

TAKING THE LAND: YOURSELF -- BEING FOUND IN CHRIST

(5 March 2009)

Numbers 13:25 (RSV) - At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land.

When was the last time you spied-out the land of your heart, mind, body, soul, and spirit? This lesson will focus on the capture of these for Christ. Jesus Christ is as our "Promise Land." Do we see with eyes of the body or do we see with eyes of faith? What are we to believe? Can we arrive to the Land of Promise by our own efforts with no help from Jesus? Are we weak in ourselves or strong in our Lord? Isn't it better to be weak in our own estimation of ourselves?

2nd Corinthians 12:9 (RSV) - But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is **made perfect in weakness**." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Numbers 13:32 (RSV) - So they brought to the people of Israel an evil report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone, to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature."

Are there bad things in Promise Land of Jesus Christ? No? Why, then, do we see bad things and often have fear? What do we see from afar? What do our eyes show us? Do we see giants in the Land? Can we agree that a giant can be a type of fear? So why do we fear? Is it because we worry that we might be harmed or die from what we fear? Should we not trust God for life and protection instead? Do we really trust our Lord? Our fears often betray our real heart which shows we lack faith and trust in God.

Deuteronomy 31:8 (RSV) - It is the Lord who goes before you; He will be with you, He will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed.

As Christians, we know the Lord is with us, because:

1st Corinthians 6:19 (RSV) - Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?

Ephesians 1:13 (RSV) - In him you also, who have heard the word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

2nd Corinthians 1:22 (RSV) - He has put His seal upon us and given us His [*Holy*] Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Numbers 14:9 (RSV) - Only, do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread [*spoils of war*] for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

Hasn't the enemy been defeated? Isn't his protection ended by the victory of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

1st John 5:4 (RSV) - For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith. [*in Christ as Lord*]

Romans 8:37 (RSV) - No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

What about the Devil and his demons? Do they have real power over us?

Revelation 12:7 through 8 (RSV) - Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, (8) but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

There is no more room for the Devil and his angels in heaven! Where is the Promise Land? Isn't it found in Christ? Where is Christ? Isn't He in heaven at the "Right hand of the Father?" There is no evil in heaven anymore! Where are we? Are we not in Christ? Have we not been transferred to the Kingdom known as Jesus Christ?

Colossians 1:13 (RSV) - He [Jesus] has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son!

We are not under the rule of darkness anymore for any real death consequence!

Revelation 12: 9 (RSV) - And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Just as there are enemies in the Promise Land, so, too, the devil and his angels are here on earth, but what power do they have over us, except what we give them? The answer is in the Scriptures:

Revelation 12:10 (RSV) - And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

The devil and his angels can do only one meaningful thing: accuse us of sin before God.

Revelation 12:11 (RSV) - And they [Christians, the "Elect"] have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

So this is where we are now: defeating and conquering the Devil and his fallen-angels by the Word, the "Sword of the Spirit." We love not our lives, but, instead, we love the real Life that is Christ Jesus.

John 12:25 (RSV) - He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. [also see Matthew 10:37]

*Luke 14:26 (RSV) - If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, **even his own life** - he cannot be my disciple.*

Why hate this life in this world? Answer: because it is not the real Life, because only Jesus is the Life (everything else is a very poor shadow):

John 1:4 (KJV) - In Him [*Jesus*] was Life; and the Life was the Light of men.

John 14:6 (KJV) - Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...

1st John 2:16 (KJV) - For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

In 1st John 2:16, we see that "Pride of Life" is not such a great thing! Why? Because it is of the world! What do we know about the world? The Devil is here and he has influence here to "Accuse us before the Father."

1st John 5:19 (RSV) - We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.

And what are the things we often like and love in the world? What are some of our possible idols given to us by the evil one of this world? Any of the following could become an idol when it becomes an excessive worry or distraction which takes our focus away from God:

TV, shopping, games, music, home improvement, love of nature, fishing, camping, political interests, sports, dining out, family [see Matthew 10:37], vacations, work, studies, hobbies, working-out...

James 4:4 (RSV) - ... therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

John 11:25 (KJV) - Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection, and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

John 12:24 (RSV) - Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies [*changes*], it bears much fruit.

We are "Dead" without Christ! He really is our Life! In Him there really is "Freedom."

2nd Corinthians 3:17 (RSV) - ... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom!

So... Galatians 5:1 (RSV) - For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery [*of the evil and sin of the "Old Nature" of "Self"*].

1st Peter 2:16 (RSV) - Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God.

We still have free-will to choose sin, but the the Holy Spirit in us makes it possible to refuse evil and sin. Yet, if we choose sin after we have the Power in us to refuse sin, then the result could lead to our truly being condemned on Judgment Day.

What have we learned in this lesson so far?

1. Now, we can see we are already in "The Promise Land" of Jesus Christ if we truly belong to Him and are truly His.

2. Next, we can see the evil one is here with us on earth to accuse us, as if to confuse us, as if slow down the victory of the our Lord Jesus Christ; yet, we know Jesus has "Finished" His work at the cross (John 19:30).

3. Finally, we are warned not to re-submit to the yoke of slavery that is sin and evil.

Now, we need to examine what is in "The Land." We can examine, or spy-out "The Land" in two ways: by using eyes of the flesh or by using eyes of faith. Which eyes are better? Which eyes do we use more often?

If use our human eyes of the world, our eyes made of flesh, we will see many things; things perhaps that are not so real. If we use eyes of faith, we will see the Truth more easily and be victorious more rapidly in our "Land" or reality; in our spiritual growth!

Romans 14:23 (RSV) - ... for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

2nd Corinthians 5:7 (RSV) - For we walk by faith, not by sight. [that is: human sight from eyes of flesh; the sight of understanding from the brain of flesh which is lost in the ideals of the world]

We should use eyes of faith for spiritual sight and understanding, but we often use our natural eyes of understanding for sight. This aught not be so, but it often is. Why?

2nd Corinthians 3:18 (KJV) - But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We are still being "Changed" from "Glory to glory." That is, we are still growing away from our "Old Nature" as our current perception in this old reality of the world (see Ephesians 5:16). Yes, we are finished in Christ, but our bodies have not been redeemed and still tempt us to sin through the "Old Nature" it is.

2nd Corinthians 5:2 (RSV) - Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling!

Galatians 2:20 (RSV) - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

We now live by faith in Christ while in the flesh: this is the only way if want to say we really have died to the "Old Nature" of human "Self" in the flesh: we ourselves have died with Christ on the cross, but in practicality for our lives: we die daily to "Self" as the "Old Nature."

1st Corinthians 15:31 (KJV) - I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Now what is in our "Land" if we look with our eyes of "Flesh" or "Old Nature" of "Self?"

Judges 3:1-2 (NIV) - These 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.

Wow! So we have some “bad guys” left in *The Land* for reasons of testing; to teach us spiritual combat! It seem there is a reason God chose not to immediately lock-up the devil and his demons; but, instead, cast them to the earth:

Ephesians 6:12 (RSV) - For we are not contending [*having conflict, combat*] against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Why do we seem to need this testing?

Malachi 3:2 through 3 (RSV) - For He [God] is like a refiners fire and like fullers' soap; (3) He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present **right offerings** to the Lord.

Levi were for the priesthood; but so are we: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood...” (1st Peter 2:9). We can expect to be refined by the Refiner.

*We are “Tested” to learn how to make “**Right offerings**” of behavior to the Lord; through proper obedience to His will in holy righteousness. In “Testing” there often is suffering:*

*Romans 5:3 through 4 (RSV) - More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4) and **endurance produces character, and character produces hope.***

“Testing” improves our spiritual character before God; we become more spiritually mature.

Who authorizes “Testing?”

Hebrews 5 through 11 (RSV) - ... “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by Him. (6) For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.” (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. (11) For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

*As we can see, our “Testing” and “Discipline” is for two main reasons: **Holiness and righteousness.** “Correction” is also used by God to help us repent of sin. God can decide to authorize evil to have influence upon us for correction and spiritual growth: combat lessons. There are some that teach that God would not deliberately allow any of His children to become sick, but there is nothing in the Scriptures to directly confirm this, rather the opposite is certainly true:*

Revelations 3:19 (RSV) - Those whom I [God] love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

Job 33:19 through 30 (RSV) – Man is also chastened with pain upon his bed, and with continual strife in his bones; (20) so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite dainty food... (29) Behold, **God does all these things**, twice, three times, with a man, (30) to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may see the light of life.

By free-will, allowed by God's grace, we often choose wrongly; yet, God is faithful to correct us... it is often a painful process... to fight God, even if only by ignorance. To say God will not ever let "Evil" come upon us for "Testing" or for "Chastisement" is to forget the message from the story of Job. But we can remember these for comfort:

Matthew 11:30 (KJV) - For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

1st Corinthians 10:13 (RSV) - No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

What are some of the common enemies in The Land?

Judges 3:3 through 5 (NIV) - 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. (4) They were left to test the Israelites **to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands**, which he had given their forefathers through Moses. (5) The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Imagine the "Rod of correction" (Proverbs 22:15; Hebrews 12:5 thru 11; Psalms 23:4, and 2nd Kings 17:25) from the Lord which falls upon His children that decide to love the beautiful evil things of this world?

Some new converts to Christianity experienced supernatural healing from evil vices such as alcohol, drugs, porn, and/or cigarette smoking. Yet, this doesn't happen in the same way in all converts. What remains in us all are some "Enemies in the land." We are not fully made perfect in the body, flesh, and spirit all in a day. From 2nd Corinthians 3:18, we know our lives are a growing process in our Lord. Now, what are some vices, imperfections, or sin-attitudes you still have in your life which need to be confronted?

Examples: smoking (or other addictions), short-fused, prideful, undisciplined with the eyes, a lazy spirit, fearful, having doubt in God, fearing too often, often angry, gossiping, not loving unconditionally, having a vengeful spirit, a lack of holiness, a hypocritical spirit, having a wrong notion that small sins are acceptable to have... so forth.

Judges 3:3 through 5 we discover there are eight groups left in the land: Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians, Hivites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, and the Jebusites. Of the eight groups, the biggest enemies were the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Hittites and the Amorites.

Let's focus on these four groups first:

(Note: Much of the remaining text in this Bible Study was taken from an existing Bible Study on this topic written in New Zealand by "I Gordan." This is well done and helpful. I have modified some of his remarks as seemed best for additional clarity)

Those Nasty Philistines!

The first group mentioned is the Philistines. They were an aggressive tribal group in the southwest of the Promised Land, and one whom Israel would battle for a long time. The name "Philistine" means "Wallowing" or to "Wallow self." The dictionary says that wallowing means "Roll about in or to give oneself over to; revel in a feeling or way of life. Example: to wallow in self pity; or to wallow in riches.

We read in Judges 3:1-6 that there were five Lords over the Philistines. We can look for a spiritual understanding and suspect that these five Lords stand for five different aspects of our "Sin Nature" (of the flesh) regarding wallowing: self-pity, self-depreciation, self-importance, self-indulgence, and self-pleasure.

The Philistines speak of our great enemy of "Self" in all the delicious forms it comes in. It doesn't matter whether you are wallowing in the depths of self-pity or are giving yourself over to worldly indulgence or self-importance, one thing is for sure -- then -- there are stinking Philistines in the land! And don't forget this either -- of all the enemies of Israel, the Philistines were the greatest and lasted the longest! This was not an easy battle, then, and it isn't an easy battle now! The Philistines remained and would later become Israel's strongest and most bitter enemy during the reigns of King Saul and King David. So don't be surprised, even if you've been a Christian for 30 years, at the depth of wallowing "Self" will do if unchecked! You have the Holy Spirit in you for strength to dominate the enemy with correct holy decisions for resisting evil temptations coming from your "Old Nature."

One writer (Major Ian Thomas) writes: "The flesh will threaten, shout, strut, domineer, sulk, plot, creep, beg, plead or sob – whatever the situation may demand in the interests of its own survival... The flesh hates to be exposed for what it is and will fight desperately to avoid that awful moment of truth – that moment when the Holy Spirit rips the mask from its sickly sticky face!" This is so true, but a lot of people will just say:

"Well, that's just me, that's who I am!" But if you are a born again Christian, then you are also a "New creation" and that stuff is not who the "Real you" is anymore; but you do have to know and recognize your enemy is holding-up inside your "Old Nature" ("Sin Nature")! The first step to victory comes from self-judgment (honest introspection), instead of wallowing in some form of self-pity (which, if we are honest, we all strangely enjoy from the sympathy of mis-given love we often receive from others). We need to recognize the influence of the enemy and ask the Holy Spirit to produce in us that which we are not: that which seems missing in us for holiness.

The Canaanites – The curse of modern-day Western Christianity!

While the Philistines speak of the wallowing of self, the Canaanites speak of the influence of the world upon the Christian faith. The name Canaanite means "Merchant, or trafficker" and this is exactly what they were. Harpers Bible dictionary states that "the Canaanites enjoyed a reputation as traders." They lived within the land and were happy to remain there just so long as the trading and profit were good! Do we not see this Canaanite principle all around us in western Christianity?

This principle is often expressed as "Looking religious," or going to church for what you can get out of it (as opposed to how you can serve there)! This may be for monetary gain, or social gain... it may be Canaanites within the land of your heart!

2nd Corinthians 2:17 (RSV) - For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word...

1st Timothy 6:5 (RSV) - ... imagining that godliness is a means of gain [*of wealth*].

Gordan writes: "How many Christians, while they would never say it, simply treat God like as a "Father Christmas" to satisfy their every want? How can the "Name it and claim it, blab it and grab it theology" take such a hold upon so many Christians? Or how is that the self-centered "Prayer of Jabez" is passed-off as biblical Christianity in many places within Christianity? It seems the Canaanites are still a strong enemy within the hearts of many Christians."

Gordan writes: "I went into a Christian bookshop the other day and found a new book on the life of Jabez. Someone had written a 250 page novel on the life of this man who is only mentioned in three verses in the Bible! Wow! What insight that author must have had! Or maybe, just maybe, it was a desperate attempt to make money out of the latest "Christian" cash cow! I smell Canaanites!!! Or for that matter, when will the "Left Behind" series ever come to an end? I'm not against the content of these books, but is it just me, or does each new book seem to occupy a smaller time frame of the tribulation? You don't think they could possibly be squeezing it for all that its worth do you?"

It does seem that much of the marketing happening from within Christian circles is from unholy motivations. This is not to say they are not good Christian books in Christian bookstores; but, before you buy them, make sure you've already bought a Bible and know it inside-out. The Bible will answer most of the problems all these other books attempt to solve. After a Bible, consider buying another Bible version, Bible software, a Bible Dictionary, and a Bible Lexicon... and then, if you still have spare time, consider reading other Christian classics written by the Saints of old: Pilgrim's Progress or Holiness (to name only a few).

Hittites. Hittites everywhere!

Now this one gets me. The third major people group that lived within the land were the Hittites. The Hittite empire was one of the largest in ancient times and it's people were very strong, spreading out over an immense area. The name Hittite is derived from the name "Heth" and means "Sons of terror." It is the principle, or spirit, of fear that seeks to dominate our Christian lives. Now the Hittite empire may have come and gone, but its principle of fear and terror certainly hasn't. How many Christian lives are still held captive, and controlled by the Hittite enemy? They aught not be!

Samuel Ridout, in his excellent book, "Lectures on the book of Judges," makes the following convicting, challenging comment: "The Hittites dwell everywhere, and if you allow them, they will settle down in your midst. They will close your mouths, so you will be afraid to speak. Why is there so much silence amongst God's beloved people? Why is there so little testimony in proclaiming the gospel, so little ministry amongst the saints, so few voices heard in prayer and praise in the assemblies? Could it be that we let the Hittites dwell right in our very midst? You are afraid to speak a word for the Lord Jesus, afraid to lift up your voice in thanksgiving – to lead the prayers and praises to Christ Jesus? You are afraid to take your stand for Christ and confess Him fully? – afraid to do that which your conscience and the word of God declares should be done? Oh, the Hittite empire is indeed a wide one – it reaches everywhere and their dwelling amongst us is a witness how we have failed to cast them out.

Yet, thank God, their very presence amongst us is a call from Him to rise now and put them away from us; to be done with fear, to be done with all this terror, this holding back, and to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might!"

The good-looking Amorites (from a distance!)

The next major people group we find in the Promise Land were the Amorites. The word Amorite means "A talker, to say, speak." It is also interesting to see that it is derived from a word that can be used in the sense of self-boasting or commanding. So the Amorites speak of words without action.

You may remember from the story of Pilgrims Progress that Mr. Christian and Mr. Faithful met Mr. Talkative on their journey to the Celestial City. John Bunyan writes of Mr. Talkative saying "He was a tall man and somewhat better looking at a distance than close up." You probably all know someone like that! Someone who has all the right words, and when you meet them you think "Wow, that person is spiritual!" But a close up inspection of their life shows it to largely be an illusion. They can talk the walk but are somewhat lacking walking the talk! Lord save us all from that hypocrisy in our own lives!

It is the very principle that Jesus warned His disciples against when He spoke of the Pharisees saying "Obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." (Matthew 23:3) James spoke about these dangers as well saying "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22) Paul reminds us that the goal of all instruction is love, from which, some have wandered away from, turning aside to meaningless talk (1st Timothy 1:5 through 6).

Isn't this something we can all be guilty of? When you read the Bible or listen to a sermon, are you merely after head knowledge or are you looking to how the Word can be applied in your life? True understanding is important, but it should always have a practical out-working.

Here is another insight from Pilgrims Progress which makes another interesting comment about understanding and words without action (the Amorites)... Mr. Faithful said:

"This reminds me of the words of Moses when he described the animal that is ceremonially clean: it is the animal that has a split hoof and chews it's cud, not the one that has a split hoof only, or the one that chews its cud only. The rabbit chews its cud, but it's still unclean because it doesn't have a split hoof. This resembles Mr. Talkative. He chews the cud – that is, he seeks knowledge and chews on the word – but he doesn't have a separated hoof; he doesn't separate himself from the way of sinners. Like the rabbit, he retains the foot of a dog or bear, and so he's unclean."

1st Corinthians 13:1 (RSV) - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Beware of allowing the Amorites to settle and live in your land of life!

The false humility of the Hivites and Perizzites.

The names Hivites and Perizzites have the same meaning. Hivites means “A villager,” and Perizzites means “Rustic or belonging to a village.” In the Amorites you had a talker, someone who liked to command and thought very highly of himself. The Hivites and Perizzites represent the other side of the coin – the villager or commoner mentality.

Someone who constantly downplays him or herself to the point where they do not think God can use them. Now, some boast of self, some downplay self, but sure enough, self is still the focus! Into the category of the “Villager mentality” we could put two great persons of the Old Testament – namely Moses (Exodus 3:10 thru chapter 4) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-16). But both overcame this attitude and were greatly used of the Lord.

Finally we have the Sidonians and the Jebusites. Sidonian means “Hunting” and reminds us of the battle that we are in.... where “Our adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1st Peter 5:8)

The last enemy mentioned is the Jebusites. Jebusite means “To trample, tread down” and speaks of the desired end result of our combined enemies. The Jebusites dwelt around and in Jerusalem and there is evidence that Jebus was the pre-Davidic name for Jerusalem (Joshua 15:8 and 18:28; Judges 19:10, 2nd Samuel 5:6-9 and 24:18-25).

So from this we see that just as the Jebusites desired to rule in the center of Israel, where God’s rule should be established, so our enemies desire to rule from the very center and heart of our lives. Think about your life for a second... have you been giving the enemy a place that should be reserved for God?

The Purpose of the Enemy

Lets get back to the original text – Can you remember what God said He would use the enemy for? Here is the scripture again.

Judges 3:1-6 “These are the nations the LORD left **to test** all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to **teach warfare** to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience).”

Two things, remember? God said that He would use those nations to test Israel, and, second: to teach warfare to Israel.

So firstly, there is a test... What exactly was the test? Well, we read at the end of chapter two that the nations remained “In order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.” (Judges 2:22)

In other words, the nations remained in the land and God used them to see whether Israel truly had a heart for Him.... or whether, instead, they would give in to the temptations of the other nations and follow their gods.

So let me ask you... what enemies remain in your life? Are you given to Hittite fear, Philistine self-wallowing, Canaanite worldliness or Amorite hypocrisy? We are all different and as such, we all have different areas of weakness. But like Israel of old, the Lord will test us to see if our hearts are truly for Him: to purify us.

The testing of the Lord through the various trials and enemies we face, has another, often unseen, benefit. That is, like Israel of old, the Lord uses it to teach us warfare. The battleground may have shifted from the Megiddo plains to within our mind, but the fight itself is just as real. The Lord needs to teach us warfare. It is something we all have to learn as we live and grow as Christians. Notice also that the Lord was kind enough with Israel to even use the terrible situation they had got themselves in, for their own good. He didn't give up on them and He doesn't give up on us – even if we have blown it. But He will see another situation that He can use to teach us and test us.

“The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.”

Finally, we read in this passage that Israel disobeyed the one true God - through intermarriage with their enemy's daughters (something they were not allowed to do) and through the worship of false gods. Hence, the cycle of sin began. If you want to know where the cycle begins, it is here with compromise to the commands of God that He has declared for our own good. How about you? Have you made compromises with the enemy that draw you away from the living God? If so, then do you know that the Lord will use that situation to test your commitment to Him! He will turn you back to Himself with trials and suffering if you wait too long to repent! So, turn again to the living God. There is no situation too hopeless for the Lord; and victory, on His terms, can always be counted upon.

Addendum: The Flesh (Greek sarx)

From Strong's Bible Lexicon, Number G4561 for the word "Sarx" (Greek), flesh. There are 151 appearances in the NT Bible translated as "Flesh" in the KJV. The word "Sarx" can refer to the body itself (less often used translation). In the common literal sense, the word "Sarx" refers to the substance (flesh, muscle, meat) of the body, whether of animals or persons. In an ethical and spiritual sense, the word "Sarx" is the lower nature of a person, the seat and vehicle of sinful desires [like the "Heart" ... see Jeremiah 17:9].

Newer Bible translations are using the phrase "Old Nature" for the Greek Word "Sarx." This works as long as we remember the source of the "Old Nature" is ourselves; and that such "Old Nature" comes from the flesh, body, and brain as desires and passions which are against the Holy Spirit in us (Galatians 5:17). We cannot ignore the fact that desires and impulses of lust, anger, envy, jealousy, hate, pride, selfishness, are chemical reactions produced by the body and brain which can lead to temptations in sin. It makes more sense to speak of the lusts as being of the flesh (1st John 2:16) than as being of the "Old Nature." The "Old Nature" tends to be nebulous intangible concept where cause-and-effect become unclear in the human condition; and this has caused some Christians miss the connection between sin and the human condition in the flesh (as body and brain). Many causes which lead to sin are from flesh itself, not demons. This includes the chemical reactions produced in the brain that tempted us to bad decisions as sin. This isn't to say the flesh is evil in and of itself, but that the flesh often is the means whereby evil has cause to reveal itself when you let your self-control become poor. The flesh has been corrupted by the "Fall of Man" and by ill-influences of evil and curses upon it:

Romans 8:20 thru 22 (RSV) - For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; (21) because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay... (22) We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now...

We see the whole creation is affected by the curse against it by God (in Genesis 3:17 through 19) from the time when Adam and Eve first sinned against God. Creation is not perfect anymore (including plants and animals; consider that God didn't create poison arsenic or snakes with poison fangs, but that these are mutations due to corruption of the creation wrought by God's curse, sin, and Satan; see 1st John 5:19 regarding Satan).

Ephesians 4:22 (RSV) - Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts.

We see in this verse that the "Old Nature" (flesh) is indeed corrupt through deceitful lusts from it; that this corruption is of the flesh as body and brain. This is why we need to receive a new body in the resurrection (as Jesus received); until then, we need the Holy Spirit to help us master the sin-nature of the natural corrupted human body (see Genesis 4:7). This is why the brain (mind) needs constant renewal in the Bible (Romans 12:2)! Without the Word of God in your brain, the flesh will give you many temptations, and self-control will be hard (see Proverbs 25:28; Galatians 5:23; Psalms 119:11 and Philippians 2:5).

Jude 23 (NIV) - Snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear... hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. [JNT: *hating even the clothes stained by their vices* - KJV: *hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*]

The Jewish New Testament (David H Stern), in this instance, completely ignores the Greek word "Sarx" for "Flesh" leaving the reader wondering at the cause of the "Vices." The cause for the clothes being stained is from the corruption of the flesh itself. A leper of the day would stain his clothes with his sick pussy body: this is the imagery being expressed here. Vices of the flesh originate chemically in the flesh and brain. Without the flesh, vices have no agency from which to cause temptation to the person. Lust, pride and/or selfishness cannot exist separate of the flesh (and brain); it requires the body in order to exist. The flesh has become corrupted. Thankfully, the original Greek and older Bible translations do capture this understanding. However, the JNT does well here:

Romans 8:13 (JNT) - For if you live according to your old nature [RSV: "Flesh"], you will certainly die; but if, by the Spirit, you keep **putting to death** the practices **of the body**, you will live.

John 3:6 (JNT) - What is born from the flesh is flesh, and what is born from the Spirit is spirit. [our "New Nature" is born of the spirit, not flesh – see John 3:8; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; and 1st Corinthians 15:50]

Romans 7:18 (RSV) - For I know that **nothing good dwells within me**, that is, in my flesh [JNT: "Old Nature"]. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. [*this is why we need Jesus for help; see Romans 7:24 through 8:4*]

Rev 7