

Week #:	164	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Judges 1:1-36
Scriptures:	Proverbs 26:11; Hebrews 3:12; Psalm 119:11; Psalm 119:105; Judges 1:1-36				
Songs:	Refiner's Fire – Hillsong (4:00)				
	That's Why We Praise Him – Lisa Bevill (4:23)				
	PRAYER:	Fresh Wind – Hillsong Worship (4:33)			

Judges Chapter 1

Judges is an encouraging book with one victory after another. It is also a depressing book in that they continually turn away from God again and again. It's kind of the glass half empty and half full kind of story.

It serves as a warning as to the consequences of having this kind of a cycle as the norm in their lives as Christians. It was the norm for the Israelites and it can become the norm for the believer as well where Christians never experience that victorious life. They're constantly somewhere at some level in that cycle of sin – or the Cycle of Apostasy.

The book of Judges teaches those who are in that cycle how to break it. It is breakable. There is a way to get out of that rut, and the book of Judges gives us the keys to doing that. We will call them the three R's: Repent >>> Return >>> Repeat

We see this in the letter to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 where they were admonished because of leaving their first love. You could say they were in a rut, and the exhortation to them is this three-fold approach to go back and do what worked in the beginning: repent, return, and repeat. When we get into this three-prong cycle, then we can effectively break that cycle of apostasy that we find throughout the book of Judges.

Throughout this book there are 12 deliverers sent by God to help the people return to God. Our deliverer is more powerful though, and it only takes the power of Jesus Christ. When Jesus, as our deliverer, breaks the cycle, then His Word as our daily bread keeps us from going back.

Proverbs 26:11 says:

¹¹ Just as a dog returns to his vomit, a fool repeats his folly.

This is a graphic and disgusting proverb. Yet it is what God feels like when He sees us get stuck in this cycle just as Israel did for so many years.

We are encouraged by Paul in Hebrews 3:12

¹² Watch out, brothers, so that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust, which could lead you to apostatize from the living God!

God does not want us to get stuck in this foolish cycle. He gives us the way out.

Psalms 119:11

¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Psalms 119:105

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The whole of Psalm 119 is all about the Word of God. If you want to know how to break that cycle, it can only be done by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in your life. You've got to get into the Word and the Word has to get into you.

God doesn't want us to live this life of up and down, back and forth, chaos. His desire is to have us remain with Him.

Throughout the book of Judges Israel will stay in this sin cycle because of their low regard for the Word of God – the commands of God. A Christian who has a high regard for the Word of God is a Christian who will live and walk in victory. It is said that sin will keep you from the Bible, but the opposite is true too – the Bible will keep you from sin! It's a shield and protection. We need the Word of God daily.

We will see right from the start as we begin this book how low their regard for God's commands was.

Judges 1:1-36

¹ After the death of Y'hoshua, the people of Isra'el asked *ADONAI*, "Who will go up for us first to fight against the Kena'ani [Canaanites]?" ² *ADONAI* said: "Y'hudah [Judah] will go up; here, I have handed the land over to him."

We don't know how the Lord spoke to them in this instance. It is possible that the answer was from the high priest's breastplate. Adonai would reveal His will through the stones on it. However, it was said, God said to send Judah first. The name is the nature. Judah means praise. So, God was sending PRAISE first. Our praise of the Lord should always precede our service to the Lord as well as our battles in the Lord.

³ Y'hudah [Judah] said to his brother Shim'on [Simeon], "Come up with me into my assigned territory, so that we can fight against the Kena'ani [Canaanites]; and I likewise will go with you into your territory." So Shim'on [Simeon] went with him.

At first glance it appears to be a good idea to have Simeon come with Judah and go first. It could be the camaraderie of doing this together. The problem is this isn't what God said for them to do. Is it possible that they are cowardly? Even after hearing from God, they are choosing another way that sounds better to them.

⁴ Y'hudah [Judah] went up; and *ADONAI* gave the Kena'ani [Canaanite] and the P'rizi [Perizzites] into their hands; of those in Bezek they killed ten thousand men. ⁵ They found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek; and they fought against him. They killed the Kena'ani [Canaanites] and the P'rizi [Perizzites], ⁶ but Adoni-Bezek fled. They pursued him, caught him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

They just killed 10,000 men. That's the entire population of some small towns. Why would they cut off their thumbs and toes? Anyone who has ever suffered an injury to their thumb or toe can give a little insight here. You cannot hold a sword or pull back a bow if you do not have a thumb, and you cannot balance correctly or run properly if you do not have a big toe.

Again here we see also that they have gone beyond that which God had told them to do. They did it out of disobedience. There's a pattern developing here. These small little things that

creep in, a little at a time. The little sin that your conscience prods you about, and you ignore it. Then the next time it is easier to ignore it, and it's easier to go further in your sin. Eventually you get to the point of not even hearing that prodding of the Holy Spirit inside us.

⁷ Adoni-Bezek said: "Seventy kings, with their thumbs and their big toes cut off, gathered food under my table; God has paid me back in accordance with what I did." They brought him to Yerushalayim [Jerusalem], and he died there.

You would think this man would be indignant after what he has been through in facing these tribes, but he isn't. Instead, he sees this as the justice of God. Man knows that God is a just judge.

⁸ Then the people of Y'hudah [Judah] fought against Yerushalayim [Jerusalem], captured it, overpowered it with the sword, and set the city on fire.

We studied before about the first fruits being God's. The burning of the city is a clue that this is what is happening here.

⁹ Afterwards, the people of Y'hudah [Judah] went down to fight against the Kena'ani [Canaanites] who lived in the hill-country, in the Negev [mountains], and in the Sh'felah [low-lands]. ¹⁰ Y'hudah [Judah] also attacked the Kena'ani [Canaanites] living in Hebron [Hebron] (formerly called Kiryat-Arba), and they overpowered Sheshai, Achiman and Talmai.

¹¹ From there they attacked the inhabitants of D'vir (D'vir was formerly called Kiryat-Sefer). ¹² Kalev [Caleb] said: "To whoever overpowers Kiryat-Sefer and captures it I will give my daughter 'Akhsah as his wife." ¹³ 'Otni'el the son of K'naz [Kenaz], Kalev's [Caleb's] younger brother, captured it; so he gave him 'Akhsah his daughter as his wife.

¹⁴ After becoming his wife, she persuaded him to ask her father to give them a field; when she got off her donkey, Kalev [Caleb] asked her, "What do you want?" ¹⁵ She said to him: "Give me a blessing: since you gave me land in the Negev [south], also give me sources of water." So Kalev [Caleb] gave her the Upper Springs and the Lower Springs.

This is a retelling of what was written in Joshua 15. It's interesting that it is a story that is told twice. This exploit is probably recorded twice because of the heroism of it. Years after this account, God raises up Othniel to be the first judge in this book. (Judges 3)

¹⁶ Next, the descendants of the Keini, Moshe's father-in-law, went up out of the City of Date-Palms with the people of Y'hudah [Judah] into the Y'hudah [Judah] Desert south of 'Arad; and they came and settled with the people.

¹⁷ Y'hudah [Judah] went with Shim'on [Simeon] his brother; they overpowered the Kena'ani [Canaanites] who inhabited Tz'fat, and completely destroyed it. The name of the city was called Hormah. ¹⁸ Y'hudah [Judah] also took 'Azah with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory and 'Ekron with its territory. ¹⁹ ADONAI was with Y'hudah [Judah], and they took possession of the hill-country, because they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, since they had iron chariots.

²⁰ They gave Hebron [Hebron] to Kalev [Caleb], as Moshe had said to do; and he drove out from there the three sons of 'Anak.

²¹ The people of Binyamin did not drive out the Y'vusi [Joseph] who inhabited Yerushalayim [Jerusalem]; rather, the Y'vusi [Joseph] continued living with the people of Binyamin in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem], as they do to this day.

²² The house of Yosef [Joseph] likewise attacked Beit-El; and *ADONAI* was with them.

²³ The house of Yosef [Joseph] sent spies to Beit-El (the city was formerly called Luz).

²⁴ The spies saw a man coming out of the city and said to him: "Please show us the way to enter the city, and we will treat you kindly." ²⁵ So he showed them the way into the city, and they overpowered the city with the sword, but they let the man and all his family go free. ²⁶ He went into the land of the Hittim [Hittites], built a city and called it Luz, which is its name to this day.

In verse 22 the tribe of the house of Yosef (probably only Ephraim) attacks the city of Beit-El that at one time was known as Luz. The city of Ai was very nearby, in fact Ai and Beit-El (if not sister cities) may well have been the same city just slightly relocated after a destruction. When Ephraim approached the city a man of Beit-El decided to co-operate with some Ephraimite spies and show them a good way to steal into the city. In return the Ephraimite spies promised to let the man and all of his family survive the coming onslaught. This has tones of the Jericho attack and Rahab the prostitute/innkeeper from the early parts of the book of Joshua, but that's where all similarity between the two stories ends. This man of Beit-El expressed no interest in Israel's God, and his only motive was self-preservation to the point that he was willing to commit treason to save his own skin. There was no honor in what happened here as there was when Rahab had converted before she met the spies and her allegiance to the God of Israel was at the heart of her decision. We get an interesting and instructional footnote in the next verse that says that this man of Beit-El went into the country of the Hittites (modern day Turkey) and there built a city and called it Luz. In other words after he turned his own home city over to destruction at the hands of Israel, he went and led the construction of a new city and he gave it the same name as his former one. Guilt? Probably.

²⁷ M'nasheh [Manasseh] did not drive out the inhabitants of Beit-Sh'an and its villages, Ta'anakh and its villages, Dor and its villages, Yivle'am [Megiddo] and its villages or Megiddo and its villages; so that the Kena'ani [Canaanites] managed to keep on living in that land. ²⁸ In time, when Isra'el had grown strong, they did put the Kena'ani [Canaanites] to forced labor but failed to drive them out completely.

²⁹ Efrayim [Ephraim] did not drive out the Kena'ani [Canaanites] living in Gezer; so the Kena'ani [Canaanites] continued living in Gezer along with them.

³⁰ Z'vulun [Zebulun] did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol; so the Kena'ani [Canaanites] continued to live among them but became subject to forced labor.

³¹ Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of 'Akko, Tzidon [Sidon], Achlav, Akhziv, Helbah, Afik or Rechov; ³² so the Asheri [Asherites] lived among the Kena'ani [Canaanites] who were living in the land, because they didn't drive them out.

³³ Naftali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beit-Shemesh or Beit-'Anat but lived among the Kena'ani [Canaanites] living in the land; however, the inhabitants of Beit-Shemesh and Beit-'Anat became forced labor for them.

³⁴ The Emori [Amorites] forced the people of Dan into the hills; for they would not let them come down to the valley. ³⁵ The Emori [Amorites] had resolved to live in the Heres Hills [Mount Heres], in Ayalon and in Sha'alvim; but when the power of the house of Yosef grew greater, they became subject to forced labor. ³⁶ So the territory of the Emori [Amorites] was from the Scorpion Ascent and the Rock upward.

From here to the end of chapter one we get mostly a list of failed attempts by various Israelite tribes to drive out various groups of Canaanites from their territories. Basically this is setting the playing field for what we will see happen in a chapter or so in Judges. Manessah, the other house of Joseph, could not drive the Canaanites out of Bet Shean and the surrounding areas. Many of you have been to Bet Shean and the extensive Roman ruins there. Neither could they terminate the Canaanites' hold on Megiddo, a very important fortress on a major trade route crossroads as well as a place that overlooks an extensive portion of the Jezreel Valley. We're told that in time Israel was able to subdue them sufficiently to use them as forced labor; but here we again see how the new Israeli mindset had taken hold. For this generation of Israelites the issue was expediency and economics and God's purposes lost out to these weak and selfish desires.

Ephraim failed at Gezer. Zevulun followed their brothers' ways and allowed the enemy to remain but used them to an economic advantage.

Asher followed suit in their territory.

Naftali made peace and lived intertwined with Canaanites in some of their territory, but was able to subdue them in other parts.

The last couple of verses set the stage for the migration of Dan away from their territory that was contiguous with Judah's (to the west of Judah). Dan not only couldn't defeat the people in their territory, the Amorites who lived there ran Dan out into the hills. We find that Dan eventually moved north to the border of Lebanon. Judah soon annexed Dan's former territory and they were able to defeat the Amorites; though again Judah elected to use the Amorites as forced labor rather than to follow God's instructions to rid the land entirely of them.

In the end we can say this about the state of the 12 tribes as a result of all of that we have discussed today:

1. Israel simply couldn't drive the Canaanites out. So, the Canaanites dug in and Israel's mindset moved from conqueror to diplomat. From sole possessor of the land to cohabitation with those who God found unacceptable to Him.

2. Israel found their freedom of movement highly impeded because their holds on the territories were spotty.
3. Even more problematic in the long run was that the wickedness of the Canaanites' worship of false gods remained intact and therefore represented an acute danger to Israel's purity and holiness, and a daily temptation to dilute their devotion to YHWH.
4. Israel decided it was better to create and maintain good relationships than to eject the Canaanites from the land. In fact, they saw that in many ways the Canaanites they were able to subdue made a ready and usable labor force so to them it made no sense to send them away.

The peace that men construct is not the peace that God instructs. For men peace is invariably the result of one of two things: war or compromise. In war (at least until our era) one side won, the other lost, and one subjugated the other and forced the subjugated to comply. Now more than ever it is a compromise type of peace that men seek. That is NOT the type of peace that Adonai is speaking of in His Word. His peace is absolute, it does not involve compromise and it comes from men's free will choice to serve the Lord as He demands to be served, and nothing else.

Israel saw nothing wrong in their approach to settling Canaan. Israel saw nothing wrong in their approach to battle, their new goal being making peace with their neighbors. So, they participated in their neighbors' festivals and customs, gave respect to their former enemies' beliefs and even to their false gods, and as a result enjoyed a measure of rest and fruitfulness that was mostly manmade, and thus bore little resemblance to what Godly rest and fruitfulness looked like. Inter-marriage between Canaanites and Hebrews became an everyday affair with little resistance or thought, and most and both sides saw it as a good thing. Israel was blind to their condition and would not accept that they had broken faith with their God because they felt so good about themselves and their ability to contrive their own morality WITHOUT the direction of the Lord. We'll see how the Lord feels about this in the next chapter.