

Judges 1B

- Following our introduction, we are ready to dive into the book of Judges in chapter 1 today
 - In our summary last week, we learned two things overall
 - Israel is about to lose their national leader, Joshua, who will not be replaced
 - And secondly, as a result of losing Joshua and the elders of his generation, the people of Israel will wander away from the Lord and commit apostasy
 - They begin to do what's right in their own eyes
 - So as we progress through the period of Judges, we will examine how the people of Israel behaved during a time of tribal rule with judges administering the Law
 - One of the challenges of studying the book of Judges is the structure of the book
 - As we said last week, Samuel didn't write this book as a strict historical narrative
 - Instead, he was writing to make a point about the deterioration of Israel and the causes that led to her apostasy
 - Therefore, I have prepared a handout to accompany this lesson and the rest of the study
 - The handout gives you an overview of the historical period covered by this book
 - And it provides a breakdown of the chapters according to Samuel's purpose
 - You'll notice that chapters 1-2 are a review of how Israel progressed in conquering the land
 - Then at the end of the book, chapters 17-21 summarize the main consequences for Israel's failure to defeat the people
 - Only chapters 3-16 run chronologically describing six periods of apostasy in Israel

- But the events of chapter 17 and later do not follow in time the events of chapters 3-16
 - Rather they focus on two specific consequences: the migration of the tribe of Dan and the Benjamite civil war
 - The migration of Dan comes late in the period of Judges
 - But the war of Benjamin comes early in the time of Judges
- In fact, as we begin in Chapter 1, take note of how Judah and Bethlehem are portrayed in contrast to how the tribe of Benjamin is portrayed later in the book

Judg. 1:1 Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD, saying, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

Judg. 1:2 The LORD said, “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

Judg. 1:3 Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into the territory allotted me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I in turn will go with you into the territory allotted you.” So Simeon went with him.

Judg. 1:4 Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands, and they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek.

Judg. 1:5 They found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

Judg. 1:6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

Judg. 1:7 Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.” So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

- Samuel begins his account by describing the first military campaign by Israel following Joshua’s death
 - The fight begins with Judah, who Jacob declared would be the leader among the tribes
 - We know from Jacob’s deathbed blessing of his sons that kings of Israel would arise from Judah
 - And in keeping with that plan, the Lord designates Judah to lead the final conquest of the land

- Also, when you see references to “Judah” or “Simeon” in this passage, it means the whole tribe, not the man of the same name
- So the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Simeon (which shared a border with Judah in the south) become allies in a conquest of the Canaanites in the region
 - The term Canaanite can refer generally to all the people who descended from Canaan, the grandson of Noah
 - You probably remember the account of Noah after the flood

[Gen. 9:20](#) Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.

[Gen. 9:21](#) He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

[Gen. 9:22](#) Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

[Gen. 9:23](#) But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

[Gen. 9:24](#) When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

[Gen. 9:25](#) So he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”

[Gen. 9:26](#) He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.

[Gen. 9:27](#) “May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

- Ham’s dishonoring of his father led to a curse pronounced upon Ham’s family
- The curse was not applied directly to Ham, since Ham was righteous by faith
- God will not curse His children by faith
 - Instead, the curse fell upon Ham’s son, Canaan (as we studied in Genesis)

- This prophet curse becomes the basis for Israel's blessing in the land
- The Canaanite people eventually migrate into Palestine and set up cities, plant vineyards and make a home in the land
- They live there for hundreds and hundreds of years
- In the proper time, God calls Abram, brings him into the land of Canaan
 - Then later, the Lord makes a people from Abraham's seed
 - He sends them to Egypt for a time
 - Then he frees them to wander in the desert for forty years
 - And then they finally enter the land of Canaan under Joshua
 - The Lord could have left the promised land unoccupied by anyone during those centuries when Israel was being made a nation
 - But if He had done that, then when the time came for Israel to enter, they would have been faced with a daunting task
 - The land would have been desolate, overrun by wild animals
 - And it would not have been ready to support millions of people
 - Instead, the Lord did for Israel what He had done for Adam and Woman at Creation
 - He created a perfect home for them, ready to be occupied
 - In this case, the Lord brought the Canaanite people to the region centuries earlier to settle the land
 - While Israel was away, the land was prepared for them
 - As Joshua told us last week, the cities were built, the vineyards were planted, everything was ready for the nation to take over
 - The final piece in God's plan was to ensure that the people in the land were cursed according to His judgment so that they could be justly removed from the land
 - When the Lord ordered Israel to take the land from the Canaanites and to destroy the Canaanite people, He was simply executing the sentence that had been declared by Noah

- The Canaanite people would be servants to Israel, in that they would serve Israel's needs in preparing the land
- And the people of Canaan were cursed, which means destined for destruction
- God prepared every detail so that Israel could enter the Promised Land and enjoy it from day one
- Seeing the hand of God working in this way over centuries and generations reminds us that so often we lack the perspective to understand how God is working for our good
 - As Christians, we like to quote Romans 8:28 ("...He works all things to good for those who love Him...")
 - It gives us reassurance that even when things look bleak, we can trust the Lord to bring something good from the moment
 - And this is very true
 - But what happens when a month goes by, or a year or a decade, or a lifetime...and nothing good seems to have come from the circumstances?
 - Does your faith in God's goodness waver?
 - How many people have we encountered who tell us they no longer go to church or believe in God because of some tragedy they couldn't explain?
 - They can reconcile the evil in their life with the idea of a loving, good God?
 - When you mention Romans 8:28, they shrug it off, because they never saw the good come
 - In those moments, I hope our thoughts turn to example like Israel in Canaan
 - The bad of Ham's sin and Noah's curse resulted in immense God for God's people generations later
 - It set the stage for their blessed entry into the Promised Land
 - But consider this...the good of Noah's circumstances was visited upon other people

- So it may be for us
 - God works on a timeline so vast that we can't begin to understand or anticipate all He intends to accomplish
 - Only what He chooses to reveal to us in His word is within our knowing
 - So you and I will experience tragedies from time to time in our lives, and we may search for the good God is doing in those things
 - And at time we may see the outcome
 - But also consider that the good may not show up for generations to come
 - Remain confident in the goodness of God and do not judge Him according to what you see, that is by your own eyes
- Back in Judges, now we see the good of God's plan taking shape, as Judah marches north against the Canaanite city, Bezek
 - Bezek was a Canaanite city in the Hill Country of Ephraim in the tribal land of Manasseh
 - This city lies north of the area of Judah and Simeon
 - But it seems Judah decided to attack this city because it was a stronghold of the Canaanites
 - The point of the battle was to capture the king of Bezek, Adoni-bezek
 - The term Adoni-bezek means lord of Bezek
 - By capturing the king, you demoralize and weaken your enemy
 - When they capture him, Judah cut off his big toes and thumbs
 - While this may seem cruel to us, it served a very practical purpose in that day
 - Without thumbs you cannot wield a sword in battle
 - And without big toes, you can barely walk much less run
 - So they served as a form of handcuffs and shackles
 - In his current state, he is no longer a threat and cannot escape

- Interesting, the king himself seems to appreciate that justice has been done to him, when he mentions that he himself had done similar things to other kings
 - First, this comment shows us that Judah was not acting outside the norm of his day
 - When the leader of an opposing force is captured, he was neutralized in this way
 - Secondly, it's far more humane than murdering the king, which was the alternative
 - Eventually, Judah takes the king along to Jerusalem as a prisoner of war, where Judah planned his next battle
 - Later, the king dies in Jerusalem though we don't have details for how he died

Judg. 1:8 Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

Judg. 1:9 Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites living in the hill country and in the Negev and in the lowland.

Judg. 1:10 So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they struck Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi.

Judg. 1:11 Then from there he went against the inhabitants of Debir (now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher).

Judg. 1:12 And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah for a wife."

Judg. 1:13 Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah for a wife.

Judg. 1:14 Then it came about when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. Then she alighted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?"

Judg. 1:15 She said to him, "Give me a blessing, since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Judg. 1:16 The descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad; and they went and lived with the people.

Judg. 1:17 Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

[Judg. 1:18](#) And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

[Judg. 1:19](#) Now the LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots.

[Judg. 1:20](#) Then they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised; and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak.

[Judg. 1:21](#) But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

- In v.8 we find Judah attacking the next Canaanite city of Jerusalem
 - At this time, Jerusalem was a very small, unfortified city on top of Mt Moriah
 - It was a Jebusite city
 - Jebusites were descendants of Canaanites peoples
 - Judah did the job God commanded
 - They conquered the city and burned it
 - Then they proceeded south back into the territories of Judah and Simeon defeating town after town of Canaanites
 - Things are looking good at this point
 - Joshua has died, but Judah is still making good progress
 - The Lord is clearly continuing to bless His people in these conquests
 - We see Samuel remarking that the Lord is with the people in these conquests of the land
- Samuel takes a moment in this narrative to introduce an important character: Othniel
 - Othniel is a younger brother of Caleb, who was a bold warrior like his brother
 - Earlier in the campaigns of Joshua, Othniel had played a significant part in capturing a city called Kiriath-sepher

- At that time, Caleb had offered his daughter to the man who could conquer the city
- When Othniel learned of the offer, he won the daughter's hand by defeating the city
- And in return, he received Achsah as his wife
- Samuel retells the story here to explain two things
 - First, he is emphasizing that though the town was taken before, it needed to be taken again because the Israelites failed to settle it
 - Just because you defeat a city doesn't mean it ceases being a threat
 - You have to remove the inhabitants and begin occupying it
 - Joshua defeated it once, but now Judah had to defeat it again, now under its new name, Debir
- Secondly, Samuel is showcasing the strength and resourcefulness of the women of Israel in the days when they first entered the land
 - After Othniel wins Achsah's hand, she brings her husband to petition Caleb for an inheritance in the land
 - When they come to Caleb, we can see that Achsah does the talking
 - She persuades dad for land and then later for springs to support them in the desert
 - She is bold and smart, which are qualities that must have come from growing up in a time of war and conquest
 - It would seem the women of Israel were molded by their experiences under Joshua into a resourceful group of leaders
 - But we're also left wondering why her husband wasn't capable of doing the same on her behalf?
 - The norm of the day would have been for her husband to take that leadership role
 - The fact that she did so in his place is both credit to her and warning cloud of Israel's future under these judges

- As we'll see, women are an important feature in Samuel's book
 - They tell a similar story of decline in the nation
 - The book begins with women as strong leaders, like Achsah here and later Deborah
 - By the end of the book, though, we'll read a story of another woman also seen riding on a donkey
 - But in the coming story, the woman's circumstances will be very different
- But for now, Judah is making the proper inroads into the land
 - The Canaanite cities in Judah and Simeon and even into Benjamin and Manasseh have been conquered as God directed
 - Even the relatives of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenites, have chosen to separate themselves from the Israelites
 - They have moved out of Jericho and into the wilderness, returning to their nomadic lifestyle
 - But then Samuel leaves us with an ominous details concerning Jerusalem
 - The city of Jerusalem falls within the territory of Benjamin
 - Judah conquered the city and burned it, but the Benjamites didn't follow suit and drive out the Jebusites
 - We read in v.21 that the Benjamites allowed these cursed, Canaanite people to live among the people of Israel
 - And as Samuel writes this, he remarks that this problem persisted even into his day
 - Later it will fall to David to eventually conquer the city and make it the Jewish capital
- This is Samuel's first point of background for beginning the story of judges
 - The good things Judah did were followed by disobedient things done by Benjamin
 - And of course it doesn't stop there

- Looking at the rest of the chapter, the other tribes likewise failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land

Judg. 1:22 Likewise the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them.

Judg. 1:23 The house of Joseph spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz).

Judg. 1:24 The spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly."

Judg. 1:25 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 free.

Judg. 1:26 The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz which is its name to this day.

Judg. 1:27 But Manasseh did not take possession 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; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land.

Judg. 1:28 It came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

Judg. 1:29 Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.

Judg. 1:30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor.

Judg. 1:31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob.

Judg. 1:32 So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

Judg. 1:33 Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

Judg. 1:34 Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;

Judg. 1:35 yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, they became forced labor.

Judg. 1:36 The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.

- Throughout this passage you find a phrase repeated over and over again
 - They did not drive out, they did not drive out

- It begins with the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (called the house of Joseph collectively) negotiating with Hittites instead of defeating them
- Did they need to make an agreement with this man or did they merely need to rely on the Lord to grant them entry into the city?
- They compromised by substituting a man-made way to conquer the city for relying on the Lord
- They settled for peace and ease of living over obedience
- We learned earlier that we may need to wait a long time to see the good things God can bring from the midst of calamities
 - Well, this principle works in the other direction as well
 - The full consequences of our disobedience may not been known until many years later
 - And the disobedience of these tribes in not removing the Canaanites from the land were severe and lasted a long time
- To close this morning, I want to draw your attention to one of Samuel's key themes in writing this book
 - Notice how he emphasized the obedience of Judah, especially in how he defeated the forces in Jerusalem
 - And then notice who was supposed to occupy and hold the city for the nation: the Benjamites
 - Judah did what was right, while Benjamin disobeyed
 - Who rises up from the tribe of Benjamin to lead the nation of Israel?
 - Saul, of course
 - And who rises up from the tribe of Judah to lead Israel?
 - David, of course
 - Samuel is telling a story of apostasy in the land during a time of weak leadership and repeated disobedience
 - But he's also making argument for why Saul came first and David came second
 - Why disobedience must give way to obedience