

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Telling the Old Testament
Story of God



SESSION 6

Entering the Promised Land and Call for Monarchy

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Entering the Promised Land and Call for Monarchy

SESSION OVERVIEW

Entering the Promised Land

The Call for a King

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand the purpose and style of Deuteronomy.
- distinguish the unique features of Joshua and Judges.
- identify the lessons learned in the Ebenezer account, early in 1 Samuel, in regard to Israel's relationship with God.

INTRODUCTION

From the wilderness of Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments, we now turn our focus to preparations for entering the Promised Land and the records of the conquest of the Promised Land. We will also consider the events that led up to the call for a king in the nation of Israel.

ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND



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FINAL INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE ENTERING THE LAND

God promised to Abraham a land, a place in which the people of God could live and prosper. We have come to the brink of the fulfillment of that promise. The setting of Deuteronomy is the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from the Promised Land.

The people of Israel are camped across the Jordan, anticipating crossing the river to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy depicts Moses preaching the book of Deuteronomy as a sermon. The purpose of the sermon is to prepare the children of Israel for life in the Promised Land.

The message of Deuteronomy serves to communicate the following to the children of Israel:

- It reminds them of what God has done to bring them here. He has done miracles and He has cared for them through the wilderness.
- It reminds them of the covenant and God's laws.
- It warns the children of Israel of disobedience. They must avoid the false god worship of the inhabitants of new land.

The following are considered major characteristics of Deuteronomy:

- Sermonic: long speeches of exhortation and warning.
- The Word of God is spoken through a leader (such as Moses or Joshua).
- Exhortations: to obey God's laws with the promise of blessing (6:1-3, 10-11; 7:12-15).
- Warnings: to disobey God's law will result in punishment (6:12-15, 8:11, 19-20).
- Centralization of worship: worship will take place in the one central location God chooses (12:1-7).
- Theme of the land: obedience will result in the prosperity of the land, and disobedience will result in the loss of the land and exile from it (3:18, 4:1, 8:1, 7-10, 11: 8-17).


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CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT: JOSHUA

Joshua 1: Introduction; authority of Joshua

Joshua's opening speech promises victory in the taking of the land, if the people obey the Law of God. Note the two characteristics of Deuteronomy evident in this speech:

- Word from the Lord is communicated through the leader
- Obedience will result in victory/blessing/prosperity

Joshua 2-12: Conquest of the Promised Land

These chapters describe swift and decisive victories in the taking of the Promised Land. The taking of the Promised Land is described in accordance with three swift military campaigns as follows:

- Jericho, Ai, Central hill country (7-9)
- Southern hill country, as far as Lachish and Hebron (10)
- Northern hill country, valley of Jezreel, Hazor (11)

Joshua 13-21: Division of the land among the tribes

The Promised Land is divided up among the 12 tribes of Israel.

Joshua 22-24: Joshua's farewell and covenant renewal

These chapters include Joshua's farewell speech and covenant renewal. Joshua leads the people in a renewal of their commitment to the covenant relationship with God. Joshua's final message urges the people to choose obedience and blessing, and is similar to Moses' final message before his death (Josh. 24:15-27; Deut. 30:15-20).

CONQUEST IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The description of the conquest of the Promised Land is quite different in Judges than in Joshua. Joshua gave a picture of a swift military campaign carried out by a united Israel under the leadership of Joshua.

Judges gives a different picture, of a struggling and lengthy campaign over many years, in which independent tribes and regional leaders acted in times of crisis to

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take portions of the land. Judges highlights an important pattern of sin and grace repeated throughout the book. A general description of the pattern is described in Judg. 2:11-23. This pattern includes the following six elements:

- The people of Israel sin.
- Israel is delivered into the hands of an oppressive enemy.
- The people of Israel cry out to God because of their oppression.
- God raises up a deliverer (judge) who frees them from the enemy.
- Israel experiences freedom and prosperity.
- The people of Israel sin again, and the cycle starts all over.

Most of the elements in this pattern of sin and grace can be seen in the following examples in Judges:

- 3:7-15
- 4:1-24
- 6:1-16
- 10:6-11:33
- 13:1-5

THE CALL FOR A KING



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THE STORY OF EBENEZER: 1 SAMUEL 4-7

In 1 Sam. 8, the elders of Israel approach Samuel and request that he appoint a king to judge Israel like the other nations. They want their system of government to look like that of their neighbors. They seem not to be concerned that God's plan has been not to have a king over His people.

In 1 Sam. 4-7, is a story that depicts the attitude of the nation in relation to God. The story foreshadows the nation's request for a king. It involves a series of battles with the Philistines. Within the story, the Hebrew term *Ebenezer* plays a significant role. In the first battle, Israel is encamped at the location of *Ebenezer*, while the Philistines are encamped at *Aphek*. The description of the battle is short. Israel is defeated, losing about 4,000 men on the battlefield.

The elders of Israel raise the question: "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?" Their solution to the defeat is to send for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and take it into battle with them. It is felt this will give them victory over the enemy.

As preparations are made for a second battle, and the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is brought into the camp of Israel, the Philistines become frightened. Hearing the confident shouts of the anticipation of victory in the camp of Israel, the Philistines fear that God has come into the camp. Nevertheless, the Philistines gather their courage and join in the battle.

This time the defeat of Israel is even greater. Israel loses 30,000 soldiers, the ark of the covenant of the Lord is stolen, and the two sons of the high priest are killed. Report of the defeat is brought to the high priest who falls back and dies upon hearing the Ark of the Covenant was taken.

Later texts imply Shiloh and the tabernacle are destroyed. In addition, the pregnant wife of one of the sons of the high priest, upon hearing the tragic news, went into labor, gave birth, and called her son, Ichabod. The child's name translates "no glory". Upon giving the child this name, his mother said, "The glory has departed from Israel." The picture at the end of this second battle is one of death and defeat. Worst of all, with the loss of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, it is felt God has abandoned Israel.

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A number of concerns can be attributed to Israel's defeat, and the absence of God's deliverance. First, the word of the Lord had finally returned to Israel after a time of silence (1 Sam. 3:1, 19-21; 4:1a). Despite this, when the Philistines threaten war, no one appears to consult the word of the Lord.

Second, passages surrounding this account show us the spread of sin in the community of Israel. The people have been following the sins of the sons of the high priest (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-24). In addition, the people of Israel have been worshipping and serving idols and false gods (1 Sam. 7:3).

Finally, Israel appears to place its trust in the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, rather than consulting the Lord himself. It is as if the ark was Israel's means of manipulating God or was the magic box that would deliver them from their enemy through its divine power.

The story traces the adventures of the Ark of the Covenant in the hands of the Philistines. It appears the ark brings great trouble to the Philistines (1 Sam. 5-6). Consequently, they send the ark back to Israel. Israel receives the ark and hides it away in the town of Kiriath-jearim for 20 years.

Meanwhile, Samuel leads the people in a time of renewal. At this point in the story, Israel is still under the oppression of the Philistines and Shiloh is apparently still in ruins. Samuel gathers the people at Mizpah and leads them in renewal. He calls the people to remove all of their foreign idols, turn away from false gods, and return to the Lord alone. The people of Israel fast, confess, and pray humbly before the Lord. As Israel is gathered for this time of renewal, the Philistine army reassembles. Israel becomes fearful, and Samuel offers a sacrifice and cries out to the Lord. In response, the Lord God thunders against the Philistines, and the enemy is defeated before Israel.

It should be noted that there is no mention of the ark of the covenant of the Lord being involved in this final battle. It appears what has prompted the Lord to act on Israel's behalf are the acts of renewal and humility on the part of Israel. After the victory over the Philistines, Samuel sets up a stone monument and calls it *Ebenezer*. As he does so, Samuel states, "Thus far the Lord has helped us" (*ebenezer* literally translates stone of help).

Thus, the Philistines are subdued, and the cities of Israel are restored. Some significant messages and lessons can be drawn from this account.

- Israel learns that its trust is not to be placed in false gods or idols, nor is it to be placed in the sacred objects of God (such as the Ark of the Covenant).

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- An actual relationship of submission to God should come before sacred objects.
- Sacred objects like the Ark of the Covenant do not serve as means of controlling God. That is, simply taking the ark into battle does not obligate God to fight for Israel.
- God is in control, not those who wield the sacred objects of the Lord.

The lessons appear to be short-lived, or at least unsatisfactory, for the people of Israel. Following this account, the elders of Israel ask for a king like the other nations have. Despite the fact God had just demonstrated that a humble and direct relationship with God provides greater leadership and strength than any human king, Israel requests a king. Israel's rejection of God as King is stated explicitly in 1 Sam. 8:7.

This marks a significant turning point in the history of Israel, as the Lord consents to appointing a king for Israel. Nevertheless, God's continuing concern for the people of Israel becomes evident in the way in which God reveals His idea of a great monarch, as opposed to one like the nations.

APPLICATION



NOTES

1. Look at the learner objectives for this session. Can you:
 - Distinguish the unique features of Joshua and Judges.
 - Identify the lessons learned in the *Ebenezer* account, early in 1 Samuel, in regard to Israel's relationship with God.
2. Read 1 Sam. 4. Consider the lesson the people of Israel learned in relation to placing their trust in the ark rather than in God. What conclusions would you draw regarding how to approach God and the sacred objects of God (such as the Ark of the Covenant)?
3. Read 1 Sam. 5-6. Summarize the story recorded in these two chapters. Discuss the lessons the Philistines appear to have learned through the experience described in this account. Compare the experience of the Philistines to the lesson the men of Beth-shemesh appear to have learned in the story.
4. Read 1 Sam. 8-11. Summarize the process by which Israel's first king is established. Consider what the message(s) may be concerning God's idea of kingship for Israel.
5. Compare and contrast 1 Sam. 15 and 2 Sam. 11:1-12:23 with Ps. 51. Compare and contrast Saul's reaction to his sins and David's reaction to his sins. What lessons can be learned from these texts concerning an appropriate response to sin?
6. Read the following texts: Judg. 2:11-23, 3:7-15, 4:1-24, 6:1-16, 10:6-11:33, 13:1-5. Explain the general pattern (series of events) that appears to be repeated in these texts. List the steps that seem to make up this pattern (some steps may not be evident in every passage).
7. In your journal, record your reflections and insights from this session and from your reading and study. Include a discussion of: In the Old Testament, God called His people to confront the evil of their day. What evil must we recognize and confront in our own culture?

EXAM


NOTES

1. The setting of Deuteronomy is the Plains of Moab across the Jordan River from the Promised Land.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. Deuteronomy depicts Moses _____.
 - A. singing the book of Deuteronomy as a song
 - B. delivering the book of Deuteronomy as a political speech
 - C. preaching the book of Deuteronomy as a sermon
 - D. none of the above

3. Joshua's opening speech promises victory in the taking of the land, if the people maintain strong family ties.
 - A. True
 - B. False

4. Joshua's final message urges the people to choose obedience and blessing, and is similar to Moses' final message before his death.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. The accounts of the conquest of the Promised Land in Joshua and Judges differ in the following ways _____.
 - A. In Judges, the conquest is quick and decisive. In Joshua, the conquest is more slow and methodical.
 - B. In Joshua, the conquest is quick and decisive. In Judges, the conquest is more slow and methodical.
 - C. The accounts don't differ much at all
 - D. None of the above

6. In 1 Sam. 8, the elders of Israel approach Samuel and request that he appoint a king to judge Israel like the nations.
 - A. True
 - B. False

7. *Ichabod* can be translated _____.
 - A. Full of glory
 - B. Oh, glory
 - C. Glory hallelujah
 - D. No glory

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8. According to the session material, the following is NOT a reason that the Israelites were defeated by the Philistines _____.
 - A. The spread of sin in the community of Israel
 - B. No one appears to consult the word of the Lord
 - C. The Philistines had large chariots and horses
 - D. Israel appears to place its trust in the ark of the covenant of the Lord, rather than consulting the Lord himself

9. Samuel sets up a stone monument and calls it Ebenezer, which literally translates stone of help.
 - A. True
 - B. False

10. There is no mention of the ark of the covenant of the Lord being involved in the final battle with the Philistines. It appears what has prompted the Lord to act on Israel's behalf are the acts of renewal and humility on the part of Israel.
 - A. True
 - B. False

11. The people of Israel learn that sacred objects like the Ark of the Covenant serve as means of controlling God.
 - A. True
 - B. False

12. Despite the fact God demonstrated that a humble and direct relationship with Him provides leadership and strength, the people request _____.
 - A. the ark of the covenant be returned to camp
 - B. a king
 - C. a new judge
 - D. none of the above

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. What is the purpose of Deuteronomy? Why was it written? What did it serve to do for the people of Israel?
2. What is the style of Deuteronomy?
3. How is Joshua's account of the conquest of the Promised Land different than the account in Judges? How are they similar?
4. What does the name *Ebenezer* translate to? Why is this name significant?
5. What lessons are learned by the Israelites in the Ebenezer account in 1 Samuel in regard to Israel's relationship with God?