

ADONIBEZEK'S FALL

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Under Joshua, the children of Israel conquered the land of Canaan and the land was divided among their tribes by lot. However, there remained pockets of native Amorites within the borders of each tribe's inheritance, and it was the responsibility of each of the tribes to destroy them. This was a commandment of God. In Deuteronomy 7:1-6, the Lord said to Israel, "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." The first chapter of the Book of Judges records Judah's efforts to destroy the inhabitants of Bezek including her king, Adonibezek.

God's judgment of the Amorites

Judges 1:1-4 says, "Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: *and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.*" As we saw in Deuteronomy chapter 7, part of God's reason for commanding the destruction of the Canaanites was to protect his people Israel from their wicked influence. In the days of Abraham, when God originally promised to give Canaan to his descendants, the Lord foretold his judgment upon these wicked nations, which would include Bezek. He said to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. *But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet*

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(continued)

full.” It would take about 400 years for the wickedness of the Amorites to become “full,” the point at which they would be worthy of utter destruction according to God’s judgment. When these years had passed and this point of “full wickedness” of the Amorites had been reached, the Lord reminded Israel of why they were to be destroyed: “Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: *but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*” (Deut 9:3-5).

God’s judgment of Adonibezek

This should help us understand why Bezek had to be conquered by the tribe of Judah. But what about Adonibezek, the king of Bezek? Judges 1:5-7 says, “*And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.*” From this we learn the great lesson that God will judge every man according to how he judges others (see also Matt 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 18:21-35; Luke 6:36-38; Jas 2:13). Galatians 6:7 says, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap*” (see also Psa 7:15; 9:15). The ultimate reaping will be done on Judgment Day (Jas 2:13), but sometimes God brings about judgments upon men in this life. God certainly did so in certain cases to teach us this important lesson that will have its final application upon us all in eternity. The judgment of Adonibezek is one such case (see also Haman who was hung upon the gallows that he had made for Mordecai, Est 7:9-10; 9:25). Adonibezek himself recognized that he was reaping from God according to what he had sown, as he said, “*Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God has requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died*” (Judg 1:7). God brought upon Adonibezek exactly what he had judged and measured towards 70 other kings. Adonibezek had shown no mercy and he received no mercy in return.