



WEEK 3: GOD'S NATION IN THE PROMISED LAND

Route for this week:

1. The Fall of Jericho (Joshua 5:13-6:27)
2. Getting Your Bearings: Possessing the Promised Land
3. God Speaks to Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-4:11)
4. Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:4-31)
5. David Kills Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-58)
6. Solomon Asks for Wisdom (1 Kings 3:1-28)

SUMMARY

God's people have endured slavery in Egypt and forty years of wandering in the desert. They are finally ready to trust God to give them the land he had promised their ancestors. Joshua leads them in their military conquest of the Promised Land, but it is clear that all of their victories are due to God's power. The period of the judges follows, and the emerging nation suffers many growing pains: cycles of sin, oppression by foreign enemies, and God's deliverance through his chosen leaders—the judges. The prophet Samuel helps Israel transition from a loose tribal confederation to a united nation under a king—first Saul, then David. Under David's reign, Israel has a spiritual renaissance. His example as a political, military, and spiritual leader helps the nation flourish under God's blessing as they live out their role as God's nation in the land promised to Abraham. After David's death, his son Solomon constructs a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem to be the center of worship to God. However, he also permits and even participates in worship of other gods, and the people follow his example. Though Israel has clearly enjoyed God's blessing according to his covenant promises, they have neglected him and sin has taken a foothold in their national life.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. God's people began their conquest of the Promised Land with a dramatic victory over Jericho that was obviously God's doing. However, in their second battle, they were routed by the inhabitants of a much smaller town, Ai. This happened because one Israelite had kept some of the plunder God told them to destroy (Joshua 7). Why do you think the actions of one person had such radical consequences? What does this

tell you about the nature of community in God's people?

2. The time of the judges was a dark period in Israel's history, and the story of Gideon provides an excellent example of how the nation related to God during this time. As you read each passage, discuss what you notice about Gideon's spiritual life.

Judges 6:11-17

Judges 6:25-32

Judges 7:1-22

Judges 8:22-27, 33-35

3. David was a powerful military general and a spiritually sensitive leader as king of God's people. He brought the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem with great celebration (2 Samuel 6:1-15), but when he wanted to build a Temple for worship, God told him that his son, a man of peace, would build it instead (1 Chronicles 22:6-10). Why do you think God didn't want David to build the Temple? What does it communicate about worship, if anything?

4. When God's people originally asked for a king, God warned them that it would not be everything they were hoping for (1 Samuel 8:1-22). When Solomon ruled over them, he did all the things God warned the people about, including violating all the guidelines for a king from Deuteronomy 17:14-20 (see 2 Kings 9:15-24; 10:26-11:13). What does this show you about the connection between material prosperity and spiritual vitality? Do you think Solomon thought his wealth was a sign that everything was going well spiritually?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever noticed cycles in your spiritual life that are similar to what Israel experienced in the time of the judges? How can you discipline yourself to rely on God for spiritual transformation rather than trying to do it on your own (as Samson, for example, often did)?
2. God proved himself faithful by giving his people victory and placing them in the land he had promised to their ancestors. Why do you think the people of Israel still decided to worship other gods? What can you learn from their experience about your spiritual life today to help you avoid their mistakes?

CONQUERING CANAAN

Israel conquered the land in two phases, first in the south, then in the north. Both campaigns, though, were initiated not by Israel but by the Canaanites already living in the land. The king of Jerusalem attacked Gibeon, initiating the southern campaign. Later the king of Hazor instigated Israel's northern campaign. Joshua 12 summarizes all the kings that Israel defeated. This map shows the major battlegrounds of each campaign.



Josh 10-12

