

BOOK OF JUDGES
THE CYCLE BEGINS:
THE LORD TESTING HIS PEOPLE
JUDGES 2:20--3:11

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that at various times the **LORD TESTS HIS** people.
*James 1:2-4—“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into **divers temptations**; Knowing this, that **the trying of your faith worketh patience**. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect entire, wanting nothing.”*

Though the **LORD TESTS HIS** people, **HE** never **TEMPTS** them to **SIN!**
*James 1:12-13—“Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation**: for when he is **tried**, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. **Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.**”*

Any time **GOD** puts people through a **TEST** it is so the people can know how they would **REACT**. If our **REACTION** to the **TEST** brings forth greater **TRUST** and **OBEDIENCE**, we **GROW** in our **FAITH** in **GOD!**
*(By the way, **GOD** already knows how we will **REACT!**)*

Times of **TESTING** are always for our **LEARNING OF GOD!**
Times of **TESTING** are used to **STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH!**
Times of **TESTING** are also used to give us **ASSURANCE!**

TESTING may come to an individual or it may come to a whole body of people as we see in our text tonight!

We will see in our **SCRIPTURE**, that after the people saw their **SIN** and **REPENTED**, **GOD** gave them 40 years of **PEACE**, then it started all over again.

As we look at this **PASSAGE**, let’s examine it and see what the **LORD** would have us to **LEARN** from it!

- I. WE NOTICE THE POSITION OF GOD’S PEOPLE! (3:5)**
ISRAEL Dwelt Among The HEATHEN!
This Was Not The **LORD’S** Perfect Will For **ISRAEL!**

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The **LORD’S** desire and **COMMAND** was that **ISRAEL** utterly drive the **HEATHEN** out of the **LAND**, but **ISRAEL DISOBEYED** the **LORD** by **FAILING TO DO THAT!**
(So **ISRAEL** was living in willful **DISOBEDIENCE** here!)

And even though this was **NOT** the **LORD’S PERFECT WILL** for **ISRAEL**, **HE** allowed it in **HIS PERMISSIVE WILL** for **HIS OWN PURPOSES!**

In fact, the **LORD** allowed the **CANAANITE** nations to remain in the **LAND** for three reasons.

- 1. The LORD Used Them To CHASTISE ISRAEL For Her APOSTASY In Turning To Idolatry. (2:2; 2:20-21)**

The **ISRAELITES**, in joining themselves with the **HEATHEN** people of the land through **inter-marriage** and the **subsequent idolatry** that came from that, violated the **COVENANT** that the **LORD** gave their forefathers.
Joshua 23:11-13

Therefore, just as the **LORD** had promised, **HE** no longer drove out any of the nations left when **JOSHUA** died.

The **CONSEQUENCES** of **SIN** can be one of the greatest **CHASTENING** tools of the **LORD!**

- 2. The LORD Used The HEATHEN Nations Among Them To TEST THEIR FAITHFULNESS To HIM! (2:22; 3:4)**
“Prove” means (1) “to put someone to the test or try them; (2) to give experience or train; (3) to conduct a test; establish, demonstrate; to find by experience.”

GOD is often said to *“prove”* **HIS** people, i.e. *HE tests them or tries them for their good. Let’s see some examples: Genesis 22:1–2 “tempt”*

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Exodus 15:24-25 "proved"
Deuteronomy 8:1-2, 11-18 "prove"
Psalms 26:1-2 "prove me...try my reigns and my heart"

Now understand that this "*proving*" of the LORD'S people provided each generation with an opportunity to either keep the way of the LORD or to continue in the REBELLION of their immediate ancestors.

3. **The LORD Left The CANAANITES In The LAND To Give ISRAEL Experience In Warfare. (3:2)**

To give them experience in the kind of "*holy warfare*" that was conducted during JOSHUA'S CONQUEST of the land.

This "*warfare*" was not just "*how to fight*" but *how to fight successfully, depending on the LORD to give the VICTORY through OBEDIENCE.*

WE NOTICE THE POSITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE...

II. **WE NOTICE THE PERVERSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE! (Vs 6-7)**

This came through ISRAEL mingling with the HEATHEN!

Now understand that it may have started very slowly with **great intentions planned!** It is easy to get sucked in to great evil this way!

We may have **no intentions** of getting dragged into GREAT SIN, or **drifting in our walk with the LORD**, but then we begin to have close AFFILIATIONS or UNHOLY ALLIANCES with the HEATHEN and before we know it they are INFLUENCING US in the WRONG things rather than us INFLUENCING THEM in the RIGHT things!

1. **They Inter-Married With Them. (3:6)**

The result was an impure people.

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2. **They Became Like Them. (3:7)**
They turned from WHOLLY FOLLOWING THE LORD by taking on the **gods of the HEATHEN.**

It wasn't very long before the ISRAELITES had TURNED FROM GOD and accepted other gods that catered more to their flesh!

WE NOTICE THE POSITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE...THE PERVERSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE...

III. **WE NOTICE THE POSTURE OF THE LORD! (3:8)**

- A. **First We See The LORD'S Anger!**
PRIDE, makes GOD angry! **SIN** And **DISOBEDIENCE** make GOD angry! **UNHOLY ALLIANCES** make GOD angry! A **STRONG-WILLED** and a **SELF-WILLED** people make GOD angry!
- B. **Next We See The LORD's Chastening!**
HE let them live in the mess they had created. **HE** permitted a foreign king to capture them. They served him 8 long years.

IV. **WE NOTICE THE PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE! (3:9)**

- A. **The Key Word Here Is "When".**
Their situation finally got so dire that the people **PRAYED!** But just think, this whole situation could have been avoided if they had only been **OBEDIENT TO THE LORD!**
- B. **Think Of All The Problems In ISRAEL'S History That Could Have Been Avoided By Simply OBEYING GOD'S WORD!**
- C. **Think Of All The CHASTENING That Could Have Been Shortened And Lessened By EARNEST PRAYER That Included CONFESSIO And REPENTANCE!**

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- D. Listen, If Things Are Going Hard For Us...If Everything Seems To Be Caving In On Us...Then It Is Probably Time For Some Self-Examination To See If The Reason For It Is Some Disobedience In Our Life!**

Proverbs 28:13– “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

IV. WE NOTICE THE PROVISION BY THE LORD! (3:9-11)

- A. The King Of Mesopotamia Was The Oppressor!**
GOD used a **HEATHEN** ruler to **CHASTEN HIS PEOPLE!**
This king captured them and enslaved them for eight years!

- B. OTHNIEL, Was The LORD’S DELIVERER (SAVIOUR)!**
OTHNIEL means **POWERFUL ONE** or **LION OF GOD!**

The **LORD** prepared **HIS DELIVERER** who **JUDGED ISRAEL!** **JUDGED (“SHAPHAT”– “To judge, deliver, rule; the accomplishing of a sentence”)**

He led **ISRAEL** to war against their oppressor!
The **LORD DELIVERED** the king into **OTHNIEL’S HAND!**
The **LAND** then had **REST** and **PEACE** for the next 40 years.

- C. SATAN Is Our OPPRESSOR!**
1 Peter 5:8–“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

- D. JESUS Is Our DELIVERER!**
Our **REST** and **PEACE** come from **HIM!** *Matthew 11:28-30*

CONCLUSION

1. It Is Not Easy To Serve The **LORD!**
2. But, It Is Much Harder On Us When We Don’t!