

The Bible Story In A Year

Week 13

At the completion of the book of Joshua, the major battles have been fought to conquer the promised land and the land has been divided into various territories for the tribes of Israel. However, God's plan was never to hand the land over all at once. Instead, God had planned to give the land to the Israelites little-by-little (Exodus 23:27-33; Deuteronomy 7:20-24). Therefore, there were still battles to be fought by the various tribes to finish possessing the land (Joshua 13:1-7). Joshua warned Israel, though, that intermarrying with the people of the land or worshiping their gods would result in God not continuing to drive out the nations and they would become a trap for them (Joshua 23:11-13).

1) Israel's failure to take full possession of the land. Despite the warnings about the people of the land (Deuteronomy 7:1-6), Israel often failed to keep this command after Joshua's death. Judah is said to have captured some territory but then failed to drive out others (Judges 1:18-19). Benjamin failed to drive out the Jebusites (1:21). Then, this problem also persisted throughout other tribes (1:27-36). These passages give an overview of the situation that had now developed in Israel. And, this would lead to consequences for them just as God had said. (Deuteronomy 31:16-21).

2) A cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance. Because Israel had not obeyed God, He would not drive out the inhabitants of the land and they would cause trouble for Israel (Judges 2:1-5). Throughout the days of Joshua's life, the people had seen the great works God had done for Israel and they worshiped Jehovah (2:6-7). However, after the death of Joshua and the elders of that time, there was another generation who did not know Jehovah or all that He had done for Israel (2:8-10). Consequently, Israel did what was evil in God's sight by worshiping false gods in the land (2:11-13). This greatly angered God and God handed them over to their enemies to be punished (2:14-15). The Lord

would then raise up a judge (deliverer) among the people and rescue them from enemy oppression (2:16-18). However, the people would then return to their wickedness (2:19). Throughout the book of Judges, this reoccurring pattern (cycle) continued. This had all been a test of their faithfulness to God for this generation (2:20-23; 3:1-6). Some examples of the evil done during this period can be seen in Judges 17-21.

3) The early judges. The book of Judges identifies several God raised up to deliver His people from oppression. Please note that there is likely some overlap with some of the judges (particularly in the later period). First, let's consider some earlier judges and a brief overview of this time. In order of the Bible text, the first judge was Othniel. As Israel worshiped other gods and did evil, they were sold to King Cushanrishathaim to serve him eight years, cried out to God, and Othniel delivered the Israelites so they then had peace (Judges 3:7-11). The second judge was Ehud. As Israel did what was evil in God's sight, God delivered them to King Eglon of Moab to serve him 18 years, before God raised up Ehud who defeated Eglon and the Moabites (3:12-15, 29-30). The third judge was Shamgar. Little is said about this situation, but he did strike down 600 Philistines with a cattle prod (3:31). The fourth judge was Deborah. After Israel had done evil in the Lord's sight again, God gave them to King Jabin of Canaan to harshly oppress them for 20 years (4:1-3). Deborah, though, was a prophetess and judged Israel (4:4), working with Barak to defeat Jabin's army (4:23-24). The fifth judge was Gideon. As Israel again did what was evil in the sight of God, God handed them over to Midianite oppression for seven years (6:1-6). When Israel cried out to God, God called Gideon to rescue them (6:11-12, 14-16), using an army of only 300 men so they would know it was truly God who rescued them (7:2, 7-8). After Gideon, one of his sons (Abimelech) killed his brothers and became king over the people (9:5-6), though he was ultimately defeated (9:56-57).

4) The later judges. After Abimelech (who we will not count as a judge), the period of judges continued. The sixth judge was Tola. He judged Israel for 23 years (Judges 10:1-2). The seventh judge was Jair. He judged Israel for 22 years (10:3-5). At this point in the story, we are told Israel again did evil in God's sight so that He delivered them to the Philistines and the Ammonites (10:6-10). The eighth judge was Jephthah. When Israel was being oppressed by the Ammonites, Jephthah fought against the Ammonites and God rescued them through him (11:32-33). Note also that Jephthah had made a vow to God that would come to involve his only child (a daughter, 11:30-31, 34-35; it may be that his daughter was committed to God rather than burned). The ninth judge was Ibzan. He judged Israel seven years (12:8-10). The tenth judge was Elon. He judged Israel ten years (12:11-12). The eleventh judge was Abdon. He judged Israel eight years (12:13-15). The twelfth judge was Samson. As Israel did what was evil in the Lord's sight, they were handed over to the Philistines for 40 years (13:1). Samson (a Nazarite to God from birth) was given great power through his uncut hair and did many strong acts against the Philistine, including taking his own life to defeat many of them (16:26-30).

The book of Judges highlights the unfaithfulness of Israel and the consequences they experienced as a result. In fact, the book closes with the statement that there was no king in Israel in those days and everyone did whatever seemed right to himself (Judges 21:25). This period would continue until Israel was given a king.

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?