

“The final chapter”

Judges 21

1. **An account where the Israelites make rash vows in the heat of anger, then they realize the impact of the vow, which they find unacceptable**
 - a. **Then they concoct a number of maneuvers which would allow them to sidestep their vows, yet still fulfill the letter of the law.**
2. **Examples**
 - a. **A couple may become intimate, but not “go all the way”, and thus consider that they have not “had sex” (Bill Clinton comes to mind!)**

Wives Provided for the Benjamites

21:1 **Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife."** 2 Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, 3 and said, **"O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?"**

3. **Isn't it funny that they say “O Lord, why has this come to pass!”**
 - a. **What? It came to pass because of SIN!**
 - i. **The men of Gibeah who ravaged a defenseless woman to the point of death**
 - ii. **The Benjamites who would not turn over the guilty men for justice to be served**
 - iii. **The other 11 tribes that exacted vengeance that was over the top**
 - b. **God did not exterminate the Benjamites!**
4. **Sound familiar? We make poor decisions, then the ramifications of those decisions come, and we're like: “Lord, why did you let this happen?”**
 - a. **Don't blame that mess on God!**

4 So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 The children of Israel said, **"Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death."** 6 And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, **"One tribe is cut off from Israel today.** 7 **What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?"**

8 And they said, "What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?" **And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. 9 For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. 10** So the congregation sent out there **twelve thousand of their most valiant men**, and commanded them, saying, "**Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. 11** And this is the thing that you shall do: **You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately.**" 12 So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead **four hundred young virgins** who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

5. **So the tribes come together and try to figure out "What can we do to help Benjamin?**
- a. **Hmm – well it just so happens that one of the cities didn't show up for the meeting - Jabesh Gilead (Manasseh)**
 - b. **And we did say we would kill anyone who didn't show up...**
 - c. **So the Lord must want us to go and kill everyone in Jabesh Gilead, except for any virgins we might find,**
 - d. **Hey – if that were to happen, the Benjamites could marry those virgins!**

13 Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. 14 So Benjamin came back at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them. **15 And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel.**

6. **So, great plan – problem solved... except that there still some men who don't have wives...**
- a. **Oh wait – I know – there is a feast in Shiloh**
 - b. **We can just kidnap some of those young girls!**

16 Then the elders of the congregation said, "**What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?**" 17 And they said, "There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. 18 However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, 'Cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.'" 19 Then they said, "In fact, there is a **yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh**, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah."

20 Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, "**Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, 21 and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh;** then go to the land of Benjamin. 22 Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for it is not as though you have given the women to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.'" 23 And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. 24 So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

7. **If there ever where a classic case of “two wrongs not making a right”, this is it!**
- a. **But this wasn't two wrongs, this is ... like ... one wrong stacked on top of another till you cant even keep count anymore!**
 - b. **I think it is all summed up in the last verse:**

25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

8. **But as we said before, the issue is not that they had not king – the issue is the depravity of man.**
- a. **Those who believe in the evolution of man hold fast to the doctrine that we are improving – getting better**
 - b. **In fact the opposite is true – we are getting better and better at sinning!**

Judges is a message for today

9. **The human race has a fatal flaw – we believe that we are self-sufficient**
- a. **We believe that we don't need God – that we are fully capable of handing things here on earth just fine.**
 - b. **We don't need God telling us what is right and wrong – we'll determine that**
 - c. **We don't need God telling us what should be punished or how much punishment should be given – we'll determine that**
 - d. **We don't need God governing us – we'll govern ourselves**
10. **But just look around – man is not capable of being self-sufficient –**
- a. **We will do the make the wrong choice, we'll give in to immorality despite the cost**
 - b. **we will choose ourselves over others, regardless of who gets hurt**

- c. we'll bend the rules to line our pockets – we'll take more than we deserve
 - d. that is why we need a savior – we need to be redeemed!
11. Look at our world today
- a. We are mired in a financial crisis of our own doing
 - b. We are surrounded by immorality
 - c. Our society lives according to the motto “I want what I want, and I want it now”
 - d. In other words - We live in a world that is focused on three things – money, sex, and self-worship
12. The Christian community is not immune from this disease:
13. And the cycles that Israel experienced are similar to what can happen in our lives...
- a. We are serving God – at peace and at rest, then we get spiritually lazy and compromise sneaks in.
 - b. Then we stray from God and begin to do what is “right in our own eyes” (translation – rationalization!)
 - c. Christians can worship at the alter of money, or immorality, or self-worship – and we can become enslaved by those gods.
 - d. Then God will allow our “enemies” to invade and plunder and place us in bondage
 - e. And just as the Israelites were overtaken, oppressed, and enslaved by the surrounding peoples – the ones that they received the idols from....
 - f. Christians can end up becoming overtaken, oppressed, and enslaved by the god they worship
 - i. Sometimes it happens later – 10, 20, 30 years later
 - ii. But it does come – for sure “as a man sows, that shall he reap”
 - g. We “cry out to the Lord” and are delivered.
 - h. God’ grace and mercy are always close at hand...
14. So what is wrong with this pattern? If God always forgives, what’s the big deal???
- a. Because all during this time – we are GOING NOWHERE, doing NOTHING.
 - b. Our life – just like that of the Israelites – ends up being a cycle of ups and downs – a spiritual roller coaster.
15. What do we do?
- a. We learn from the ancient Israelites – we don’t repeat their mistakes and become spiritually lazy and complacent

- b. Each one of us must do as Joshua did... make a determination that “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”**

Rev 2:10 *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

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