Title: *'As We See Fit'*: A study of the book of Judges- Part 24- *"The Saddest Ending"*

Key text: Judges 21:1-25

Suppl. texts:

Introduction: Last time, we saw the unnamed Levite rally Israel to pass a verdict against the men of Gibeah & the tribe of Benjamin. That verdict was unanimous & a death sentence was passed; all Israel would go to war against Benjamin. One attempt was made to turn over the guilty, but Benjamin refused. Though vastly outnumbered, Benjamin called out 26,000 troops & their special forces of 700 men. Finally, we saw that all the tribes were overconfident. Israel was overconfident in their huge numerical advantage & Benjamin was overconfident because of their early victories. Brothers fought against brothers, & there was a huge loss of life. On the third day, after Israel humbled themselves, the Lord provided the victory. Tonight, we conclude the book of Judges with another man-centered decision.

Outline: *read Judges 21:1-15*.

1. **The *oath***
   - The civil war has almost ***wiped*** out an entire ***tribe*** of Israel.
   - The devastation enacted on Benjamin has left Benjamin in ***dire straits***, as most of their people have died. Remember, only 600 men have survived.
   - However, there's another problem: an oath was taken.
   - **Vs. 1**; *"The men of Israel had taken an oath at Mizpah: 'Not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite."* This is sometimes referred to as ***tribalism***.
   - The Israelites had always been ***encouraged*** to marry within their tribe but were ***commanded*** not to marry outside of Israel. An edict that was often broken.
   - Many people in the past wrongly used God's command to Israel as a reason to forbid the integration of the races in marriage within America.
   - Clearly an act of prejudice & preference cloaked in the misuse of the Word of God.
   - There are a few biblical prohibitions that still stand regarding marriage: incest, adultery, & marriage between a believer & non-believer.
   - While racial integration still comes with its social challenges today, it is wrong to take a specific command given to Israel, such as this or its worship & dietary restrictions, & broadly apply that elsewhere.
   - ***An oath or a law?*** Taking an oath in ancient Israel was to swear before the Lord, & to break one's oath was to ***invoke*** the ***judgment*** of the Lord.
   - However, this seems to be a short-***sighted***, man-***centric*** oath. They did not consider the long-term ***implications*** of such a commitment.

- **Vs. 2;** *"The people went to Bethel, where they sat before God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly."*
- The people feel ***contrition*** for the extent to which the civil war has damaged Benjamin & Israel. They rightly feel ***compassion*** for the almost extinct tribe.
- **Vs. 3;** *"O LORD, the God of Israel,' they cried, 'why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?"*
- They seem to understand that they have broken God's laws & that He wouldn't be pleased with them, so they humbled themselves & offered sacrifices.
- **Vs. 4;** *"Early the next day the people built an altar and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings."*

2. **The *problem***
   - There's another problem that they haven't anticipated. Not only have they left Benjamin without the ability to ***reproduce***, but they took another hasty oath when they assembled to reach a verdict.
   - **Vs. 5;** *"Then the Israelites asked, 'Who from all the tribes of Israel has failed to assemble before the LORD?' For they had taken a solemn oath that anyone who failed to assemble before the LORD at Mizpah should certainly be put to death."*
   - Unknown to us before now, they had taken an oath to kill any Israelite tribe that didn't come for the call to action.
   - They've got ***multiple*** problems to solve.
   - **Vs. 6-7;** *"Now the Israelites grieved for their brothers, the Benjamites. 'Today one tribe is cut off from Israel,' they said. 'How can we provide wives for those who are left, since we have taken an oath by the LORD not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?"*
   - They will again turn to human wisdom, as no ***word*** from the ***Lord*** is recorded.
   - **Vs. 8-9;** *"Then they asked, 'Which one of the tribes of Israel failed to assemble before the LORD at Mizpah?' They discovered that no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly. For when they counted the people, they found that none of the people of Jabesh Gilead were there."*
   - No one participated in the call to action from Jabesh Gilead. Therefore, to honor their oath, that city must be punished. These were from the half-tribe of ***Manasseh***.
   - The people of Jabesh-Gilead may have expected some form of ***retribution*** but are likely surprised by what happens next.
3. **The *solution***
   - So they intend to kill two ***birds*** with one ***stone***. They decide to attack the city, kill everyone & save the unmarried women for the surviving Benjamites.
   - We should be surprised that they are trying to handle the ***annihilation*** of one tribe by the ***annihilation*** of another, though it's only one town.

- It should also surprise us that they pay back Benjamin for Gibeah's sin but then don't charge the entire tribe of Manasseh for the sins of Jabesh-Gilead.
- This is intended to show the ***fickle*** & inconsistent ***justice*** applied by the nation of Israel during the time of the Judges.
- **Vs. 10-12;** *"So the assembly sent twelve thousand fighting men with instructions to go to Jabesh Gilead and put to the sword those living there, including the women and children. 'This is what you are to do," they said. 'Kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin.' They found among the people living in Jabesh Gilead four hundred young women who had never slept with a man, and they took them to the camp at Shiloh in Canaan."*
- The killing of 'innocent' women & children is problematic & usually reserved for the judgment of God against His sworn pagan enemies, never against His own people.
- However, Israel comes to this conclusion on their own.
- After all, the married women don't serve the need of finding wives for Benjamin.
- Israel seems to think that they have honored both oaths. They have kept their daughters 'pure' from Benjamin, & have punished those who didn't participate in wiping out the stain of sin in Gibeah. The ***strangest*** peace treaty is offered.
- **Vs. 13;** *"Then the whole assembly sent an offer of peace to the Benjamites at the rock of Rimmon."* Come down from the rocky fortress & we'll give you wives. Not to mention, we slaughtered your former families & you're still grieving.
- The simplest action would've been to rescind their oath about marrying their daughters, but these hypocrites are worried about breaking their word.
- **Vs. 14;** *"So the Benjamites returned at that time and were given the women of Jabesh Gilead who had been spared. But there were not enough for all of them."*
- These poor women, likely all young teenagers, are subjected to ***forced*** marriage.
- Go ahead & marry while you're grieving the loss of everyone you know.
- Their plan has a flaw; there aren't enough virgin women for the 600 Benjamites.
- **Vs. 15-18;** *"The people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a gap in the tribes of Israel. And the elders of the assembly said, 'With the women of Benjamin destroyed, how shall we provide wives for the men who are left? The Benjamite survivors must have heirs,' they said, so that a tribe of Israel will not be wiped out. We can't give them our daughters as wives, since we Israelites have taken this oath: 'Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to a Benjamite."*
- We now see that they continue to solve this problem in another horrible way.
- **Vs. 19-23;** *"But look, there is the annual festival of the LORD in Shiloh, to the north of Bethel, and east of the road that goes from Bethel to Shechem, and to the south of Lebonah.' So they instructed the Benjamites, saying, 'Go and hide in the vineyards and watch. When the girls of Shiloh come out to join in the dancing, then rush from*

the vineyards and each of you seize a wife from the girls of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin. When their fathers or brothers complain to us, we will say to them, 'Do us a kindness by helping them, because we did not get wives for them during the war, and you are innocent, since you did not give your daughters to them.' So that is what the Benjamites did. While the girls were dancing, each man caught one and carried her off to be his wife. Then they returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the towns and settled in them."

- Nothing more than ***semantics***. The people of Israel again use human logic to solve the problem of too few women. They play a ***word*** game. We didn't give our daughters in marriage to a Benjamite, but if they are kidnapped, then we're good.
- Now, more poor women are ***kidnapped*** & subjected to forced marriage away from their families & tribal lands.
- In showing compassion to Benjamin, they are uncompassionate to any tribe/family that happened to have a daughter snatched & forcibly married.
- Please see that the civil war started as reprisal for violent sexual acts against one woman, an unnamed concubine. The solution is 600 violent sexual acts toward other unnamed/unwilling women. Only the wicked human heart could devise such actions & call them justified.
- By human means, the problem is solved. They are satisfied & return home. Israel intact, or so it seems.
- **Vs. 24**; *"At that time the Israelites left that place and went home to their tribes and clans, each to his own inheritance."*
- For the ***fourth*** time, the same phrase is repeated.
- **Vs. 25**; *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."*
- So ends the saddest ending ever of a book of the bible. Judges is as real as it gets; moral relativism ruled the day. God's people are worse off at the end than at the beginning.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 24

Last time, we saw the unnamed Levite rally Israel to pass a verdict against the men of Gibeah & the tribe of Benjamin. That verdict was unanimous & a death sentence was passed; all Israel would go to war against Benjamin. One attempt was made to turn over the guilty, but Benjamin refused. Though vastly outnumbered, Benjamin called out 26,000 troops & their special forces of 700 men. Finally, we saw that all the tribes were overconfident. Israel was overconfident in their huge numerical advantage & Benjamin was overconfident because of their early victories. Brothers fought against brothers, & there was a huge loss of life. On the third day, after Israel humbled themselves, the Lord provided the victory. Tonight, we conclude the book of Judges with another man-centered decision.

1. **The** _____
   - The civil war has almost _____ out an entire _____ of Israel.
   - The devastation enacted on Benjamin has left Benjamin in _____ _____, as most of their people have died. Remember, only 600 men have survived.
   - This is sometimes referred to as _____.
   - The Israelites had always been _____ to marry within their tribe but were _____ not to marry outside of Israel. An edict that was often broken.
   - Taking an oath in ancient Israel was to swear before the Lord, & to break one's oath was to _____ the _____ of the Lord.
   - However, this seems to be a short-_____, man-_____ oath. They did not consider the long-term _____ of such a commitment.
   - The people feel _____ for the extent to which the civil war has damaged Benjamin & Israel. They rightly feel _____ for the almost extinct tribe.
2. **The** _____
   - Not only have they left Benjamin without the ability to _____, but they took another hasty oath when they assembled to reach a verdict.
   - They've got _____ problems to solve.
   - They will again turn to human wisdom, as no _____ from the _____ is recorded.
   - These were from the half-tribe of _____.
   - The people of Jabesh-Gilead may have expected some form of _____ but are likely surprised by what happens next.
3. **The** _____

- So they intend to kill two _____ with one _____.
- We should be surprised that they are trying to handle the _____ of one tribe by the _____ of another, though it's only one town.
- This is intended to show the _____ & inconsistent _____ applied by the nation of Israel during the time of the Judges.
- The _____ peace treaty is offered.
- These poor women, likely all young teenagers, are subjected to _____ marriage.
- Nothing more than _____. The people of Israel again use human logic to solve the problem of too few women. They play a _____ game.
- Now, more poor women are _____ & subjected to forced marriage away from their families & tribal lands.
- For the _____ time, the same phrase is repeated.