

Judges 21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 January 2023

[0 : 00] to the book of Judges. We're going to finish the book of Judges tonight. That's a good time to say hallelujah because we're finishing up the book of Judges. We'll be in Judges chapter 21. We'll read that chapter its entirety.

And I love how Warren Wiersbe, if there's one Bible commentary that I could recommend to you as a lay person, it's good for pastors as well. I got it actually when I started in the pastoral ministry. It was one of the first that was given to me. I went to an expository preacher expository preaching conference, Carrie and I did, in Heber Springs, Arkansas. It was a little small rural church that actually was just a dot on the map.

The only thing, the reason it was there was because there was a dam across the river and there was a campground. And there's this little church, but they had planted churches all around the world. They had a flag hanging in the sanctuary of everywhere they had planted churches. And they sponsored a gentleman named David Miller. Some of you may have heard David Miller. He comes to Shelbyville quite often. David Miller is paralyzed from his neck down and does great expository preaching.

[1 : 03] When he comes out, he'll say, okay, if you'll take your Bibles and open up to the book of Judges, Judges chapter 21, and then he takes off. And he is quoting verbatim, by memory, what he's preaching.

And then he'll say, now if you go back to that third verse, about halfway through that third verse, to this word, and that's when I knew I was in a whole different league. But anyway, so when you left there as a pastor, they gave you, at that time, actually you left with a library, so you left with books. The guys that went several years after me, they left with an iPad. So, I mean, it's just a little bit different. We actually left with books. So one of the first sets ever given to me was the Warren Wiersbe Bible Commentary Set.

Still one of the ones that I recommend to lay people and even pastors because Warren Wiersbe wrote his, as a Sunday, education minister, pastor of education ministry in Covington, Kentucky. And he started writing the Sunday school material and ended up turning it into books called the B Series, Be Faithful, Be Courageous, Be Steadfast, the book of Judges is titled Be Available. And then he would, he compiled all of them together into a six-volume set called the Wiersbe Bible Commentary.

[2 : 17] Anyway, great. Not very deep, not very, what you'd call technical, but it's a great application commentary. All that to say this.

I love how Warren Wiersbe says, and you get it in particular in that commentary because that's where he's putting his books together, all of his books together. He says, by the time I got to the end of the book of Judges, I told my wife, I cannot wait till I get through writing this book. I cannot wait till I get through writing Be Available because there's really not that much to be happy about in the book of Judges. But praise be to God, immediately following the book of Judges is a book from the same time period that reminds us you're in either one of two places. You're either living in the book of Judges or you're living in the book of Ruth. Either you found a kinsman redeemer who has redeemed you, paid the price for you, and wed you, and called you out of that period, or you're living in the midst of it.

And I thought, wow, that's good, right? Because when we get done reading, you don't get this in the Jewish Bible. They're not side by side. They're not side by side. But in the English Bible, you get it. When we get done studying, in those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

[3 : 27] Then we turn the pages, and we go to the book of Ruth, and we read about a man who did what was right in his own eyes, cost him his life, his son's life, and everything seemed to be in despair. But there was a Boaz, right?

There's a kinsman redeemer who was willing to pay the price and willing to take on responsibility to call someone out of that time. So it is with excitement that we finish the book of Judges, but it's also with anticipation of what's coming up immediately following the book of Judges.

The book of Ruth is, you know, a very simple book, but it's got so much depth to it for even New Testament truths.

So let's open up with a word of prayer, and then we'll get right into Judges chapter 21. Lord, I thank you so much. Thank you for allowing us to gather together. Thank you for the great privilege it is of coming and opening up your word.

And Lord, we pray as we open up the word of God together that you would speak to our hearts and minds. We pray that the truth that you speak, we would be available to hear. And Lord, that in hearing it, we would have lives to apply it.

[4 : 34] Lord, may it be so much more than a collecting and gaining of information, but Lord, would it be an encounter with you, O God, an encounter with you and your word to show us who we are, to show us our great need.

Lord, to show us our only hope. And Lord God, may we see that in your son. May we see it in Christ. May we not see it in our efforts or our abilities, but may we see it in all that he has done. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. In the book of Judges, we have just finished up the saddest account that we can find in the book of a description of those days.

If you remember, once we finish the story of Samson, we are no longer looking at Judges in particular. Rather, we stop our chronological turning of the page and we step back for just a moment because the author has told us of all of the judges and how when each judge dies, the people go back.

And they don't just go back, they go further back. Because one of the realities that we have found in sin is if we don't find someone who can eternally redeem us from it, temporal or temporary deliverance is just that.

[5 : 54] It's temporary, but it will always take us back further than we ever were before. This is why we see this corkscrew downward throughout the book of Judges. We encounter a deliverer at the beginning who does no wrong, literally sheds no blood that we have recorded for us, but he is one who delivers God's people in righteousness.

By the time we get to the end of the book of Judges and we encounter Samson, it's almost like he can do no right. And yet he is the deliverer. So once we finish that, then the author begins to give us a picture of society.

And in giving us a picture of society, he focuses on three major events. The first one, we meet a man named Micah who had stolen from his mother, lied about it.

His mother uttered a curse and then he confessed it and said, that one you uttered a curse about, that's me. And he gave it back to her and his mother praised God for him, sent the money, had it built into an effort or a household idol.

And Micah commenced to setting up his own house of God, lowercase g, not capital G, to worship his way because in those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

[7 : 12] Micah counts himself fortunate because there's a Levite hanging out in places he should not be. There is a Levite, those who are supposed to be teaching the people the word of God and the commandments of God evidently is out of work so he is going about trying to find a place and Micah is his man.

Micah brings him in, now he counts himself blessed because he has a Levite as his own priest.

There's one picture. The second picture we have is of the tribe of Dan. Dan is not content with their lands, we find at the end of the book of Judges, but when we go back to the first part of the book of Judges, we find that not only is Dan not content with their land, the reason Dan is not content with their land is because Dan was not faithful to drive the people out of their land.

They allowed the enemies to stay present and even were defeated before them so it was easier for Dan to move on as opposed to face the enemy. It is easier just to change locations as to fight the battle.

So they go somewhere else and they move along and they take the Levite that was at Micah's house. We don't want to retell the whole story. They take him with them and they set up their own worship and we saw how when Dan moved further away, Dan moved closer to the region of idolatry and Dan is the first tribe to set up an idol.

Later on in Jewish history, we find that it is one of the places, the locations in which one of the two golden calves will be set up when the nation is divided between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

[8 : 44] Dan is literally the tribe that introduces idolatry into the nation of Israel and that is why when we have the retelling of the tribes, maybe you have never caught it, maybe you have.

When you read the book of Revelations and you see the 12 foundation stones and the naming of the stones, there is one tribe that's left out and that's the tribe of Dan. But we shouldn't be surprised about that because we are told that's going to happen in the book of Genesis.

So we see that being played out in time of the judges. That's the second account. The third account we find is the most disturbing, which leads to a 3B, if you will, and it is this Levite who again is not where he should be, has a concubine, she leaves, evidently he hasn't been good to her at home, we're never told that she cheated on him, we just know that she was not content at home, so she goes back to her father's house, he goes back and gets her.

We don't have to rehash the story, but it is so disturbing. He ends up stopping in a city called Gebeah because he hung out too long at his father-in-law's house and ate and drank and made merry, which is a good way of saying the Levite was doing things he should never have been doing. He ends up stopping overnight in Gebeah and things in Gebeah go sideways, his concubine is ravaged all night long, she ends up dying. He takes her home, cuts her up in 12 pieces and sends her amongst a tribe, starts a civil war.

[10 : 07] All kinds of things happen here. They begin to take their own vengeance, they begin to not go before, if anyone should have ever took it before the people of God, that is the priests, and should have went to Shechem, which is the last place we have God manifest himself at that time, it would have been a Levite, but he didn't, he went to his kinsmen rather than to the Lord God, and began to start a battle.

What we have found through the 20th chapter is a great military battle takes place between 12 tribes, it's 11 on one side and one on the other. They're fighting the tribe of Benjamin.

There was great loss amongst the 11 tribes at the beginning, but then the battle swayed on the third day, and the tribe of Benjamin is almost annihilated.

So that's where we find ourselves at the end of the book, at the 21st chapter. And it tells us, Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage.

So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. They said, Why, O Lord God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be missing today in Israel?

[11 : 24] It came about the next day that the people arose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then the sons of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel 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. And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, One tribe is cut off from Israel today.

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? 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-geled to the assembly. For when the people were numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-geled were there.

And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there and commanded them, saying, Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-geled with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones.

[12 : 28] This is the thing that you shall do. You shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has lain with a man. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-geled 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. 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.

And Benjamin returned at that time and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-geled. Yet they were not enough for them. And the people were sorry for Benjamin because the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

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

But we cannot give them wives of our daughters for the sons of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin. 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 Labanah.

[13:41] And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards 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 his wife from the daughters of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin.

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.

The sons of Benjamin did so and took wives according to their number from those who danced whom they carried away. And they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the cities and lived in them. 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. Here's that final conclusion. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges chapter 21. I want you to see this evening and we'll try to see it quickly because I know we have business meeting to get to as well. The final results of man's efforts. The final results of man's efforts.

[14:59] This is what we get when this is all we got. When there is no king and every man is doing what is right in his own eyes, this is what we get. Sin always has a consequence and it always takes you somewhere.

And we have said before, it will always take us further than we ever intended to go. We can only imagine that the nation of Israel never intended on being here where they find themselves in Judges chapter 21.

There was a king. He was just not allowed to rule because as we have said, we need to remind ourselves, though this phrase is repeated some four times at the end of the book of Judges that there was a king present for they lived in a theophany.

God was king. Just because he was on the throne did not mean that the people gave him a right to rule their lives. He is to be the God and king and ruler over them.

That is a principle that we find throughout Scripture. God rules over his people. And here we see that they are not living under that rulership.

[16:03] They are living according to their own plans and purposes. And this is what you get. This is the final result. This is the outcome of man's best. This is the outcome of what happens when man does what is right in his own eyes.

Read history. This is not just the recordings of the history of the nation of Israel. This is the recordings of the history of man. When you read history, be it secular history, that is history of the world, or even church history, whenever man begins to do what is right in his own eyes, this is always what you get.

This is the outcome that you will eventually arrive at. It may look a little different. It may be portrayed in a different light. But this is always the final outcome.

The first one is we come to a place of catastrophe. We come to a place of catastrophe. Man is not the captain of his own ship.

Man cannot command his own destiny. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that man cannot pay the price of his own redemption, let alone the redemption of his brother. Man cannot afford to redeem himself, let alone redeem another.

[17:16] Man cannot change where he goes. It tells us that the man plans his way, but the Lord directs his step. It tells us in the book of Job that if God was to call his spirit back to himself that all the men would perish.

But when man does what is right in his own eyes, what's right in his eyes, it always brings you to a place of catastrophe.

How in the world could we ever define the events that we have seen happen and transpire around the world? How can you define genocide that attempts to wipe out entire people groups?

How can you even begin to reason how these things can come about? How can you think about things that seem to be so disturbing until you get down to the human element?

One thing that I have found in all of the disturbing events in history that the most horrific event that you can ever think of, listen, I read a book recently and it's not a snuggle up in the middle of the night, you know, close to your bed book.

[18:17] I read a book about Auschwitz. Remember the death camp there? It happened that was liberated when Germany was liberated and the things that took place there and I opened up that book and I started reading of all the horrors that happened there and all the deaths that took place but there's this common element in every tragedy and every catastrophe of man.

When you trace it back, it always comes back to an individual. When man does what is right in his own eyes, it always ends in catastrophe.

Always. Here we see that the tribes are gathered together at Mizpah and the catastrophe before them was we're about to not be a nation of 12 tribes but we're rather about to be a nation of 11. We have almost completely annihilated one of our own kinsmen. If you remember when we closed the 20th chapter, there were 600 men of Benjamin left.

That's it. Because when those 600 men escaped from the battle, the warriors of the other tribes turned around and went to the cities of Benjamin and killed everybody else.

[19:29] Now it was one small group of men that had committed the heinous crime. It was one small group of men that had done such the horrific efforts.

Yet it was the entire tribe that ended up paying with their life. Because when man begins to do what he deems is right, it inevitably leads us to a place of catastrophe.

And here the catastrophe is. What are we going to do? Notice the refrain that keeps being repeated. Why, oh Lord, have we come to this place?

What are we going to do now? Why are one of the tribes about to be wiped out? What's going to happen? Truly we see in this passage the people of God go before God.

They make a request but we never see them offering repentance. They ask the question but we never see them falling on their faces.

[20:28] You say, well they made the offerings and you're right, they did. But notice one thing, one major difference we have here than we do when they offer the offerings and the repentance and the weeping in the 20th chapter.

God never answers. There's never an answer because God did not accept that sacrifice. There was no repentance. There's no remorse.

There's just the question, what are we going to do? Whenever man does what is right in his eyes, the end result is always catastrophic.

You always come to this place of uncertainty and unknowing because man cannot work out his own problems. It always brings us to this place.

One of the things that we see is some of the magnificent events that have happened throughout history and by magnificent I don't necessarily mean good, even the bad things, is that they never thought they would go that far.

[21:29] Yet, when man does what is right long enough, we come and we finally arrive at a place of catastrophe and this is exactly what happened here. The second thing we see is not only catastrophe but also complacency.

And we meet this and when they're asking the question, what are we going to do? We don't know what to do about finding wives for the men of Benjamin. We want to try to restore this tribe. Who of among us never came?

And then we're introduced to the city of Jabesh-Galib. Jabesh-Galib. It says, no one from Jabesh-Galib came to meet with us. Now, we have to at least gather from the text that when the twelve pieces went out and were dispersed among the tribes, there was also an edict that went out and the edict that went out was twofold.

There was this agreement that none of us are going to give our daughters to be wives of the sons of Benjamin. They made that pact, right? They made this covenant agreement with one another. But

there also has to be this edict much like Saul sends out later in the book of 1 Samuel that if anyone does not come to join us in this battle, he will pay.

When Saul gathers the people of God together for the first battle which he fights long before Saul ever does wrong, it's immediately following his anointing from Samuel, there's a battle to be fought and Saul sends out a decree and an edict that says we're going to go fight the battle and whoever does not come fight with us, we're going to come fight you next.

[22 : 54] So it's either join us or oppose us. But what we find is no one from Jabesh-Galib came because all of a sudden we're introduced to some people who could be complacent because see, there was a major problem in the land of Israel at that time and the problem was that sin had entered into the camp and now the problem is that when sin entered into the camp, God had commanded his people to confront sin.

Remember the commands that we find all through the book of Leviticus and in the Old Testament is even if it is your son and daughter, even if it is your husband or wife, if sin enters the camp, you are compelled to bring that sin to light and to purge that sin from the nation.

You are to purge it. So when they're gathering together, the intent was we're going to go oppose and purge the sin of the men of Gebeah from among us. Yet, evidently, the people of Jabesh-Galib thought they didn't have to do anything.

They would be what Jesus referred to in the book of Revelation as lukewarm. They were neither hot nor cold. We can say for everyone else, at least they stood on one side of the fence.

We're not necessarily in agreement with this. The tribe of Benjamin would not hand over the men of Gebeah and they decided we're going to stand with them. At least they were on that side of the fence. At least they chose a side to be on.

[24 : 16] The tragedy here is the complacency of these individuals who thought it would be better to do nothing. We know that a wrong has been committed and we know that God commands us to confront that wrong but it would be better to do nothing.

Let's be complacent, let's be silent and let's just stay at home and keep the peace. All of a sudden you should begin to see the picture we're painting here but stay with me in case you don't.

I'll shine a light on it in just a moment. They thought let's just stay put, let's leave well enough alone, let's let them take care of it over there. The problem that we find is that complacency cost them their lives because 12,000 soldiers knocked on the door of the city and killed everyone.

Now, let's shine a light on the picture we're painting. Sadly, so many people in the churches today think it would be better just to mind their own business and be complacent about the sin that confronts us in the world because if we leave well enough alone everything will be okay.

It would be better just to take care of us and hang out like Jebesh Galit and maybe we just all hang out in our little holy huddle here. The problem Jesus says in the book of Revelations he will come and take the lampstand away from that church.

[25 : 37] Complacency is not an option. Christ himself said you're either for me or you're against me. There is no such thing as neutral ground in a fight against evil.

Here these people thought they could choose a place of neutrality. We like the people of Benjamin. We also like the people of the rest of Israel so we're just going to be neutral.

We're going to remain neutral here. Much like America thought they could remain neutral in World War II until Pearl Harbor started taking place and then all of a sudden neutrality was no longer an option. The problem is is that neutrality lasted until people died.

Here complacency cost them their lives. I think complacency just to be honest with you and neutrality is costing many churches their witness because when we know there is wrong yet we would rather not engage the wrong then why has God left us here?

because he's called us to be his people for his glory and for his honor and for his sake. The third thing we see is compromise.

[26 : 55] There was catastrophe! There was complacency and there's compromise. These are the things you always get when man gets his own way. Man will always come to a place of catastrophe.

Man will always come to a place of complacency. Man will always begin to compromise because when things happen that you didn't intend to happen or things didn't go the way you planned it and you have no answer for the way things went and all of a sudden you end up in a catastrophe the easiest way out of that catastrophe men think is a compromise.

Now the the addict had said whoever does not come shall pay so they went to Jabesh Ghalid they killed everybody and they found and they probably were happy about it they found 400 virgins who had never known a man.

So we're going to give them to the tribe of Benjamin they announced peace to the tribe of Benjamin notice that the tribe of Benjamin never repented either. Careful who you announce peace to.

They announced peace to the tribe of Benjamin told them to come on out of hiding and yet here we see we've got 400 young virgins for you and they give them the now the problem that we have now is there are 200 men remaining and they said what are we going to do about these 200 because each of us has said sounds a whole lot like Micah and his mother right each of us has said if any man gives his daughter he's going to be cursed but now there's a way they can get your daughter without you giving it to her.

[28 : 18] There's a festival and we'll tell the men of Benjamin to hide in the vineyard and when they see the young virgins dancing they go get the one they want and then after they get it and the dad is upset and the brothers are upset we'll say no just leave them alone just give them notice it says give them to us because this is their compromise because you're not guilty because you didn't do it voluntarily they took them from you it's a compromise we're going to meet their needs but we're not going to do it in a way that brings cursing upon us now they never asked the Lord God how to do this but surely this is not God's desire I mean kidnapping is kidnapping is kidnapping I don't care how you paint it this is not God's desire but man has a way of always making a compromise when he gets himself in a conundrum because one thing

I have found out even in my own handyman activities I do it my way long enough I'm going to eventually have to compromise something to make it work that's why I keep you know buckets of extra screws and bolts and lots of tape and things like that because I can eventually make it work it's not the way it's supposed to be but it's going to work when it comes to the things of God it can't be that way God is very clear God is very detailed marriage is a thing to be honored I mean where do we see if we find out later as Paul tells us that when he speaks of marriage he's really speaking in reference to Christ and his church how do we see Jesus and his church in this picture I mean was you out dancing one day and Jesus hiding in the vineyard and come snatch you away no he lavished you with his love and called you with his mercies and his grace he drew you to himself with who he was you were attracted to him he didn't have to steal you he drew you to him but man has a way of compromise see the final results of man's efforts are always catastrophe complacency and compromise no matter where we're at no matter what God has called us to do we must ensure that we're not doing it in a way that seems right to us we must ensure that we're doing it in the way he's called us to do that we let the king make the decisions that we let the king set the course because when there's no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes this is what we get we get a catastrophe that shakes the nation we get complacency that costs the lives of those who thought they could be neutral and we get a compromise that just makes no sense at all because I'm going to go ahead and tell you if I had been one of those dads and they told me just let them have it I would have been upset it makes no sense at all besides the dad is supposed to get a dowry there's supposed to be some payment so they've taken freely what should have cost them dearly because man has a way of compromise we see as we close the book of judges this is the final result of the best that man can do may we never stand in the best of our efforts but may we stand where we see Ruth standing at the end of the book that bears her name in the efforts of someone else because Ruth met

Boaz and we don't find what Ruth did all we read about throughout the second half of that book is all that Boaz did we need a redeemer who will do it for us we don't need ourselves to see what we can work out judges chapter 21 thank you brothers thank you thank you thank you