

CONCERNING THE WAY

August 19, 2008

LESSON 27: ISRAEL: INTO THE PROMISED LAND



Introduction

In this lesson we will cover, at a high level, the books of Joshua and Judges, where Israel, at long last, enters the promised land and proceeds to conquer the Canaanite cities and kingdoms one by one..

- *Dusty Rhodes*

First let's do a little review and summation of where we have been - the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Genesis is the book of beginnings. We had the beginning of the earth, the beginning of God's plan to redeem humanity from the Fall, the rebirth of the earth following the flood, the beginning of an eternal promise to one man and a select group of his descendants, and the beginning of a nation set apart to God. We see God's sovereign hand orchestrating events, despite the weaknesses of the men that He chose. We see the beginning of many things that are given fuller revelation later on in the Bible. The picture we as believers today get from Genesis is the idea of being born again, a new creation in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In Exodus we see the theme of redemption, God delivering His chosen nation from slavery. The message to us is that God has delivered us out of the terrible slavery of sin (John 8:32-36)! Exodus reveals the Law, the standards of Holy God, which brings us to a realization that we cannot measure up, that we need Christ.

Leviticus is a book of worship. It tells the children of Israel how to GET RIGHT WITH GOD and how to STAY RIGHT WITH GOD. How can sinful people worship a holy God? This question is answered by the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus is God's INSTRUCTION BOOK FOR THE PRIESTS! When it came to worship, the Levites and the Priests were the leaders of the people, and in this book God tells them the things they need to know.

There is only one way that sinful man can come to a holy God. He must come to God by way of SACRIFICE! The book of Leviticus has much to say about ANIMAL SACRIFICES. All of these sacrifices were pictures of what Christ would someday do on the cross for all. We can read about these sacrifices in the first few chapters in Leviticus. These animal sacrifices carried an important message:

- 1) **Blood must be shed.**
Jesus Christ shed His blood for us (Hebrews 9:22).
- 2) **An innocent *substitute* must die. Instead of the sinner dying, an innocent animal must be killed.**
Jesus Christ died as our Substitute (1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 5:8).
- 3) **The *death penalty* for sin must be paid.**
Jesus Christ died for us (Romans 5:6,8).

The message to believers today is that we can worship a holy God because of Christ's sacrifice (1 Peter 3:18).

The book of Numbers is named that because the children of Israel were "numbered" or counted on two different occasions. It could also be called THE BOOK OF WANDERINGS--the road map for the wilderness of this world. The key idea in the book of Numbers is that of UNBELIEF. The children of Israel did not believe God and as a result of this the book of Numbers tells about the 40 years of WILDERNESS WANDERINGS (the time it took for the last unbelieving man to drop dead). See Numbers 14:29-30. The message for us today is that we must believe God's promises. FAITH is the key (Hebrews chapters 3 and 4).

The book of Deuteronomy is basically God's commentary on the Law of Moses. The name DEUTERONOMY means "the second law." This means that God's law was given a second time to the new generation. Moses, who was now a very old man, carefully repeated and explained the law to this new generation. These would be the people who would go into the promised land. The older generation was not allowed to go. Jesus says the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, and that is found in Deuteronomy 6. How do we show our love for God? By obeying what He says. (John 14:15,21,23) The message for us today is, though we are not under the Law of Moses, we must obey God. OBEDIENCE is the key (John 14:15,21,23)!

In our next series of lessons we will go through the rest of the Old Testament, picking out important events to focus on. We'll be moving quickly, not because the rest of the books are unimportant, but because I'm in a hurry to get to the New Testament. Some day, Lord willing, we'll come back to some of the Old Testament books and do a detailed study.

So, we'll go right on into the Book of Joshua. Joshua is the first book of the Bible where you have the believers looking back upon an already finished set of Scriptures, the canon at that time. This is why the book of Joshua begins, "*This law scroll must not leave your lips.*" In other words, even though Joshua was able to receive direct and continuing revelation from God, he used the established canon of Scripture as his ultimate norm, supplemented as necessary by further word through the prophets. But his standard was the Bible and this shows us the Bible should be our standard.

Remember, God called Moses up into Mt. Nebo. It was now time for him to pass off the scene. He could see the Promised Land, but he couldn't go in. And as we ended the Book of Genesis, with the death of Joseph, so we end the Book of Deuteronomy with Moses' death. And I think the same thing still holds true, **God buries His servants, but never His program.** It may look as if all hope is lost but things continue on right up until the present. You know so many people, especially the environmentalists, are so worried about the future of our planet. I certainly agree that we should take care of it, it is our responsibility after all, and nobody wants a beautiful earth more than I do. But environmentalists, for the most part, have a paganistic and atheistic view of the world. They think that we are destroying our world, but **God is not going to let mankind ruin His program.** This old planet is going to do all that it was intended to do until God is ready to finish it. And He'll do it His own way and in His own time, so we don't have to try to restore, "Mother Earth." God has promised to do that, it's His job, not ours. Now in the Book of Joshua, God's program is going to continue on. The new leader is in place:

Joshua 1:1-4 *After Moses the LORD's servant died, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant: (2) "Moses my servant is dead. Get ready! Cross the Jordan River! Lead these people into*

the land which I am ready to hand over to them. (3) I am handing over to you every place you set foot, as I promised Moses. (4) Your territory will extend from the wilderness in the south to Lebanon in the north. It will extend all the way to the great River Euphrates in the east (including all of Syria) and all the way to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

Does that ring a bell for those of you who have been with me in Genesis? Isn't that exactly what God told Abraham? All the way from the Mediterranean Sea to the river Euphrates. Down to the Persian Gulf and then across the Red Sea and then out to the river in Egypt. That's all been deeded to the nation of Israel by way of Abraham. So God repeats it now to Joshua. But we know historically that Israel never occupied very much; we'll see that in a little while. They got a little bit east of the Dead Sea. And then under David and Solomon, they got a little bit up toward the Euphrates. But Israel has never occupied every thing that was promised back here in Genesis, and now in Joshua. **That's still in the future.** One day, they will have the whole thing. But so far, historically, it has not happened. So now come down to verse 5. God tells Joshua:

Joshua 1:5 *No one will be able to resist you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not abandon you or leave you alone.*

Joshua reigned as the leader of Israel for 26 years. That's not long; twenty six years and then Joshua too, will die. And then Israel, as we'll see, will go into the time of the Judges and the Judges cover three hundred years. And then we come to King Saul and King David.

You know where else this verse is? Hebrews. The New Testament. It's the same promise that God has given to you and I. "I will never leave you and I will never abandon you." Much of what God gives to Israel under Law is strictly for the Jew. But on the other hand, there is so much that we can take and apply to our own situation today. Here is one of them. Just as surely as God tells Joshua to be of good courage and be strong, that is also the admonition for us today. In fact, go to Ephesians Chapter 6. Some of you know these verses from memory. You've probably heard many sermons on them so I'm not going to enlarge on it. But I want to show you that the God of Joshua is the same God that we deal with today. And as He told Joshua to be strong and of good courage, look what He tells us through the apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 6:11,12 *Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.*

Our struggle is against the spiritual forces of evil. Sometimes this is easy to figure out, but sometimes it takes discernment to see the spiritual evil arrayed against us. World rulers of darkness can also mean the big wheels of denominations or institutions that have abdicated their position. They have turned, doctrinally, from the basic truths of Scripture. They no longer ascribe to the burial and resurrection of Christ. They will not recognize that He was the Creator God. They will no longer preach the atoning power of the Blood. That's what we're up against. These guys have got a lot of influence. They've got a lot of power. They can crank out the books, and people read them and people are influenced by them. We are up against spiritual wickedness in high places. I'm not saying all, but there are too many. I know that we still have good men out there. I know that we still have good men in seminaries, so when I say these things, I'm not making a blanket statement. But sound Bible teaching is getting harder and harder to find.

Ephesians 6:13-16 *For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. (14) Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, (16) and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (18) With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.*

In the Spirit means the Holy Spirit takes our prayer right into the throne room of Heaven. I think prayer is too often neglected. Never underestimate the power of prayer. Don't limit God in prayer. I know there are some that say, "Well, we have no business asking God for anything but spiritual things." Listen, God is just as concerned about our physical needs and our material needs as He is with the spiritual. Remember when we were back in Genesis and I taught that God has made us not just soul and spirit, but He made us what? Body, soul and spirit. He's concerned with the whole person. If you'll come back to Joshua, just as surely as He told this man to be strong and of a good courage, so we can take that in application. So now He says:

Joshua 1:6 *Be strong and brave! You must lead these people in the conquest of this land that I solemnly promised their ancestors I would hand over to them.*

Here we come to that Abrahamic Covenant. God promised Abraham that not only would he have a nation arise, but that nation would have its own land in which to live. Here it is now. It's right before them. And God is telling Joshua, "You're going to divide the land," that is, to the various tribes of the twelve, all except Levi of course, and they are going to live off the inheritance of the other eleven.

Joshua 1:7 *Make sure you are very strong and brave! Carefully obey all the law my servant Moses charged you to keep! Do not swerve from it to the right or to the left, so that you may be successful in all you do. (8) This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful.*

I believe that this is just as applicable to us, even though to Joshua the Law is what He is talking about. Yet for you and I, living in the Age of Grace, the Word of God is still paramount in our everyday experience.

You wake up in the middle of the night, what do you think about? Do you think about the Word of God? That's what God expects. And He's not expecting the impossible. The moment you wake up in the morning, what's your first thought? Oh, thank the Lord that I'm still in His care. You see that beautiful sunrise and do you give the Lord credit for it? We live in a beautiful world. Do you stop and give the Lord the glory for it? Well this is what He wants.

I've got to constantly remind us that He's talking about the Law here, but still, for you and I, it's the same God and He expects the same kind of a reverence toward Himself. And then He says that if Joshua would obey then he will be successful. God doesn't promise this in the New Testament or Paul's writing, but here He does.

The "Prosperity Gospel" preachers like to grab a verse like this. But Paul never says anything like this. Paul never says that if you're obedient, that you would be successful. Paul doesn't even

guarantee good health. In fact, I can think of good examples of the opposite. A beloved hymn writer, a lady that must have really loved the Lord, if you can tell by the songs that she wrote, Fanny Crosby, was blind from birth. If this Old Testament promise held true today, don't you think she would have had her sight? Many other believers have gone through terrible times, and according to this, that shouldn't have happened. We don't have that kind of a promise. Everything we have is just an outpouring of God's grace. That's because our promises are primarily spiritual, heavenly, whereas the Jew's promises are earthly.

Let's move on to Chapter 2. Remember that Joshua is going to bring them across the Jordan River. And they're going to come across in the springtime, when Jordan is at flood stage. It isn't a little narrow river that you see if you've gone there or have seen pictures. It's a great expanse of flood tide.

Joshua 2:1 *Joshua son of Nun sent two spies out from Shittim secretly and instructed them: "Find out what you can about the land, especially Jericho." They stopped at the house of a prostitute named Rahab and spent the night there.*

Jericho is just across the river. So they're going to spy on the place; they're going to look it over. Jericho was one of the great walled cities of that day. They had a wall large enough to drive chariots on. But not only that, they lived on the wall, some of the less fortunate. And so, as they went on the wall, they came into the house of a prostitute, believe it or not. And this harlot's name was Rahab.

There's a good lesson about belief here. How much belief did Rahab have? Enough to be saved. She didn't know everything all the way back to Adam. Rahab couldn't have written a book like Moses and Joshua did. But yet, Rahab had just enough faith that God could save her and call her His own. Let's read on. So the King of Jericho finds out that there are spies. And he has a good idea that they had hid out in the home of Rahab. And of course that's where they are. So anyway, the authorities from the King of Jericho come to Rahab:

Joshua 2:3-5 *So the king of Jericho sent this order to Rahab: "Turn over the men who came to you — the ones who came to your house — for they have come to spy on the whole land!" (4) But the woman hid the two men and replied, "Yes, these men were clients of mine, but I didn't know where they came from. (5) When it was time to shut the city gate for the night, the men left. I don't know where they were heading. Chase after them quickly, for you have time to catch them!"*

So she lies to the King, which I guess was OK, since it was for the benefit of God's servants. She uses a ploy that people still use today. She says, "They went thataway." But they were still in her house. And she hides them in the thatched roof.

Joshua 2:6-9 *(Now she had taken them up to the roof and had hidden them in the stalks of flax she had spread out on the roof.) (7) Meanwhile the king's men tried to find them on the road to the Jordan River near the fords. The city gate was shut as soon as they set out in pursuit of them. (8) Now before the spies went to sleep, Rahab went up to the roof. (9) She said to the men, "I know the LORD is handing this land over to you. We are absolutely terrified of you, and all who live in the land are cringing before you.*

Here's that small portion of Rahab's faith. She didn't know everything, but she had enough faith that God could use her. Remember what King Balak faced back there in Moab, and the Canaanites are facing the same thing (they see this multitude of Israelites). But that didn't affect them near as much as what they had been hearing. And what had they been hearing? All that their God had been doing for them.

Joshua 2:10,11 *For we heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you left Egypt and how you annihilated the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, on the other side of the Jordan. (11) When we heard the news we lost our courage and no one could even breathe for fear of you. For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below!*

That is Rahab's profession of faith. She couldn't profess faith in the Gospel as we know it, that Christ died for her, was buried, and rose from the grave for her, because it hadn't happened yet. In fact, Isaiah Chapter 53 hadn't been written yet. But what little knowledge God had given to her, she responded to it. And she embraced it in faith. What is the basic difference between believing in God and believing God? It is all the difference in the world. See, you can believe in God, and I suppose that 95% of Americans say, "I believe in God." The other 5% say they don't, but way down deep when the deathbed comes they do. I do not believe there is an absolute atheist. To believe in God is one thing. To believe God: that enters into faith; that implies that God has said something. And as soon as God said something and we believe it, then it is faith. For example, He tells us (in I Corinthians 15:1-4) that for our salvation we are to believe that Christ died for us, was buried, and rose from the grave, and that he did that for you and me. Now that is faith. Let's turn to the Book of Psalms for a moment. Chapter 14:

Psalms 14:1 *Fools say to themselves, "There is no God." They sin and commit evil deeds; none of them does what is right.*

Look at this verse in your Bible. Some of your translations have "There is" in italics. The reason words are italicized is because they have been added by the translators, to hopefully clarify. If you leave those two words out as it was originally, you can interpret it two ways. It can be talking about people who don't believe God exists, or it can be talking about people who say no to what God has said. That is the real fool. No, God.

I don't think there are very many people fool enough to say that there is no God. But there are millions who say, "No, God, I don't want to believe what you say. I don't want to do what you say." Rahab believed God, and she was being obedient to God by hiding the spies. She was already putting her faith into action. Here we have one of those rare exceptions to the Abrahamic Covenant. Rahab is a Gentile, not a Jew. And she not only comes into the family of God, but in Matthew Chapter 1, we see what this little bit of faith resulted in. Remember she was a harlot, a prostitute, living on the wall in Jericho; but she recognized who God was, and what He could do for her. **In Matthew 1:5 who do we see in the genealogy of Christ? Rahab.**

Let's go back to Joshua. Israel has come out of the wilderness experience through Moab and there they are on the east side of Jordan. It is spring time and the river is now in flood stage. It may be a mile or two wide. Ordinarily the Jordan River is not very big. But at flood time it can be very wide. This is what Israel is up against. They're up against the Jordan River, in the spring at flood time. And just on the other side, about five miles in from the river, will be the city of Jericho. But now here in Chapter 3, I want you to see how things are changing a little bit. Remember when they came out of Egypt, the children of Israel were led by the Cloud or the Pillar of Fire. And throughout that whole forty years of wilderness experience there in the Sinai, that Cloud and the Pillar of Fire have been evident. That has been their leading force. But now when you get here, something else happens. It's not the cloud leading them into the river; now it's the Ark of the Covenant being carried by the priests.

Joshua 3:1,2 *Bright and early the next morning Joshua and the Israelites left Shittim and came*

to the Jordan. They camped there before crossing the river. (2) After three days the leaders went through the camp

And remember we're not talking about a few thousand; we're talking about a few million. I don't want you to lose that concept of this great multitude of people, plus all of their livestock, plus a great number of hangers-on (called the mixed multitude in the Scripture).

Joshua 3:3 *and commanded the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, you must leave here and walk behind it.*

That's going to be the sign of their leadership, the Ark of the Covenant. Remember from our Tabernacle study; the Ark of the Covenant was that little box, overlaid with gold, in which were the tables of the Ten Commandments and samples of manna. And over the Ark of the Covenant, remember, was the Mercy Seat. Now when everything was completed, and they were ready to begin their Tabernacle worship, the Shekinah glory, this cloud, placed itself right above the Ark of the Covenant which was in the Holy of Holies. It's this same piece of furniture now that is signified by the very presence of God, the very mercy of God, that is going to lead the children of Israel.

Joshua 3:4 *But stay about three thousand feet behind it. Keep your distance so you can see which way you should go, for you have not traveled this way before."*

That would be a little over a half a mile. They were never to get too close, remember, to the Ark of the Covenant.

Joshua 3:6,7 *Joshua told the priests, "Pick up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they picked up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people. (7) The LORD told Joshua, "This very day I will begin to honor you before all Israel so they will know that I am with you just as I was with Moses.*

In other words, God is going to prove to the nation of Israel that Joshua is now His man to lead them in and occupy the whole area of Canaan which is still inhabited by the Canaanites and the various tribes, tribes that God told Abraham would be driven out so that his offspring could have the land of Canaan.

Joshua 3:8 *Instruct the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, 'When you reach the bank of the Jordan River, wade into the water.'* "

As they stepped in, the water just sort of piled up. And like the Red Sea experience, Israel is now able to cross the Jordan on dry ground even though it's at flood stage. I've emphasized before that when you deal with God and Israel, the supernatural is common place. Never be shocked by any kind of supernatural, miraculous event when God deals with Israel. **And there will be more to come in the future.**

Now of course, we're living in the Age of Grace. We're not living in the time when God is dealing with His Covenant people and God is still the same, all powerful, sovereign God. We know that God can still do anything that He would want to do. But in this Age of Grace, He has chosen not to perform the supernatural. And I think the reason is that **He has given us His Word, and it's all that we need.** You and I today do not need a manifestation of the miraculous in order to believe and trust what God has said. But Israel, you see, as Paul says in I Corinthians 1:22 that the Jew required

a sign. It was just part of their nature. They had to constantly see the very proof of God. So the miraculous was common place. As you go up through Israel's history supernatural events were just constantly happening, whether it was in war or whether it was in the scope of their religion.

Joshua 3:13-17 *When the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the LORD, the Ruler of the whole earth, touch the water of the Jordan, the water coming downstream toward you will stop flowing and pile up." (14) So when the people left their tents to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. (15) When the ones carrying the ark reached the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the ark touched the surface of the water — (the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest time) — (16) the water coming downstream toward them stopped flowing. It piled up far upstream at Adam (the city near Zarethan); there was no water at all flowing to the sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea). The people crossed the river opposite Jericho. (17) The priests carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan. All Israel crossed over on dry ground until the entire nation was on the other side.*

In Chapter 4, he sets up a memorial of twelve stones and so forth, you can read that in your spare time. Now let's go to Chapter 5:

Joshua 5:1 *When all the Amorite kings on the west side of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how the LORD had dried up the water of the Jordan before the Israelites while they crossed, they lost their courage and could not even breathe for fear of the Israelites.*

In other words, in the area between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, Canaan. That's what you call the fear of God. They had the proof that Israel's God was alive and well and still performing the miraculous. They had heard about what had happened 40 years earlier. Now they've been close enough. They probably had eye witnesses that saw that the Jordan River suddenly dammed up by an invisible power.

Joshua 5:2 *At that time the LORD told Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites once again."*

They've just crossed the Jordan river. They're now in enemy territory. They're only a mile or two away from the first city they're going to have to conquer. And then God stops them; and they have a tremendous national rite of circumcision. Imagine! At the doorstep of the enemy, they have a national circumcision! Why? Because they had neglected it for forty years. I always have to put it this way. **When it comes to dealing with God, it's first things first.** In other words as far as God was concerned, it was more important that Israel fulfill their Covenant relationship with Jehovah, which of course, had been demanded from day one. Even at the doorstep of a mortal enemy, the city of Jericho, God literally lays the nation of Israel in a useless position. We think that's foolishness, don't we? That He would incapacitate the whole nation at the doorstep of their enemy. But that's what He does. So they went through this whole rite of circumcision, in order to prepare them spiritually for the physical battles that were coming. It was a Covenant relationship that had to be consummated.

Joshua 5:8-10 *When all the men had been circumcised, they stayed there in the camp until they had healed. (9) The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have taken away the disgrace of Egypt from you." So that place is called Gilgal even to this day. (10) So the Israelites camped in Gilgal and celebrated the Passover in the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the plains of Jericho.*

This Passover, right here, is forty years to the day from the Passover they celebrated that night in Egypt. We'll show you this more when we get to the study on prophecy, but when you come to Old Testament Bible prophecy, always remember that not only does God foretell something, but He puts it in a time frame. God's timing is so exact that when He says something is going to happen, prophetically, at a specific time in the future, be it forty years, seventy years, five hundred years, or even a thousand years or more, you can take it to the bank that it's going to happen just like God says. Now that's true prophecy and this is only associated with the nation of Israel.

Every once in a while you hear about a group of people sitting on a mountain top, waiting for the Lord to come. They sell their houses and their lands and they sit there waiting because someone told them when it's going to happen. Others have done it before them and there may be more to come, but this is where they're way out in left field. Old Testament Prophecies have definite time periods for the most part. But you see there is no prophecy like that given to the Church. For that reason, the Church does not know when the Lord is going to come for her. If a date could be set, then you're putting the Church under prophecy. You can't do that any more than you can put the church under Law. You can't put the Church under prophecy because the two absolutely will not mix. So always remember that. There is nothing designated, date or time wise, for the Church. That's what isolates us from the whole Jewish program.

Joshua 5:11 *They ate some of the produce of the land the day after the Passover, including unleavened bread and roasted grain.*

This was probably grain that had been stored in the granaries of the Canaanites. Israel now partakes of that instead of, (now think a minute, what have they been eating for forty years?) manna. And now the manna stops. That is part of their beginnings. That was part of their weakness, you might say. But now that they have crossed over; they have gone through the river Jordan, they have gone through the circumcising, they have gone through the Passover, and now they eat the grain of Canaan.

What's the lesson? Well, we have to go to the New Testament. Turn to II Corinthians Chapter 5. We have to remember that in order to get to where you and I live today in this Age of Grace, there's only one section of your Bible that gives us all the instructions for it, and that is Romans through Hebrews (the writings of Paul). Look what Paul writes to the Corinthians, basically a Gentile congregation. He could just as well be writing to you and I today.

II Corinthians 5:14-16 *For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. (15) And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. (16) So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer.*

Remember what I just said about manna? They feasted on manna as a result of their weakness. They had nothing to do but just wait on God. It was the very simplistic beginnings of the nation. But now that they have the crossing of Jordan behind them, and they're now ready to occupy the land, God says, "No more manna. You're going to have to get off the manna and you're going to have to eat off the grain of the land." You see what Paul was saying? He was saying, "Oh I knew Christ in the flesh." And I'm sure he did, even though there's no record of the two ever meeting face to face. But Saul of Tarsus was a contemporary of Christ. I think they were basically the same age. So he had heard, and

he had probably witnessed all that Jesus had done up and down the land of Israel. But Paul never concerns himself with Christ's earthly ministry. Paul concerns himself only with Christ after His resurrection. The power of the resurrection is all that Paul knows. And so he says, "Yeah, we knew Christ in the flesh, but since His resurrection, we know Him that way no more. That has to be behind us." Let me show you another one.

II Corinthians 13:4 *For indeed he was crucified by reason of weakness, but he lives because of God's power. For we also are weak in him, but we will live together with him, because of God's power toward you.*

Hey, that throws a curve at us, doesn't it? What is he referring to? His earthly ministry again. Even though He performed the miracles and everything else, what kind of a man was He? Meek, lowly, riding on the colt. He had no place to lay His head, not even a pillow. He said, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests..." but He had none of those. So He was basically in a ministry of humiliation and as Paul says here, a time of weakness. But He lives, and we will live because of God's power, resurrection.

Colossians 2:11 *In him you also were circumcised – not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but by the removal of the fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ.*

Now when something is done without hands, who's performing it? God is. It's the very power of God that is performing a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sin of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. What has to be cut off at our salvation? The old Adam. That's spiritual circumcision. When the old Adam is cut off, it's of no use. And a result of that, of course, is our entering into the Body of Christ. We enter into the Body of Christ no longer feasting on manna, but we're feasting on the grain of the land. In Hebrews Chapter 5, Paul says, "Get off the baby bottle, it's milk, and for goodness' sake get on to a diet of meat." **And in our lessons, you can throw away the baby bottle. I'm trying to feed you steak and vegetables."**

Well, Joshua Chapter 6 details the conquering of Jericho, and most of us know that story. If you don't please read it and the rest of Joshua for a sense of how God took Israel through Canaan, conquering as they went. We're going to skip over the rest of the Book of Joshua which covered twenty-six years.

What can we learn from the book of Joshua? I think the Promised Land represents the believer's life. At the moment of salvation, you have a life that's dominated by all kinds of sin patterns, human viewpoint thinking, worldly ideas, thoughts, and opinions shaped by the world. Sanctification, under the power of the Holy Spirit, will gradually eliminate these things from your life, through studying the Word of God. Each stronghold in the land must be eliminated. Joshua is a picture of victory in Christ.

Joshua, over a period of twenty-six years, gets the children of Israel to the place where they occupy all of land of Canaan west of the Jordan river, with the exception of two and half tribes who stay on the east side. Look at your Bible maps to see the division of the land between the tribes.

The Book of Joshua

Victory
Freedom
Faith
Faithfulness to the Lord
Joy
Strength

The Book of Judges

Defeat
Slavery
Unbelief
Apostasy from the Lord
Sorrow
Weakness

JUDGES

Judges 2:7-10 *The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua's lifetime and as long as the elderly men who outlived him remained alive. These men had witnessed all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. (8) Joshua son of Nun, the LORD's servant, died at the age of one hundred ten. (9) The people buried him in his allotted land in Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. (10) That entire generation passed away; a new generation grew up that had not personally experienced the LORD's presence or seen what he had done for Israel.*

The book of Judges covers three to four hundred years. That's a long time. That's twice as long as America has been a nation. But in that period of the Judges, they have occupied the land of Canaan of course, but did they destroy the Canaanite people as God instructed? No they did not. They got soft hearted and they thought, "We could use these people for servants or for one reason or another." They stopped destroying the Canaanite people. Now just exactly as God promised (we studied it last lesson), what kind of an effect did the Canaanite people have upon the children of Israel? They took them right into idolatry. Now that's hard to comprehend. How a nation of people such as Israel, who had all of the manifestations, the miracle working power of their JEHOVAH God in their midst, could turn to pagan idols.

The history of Israel then, throughout the three to four hundred years of the Book of Judges, was a roller coaster. They reach a spiritual height under a good judge, who was merely a ruler under God. A God centered government. And then when he would pass off the scene, the children of Israel would forget all about him and Jehovah, and would dip into idolatry and down they would go. Enemies would come in and overrun them and tax them, and put them under servitude. And finally the Jews would cry and lament their state and God would hear them and bring another Judge on the scene. You may remember some of the judges, like Gideon, Deborah, and Samson. The Judges weren't just judicial leaders, but military, civic, and spiritual leaders. There were not over all of Israel, but only certain sections.

The book of Judges is important because it is the first historical analysis ever done by the human race. This may shock some of you but actually in history the book of Judges was probably done under the tutelage of Samuel, or some of his students, and Samuel was the man who was the world's first historian. You may say well there were historical records before this. Yes there were, but these were chronicles, they were what you usually get in a history course, you know, what happened in 1836, what happened in 1840, what happened in 1865, memorize it, pass the exam on Friday, forget it on Saturday. Memorizing dates and events associated with dates are important, it's just when you memorize dates by itself that it becomes obnoxious and you don't really learn anything.

Judges takes the analysis of the 400 years and tells us what happened because by 1000 BC the

nation was in the middle of what we would call the dark ages. And the book of Samuel is about the nation being delivered from the dark ages. Something very wonderful had started out in 1400 BC, and yet within four centuries of time the nation went down.

Now that shouldn't shock you, four centuries may sound from this point to be a very short time, but how old is the United States? Just a little over 200, and you can obviously see the fantastic changes that have occurred in this country in 200 years in the moral and spiritual areas. So if this 400 year collapse seems to be rapid to you, it's nothing compared to what you are in the middle of right at our own point in history.

So the book of Judges is a history book. And it's interesting that it was possible because it had the entire preceding six books of Scripture behind it. In other words, the book of Judges could never have been written had the historian not had a framework of history given by divine revelation. So the book of Judges is a historical analysis done by a group of men using as their controls the norms of Scripture that they had already had before this history started. And in chapter 2 you have the first and probably the most primitive view of history; the cyclic view of history.

The cyclic view of history has three parts to it and you can visualize it as just going round and round. Actually these cycles go like this: you have a cycle, part one would be the apostasy and this is when the nation goes on negative volition. Then part two, down about the four o'clock position, at this point you have the nation receive discipline and they suffer. And then around the eight o'clock position you have the nation begin to come back out of it because they are suffering and they confess their sins and they begin to move on but each cycle gets lower and lower and lower so you actually have a series of cycles. But these are not endless cycles such as the pagan histories, there's a progress to these cycles and the progress is down.

Judges 2:11-13 *The Israelites did evil before the LORD by worshiping the Baals. (12) They abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods — the gods of the nations who lived around them. They worshiped them and made the LORD angry. (13) They abandoned the LORD and worshiped Baal and the Ashtars.*

Verses 11-13 give you the first part of the cycle. That expresses the negative volition of the people and the prophets who are writing this historical analysis, Samuel and his seminary students, these are students that had lived in the latter part of this historical era and they must explain what has happened historically to their nation. It is not that they are feeling sorry for themselves; it is rather that they analyze the history of the nation inside the terms of the Law, that is, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, 32, and 33.

So these men go back and they say how did we get smashed, what was the trouble? Why did we go down as a nation? They say, well, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 tells us that when we engage in idolatry, a violation of the first commandment, we have a God other than Jehovah, who is the God-King of the nation, then we are in trouble. So the first step in the cycle is a violation of the first and great commandment.

Judges 2:14-15 *The LORD was furious with Israel and handed them over to robbers who plundered them. He turned them over to their enemies who lived around them. They could not withstand their enemies' attacks. (15) Whenever they went out to fight, the LORD did them harm, just as he had warned and solemnly vowed he would do. They suffered greatly.*

The second step in the cycle, and these verses show how these historians wrote. Look at how verse 14 reads, “The LORD was furious with Israel,” stop right there; that is an interpretation by the historian. The historian didn’t see the hand of God, literally, come down and spank the nation. He observed something in history and this is his interpretation of the cause and effect. But after that, the rest of the verse is a historic event, he could observe that, he could watch the nation fail on the military battlefield, he could watch the nation fail economically, so those were historic events to which he is giving the interpretation that God was furious with them.

Now verse 15 tells you why the historian interpreted the data this way, because “he had warned and solemnly said he would do,” and that proves to you the historian is going back to Deuteronomy for his framework. He is encountering the historical data - the date, the events, who beat up who, when, where, and who was the leader, who assassinated somebody, etc. That’s all the historical data. He adds to that the Law, or we would say the Word of God, what God says He’s going to do, how God is going to rule in history, and then out of these two factors, the historical data and the framework supplied by Scripture, he makes his interpretation.

So therefore we have in the book of Judges a history book written by man, and I want you to notice that historians can only write such a clear history as we have depicted in the book of Judges if and only if they have available to them the Word of God and they know God’s plan and they can read it in the historical process.

Judges 2:16-19 *The LORD raised up leaders who delivered them from these robbers. (17) But they did not obey their leaders. Instead they prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned aside from the path their ancestors had walked. Their ancestors had obeyed the LORD's commands, but they did not. (18) When the LORD raised up leaders for them, the LORD was with each leader and delivered the people from their enemies while the leader remained alive. The LORD felt sorry for them when they cried out in agony because of what their harsh oppressors did to them. (19) When a leader died, the next generation would again act more wickedly than the previous one. They would follow after other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They did not give up their practices or their stubborn ways.*

Then this is the third part in the cycle. In the middle of verse 18 there is historic evidence. In other words, they experienced in history the historical data, all of a sudden some guy would pop up out of nowhere, he would be successful on the battlefield, he would have leadership ability and he’d lead the army out and all of a sudden they’d start winning. And so the historian would say just a minute, what’s going on here? He then realizes God raised that man up to deliver them, and so the historian is preaching doctrine to the people through history.

This is what you should be doing as a believer; this is a lesson for you. Every believer in Jesus Christ should be a historian of your personal life. Maybe you never thought of that but you have the framework of the Word of God to explain why things happen to you and are happening to you in your life and you will come a lot closer to knowing the Lord personally on a daily basis if you just simply watch what is going on in your mind, what is going on in your home, what is going on in your environment. And then ask why, and go back to the Word like this historian, or historians did. They saw things go on in their nation and they went back to the Word to find out why these things are going on. So every believer has a mandate to be a historian of your own personal life.

So then we have in Judges this simple cycle, but then something happens. If you look in Judges 2:1

we had a sentence of doom pronounced on the nation.

Judges 2:1-2 *The LORD's angelic messenger went up from Gilgal to Bokim. He said, "I brought you up from Egypt and led you into the land I had solemnly promised to give to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my agreement with you, (2) but you must not make an agreement with the people who live in this land. You should tear down the altars where they worship.' But you have disobeyed me. Why would you do such a thing?"*

Here is the Lord Jesus Christ in His preincarnate form again. Now Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Do you think that Christ is any less nitpicking today than He is here when He's saying this in verse 2? If Jesus Christ never changes then this means that you as a believer will face your Lord and He'll ask the same thing as He does here, "you have disobeyed me, why would you do such a thing?"

Judges 2:3-4 *At that time I also warned you, 'If you disobey, I will not drive out the Canaanites before you. They will ensnare you and their gods will lure you away.' " (4) When the LORD's messenger finished speaking these words to all the Israelites, the people wept loudly.*

So you have a sentence of doom; actually given in Judges 2, historically pronounced at the end of the period. There is judge after judge, going through this cycle, and finally we come to the last cycle. We start going down and down and down, and the cycle hits the number one position, we're on apostasy now, we're on disobedience; it hits the number two position, and that is that the nation begins to suffer but they do not go to the number three position because the nation does not repent, does not have confession, and so the last judge, Samson, is one who cannot deliver his nation. Samson dies inside a pagan temple, as a slave to Dagon. And thus ends the 400 year era of history and the last judge breaks the cycle. The cycle hits rock bottom, and the whole thing stops. This is the sentence of doom.

This is important for prophecy students because this sentence of doom proves that Israel never occupied all the boundaries of the land in the Old Testament. It proves premillennialism because it shows that the boundaries of the Abrahamic Covenant could never have been satisfied in any time of the Old Testament.

Now when we come to Judges 13, there are some things that are different about Samson. With all the other judges it's the same cycle, point one, point two, point three, point one, point two, point three, point one, point two, point three, the same old thing over and over again but the cycle stops with Samson

Judges 13:1 *The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.*

Now look at the words "forty years." Samson is born pretty much during the early part of this period.

Judges 13:2-5 *There was a man named Manoah from Zorah, from the Danite tribe. His wife was infertile and childless. (3) The LORD's angelic messenger appeared to the woman and said to her, "You are infertile and childless, but you will conceive and have a son. (4) Now be careful! Do not drink wine or beer, and do not eat any food that will make you ritually unclean. (5) Look, you will*

conceive and have a son. You must never cut his hair, for the child will be dedicated to God from birth. He will begin to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines."

You can read the story of Samson yourself in chapters 14-16, but most of us know the story pretty well. Samson began the job and did some good things but can't finish the job. Samson and Samuel are going to be two parallel men; one does the job and the other flunks the job. Both men started out the same way, verse 5 speaks of how Samson was dedicated by his parents to the Lord. He didn't have his hair cut; he was one of the long hair boys but the interesting thing about this is it shows you the rest of the men didn't have long hair because this is the exception to the otherwise standard rule. Samuel was also this way as we'll see in 1 Samuel 1, so these men are similar, and they lived at about the same time. And Samson winds up dead in a pagan temple and Samuel winds up anointing the king. So both men live at the termination of this dark age period; Samson never lived to see the light, Samuel does.

But the interesting thing is at the end of Samson's career, in Judges 16:31, he judged Israel 20 years, so you see the forty year duration of the Philistine oppression was unbroken by the time that Samson died.

Judges 16:31 *His brothers and all his family went down and brought him back. They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel for twenty years.*

To summarize, Samson met a violent death; Samson was a violent man. Samson's job was basically to be a professional troublemaker. During Samson's time and during his ministry you had a rise of ecumenical religion which was to plague Israel for many centuries after that. The ecumenical religion was powered toward all viewpoints, and so you had divine viewpoint mish-mashed together with human viewpoint. And they weren't separated, and because of that, people were not making clear choices; they were making mixed choices and so God had Samson come along and deliberately start brawls, start fights, irritate the Philistines, start wars, do anything he could to irritate the two sides.

So this is Samson's job, and God picked a good man for it because Samson was specially fitted to start fights, and he usually finished them real well, except his last one. He was like a real superhero with real super-strength, given to him by God, but he was a typical man in other respects. Like many men, he was weak when it came to women, and a woman caused his downfall.

Samson was a person who was an agitator. Samuel, however, is of an utterly different character and next lesson we are going to turn to 1 Samuel. We'll skip the book of Ruth, the book of Ruth is set during the time of the Judges, and it is a book that shows you what the loyal believers were doing when all this stuff was going on. Judges gives you the overview, Ruth is a snapshot of what happened in one family where the Word of God was honored, and shows that there were some light areas during all the rest of the dark ages.

Take the time to read the book of Ruth. It is a small book, a beautiful story, and is a picture of the redemption we have in Jesus Christ.