

## Episode #552 Judges 20 Part 2 – Civil War!

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. Last time we considered the story of the Levite's concubine. All Israel gathered together after this outrage was done. A man had come to the Benjamite city of Gibeah, and some of the Benjamite inhabitants of Gibeah had acted just like the men of Sodom had in the book of Genesis. Israel was shocked and appalled at such immoral behavior among them, so they gathered and determined to destroy Gibeah. Benjamin did not come to the gathering, and Israel sent to them asking them to send the men of Gibeah to them so they could destroy them. Benjamin refused, decided to side with the city inhabited by their fellow tribesmen. Israel prepared their army to attack Benjamin, and then went to consult with the LORD!

III. The Failure of Israel. Judges 20:18-28.

A. Verse 18. The Israelites go to God's house at Shiloh, Joshua 18:1, Judges 18:31.

Notice their question: who should go to war first? Not asking what their plan should be. This whole portion illustrates to us the theme of the later part of Judges: Judges 17:6, 21:25. Notice: Benjamin was doing the same thing, only what was right in their eyes was different. Yahweh answers. Judah first in victory or in defeat.

B. Verse 19. They again prepare to fight at Gibeah.

C. Verse 20. They set up the fight against Benjamin at Gibeah.

D. Verse 21. In spite of their inferior numbers, Benjamin wins. They almost kill as many as their own army! Why? Remember, this was their plan; the LORD was only given a small part. They had the idolaters of Dan in their army! Did not the whole nation deserve destruction and defeat for this wickedness?

E. Verse 22. They encourage themselves and prepare to fight another day.

F. Verse 23. They weep and ask the LORD if they should go to war against Benjamin.

Why didn't they ask this in the first place? But notice what they didn't ask: why did He allow this defeat? If they had asked, they may have gotten the answer. Note: they admit Benjamin is their brother. He tells them to again go to war.

G. Verse 24. They obey and prepare for war the second day.

H. Verse 25. Again the result is a Benjamite victory. Another large number of Israelites lose their lives; Benjamin's losses are minimal.

I. Verse 26. Came before God's house (the tabernacle) again in Shiloh. They weep, sit before Him, fast, and offer burnt and peace offerings.

J. Verse 27. They enquire of Jehovah. We are told the ark was there at that time.

K. Verse 28. Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, contemporary with Moses' grandson Jonathan (Judges 18:30), is the high priest, a hero from the days of Moses (Numbers 25:6-13).

The asking is by Urim and Thummim in his breastpiece. Again they ask what they should do, not what the LORD is doing. They refused to learn the lesson He was teaching. He tells them to go to battle again. Now He will give them the victory. He is willing, even though they never did ask the right question.

IV. The Defeat of Benjamin. Judges 20:29-46.

A. Verse 29. This time they act cleverly and set up an ambush around Gibeah.

B. Verse 30. They acted the same, setting up battles lines against Gibeah.

- C. Verse 31. The Benjamites are drawn out of the city, striking down Israelites as they did the previous times.
- D. Verse 32. Benjamin thinks this is a repeat of what happened the previous two days. Meanwhile the Israelites decide to flee in order to draw the Benjamites out of the city.
- E. Verse 33. They fled but then rallied back into battle array at Baal Tamar (Lord of the Palms). Meanwhile the ambush strikes against Gibeah.
- F. Verse 34. Ten thousand chosen men came from ambush to attack Gibeah. Yet the battle is so fierce that Benjamin is too busy to notice what is going on behind them.
- G. Verse 35. This time the Jehovah defeats Benjamin before Israel. Benjamin had 26,700 men, and here 25,100 of them die in the battle.
- H. Verse 36. Benjamin realizes they are defeated. Again we review the battle. Israel withdrew from Benjamin, trusting in their ambush against the city.
- I. Verse 37. The ambush hurries from their concealment and rushes on Gibeah. They execute all the people of the city and wipe out Gibeah.
- J. Verse 38. The Israelites will know that the ambush succeeded when the ambushers set the city on fire with a great bonfire of flame and smoke.
- K. Verse 39. As Israel gives way before Benjamin about thirty of them are struck down. Benjamin thinks they are winning the day like they did the first two days.
- L. Verse 40. When the flame and a pillar of smoke rises from the city, Benjamin finally looks behind them and sees their only retreat on fire behind them.
- M. Verse 41. The Israelites stop fleeing and turn back to fight. Benjamin are alarmed, and realize that calamity has come upon them.
- N. Verse 42. The Benjamites turn their backs to Isarel and try to flee to the wilderness, but they cannot escape. The army of Israel catches up with them, and the Benjamites coming out of the cities to flee they destroy with the Benjamite army.
- V. The Israelite people respond to the moral outrage done by some men of Gibeah by attacking the whole tribe of Benjamin. They attack with only a cursory enquiry of the LORD. Twice they are defeated, and yet still they refuse to ask the LORD why. Perhaps they well knew their own sins, or perhaps they just did not care for any self-examination. The LORD finally relented and gave them the victory in spite of their refusal to look at their own sin. Is this ever true of us, that we are so busy trying to win a victory for the Lord that we refuse to examine our own lives and see what we may be doing that is not pleasing to Him? Let us not do so!