

Judges Chapter 21

John 1:40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

John 1:41 He *found first his own brother Simon and *said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ).

John 1: 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

John 1:43 The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He *found Philip. And Jesus *said to him, “Follow Me.”

John 1:44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

John 1:45 Philip *found Nathanael and *said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

The disciples were aware of the Scripture concerning the Messiah from the Old Testament and knew the time had come. Perhaps they understood the timing of the Messiah inherent in the book of Daniel. However, they knew, there was an expectation. Today there is an expectation...

Judges Chapter 21

Judges 21

From the headlines: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11554367/Doomsday-bunkers-new-fad-four-ten-Americans-feel-living-end-times.html>

- A recent Pew Research poll of more than 10,000 adults found that four-in-ten Americans feel we are living in the 'end times' and that doomsday is coming.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/>
- But it isn't just conspiracy theorists who are fearing the worst, as billionaires have been quietly building survival bunkers in remote locations for years. <https://nypost.com/2022/09/24/how-the-worlds-billionaires-are-paying-to-escape-global-disaster/>

People are not just talking about “end times,” people are preparing for them, even if they don’t believe in the Bible.

Judges Chapter 21

Judges 21

Today brings in the new year. Today we will complete the study of the book of Judges.

Let us review briefly using an outline.

Verses	Remarks
1:1-1:36	Incomplete Occupation of the Land
2:1-2:5	Angel of the Lord
2:6-3:5	Cycles of Judgment
3:6-3:11	Othniel
3:12-3:30	Ehud
3:31	Shamgar
4:1-4:23	Deborah & Barak
5:1-5:31	Song of Deborah
6:1-8:35	Gideon
9:1-9:57	Abimelech
10:1-10:2	Tola
10:3-10:5	Jair
10:6-12:7	Jephthah
12:8-12:10	Ibzan
12:11	Elon
12:12-12:15	Abdon
13:1-16:31	Samson
17:1-18:31	Michah and Tribe of Dan
19:1-21-24	Levite and Tribe of Benjamin

Some notes to keep in mind:

1. **Incomplete Occupation of the Land.** The sons of Israel did not operate as “one man” in the occupation of the land. Each tribe went up to conquer its own inheritance. The result was such that native tribes with their anti-God practices were left in place.
2. **Angel of the Lord.** This manifestation of the Pre-Incarnate Christ shows up multiple times in the book of Judges. A key phrase to

Judges Chapter 21

Judges 21

remember is: Judges 2:1b "...‘I will never break My covenant with you,’". If you believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and the faithfulness of God, then taking this literally, God will be faithful to the sons of Israel and will fulfill all the covenants He made with Abraham and his descendants. The Church will not replace or supersede the sons of Israel. There is a certain logic that must be followed if you believe the Church can replace the sons of Israel because of their abandoning God. If that were true, then God would abandon the Church because of its abandonment of Him. In which case, He would have to come up with something else or revert back to the sons of Israel.

3. **Cycles of Judgment.** The text explains what is about to happen. People abandon God. As a result, God gives them into the hands of their enemies and they become slaves and/or oppressed. They cry out to the Lord who sends a judge to lead them into victorious battle. And for a short while, they appear to revert back to worshiping God.
4. **Othniel.** This is the best judge. As so many commentators point out, everything goes down hill after Othniel. The people go further into paganism and the judges become less effective.
5. **Ehud.** This was a left-handed man who cultivated a friendship with the oppressing king to kill him in an almost sacrificial way.
6. **Shamgar.** A “minor” character who is not a son of Israel. Yet, he is mentioned as having killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad. Likely he was an Egyptian perhaps of an elite military unit.
7. **Deborah & Barak.** Remember Deborah was doing the judging and Barak became a weak military leader.

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

8. **Song of Deborah.** A whole chapter is devoted to this song/poem. It gives background on who participated in the battles and who did not.
9. **Gideon.** He is often considered a pivot point in the book of Judges. He encountered the Angel of the Lord and gave Him two tests: The first test verified that He was more than a mere man. The second test verified that He was greater than the Canaanite gods Baal and associates. There is also a demonstration of God's grace when Gideon and the 300 watch God turn the enemy troops against themselves. This is an echo of Moses' command to the people

Exodus 14:13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”

We use a version of this from David as a promise. “The battle is the Lord’s.”

10. **Abimelech.** He was not a judge. He was a very bad man. It shows how degraded the society was at that time for such a man to assume power.
11. **Tola.** Just a “minor” judge.
12. **Jair.** Just a “minor” judge.
13. **Jephthah.** A son of a concubine and an outcast. At this point, there was no one in Israel to lead a revolt against the Ammonites except

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

this ruffian. After Gideon, the situations and methods of deliverance became messy.

14. **Ibzan**. Just a “minor” judge.
15. **Elon**. Just a “minor” judge.
16. **Abdon**. Just a “minor” judge.
17. **Samson**. Most people are familiar with Samson and Delilah. In typology, Samson is recognized as a type of Christ. Samson did not completely deliver Israel from the Philistines. That was left for David. But Samson did stir things up which set the stage for David.
18. **Michah and Tribe of Dan**. The final two episodes in the book of Judges illustrates the paganism of the sons of Israel on a personal level. It also gives history on the tribe of Dan and the reason it was located in the north of the territory of the sons of Israel and not along the coast as God had provided. God’s permissive will is on display.
19. **Levite and Tribe of Benjamin**. Another illustration of the permissive will of God in spite of the degeneracy of the sons of Israel. It also gives background to the tribe of Benjamin out of which will come the first official king of Israel.

Chapter 21 completes the book of Judges. It answers questions one might have from reading the early chapters of 1 Samuel. God picked Saul out of the tribe of Benjamin from a family living in Gibeah, the scene of the murder of the Levite’s concubine. This chapter specifically addresses why the tribe of Benjamin was the smallest tribe in Israel.

Judges 21:1 Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, “None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage.”

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

The men of Israel. Literally, it is “the man of Israel.” A plural for “man” is expected, but it is in the singular. Even one version of the LXX translates it as “the sons of Israel.” So the reader must ask why singular here in the Hebrew? Remember how chapter 20 started?

Judges 20:1 Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah.

So here at the beginning of a new chapter, it echoes the unity of the tribes of Israel...against one of their own.

In marriage. NASB notes says “for a wife.” Because of the sin of the men of Gibeah, the whole tribe of Benjamin was tainted in the eyes of the sons of Israel. And further, because the tribe of Benjamin would rather fight than to hand over members of their tribe to the sons of Israel for punishment, they are not to be trusted with the daughters of the sons of Israel. What they are doing here in verse 1 is to equate the tribe of Benjamin with the Canaanites. Read what the Law required concerning marriage.

Deuteronomy 7:1 “When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

Deuteronomy 7:2 and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

Utterly destroy. Words from this root are used in the book of Judges: once for what the sons of Israel are to do to the Canaanites and once against fellow sons of Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:3 Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.

The sons of Israel violated this prohibition from God, but now apply this to a fellow Israelite tribe. The sons of Israel may not always have been God fearing men, but they certainly took their vows seriously. We saw that with Jephthah when he offered his daughter as a burnt offering. Now, they don't go to God to say, look at the mess we got ourselves into. What do we do to get out of this. No, they use human viewpoint.

Judges 21:2 So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly.

The lies and judgment of human viewpoint when they meet reality cause great suffering. We see that today in the USA. When lies meet reality, people get hurt. Here in Judges chapter 21, the sons of Israel have backed themselves into a corner from which there is no easy solution. The people went to Bethel. This is where Abraham set up an altar to God.

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

Genesis 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

Bethel. Means “house of God.”

Wept bitterly. This is not just the verb or the intensive verb nor an infinitive absolute verb. There is great emphasis on this weeping. It is a verb for crying plus the noun for crying plus the word for “great” or “very.” It might be literally translated as “they were weeping a great weep.” The verb is the same one used in Judges 2:4.

Judges 2:4 When the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

But the passage in chapter 2 only has a single verb, they wept. The weeping here is very intense. Perhaps it could be compared, on a personal level, of shooting one of your brothers or sisters, even if done in self-defense. You lost a member of your family. And you did it.

One commentator had a pertinent observation (Wong) comparing the weeping in Judges 21:2 with Judges 2:4, “While one records Israel’s failure to do what was right, the other records Israel’s success in doing what was wrong.”

Judges 21:3 They said, “Why, O Lord, God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be missing today in Israel?”

From Constable:

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

“The Israelites' initial reaction was to ask God to explain the situation (v. 3). The reason for it was their failure to seek and follow God's will earlier (cf. 20:8-11). Here we see no mourning for sin, no self-humbling because of national transgression, and no return to the LORD. The LORD did not respond to them because they were acting in self-will (cf. v. 10).”

Judges 21:4 It came about the next day that the people arose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

From Constable: “Then the Israelites sought the LORD more seriously (v. 4). It seems strange that they built an altar at Bethel, since they had recently offered sacrifices on the one that was there (20:26). Perhaps they rebuilt or enlarged the altar at Bethel, or maybe they built a second altar.”

Here they are signifying, as before, that they seek to be back in fellowship with God. But, almost immediately after seeking fellowship with God, they don't ask for His guidance and go off on human viewpoint again.

We see this today in the US. Human viewpoint solutions enforced with emotional responses apart from or even in opposition to God. So why wouldn't we see terrible suffering result. There are more people dying from various causes than is expected based on pre-Covid statistics. There are of course various reasons. Drugs. Fentanyl and other opioids are killing many people. Various diseases including the standard heart disease and cancer. Continuing Covid and other viral diseases. And of course wars and various persecutions.

Judges 21:5 Then the sons of Israel said, “Who is there among all the tribes of Israel

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

who did not come up in the assembly to the Lord?” For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the Lord at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.”

Previously in the book of Judges, we saw that when a city or tribe refused to respond to a call from a judge, that there was at a minimum shame. In some cases, as with Jephthah, he killed the leadership of the city because they refused to aid his army.

Now, human viewpoint says, we will get those so and so's who didn't respond to our call to wipe out Benjamin. We will give their unmarried daughters to the lonely 600 men of Benjamin after we kill them and their wives and children. We will treat them like we should have treated the pagan Canaanites.

Judges 21:6 And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel today.

Judges 21:7 What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the Lord not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?”

Judges 21:8 And they said, “What one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the Lord at Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

Judges 21:9 For when the people were numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there.

Judges 21:10 And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there, and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones.

Judges 21:11 This is the thing that you shall do: you shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has lain with a man.”

Human viewpoint, doing what is right in their own eyes brings death.
Remember:

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Utterly destroy. This is the same word used in the Deuteronomy 7:2 quote about destroying Canaanites. It was also used in the book of Judges.

Judges 1:17 Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.

Utterly destroyed it. Same basic root as found in Judges 21:11. In Judges 1:17, there is a play on words. “Hormah” is from the same root as that means “destroyed” or “annihilated.” Now in Judges chapter 21, it is used against a tribe of the sons of Israel. It is almost like a Law and

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

Order show in which someone commits a crime and then kills a witness. As the saying goes, dead men tell no tales. And they don't complain.

Judges 21:12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

From Constable:

"Next, the Israelites commanded 12,000 valiant soldiers to attack and completely destroy the uncooperative Israelite town (vv. 10-11). The only people to be spared were virgin females. This was another sinful plan born out of self-will and vengeance. Note that it was the decision of the whole congregation of Israelites."

Judges 21:13 Then the whole congregation sent word and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them.

Judges 21:14 Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead; yet they were not enough for them.

Again from Constable:

"The failure of the plan confirms that it was not God's will, although He permitted it."

The permissive will of God allows events that we might say are imperfect, yet, Jesus Himself said:

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

John 9:1 As He (Jesus) passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

John 9:2 And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?”

John 9:3 Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

So in the book of Judges, God allows for many bad things to take place, but uses them to teach us many lessons.

Judges 21:15 And the people were sorry for Benjamin because the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

Judges 21:16 Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?”

Judges 21:17 They said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe will not be blotted out from Israel.

Judges 21:18 But we cannot give them wives of our daughters.” For the sons of Israel had sworn, saying, “Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

Judges 21:19 So they said, “Behold, there is a feast of the Lord from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah.”

Judges 21:20 And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards,

Judges 21:21 and watch; and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch (or better you shall seize or abduct) his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

Judges 21:22 It shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, that we shall say to them, ‘Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take for each man of Benjamin a wife in battle, nor did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty.’”

Judges 21:23 The sons of Benjamin did so, and took (or more literally, tore away, seized) wives according to their number from those

**Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21**

who danced, whom they carried away. And they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the cities and lived in them.

As one commentator (Trible) observed: “The rape of one has become the rape of six hundred.”

From D.R. Davis:

“There is a certain rightness and a certain wrongness about what Israel does. They justifiably requite Jabesh-gilead with unjustifiable severity (vv. 5, 10). They stand consistently upon their wife-oath (vv. 7, 16-18) but trample happily upon the rights of the Shiloh girls and their families (vv. 19-22). It is a mix of consistency and confusion.”

“The ambivalence pervading chapter 21 simply fits the pattern of incongruities throughout the story from the beginning of chapter 19.”

From Robert Chisholm: “Dodging a vow (21:15-25). Two hundred Benjaminites still needed wives, so the Israelites devised another scheme to solve the problem.

“They instructed the Benjaminites to go to the annual feast to the Lord in Shiloh, hide in the nearby vineyards, and wait for the daughters of Shiloh to appear. When they came out to dance and celebrate, each of the remaining two hundred Benjaminites was to grab a young woman and take her home to Benjaminite territory as a wife. When the fathers of the women objected, the Israelites would defend the Benjaminite cause and relieve any concern that their oath had been broken. Once again they were able to find a loophole in their oath. The oath said no one would “give” (literal translation) his daughter to a Benjaminite (wv. 1, 18); it said nothing about Benjaminites kidnapping daughters (Satterthwaite 1993, 82). When the time for the feast came, the Benjaminites, freed up by a technicality, followed these instructions and carted off two hundred

Judges Chapter 21
Judges 21

young women. Like Jephthah's daughter before them, the women's dancing and joy was rudely turned into horror (cf. 11:34)."

Judges 21:24 The sons of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went out from there to his inheritance.

In the end, the Levite gave the Benjamite men his concubine based upon a plea from the owner of the house to "Please let me bring them out that you may ravish them and do to them whatever you wish."

Here in chapter 21, the Benjamite men are again given permission to kidnap and rape the virgin women by the sons of Israel. They take a despicable act and call it politically correct. That kind of thing happens almost every day as reported in the news.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Robert Chisholm:

"By the end of the book Israel's moral decline is complete. Women, who at the beginning of the book inspired Israelite men to great deeds and then played the role of national deliverers, were then raped, slaughtered (21:16), and kidnapped by their countrymen. Ironically the brutalization of Israelite women anticipated by Sisera's mother (5:28-30) is realized, not through a ruthless foreign conqueror, but through Israelite men."

From Gary Inrig:

"Judges 19—21 gives us one of the ugliest stories in the Bible. The key to it is that, at every stage, men were acting on the basis of what was

Judges Chapter 21

Judges 21

right in their own eyes. As far as the men of Gibeah were concerned, rape was all right. To the farmer and the Levite in the house, homosexual rape was unthinkable, but the sacrifice of blameless women to protect themselves was completely justified. The men of Benjamin thought it was right to overlook sin and to defend evil men. To Israel, revenge and retaliation could be justified, and to solve their problems about marriage for the Benjamites, the massacre of innocent people and kidnapping could be condoned. The moral elevator is in freefall!"

"The interesting thing is that none of this had anything to do with idolatry or Baal worship. It began with individuals ignoring the law of God, doing what was right in their own eyes, and it led a whole nation into moral collapse."

Genesis 42:3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.

Genesis 42:4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him."

1 Samuel 9:21 Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?"