

**Judges 3:1-4** *Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof; Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwell in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.*

- The book of Judges has been called “The Dark Ages of Israel” because of the nation’s constant backsliding. This is characterized by the recurring cycle of disobedience, foreign oppression, cries of distress, and deliverance by the judges (and phrases like “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” “handed them over to,” “cried unto the Lord,” and “the land had peace”).
- Remarkably, this age of failure in Israel was in a special way the Old Testament Age of the Spirit, when men were enabled by God’s Spirit to accomplish mighty acts in the war against darkness!
- In the beginning of this book, God tells us that He chose to leave heathen nations in the promised land to **PROVE** Israel, and to teach **WARFARE** to the younger ones who had never known war.
- In the New Testament, God many times leaves major obstacles in our “promised land” to accomplish the same two goals: **PROVING FAITHFULNESS** in established saints and **TEACHING WARFARE** to new Christians. Learning these things is more crucial to our success than having “spiritual comfort.”
- Have you ever wished you could “arrive” spiritually? Paul discovered it would never happen in this life!

*(2 Corinthians 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.)*

**ISRAEL WAS LEFT WITH FOUR MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THEIR PROMISED LAND:**

**1. THE PHILISTINES:**

- they posed a continual threat because they monopolized the making of iron (*1 Sam. 13:19-20*)
- the church cannot match the earthly abilities of the world; we must work in the spiritual realm
- God wants to teach us to rely solely on Him instead of the world’s talents and tactics

**2. THE CANAANITES:**

- Canaanite fertility cults were more lewd, corrupt and immoral than anything else in antiquity
- No wonder God told Israel to completely destroy them; in NT we “mortify” the flesh (*Rom. 8:13*)
- God doesn’t deliver us from our flesh - He expects US to “flee” and “pluck it out” (*Matt. 5:29-30*)

**3. THE SIDONIANS:**

- best known for Jezebel, daughter of their king, who married Jewish king Ahab (*1 Kings 16:31*)
- more than anyone else in Scripture, Jezebel is associated with worldly appearance and actions
- the call to “come out from among them and be ye separate” (*2 Cor. 6:17*) is a NT call!

**4. THE HIVITES:**

- best known for their deception of Joshua (*Josh. 9:14-15*) by using an elaborate scheme
- our day is best characterized by religion wanting to be in “league” with apostolic power
- only through constant counsel with the Lord can the NT church avoid the same mistakes!

- Multitudes followed Jesus for the loaves and fishes. Crowds thronged him for the miracles. Many came to hear him teach. Few followed that teaching. Even fewer walked with him. Only a handful stayed when the tide of popularity turned against him. At his arrest, everyone forsook him and fled.
- Jesus had anticipated this from the beginning! (*see John 6:60-68*) **Only a few really want this!**
- Jesus has DELAYED OUR DELIVERANCE because our spiritual development is most important!
- When Israel was at a standstill facing Goliath, they all hoped God would do something. But God did nothing until David did something. God intervened, but He was waiting for someone to move!