

Immediate Context

What started off so well in Judges 1:1-20 begins to spiral downward in Judges 1:21-36, and becomes a cycle of spiritual decay, culminating in the Angel of the Lord's intervention in Judges 2:1-5. Yet, by studying their example and identifying how they departed from God's will, we can learn how to avoid making the same spiritual mistakes in our lives.

Judges 1:21 – The Failure of Benjamin

- Why is Benjamin next? We appear to be moving north and Benjamin is a border tribe to Judah.
- Why did Benjamin fail to eliminate the Jebusites? We aren't told why. Look back to the commentary from the past lesson on *Judges 1:19*.

It is significant is that Judges begins with Israel asking God what to do. We don't hear of that happening in the remainder of this chapter. Perhaps that is their first mistake.

Judges 1:22-26 – The House of Joseph and Bethel

- What is the "house of Joseph"? It is likely both Ephraim and the ½ tribe of Manasseh, which had abutting territory and were both children of Joseph. It indicates that they may have initially cooperated (like Judah and Simeon). This might be why verse 22 begins with "Likewise" in the NASB. **It is important to note that the Lord was with them at this point. This will come up again later.**
- What is the significance of Luz/Bethel? It was the place where Jacob (later Israel) had his dream when he ran from Esau. See *Genesis 28:10-22*.
- Note the similarities but yet the significant differences with the Battle of Jericho (*Joshua 2:8-14*). Israel made a covenant with both this man and with Rahab, however:
 - The man from Luz was bought off rather than providing a testimony of faith in God
 - The man was given freedom rather than assimilation into Israel
 - The result was that the culture of Luz was transferred elsewhere rather than eliminated. **Canaanites were allowed to live at a distance from Israel.**

Judges 1:27-28 – The Failure of Manasseh

- Take possession – to inherit
- Note the difference between "did not take possession" and "could not take possession". There is a powerful parallel we should consider. See *Galatians 4:6-9* and *Romans 6:6-18*. **We are free from sin and no longer have to be mastered by it; it can be overcome. We often miss out on our potential to defeat sin in our lives because of our lack of faith in God.**
- Israel chose to make the Canaanites forced labor when Israel grew strong. This was pragmatic disobedience. They were making a covenant with the people of the land. While this made sense to them (increasing their strength and productivity), it allowed their influence to remain. Consider *2 Kings 5:1-5* as a reverse parallel. **There is a danger when we play with or "tame" our sins rather than destroying them.**
- The cities that they did not possess were of strategic importance along the coasts, rivers, and in the heart of the land. **Satan is a master strategist!**

Judges 1:29 – The Failure of Ephraim

- Gezer was at a major crossroads. The presence of the Canaanites would impact many.
Note that the Canaanites “lived among them”.

Judges 1:30 – The failure of Zebulun

- Again we see covenants with the Canaanites and their presence “among them”.

Judges 1:31-32 – The failure of Asher

- Notice a major shift in language here. The Asherites “lived among the Canaanites”. This indicates that the Canaanites were the predominant influence in Asher’s territory.

Judges 1:33 – The failure of Naphtali

- Another case of compromise and predominant Canaanite influence.

Judges 1:34-36 – The failure of Dan and the power of the Amorites

- Dan is still in southern Israel at this point.
- The Amorites controlled Dan, not the other way around. **We have gone from the Israelites allowing the Canaanites to live at a distance (in Bethel) to the Canaanites allowing the Israelites to live at a distance. We are seeing a very negative progression.**
- Ephraim (a tribe from the household of Joseph) later took over some of Dan’s territory.

A Few Final Words on Judges 1

- From Judah to Dan, we see spiritual decay in the tribes. This will be mirrored in the judges, from Othniel (of Judah) to Samson (of Dan).
- This chapter shows us why (generally) there was spiritual decay
 - Toleration led to apostasy. **Like a surgeon who only removes part of a cancer, the remainder will grow and metastasize, killing the entire body.**
 - There was no immediate consequence to their actions. Why not? See *Romans 2:4*.
Don’t despise the patience of God!
- Sometimes what looks like success in our eyes (Canaanite slaves) is failure in God’s eyes
- Ultimately, faithfulness in all things will be rewarded.

Judges 2:1-5 – The Visitation of the Angel of the Lord

- Why Gilgal? Gilgal was the place they arrived when they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. It was near Jericho and was the site of the circumcision of the generation that entered the land. Gilgal means “a rolling”, a reference to the act of circumcision. See *Joshua 4:19-5:9*.
- Why Bochim? Bochim is only mentioned in this passage in the Bible. It is likely that it was at Bethel, perhaps near the tree of weeping. See *Genesis 35:8*. Bethel was likely chosen because it was where the Israelites made a covenant with the inhabitant of Luz (later Bethel) contrary to God’s decree that they should NOT enter into covenant with the inhabitants of the land.

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- Why journey from Gilgal to Bochim? This indicates that the journey was meant to show Israel's digression from a place in which they were faithful to God, to a place where they were unfaithful. Recall, the Lord was with the House of Joseph when they went against Bethel. See *Judges 1:22*. However, Israel was unfaithful by covenanting with the Canaanites who gave them intel on a secret way into the city.
 - Who is the Angel of the Lord? All indications are that this is a pre-incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Angel speaks in first person and indicates that He is the One who accompanied Israel on its journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. See *Exodus 33:12-16* and *Joshua 5:14*. **Losing the presence and active work of the Lord in Israel was to lose EVERYTHING that made Israel special among the nations.**
 - When did God commit to give the land to Israel? See *Genesis 26:1-4*.
 - When did God require Israel to make no covenant with the people of the land and to break down their altars? See *Exodus 23:20-33*. Everything God was saying to them was repetitive of what was already told to them and recorded in His book. **While there are many surprises we encounter while serving God, the reality of His blessing and judgment should be of no surprise to us. What He has said, He will do.**
 - How should we understand the consequences? The general consequence is that the Angel of the Lord will no longer drive out the inhabitants, but the specific consequences relate to Israel's violations. Because they allowed the Canaanites to remain in the land and often conveniently made covenant allegiance with them (for the sake of gain), the inhabitants would become "thorns in their sides". What they thought would be profitable would become a liability. Secondly, because they did not break down the altars, they would be ensnared by the idols.
 - How should we understand the weeping and sacrifice at Bochim? Why didn't the Lord change His mind? The only way to make sense of this is to recognize that this was likely a shallow repentance that did not produce any real change in the people. They tore their garments, but not their hearts. **How deep is your repentance over sin? Tears and outward acts of obedience do not guarantee a changed heart.**