take?

7. What events prove God was fighting for Israel?

8. Name 3 other cities conquered in the south and 3 in the north.

### **Lesson 9**

# **Give Me This Mountain**

## **Joshua 12-15**

Joshua 12:1-6 describes how the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh received their inheritance on the east side of Jordan. The sea of Chinneroth is more familiar to us under the name of the Sea of Galilee. Verses 7-18 relate the kings and cities conquered in the southern campaign and verses 19-24 the northern campaign. Thirty-one kings are listed as having been conquered.

Chapter 13 begins a description of the division of the land. Verses 2-3 name the unconquered areas in the south, while those in the north are described in 4-6. If Israel had have been obedient and faithful to God, they would have been able to drive out the people with God's help as promised in verse 6. However, they were not and ultimately were corrupted by the evil influence left in the land. The remainder of chapter 13 details the inheritance of land given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh in accord with Moses' directions in Numbers 32 and Deuteronomy 3.

Chapter 14:1-5 describes those present at the time of the division of the land west of Jordan among the nine and one-half tribes. The instructions for dividing the land had been given by Moses in Numbers 33:50-56. Notice, they were to cast lots, with some special consideration so that the larger tribes received more and the smaller tribes less land. God could work in the casting of lots as Proverbs 16:33 says. Joshua notes that Levi received no land inheritance. Jacob adopted Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which gave Joseph the double portion of birthright and made 12 tribes to receive the land

(Genesis 48).

Before the distribution of the land had gone too far, it was appropriate for Caleb to come to Joshua and remind him of the promise God had made (Numbers 14:21-24; Deuteronomy 1:35-36). Caleb says he was forty years old when he helped spy out the land. The powerful influence of faithless leaders can be seen in their ability to make the hearts of the people to melt. In contrast, the man who "wholly followed the Lord" was rewarded (Hebrews 11:6; 6:10).

We know Israel wandered thirty-eight more years in the wilderness before she came again to the promised land, so Caleb's report of forty-five years passing tells us the conquest of Canaan had taken seven years to that time (Deuteronomy 2:14-15).

Great men of God, like Caleb, rely upon God to give them the strength to complete their task (compare 1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47; 2 Timothy 4:16-18). Notice, Caleb knew he had lived to be eighty-five because of God's blessing (Joshua 14:10). He even yet knew that he could only accomplish conquest if the Lord was with him (Joshua 14:12; James 4:13-15; Romans 8:31; Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 13:5-6). Caleb had told the children of Israel that they could conquer the land and, with the help of God, he and his son-in-law, Othniel, did just that despite the fact that they faced the strongest of the giants who lived in Canaan (Joshua 14:13-15; 15:13-19).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Where did the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of

Manasseh receive their inheritance?

2. Who directed how that land was to be distributed and where do we find those directions?

3. How many kings does Joshua 12 list as being conquered?

4. Was all of the land conquered at this time? Where did you find your answer?

5. Where did Joshua find his directions for carrying out the division of the land?

6. Why did Caleb come to Joshua before the division of the land had gone too far? Of which tribe was he a part?



7. How old was Caleb when he spoke to Joshua? How old was he when he helped spy out the land?

8. How long did the children of Israel wander in the wilderness?

9. Where do great men of God get their strength? Site some passages that show this fact.

10. What area did Othniel conquer?

### **Lesson 10**

## **Settling in the**

# Promised Land

## Joshua 18-21

The end of Joshua 14 tells us that the land had rest from war, so, according to Deuteronomy 12:10-11, it was now time for God to select the place for his name to dwell and people to offer sacrifices to him. The tabernacle at last found a permanent resting place in Shiloh, which is appropriate since that name means, "rest" (Joshua 18:1). It is interesting to note one of the promises of the coming Messiah also refers to him as Shiloh, or the source of our ultimate rest (Genesis 49:10).

The tabernacle remained in Shiloh until the days of Eli the priest. The men of Israel thought the power of the Lord rested in the ark of the covenant, so they went and got it when the Philistines were defeating them in battle. They were routed and the ark captured because God was not with them (1 Samuel 4:1-11). It was never returned to Shiloh and that city continued to decline until it was at last destroyed by the Assyrians (Psalm 78:55-61; Jeremiah 7:12; 26:6).

After the tabernacle was set up, Joshua turned to the job of completing the distribution of the land (Joshua 18:2-10). He chided the remaining seven tribes by asking, "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?" God had given them their land but they were too lazy to possess it by completing the division of it and actually taking up residence. Joshua required the seven remaining tribes to provide three men each to go out and survey the land that

had not yet been occupied by God's people. Keil and Delitzsch say this particularly means they were to list the cities in the area and the type of land surrounding each so a proper division could be made.

The division of the land that followed the survey is found in Joshua 18:11-19:48. The distribution was made by Joshua, Eleazar the priest and the heads of the tribes in Shiloh. Note Jebus, which was later named Jerusalem, was one of the cities given to Benjamin. Some see this as a fulfillment of the prophecy made by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:12. In any case, the temple was erected in a city within the area allotted to Benjamin.

After all of the tribes had received their inheritance, Joshua received his (Joshua 19:49-50). It appears he, like Caleb, had been promised certain land as a reward for his faithfulness when they reported the things they had seen when spying out the land. He was given the city of Timnath Serah in the mountains of Ephraim, which was his tribe (Numbers 13:8).

God gave Moses direction concerning the cities of refuge in Numbers 35:9-33; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; and 19:1-21. In Joshua 20, God tells Joshua to appoint those cities as he had instructed Moses. These cities were not built to harbor criminals but those who accidentally killed someone. Further, the avenger of blood could go to that city for a trial to prove the death was not accidental. If proven, the guilty man was delivered from the city to be executed. God has never approved of criminal activity. However, as long as the man who accidentally killed remained within the city walls, he was safe from harm. Clearly, these cities foreshadowed the safety we can have in Christ as the

Hebrews writer indicates in 6:18-19.

Joshua 21:1-42 tells the cities that were given to the Levites so they would have a place to keep their cattle (compare Numbers 35:1-8). Verses 43-45 tell us God gave Israel all the land he had promised to the fathers (Genesis 12:7; 15:18). He gave them rest and no enemy was able to stand against them. In fact, their enemies had been given into their hands and they could easily have driven the rest out if they had have been so minded. So, God kept every part of his promise, though Israel did not take advantage of it through simple obedience (Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 12:9-10).

### **Questions**

1. Who chose the spot on which the tabernacle was to permanently rest? What place was chosen?

2. When was the ark of the covenant removed from that place? By whom?

3. Why had seven tribes not received their inheritance of land?

4. What did Joshua require of those tribes?

5. In whose land is Jerusalem found?

6. What was the purpose of a city of refuge?

7. Why did the Levites need cities?

8. Did Israel receive all the land God promised the fathers?  
What verse supports your answer?

#### Lesson 11

## **A Witness that the Lord Is God**

## **Joshua 22**

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had faithfully remained throughout all of the days of conquest. Joshua now calls them to him and commends them for faithful service. He then sends them to their land east of Jordan with praise for their faithfulness and a parting charge. He urges them to do God's will and serve him with all their heart and soul. Interestingly, Joshua used six action commands to outline their service to God. They were to do, love, walk, keep, hold fast and serve. Of course, they are to take their portion of the spoils of war home with them to be divided among their people (Joshua 22:1-9).

As they were on their way home, they decided to erect an altar on the west side of Canaan. It did not take long for word to reach the rest of Israel about the erection of an altar by the two and one-half tribes. The other tribes immediately assembled at Shiloh in preparation to go to war against their brethren. They sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, along with one ruler from each of the remaining nine and one-half tribes to discuss the matter before marching to war.

When Phinehas and the rest of his company arrived in Gilead, they set forth their charge that the erection of an altar was in direct violation of God's command (Leviticus 17:8-9; Deuteronomy 12:5-14). God intended for his people to come together in the one place he chose to offer sacrifices to him. This would serve to keep the people united and stress the importance of doing his will. If the people found those of a certain city serving other gods,

Moses' law required that the people and livestock of the city be killed and the city with all its goods burned and left forever as a heap (Deuteronomy 13:12-18). In this way, the rest of the people would put away from them the accursed thing.

To show the importance of dealing with the sin quickly, Phinehas cites to instances in Israel's history. First, he reminds the people of the time when Israel remained in the Acacia Grove of Moab and worshipped Baal of Peor. In connection with this, they committed adultery with the women of Moab. Twenty-four thousand died at the command of God because of that sin (Numbers 25:1-9). Phinehas says Israel is not free from that sin even as he speaks, apparently because they still had the type of heart that would allow them to go after harlots and worship false gods. Though the plague was stayed, its potential for revival was there because the people were so inclined. This made it essential to deal with similar sins quickly.

Second, he told of Achan's sin in the more recent past (Joshua 7). Though only one man sinned in taking of the accursed thing, many suffered in the defeat Israel suffered at Ai. Until they put away the accursed thing, the people were not free from the curse being on all of them. Therefore, he went on to suggest any fear the land they had been given on the eastern side of Jordan was unclean and needed special offerings to be cleansed could be resolved by their settling on the western side of Jordan among the rest of the tribes (Joshua 22:10-20).

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered in a way intended to prove without a doubt their loyalty still rested with the God of Israel.



They began by using all three of his names, El, meaning the strong one, Elohim, the Supreme Being to be feared, and Jehovah, the truly existing One, the God of the covenant, as is pointed out by Keil and Delitzsch. Then, they repeated the three names and said God, because he is all knowing, knew if they were in rebellion and could punish them accordingly. However, their purpose had been to erect a replica of the altar in Shiloh as a witness between the descendants of those on the east of Jordan and those on the west of Jordan that they all served one God as one nation. Their answer satisfied Phinehas and the other representatives, so they went home and reported it to the rest of Israel and war was averted. The two and a half tribes named the altar Witness (Joshua 22:21-34).

### **Questions**

1. Name the tribes that settled on the east side of Jordan.

2. What did Joshua urge them to do in his parting charge to them?

3. What did they do as they went home that disturbed the rest of the people?

4. Who was sent to talk to them?

5. What story was related first to explain why they were upset? Where is it found?

6. What story is told second and where is it found?

7. What three names of God are used in this story and what does each of them mean?

8. What was the reason for erecting the altar?

## Lesson 12

# Joshua's Farewell

Joshua 23-24

As Joshua neared the end of his life, he called for all the leaders of the people to meet with him. He reminded them that it was God who fought for them in the conquest of the land. How else could the walls of Jericho fall down and the sun stand still? The parts of the land remaining to be conquered were their's for the taking because God would drive the people out.

Joshua did place a burden of responsibility upon the people of Israel as well. First, they had to keep the law of Moses. Second, stay free from the idols and people of the nations around them. Third, they should remain loyal in their service to and love of the one true God (Deuteronomy 6:5). As long as they did these things, God would cause one Israelite to be able to chase a thousand of their enemies. He warned the leaders that failure to follow God would result in him turning from them just as surely as he had fought for them. They would perish like the wicked people they had driven out of the land with God's help (Joshua 23:1-16).

Then, Joshua called for all the people to come with their leaders to Shechem to present themselves before God. Since the expression, "before God" indicates before the ark of the covenant, it must be assumed the tabernacle, or at least the ark, was moved for this solemn renewal of Israel's commitment to God. Shechem was the place Abraham first received the promise of the land (Genesis 12:6-7), Jacob set up his tent upon his return from Laban (33:18-20) and apparently Jacob called for his family to cleanse itself from false gods (35:1-4).

Joshua briefly related the history of God's people all the way back to the time when they lived on the other side

of the Euphrates. Terah, Abraham's father, and his son Nahor worshipped false gods. God directed Abraham's path to Canaan and gave him Isaac. Jacob and Esau were the two sons born to him. Esau was given the area around Mount Seir and Jacob went into Egypt along with his children. God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver his people from Egypt and used plagues to cause their release. He destroyed Pharaoh's chariots in the sea and was with Israel in the wilderness. He kept them safe in the wilderness and gave them the land of promise. They did not win the land by their own power but with the hand of God. They reaped the harvest of crops they did not sow (Joshua 24:1-13).

On the basis of all God had done for them, Joshua urged the people to serve God and renounce all the gods their fathers had once served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt. That they had a choice is clear from verse 15. All must recognize that one cannot serve the true God and false gods at the same time. (Matthew 12:30.) The choice must be made immediately while God is still readily available and receptive to the sinner (Isaiah 55:6-7). The best choice is for God because he can take care of those who follow him now and in the world to come (Matthew 6:33; 10:28).

The people chose God because of all the good he had done for them. Joshua did not immediately accept their commitment but made them realize that God is jealous and will punish all who profess to follow him yet still serve other gods. Yet, the people still said they would serve the Lord and Joshua told them their own words would be witnesses against them. When they still accepted, Joshua told them to put away idols and give their hearts to God

(John 4:24). This they committed to do and let Joshua set up a rock as a reminder of their agreement and wrote their decision in the book of the law of God.

After the renewal of the covenant, everyone went his own way and Joshua died. They buried him in his inheritance. As a fitting tribute to God's great leader, the text notes the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who served with him. The people also buried the bones of Joseph in Shechem as had been promised years before (Genesis 50:24-25). Eleazar, the high priest, also died and was buried by his son Phinehas (Joshua 24:14-33).

### **Questions**

1. What did Joshua do when he was old?

2. Name three things he urged the leaders of the people to do.

3. What would happen if they failed to do those things?

4. Where did Joshua call all of the people? What other significant things had happened there?

5. Who did Joshua say had served false gods?

6. What great things does Joshua mention God did to deliver his people?

7. What choice did Joshua give the people? When did they need to make it?

8. What three burials are mentioned at the end of Joshua 24?

### Lesson 13

# **Trouble in the Promised Land**



### **Judges 1:1-2:5**

On his first missionary journey, Paul went to Antioch in Pisidia and preached in the synagogue. He told of God's care for his people in bringing them out of Egypt, then said, "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13:19-20). The book of Judges covers some of the events of that period, though Eli and Samuel would also be included according to Paul's account. The events of Ruth occurred during the days of the judges as well (Ruth 1:1).

Keil and Delitzsch describe judges as those "who procured justice or right for the people of Israel, not only by delivering them out of the power of their foes, but also by administering the laws and rights of the Lord (chap ii. 16-19)." They did more than judge matters of the law. In fact, they served more as a head of government under the direction of God. When the people asked for a king, God said they had not rejected the old judge and prophet Samuel but God as their ruler (1 Samuel 8:1-9).

The Bible does not tell us of an unbroken line of judges serving in Israel. Instead, God ruled through the law he had given Moses and the work of the heads of tribes and elders of the people. It seems God only raised up judges when the people cried out from their suffering under the hands of their enemies. Such suffering was the result of their rebellion against God as can be seen by three clear warnings issued by him in 2:1-4; 6:7-10; and 10:10-14. It appears the judges did not usually rule over all of Israel at

one time but the tribe, or group of tribes, that was particularly being oppressed at the time.

Joshua had promised the children of Israel that faithfulness to God would yield great blessings. They would be able to drive out the rest of the enemy, with only one Israelite chasing a thousand of the enemy. He also warned of the danger of forming close relationships with other nations and failure to drive them out (Joshua 23:6-13). When Joshua died, Israel asked God who should go up before them to fight against the Canaanites (Judges 1:1; Numbers 27:21).

God selected Judah to lead the rest of the tribes into battle. Judah asked Simeon to go with him and promised to help him conquer his lot if he would help conquer that of Judah. They killed 10,000 Canaanites and Perizzites in Bezek and captured their king, Adoni-bezek. His thumbs and great toes were cut off so that he could not flee nor take up arms. Though his punishment may seem harsh to us, he saw it as just retribution, saying, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." His imagery was like a dog eating under the master's table and describes the worst possible humiliation. Israel led him to Jerusalem, where he died (Judges 1:2-8).

God blessed the efforts of Judah and Simeon as they conquered the mountains of their two lots. They failed to conquer the inhabitants of the valleys because the people who lived there had iron tipped chariots (Judges 1:9-19). Other failures to drive out the nations are recorded in Judges 1:21, 27, 29, 30, 31-32, 33 and 34. Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh did destroy the people of Bethel.

Spies captured a man of that city and got him to show them another way into the city, with the promise they would spare his family. They conquered Bethel and slew all in it but that man. He went into the land of the Hittites and built a city named Luz, after his former place of abode (Judges 1:22- 26). Manasseh, Naphtali and Dan did also force some of the nations to pay tribute to them, but they remained there as a thorn in Israel's side because they were not driven out (1:28, 33, 35-36).

The angel of the Lord came to the people and told them he would no longer fight for them because they had failed to follow his directions. They had made covenants with the people in direct violation of his will. This despite the fact that he had brought them out of Egypt as promised. Now, the people remaining in the land would become a snare to God's people. The place where they heard this was named Bochim, which means "Weeping" (Judges 2:1-5).

### **Questions**

1. Who did the Lord say should go up first to fight against the Canaanites?

2. Name three towns the tribes of Judah and Simeon conquered.

3. Who was Achsah? Who did she marry? How did he get her as his wife? What did she ask from her father?

4. Who received Hebron?

5. Who failed to drive out the Jebusites?

6. What does it mean when it says they put certain people to tribute? Could this be described as a covenant agreement?

7. Who forced the children of Dan to live in the mountains?

8. What sad announcement did the angel of the Lord make at Bochim?

#### **Lesson 14**

## **A Generation that**

# Did Not Know God

## Judges 2:7-23

The death of Joshua and his generation brought a great change in Israel. They knew the Lord and his powerful working in behalf of his people in leading them out of Egyptian bondage, through the wilderness and in conquest of the promised land. However, it appears they failed to tell the next generation of the Lord's wonderful love (compare Deuteronomy 6:1-9), because the text plainly says they did not know the Lord or the powerful works he did for his chosen people (Judges 2:7-10).

Baal was the primary male deity of the Canaanites, worshiped as the god of the sun and source of all physical life. His name is often attached to some other name to designate the particular area worshipping him. Baalim is the plural of Baal as Ashtaroth is the plural of the goddess Ashtoreth. She was the moon goddess who roughly corresponded with the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

Ironically, one could serve Baal and the true God at the same time as far as the Canaanites were concerned because they believed in numerous deities. To serve the true God, however, required forsaking all other gods (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:10-25; 13:6-18). Israel failed to realize the danger in following other gods and is described as lying down to prostitute herself with them (Judges 2:11-13). God is often pictured as the husband of Israel in the Old Testament and the church is Christ's bride in the New Testament. To worship other gods is to commit spiritual fornication (Hosea 2:2-13; 2 Corinthians

11:2; James 4:4).

If God failed to punish those who rebelled against his will, he would cease to be righteous and, therefore, cease to be God (Psalm 89:14). This is why God had to deliver Israel into the hands of the spoilers (Judges 2:14-15). The chosen people could no longer stand before their enemies but ran from them because God was not on their side (Leviticus 26:17, 36-39; Deuteronomy 28:25-26). This is in sad contrast to the great promise God had made to them in reference to their ability to conquer their enemies if they remained faithful (Leviticus 26:3-8). However, it should be noted the promise had an "if" clause all along and was contingent on their keeping God's commandments.

Just because God punished Israel, it cannot be said he ceased to love them. In fact, he heard their groanings under the hands of those who oppressed them and sent judges to deliver them out of their hands (Judges 2:16; Hosea 11:8-9). It is unfortunate that Israel did not learn from their punishment. When the judge died they went back into idolatry with a greater zeal than their fathers had pursued it prior to the time God let an enemy put them in subjection (Judges 2:17-19; Isaiah 63:7-10; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

The repeated rebellion of his chosen people led God to say he would cease driving the nations out of the promised land. Instead, they would remain to test whether God's people would be faithful to him or continue to worship false gods (Judges 2:20-23). Clarke writes, "These words are spoken after the manner of men; and the metaphor is taken from the case of a master or father, who distrusts the fidelity or obedience of his servant or son, and

places him in such circumstances that, by his good or evil conduct, he may justify his suspicions, or give him proofs of his fidelity."

### **Questions**

1. How long after the death of Joshua did the people continue to serve God?
2. Who did the people forsake the Lord to serve?
3. What did the Lord do because of their actions?
4. Who did the Lord raise up to deliver his people out of the hands of the plunderers?



5. How long did the people remain faithful after God had delivered them?

6. What did they do after that time?

7. What was God's response to their repeated rebellion?

8. Discuss the relationship between true love and punishment.

#### **Lesson 15**

## **Proving Israel**

### **Judges 3**

Through Moses, God had made a great promise to Israel to fight for them and drive out the nations from the land of Canaan (Exodus 23:27-33). Thomas suggests Israel would never have had to learn war if they had remained faithful because God would have fought for them. (Joshua 1:7-9.) However, because of Israel's unfaithfulness, God withdrew his promise and left the nations in the land to test Israel's willingness to follow God (Judges 2:20-23).

Two things would come out of the nations remaining in the land. First, Israel would be tested in reference to their desire to follow God instead of serving idols. Second, they would learn how to defend themselves in battle (Judges 3:1-5). The five lords of the Philistines ruled in the cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron (1 Samuel 6:17). They controlled the area along the coast from Sharon to the Egyptian desert. Thomas says, "The Sidonians probably lived in the northern part of Phoenicia, while the Hivites dwelt in the northern section of Palestine, in the Lebanon mountains." The Canaanites dwelt on the sea coast south of Sidon, according to Keil.

Unfortunately, Israel at this time failed the test because the people took the daughters of the nations for their sons' wives and gave their own daughters to the sons of the nations to have as wives. This led them to worship the idols of the nations living among them (Judges 3:6). God had foretold this exact pattern in his instructions to the people which he gave through Moses (Exodus 34:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Is it any wonder Paul warns against

believers being unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14)?

Because of the evil influences of idol worshipping mates, Israel forgot God and served Baal in the groves built by the nations. This caused God to be angry and allow the king of Mesopotamia, or land between two rivers, which would be the Tigris and Euphrates, to defeat them. When Israel cried out under the oppression of eight years, God raised up Othniel to deliver his people. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him so that he would be able to effectively lead God's people. In a prophecy about the coming Christ, Isaiah describes the Spirit as one of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might and the knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2). Certainly, that Spirit could enable a man to lead God's people. With the power of the Spirit, Othniel was able to defeat the king of Mesopotamia and rule Israel in peace for forty years (Judges 3:7-11).

After the death of that great spiritual leader, Israel again began to worship idols and God allowed Eglon the king of Moab to conquer them, with the help of the Ammonites and Amalekites. Eglon ruled over Israel 18 years. At the cry of his people, God raised up Ehud, a Benjamite, to deliver them. Ehud supervised the delivery of tribute to Eglon, who was apparently residing in the city of palms, near the sight of Jericho.

When the tribute was fully delivered, Ehud turned back from the stone images at Gilgal and sent word to Eglon that he wished to speak to him privately. He told him he had a message from God, so Eglon stood. Ehud then withdrew an 18 inch dagger from his right side and sunk it into the fat king until even the handle was

swallowed up. He locked the doors and escaped before any of the servants dared to unlock the doors and discover the body.

Ehud then assembled an army in the mountains of Ephraim and cut off the escape route of the Moabites by taking the fords near Jericho. Ten thousand of the enemy were destroyed during the battle and Israel had rest for eighty years (Judges 3:12-30).

Shamgar also delivered Israel, but we know very little about him. The text simply says he slew 600 Philistines with an ox goad and delivered Israel (Judges 3:31).

### **Questions**

1. What two reasons did God give for leaving the nations

in the promised land?

2. What people did the children of Israel dwell among?

3. What caused God to be angry with his people?

4. What king of what land conquered Israel?

5. After how many years did God send what man to deliver Israel?

6. How long did they have peace?

7. What king over what nation next conquered Israel?  
Whose help did he enlist?

8. Who defeated him? Describe how he killed him and  
defeated his armies.

#### **Lesson 16**

## **A Mother in Israel**

## Judges 4-5

Judges chapter four may indicate Shamgar worked only briefly after Ehud. At any rate, the children of Israel began to worship idols again after the death of Ehud (Judges 4:1; 5:8). God allowed Jabin, king of the Canaanites, to conquer and rule over them. Jabin's general, Sisera, terrorized the people with nine hundred chariots of iron for twenty years (4:2-3; Joshua 17:16-18).

During this time of oppression, Deborah judged the people under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. She describes herself as a mother in Israel, possibly because she loved the people with a mother's love (4:4-5; 5:7). She is called a prophetess because she made God's will known. Miriam, Noadiah, Hulda, Anna and Philip's four virgin daughters are also called by that name (Exodus 15:20; Nehemiah 6:14; 2 Kings 22:14-20; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:8-9). Like other judges, Deborah heard the cases brought to her and made sure all was handled justly.

God also used her to gain Israel's freedom from their enemies by having her call Barak from Kadesh in Naphtali. Barak was to assemble 10,000 fighting men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. When they were assembled, God promised to call out the army of Sisera at the River Kishon and deliver them into their hands. Barak would not go without Deborah, possibly because he lacked confidence in himself or because he wanted to be reassured of God's wishes in reference to the attack by the presence of his spokeswoman. Deborah said she would go, but the honor of the victory would be given to a woman (4:6-9).

When Sisera heard that Barak assembled an army at

Tabor, he led his chariots and armies to the River Kishon. Then, Deborah told Barak to begin the battle because God had delivered Sisera into their hand. Josephus says a rain and hail storm occurred as the battle began, with the wind driving it right into the faces of the enemy (compare 5:19-22). Certainly, it could be said God was fighting for them in that case. Sisera fled on foot while the rest of the army was killed by the sword (4:10-17).

Verses 11 and 17 tell us Heber the Kenite had separated from his tribe, was at peace with Jabin and lived beside Kadesh. As Sisera fled, he came to the tent of Heber and was invited in by Jael, Heber's wife. She hid him under a blanket and brought him milk when he asked for a drink of water. He promptly fell asleep and she took a tent peg and drove it through his temple into the earthen floor, thus killing him. This would seem to be the fulfillment of God's prophecy through Deborah in verse 9. When Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, Jael invited him in to see the man he sought. As always, the true credit for the victory of God's people goes to God himself and the text notes such was accomplished in the presence of the children of Israel (4:18- 23; 5:24-27).

With God's help, Israel grew stronger and stronger until they were able to destroy Jabin. As Deborah says in her song, "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun When it comes out in full strength." The text then simply tells us the land had rest for forty years (4:24; 5:28-31).

## Questions



1. What did Israel do when Ehud was dead? How does 5:8 explain it further?

2. What king, with what general, oppressed Israel and for how long?

3. Who judged Israel at this time? What other word is used to describe this person?

4. Who did the Lord have her call? What was he told to do?

5. Under what conditions would he go? Who did the Lord say would receive the honor of defeating Sisera?

6. Describe the battle.

7. How and where did Sisera flee? Who killed him?  
How?

8. How long did Israel have peace this time?

**Lesson 17**

**Let Baal Plead**

**Judges 6**

When Israel again did evil in the sight of God, he delivered them into the hands of the Midianites, who were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2). They were allied in the oppression of Israel with the Amelekites and the children of the East, which is the general name of the people who lived in the desert east of the promised land. Because of seven years of severe treatment, the children of Israel made homes out of the caves and ravines they found in the mountains. Their enemies came every time they planted and destroyed their crops, not even leaving the sheep, ox or ass. They came in such large numbers that they could be said to be as locusts in the land. Their large herds would have eaten much, if not all, of the available grasses (Judges 6:1-5).

Israel cried out to God for help during this time of great poverty. He sent a prophet who reminded them of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 20:2) and conquest of the land of Canaan. The prophet further reminded them of God's injunction for them to not fear the gods of the people in whose land they were dwelling, but they had failed to heed his voice (Judges 6: 6-10).

God sent his angel to call Gideon to deliver his people. It is reassuring to note God is well acquainted with Gideon's life and character (Verses 11-12). Gideon's knowledge of the suffering under Midian, and perhaps God's warning issued through Moses (Deuteronomy 31:17), led to the questions of verse 13. Keil says Gideon did not recognize his visitor as an angel, so he addressed him as "Sir." The Lord said he would be with him and he could go in that might. Gideon then realized who he was talking to and addressed him as "Lord," while still doubting his

own abilities because he was from such a lowly family. However, God again told him he would be with him and said the Midianites would be defeated as if they were one man being killed by a blow.

Gideon's request for a sign might be viewed today as a lack of faith, however, Thomas presents a different view. "There is a great difference in a humble believer's seeking more information regarding a given situation, and one who questions that which God proposes to do." He sites the difference in God's reaction to the questions of Mary and Zacharias in Luke 1. Mary was given an answer while Zacharias was stricken dumb because of his lack of belief (Verses 20, 38).

Gideon asked his visitor to stay long enough for him to prepare a gift for him. Keil says the word used indicates he was speaking of a sacrificial gift which, if accepted, would prove God was speaking to him. The angel directed Gideon to place the gift on a rock much like a sacrifice on an altar and the burning of it proved to him God was sending him. As the angel departed, Gideon became afraid because he had seen the Lord's angel face to face but God assured him he would have peace and not die. In gratitude, Gideon built an altar he named "The Lord send peace" (Judges 6:14-24).

That same night, God gave him instructions to tear down the altar to Baal, erect one to God and offer a sacrifice using the wood from Baal's altar. This Gideon did at night with the help of ten servants. The next day, the men of the city intended to kill Gideon, but his father, Joash, said it was none of their business. If Baal was offended, he could deal with him, so he was named

Jerubbaal, which means "Let Baal plead." At that time, a fresh invasion occurred but, instead of fleeing to the caves and ravines, the people answered the call of Gideon's trumpet and prepared for battle. The text tells us this call went out as a result of Spirit of the Lord coming on him (Judges 6:25-35).

Gideon still felt he needed one more sign from God that he was to lead the people into battle against the Midianites. He asked God let dew only be on a wool fleece in the morning and all the ground be dry. When God met that request, Gideon asked for one more. This time the ground should be wet and the fleece dry. God answered in just the way he asked and Gideon had assurance the Lord would fight for Israel (Judges 6:36-40).

### **Questions**

1. Why was Israel delivered into the hand of Midian for seven years?



6. What did God command Gideon to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What was Joash's answer to those who would have killed his son?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Gideon knew God was with him because of the signs the Lord gave him.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Discuss ways we can know God is with us.

#### **Lesson 18**

## **The Lord Delivered Israel**

### **Judges 7-8:21**

The second invasion of the Midianites and their allies placed 135,000 troops in the land of Israel (Judges 8:10). Yet, when God saw the number of men who answered Gideon's call to arms, he said 32,000 men were too many to go up against them. He did not want the people to think they had delivered themselves. God told Gideon to send the fearful home and 22,000 left the battlefield. There is no place in God's army for the fearful (Revelation 21:8). Barne's Notes says the name of the well, Harod, means trembling and may come from this very incident.

God still saw the 10,000 as too many so he had Gideon take them to the water to drink. Those who lapped the water like a dog were to be separated from those who got down on their knees. Thomas quotes from George Adam Smith who says, "The stream, which makes it possible for the occupiers of the hill to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water; for they drink in the face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for hostile ambushes." He goes on to explain, "Those Israelites, therefore, who bowed themselves down on their knees, drinking headlong, did not appreciate their position or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand, while they held their weapons in the other and kept their faces to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had their hearts ready against all surprise."

God could now use the 300 men ready to fight to win the victory and bring deliverance to Israel. Though God was ready, he did allow Gideon the opportunity to go down



to the camp of Midian at night and hear a dream that would strengthen him for battle. This may have been in part because the ratio between the armies had gone from 4 to 1, to 450 to 1. Gideon overheard a dream about a barley cake, representing Israel, that tumbled into the camp of Midian and knocked down a tent, representing the defeat of the host of Midian (Judges 7:1-14).

Perhaps now realizing the Lord can win the battle with many or a few (1 Samuel 14:6), Gideon divided his troops into 3 parts and sent them out with trumpets, pitchers and torches in them. At the beginning of the middle watch, which would have been about midnight, Gideon gave the signal. The men broke the pitchers, blew on the trumpets and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The enemy ran out of their tents in confusion and the Lord caused them to turn on one another with their swords. While they were fleeing toward the Jordan, Gideon called for Ephraim to seize the watering places so retreat could be cut off (Judges 7:15-25).

Gideon soothed the hurt feelings of Ephraim by telling them that, though they were called late to the battle, their grape gathering had been more fruitful than all the vintage of Abiezer. Gideon and his exhausted troops crossed over Jordan still in pursuit of the enemy. They asked for bread from Succoth and Penuel, neither of which would provide it for fear of Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. Gideon made a surprise attack on the kings with their 15,000 remaining troops and took both of them captive. He then went back and whipped the leaders of Succoth with thorns from the wilderness, destroyed the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city. He killed the kings because they had killed his brothers at Tabor

(Judges 8:1-21).

### Questions

1. How many men did Gideon have when he first called his brethren to war? After the fearful went home?

2. How did God reduce the number of men who would fight? After God separated them at the waters, how many men were left to go with Gideon into battle?

3. How many Midianites were they going up against?

4. How did Gideon receive reassurance they would be victorious?



Israel tried to set up Gideon and his descendants after him as king over them. Gideon's answer is significant. "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." Had they have listened to their leader more closely and heeded his words, many problems would have been avoided. Unfortunately, he did ask for and receive the earrings they had taken as spoil from the Midianites. With them he made an idol to worship and caused Israel to sin in worshipping false gods.

For forty years the land had rest and Gideon died at a good old age. He had seventy sons of his wives and concubines, including Abimelech. Following Gideon's death, Israel again worshipped Baal. "Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side" (Judges 8:22-33).

Among Gideon's 70 sons was Abimelech who was born to him of a concubine from Shechem. He got the people of that city to pay him 70 shekels of silver and used it to enlist the help of some worthless and reckless men. They went out and killed the other sons of Jerubbaal, except for Jotham, the youngest. When he learned of the death of his brothers, he stood on top of Mount Gerizim and told a parable of the trees anointing a king.

When the trees first decided they wanted a king to rule over them, they asked the olive tree to take the job. However, the olive tree said it could not quit providing oil which was used to honor God and men. Next, the trees asked the fig tree to be their ruler, but the fig said it could not cease producing sweet fruit. When they approached

the vine, it asked if it should stop producing wine which gave cheer to God and man. Finally, the trees asked the bramble to rule over them. The bramble responded by saying, "If in truth you anoint me as king over you, Then come and take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble And devour the cedars of Lebanon!"

Jotham then noted the terrible way the men of Shechem had rewarded Gideon for leading in the fight against their enemies and risking his life. He said fire would go out from Abimelech and destroy them and fire would go out from them to destroy Abimelech. Jotham then hid in Beer for fear of his brother (Judges 9:1-21).

Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years and, though he was wicked, is considered to be the next judge. After that time, God caused a spirit of ill will to arise between the men of Shechem and Abimelech. The men of Shechem set ambushes for Abimelech and the men who had helped him kill his brothers. They robbed anyone who passed along that way. They also chose Gaal the son of Ebed to be their new ruler. They made wine, ate, drank and cursed Abimelech. Gaal, in the midst of the celebration, challenged Abimelech to gather an army and come out to meet him in battle.

When Abimelech did, he defeated the city and burned all the people who locked themselves in the tower for protection. Then, he fought against Thebez. When he approached their tower, a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and crushed his skull. He had his armorbearer kill him with a sword so people would not say he had been killed by a woman. So, God repayed him for murdering his brothers (Judges 9:22-57).

Next, Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years and lived in Shamir, which is in the mountains of Ephraim. Jair next ruled over Israel for twenty-two years.

### **Questions**

1. What did the people of Israel want Gideon to do?



7. What happened to the men of Shechem?

8. How did Abimelech die? What does the inspired author say about his death?

9. What two judges ruled after Abimelech and how long did each rule?

#### **Lesson 20**

## **Jephthah Delivers God's People**

**Judges 10:6-11:33**

Israel then began to serve the Baals and Ashtoreths of the nations around them. God allowed the Philistines



and Ammonites to conquer his disobedient children and oppress them for eighteen years. When they cried out to God to deliver them, he told them he had delivered them in the past but they had gone to serve other gods. He told them to ask those gods to deliver them. This apparently caused them to realize their mistake and they put away the false gods they had been serving. God could not stand their misery any longer and prepared a man to deliver them (Judges 10:6-18).

Jephthah was a brave man whose mother was a harlot. The men of Gilead allowed his brethren to drive him away so he could not receive a part of the inheritance of their father. He went to live in the land of Tob where loose men gathered around him and helped conduct raids on those nearby. When Ammon made war with Israel, the men of Gilead began to search for a leader who would be rewarded by being made head over them.

Jephthah recalled the wrong committed against him by the elders allowing his brethren to drive him away. He said he would lead them in battle if they would make him head over them as they said. They all went to Mizpah and formally made this agreement with the Lord as their witness (Judges 11:1-11).

Jephthah then tried to use diplomatic means to avert a war. He sent to the king of the Ammonites and asked why he had come to fight against their land. His answer was that Israel had taken away his land when they came up out of Egypt. Jephthah sent back messengers to remind the king that Israel had come to Kadesh and then asked first the king of Edom and then the king of Moab to let them pass through. They circled the land of both kings and then

asked the king of the Amorites if they could pass through his land. He too denied them passage and then brought his army out to war against Israel. He was defeated and Israel took possession of the land which God had given them. Also, Balak the king of Moab had not tried to fight with Israel over the conquered land nor had he laid any claim to it. Israel had occupied the land for 300 years without challenge so there was no force to the king of Ammon's challenge. Despite the force of Jephthah's arguments, the king of Ammon would not be swayed from warring against Israel (Judges 11:12-28).

The coming of the Spirit of the Lord on Jephthah proved he was God's appointed leader. He immediately rose up and traveled through the area gathering an army to fight for the freedom of Gilead. This area, from the Arnon River to the Jabbak River, covered the inheritance of Reuben and half of Gad. Before going into battle, Jephthah vowed he would give to the Lord the first thing that came out of his house to meet him if the Lord gave the Ammonites into his hand (Judges 11:29-33).

### **Questions**

1. Why did God say he allowed the children of Israel to be oppressed in chapter 10?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who did the men of Gilead ask to lead them into battle against Ammon? Explain how they had previously treated

him.

3. How did he try to avert war with Ammon?

4. What expression in Judges 11:29 lets us know Jephthah was God's appointed leader?

5. What vow did he make to God if he should win the battle? Did God require him to make such a vow?

### **Lesson 21**

## **Jephthah Keeps His Vow**

### **Judges 11:34-12:15**

With God's help, the Ammonites were subdued with a great slaughter. Jephthah's daughter, who was his only child, was the first to come out of his house to greet him and celebrate his victory with dancing (Compare Exodus 15:20; 1 Samuel 18:6-7). Ordinarily, a father would

rejoice to see his child running out to meet him upon his return home. However, because of the vow he had made to God, Jephthah tore his clothes and cried out.

His daughter considered a vow to the Lord to be so important that she told her father to do to her whatever he had promised. Her one request was that she be allowed to go to the mountains and bewail her virginity because she would never know a man. When the time was up, Jephthah kept his vow. From that day forward, the young women of Israel devoted four days a year to go to the mountains and sing praises for Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:34-40).

Leviticus 27:28 speaks of devoted offerings to the Lord, which may well explain Hannah's vow to the Lord in reference to Samuel prior to his conception (1 Samuel 1:8-11). However, God despised the human sacrifices the nations made to Molech (Leviticus 18:21; 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 12:29-31). What then are we to do with a man of faith making a vow that would cause him to do the very thing God hated (Hebrews 11:32)? Keil suggests the vow could have been fulfilled in a spiritual sense with the girl remaining unmarried and her being dedicated to God for the rest of her life. If we cannot accept that idea, it would appear we must think of this as one of the flaws found in a man who otherwise served God well. The importance of keeping one's promises to God would still be seen in the midst of a terrible sin.

Judges 12 once again reveals the tragedy pride can lead us into (compare Joshua 17:14-18 and Judges 8:1-3). The tribe of Ephraim approached Jephthah with threats because he had not called them to battle. He told them he

had called and they had refused to come to his aid so he proceeded into battle without them at great personal risk. Jephthah gathered his army together and fought with the people of Ephraim. They blocked their path across the fords of Jordan and used a dialect distinction to be sure none got away. Forty-two thousand were slain as a result of pride (1-6).

Jephthah judged Israel for six years. He was followed by Ibzan, who judged for seven years and Elon, who God used over his people for ten years. Abdon is said to be a Pirathonite, which was in Ephraim (1 Chronicles 27:14). He judged for eight years.

### **Questions**

1. What happened upon his return that made Jephthah very unhappy?

2. What does the text say the daughters of Israel do to honor Jephthah's daughter every year?

3. What complaint did the men of Ephraim bring to Jephthah?

4. What was his answer?

5. What happened to the men of Ephraim?

6. What other rulers does chapter 12 mention and how long did each judge Israel?

**Lesson 22**

**They Plowed With  
His Heifer**

**Judges 13-14**

By now, the words this chapter begins with are all too familiar. Whenever God's people strayed from worshiping the true God to serving idols, God let them be

oppressed by some enemy. In this case, it is the Philistines who God used to discipline his people for forty years (Judges 13:1).

Thomas says Zorah was on the border of Dan and Judah, which was close to the area the Philistines occupied. Interestingly, Dan means "a judge" and Jacob had foretold Dan would judge his people (Genesis 49:16-17). Whether this has specific reference to Samson, we cannot say for sure. It is plain, from the directions given to his mother, that Samson was to be a Nazarite (Numbers 6:1-21). A Nazarite was a man or woman consecrated to the Lord for a set period of time, which could even extend to a lifetime as it did in Samson's and Samuel's case (Judges 13:1- 7; 1 Samuel 1:11, 28).

The one who took a Nazarite vow was not to partake of the fruit of grape vines at all. The hair was not to be cut until the time of the vow was completed when it would be shaved and burned before the Lord. The Nazarite was not to touch any dead bodies, even those of close loved ones since that would make him unclean.

Manoah's wife came to him and said a man had told her she was to bear a son who would be consecrated to God from the womb and would begin to deliver God's people from the hand of the Philistines. Thus, he prayed God would again send his messenger so he could learn more about God's plan. When the Angel of the Lord again appeared to her, Manoah's wife ran to tell him. He learned the consecration of this child would begin with the mother while he was still in her womb.

Manoah then sought to detain the man so they could prepare a young goat for him to eat. He said he would not



eat but they could offer it to the Lord. Still not knowing the identity of their visitor, Manoah asked his name that they might honor him with some gifts when the child was born. The angel of the Lord simply said his name was wonderful, or secret, indicating his relationship with God (compare Isaiah 9:6). He then ascended to heaven in the flame of the offering Manoah made to God. Realizing the true identity of the messenger made him fear, but the child was born as foretold and moved among the people of Dan as the Spirit directed him (Judges 13:8-25; 14:6; 15:14).

Samson found a daughter of the Philistines in Timnath that he wanted to marry and asked his parents to make the proper arrangements. They did not approve of marriage to one not of God's people and asked if he could not find an Israelite girl for a wife (compare Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6). Of course, his parents did not know that God was going to use this marriage to produce an opportunity to deal a blow to the Philistines (Judges 14:1-4).

While going to Timnath, Samson was attacked by a young lion which he killed with his bare hands, because of the strength he received from God. Later, when he returned to take her home to marry her, Samson went aside and found honey in the carcass. He took some, ate it and gave some to his parents to eat without telling them where he got it. Samson prepared a feast according to the usual custom and the bride's parents invited thirty friends to join them. Samson told a riddle which they could not solve without the aid of Samson's bride. When she persuaded him to tell her the meaning of the riddle and then the guests revealed its answer to Samson, he said they would not have known if they had not plowed with his heifer. To fulfill

his obligation of a suit of clothing for each of the thirty, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to go to Ashkelon and slay thirty men.

With his anger aroused against his wife, Samson left her there and returned to the home of his parents. He did not intend to break off the marriage, as will be seen in the next chapter, but his father-in-law gave his daughter to the friend Samson had chosen at the feast (Judges 14:5-20).

### **Questions**

1. What instructions did Manoah's wife receive from the angel of the Lord?



7. What riddle did he tell at the wedding feast?

8. How did the guests learn the answer to the riddle?  
What was Samson's response?

### **Lesson 23**

# **Asleep In Satan's Barber Chair**

### **Judges 15-16**

When Samson went down to Timnath at the time of the wheat harvest to visit his wife in her chamber, his father-in-law told him he had given her to his best man. He offered Samson a younger daughter, but he was enraged

because the covenant made by his parents when they paid the dowry had been broken. He caught 300 jackals, which are much like foxes, and tied pairs of them together with torches between their tails. Their release into the standing grain caused the harvest to be burned shock and all. Even the nearby olive groves were destroyed (Judges 15:1-5).

The Philistines sought out the cause of such destruction and found Samson had committed his act of aggression because his father-in-law had violated their agreement. So, they burned him and his daughter, which was the very thing she had earlier sought to avoid by revealing the meaning of the riddle (see 14:15.) Samson then set out to avenge himself upon the Philistines with a great slaughter. He then went to Etam, likely the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 11:6 (15:6-8).

The Philistine army then encamped in Judah against Lehi, which means "jaw." Three thousand men of Judah went down and bound Samson with two new ropes and delivered him to the enemy to avoid a war. They rejoiced when they saw him bound but the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to snap the ropes as if they were flax that had been burned in the fire. With the jawbone of an ass, he slew 1,000 men and renamed it Ramath Lehi, meaning "jawbone height." He then acknowledged God's victory through his servant and asked for much needed water to drink. God opened up a place in the earth and Samson drank. This place was named "tooth hollow," likely because it was on jawbone height (15:9-20).

Samson went in to a harlot at Gaza, which the text does not say was of the Lord as had been the earlier marriage arrangement at Timnath. The Gazites

surrounded the city and waited for daybreak to kill him. At midnight, he tore the gates, posts and all, out of the ground and carried them about a half mile distant to a hill facing Hebron (16:1-3).

He then fell in love with a woman near his birthplace named Delilah. The lords of the Philistines offered her 1,100 shekels of silver from each of them if she could discover the secret of his strength. Three times he deceived her and he overthrew the men who came to capture him. However, the fourth time she wore him down by continual questioning and he revealed the secret of his strength was in the Nazarite vow. Remember, the uncut hair was a symbol of his life being consecrated to God, so, when a Philistine barber cut it while he slept on Delilah's lap, the Lord's strength left him. This time the Philistines successfully captured him, put out his eyes, bound him with brass, or bronze, fetters and put him to work grinding grain in the prison (16:4-21).

Later, the Philistines brought him to the temple of their god Dagon where about 3,000 were gathered to celebrate the victory he had given them over their enemy. Samson, whose hair had now begun to grow back, was led to the temple by a lad and placed between the pillars to entertain the people by their being allowed to make sport of him. He prayed to God for strength and pushed down the pillars so that he killed more in his death than in his life. His brothers buried him in the tomb of his father after he had judged for twenty years (16:22-31). It should be noticed that the Lord gave him a second chance when Samson again acknowledged the source of his strength.



3. Who delivered Samson to the Philistines and how did he kill over a 1,000 of them?

4. How were the Gazites able to surround Samson?

5. What did he do and when?

6. With whom did he fall in love?



7. Name the three false answers he gave her.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Why did cutting Samson's hair take away his power?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How did Samson regain his power and what did he do with it?

**Lesson 24**

**"Every Man Did That  
Which Was Right  
in His Own Eyes"**

**Judges 17-18**

The title for today's lesson, which comes from Judges 17:6, describes a tragic period in Israel's history. The people had lost sight of their true leader, God, and strayed

into sin. Events in the life of a man named Micah, who lived in mount Ephraim, are representative of that time.

Micah stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother, but confessed it to her after he heard her place a curse on the money. She asked the Lord's blessings on him, dedicated the silver to the Lord and gave it back to her son to make a graven image and a molten image. Of course, that shows her ignorance of God's law (Exodus 20:3-6). Micah set up the image along with his household gods, or teraphim, and made one of his sons serve as a priest (Judges 17:1-5).

A Levite who had been living in Bethlehem set out in search of a new place to live and came to the house of Micah. Micah offered to pay him ten shekels of silver a year along with a suit of clothes and food to serve in his house of God. When he agreed to accept, Micah was happy because he believed the Lord would now make him prosper (17:7-13).

At the last census, Dan had numbered 64,400 males of 20 years old upward and the land allotted to them would have been sufficient had the Amorites not forced them into the mountains (see Numbers 26:42-43 and Judges 1:34). The men of Dan decided they did not have enough land to pass from father to son for an inheritance. So, they sent five men to spy out a land they could occupy.

They spent the night with Micah and heard an accent obviously not from that region. They asked the Levite how he came to be in the house of Micah and he told them he was serving as his priest. When they asked him to inquire of God as to their efforts, he said God knew of their

plans and approved. They then went to Laish, which is called Leshem in Joshua 19:47, and found the people living by trade and commerce like the Sidonians with no one ruling over them and far away from their people (Judges 18:1-7).

Encouraged by the report of the spies, 600 men of Dan set off with weapons to attack the city. When they came to mount Ephraim, the spies told them about the house of God with the image and priest. They greeted him in a friendly way and went in to take the image, ephod and household idols. The priest asked them what they were doing and they urged him to keep quiet, asking him if it was not better to serve a tribe in Israel instead of just one man.

The priest happily went with them. They placed the children, household goods and livestock in front of the column, apparently expecting Micah to have a hostile reaction. Micah and the men who worked with him pursued them, but the Danites turned and asked why they followed. Micah responded that they had taken everything from his house of God and left him nothing. They told him he should leave things as they were or be in jeopardy of his life as well as sacrificing the lives of his family. He saw their strength and returned home. Notice, false worship of the true God had not helped him as he thought it would (Judges 18:8-26; 17:13).

The people of Dan took the things that had belonged to Micah and went on to Laish. They defeated the people with the sword and burned their city which lay in the valley which was the source of the Jordan river. They rebuilt the city and renamed it Dan. Jonathan, who was the grandson

of Gershom the son of Moses, served with his descendants as priests of the people until they were taken captive (Judges 18:27-31; 1 Chronicles 23:14-15).

### **Questions**

1. To what sin did Micah confess?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What attitude did the people of his day have?



7. What did they do at Micah's house? How did Micah respond? What did they tell him?

8. What did they do to the city of Laish? What did they rename it?

#### **Lesson 25**

## **Benjamin's Partnership With Evil**

#### **Judges 19-21**

A Levite living in the remote part of the mountains of Ephraim took a woman from Bethlehem to be his concubine, which is like a wife only without the same rights. She was unfaithful to him and returned to her

father's house. After four months, the Levite went to her and persuaded her to return to him. His father-in-law, perhaps in an effort to insure good treatment of his daughter, encouraged him to stay and receive strength from food and drink for four and a half days. This caused him to be late passing by Jebus and at last arriving in Gibeah (Judges 19:1-14).

They stayed in the marketplace of Gibeah because no one invited them in for the night. At last, an old man, also from Ephraim, invited them in to receive food, a night's lodging and provisions for their animals. While they were enjoying themselves, evil men of the city surrounded the house and demanded that the Levite be given to them that they might commit homosexual acts with him. The old man pleaded with them on the basis of hospitality not to do such a thing and, like Lot, offered his virgin daughter instead. He finally ended up giving them the Levite's concubine, who they abused all night until she fell down dead at the door (Judges 19:15-27; compare Genesis 19).

The Levite took her body back home and used the knife he used to slaughter animals to cut the body into twelve pieces to send to all the tribes of Israel. He invited all the tribes to consider the terrible crime committed and say how it should be punished. The congregation gathered at Mizpah, which Keil says is on the western border of the tribe of Benjamin, to review the incident and decide what to do. With the Lord as their witness, it was decided to go up against Gibeah, lay it to ashes and distribute the land by lot. One man out of every ten was selected to go out and obtain provisions for the army (Judges 20:1-11).

The other tribes called upon Benjamin to release to them the wicked men that they might be put to death in accord with the law (Deuteronomy 22:22). By refusing to release them, the rest of the tribe of Benjamin upheld the sinful act of the men of Gibeah and became their partners in sin. Twenty-six thousand from Benjamin plus 700 chosen men from Gibeah prepared for battle. The 400,000 men of Israel first went to Bethel, where Jacob had heard from God (Genesis 28 and 35), to ask God through the high priest, Phinehas, who should lead them in battle.

The Benjaminites killed 22,000 the first day. They went weeping to the Lord to inquire whether they should go up again. At his direction, they went up a second day and lost another 18,000. They went to the house of God, wept, fasted until evening and offered sacrifices. When they inquired again of the Lord through Phinehas, he said for them to go up and he would give them into their hand. On the third day, they set an ambush and slew 25,100 and struck the city of Gibeah with the sword. Six hundred fled to the rock of Rimmon for safety. Then, the rest of Israel struck down every man and beast they found in Benjamin (Judges 20:12-48).

The other 11 tribes had sworn, perhaps rashly, they would not give their daughters to the men of Benjamin. With the war now ended, they went up to the house of God and wept. They were concerned that a tribe was now missing from the 12. The next morning, they offered sacrifices to God and inquired of one another to determine who had not come up to the assembly at Mizpah. Jabesh in Gilead had not come up, so 12,000 fighting men went against that city and struck it with the sword, sparing only female virgins. The four hundred who were found were



given to the remaining men of Benjamin (21:1-13).

Two hundred men still remained of Benjamin who had no wives. Because of the oath at Mizpah, the men could not give them any wives. However, they did advise them to come up at the next annual feast at Shiloh and seize some daughters of that city while they were dancing outside the town. The elders promised that when the relatives of the virgins came to present their case, they would answer in their behalf that enough wives were not secured in the battle at Jabesh Gilead. Also, they would pronounce the men of Shiloh free from the oath because they had not given their daughters to the men of Benjamin. When the wives were thus secured, the men of Benjamin returned to their land and rebuilt the cities which had been destroyed (Judges 21:14-25).

### Questions

1. Why did the Levite's concubine return to her father's house?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How long was it before he went to get her? What was her father's response?

3. Where would the Levite not spend the night? Where did he decide to spend the night?

4. What tragedy happened that night? How did he react to it?

5. What did the congregation decide to do? Did they consult the Lord?

6. Describe the events of the three days of battle?

7. How many were left of the tribe of Benjamin? What part of their condition made the rest of the tribes especially sad?

8. Describe the events of chapter 21 which resolved this problem.

9. What did the men of Benjamin finally do?

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This book is dedicated to my sisters, Laura Osborne and Lisa Wilson, who have supported me in the preaching of the gospel.