

Judges 20-1-21-21  
Moral Corruption – Part 2

Introduction

A. Israel's outrage at the actions of the Benjamites (20:1-17)

1. The text today starts out on a bit of a positive note (1-13):
  - a. Men from 11 of the 12 tribes of Israel (all but Benjamin)—400,000 men—come to Mizpah to learn of the atrocity that took place in Gibeah (1-8)
  - b. They appear to be unified in their outrage and condemnation of the actions of the men of Gibeah (8-
    - 1) They **“arose as one man...”** (8) and were **“united as one man”** (11)
    - 2) They committed to not going home until the matter was addressed (8)
    - 3) They agree to go together to Gibeah, find the men and punish them for what they did in order to **“remove this wickedness from Israel”** (13a)
2. But, then things take a negative turn (12-17):
  - a. When they arrive in Gibeah, they solicit the help of the Benjamites to identify and turn over the wicked men (12-13a)
  - b. However, the Benjamites refuse and instead take up arms and prepare for battle against the other 11 tribes (13b-17)
3. So the passage starts out with what appears to be Godly and moral outrage driving a unified effort against heinous sin, quickly turns into a civil war when one of the tribes decides it's more important to protect wicked men than obey the Law

B. God executes judgement against the Israelites and the Benjamites (20:18-48)

1. Like the section above, this one begins on a bit of a positive note (18)--As Israel prepares for battle against the tribe of Benjamin, they seek direction from God
2. But also like the section above, things take a negative turn (19-25):
  - a. In the first battle, Israel is defeated and Benjamin kills 22,000 men of Israel (19-21)
  - b. In the second battle, Israel is defeated again and Benjamin kills 18,000 men of Israel (22-25)
3. What's going on here?
  - a. Israel appears to be doing the right thing by trying to locate the men who committed the wickedness and purge such behavior from Israel—this is Lawful
  - b. When Benjamin refuses to turn over the men and decides to protect them, again Israel appears justified by the Law
  - c. They even inquire of the LORD—BOTH TIMES!--and He responds by giving them instructions
  - d. But why, then, does the LORD allow Israel to be defeated twice and lose 40,000 men, but Benjamin appears to lose none?
    - 1) It is likely God's judgment on Israel, not so much for these actions but their overall spiritual and moral corruption (already described by the author)

- 2) Israel was by no means innocent, in spite of their zeal in rallying together to deal with the sins of their brothers in Benjamin (isn't this often true of ourselves—we don't see our own sins but so quickly judge that of others?)
- 3) This becomes apparent in the next few verses (26-30)
  - a) The first time Israel inquires of God they simply ask Him a question
  - b) The second time they inquire of the LORD, they accompany it with some weeping
  - c) The third time they inquire of the LORD, however, they do so after weeping, waiting, fasting and offering burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD
  - d) The BURNT OFFERING was an offering of atonement for sins
  - e) The PEACE OFFERING was a voluntary offering intended to express one's thankfulness to God for His help and deliverance
  - f) So, it appears that Israel finally realized that their defeats were God's judgement and they dealt first with their own sin, before continuing their quest to deal with the sin of the Benjamites
4. The LORD executes his judgement on Benjamin (27-48):
  - a. Having cleansed themselves from their own sin (above), Israel now approaches God a third time and He promises them victory (27-28)
  - b. The LORD delivers all but 600 men of Benjamin into the hands of the other 11 tribes (29-48)

C. Israel mourns the near destruction of Benjamites (21:1-4)
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1. This next section, like the ones above, also starts on a rather positive or encouraging note:
2. The 11 tribes of Israel mourn the near destruction of their brothers, the Benjamites—all that is left are 600 men (all the women and children have been killed)
3. There was no rejoicing over Benjamin's defeat, only remorse and concern over the loss of one of the tribes of Israel
4. In their zeal, the 11 tribes had made a hasty and unwise pact not to give any of their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites (21:1)
5. With no wives, they tribe would disappear forever
6. Now, this was a problem they themselves had created—they had sworn an oath at Mizpah not to give their daughters to any Benjamite as a wife (1)

D. Israel concocts wicked plans to fix the problem and protect the future of Benjamin (21:5-25)
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This is where this section, like the previous ones, takes a negative turn –the Israelites come up with two plans to solve the problem (5-25):

1. The first plan (5-18):
  - a. Find out which clan(s) did not join them at Mizpah—this turned out to be Jabesh-gilead
  - b. Then, kill everyone in that clan except the virgins—this was apparently okay in their eyes since they had sworn an oath to kill them anyway (5)
  - c. Give the virgins to the Benjamites
  - d. However, this plan only provided wives for 400 of the 600 Benjamites who were left
2. The second plan (19-24)—encourage the Benjamites to kidnap women from Shiloh
  - a. There was a big feast in Shiloh every year

- b. The men Benjamin were encouraged to hide in the vineyards and wait for young women to come out to the dances and then abduct them and take them back home to be their wives
- c. This was apparently okay in their eyes and didn't violate their oath because the women were taken by Benjamin, not given to them

Conclusion
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1. The key to understanding what the author is trying to tell us in this story, as well as those in the entirety of Judges, is the final verse of the book: **"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."**
2. That's exactly what we see in throughout this story of the Levite, his concubine and the civil war between Benjamin and the other 11 tribes of Israel
  - a. We see the men of Gibeah, Israelites under the covenant of God, ignore the Law and do what is right in their own eyes
  - b. We see the old man and the Levite do what is right in their own eyes by offering to give up two innocent women to be mistreated, raped and murdered to save their own skins
  - c. We see the Israelites rise up in unity to attack their brothers for their sin, while ignoring their own sin, and then doing what is right in their own eyes when it comes to solving a problem they in their own haste and sin created
  - d. Did you notice the irony of this story? The Israelites were enraged at the sin of the Benjamites but then are guilty of the very same sin themselves?
    - 1) The Israelites were enraged because of the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine
    - 2) But yet, their solution to the bride-problem they created for the Benjamites included rape and murder!!!
    - 3) What hypocrites!
3. So one lesson for us in all of this is nothing good ever comes out of simply doing what is right in our own eyes
  - a. In Numbers 15:38-39 Moses instructed the Israelites to make tassels on the corners of their garments
  - b. They were then to put a blue cord on each of these tassels
  - c. These tassels and blue cords were to remind the Israelites **"not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes"** but rather to remember the commandments of God
  - d. We need to remember the same thing: we are called to do what is right in the LORDs eyes as revealed in His Holy Word, not do what seem right in our own eyes
4. A second lesson is found in this passage:
  - a. How often do we judge others for their sins, or even get enraged at the sins of others, yet fail to realize that we are guilty of the same or similar things?
  - b. That's what the Israelites did here—and it was driven primarily by them doing what was right in their own eyes
  - c. How often are we guilty of the same thing?
  - d. Did not Jesus warn us about this in Matthew 7:1-5:
    - 1) Notice that this passage doesn't ultimately say that we shouldn't judge one another
    - 2) Rather, it says that we must first remove the log from our own eye before we can remove the speck from someone else's eye

- 3) In other words, it's like the Israelites in this story—they first needed to deal with their own sin before the LORD before they could judge the Benjamites (and be granted victory over them)
- a. The Israelites were right to want to address the sins of the men of Gibeah:
  - b. However, they were wrong to do so before dealing with their own sin
  - c. They were also wrong in going beyond the Law and making their own oath to kill the men of Jabesh-gilead for not going along with them and their oath against marrying with the Benjamites
  - d. They were also wrong when they committed the same sins for which they were judging the Benjamites