

Day 239 - SUNDAY: August 27th

Judges 1

Judges 1:1–36 NKJV

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?" And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand." So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him. Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he

died. Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland. Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.) Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. Now it happened, when she came to him, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" So she said to him, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which lies in the South near Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. And

Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak. But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.) And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy." So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day. However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean

and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute. Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in

Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute. Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward.

Daily Deep Dive:

Book Overview:

Here is the UCG reading programs overview of Judges:

“The second book of the Prophets, Judges spans the approximately 325 years from the death of Joshua, some 25 years after Israel's entry into the Promised Land, to shortly before the coronation of Israel's first human king, Saul. Though it may have been written by various authors, adding to the storyline as events transpired—e.g., the Song of Deborah and the parable of Jotham—it was probably put into its final form by the last of the judges, Samuel, in the 11th century B.C. The Talmud states, "Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the book of Judges" (Baba Bathra 14b).

Moses and Joshua were, of course, the first of Israel's judges. But once in the Promised Land, others followed. The judges were military men and governors whom God led to deliver Israel from foreign oppression and who then had a

responsibility to "judge" the people in concert with the priests and Levites (Deuteronomy 17:8–9). Each judge acted in a capacity similar to the later kings of Israel, except no hereditary line was involved. No judge after Moses and Joshua exercised authority over all Israel, but each functioned within a limited geographical area for a particular period of time.

As for general themes, the book of Judges shows that Israel's national existence depended on her obedience. In a monotonous cycle: Israel rebelled; God allowed them to be conquered by an enemy king; they were vassals to a foreign nation for a period of years; Israel cried to God; and God raised up a judge to deliver them. The cycle may be described as sin, servitude, supplication, salvation. (Notice that God always gave more years of peace than years of captivity—often at a five-to-one ratio.)

Judges also shows the necessity of right leadership. Each time God delivered Israel, He called a specific individual to lead them into battle, and to be judge over them when they were freed. And when that leader died, the nation returned to its apostasy (with the exception of Samuel, the last judge, whose situation was rather different, as we will later see).

Judges is a book about people set on "doing their own thing" ("In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes"—Judges 21:25; also 17:6; 18:1; 19:1). The absence of a human monarch allowed the people a great deal of personal freedom. But such freedom without adherence to God's moral instructions inevitably leads to anarchy and confusion. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries on Judges notes that the period of the Judges set the stage for the apostasy that later led to the national punishments God visited upon Israel and Judah. "Few periods in Israel's eventful history are as important as the period of the judges. During these centuries the nation took the wrong turning that led to her downfall and near-destruction. The apostasy of the later generations has its origin in the early years of the settlement, and there is a clear line between the time when the nation first went after Baal and the dark age when the Jerusalem Temple itself was defiled with all the trappings of the Baal worship, not excluding cultic prostitutes (2 Kings 23:4–7)" (p. 11).

Because many of the tribes allowed Canaanites to continue to dwell in the land, the influence of Baal and Asherah worship retained a foothold. Worship of these pagan gods involved the most vile acts, including sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals. For these and other abominations, God would eventually send His people into captivity.

Bible scholars have a problem with Judges because "there is general agreement that the problem of harmonizing the chronological data presents insurmountable difficulty" (Soncino Commentary, introductory notes to Judges). Some 50 different methods of calculating the chronology of Judges have been offered. This is because many of the judgeships overlap, the last chapters of the book are out of sequence, and many scholars—dating Israel's conquest of the land too late—do not allow the full amount of time between the conquest and the beginning of the monarchy.



Map of the Judges Locations

After God had brought Israel out of Egypt, He told them that He would bring them into a blessed land whose inhabitants were to be utterly destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:1–2). Israel was to show no mercy, nor make any covenant with them. Nevertheless, God said He would not expel the Canaanites immediately, but would, little by little, drive them out before Israel, lest a sudden depopulation of the land be to Israel's hurt (Exodus 23:29–30). This God would have done, if only Israel would have remained faithful to the task.

The business of conquering the land was begun under Joshua. All the days of his life it appears that the Israelites remained generally faithful to the task, though Joshua complained about their lack of zeal even during his lifetime (e.g., Joshua 18:3). But after Joshua died, Israel's zeal definitely slackened. The people became more interested in enjoying God's blessings (a settled life in a new land) and less interested in carrying out His directives (exterminating the Canaanites). Their shortsightedness would haunt the new nation throughout its entire history and ultimately lead to its downfall.

Judah and Simeon began well, working together to clear their inheritances of the Canaanites. Most of the highlands were secured for Judah and Simeon, but the Canaanites of the lowlands were better armed and resisted the two tribes. God was not willing to then remove those Canaanites. Instead, they would be removed later.

The people of Benjamin, however, were not so zealous. When they could not drive the Jebusites from Jerusalem—Jebusites who had been driven from the city by Judah, but then had returned to reinhabit it—the Benjamites did nothing. They did not seek assistance from their brother tribes but instead chose to allow the Jebusites to remain. Benjamin pursued the occupation of its territory halfheartedly, and the Jebusites would remain until David's day.

The story was much the same with the other tribes. Ephraim and Manasseh left many Canaanites dwelling in their land. Asher did likewise. Naphtali followed suit, and Dan allowed itself to be driven away by the Canaanites who held its allotted territory. Thus the stage was set for a continual train of miseries. The halfhearted conquest would result in repeated wars, intertribal disputes, inefficient national government, frequent apostasies in which

Canaanite religious practices were embraced, and, as a result, eventual expulsion from the land.

God never gives a command that cannot be followed, at least in the letter. Though the doing of the command might be difficult and may require considerable time and effort, the latter end always proves to be immeasurably better than the results of neglecting to obey the command.

As Christians we have been given the command to fight the good fight of faith, pressing onward to receive our reward in the spiritual "Promised Land" of God's Kingdom. It requires consistent and energetic effort, and there are always spiritual Canaanites who oppose us and attempt to drive us from our inheritance. How have you pursued your inheritance? Have you slacked off? Have you warred with half a heart? Are you willing to fellowship or run with spiritual Canaanites, not recognizing that to do so only means eventual expulsion from your inheritance? If so, now is the time to repent, redouble your efforts and make a good warfare. And while warring, do not forget to aid your brother as he strives for his inheritance also." [END]

I'll add a few more comments: The Archeological Study Bible (Zondervan) states: "It is conceivable that Samuel compiled some accounts from the period of the judges and

that afterward such prophets as Gad and Nathan helped to edit the material” This is based on 1 Chronicles 29:29 that states: “Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer,” This study bible continues by saying: “The frequently repeated phrase “in those days Israel had no king” does suggest a date after the monarchy had been established. Some scholars believe that this book was written before David had captured Jerusalem because the Jebusites still controlled that city.”

Verse 1 – It’s interesting to me that Joshua left no successor as the overall ruler of the nation of Israel. Therefore, Israel asked of God, which tribe should go first as they had no leader to give them instructions.

Verse 5 – Adoni-Bezek was the local king or ruler there.

Verse 6 – The JFB commentary states: “being taken prisoner, he was treated with a severity unusual among the Israelites, for they “cut off his thumbs and great toes.” Barbarities of various kinds were commonly practiced on

prisoners of war in ancient times, and the object of this particular mutilation of the hands and feet was to disable them for military service ever after. The infliction of such a horrid cruelty on this Canaanite chief would have been a foul stain on the character of the Israelites if there were not reason for believing it was done by them as an act of retributive justice, and as such it was regarded by Adonibezek himself, whose conscience read his atrocious crimes in their punishment.” [END]

Verse 13 – We covered this in Joshua 15:17