

Sample Study *Judges 1-10*

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Read - Introduction, Judges 1:1-36; other references as given.

1. The first verse of the book of Judges is more than a historical marker. It is a statement that identifies a drastic change in the spiritual condition of Israel. Even though the books of Joshua and Judges stand side by side in Scripture, they are poles apart in what they record about Israel's relationship to God. Joshua is a book of victory and faith as the Israelites destroyed the backbone of military resistance in the land of Canaan. Judges is a book of defeat and sin as the individual tribes failed to obey God's command to rid their individual tribal allotments of the remaining heathen influence.
 - a. What was the first thing the sons of Israel did after the death of Joshua (v. 1)?
 - b. Look carefully at the promise the Lord gave to the tribe of Judah (v. 2). What do you notice about the promise?
2. God ordered Israel to fight against the Canaanites (v. 1). (Note: the word Canaanite is used generically in verse one to describe a number of heathen nations living in Palestine.) God's command for Israel to destroy its enemies has caused some people to question the character of God. Why did God command Israel to destroy these nations (Gen. 15:16; De. 7:1-4)?
3. The name Adoni-bezek is likely a title (lord or king of Bezek, cf. Jos. 10:1) rather than a proper name. The Israelites cut off his thumbs and big toes, which incapacitated him as a warrior and as a priest: a dual function common to many ancient kings. This action is a good example of *lex talionis* - the ancient law of retribution that demanded an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (cf. Ex. 21:34).
 - a. The Israelites' action toward the king of Bezek appeared to fulfill the Law's demand for retributive justice. Considering the previous command that Moses had given the Israelites, how would you describe their action (De. 7:1, 2; 20:10-18; Jos. 11:20)?
 - b. Sometimes believers attempt to mask their disobedience to God by doing things that appear to be spiritual (e.g., giving financially to the church missions program but not witnessing for Christ themselves). Give at least two additional examples of things believers do that appear to be spiritual but are only excuses for their disobedience to God.

4. The response of the Canaanite king Adoni-bezek is significant (v. 7). Although it is not surprising that he accepted his specific punishment as *lex talionis*, it is surprising that he saw his punishment to be a direct result of God's judgment. What important spiritual truth(s) does Adoni-bezek's answer illustrate (Ro. 2:14, 15)?

5. The tribes of Judah and Simeon joined forces and captured Jerusalem (v. 8). However, later in chapter one, the Biblical writer appears to contradict himself when he says Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites living in Jerusalem (v. 21). What *do you think* happened?

6. After the defeat of Jerusalem, the two tribes fought against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country (the central mountainous area, v. 10), the Negev (the arid area south of Hebron, vv. 11-17), and in the lowland (the coastal plains, v. 18). The Israelites took possession of the hill country but could not defeat the inhabitants of the lowlands (v. 19). Why couldn't they dispossess the Canaanites from the land (v. 19, cf. De. 7:1, 2; Ju. 1:2-6)?

7. During the original settlement of the land by the twelve Israelite tribes, nine and a half tribes settled west of the Jordan River and two and a half tribes settled east of the Jordan. (Note: the tribe of Manasseh settled on both sides of the Jordan.) The twelfth tribe, Levi, settled west of the Jordan but did not receive a specific parcel of land (cf. Jos. 13:33).
 - a. Of the eight and a half tribes who received an allotment, how many of them did not possess the inheritance that God had promised (vv. 17-36)?

 - b. One four-word phrase occurs five times in vv. 21-36 and summarizes the failure of the Israelite tribes. What is this phrase and what *do you think* its repetition is trying to teach us?

8. God promised to drive the Israelites' enemies out of the land on one condition - obedience to Him (cf. De. 6:17-19). Their failure to possess the land can be attributed to only one thing - disobedience to God (cf. De. 7:4). Similarly, many NT believers fail to appropriate God's precious and magnificent promises of victory over their enemy (sin). The first chapter of Judges teaches some valuable lessons about living victoriously in the Christian life. Please list at least two of them.

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1.
 - a. They inquired (presumably by means of the Urim and Thummim) of the Lord which tribe would be the first to fight against the Canaanites.
 - b. The Lord answered their petition directly. The Lord said the land had already been given into their hand. This indicated that victory was assured.
2. These nations had spurned God's truth and grace for generations (Gen. 15:16). God was directing Israel to function as His mediatorial agent and be the instrument of His wrath against the nations who rejected His call.
3.
 - a. Sin.
 - b.
 1. A believer who participates consistently in corporate worship but has unconfessed sin in his life.
 2. A believer who has been called by God to serve the Lord in a leadership manner but instead serves as a layperson in his local church. Other answers could apply.
4. God has placed knowledge of His law within the heart of all people. This internal law condemns him when he has done wrong and Adoni-bezek's confession is an excellent example of the truth of this reality.
5. The city of Jerusalem lay on the border between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Judahites captured the main part of the city but were not able to conquer the inner fortified part of the city that offered much greater resistance to the Benjaminites. David eventually conquered the entire city (cf. 2 Sam. 5:6-9).
6. The most obvious answer is the one listed in verse 19; the Canaanites had iron chariots. However, this is only a symptomatic result of the effects of their disobedience to God. The real reason that the Israelites could not dispossess the Canaanites from the land was that they had been disobedient to God and He was not willing to remove their enemies from the land. While their administration of the law of retribution appeared to be a fulfillment of the Mosaic command to require a tooth for a tooth, etc. (Ex. 21:34), it was an example of masked disobedience. Perhaps the leaders' action fooled the people, but it did not fool God. As a result they forfeited the power of God over their enemies. God's people need to learn this lesson.
7.
 - a. All of them.
 - b. [Name of tribe] **drive not out...** . The believer's total inability to experience victory over his enemies (sin) when he does not obey the Lord. There are simply no exceptions to this spiritual truth.
8.
 1. Partial obedience to God results in total inability to experience victory over sin.
 2. When a believer attempts to mask his disobedience to God, others might be fooled, but it is God who holds the keys to victory over our enemies. When God's people sin, they forfeit the power of God over their enemies.
 3. Compromise is always a logical (albeit sinful) excuse for disobeying God's commands and rejecting His promises. Other answers could apply.