



Conquering Canaan

Lesson 6: Israel's Failure

(Judges 1:1-3:6)

Joshua led the Israelites through the major battles in conquering the Canaan land God had promised them. After all these victories, the Israelite people could live in the land they had been given. But, the fighting was not over. Although they had fought the major battles that required all the Israelites to fight together as one army, each of the tribes would have smaller battles to fight to conquer all the cities in their land.

This is exactly what Moses had told the Israelites would happen when he spoke to them before he died (read Deuteronomy 7:17-26). He promised that God would send hornets and drive all the people out of the land. But, God would do it little by little. If not, there would be too many wild animals that would live in the land. However, God warned them not to let the people stay in the land and to burn up all their false gods.

Now, it was time for the Israelite tribes to clear out their lands and take full possession of them. The tribe of Judah was the first to go. They made an agreement with the tribe of Simeon to fight together. So, Simeon helped Judah clear out Judah's land; then Judah helped Simeon clear out Simeon's land.

They were successful in doing their work. They captured the cities and the kings. There was only one place they failed. They saw some people with iron chariots and could not drive them out. They must have been too afraid to fight against them and did not have enough faith in God's power.

However, while Judah and Simeon were mostly successful in taking their land away from the people who lived there like God had said, the other Israelite tribes did not do what God had told them. Although they may have driven some of the people

out, they did drive them all out. The Bible specifically says that Benjamin failed. Manasseh failed. Ephraim failed. Zebulun failed. Asher failed. Naphtali failed. Dan failed.

Then, the angel of the Lord spoke to the Israelites at Bochim. He said that He had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and led them to this land He had promised to give their fathers. He had promised never to break the agreement He made with the Israelites. But, He had told the Israelites not to make any agreement with the people of the land. And, He had told them to destroy the altars the people used to worship false gods.

But, the Israelites had not obeyed Him. Because they disobeyed, He would not drive the people out of the land. Instead, He said that the people would be thorns in their sides and their false gods would be a trap for them. When all the people heard these words, they were very sad and offered sacrifices to God.

The Israelites did not obey God. Instead, they worshiped the false gods that were worshiped by the people of the land (like Baal and Ashtoreth). They bowed themselves before the false gods and abandoned the true God who had brought them out of Egypt.

As a result, God punished the Israelites for their disobedience. He let other people steal from the Israelites and sold them to their enemies. He fought against the Israelites and brought disaster on them, just as He warned would happen if they did not obey Him.

Then, after God punished the Israelites for a while, they would cry out to God for help and turn away from their wickedness. So, God would raise up judges to save the Israelites from their enemies. But, after the judge died, the people would become wicked again and be punished. This is the story of the book of Judges. All this was done to test the Israelites to see if they would obey God. God wanted them to be obedient to Him and learn how to fight in battle. But, instead of obeying God, they let the people live in the land and made agreements with them.

Study Questions:

- 1) Why did the Israelite tribes have to keep fighting after Joshua died?

- 2) Why did God not give the Israelites all the land at one time?

- 3) Who was the first tribe to fight for their land? Did they defeat the people of the land?

- 4) What Israelite tribes did not defeat the people of the land?

- 5) How did the people disobey God?

- 6) Was God happy with them?

- 7) How did God punish them?

- 8) What did the judges do?

Memory Verse:

“You are not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You are to tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed me. What is this you have done?” (Judges 2:2).

Draw a picture of the lesson you learned about: