

Episode #602 Judges 21 Part 2 – Wives For Benjamin

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 saw that Israel, after defeating the tribe of Benjamin, wiped them out in systematic purge. Then afterwards they regretted the loss of one tribe out of Israel! Six hundred had escaped, but all the women were dead and they had made an oath not to give any Benjamite a wife. They looked for a place to find women for Benjamin, and they discovered the city of Jabesh Gilead had not sent any representatives to the gathering, according to another oath.

III. Wives for Benjamin. Judges 21:1-24.

- A. Verse 10. They send out twelve thousand most valiant (sons of strength) to wipe out Jabesh in Gilead according to their oath. Their solution: more slaughter. Wonderful!
- B. Verse 11. Every male and every woman who is not a virgin in Jabesh Gilead is to be wiped out systematically, as they had just wiped out Benjamin.
- C. Verse 12. They do this. They save the young virgins of Jabesh for the Benjamite men. They find that this totals four hundred. Note: probably many were not yet marriageable age, but it was not unusual for a girl to be betrothed long before she could marry. They bring the girls back to the camp at Shiloh. In Canaan, not Israel? Probably because Gilead was east of Jordan and was NOT originally the land of Canaan. Also too Israel had treated Benjamin and Jabesh like they were Canaanites.
- D. Verse 13. They send to the rock Rimmon to make peace with Benjamin.
- E. Verse 14. The Benjamites return from the rock. They greet them with something like, "Sorry we killed all your women, but here are some we found for you!" But note: 600 Benjamite men and 400 Jabeshite women: they had not found enough.
- F. Verse 15. Yahweh had made a breach, and they were sorry and want the breach mended. But note: was this Yahweh's plan or their plan?
- G. Verse 16. They are still short 200 wives, and think where they can come from.
- H. Verse 17. They want Benjamin to survive so a tribe will not be missing from Israel. A good goal, but why didn't they think of it before?
- I. Verse 18. They cannot break their oath of a curse on anyone who provides a wife for a Benjamite.
- J. Verse 19. Note that they did not all even know of this feast, but every Israelite should have known by heart and attended yearly every feast! Faithfulness to the law was not common. Note: though their camp was near Bethel and Shiloh, it was not apparently at the tabernacle. Probably the solution to our mystery of the camp at Bethel or Shiloh
- K. Verse 20. They tell the 200 Benjamites without a wife to set up an ambush at Shiloh.
- L. Verse 21. The young, unmarried women of Shiloh will come out of the city to dance at the feast. Note: Jehovah's feasts in the law never involved dancing girls! This was probably picked up from the Canaanites. They are to kidnap girls to be their wives and run back with them to Benjamin. These would be Levite girls, since this was a city of Levite priests.
- M. Verse 22. They will provide compensation for their angry fathers. They will also reassure them that they are not cursed since they didn't provide a wife voluntarily.

N. Verse 23. Benjamin follows these commands and kidnaps enough girls to be their wives. Then they went back to the territory of Benjamin, rebuilt the cities, and lived there with their new wives.

O. Verse 24. Meanwhile the Israelites leave the camp and all head back to their homes.

V. Judges 21:25. This is the summary of the state of Israel during the book. Note the downside versus having a righteous king. However, note also the advantage over having a wicked king. All are free here to worship the LORD according to their consciences. The problem is that their consciences are corrupt! We too have great freedom in the dispensation of grace, and in many ways things are just as messy. What will we do? Will we walk worthy? (Ephesians 4:1)

VI. The solution the Israelites came up with for providing women for Benjamin was to wipe out some other Israelites and take their girls. When this was not enough, they had the Benjamites kidnap some of the priests' daughters! Everything here is as Judges 21:25 says: all did what was right in their own eyes! Judges started with Israel failing to wipe out the wicked Canaanites, and ends with them all but succeeding at wiping out their own brother Benjamin! We might criticize this, but do we do the same? Do we follow what God really says He wants, or do we do what seems good to us? This is the great lesson of this last section of Judges!