

Judges 1:1-36 – Gradual Weakening of Israel

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, JFB, Expositor, Geneva, Gill, Henry, Poole, Trapp, Prev, Stewart
Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The Book of Judges, was most likely written by Samuel. We don't know for sure. But it doesn't matter. Remember this saying: It doesn't matter who writes a law, as long as we know it comes from the king. Judges is God's Word.

Now Judges is so called because it was about the time when the judges ruled Israel between the time of Joshua and the installation of King Saul, from about 1400BC-1050BC – about 350 years. The time of the judges was a time of an ever-increasing spiritual darkness in Israel. Israel's moral decline became more and more apparent. Were it not for the grace of God – to keep the covenant he made with Abraham to send Messiah – he would have completely destroyed Israel.

In this book you will see some remarkable similarities with that time and circumstance and our time and circumstance, so the message will be all the more relevant.

In this introductory sermon you will see how Israel started to weaken.

Our headings are:

Judah's Good Example: Tribal 部落

Judah's Good Example: Individual

The Other Tribes started to Weaken

Our goals are: That you will learn that you and your family must constantly lean upon the Messiah for strength to fight against sin and to remain faithful in your Christian life.

Judah Good Example - Tribal

1 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?"

1. After Joshua's death, and before the death of the other leaders of Joshua's era, Israel continued to live for the Lord. They showed this by continuing to conquer 征服 the land – the land from which Messiah would come. Now Joshua had accomplished much, but Israel needed to finish the job. Israel showed their faith by praying. They asked God for directions to do their work. They did not ignore prayer as they did at Ai! And though their lion was dead...their strength was in the Lion of Judah.

Isaiah 33:22 (For the LORD is our Judge, The LORD is our Lawgiver, The LORD is our King; He will save us);

a. No job is ever fully accomplished by leaders alone. Churches that insist on pastors and elders doing all the work will become weak. When the church is weak the kingdom will be weak. Are you helping your pastor and elders to do the work of the kingdom?

b. There must not be an undue exaltation 过度的信靠 of leaders. This might cause an over dependence upon them. And sometimes, when an elder fails, it can hurt the cause of Christ more significantly.

c. Prayer must precede any action. Pray before you drive. Pray before you evangelize. Bathe everything you do with prayer.

2 And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand." 3 So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory 请你与我一同上我抽籤所得的地去, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him.

2. God directed Judah to continue to conquer and Simeon went with him. Were these two tribes the same in everything? Surely not!

Historically, Simeon defended his sister by killing those who took advantage of her, while Judah gave himself as a substitute for his brother Benjamin. Nevertheless, they both served one God and they worked together in unity to advance God's cause.

This is surely a reproving 责备 of those who have no contact outside of your immediate circle and those who refuse to work together with other believers. Will some of other people's actions make you uncomfortable? Surely. But you are to work together for Christ's credit 功劳. The church needs you. You are not called to work only with those with whom you feel comfortable.

4 Then **Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand;** and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. 5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table 在我的桌子底下 取食物 **as I have done, so God has repaid me.**" Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8 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.

3. Judah and Simeon worked together (two are better than one) and destroyed their enemies. Even in destroying their enemies, they **showed their love for God.** Not only did they obey God in going after the enemies, but they also worked to show the surrounding nations that Jehovah was the true God of heaven and earth – the greatest God. Adoni-Bezek used to cut off the thumbs and big toes of the kings he conquered, so **Judah and Simeon showed Jehovah's power over Adoni-Bezek's** god by capturing him and cutting off his toes and thumbs. Even Adoni-Bezek recognized who the true God was!

Don't misunderstand: this was not an example to teach that mutilation 残害 of captured enemies is normal or acceptable. This was an exceptional situation to make a specific point. WWJoshuaD is not an appropriate question!

16 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.

4. Even those from outside of Israel, like Moses' father-in-law's descendants, were welcomed in Israel – and even lived in the royal

tribe –Judah’s tribe – not Levi, Moses’ tribe. So the spiritual situation in Israel was good for a while. Judah was Caleb’s adopted tribe as well. Converts could live wherever they chose.

Everyone must be welcomed into the church of Jesus Christ – the true Jews- as they are royal priests of God.

17 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. 18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. 19 So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they **could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland** 但不能赶走平原的居民, because they had chariots of iron 铁车. 20 And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak

5. Judah continued the quest to capture the land. They had some difficulty with the inhabitants of the lowland so they stopped fighting! Iron chariots scared Judah off. Judah trusted in the power of the chariots of the Canaanites!

6. God never promises that there would always be an easy life. In fact, to the contrary, God says that you must expect suffering. Sin is a fighter. The Devil is a fighter. The people who work for the Devil are fighters. Fight against sins that want to set roots in you!

2Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body 我们虽然四面受压, 却没有压碎, 心里作难, 却不至绝望, 9受到迫害, 却没有被丢弃, 打倒了, 却不至死亡。10我们身上常常带着耶稣的死, 好让耶稣的性也在我们的身上显明出来

Judah’s Good Example - Individual

9 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. 10 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 Talmi. 11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.) **12 Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife."** 13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. 14 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?" 15 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.**

1. While it was good to see the big picture of the tribes – Simeon and Judah- fulfilling God’s command, the Lord took the time to give an individual examples of those who continued the fight. He used the historical example of Caleb who went by himself to fight.

Caleb, the convert, never said the giants of that land (like before) weren’t big and dangerous – he simply stood on the promises of God. He argued from faith, not fear. Earlier, he could have desired with the other 10 spies to go back to Egypt and enjoy the temporary pleasures there. But he could not take the easy way for him. So God promised him that he would enter and occupy the land where he had walked 45 years before. It was a handsome reward. This Caleb was adopted into the tribe of Judah. What a remarkable blessing. His parents named him Caleb – dog-a wild, ferocious 凶猛 animal...not the cute puppy of today, but he had faith in the true God and labored for his Savior. The fact that he was a newcomer or a convert did not stop him.

2. The Lord knows that individually 个人 you can make excuses and say that you could not do anything by yourself – that you need others. So he is saying: “You can do many things by yourself. Stop waiting for others.” This expecting others to do the job (someone else will distribute the tracts), or thinking it is too difficult for you (I am not able to speak), is one of the main reasons the church has become weak. Look to the greatness of your God rather than the size of your enemies.

3. And yet, when the task became too great (or beyond his ability) Caleb asked for help. He rejected the idea of an independent life 单独的生活. He needed others. So he asked for help to conquer Kirjath Sepher and offered his daughter’s hand in marriage. He did not need these new lands but he sought the greater good of Judah and Israel. Caleb was not selfish. He gave up Hebron – a special city - for the worship of God. Othniel, probably not a blood brother, but a cousin, offered Caleb the city as a dowry for his daughter.

Philippians 2:20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

Your nationality, educational background, or gender must not keep you back from accomplishing much for your Savior. **Don’t excuse evangelistic laziness because of limited ability or circumstances.** Don’t say: “I wasn’t raised as a Christian, so I don’t know what to do.” If you don’t know enough doctrine to teach your family and friends to keep them safe from hell, then use good books or listen to good sermons. Ask for help!

Christians must never fight in detached armies 独立的军队 for they threaten the general cause. It is a blessing of having communion with the saints. Ask for help when you need it. Help others when you can. It is when we move away from serving each other that the church truly gets weak.

4. Wisely, Caleb’s daughter urged her husband to ask Caleb for some more land and water for her fields. Her husband was probably a coward so she asked Caleb for their need. Caleb kindly gave it to her. But it is how she characterized the land that is remarkable. She doesn’t see it has “more hard work.” She wanted to labor for her family, for Judah, for Israel, and for the coming Messiah! **She counted it a blessing!** She didn’t say: “Lord, give me a fish,” but “Lord, teach me to fish.”

5. Do you ever feel like your children are more of a burden you don’t want to carry? This is how the world thinks of children today...or work...others people dream of winning the lottery 乐透 Learn that dealing with your challenges is ultimately for the good of your neighbor, for the glory of Christ, and for your blessing! Labor is not a curse. **Further, do not think that spiritual investments you make into children are ever worthless!**

The Other Tribes Started to Weaken

21 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.

1. Benjamin was a great warrior tribe with much skill, but they did not completely drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem (probably a 2nd attempt). Their failure was not corrected until 400 years later under King David. The warriors of Israel weakened Israel. Benjamin's eyes were upon themselves, rather than on their God, so they sank...they shrank away from their duty.

22 And the **house of Joseph** also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. 23 So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.) 24 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." 25 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. 26 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. 27 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. 28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. 29 Nor did **Ephraim** drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

2. And the same thing was true for Ephraim and Manasseh. They capture Luz (Almond), and later called Bethel (House of God), but neither tribe gained complete victory. And while it is commendable that they 2 tribes worked together, that wasn't enough. They mistakenly thought that they could live alongside these wicked tribes. The cancer took roots. **Isn't this the argument of many...who think they could marry those who don't believe...** or those churches that think they can work with other religions...like the Roman Catholic Cardinal who recently said that Christianity was similar to Islam and that we were serving the same god as Muslims? Will the world have to wait until the judgment day to find out that they are lost?

30 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**. 31 Nor did **Asher** drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. 32 So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. 33 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** 伯 示麦和伯 亚纳的居民成了给他们作苦工的人

3. Most of the other tribes did not drive out the enemies as they should but chose to live alongside them. Zebulun and Naphtali went a step farther and put the Canaanites under tribute. Obviously if they could put them under tribute meant they could have destroyed them, but they chose money instead of total destruction. They saw a benefit and so ignored God's law. Like Saul, they thought that good animals should be used for sacrifice and ignored God's call to destroy them all. They made a covenant with the wicked. How could they escape judgment? **They made a small compromise, but that was the slippery slope. The truth is, obeying ¾ of God's laws – even 9/10th is not sufficient.** And if you lose some benefits...because you want to see Satan's kingdom destroyed, don't be alarmed. God will repay you.

34 And the Amorites **forced the children of Dan** into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; 35 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. 36 Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward.

5. Dan backed away from the fight with the Amorites – and chose to run to the mountains for help. (The Amorites were already defeated before.) It took Dan's neighboring tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh to help save them.

6. Surely a nation that refuses to fight cannot not be free for long. Surely a church that refuses to fight will not exist for long. Surely a church that refuses to fight won't be able to give glory to God for long.

Conclusion:

Shortly after Joshua died and before his other contemporaries 同时代的人 died, the people of God continued to do battle with the Canaanites. But you noticed that they did not completely destroy the Canaanites. They choose money over freedom. And while they could survive for a generation, the plague of compromise started to spread.

Brother and Sisters in Jesus Christ: How can the church survive if it chooses to avoid evangelism 传福音 (the means of destroying Satan's kingdom) because of laziness, fear, compromise 妥协, or indifference 漠不关心? How can the church survive if it thinks that you can make peace with the world? If you dig wells and build hospitals, will that destroy the Devil? If you refuse to evangelize because you are afraid you might lose a friendship, **what good is that to the person?** Do you see why the church is weak today? **We will be taken prisoner more and more, like the people of Dan, if we stop short of total transformation 全面的改变 of the culture by preaching of the Word.** So lean upon Messiah and work for a transformative change! It is time to conquer the world and destroy the Devil's work. May the Lord put the Devil under your feet shortly.

Finally, Christ will conquer the world. He makes no compromises with anyone. Surrender to him and live. He paid the price for the freedom of sinners when he died on the cross. Reject him and die in hell.