

Judges 20:14-48

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[0 : 00] The book of Judges, we'll pick up, we're in the 14th verse, so we'll be in Judges 20, verse 14, and we'll read to the end of the chapter, which gets us down to verse 48. Before we get into it, we need to set the context, because we're picking up mid-event, if you will, but it was a good dividing point.

If you remember, the book of Judges has this great theme. It's not a good theme, but it's a great theme, great in magnitude, not great in character. And the overall theme, the book of Judges, is a phrase we find repeated, starting around Judges 16 to the end of the book, which is the 21st chapter.

And that is, in those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

So what we find in the book of Judges is what happens when man gets his way. We find that throughout the book of Judges, that man may be able to deliver himself for a time, but deliverance of man is ultimately vain, because that deliverance is short-lived.

God raises up deliverers and redeemers that would set his people free from that which holds them back. And we would see that that would last as long as that judge was alive.

[1 : 20] But when that judge died, man would go back, but they would go further back. Because one of the great dangers of sin is that self is never satisfied with sin. What is pleasing in sin now will not be pleasing in sin in the future.

We'll have to go further into sin. This is why sin always takes you further than you ever intended to go. This is why once we begin to go down the road of doing what we think is right, we always end up traveling much further down that road than we ever thought.

And this is why we must be careful to say, Well, I'm only going to do just a little bit. I know when to stop, or I know when far enough is. And this is why we dare not tread that fine line.

Because we will always, ultimately, end up going further. What is important, in particular with the book of Judges, is to remember that what we are reading and studying, as difficult as it is, as uncomfortable as it may be, is so much more than just the history of the nation of Israel.

We don't need the book of Judges to tell us that the nation of Israel has a messed up past. We just don't. We can see that when we open up 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

[2 : 39] If there is, or are, books of history which define for us the problem of the nation, it would be 1 and 2 Kings, and then later on, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Now those are important and imperative, because 1 and 2 Kings are written about the time of the Babylonian deportation, when the nation finally hit rock bottom. 1 and 2 Chronicles are written after the nation came out of Babylonian captivity, to remind them how they got in that problem.

If you are reading through the yearly reading plan, which I know some of you are, and you are reading through the one in particular, you are making your way through the book of Ezra.

Ezra will eventually lead to Nehemiah. Ezra is a scribe. We have not read it yet, but you will find that when Ezra is a scribe, that he dedicated himself to the study of God's Word, so that he may teach other people.

Many biblical historians believe that Ezra the scribe also wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles, to remind the people how we got here. All that to say, we don't need the book of Judges to tell us the history of the nation of Israel.

[3 : 46] We need the book of Judges to tell us the problem that man has. This is not a Jewish problem. This is a man problem. This is our problem.

That's important to remember, because what we see transpiring in the book of Judges is also the thing we see transpiring in the history of the world.

Throughout the book, there is a digression. I know I've said it over and over again, but one thing we get from this is that we learn, right? And we learn most, or at least I do, by repetition.

Throughout the book of Judges, there's a digression. We're continuously going down. Read your history. The history of mankind is not a progression.

It is a digression. We are not getting better. We are getting worse. For every new advancement in technology, we invent a better way to kill people.

[4 : 44] We are not progressing. We are digressing. You can turn on any TV show that speaks of these abandoned places that archaeology has uncovered, and the main question asked is, we don't know how they built it.

How did they do that so long ago? But yet it still stands, and it still testifies to a progressed race of mankind in which we have seemed to move further away from.

Because what we see happening, and I have to give this introduction so that we know, in the book of Judges, it's the same thing we see happening in history. The further we go, the more man gets his way.

Because what was supposed to happen, in those days, there was no king in Israel. That's not right. They were to be operating under a theophany. God was to be their king.

They did not recognize him as king, so they did not allow him to be king, and since they did not allow him to be king, they got to choose what they wanted to do. Genesis 1, 2, and 3 tell us that God created us to rule, and he is to rule over us.

[5 : 56] He is our king. And yet, the further we get away from the garden, the less kingdom we see him ruling in. So we see these same principles happening.

We have come to the point where, in Judges 17, there was a messed up individual. That messed up individual ended up being part of a messed up family.

Remember his family? And then that messed up family led to a messed up tribe, the tribe of Dan. And that messed up tribe had a messed up priest, a Levite. We've seen a Levite played both ways here.

We see a Levite in the 19th chapter hanging out in places he should have never hung out, doing things he should have never done, and eventually we see that the tribe of Benjamin commits an awful crime because as he's hanging out in a place he should have never been, in Gebeah, the men of Gebeah, who are Benjamites, come knocking at the house that he is at, wanting him to come out so that they may have their way with him, we are reminded of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But rather than walking in righteousness and being concerned about what was going on, he pushed his concubine outside and they had their way with her and they ravished her, it says, until daylight and she fell down and died at the threshold of the door.

[7 : 17] And so as not to put all the blame on one individual, he takes her home, cuts her in pieces, and sends her throughout the nation. You remember, the principle was to be, and if anybody was to know it, it should have been a Levite, that when a crime was committed, the matter was to be brought before the priest because the priest would carry the matter before the king, who was God, and God would determine what the consequences for the crime were.

He didn't do that. He chose to send it among his brothers, his fellow countrymen, and ask them what they thought they should do. So they gathered together, and the conclusion they come to is a just conclusion that the men of Gebeah should pay for the crime.

And now I'm getting into the 20th chapter. They should pay for this crime with their life because wickedness was to be purged from the land. So they gathered together, all of Israel, minus the tribe of Benjamin, and they reach out to Benjamin and ask them, the tribe that is, send us the men of Gebeah that we may put them to death for their crime.

The 13th verse tells us that they refused to do so. They began to defend the evil. They didn't want to hand over their fellow countrymen or their fellow tribal countrymen even at that.

So now we pick it up in the 14th verse of the 20th chapter. And the sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities of Gebeah to go out to battle against the sons of Israel. From the cities on that day, the sons of Benjamin were numbered 26,000 men who drew the sword besides the inhabitants of Gebeah who were numbered 700 choice men.

[8 : 57] Out of all these people, 700 choice men were left-handed. Each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. Then the men of Israel besides Benjamin were numbered 400,000 men who drew the sword, all these were men of war.

Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel and inquired of God and said, who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin? Then the Lord said, Judah shall go up first.

Paul is right there. Notice this in the Old Testament. Judah is always first. Pay attention to that because there's a line from the tribe of Judah who is going to be the forerunner who is first and that is Jesus.

Okay? So the sons of Israel arose in the morning and camped against Gebeah and the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin and the men of Israel arrayed for battle against them at Gebeah.

Then the sons of Benjamin came out of Gebeah and felled to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel. But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day.

[10 : 05] The sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening and inquired of the Lord saying, Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin? And the Lord said, Go up against him.

Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day and Benjamin went out against them from Gebeah the second day and fell to the ground again. 18,000 men of the sons of Israel, all these drew the sword.

Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept. Thus they remained there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

The sons of Israel inquired of the Lord for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to minister in those days saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin or shall I cease?

And the Lord said, Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand. So Israel sent men in ambush around Gebeah and the sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gebeah as at other times and the sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city and they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times on the highways one of which goes to Bethel and the other to Gebeah and in the field about 30 men of Israel and the sons of Benjamin said, They are struck down before us as at the first.

[11 : 28] But the sons of Israel said, Let us flee that we may draw them away from the city to the highways. Then all the men of Israel arose from their place and arrayed themselves at Bethel at Baal Tamar and the men of Israel in ambush broke out of their place even out of Maragibah when 10,000 choice men from all Israel came against Gebeah the battle became fierce but Benjamin did not know that disaster was close to them and the Lord struck Benjamin before Israel so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day all who drew the sword.

So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated and when the men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gebeah and the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gebeah and the men in ambush also deployed and struck all the city with the edge of the sword.

Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city. Then the men of Israel turned in the battle and Benjamin began to strike and kill about 30 men of Israel for they said surely they are defeated before us as in the first battle but when the cloud began to rise from the city in the column of smoke Benjamin looked behind them and behold the whole city was going up in smoke to heaven.

Then the men of Israel turned and the men of Benjamin were terrified for they saw that disaster was close to them therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness but the battle overtook them while those who came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst of them they surrounded Benjamin pursued them without rest and trod them down opposite Gebeah toward the east thus 18,000 men of Benjamin fell all these were valiant warriors the rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimen but they caught 5,000 of them on the highways and overtook them at Gidim and killed 2,000 of them so all Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men who drew or draw the sword all these were valiant warriors but 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimen and they remained at the rock of Rimen for months the men of Israel then took back or turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found they also set on fire all the cities which they found

Judges 20 14-48 a little bit of repetition there tells what happened and then it goes back and tells how it happened but yet we see this final outcome we have reached what the book of Judges has depicted for us in naming its judges we have now reached the greatest illustration of the time we have seen how wicked the time was illustrated in individuals we have seen how wicked the time was illustrated in families we have seen how wicked the time was illustrated in a tribe now we see just really how bad it was throughout the whole nation I want you to see and I will try to make it quick this evening what it looks like in a broken down society here we see a broken down society the first thing we notice and we don't have to spend a lot of time introducing it because we already have the first thing we notice is there is an unavoidable conflict with evil there is an unavoidable conflict with evil the men of Israel sought just to bring about the penalty on the men of Gebeah they only wanted those few men the problem is is that no matter how much you try to address one issue there was a greater problem one display of the problem does not really cure the whole problem or one action the men of Gebeah and what they had done does not necessarily address the issue and that is the nation was far far away from the Lord their God and as they sought just to penalize those few the greater problem manifested itself namely that the sons of

[15 : 32] Benjamin decided they weren't going to cooperate they were supposed to be operating under a national standard to purge the evil from among them even if it was your own son or daughter or even if it was your own spouse if someone done something which brought the fame to the name of the Lord God you were to hand him over or her over and yet here we find that they're not going to do this and the reason they're not going to do this is because every man is doing what is right in his own eyes and what is amazing is that it is the tribe of Benjamin which begins the battle because it says the sons of Benjamin gathered together and went out to fight the nation of Israel because we always realize if we bring this application to ourselves if we're just trying to address the sins with an S issue that is how sin manifests itself if we just want to address the manifestation of sin without addressing the problem of sin we're not dealing with the main issue so to put it in blunt terms it's not the bad things we do it's the bad person we are what was going on in the nation is they wanted to address the bad thing friend listen you can't address the bad thing without addressing the bad person because you can change your actions without changing who you are and it will begin to manifest itself in a different way and we see this throughout the nation this latest thing was just a manifestation of evil and eventually when traveling down the road of sin we always come to this unavoidable place of conflict you are either going to fight it or you are going to surrender to it sin does not desire to share its glory much like

God will not share his glory Jesus was very clear in this you cannot serve two masters you will love the one and hate the other he said you cannot serve both God and mammon or money you cannot please God and the world there is no fellowship Paul says with light and darkness there always comes a time where it is unavoidable that conflict has to happen when evil is allowed to reign among the people of God eventually it comes out and when it spills out that's a moment of conflict and now we have reached a time in society where the people are doing what is right in their own eyes and the tribe of Benjamin says well you think it's right to punish them but we don't think that's right and since our right and your right don't get along all of a sudden there's a conflict there is this unavoidable conflict with evil anyone that is seeking to follow the Lord

God will eventually come to that place this is why we are told we are employed in his army as soldiers and Paul says we are to put on the full armor of God because there is always a conflict with evil evil does not let its captives go peacefully it does not surrender easily and it does not give up one thing we find out in the Christian life is that Satan leaves us alone more when we before we trusted Christ than after we trusted Christ and the reason behind that is is Satan doesn't have to bother us when he already enslaves us Jesus says you are either a slave of Satan or a slave of God no man is free and when Satan already owns us he doesn't have to bother us it is only when we choose to be redeemed and set free then all of a sudden are we faced with that inevitable conflict with evil here we see that it is unavoidable the tribe of Benjamin says they're not going to have it and they're going to fight against him so there's the unavoidable conflict with evil the second thing that we notice in our passage is the humility that leads to worship now put yourself in the shoes of what's about to happen the tribe of Benjamin from the cities gathers 25,000 men there are 700 men in Gebeah so we're at 25,700 men of those 700 men or of those 25,700 men 700 of them are left handed and can sling a stone at a hare and not miss they're pretty good warriors it's kind of ironic that throughout the history of the

Old Testament in the tribe of Benjamin we find a lot of left handed individuals and it's ironic because Benjamin means the son of my right hand anyway just from the left side you attack a more vulnerable position because you're not used to fighting left handed individuals in that kind of conflict so they have 25,700 individuals and the nation of Israel apart from the tribe of Benjamin gathers their soldiers and they have 400,000 soldiers now it does not take a genius to figure out that 400,000 is probably going to defeat 25,700 I mean the odds are stacked against them military planning wise tells us that this is a no brainer right 400,000 can surely overcome 25,700 and even the tribe of Benjamin was not necessarily known for their militaristic abilities that is the tribe of Dan that's the battlers and the warriors and all these other things but what we find is that when they go into battle on the first day of battle it says that the tribe of Benjamin killed 22,000 men of the nation of

Israel now before they went to battle they went before the Lord and said should we go yes and they said who should go first Judah should go first we'll acknowledge that but when they go into battle the first day the sons of Benjamin come and they kill 22,000 of the 400,000 we have no record of any of the tribe of Benjamin dying as a matter of fact they don't die until day three well the nation of Israel still has more men so they gather together and they say we'll go out again they go before the Lord shall we go fight yes go fight so they go out again and that day 18,000 men have died so in two days of fighting 40,000 men of the nation of Israel have died 40,000 of their 400,000 they have had more men die on the battlefield than the sons of Benjamin have fighting have thought about that now first thing we should notice and we have to go back to last week's message to get this the

[22 : 26] Levite sought revenge and any time man seeks his own revenge everybody pays everybody pays but the second thing we should pay particular close attention to in this passage is what happens after day two because it says after day two after 40,000 men have died the sons of Israel gathered at Bethel and they fasted now they have asked God questions but they haven't been to this point yet they fasted that is they were humbled and after they fasted they were broken it says and then they offered offerings the peace offering and the guilt offering notice that so now what we have here is worship see they went to fight a battle in their own strength and in fighting in their own strength though they had greater numbers though from the outside it looked like surely they would win all they did was suffer loss friend listen to me as people of

God there is always an unavoidable conflict with evil but when we come to that conflict of evil and we are going to fight the battle when we fight it in our strength we will always suffer loss and we will suffer loss until we get to the place where they were at no matter how strong we may look no matter how much it may appear that we outnumber our enemy until we get to the point where they were and that is on our faces worshipping there will be no victory God humbled them in their own strength with their own numbers with the sheer size of their army this should have been resolved quickly but it was not 40,000 men paid with their life until the nation of Israel it says humbled themselves they fasted they cried out to God and they made sacrifices sacrifices are worship peace offerings and guilt offerings then then they asked

God should we go or should we stay this is the first time they give God the freedom to set the course God says go for I will deliver the sons of Benjamin this is the first assurance God gives for victory it follows and it's not a mistake it follows immediately upon the hills of their humbling and worship when you open up the pages of the book of Acts you find a persecuted church when you find a persecuted church who is fighting against evil inevitably you find a persecuted church who is in a battle against evil they gather together and they worship and after they worship the place where they worship is shaken and all of a sudden God begins to do something when the battle of evil rages man dare not fight in his own strength but we must go before the throne of

God in worship which leads us to the third and final thing there is the unavoidable conflict with evil the humility which leads to worship third and finally the victory which belongs to the Lord with fewer people but in the same place slightly altered battle plan they take the battle plan that Joshua uses and they set an ambush they go out and they fight again thirty more men die the nation of Israel read that but then we read in the midst of that fighting they had a great military plan but don't miss this says in verse 25 or 35 and the Lord struck Benjamin and the Lord struck Benjamin before Israel so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men and then it retells how he did it he used the sons of

Israel to do it but don't ever lose sight of the fact that it was the Lord who did it because victory always belongs to the Lord ultimately and finally the nation of Israel could not win this battle with evil on their own only after worship only after humbling and only when they're relying solely upon the Lord does the Lord deliver the tribe of Benjamin into their hands victory belongs to the Lord any victory over sin is completely his victory why because sinful man cannot defeat sin on his own this is why we need a savior hanging on the cross of Calvary this is why he must be perfect this is why he has to be the seed of a woman and not the seed of man it is the

[28 : 05] Lord's victory and not man's here we see what it looks like in a broken down society battling against each other fighting one another civil war has broken out even the people of God can't get along and the reason the people of God can't get along is because the evil is present and even though the people of God seem to be fighting and battling against the evil that they come before the Lord their God and allow him to do it Fred it sounds a whole lot like our day and time a whole lot like our day and time I can promise you almost to the utmost of my being after we gather together next Sunday night and we begin to seriously pray about where we think God wants us to be the attacks will start coming there will be a spiritual battlefield going on because

God wants to mobilize his people and Satan does not like it there will be bickering and fighting maybe not amongst us but around us there will be discord and turmoil that proceeds and goes on there will be trials there will be struggles there will be temptations but may we and I didn't plan this I'm so glad God brought us to this may we fall on our faces and worship him before we decide to fight one another over those things because here we see that God wins the battle at the end of the day and every victory is his because the reality is we are a church and a broken down society but God has given us the opportunity to be his church in this broken down society for his glory and for his purposes and as we seek to be that church we know that there will be an unavoidable conflict with evil we know there will be times when we are humbled that leads us to worship but we also know that every victory belongs to the

Lord and not to man judges 20 verses 14 through 48 ask a question yes ma'am says in here no no okay go ahead okay the Lord the Lord answers the Lord respond what does he do does he talk to I was trying to wait for that so Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.