

ASSIGNMENT 2

Conquest and Settlement of the Land 1225-1020 B.C.

Under Joshua, the Promised Land was "conquered" by Israel. Archaeology attests to new occupations of the sites by people who built more crudely, made poorer pottery, etc., the Israelites in transition from a nomadic to a sedentary culture. A prevalent concept was that of "Holy War," in which Yahweh Himself took the land from its Baal-worshipping, idolatrous inhabitants to give to His own people.

Before Joshua left them, a Tribal League was formed at Shechem, when some Canaanite tribes (probably) and some "Israelite" tribes who had never settled in Egypt joined with the descendants of the exodus group and were covenanted to Yahweh, united by their worship of God. When Baalism crept in, the unity was weakened. Baalism crept in because the Israelites tended to copy the ways of Canaan. The new neighbors, the Canaanites, were agricultural people who lived in small city-states, or kingdoms. The productivity of their land, they believed, came from their worship of the fertility gods, or Baals. Israel fell into the worship of Baal, and thus the tribes lost their unity.

The judges were individual leaders raised up by Yahweh to handle specific military situations. It was clearly understood by the historian who wrote Judges, that Baalism incurred God's anger and punishment — the tribes were reduced to subservience by some neighboring group and were hard pressed for several years, until they cried out to Yahweh for help; here He called upon some individual to rescue them: the judge was a military leader. After victory, the people went back to worshipping Yahweh. Then, in another part of the land, some other tribe fell to worshipping Baal, and the pattern was repeated. The tribes were not united, even for defense (as Deborah's roll-call in the poem in Judges 5 shows). Much of the insistent clamor for a king came from the need felt for unity.

Readings

Joshua and the "Conquest" of the Land..... Joshua 1:1 to 11:23

The Covenant at Shechem, probable basis for the
the Tribal League..... Deuteronomy 27, 28
Joshua 8:30-35; 24

Thesis about the challenge of the Land..... Judges 2:6 to 3:6

Accounts of individual charismatic leaders
("Judges") Judges 4-5; 6-8; 9; 11; 13-16

Questions and topics for discussion

- What qualities are impressed upon Joshua as necessary for himself and the people?
- What aspects of "Holy War" do you see (no spoil to be taken; God fights against His enemies; numbers of men are not important — absence of fear *is* important, etc.)? Watch them as you continue reading, even in the period of the Divided Kingdoms.
- Note that the Covenant at Shechem is important in the establishment of a Tribal League, the form of government under God during the period of land settlement. The provisions of the Covenant imply adherence to the stipulations of the Decalogue.
- What is the pattern (cycle of events) in the period of the judges?
- Note the problems facing the Children of Israel as they settle in the land: geography (terrain) and scatteredness of the tribes; Baal worship by residents whose culture is more advanced materially than that of the nomadic shepherd Israelites moving in and having to learn to be farmers — agriculture for the Canaanites being based on the worship of fertility gods.

NOTES

ASSIGNMENT 2 Continued

NOTES

- What traits did the judges have in common? Who could be a judge?
- The Fable of the Trees (Judges 9:8-15) is NOT to be read in a 20th Century A.D. context, with the idea that it is difficult to find good men to go into government. It reflects, rather, the prevalent concept (like Gideon's statement in Judges 8:23) that God is King and men serve Him and the people best, as the good trees did, *without* the position of king, which would make a man a rival of God. Only a "bramble bush" (a vain, boastful, ambitious person) would even seek the kingship.
- What superstitions do you notice — about seeing God or an angel, touching the Ark, etc.?
- Why was God angry at the house of Eli?

United Kingdom, 1020-926 B.C.

A strong conservative element, chiefly among the northern tribes, resisted the monarchy, adhering to the concept of God's rule as in the time of the charismatic leaders, the judges. Presently the old historical traditions of a chosen people in a promised land are linked with a (new) promise to David of a successor upon his throne. This idea takes strong hold in the south, where Jerusalem is situated, a city finally captured by David from its inhabitants, the Jebusite tribe. This new capital is strategically located, as neither northern nor southern tribes have allegiance to it from early times; it is "our" capital, to which David brings the Ark, the oldest symbol of God's covenant relationship to His people.

Readings

Transition through Samuel from the Judges to the Monarchy	I Samuel 1-8
Saul	I Samuel 9-31 (omit Chapter 25)
David	I Samuel 16 to II Samuel 24 (pick up I Samuel 25. There is overlapping in the lives of these two men.)
Solomon	I Kings 1-11
Rehoboam	I Kings 12:1-24

Questions and topics for discussion

- Why was Yahweh hurt when His people insisted upon having a king?
- What were the reasons for wishing a king? (Basic in the period of the judges was the unity of the tribes through adherence to Yahweh. Baalism broke into this, of course. However, there was a need for a clearer sense of common defense, especially against a new enemy, the Philistines.)
- Compare Saul, David, and Solomon as kings on these points: traits (qualifications for kingship), concepts of God, relationship to God, achievements, defects. (Do not forget that Saul did not seek the kingship, was the first to unite the scattered tribes for war, was the first to be a king, and that he presently began to think of the kingship as hereditary—thus becoming entwined in a situation and emotions prompting his enmity towards David.)
- When we come to Solomon we are at the zenith of the material (historical) kingdom. What evidences of this do you find in your Bible and outside reading?
- What made the kingdom divide? Do you see in the northern tribes' declaration of independence from the southern kingdom of Judah (under Solomon's son, Rehoboam) a fulfillment of Samuel's descriptive prophecy about a king in I Samuel 8?