

INTRO:

VISION FOR THIS SERIES:

- To show that God's redemptive purposes work in the darkest moments and seasons.
 - God's redemptive plans don't fail because his people fail him. (He's bigger than our failures)
 - God raises up and uses imperfect leaders to bring about his work of deliverance.
- My hope is that YOU would have the faith and courage to say 'yes' to God's call.
 - No matter how insignificant you feel OR how great the challenge OR how dark the situation.
 - You don't have to be perfect, you just need to be available

JUDGES 1-2 SUMMARY

- The people of Israel fail to drive out the Canaanites from the land
 - Even though we read explicitly that 'the Lord was with them'
 - This suggests that it wasn't for lack of God's presence and power that they failed to drive out the Canaanites.
 - Rather, it suggests that they settled AND/OR they feared.

- The Angel of the Lord confronted them:

Judges 2:1-3 ESV

¹ Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, ² and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? ³ So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you."

- After Joshua passed away and all his generation there arose another generation that did not know the Lord or the work that God had done for them (2:10)
 - (2:11) Further, the people did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.
 - They served the baals
 - They abandoned the Lord
 - They went after other gods—the gods of the people who were around them

Judges 3:1-11 ESV

¹ Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. ² It was only in order that the generations of the people of

Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before. ³ These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. ⁴ They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. ⁵ So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶ And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. ⁷ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. ⁹ But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

1: GOD HAD LEFT NATIONS IN THE LAND TO TEST AND TO TEACH ISRAEL [V1-4]

Judges 3:1-4 ESV

¹ Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. ² It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before. ³ These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. ⁴ They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

Nations and peoples were left in the land

- Joshua's generation had done much to conquer the land—including taking out the giants.
- As a generation (collectively), they seemed to live by faith and aimed to please God.
- Yet, they had their failures and shortcomings.
 - This is the nature of things

- A humble perspective
- They were only supposed to do so much, before they passed the torch and the next generation was to finish the job.
 - In this they were faithful
 - Although, I think they didn't accomplish as much as God intended for them.

The remaining enemies were intended by God as a means of testing and teaching

- **Testing:**
 - Will they choose to love God OR will they chase idols and worldliness.
 - V4: Will they obey God's commandments?
- **Teaching:**
 - They needed to know how to fight and defend themselves
 - There's a hidden danger to success & good times...
 - "Hard times create strong men.*
 - Strong men create good times.*
 - Good times create weak men.*
 - Weak men create hard times."*
 - God knows this and intended for the following generations to learn to fight evil and protect the good, holy, innocent, and just.

2: THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL FAILED MISERABLY [V5-7]

Judges 3:5-7 ESV

⁵ So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶ And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. ⁷ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

Notice the progression of compromise and sin:

- **They lived AMONG the nations**
 - They settled with compromise
 - They didn't drive out the nations that God commanded them to
 - It would cost too much, they presumably deemed obedience in this case as an unnecessary extreme!

- **They INTERMARRIED** – *took daughters for their sons and gave their daughters to the sons of the nations*
 - Scripture doesn't prohibit the intermarrying of nations or races, but of faith.
 - There's always been positive examples of Gentiles coming to faith and intermarrying—point is that they become Israel and serve God
 - What is happening here is the opposite—Israel becoming 'one people' with the pagan nations.
 - But NOTABLY: What had been compromised/tolerated soon became EMBRACED
- **They SERVED their gods**
 - Serving: implies the active adherence and worship of the pagan deities.
 - Baal and the Asheroth are now the masters RATHER than Yahweh
 - What would have been unimaginable to the previous generation is now wholeheartedly received.
 - This was exactly what God had warned against, but this is where spiritual compromise and settling eventually leads to.
- **The people did EVIL**
 - This is primarily speaking of their covenant unfaithfulness – idolatry
 - However, what we could easily extrapolate is the implied exchange of morality in serving other gods
 - They embrace the worldly pagan practices that are an abomination to the LORD
- **Summary: they forgot the Lord THEIR God and served the Baals and the Asheroth**

Its important to remind God's people continually of the danger of settling and compromise.

- Because we are constantly in a fight spiritually
- And the enemy doesn't take breaks (long)
- Generations need to be taught to fight temptation and compromise
- ITS THE PASTORAL EXAMPLE IN SCRIPTURE: WARN AND REMIND GOD'S PEOPLE CONTINUALLY

3: THE LORD DISCIPLINED THEM [V8]

Judges 3:8 ESV

⁸ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

Notice:

- The Lord is angry - for he is a jealous God (righteously)
- He 'sold' them into the hand of the King of Mesopotamia
 - He withdrew his blessings and his protection
 - He allowed their enemies to prosper

The people had chased after the world, so the Lord gave them over to the world

- Cushan-rishathaim = 'double wickedness'
- Believed to be a regional power and quite possibly the WORST foe that Israel faces in the period of the Judges

These dark times are different from the time of testing

- These times are the results of their choices: CONSEQUENCES
- While not stated directly, the implication is that the people suffered under the 'double wicked king' of Mesopotamia
- Play stupid games, win stupid prizes
 - Reject God as your God and King – Serve the Baals and suffer pagan rule

4: WHEN THE PEOPLE CRIED OUT TO THE LORD, HE ANSWERED [V9]

Judges 3:9 *ESV*

⁹ But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

- Notice that God hears and answers their prayers!
- Further, the difficulty, problem or depth of darkness and depravity DON'T limit God's redemptive power.
- "Double Wicked King" – No problem for God.

- Consequences accomplished what had intended:
 - They turned from their false gods and TO the Lord!
 - He was ready to meet them in his grace and power!

5: OTHNIEL: GOD'S APPOINTED DELIVERER [V9-11]

Judges 3:9-11 ESV

⁹ But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Who was Othniel, the first judge of Israel?

- Caleb's nephew, a Kenizzite who has become part of Judah (possibly by way of Caleb's marriage into the tribe).
- A proven warrior
 - [Joshua 15:15-19](#) & [Judges 1:11-15](#) describe Othniel's conquest of Debir/Kiriath-sepher.
 - [Joshua 11](#) mentions that Debir was a city associated with the Anakim (giants)
 - There's a potentially strong case to be made that:
 - Joshua's conquering of the region and eradication of the Anakim was carried out by those under his command.
 - Regarding Debir, it had proven especially difficult and challenging, so Caleb puts a reward on the champion who can conquer it.
 - Othniel, his nephew is the man and wins the prize, Caleb's daughter in marriage (not weird or wrong in that day).
 - Therefore, he had seen and potentially conquered the giants himself
- Now later in life, Othniel is God's appointed 'deliverer' of Israel

Here's what really matters about Othniel:

- God called, chose, and raised him up.
 - We recognize that this raising up took potentially a lifetime.
 - He was made ready and revealed in the moment God chose

1 / Othniel

- Interestingly, God had battles for him in the varying seasons of life (young and old) – likely the battle roles varied too.
- The Spirit of the Lord was upon him
 - He wasn't just a warrior, city conqueror, or giant slayer.
 - He was a leader anointed with God's spirit and power

Of note:

- Othniel is the only judge in the book who doesn't have major flaws associated with him.
- He's seen to be a faithful man of God - presumably a man between the generations

VICTORY & PEACE

- We don't know much of his strategy or the details of the battle other than that God gave him the victory over 'double wicked'
- The land rested for 40 years (under his leadership)
 - When the righteous lead, the land knows peace.

RESPONSE | APPLICATIONS:

1: God allows challenges for testing and teaching.

- Embrace the challenges
- Seek God's help in the test
- Pursue faithfulness to God above the short-lived comfort of compromise

2: Consequences, when we fail, are intended to turn us back to God

3: God answers the prayers of his people

- Even after we've failed and sinned
- God's mercy and grace are ready to meet us when we call out to him

4: God has an answer for the dark times

- Ultimately God is the hero of [Judges 3](#) and Othniel's story
- But God uses people—faithful men and women who trust him
- How might God want to use you?
 - Will you say yes in the younger years?
 - Will you say yes in the later years?
 - Remember, if God calls you, He will empower you!