

Conditions in Israel - Judges 1:1-3:6

Failure to Drive out The Canaanites - 1:1-2:5

Introduction

1. The book of Joshua records the successful military campaigns of the nation of Israel against the nations in the land of Canaan at the command of God, and by His help. The book also records the fact that actual possession of territories assigned to each of the tribes, west of the Jordan river, still lay in the future (Joshua 14:1-5; 15:1-63).
 - a. “The land had been given. There could be no doubt about that... It had also been conquered and divided by lot... But notwithstanding all, each tribe had to possess its own, first by the sword, and ultimately by the plough and the spade” (F.B. Meyer).
2. The first two chapters, and the first six verses of chapter three, make up the book’s first of three divisions: an introduction consisting of both a preview and an overview of this particular stage in Israel’s history. In it we are made aware of the circumstances – incipient at the time of Joshua, but prevailing in the generation that followed – that promoted the introduction of the judges. Here we find some overlapping with the two books of Joshua and Judges (Judges 1:1; 2:6-10 cp. Joshua 24:29-31).
3. In this lesson we will see how Israel failed to purge the land completely of the wicked and sinful Canaanites; the result and consequences of disobedience; and note what lessons we can learn and apply today.

I. Conquest by Individual Tribes (1:1-36)**A. “Now it came about after the death of Joshua...” – verse 1a cp. 2:6-8.**

1. What are we to make of the confusion between this verse and chapter 2:6-8?
 - a. “The words, *and it came to pass after the death of Joshua*, must therefore be understood (if the text is in corrupt) as the heading of the whole book, just as the Book of Joshua has for its heading, ‘Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass’” (Pulpit).
 - b. “The introductory verse... which refers to the death of Joshua as having already taken place, seems to be intended as a general indication of the historical period of the book as a whole; for some at least of the events narrated in Jdg 1 through 2:5 took place during Joshua’s lifetime” (ISBE).
2. “... that the sons of Israel inquired of the Lord...” – verses 1-3; cp. Num. 27:15-22; cp. Jdg 20:18, 27-28.
 - a. “Descriptions of the book’s setting in Judges, chapters 1 and 2, vary between times after Joshua’s death and flashbacks summarizing conditions while he was alive” (Ken Cayce¹).
 - b. This might explain Joshua’s skepticism of his countrymen’s promise to serve God faithfully after his passing (Joshua 24:14-28; Judges 2:6).
3. What answer did Israel receive to their inquiry? Is there anything wrong with Judah’s response?
 - a. “The predicted pre-eminence was thus conferred upon Judah by divine direction, and its appointment to take the lead in the ensuing hostilities was of great importance, as the measure of success by which its arms were crowned, would animate the other tribes to make similar attempts against the Canaanites within their respective territories” (JFB) – cp. Genesis 49:8.
 - b. “Being conterminous tribes, they had a common interest, and were naturally associated in this enterprise” (JFB). Cp. Jos. 19:1-2.

B. Relative Successes of the Tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Ephraim – verses 3-26.

1. Judah takes possession of allotted land – 4-21.
 - a. Who did Judah and Simeon successfully defeat (4-5)?
 - 1) “Adoni-Bezek = ‘my lord is Besek’” (BDB). “Lord of Bezek” (Strong’s).
 - 2) “Its site is unknown. It is thought to be a different place from the Bezek of 1 Sam. 11:8” (Pulpit).
 - b. What form of treatment did he receive upon capture – 6-7; cp. Exodus 21:23-25; 1 Samuel 15:33?
 - 1) “Barbarities of various kinds were commonly practiced on prisoners of war in ancient times, and the object of this particular mutilation of the hands and feet was to disable them for military service ever after. The infliction of such a horrid cruelty on this Canaanite chief would have been a foul stain on the character of the Israelites if there were not reason for believing it was done as an act of retributive justice, and as such it was regarded by Adono-bezek himself, whose conscience read his atrocious crimes in their punishment” (JFB).

¹ www.bible-studys.org/Bible%20Books/Judges/Judges%20Chapter%201.html

c. How is the capture of Jerusalem and adjoining region described (8-16)?

1) The city of Jerusalem. Cp. Jos.15:63; 2 Sam.5:6-9.

- a) “The capture of this important city, which ranks among the early incidents in the war of the invasion... is here noticed to account for its being in the possession of the Judah; and they brought (him)... in order, probably, that his fate being rendered so public, might inspire terror far and wide” (JFB).
- b) “The conclusion is that Jerusalem was only taken once, namely, at the time here described, and that this was in the lifetime of Joshua; but that the children of Judah did not occupy it in sufficient force to prevent the return of the Jebusites, who gradually recovered complete possession” (Barnes).

2) The cities of Hebron and Debir fall to Judah?

- a) What was the historical importance of Hebron (Genesis 23:2; 49:31)?
- b) Who was Caleb? What offer did he make? What relation was his son-in-law? – (Numbers 13:6; 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:34-36).
- c) “In ancient times fathers assumed an absolute right over their children, especially in disposing of them in marriage; and it was customary for a king or a great man to promise his daughter in marriage to him who should take a city...” (TSK) – cp. 1 Samuel 17:25.
- d) Who initially took these cities (Jos. 10:36-40; 15:13-19)?
 “It appears that the city of Hebron had fallen back into the hands of the Canaanites, for it was again taken from them by the tribe of Judah... Debir had also fallen into their hands, for it was reconquered by Othniel, the son-in-law of Caleb” (Clarke).

3) Who were the Kenites (cp. Exodus 18:14-17, 27)? – verse 16.

- a) “If he might not himself, his posterity did accept the invitation of Moses... to accompany the Israelites to Canaan” (Clarke).

2. The tribe of Simeon takes possession of land allotted to it – verse 17.

3. Judah’s progress is hampered and the promise to Caleb fulfilled – verses 18-20.

- a. Whose cities are Judah said to have taken (cp. Jdg. 16:1)?
- b. Why did Judah fail to fully take possession of its territory (Dt. 20:1-4; Jos.13:6; 17:18)?
 - 1) “The chariots of the Canaanites were very formidable to the Israelites, who had no means of coping with them. Thus we are told of Jabin, king of Canaan... that he had 900 chariots of iron, and mightily oppressed the children of Israel” (Pulpit).
 - 2) “Not because the iron chariots were too strong for omnipotence, or because He refused to help them; but because their courage and faith failed when they saw them” (TSK).

c. Who specifically gave Caleb his land to fulfil a promise (cp. Josh. 14:1-2, 6-15; 15:13-16)?

4. Benjamin fails to take Jerusalem – verse 21; cp. Joshua 15:63.

- a. “Jerusalem was situated partly in the tribe of Judah, and partly in the tribe of Benjamin, the northern part belonging to the latter tribe, the southern to the former. The Jebusites had their strongest position in the part that belonged to Benjamin, and from this place they were not wholly expelled till the days of David” (Clarke) – cp. Joshua 15:8; 18:28; cp. Judges 19:10-11.
- b. “Probably the original reading *Judah* was altered in later times to *Benjamin*, because Jebus was within the border of Benjamin, and neither had the Benjamites expelled the Jebusites” (Barnes).
- c. “As the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem till the days of David, by whom they were driven out, and the author of the book... states them to have been in possession of Jerusalem when he wrote; therefore this book was written before the reign of David” (Clarke).

5. The tribe of Ephraim (house of Joseph) takes possession of land allotted to it – 22-26.

C. Tribes Failing to Drive out the Canaanites – verses 27-36.

1. Name the tribes. Describe events. Compare accounts in the book of Joshua (read the quote at: D / app.).
 - a. vs. 27-28; cp. Joshua 17:12-13 –
 - b. vs. 29; cp. Joshua 16:10; cp. 1 Kg. 9:16 –
 - c. vs. 30 –
 - d. vs. 31-32 –
 - e. vs. 33 –
 - f. vs. 34-36; cp. Joshua 19:40-48; cp. Judges 18:1-29 –

II. Israel Rebuked for Its Disobedience (2:1-5)A. “The angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal...” – verse 1.

1. A number of suggestions have been put forward as to the identity of the personage in question; this author is inclined towards it being one that we find, in scripture, described as the angel of God’s presence.
 - a. Of the reputable translations, the A.V. alone reads, “an angel”, suggesting a heavenly messenger of no superior rank or authority.
 - b. Barnes claims that this appellation is used in nearly all instances to designate one special among God’s messengers: the angel of God’s presence (Exodus 3:2-6; 23:20-23; 33:14; Genesis 22:11-12; Joshua 5:13-14; Judges 6:12; 13:3).
 - c. The angel of God’s presence was an angel invested with His dignity and authority (cp. Colossians 2:18-19; Revelations 19:10; 22:9).
2. Gilgal; north of Bethel (Deuteronomy 11:30; Joshua 9:6; 10:6; 2 Kings 2:1).
 - a. What was the national and spiritual significance about this place (Josh. 4:19; 5:4-7, 11-15)?
 - b. Bochim. “A place on the mountain west of Gilgal... no name resembling this has been discovered. Given on the occasion mentioned, it may not have endured. Many, following the Septuagint, identify it with Bethel” (ISBE).

B. “I brought you up of Egypt... and I said...” – verse 1.

1. What charge does God lay at the feet of Israel – 1-2; cp. Deuteronomy 7:1-6?
 - a. “The two articles of the covenant here specified... are those which the Israelites had at this time broken” (Barnes).
 - b. The children of Israel were commanded by God not to form pacts or agreements with natives of Canaan, but to destroy everything pertaining to the worship of idols. This was integral to their covenant with God and to keeping faith with Him. Sadly, they had broken God’s covenant in allowing the Canaanites to remain among them and exposing themselves to their wicked influence.
2. What would be the consequence and result of their actions – 3; cp. Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:12-13?
 - a. “The burden of the angel’s remonstrance was that God would inviolably keep His promise; but they, by their flagrant and repeated breaches of their covenant with Him, had forfeited all claim to the stipulated benefits. Having disobeyed the will of God by voluntarily courting the society of idolaters and placing themselves in the way of temptation, He left them to suffer the punishment of their misdeeds” (JFB).
 - b. “As thorns” is italicized, indicating that it has been supplied by the translators. It is reckoned they drew upon its usage in a previous message to Israel (Num.33:55).
 - c. “... and they shall become adversaries to you; and their gods shall become a snare to you” (LITV).
3. What impact did God’s rebuke have on the people – 4-5?

Discussion/Application

- A. When the tribe of Judah sought the help of the tribe of Simeon when God had selected who should go up first against the Canaanites; it might at first seem practical as tribes with neighboring lands. But God’s command was specific. Was Judah trusting in the numerical strength the tribe of Simeon provided (strength in numbers mentality) instead of a total trust in God’s ability to deliver a victory regardless (Lev.26:8; Jos.23:10)? Who else suffered similarly from a lack of complete faith in God’s power (Matt.8:26-31)? What are some of the ways we can demonstrate the same lack of faith today? The lesson here is that partial faith results in failure.

- B. Can our claim today to be right with God come from a false sense of satisfaction that we have done all that He has commanded of us? The children of Israel went to their respective lands, defeated the Canaanites, and might have felt pleased at having done what God commanded them. But with what does God charge them (2:2b)? How can we be guilty of this today (e.g., Eph. 4:15)? The lesson here is partial obedience is full disobedience.
- C. The promises to Israel were conditional. Their security in the land of Canaan and full enjoyment of its yield depended on their compliance to God's instructions. Israel failed to obey the command given to them by God, so they would be left to suffer the consequences of their actions; plundered and humiliated by their enemies. We too are given promises, conditional upon faithfulness to God (Jno. 10:29; Matt.11:28-30).
- D. "The same course of subjugation was carried on in the other tribes to a partial extent, and with varying success. Many of the natives, no doubt, during the progress of this exterminating war, saved themselves by flight and became, it is thought, the first colonists in Greece, Italy, and other countries. But a large portion made a stout resistance and retained possession of their old abodes in Canaan. In other cases, when the natives were vanquished, **avarice** led the Israelites to spare the idolaters, contrary to the express command of God; and their disobedience to His orders in this matter involved them in many troubles which this book describes" (JFB).