

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JUDGES 17-21

The last 5 chapters of Judges, along with the book of Ruth, provide us with 3 episodes from this gruesome period of Hebrew history. Ruth is a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day. It shows there were a few people during this period willing to place *principle* above *pleasure*. But Ruth was the exception... The stories in Judges are more indicative of the times. They reek with unrighteousness.

Judges 17-21 reveals just how far a society will deteriorate when “**everyone does what is right in their own eyes.**” I call it the “**Outback philosophy**”...

Outback Steakhouse use to have a commercial where a truck-load of good-looking guys and gals drive pass warning signs onto the beach. They violate the law, and have a fun and frolicking party – complete with bloom’n onions, steaks, and brusokies. All the while a spokesman chants a motto, “**No Rules, Just Right**”.

Once, I asked an Outback waiter to let me substitute cheese fries for regular fries. You’d think I was asking to change the US Constitution. *He couldn’t. It was against the rules.* I said, “*What about your motto - NO RULES, JUST RIGHT.*”

It seems the motto only applies when it works in Outback’s favor.

That’s also what happens in an amoral society. People make up their own rules! Society requires rules. But toss out God’s rules and it becomes a contest to see who can garner

the power so they can make rules that best serve their own interests. The results are nasty and brutal. Just consider these last 5 chapters...

The first story in Chapters 17-18 centers around a man named "Micah". I call him "mixed up Mike". Chapter 17 shows how convoluted life had become.

"Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, "The 1100 shekels of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears - here is the silver with me; I took it." The first bit of info we learn about Mike is he steals money from his own mama. He probably had a gambling debt from internet poker.

"And his mother said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!" The only reason Mike fesses up is he fears the curse his mom places on the stolen loot.

"So when he had returned the 1100 shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you."

Here it gets more bizarre... Micah's mama dedicated the silver to Jehovah God to make a carved image for her son. Of course, carved images were forbidden by the Law – *the second commandment*. Her attempt to honor God is a violation of God's own commandments. *She wants to serve God, but do it her own way.*

“Thus he returned the silver to his mother.

Then his mother took 200 shekels of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.” Here’s the ultimate oxymoron – *Micah makes an idol for God.*

Verse 5 “The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.” In the name of Jehovah, Micah constructs his own shrine, sets up his own image of God, makes his own ephod, and selects his own priest. He violates every detail of God’s Law.

Private shrines were forbidden by God’s Law. Old Testament worship was *corporate* and *communal*. It was supposed to be carried out at the Tabernacle.

Nothing tangible or visible was to be employed in your worship. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, God is spirit, and He’s to be worshipped in spirit and truth.

And the priests were to be Levites. Micah and son were from Ephraim.

Verse 6 sums up Micah’s problem. “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Evidently, there was a side to Micah that desired to be spiritual. Perhaps he sensed a real longing for God. But rather than submit his will to God, and pursue God the way God requires – he opted for a tailor made religion. Micah constructed His own brand of spirituality.

Here’s a man that wants to be “*spiritual*” and “*religious*” - but his spirituality has very little to do with the Bible. It’s a hodge-

podge of Judaism, superstition, and the occult. It's based on personal experiences and tastes not the truth of God's Word.

Hey, welcome to our modern world! Every survey and poll today tells us that interest in spirituality is up - while commitment to biblical truth is down.

In their book "*American Demographics*" authors Cimino and Lattin explain what kind of religion people today desire... "It's a religion of the heart, not of the head."

It's practical and personal, more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It's about feeling good, not being good. It's as much about the body as it is about the soul." People today want a convenient spirituality without *moral absolutes* and *ultimate authority*. They want a *designer religion* not *biblical truth*. They're happy to embrace Jesus as a potential *guide, or helper, or friend...* but "*Jesus is Lord*" doesn't fit into modern notions of spirituality.

The Washington Post recently ran an article, "[A Church Away From Church](#)".

It discusses a growing trend toward establishing "*prayer rooms*" or "*meditation seats*" or "*home altars*". People call it creating "*sacred space*" at home.

One lady commented on the altar in her bedroom, "It symbolizes an amalgam of personal beliefs and experiences... (and) provides me with a more intimate and meaningful form of worship than any religious institution could offer..."

As part of her altar she has several idols (or goddesses), Roman Catholic candles, and items held sacred by Native

Americans... It's *mixed-up Mike* all over again. Today's spirituality is a quagmire of religious sentiment divorced from biblical truth. It's a heretical blend - with nothing to do with Christianity.

Mixed up Mike's situation worsens in verse 7, "Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there." A real, bonafide priest stumbles into the picture. He's actually a Levite.

Micah wants to gain legitimacy for his religion by hiring a live-in priest.

Verse 8 "The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn wherever he could find a place. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?"

So he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay." Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you 10 shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in. Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him.

So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!" Micah's faith is nothing more than superstition. This itinerate Levite has now become his

good luck charm.

Micah has hired him a personal guru – his own spiritual trainer.

The whole set-up was a gross violation of God's law. Drop down to 8:31, and read our author's reminder, "So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."

Micah wanted to be spiritual, but He didn't want to be obedient to God.

Hey, *spirituality* and *godliness* are not the same... I know folks who claim to be spiritual, but ignore God's revealed truth. You can be spiritual and miss God. You can worship the wrong spirit... Godliness is spirituality that's obedient to God.

True spirituality – a real connection to God - can't be personalized to your own private tastes. "*Religion a la carte*" is trendy - but it never gains God's approval.

True worship... worships God the way God wants to be worshipped.

Chapter 18 "In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them." The Danites grow impatient, and set out on their own to find a place to settle.

The Danites had a wait problem... [a w-a-i-t problem](#). One of the first lessons we learn as Christians is to wait on God. God's best is always worth the wait.

So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. While they were at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?"

He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest." So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous." And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way."

“So the five men departed and went to Laish...” The tribe of Dan was allotted a tract of land along the southern Canaanite coast – land occupied by the Philistines.

This may’ve been another reason they wanted to move. It was easier to *flee* than *fight*. It was less risk to *move on* than *move out* and trust God for victory.

“They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.” Laish was on the northern border of Israel and Sidon – north of the Sea of Galilee. Laish was in the mountains – near the headwaters of the

Jordan River. Visit Israel with us and we'll visit the *Dan Nature Reserve*.

The Sidonians to the north of Laish lived primarily on the Mediterranean coast which left the city of Laish isolated. The land was fertile and prosperous.

In Verses 8-10 the spies return and convince the Danites to move.

Verse 11 “And 600 men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war.” They traveled northwest. “Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There it is, west of Kirjath Jearim.) They passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.”

Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do." So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man - to the house of Micah - and greeted him.

The 600 men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the 600 men who were armed with weapons of war.

When these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" And they said to him, "Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth (shhhhhh), and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?"

When the priest tries to stop the thieves, they buy his devotion. And notice their offer... "Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe..." *Hey, come with us and you can pastor a bigger church!*

This is a step up for the Levite – a promotion. He wasn't committed to Micah. He was a hired gun – a priest for sale. He was open to the highest bidder. They say "every man has his price." That was certainly true of this Levite. He sold out.

It's one thing when the people do what's right in their own eyes – but this was also indicative of the leaders. Not even the priests were truly committed to God.

It's sad today, when a pastor seeks a better offer – a more lucrative job - rather than God's call. *How many pastors have accepted a call to a smaller church?*

"So the priest's heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people. Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.

When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house gathered

together and overtook the children of Dan.

And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, "What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?" So he said, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, 'What ails you?' "

And the children of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!"

As I said earlier every society needs laws. Rules are inevitable. But when you throw out God's laws – then it's left up to the people in power to make the rules.

The law of the jungle goes into effect... It becomes "might makes right."

"Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house." *How tragic to worship a god that can be stolen...* Here's the problem with today's "feel good", "tailor made", "personalized" religion – it doesn't survive tough times. Storms steal your faith.

Only faith tied to the rock named Jesus - can withstand life's stress and storm.

The rest of the chapter tells us how Laish was defeated. The city was renamed "*Dan*". And the Levite, Jonathan, served as Dan's own personal priest. He *was the best priest money could buy...* All the while *God's priesthood* ministered in Shiloh.

Hey, *designer religion* might make you feel good, but it never pleases God.

And here's the problem with *wrong worship*... it produces *wrong living*.

Ungodliness leads to *unrighteousness*. When a person *believes wrong*, they eventually *behave wrong*. As it's been said, "When God goes, anything goes."

And the final, grizzly story in the book of Judges shows how utterly immoral ungodly people eventually become. *It'll make the hair stand up on your neck.*

Chapter 19 "And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim."

This was a different Levite – he also lived among the tribe of Benjamin.

"He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months." In ancient times it was common for men to keep concubines. Hagar was Abraham's concubine.

In essence, a concubine was a legal mistress. She was legally bound to the man, but with fewer privileges than a wife. She was considered his property.

Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house;

and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there."

So far so good! This sounds like a sweet tale of a restored marriage... *but...*

"It came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way."

So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together.

Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the 5th day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart."

So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate.

And when the man stood to depart - he and his concubine and his servant - his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home." For two days this father-in-law managed to hold on to his little girl, and stall her husband's departure. Finally, enough is enough. He makes his break.

Verse 10, "However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came to opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem)." Bethlehem to Jerusalem was just a few miles - they hadn't been on the road very long.

"With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it." But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah."

It would be safer among fellow Israelis. "So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah."

And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. (Just north of Jerusalem.) And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night."

Verse 16 "Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. (The Levite was also from Ephraim) And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?"

So he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in

Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD." He was headed for Shiloh to worship at the Tabernacle. After all he was a Levite. He had duties.

"But there is no one who will take me into his house, although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything." This should've been a clue that something was wrong in Gibeah.

When there's no hospitality among God's people – *a people who have been shown such hospitality by God* - something is terribly amiss.

And the old man said, "Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." And we're about to find out why this was such a bad idea... "So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

Verse 22 "As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!" These men were homosexual rapists.

Their conscience had been seared. Natural, sexual intercourse with a woman no longer satisfied them. They were controlled by perversion and violence.

“But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage.” Remember, in ancient times hospitality was a sacred trust. A house guest became the God-given responsibility of the host.

But this guy goes overboard. He shouts to the rapists, “Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!”

Custom or no custom – hospitality or no hospitality - what kind of a man throws his own daughter out to a gang of *ruthless rapists* just to save his own skin?

Verse 25 “But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.” The Levite was no better than his host. He had less love for his concubine than the man did for his daughter.

Here’s a clue why the concubine had run off with another man and gone home to Bethlehem. The Levite had probably been abusive to her in years past.

Again, imagine the *callousness* and *cowardice* of this man. And remember he’s a Levite – a man of God. He grabs the girl he’s suppose to love, and throws her out to pacify a mob of sexual predators. Savages spend the whole night gang raping the woman. Only when the sun *comes up* does the pack *break up*...

It reminds me of what happened in New York's Central Park a few years ago. A group of teenagers went "*wilding*" - as it was called. They went on a wild rampage of mayhem and anarchy. When an innocent jogger crossed their path the poor lady was gang raped and brutalized... *Not much has changed in 3400 years.*

Remember the phrase, "When God goes... anything goes!"

Verse 26 tells us, "Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light."

When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold." *And notice his lack of compassion...*

"And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer." The woman was dead. She'd been raped and murdered *while he slept.* "So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place."

On the way home the atrocity of the crime must've been soaked in. He turned into Gibeah because it was an Israelite city. Never in his wildest imagination did he think such a brutal and violent crime could be committed by his own brothers.

"When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into 12 pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel." He dismembers the corpse, packs the pieces on his donkey, and turns it loose.

Such a terrible crime should not be hidden. People need to know...

Verse 30 “And so it was that all who saw it said, “No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!” Mission accomplished. The nation was appalled and alarmed at the savagery of the brutal crime.

Chapter 20, “So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba...”

Dan was the northern-most city in Israel. Beersheba was the southern-most. “*From Dan to Beersheba*” was a proverbial way of saying “*north to south*”.

“As well as from the land of Gilead (tribes east of the Jordan River), and the congregation gathered together as one man before the LORD at Mizpah.

And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) The perpetrators were Benjamites. Apparently, they weren’t invited.

Then the children of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?”

So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, “My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but

instead they ravished my concubine so that she died.” Notice how the Levite spins the story. It’s the truth. But he doesn’t mention his own cruelty – how he threw the woman to the mob.

“So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!” Something needs to be done... *what do you suggest?*

“So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah:

We will go up against it by lot. We will take 10 men out of every 100 throughout all the tribes of Israel, a 100 out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every 10,000, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.”

Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? Now therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!" But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children

of Israel.” It’s tragic that whenever a gruesome, perverted act gets committed there’s always someone to defend the guilty party. Here it’s the children of Benjamin.

Today it’s the *ACLU*, or *People of the American Way*, or *Planned Parenthood*.

“And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered 26,000 men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered 700 select men. Among all this people were 700 select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss.

Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered 400,000 men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war.” You’d think 400,000 battle ready troops would overwhelm 26,700 Benjamites – but a couple of factors even out the battle.

Gibeah was a remote, mountainous city that was easily defensible.

And the Benjamites had 700 left-handed, sling-shot, sharpshooters. As the Israelites climbed the hilly terrain the snipers could pick them off one at a time.

In verse 18 civil war breaks out. “Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, “Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?” The LORD said, “Judah first!”

So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah.

And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin,

and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah.

Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground 22,000 men of the Israelites.” Benjamin wins a surprising victory.

“And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day. Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, "Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?"

And the LORD said, "Go up against him."

So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground 18,000 more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.

Why did God allow Benjamin to win the first two rounds of the conflict we're not sure! Perhaps Israel's numbers made them a little over-confident. God needed to humble His people. Now they realize how much they need God's intervention.

“Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the

covenant of God was there in those days, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?"

And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

This time Israel employs a strategy. "Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times.

So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about 30 men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, "They are struck down before us, as at first." But the children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways."

So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba. And 10,000 select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them.

The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day 25,100 Benjamites; all these drew the sword.

So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated.

The rest of the chapter gives us details about the battle. Israel set an ambush... A battalion of Israelis drew the Benjaminites out of the city – while another unit took Gibeah and set it ablaze. At first, the Benjaminites thought this was a repeat of the prior two battles. But as soon as the retreating Israelis saw the smoke from the fire they turned back on the Benjaminites.

It created a panic among the Benjaminites and insured their slaughter.

Verse 47 “But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months.

And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword - from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.”

Chapter 21 “Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife."

Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, and said, "O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?" So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

The children of Israel said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death." And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today." The tribe of Benjamin was 600 men shy of extinction. The refugees at Rimmon were the only remnant.

Israel cries out, "What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?"

"And they said, "What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?" One city was missing from the assembly in Mizpeh.

And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. So the congregation sent out there 12,000 of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children.

And this is the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately." So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan." See what happens when everyone makes up their own rules... It gets more and more difficult to differentiate between the good guys and the bad

buys.

Verse 13 “Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them.

So Benjamin came back at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them.” Only 400 of 600 men received a wife. “And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel.”

Then the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?"

And they said, "There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, 'Cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.' " *But they've got a plan!*

Hey, man will always have a plan. When you reject God's Law you've got to come up with your own plan. And this is where we get ourselves in trouble.

Here's Israel's plan, “Then they said, "In fact, there is a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah."

Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying,

"Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of Benjamin."

Hide in the bushes and when the babes start to dance... *just grab a wife!*

Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for it is not as though you have given the women to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.' "

Hey, you didn't give your daughters to Benjamin they were just taken. Your oath is still intact.

"And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them.

So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance."

Which brings us, as promised, to the **Top 10 Biblical Ways To Find A Wife...**

10) *Judges 21:19-25...* Go to a party and hide. When the women come out to dance, grab one and carry her off to be your wife.

9) *Hosea 1:1-3 – this was Hosea...* Find a prostitute and marry her.

8) *Exodus 2:16-21 – this was Moses...* Find a man with seven daughters, and impress him by watering his flock.

7) *From Deuteronomy 21:11-13...* Find an attractive prisoner of war, bring her home, shave her head, trim her nails, and give her new clothes. Then she's yours.

6) *Ruth 4:5-10 – we'll read about Boaz next time...*
Purchase a piece of property, and get a woman as part of the deal.

5) *Genesis 2:19-24 – this was Adam...* Have God create a wife for you while you sleep. And note: this will cost you a rib.

4) *Genesis 29:15-30 – this was Jacob...* Work seven years in exchange for a woman's hand in marriage. Get tricked into marrying the wrong woman. Then work another seven years for the woman you wanted to marry in the first place.

3) *Esther 2:3-4 – this was King Ahasuerus...* Become the emperor of a huge nation and hold a beauty contest. The winner becomes your wife.

2) *Judges 14:1-3 – this was Samson...* When you see someone you like, go home and tell your parents, "*I have seen a ...woman; now get her for me.*" If your parents question your decision, simply say, "*Get her for me. She's the one for me.*"

1) *1 Samuel 18:27 – this was David...* Cut off 200 foreskins from your future father-in-law's enemies, and trade them in for his daughter's hand in marriage.

These are all biblical ways to find a wife. *Or you could just pray and trust God.*

Well, the best way to describe tonight's study is... *what a mess!*

Verse 25 is the last verse in the book of Judges, and it sums it all up. “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

The nation had plunged into a period of *confusion*, and *chaos*, and *carnage*.

But aren't you glad that we have a king? His name is *King Jesus*. And He has not left us to guess at life – to wing it – to make it up as we go... Jesus has left us with the *Word of God* and the *Spirit of God* to lead us in His ways – the right way. He knows better how we should live than we do. Let's be subject to King Jesus.