

The Book of
JUDGES

Testing the Heart of God's Children



No King in Israel

Judges 21:1-25
Lesson 21

Introduction

Remember the old saying, “Two wrongs – don’t make a right”? Israel weeps because the senseless slaughter of women and children as part of their harsh disciplinary action against the Benjamites, has nearly annihilated one of their tribes. Their rash vow not to give any of their women to Benjamin, resulted in a predicament they regret. Though it seemed like the right thing to do at the time, it had unforeseen consequences. David Guzik said, “Justice not only brings punishment to evildoers, but it also guards against punishment that is too harsh.” They demand an answer from God as to why He has allowed their own actions to produce such devastating results.

Further complicating matters they also vowed to put to death anyone who did not join their assembly at Mizpah. When they undertook to find a way to fix their problem without breaking their vow, it resulted in the brutal destruction of all the men and women of the tribe of Jabesh Gilead, who had refused to join them. Jabesh Gilead belonged to the half-tribe of Manasseh. Their virgin daughters were spared and given to Benjamin as a way to preserve the tribe without breaking their vow. When that didn’t completely fix the problem, they concocted another plan for Benjamin to steal their remaining wives so they could say they didn’t actually give them away.

They justified their actions in keeping their vow and accepted no blame for themselves. They believed that the ends justified the means. We don’t have to look very far to see that our present times are very much the same. Only God the Righteous Judge, judges all things in truth.

“There was no king in Israel everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” Because there’s no king, people are rebelling against God and doing whatever pleased them; and it will be that way until the King returns and takes His throne on earth. Israel has departed from the covenant standards of conduct found in God’s Law resulting in moral chaos. One commentator stated, “*Every man did what was right in his own eyes . . .* The question was, where did Everyman’s “own eyes” look to find the authority which would tell him how?”

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
Mercy and truth go before Your face. Ps 89:14



Looking for Gold - What does it say?

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Setting the scene: Read 1 Sam. 15:22, Jer. 17:9-10, Rom. 1:18-24, Romans 3:9-20 for added insight. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.

Judges 21:1-7

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?"

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?"



Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, cross-references. Notate where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. What does God want you to know about Himself?

Judges 21:8-15

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.

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.

Judges 21:16-25

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.

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



Boiling it Down – What does it mean?



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 21:1-7 _____

Judges 21:8-15 _____

Judges 21:16-25 _____



Refined as Gold - How can I apply it?

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 21:1-7 _____

Judges 21:8-15 _____

Judges 21:16-25 _____

Challenge: Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up the main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.



Storing up Your Treasure . . .

Though they offered sacrifices and weeping to God, did He answer them? What might that suggest?

Was there a way out of their foolish vow? Lev. 5:4-6

What does God want more than our sacrifices? 1 Sam: 15:22

What is the only guarantee of truth and justice? Deut. 32:4

What words or phrases are repeated?

Checking for Clarity: See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Judges 21:1-7 _____

Judges 21:8-15 _____

Judges 21:16-25 _____

Bars of Gold: State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

Flex Your Muscles: Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?



Hide Your Treasure in your Heart

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
But the Lord weighs the hearts. Prov. 21:2

Radiating His Truth . . .

God has called us to listen to His direction. – Gary Inrig

