

## EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

### Message #27

### Judges 21:1-25

Back in 1928, during the depression, an editorial appeared in the Wall Street Journal that said this: “What America needs today is not government controls, industrial expansion, or a bumper corn crop; America needs to return to the day when grandpa took the team out of the field in the early afternoon on Wednesday in order to hitch them to the old spring wagon into which grandma put all of the children after she washed their faces shining clean; and they drove off to prayer meeting in the little white church at the crossroads underneath the oak trees, where everyone believed the Bible, trusted Christ, and loved one another” (Cited from J. Vernon McGee, *Judges*, p. 86).

There is well over a 3000 year gap of time between the events of the book of Judges and the day in which we live. If you look at our day and its modern technology, it would appear that we are far advanced in our time and have really developed. We have computers, we have satellite TV, and we have vehicles that can almost drive themselves. We certainly seem to be far more sophisticated in our day than they were back in the days of Judges. However, when you look at the morality of the world, the spiritual convictions and values of most people and the attitude most have for God and His Word, we are no different. Nothing has changed. Everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes then and the same is true now.

The Apostle Paul said that O.T. things are written for our instruction (I Cor. 10:6-11). Every believer ought to think very seriously about what happened in the book of Judges, because it can happen to this church and it can happen to you. You can drift away from the Word of God to the point that things end in complete disaster.

In chapter 20, we saw that Israel had just about eliminated the tribe of Benjamin and now all of Israel is living in the aftermath of this big mess. Only 600 males were left and the tribe of Benjamin was in danger of extinction.

### **IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONFRONTING AND DEALING WITH SIN, ISRAEL ONCE AGAIN CAME UP WITH THEIR OWN PLAN TO PRESERVE BENJAMIN WHICH WAS A PLAN OF MURDER AND KIDNAPPING.**

You would think by now that Israel would have learned that we really need to do honest business with God. You would think that Israel would be so sick of being in one mess after another that they would turn everything completely over to God. But they hadn't learned yet.

### **PART #1 – Israel faces some emotional problems in the aftermath of their oaths. 21:1-7**

We do not have the oaths recorded in chapter 20, but apparently when the Israelites gathered at Mizpah (20:1), they decided to make a couple of oaths.

First, the Israelites had apparently all united and taken an oath at Mizpah not to give their daughters in marriage to any Benjaminite (21:1).

Now the problem with this is you are taking an oath that is actually contrary to what God's Word reveals. It was against the Mosaic Law for any of the 600 Benjaminites to marry women who were not Israelites (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3).

Secondly, they had also pronounced an oath before God at Mizpah that they would put to death any Israelite who refused to help destroy the Benjaminites (21:5).

Neither of these oaths are sanctioned by God, but they just made things up as they went. So now, Israel found themselves in a real bind. They were weeping before God in Bethel because of these things and in **verse 3** they ask God why have these bad things happened? Well the answer is because they are spiritually stupid. The bad things happened to them because they lived life their own way apart from God's Word and they kept making one stupid decision after another.

According to **verse 4**, they did sense something needed to change in their relationship with God so they built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, but that didn't seem to solve anything.

In fact, it is almost hypocritical. They offer a peace offering to God in **verse 4**, and then in **verse 5** they want to know who of Israel didn't help so they can put them to death. They want God to forgive them after they have let God down in so many ways we can't even number them all, but they are not willing to forgive their own brothers who just let them down once.

Now here is the weird thing. In **verse 6**, they are sorrier for the Benjaminites, who are rapists, than they are for their own brothers who just didn't come help them kill the Benjaminites.

As **verse 7** says they were crying out "What shall we do?"

**PART #2** – Israel comes up with their own solution to the problem. **21:8-12**

This is so typical of people who do what is right in their own eyes. They pray and ask God what to do and then they come up with their own plan and do it. Haven't you seen this kind of thing before? Some people wonder what they should do and never go to God or consult those skilled in the Word, and then they fly off half-cocked and do what they want to do.

As they were considering these things, it dawned on them that no one from the town of Jabesh-gilead, which is located about forty-five miles north east of Gibeah, had responded to their call for help (**v. 8**).

So they figured they could fulfill their vows there. Jabesh-gilead was only about thirty-eight miles north east of Bethel so they sent 12,000 soldiers to that town with the goal of killing men, women and children (**v. 10**), including every man or woman who has been physically intimate.

In some very distorted system of weird justice, since they would not help destroy sexual perverts of Benjamin who had been homosexual and heterosexual rapists, they would kill any man or woman who had any sexual relations. But notice according to verse 12, they found 400 virgins and brought them to Shiloh, which is located about nine miles north of Bethel and about thirty miles north of Jerusalem.

**PART #3** – Israel moves toward reconciliation with Benjamin. **21:13-18**

This story gets weirder every moment. Instead of Israel wanting to reconcile with Israelites, they want to reconcile with Benjaminites. According to **verse 13**, the whole congregation of Israel went to the 600 Benjaminites to proclaim some peace settlement.

As a peace offering, they offered the Benjaminites the 400 virgins (**v. 14**). The girls have no say at all in this. This is nothing more than a program that forces these girls to have sex with 400 Benjaminite men.

According to **verse 15**, they felt sorry for Benjamin. Well what about the girls? They were sad that there had been such a problem between Israel and Benjamin. Aren't we forgetting something here? The Benjaminites were homosexual rapists who refused to face their sin and would not turn over the culprits who raped and murdered a woman.

There is no evidence that Benjamin has repented of any sin. You do not find Benjamin trying to get right with God. And here Israel is trying to reconcile with Benjamin.

When God's people move away from God's Word they lose a sense of right and wrong. They can actually do the opposite of what God would want them to do. These Israelites should have been telling Benjamin you need to get right with God. Instead, they are telling them they are so sorry this has happened and here are 400 girls for your pleasure.

I'll never forget years ago in another ministry when our church had to put an immoral person under discipline. Some very fleshly people in the church actually went to the godless and immoral person to try to make him feel good and almost apologize for the discipline. When our leaders learned of this, they said to some of these people, have you lost your minds. What is wrong with you? We don't need to be reconciled to him, he needs to be reconciled to God.

Now giving the Benjaminites 400 girls presented a problem because there were 600 men and this meant there were still 200 Benjaminites who did not have women. So the leaders of Israel are trying to form a solution because of their stupid vow that said we cannot give a wife to Benjamin.

This is bizarre. There is no indication that any of the men of Benjamin were confessing sin and seeking the will of God. The Israelites are not even challenging the Benjaminites to get right with God; they are trying to figure out how they can appease more Benjaminites. Fact is if you have 400 women producing babies, the Benjaminites would not be blotted out, which is the charge of the Israelites.

**PART #4** – Israel comes up with another of their own plans to help Benjamin. **21:19-24**

The Israelites came up with a plan. They said, our oath said we cannot "give" our daughters to Benjaminites, but it does not say that the Benjaminites cannot "take" or "steal" our daughters.

Just thirteen miles north of Mizpah was Shiloh and many Israelite daughters would be participating at the harvest festival and they would dance in the fields near the vineyards. Lebonah was about three miles north of Shiloh. This dancing festival these Israelites did not get from the Bible; they got it from heathen cultures.

I find this interesting because this is one of the verses that some churches have cited as a proof for having dancing girls at church. The fact is this has nothing to do with the church and second, it was a heathen ritual, not a biblical ritual. It is a known fact that heathen religions feature dancing girls and when you have dancing girls at church you are in a church that is promoting what is diabolical, not what is biblical.

The Israelites told the Benjaminites to go and hide in the vineyard areas and when the girls went out to dance, grab a girl and steal her and take her to your land (**21:21**). In other words, forcefully take your pick of girls and kidnap them and make them your wife.

Then the Israelites said when their fathers come to us we will tell them that this was all innocent, because they had not broken their vows because the Benjaminites just took their wives (21:22). Since the Israelites had just killed their own brothers no one would dare go against them.

So that is exactly what the Benjaminites did. They took their wives and they went back to their land and they rebuilt their cities (21:23). According to **verse 24**, all Israel went home to live out their lives in their own ways in their own land.

This was one big ugly mess. You have a big mess on your hands because one Levite did not do what was right. One Levite let his concubine be raped and killed because he was not an honorable man and it led to this whole mess.

But **verse 25** says it all; “there was no king in Israel” and “everyone continued to do what was right in his own eyes.”

God had given His grace to these people time and time again, and yet they just kept doing what was right in their own eyes. Nothing much has changed for Israel today. Nothing much has changed for us.

Some final, practical applications from Judges:

- 1) God is looking to use people who love Him and His Word and seek to obey it.  
All through Judges we have seen that. God greatly used anybody who would get serious about Him and His Word. But if you are going to be this type of person, your goal cannot be to do what is right in your own eyes, but do what is right in God’s eyes.
- 2) God is still sovereign and still working out his plan even in a grim world. Our world is pathetic. There is very little justice, honesty and integrity. It does not shock us anymore to hear almost anything. It is good to know that the God of the Bible is still on His throne.
- 3) God will allow nations, individuals and churches to go their own way. If you want to live life doing what is right in your own eyes, God will let you. But you will be miserable. Although the misery may not hit immediately, Judges proves it will hit eventually. God can and will let His own people become miserable if they refuse to obey Him and His Word.
- 4) God will graciously forgive His people and greatly use them if they will face their sin and confess it and turn from it. Time and time again in Judges we just kept hoping someone would get this point. Don’t you miss it in your life.
- 5) Judges is an amazing demonstration of God’s grace. There are times when we are not doing the will of God nor are we interested in obeying the Word of God, and yet God is gracious to restore us and use us.

I hope you have profited from our journey through Judges. This book certainly has challenged me and I hope it has you.

When it comes time for us to individually face Jesus Christ, the one statement we never want to hear from His lips is that “you were just like the people in the book of Judges.” May God help us all to not have this be the testimony of our lives.