**JUDGES**

**Settling the Land**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

The Lord had promised the Israelites a national homeland. This would create the boundary within which a descendant of Abraham, the Promised Child of Genesis 3:15, would be born, live and die.

We saw in the book of Joshua the story of how the Promised Land was secured. A major emphasis in the narrative was the repeated reminder that the secret to their success would always hinge on their faithfulness to God and obedience to His precepts. Joshua also described how the invading Israelites were given the brutal command to entirely destroy the people and culture of the land. This command was given as a judgement on the Canaanites for their immorality and idolatrous religious practices. It was also given so that the Israelites would not be influenced by evil practices and drawn away from devotion to God and obedience to His values and instructions.

In this, Israel was mostly successful except they failed to completely rid the land of the Canaanites. Instead, they allowed pockets of the pagan groups to remain and continue their evil practices – setting up the potential for future trouble.

**What you need to KNOW:**

The book of Judges tells the story of what happened to the Israelites after they settled the land. Judges is a sad tale of a troubled time. We will see that after the conquest, the subsequent generations of Israelites didn’t understand that the successful establishment of their nation would require the same faithful obedience that gave the nation success in securing the land. Because the idolatry of the original inhabitants was not completely removed, the idolatrous cancer of the Canaanites metastasized and infected the Israelites.

Judges describes Israel’s first steps in their national development. During this period, Israel had no central government but functioned as a kind of confederacy of independent tribes. Ideally, they were supposed to consider The Lord to be their king and leader, but practically that didn’t work very well. They perpetually turned away from giving God and His values their rightful place in their personal and societal lives.

Seven times the book of Judges gives this evaluation of the people, ***“Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.”***

**Chapter 2** gives a good summary of their repetitious and destructive behavior when it says, ***“They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord’s anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them… They were in great distress.” (vv. 12-15)***

Their wrongheaded behavior continually recurred during this historical period. And, each time, after bringing a period of judgement on the people, God would show mercy and relieve the distress of the people. He did this by raising up a series of leaders called “Judges” who would help the people repel the marauding raiders and reestablish peace. ***“Then the Lord raised up judges,who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.” (v. 16)***

However, after the Judges helped the people get out of their trouble, they repeatedly returned to “their evil practices and stubborn ways.” ***“Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. (vv. 18-19)***

This see-saw pattern of sin-judgement-mercy-sin recurs six times in the book of Judges. Nevertheless, God preserved the nation because doing so was all part of the plan to restore His good creation to its original factory settings.

**GET GOING!**

**Continue your personal Walk Through the Bible by taking a hop, skip and a jump through Judges.**