

Israel Unable to Conquer All Enemies

Judges 1

Introduction

Have you ever started a task but left it unfinished? Does a puzzle partly done look ready for display? Have you ever started to build a LEGO® kit but stopped before it was complete? Sometimes, you receive a gift that needs to be assembled. If you don't follow the instructions, you risk doing it wrong. Well, that is what Israel did. They only followed part of God's instructions when they moved into the land He promised them.

Israel's people were united when Joshua was their leader. Everyone agreed the goal for Israel was to conquer and then live in the promised land. Joshua and his generation died. The Israelites found themselves without a leader. They began to make **compromises** about the goal. Compromise led to sharing the land with their enemies, which led to marriages between Israelites and the **pagan** people, which led to idolatry (the worship of false gods).

Outline of Judges Chapter 1

- I. Judah's Incomplete Victory Over Enemies - Judges 1:1-20
- II. Other Tribes Fail to Drive Out Enemies - Judges 1:21-36

I. Judah's Incomplete Victory Over Enemies - Judges 1:1-20

Judges begins with the people of Israel asking God *"Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?"* God had commanded the total destruction of the Canaanites living in the land. It was to be a holy war, and the tribes started off right by going to God for direction.

Do you think that destroying all the Canaanites sounds harsh? Why would a loving God command such a horrible thing? The answer is simple. God loves justice, and sin has

consequences. The Canaanites were a sinful people. They were evil, and they worshipped their false gods by practicing evil. They did not value the lives of others, their own children, or even themselves. God requires justice. He is the ultimate Judge with the complete authority to sentence the Canaanites to death. However, the Israelites failed to follow God's command to destroy the Canaanites. As a result, the Canaanites were more than a bad influence on God's chosen people. They infected the Israelites like a deadly and poisonous disease.

God did not leave His people on their own. He was with them. He spoke of Judah saying *Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.* Wouldn't you want to take part in an army with a promise like that! Judah recruited neighboring tribe Simeon. God may have chosen Judah because the conquest was to be completed from the south up. Perhaps Judah was chosen because he was the leading tribe and would someday bring forth the King of kings. Either way, Simeon agreed to fight alongside Judah.

Judah obeyed God and received the victory God promised. The enemy was defeated at Bezek, and their general was captured. Adoni-Bezek means "the Lord of Bezek" and was probably his title. Before he died, he admitted that he has punished seventy enemy kings, proving he was not an easy enemy to conquer. Most remarkable is that he acknowledged God as the One to have victory over him saying, *as I have done, so God has repaid me.* This is because all men know the truth about God. This is known as **general revelation**. Those who choose to live sinfully are making an evil decision to ignore the truth (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:18-20). What can you do to help someone who has chosen to ignore the truth about God?

Judah's remaining battles are mentioned briefly. Jerusalem was a prized city then, just like it is today. It was located at the top of Mt. Moriah and was practically unconquerable. Even though Judah was victorious, the Jebusites would regain control of Jerusalem again in the future. The tribe of Benjamin *did not drive out the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day*¹.

Judah continued to conquer the *hill country, the South (Negev) and lowland*. These are areas in the south of **Palestine** (what Canaan is called today). The hill country separates the north part from the south part of Palestine. In those days, boundaries were established using natural divisions, meaning nature or landmarks. The South, also called Negev (dry) is flat ground from Hebron to the Gulf of Aqaba. It parallels the Dead Sea, and, at 1,300 feet below sea level, it is the lowest spot on earth. Judah controlled all that land.

On a hilltop in the northern part of Judah's territory, there was a fortress city called Hebron² (Joshua 14:15, 15:13-17). The Lord promised this land to Caleb through Moses because he had *a different spirit in him and followed the Lord fully* (Numbers 14:24). Caleb had been one of the spies Moses sent into the land of Canaan. He and Joshua were the only two spies that believed God would deliver the Canaanites to be conquered. The other spies reported *We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we* (Numbers 13:31). The people of Israel sided with the majority of spies and wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb for their reports. God's judgement was that none of the people of Israel would enter into the land He promised except Joshua, Caleb, and the next generation. Furthermore, He struck the faithless spies with the plague and they died. The repentance of the Israelite people came too late.

1 This verse indicates that Judges was written before David (the future King) drove the Jebusites out. It helps to give a date to much of the book of Judges.

2 Abraham and Sarah are buried in Hebron, the patriarchal family burial plot (Genesis 23:2, 25:10).

Hebron was the next conquest for Judah. Caleb was there fighting for the land which God had given to him. Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak (Joshua 15:14). But, he didn't stop there. He was eager to see more of God's promise fulfilled, so he offered a prize for the warrior that conquered the neighboring city of Debir (Kirjath Sepher). He offered his daughter's hand in marriage. His nephew, Othniel, took Debir and was married to Achsah, Caleb's daughter.³ In these times, it would not have been thought of as a forced marriage. Caleb could make this offer because he knew his daughter would trust him to the point of obeying his will over her own. (Likewise, we should trust our Father God's will over our own.) Being the fully faithful man he was, he had surely raised his children to be the same. Caleb could count on the obedience of His daughter in the same way that he could count on God's faithfulness to deliver the city into their hands. How much more would he trust God's choice of a husband for his daughter? And, in fact, Othniel (the prize winner) later became the first deliverer and judge of Israel, receiving the Spirit of the Lord (3:10). Clearly, Caleb was not disappointed in God's choice of son-in-law.

Do you trust God's will more than your own will as Caleb and Achsah did. Just as Caleb knew that God would not withhold any good thing from him (Matthew 7:11), Achsah knew her own father would do the same. She, with her husband's approval, secured for them and their future family a field with springs that provided plenty of water to their land.

With the Lord's presence, Judah cleared the hill country, but failed to clear the lowlands. The iron chariots of the Canaanites were a factor. But there was a far greater reason for the tribes failure: compromise.

3 In early Bible times, it was not a sin to marry relatives until God commanded restrictions against it in Leviticus 18:6-18. The reason that marriage between relatives is strongly discouraged and even forbidden is due to the risk of genetic defects. However, this was not a risk for early humans because their genetic code was so young, it had few defects.

II. Other Tribes Fail to Drive Out Enemies – Judges 1:21-36

There are two phrases which distinguish this section of chapter one: 1) they did not drive the Canaanites out, and 2) so they lived among the Canaanites.

Judah destroyed the enemy in its territory and set the example for the other tribes. However, just as Judah failed to finish the job in the lowlands, seven other tribes failed also. (verses 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33).

- The tribe of Benjamin's territory was north of Judah. Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's sons. He and Joseph were full blood brothers, born of Rachel. The tribe did not destroy the Jebusites, *so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.*
- The tribe of Manasseh was part of Joseph's inheritance. As his father's favorite son, Joseph received a double blessing from his father, one for each of his sons. Unlike the other tribes, Manasseh's territory was on both sides of the Jordan River. This tribe left pockets of Canaanites throughout its territory.
- The tribe of Ephraim, named after Joseph's other son, later became the general name for the northern ten tribes with the capital being Samaria. Ephraim also did not drive out the Canaanites.
- The tribe of Zebulun also failed to drive out the Canaanites.
- The tribe of Asher was so weak that the tables were turned. They are described as dwelling among the Canaanites!
- The tribe of Naphtali, like Asher, is also described as living among the Canaanites. They at least put the Canaanites to tribute, which means they taxed them.
- The tribe of Dan was forced into the mountains by the Amorites (known as very fierce Canaanites), who would not allow the Israelites to come down into the valley! Eventually, the house of Joseph (both the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim) would turn the tables and put the Canaanites under tribute (1:35).

Judah (and Simeon with him) began strong. Still, they stopped short of complete victory. In the end, they **tolerated** the enemy in their midst. Moses and Joshua had given strict warnings about the enemy and the need for total extermination in order to enjoy all that God had promised (Deuteronomy 7:16-21, Joshua 23:5-13).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 52:11 to warn us: *Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you* (2 Corinthians 6:17). Separation is the opposite of compromise. †

Prayer

Lord, let me not compromise Your truth for lies. Lead me from temptation and guard my heart.

Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 6:17 *Therefore, Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.*

Vocabulary

compromise - a choice to accept less than you want in order to have peace

pagan - of false gods

general revelation - proof of God's existence found in nature (creation) and in man himself

Palestine - modern day Canaan; refers to land between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, sometimes including surrounding areas

tolerate - to allow something to be done without taking action to stop it

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 2

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. From page 3 of the notes, what two phrases are common in the first chapter of Judges?

① _____

② _____

2. What did you learn from the notes about Caleb that you did not know before?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 2:1-6.

3. a. From verse 1, who spoke to the Israelites?

- b. From what He says in verses 1 and 2, who do you think this is, specifically?

- c. What three things had He done for the Israelites?

① _____

② _____

③ _____

- d. What two commands did He give in verse two?

① _____

② _____

4. a. Had the Israelites been obedient? (Circle one.) YES NO

- b. What was the consequence of their actions?

5. What was the reaction of the Israelites to these consequences? (Circle all that are correct.)

They laughed.

They wept.

They sacrificed to God.

They made golden idols.

They cleansed themselves.

Each went to his own land.

They all swore and oath.

6. a. What did they name the place?

- b. What does the name mean? (Look in the margin or notes in your Bible.)

DAY THREE: Read Judges 2:7-10.

7. a. How long did Israel faithfully serve God?

b. What happened after that?

c. How do you think this could have happened?

d. Do you think the same thing could happen in your family? Why or why not?

8. Fill in the blanks: Joshua died when he was _____ years old. They buried him _____.

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 2:11-19.

9. These verses describe a cycle of events which will repeat itself seven times in the Book of Judges. Each set of verses below describes a phase of the cycle. Write in your own words what happened in each phase of the cycle.

Judges 2:11-13

Judges 2:14-15

Judges 2:16 and 18

Judges 2: 17 and 19

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 2:20-23.

10. a. What do you learn about God's anger? Use verse 12 also.

b. Why was God angry with Israel? See also Psalm 106:34-40.

11.a. Do you think God is angry with anyone today? If so, who? See John 3:36 for help with your answer.

b. According to the following Scripture passages, how can people escape the anger of God?

John 3:17-18

1 Thessalonians 1:10

12. a. Why did God no longer drive out the pagan nations of the land?

b. From verse 23, What do you think the word 'immediately' indicates?

13. In one sentence, what is Judges chapter 2 about?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 2

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

1. **compromise** negotiate reach agreement war
2. **pagan** false real fake
3. **tolerate** put up with bear with it fight against

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**Word****Definition****compromise**

to allow something to be done without taking action to stop it

general revelation

of false gods

pagan

modern day Canaan; refers to land between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, sometimes including surrounding areas

tolerate

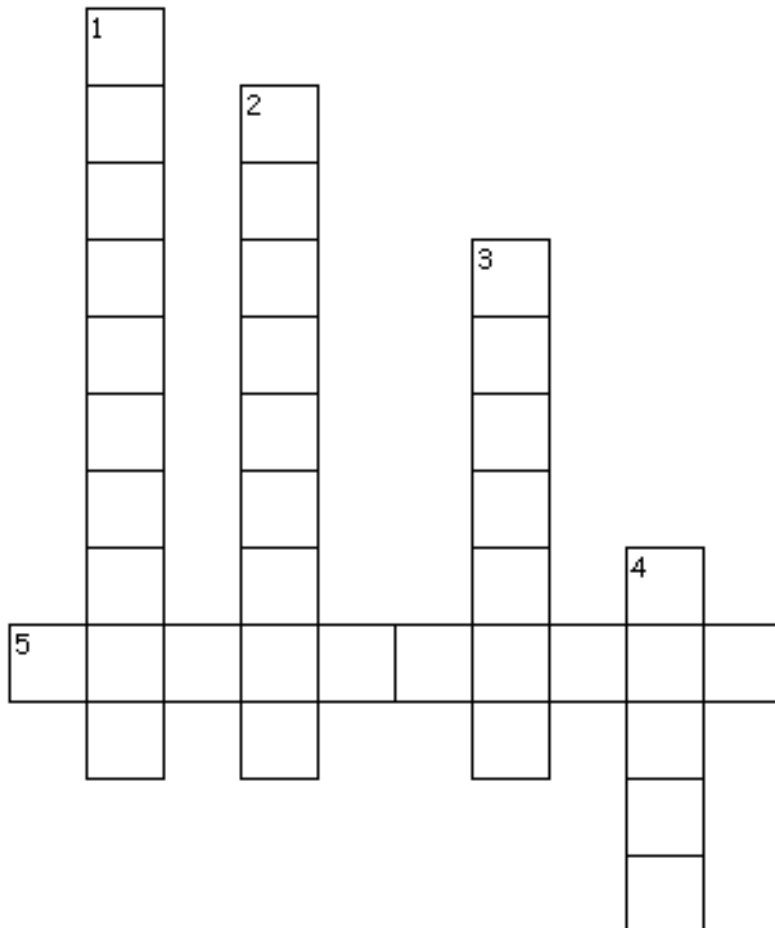
a choice to accept less than you want in order to have peace

Palestine

proof of God's existence found in nature (creation) and in man himself

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.Crossword: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.

Fill in the boxes with the correct words.

**Across**

5. to give a hint or suggestion beforehand of someone or something that is to come

Down

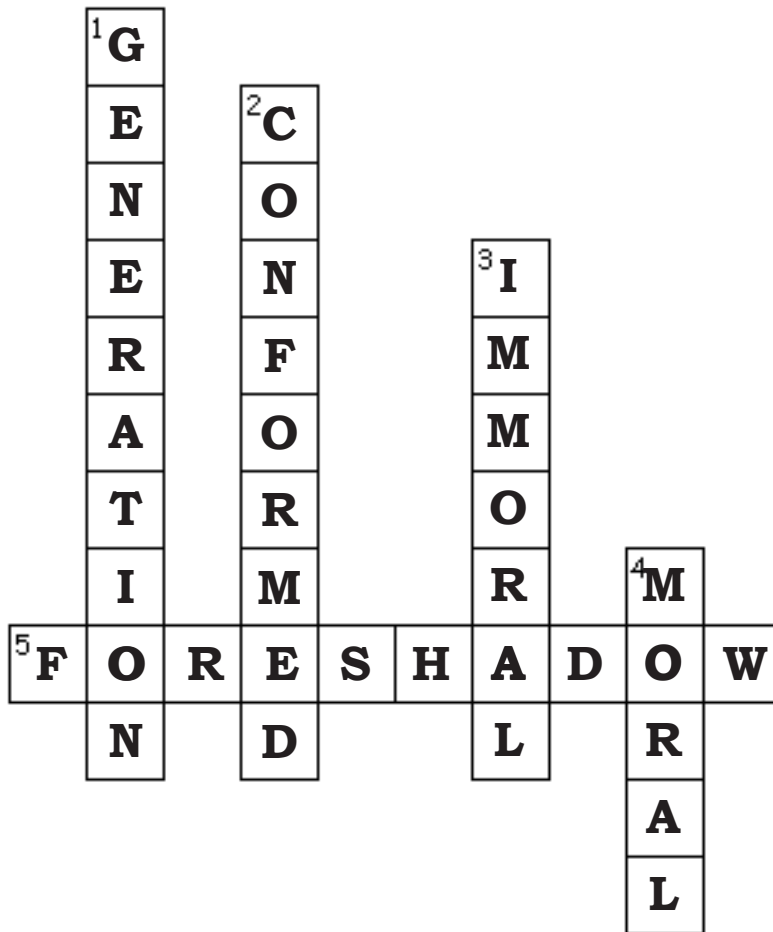
1. a group of individuals born and living at the same time

2. to be similar or identical; to act in agreement

3. not concerned with the rules of right conduct or the difference between right and wrong

4. right behavior; good

ANSWER KEY



Across

5. to give a hint or suggestion beforehand of someone or something that is to come

Down

1. a group of individuals born and living at the same time

2. to be similar or identical; to act in agreement

3. not concerned with the rules of right conduct or the difference between right and wrong

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