

# Judges 1:1-36

**Introduction** – God’s Word comes to us in letters and laws and proverbs and prophecies and poetry and history. Each type of literature must be interpreted with the form of writing in mind. History in the Bible is not to be read as simply names, dates, and places. It is to be read as preached history, as a sermon. The facts are true, but the literary structure, the words and phrases used and repeated, that which is recorded and that which is emphasized, all play into interpreting the narrative. Jesus instructs us that all of the scriptures pointed to Him (Luke 24:27, Heb 1:1, 2 Tim 3:15-16). So we are to look at this history as teaching redemptive history, instructing us in the work of Christ for His people. Judges was known as one of the books of the ‘former prophets’, and so these stories, while true in themselves, also act as ‘types’ in seeing the work of God throughout the history of His people.

**1:1 – “after the death of Joshua”** – Judges covers approximately 350 years, from the time of Joshua’s death until the rise of Samuel, the last judge before the kings of Israel. Joshua had led his people into the Promised Land and accomplished great victories. Judges is a time of occupation of that land and the growing consequences of the people’s compromises in obeying and serving Yahweh alone.

**Initial Faithfulness** (vv 1-17) – The book begins with several short accounts of victory by the tribe of Judah as they faithfully serve the Lord. In them we see miniature accounts of gospel victory.

**Judah – and Simeon** (vv 1-3) – The ‘royal’ line is called to lead the battle into Canaan, for the time of the Canaanites wickedness was now full (Gen 15:16). Simeon would remain in the Southern Kingdom, his land was taken out of Judah’s territory (Josh 19:1-9). Interestingly, Simeon will be ‘saved’ from the Assyrian captivity by this calling from Judah.

**Worldwide Conquest** (vv 4-7) – The Lord of the seventy was put down, along with 10,000 men. He received his just punishment and dies in the city of the great World Conqueror.

**Jerusalem** (v8) – The city set on fire, a ‘new’ Jerusalem would one day be established. Another day would come when another son of Judah, David, would again take Jerusalem. And then another Day would come when the greatest Son of Judah would take Jerusalem.

**Vengeance Upon Giants** (vv 9-10) – The ‘city of Arba’, so named because Arba was the great man among the Anakim who spawned these giants. Caleb had waited forty years to take the giants on, and God granted him victory.

**A Great Love Story** (vv 11-15) – Othniel, to win his bride, destroys a great city of wickedness. Caleb, the father figure, gives the bride to his son (nephew), and grants them a land of peace, and the bride seeks a blessing, an outpouring of water, from the father. There are hints of gospel victory here.

**Faithful In-Laws** (v16) – Moses had persuaded some of Jethro’s family to come with him to the land of promise. Those who believed and followed Moses, came through his line of Levi and were placed in the land of Judah.

**Utter Destruction** (v17) – “Hormah” means ‘placed under the ban, totally destroyed’. If this utter destruction was done according to God’s decree (Deut 13:12-18), then it is offered up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Simeon may be mentioned because this time (as opposed to his actions in Gen 34) he is faithfully bringing God’s wrath to bear.

**Minor Compromises?** (vv 18-21) – Judah took several Philistine cities and the hill country but could not take the valley where the Canaanites had iron chariots, but God had told Judah that He had delivered the land to them. Judah initially takes Jerusalem which is in the land given to Benjamin, but Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites, allowing these pagans to dwell with them. In both of these cases, only a partial victory is obtained. Was the issue ability, or faith - and in that faith obedience and perseverance?

**Theological Geography** (vv 22-36) – As the author takes us across the land, we see pragmatic victories and theological compromises. These compromises are spelled out in a list of progressive failures. Seven times in these verses, the tribes are charged with not ‘driving them out’.

**Another Jericho** (vv 22-26) – Like Jericho, spies are sent to Luz (Bethel) and they find help from within. But this time, when the city is taken, the saved family does not repent and join Israel, but flees and sets up another pagan city.

**Unlawful Treaties** (vv 27-30) – Manasseh does not drive out the Canaanites, but put them under tribute, clearly against the Lord’s commands (Ex 23:32). Ephraim and Zebulun act similarly.

**Dwelling With Them** (vv 31-33) – Asher and Naphtali are not said to allow the previous inhabitants to dwell among them. Rather, they are said to dwell with the inhabitants, as though the Canaanites predominate these lands.

**The Tribe of Dan** (vv 34-36) - This tribe is even forced to live in the mountains. The wickedness of this tribe is given in much more detail in Chapters 17-18.

**And so for us...**

**Our Great Commission** - The people were told to take the land, and we have been told to disciple the nations. History has recorded times where God has faithfully given areas to His people in victory. Faithful men and women who believed God, oftentimes against great odds, mark those times.

**People of Pragmatism** - Today, we seem to be marked as a pragmatic people, willing to compromise if it will provide peace and prosperity for the moment. These compromises seem to bring no instant disaster, and so we put up with the unbelieving impact upon our culture.

**Marked Pessimism** - Over time, the modern church has grown in its pessimistic expectation to have a marked impact on the culture. We are our own prophets.

**Gospel Pictures** - God teaches theology, not so much through systematic theologies, but through stories. His stories teach us that we are to preach His gospel, allow no area of unbelief to rule in the culture, bringing every king and every thought captive to Christ. And we are taught that victory has nothing to do with the size of the enemy, but rather with our faith in His promises.

*Dave Hatcher - October 27, 2002*