

Judge Othniel

A Devotion

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by

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Do you remember Othniel?

Do you remember how he ended up marrying Aksah?

That was Judges 1, where Othniel won Caleb's daughter – who was his cousin – by attacking and capturing the city of Kiriath Sepher for Caleb. Othniel is 'star of the day,' once again. (Who remembers that old TV show?)

Well, we're going to revisit Othniel this morning in the early verses of **Judges 3**.

¹These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in **Canaan** ²(he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): ³**the five rulers of the Philistines**, all the **Canaanites**, the **Sidonians**, and the **Hivites** living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. ⁴They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands, which he had given their ancestors through Moses.

⁵The Israelites lived among the **Canaanites**, **Hittites**, **Amorites**, **Perizzites**, **Hivites** and **Jebusites**. ⁶They took their daughters in

marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

⁷The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherah's. ⁸The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years. ⁹But when they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. ¹⁰The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. ¹¹So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

PRAYER

A teaching moment.

Canaan and the Canaanite people, are not strictly, synonymous terms.

Canaan is a region of land; land inhabited by many people groups (tribes, nations), one of which are the Canaanite people. Some other people groups who live in this **region called 'Canaan'** are, the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, Sidonians, and the Philistines.

I know; it's a lot of names. So, it doesn't hurt us to know just a little bit about them. After all, these are the people groups who have been occupying the same land that Israel is now taking from them by force!

Does it shock you that they don't want to just die or walk away? And yet, the Lord has "*given them into your hands*" (**Josh. 24:11d**), God tells Joshua. But as I noted last week, the Lord is not unaware of the hearts of His children, Israel: He knows they are going to prostitute their love for Him, by doing expressly, what the Lord has told them NOT to do? And like a good parent who knows their child's proclivities; He is not going to let them just prosper, in spite of their wayward living. In this case, the Lord leaves the enemy all around them, as a test Israelites who had not yet been tested. To "take" a whole land – a region – requires a strong military. And hence, a fight for their life, is how God shaped their path to nationhood.

So, what were those "proclivities" – those sins – I mentioned? Israel made the decision to do exactly, what they said – in **Joshua 23 - 24** – they would NOT do!

Here's a list:

INTERMARRIAGE

Joshua 23:¹²"But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and **if you intermarry with them and associate with them**,¹³ then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

Judges 3:⁵The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁶They

took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

SERVING FALSE GODS

Joshua 24:¹⁶Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! ¹⁷It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. ¹⁸And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.”

Judges 3:⁷The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherah's.

As the Israelites were a type of the church on earth, they were not to be idle and slothful. The Lord was pleased to **try** them by the remains of the devoted nations they spared.

Temptations and **trials** detect the wickedness of the hearts of sinners.

Those same **temptations** and **trials** strengthen the graces of believers in their daily conflict with Satan, sin, and this evil world. They must live in this world, but they are not of it, and are forbidden to conform to it.

This marks the difference between the followers of Christ and those merely professing to follow.

The friendship of the world is more fatal than its **hostility**; the latter **can only kill the body**, but the former murders many precious souls.

In their case, Israel was subject (**vs. 8**) to *Cushan-Rishathaim*, king of *Aram Naharaim*. Then the Lord raised up Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, to save them. He brought them peace for 40 years, until he died.

I know that's not a very engaging story – just the facts! Othniel delivered Israel from their enemies for 40 years – the lifetime of a generation of Israelites. Eventually we'll get some stories to go along with these Judges of Israel. Judges like Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Sampson. For now, Israel had a generation who lived at peace because of a righteous judge who ruled over Israel.

PRAYER

Questions – comments – please.

Those of you who have been sending your tithes and offerings in to our Treasurer, Ron LeShane – I can't thank you enough. It is a mark of faithfulness on your part, and for ours as the leaders in your congregation – it makes it possible to continue to do those things which are necessary to keep heading in the positive direction our church has been going. So again, thank you. If you are having trouble finding Ron's address, simply drop me a text, email, or phone call; I'll be happy to forward that to you.

Blessings!