

Promised Land 1 Study and Discussion Questions

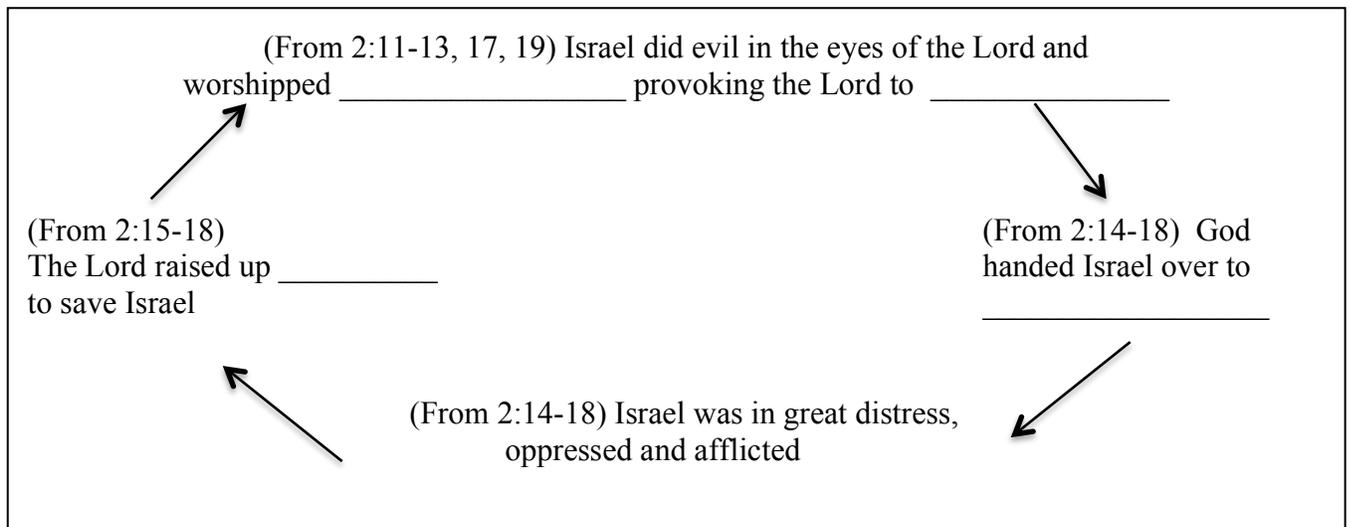
Lesson Four: Causes of Israel's Decline, Deborah, Gideon - Judges 1 – 9

Judges 1 – 2: Causes of Israel's Decline

- 1) Read what Judges 1:1-3 and Joshua 19:1 say about the tribes of Judah and Simeon. Then, look back at the Patriarch Jacob's prophetic blessings over his twelve sons on his deathbed (Genesis 49) and try to explain how Judges 1:2-3 reveals a partial fulfillment of the prophecies about Judah and Simeon (Genesis 49:5-12).

- 2) Following the national campaigns that Joshua fought and won, Judges 1 reveals information about regional tribal battles, fought to drive remaining inhabitants out of the Promised Land. How thoroughly did Israel cleanse the land of these people groups (see Judges 1:19, 21, 27-36, 2:2-5)?

- 3) Judges 2:10-19 describes a cycle of apostasy (abandoning faith in God) that characterized Israel during the period of the Judges.
 - a) Use the verses listed to fill in the missing words:



- b) What does 2:10-19 reveal about God's anger toward the Israelites?

- c) What does 2:10-19 reveal about God's mercy toward the Israelites?

- d) Which behaviors of the Israelites, as described in 2:10-19, are typical of people in every era who neither "know the Lord nor what He has done" (2:10)?

e) How will you use what you learn from this cycle to intercede in prayer for yourself or others?

Judges 2 – 3: Causes of Israel’s Decline

- 4) What reasons did God give for allowing the other nations to be left in the land after Joshua’s death (Judges 2:20 – 3:6)?

- 5) See any text note in your Bible that clarifies the word translated “judge” (for example, in Judges 2:16). What insight about the nature of this office is given in Judges 2:16, 18, 3:9-10, 15-16, and 31?

- 6) Israel had many enemies.
 - a) Which three enemies of the Israelites are named in Judges 3:7-31 and who were the first three judges the Lord raised up to deliver Israel from them? Include verse numbers.

 - b) From Judges 4:2, 6:1-3, and 10:7, list the names of Israel’s other enemies in this period.

 - c) From what kind of personal, social, or spiritual enemies do you need to ask the Lord to deliver you today (see John 15:18, Romans 8:8, and 1 Peter 5:8)?

Judges 4 – 5: Deborah

- 7) Skim Judges 4-5. Why did Barak fail to receive the honor for defeating Sisera?

- 8) How does the picture Deborah paints at the conclusion of her hymn of victory (Judges 5:31) give insight into the key to spiritual success, the key that eluded Israel in the days of the judges (see also Deuteronomy 6:5, Joshua 22:5, Psalm 18:1, 119:132)?

- 9) Read Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Hebrews 8:7-13, focusing on the word “heart.” In consideration of these verses and what Deborah indicated at the end of her hymn (see question 8), how should we pray about persistent patterns of sin in our own lives? Write out your prayer.

Judges 6 – 8: Gideon

- 10)** According to Judges 6:14-15, what was Gideon's main objection to leading the Israelites in battle against the oppressive Midianites? What do 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 have to say about this?
- 11)** What first step toward courage did the Lord ask Gideon to take (Judges 6:25-30)?
- 12)** Judges 6:36-40 tells of Gideon requesting a miracle regarding a fleece he laid out overnight.
- a)** Describe Gideon's putting out of the fleece (Judges 6:36-40).
 - b)** Was Gideon testing God because he did not know God's will? If not, why might Gideon have tested God as he did?
 - c)** Consider whether Gideon's actions in creating this test are an example Christians should follow and record your thoughts.
- 13)** According to Judges 7, what lesson did the Lord teach fearful Gideon (and Israel) about human weakness? For what do you need to ask God to give you assurance and victory?

Judges 8 – 9: Gideon's son Abimelech

- 14)** Read Judges 8:22-23, 29-31 with 9:1-6, 22-24, 42-57. What did Gideon's son Abimelech desire for himself?
- 15)** Compare Gideon's declaration about the Lord (Judges 8:23) with the Israelites' attitude toward the Lord in the period of the Judges (Judges 1-2; review your answers to questions 2-3, if necessary). Read Revelation 19:16. *Specifically* what will you change or do differently today in acknowledgment of Jesus' rightful lordship?