

JUDGES

Lesson 10 w/Answers

Judges Chapters 20-21

As we conclude our study of the book of Judges, we will examine the reaction of the tribes of Israel following the raping and killing of the Levite's concubine, and their response to it. This incident at Gibeah highlighted one of the lowest points in the early history of the tribes. Without a king, they gather at Mizpah, a place of solemn assembly, to seek God's instruction regarding how to respond.

Just as we sometimes see in our own lives, it can sometimes take great tragedy, or a very hurtful wrong to bring our focus back to God and his son Jesus. We will see this played out vividly in this lesson, as the remaining tribes of Israel fall at God's feet, seeking Him and His will for His chosen people.

Let's read Judges Chapters 20 and 21 and consider the following:

1. In Judges 20:1-11 we see a great gathering as the tribes of Israel meet to hear the firsthand account of the Levite and to consider what God would have them do in response to the incident at Gibeah. Who, i.e., which tribe, is not present at this large gathering? How do we know that the Israelites were seeking God will in this matter? How many men were gathered there? (Judges 20:1-3)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Judges 20:1 tells us that they were "assembled before the Lord in Mizpah."
 - b. ANSWER 2: Specifically, 400,000 men were gathered at Mizpah, "armed with swords."
 - c. ANSWER 3: The Benjamites were not invited, as Judges 20:3 indicates that the Benjamites "heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah."
2. Did the remaining tribes want to extinguish the tribe of Benjamin in retaliation for killing the concubine? What exactly did they want to do in order to punish the perpetrators? (Judges 20:4-13)
 - a. ANSWER: The Israelites did not want to punish the entire tribe of Benjamin, only the men of the city of Gibeah who had done this awful thing.
3. What was the reaction of the Benjamites? (Judges 20:13-16)
 - a. ANSWER: The Benjamites refused to turn over the men who had committed the atrocity. Rather than see their behavior punished, the Benjamites took an opposite stand in support of them. Amazing. Now the Benjamites are reflecting their true colors, not as members of the greater group of tribes (i.e., the Israelites), but separating themselves from the others by protecting the wicked men of Gibeah.
4. The Israelites gather a large army to fight against the Benjamites, totaling four hundred thousand men. The Benjamites pull together an army of twenty-six thousand, plus seven hundred already living in Gibeah, to defend the city. Who among the Israelites led the army against the Benjamites? How did the four hundred thousand fighting men do against the twenty-six thousand? (Judges 20:17-48)
 - a. ANSWER: The LORD led them. They did not take the entire army but listened to the LORD; and, over a three day period, they drew the Benjamite army out into the open, away from the city, and defeated them.
5. In total, following the battle at Gibeah, of all of the tribe of Benjamin, how many Benjamites—men, women, children and animals—survived? (Judges 20:46-48)
 - a. ANSWER: In the end, all of the tribe of Benjamin, including its men, women, children, and animals, were destroyed—except for six hundred men who had fled to the rock of Rimmon (Judges 20:47).
6. What was the reaction of the remaining tribes to the utter defeat of the tribe of Benjamin? (Judges 21:1-3)
 - a. ANSWER: The Israelites were saddened because it now appeared that the collective group of tribes who comprised God's Chosen People—the very people God had brought out of slavery in Egypt to the Promise Land—would now be without one of its tribes.
7. After the annihilation of the Benjamites, the Israelites found themselves in a bit of fix. What was their dilemma, and how did the Lord show them how to handle it? (Judges 21:4-12)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Judges 21:6-7 conveys that they had taken an oath before the battle "not to give any of our daughters in marriage" to the Benjamites. The dilemma was that they could not give their daughters to the surviving Benjamites in marriage, but this would virtually ensure that the tribe of Benjamite would die out and become extinct. They needed to find suitable wives in order to replace the tribe of Benjamin.
 - b. ANSWER 2: It had been determined that no one from Jabesh Gilead had "come to the camp for the assembly." As punishment, they determined that all of the men and women and children living would be put to the sword, except for the virgin women.

8. So, in order to provide suitable wives for the surviving Benjamites, and to punish the people of Jabesh Gilead who had not come to the assembly, they killed all of them, men, women and children, except virgins. The trouble with this solution was that there were six hundred Benjamite men but only four hundred virgins. How did they then solve this problem? (Judges 21:13-24)
- a. ANSWER 1: They devised a plan built around an upcoming annual festival at Shiloh, where young virgin girls would be dancing. This would enable the Benjamite survivors to "seize one of them to be your wife."
 - b. ANSWER 2: This was also a clever but disingenuous way for them to provide wives to the Benjamites without breaking their vow. Instead of "giving" them their women, the women were actually "seized."
9. The last verse of the book of Judges sums up the entirety of the book and the behavior of the Israelites. How does their scheme at the festival illustrate the last verse of Judges Chapter 21?
- a. ANSWER: Clearly the Israelites knew that they were breaking their vow to the LORD, but they wanted to do things their way, so they chose the festival scheme to solve their problems— thus doing as "everyone saw fit" rather than relying on the LORD.
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We have seen time and again in our study of Judges how man's heart is not inclined toward God; and given the opportunity, man will always do what seems right in their own eyes rather than trusting in God and His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is no surprise that following our own plans and schemes always leads to punishment—and eventually destruction; but it is also no surprise that if we repent and turn to God, He is faithful to forgive us.

As we reflect on this study, one verse in particular comes to mind: 2 Chronicles 7:14, which states, "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Today we as individuals, and as a country, need to hear these words and apply them to our own hearts, and in our own land. We need God today more than ever. Let's not become like the Benjamites and the Israelites during the period of Judges, doing what we see fit and ignoring the God who created us and the universe, as well as our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

Thanks again for studying with us.

In Christ,

Wes