

Life Lesson 45
Judges/Othniel
Text:Judges 1-3

Introduction

At last the children of Israel were in the promised land! They conquered the people who lived in the land and they settled down to live in the wonderful land they had waited so long to occupy. But their troubles weren't over. In fact, they were just about to begin.

The Story

You will remember that God chose Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and to the promised land. Then He called Joshua to be the leader. As long as Joshua and his helpers lead the people, things went well.

When Joshua died, though, things fell apart. Right away the people started worshipping other gods. We see a pattern starting in the book of Judges that is repeated over and over throughout the book.

First the people *sinned* against God. Then God allowed another nation to come in and conquer them. They *suffered* under the rule of the cruel people who took over. They were so miserable that they repented and asked God to help. They made *supplication*, which means they begged God to help them. God heard, and gave them a deliverer to bring them *salvation*. That deliverer is called a *judge*. A judge was a cross between a military general, a president, and the supreme court. Usually as long as the judge lived, the people behaved themselves. After the judge died, they went through the same old circle again -- sin, suffering, supplication, and salvation.

After Joshua died, the people started worshipping Baal and Ashteroth. The other nations

still lived close by and the Israelites married some of the Canaanite women and let their daughters marry men from the enemy tribes. God told them over and over not to do that! The Bible says that God's anger against them was hot. That means they were in really BIG trouble.

The King of Mesopotamia attacked them, and God let him win. The Israelites were defeated. The enemy spoiled them. That means they took away their cattle and their sheep, and their money. Not only that, the Israelites became the slaves of the King of Mesopotamia. They couldn't rule themselves. They had to do what the king said.

For eight long years, they served as slaves to the enemy nation. They had such a hard life! They were miserable and they cried and asked God to forgive them.

"Please send someone to deliver us!" they prayed.

God heard their cry. He raised up a man to be their deliverer. Maybe those in brave Caleb's family learned from his courage, because the first judge was Caleb's nephew, Othniel. His dad was Caleb's younger brother, Kenaz.

The Bible says that God's spirit came on Othniel. He became the new leader, the judge. Othniel gathered the troops of Israel and led them to war against the Mesopotamians. This time, God was on their side. They won a great victory and ran the enemy out of their land.

At last they were free! They served God and lived quietly in the land for 40 years. Then Othniel died, and the whole miserable cycle started all over again.

The Life Lesson

The Bible says that the Old Testament stories are written down to be an example for us. We see that while the Israelites loved and served God, they were blessed and happy. When they disobeyed, God was angry and let bad things happen to them.

Not all bad things happen because of sin, but God still won't let his people get by with doing evil things! When Christians do wrong, they should ask God's forgiveness. He's so good to forgive us and deliver us from our sin.

The best thing to do, though, is not get started in the stupid circle of sin in the first place. Instead, we can obey God and be happy serving Him.

Review Questions

What did the Israelites do after Joshua died?

They served other gods and married the Canaanite women.

How did God feel about the Israelites sin?

He was angry with them.

How did God punish the Israelites for their sin?

He let the King of Mesopotamia conquer them.

How long did the Israelites have to serve the Mesopotamians?

Eight years.

When the Israelites repented, what did God do?

He forgave them and sent a judge to deliver them.

What is a judge?

A combination of a military general and government leader.

Who was the first judge?

Othniel

Who was Othniel's uncle?

Caleb

Tell the circle that happened over and over in the book of judges.

Sin, suffering, supplication, salvation