

Lesson 12: Judges 20 – 21

War with Benjamin, Benjamin Saved from Extinction

In our last lesson a Levite was traveling home with his concubine /wife and a servant. His wife was raped repeatedly through the night by men of the tribe of Benjamin. The woman died from her injuries. Her Levite husband took her home and cut up her body into twelve pieces, sending these body parts to each of the tribes. It was intended to be a message to the tribes of Israel that something had to be done to punish those responsible for these deplorable actions. This is the rest of the story. This lesson completes our study of Judges. Our next lesson comes from 1 Samuel.

1. Read Judges 20:1-10 and footnotes. Share any interesting or helpful footnotes with your group. The lewd and outrageous act of the men from Gibeah had *united* all of the Israelites at one place.

Why have all the tribes of Israel gathered together?

What parts of the Levite's testimony are not completely truthful? (See also Judges 19:22-28)

2. Read Judges 20:11-19 and footnotes.

In verses 20:11-13, what steps did the men of Israel *first* take to "purge the evil"?

How many men were gathered from the tribes of Israel?

How many men were gathered from Benjamin?

What was significant about the 700 warriors from Gibeah?

3. Read Judges 20:20-29 and footnotes.

In the first battle (20:21) how many Israelites had perished?

How many Israelites perished in the second battle? (20:25)

After each defeat, what did the Israelites do?

4. Read Judges 20:30-37. This is the third battle between Israel and Benjamin/Gibeah.

At this point, did Benjamin believe they would win this civil war?

What made this battle different?

5. Read Judges 20:37-48 and footnotes.

What happened to Gibeah? Did anyone survive? (20:37)

How many from the tribe of Benjamin died in this battle?

How many men survived from the tribe of Benjamin? (20:47)

6. Read Judges 21:1-14 and footnotes. Share info from the footnotes with your group.

Before the civil war, the tribes of Israel had made two oaths.

What were they?

7. Read Judges 21:10-24. After the “victory” over Benjamin, the tribes of Israel seemed to be mourning the great losses from the tribe of Benjamin.

What do the Israelites do in order to prevent the complete extinction of the tribe of Benjamin? (There were two parts to their plan.)

8. Reflection: Had the punishment of Benjamin gone further than they had intended? Read also Leviticus 24:17- 20 below.

Leviticus 24:17- 20 “Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death. ¹⁸ Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution—life for life. ¹⁹ Anyone who injures their neighbor is to be injured in the same manner: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The one who has inflicted the injury must suffer the same injury.

9. Read Judges 21:25.

Reflection: If there was a judge at the time of these events, would the outcome have been different?

With a king over all of Israel, would it have been different?

10. Reflect on what you have learned during our study of Judges about the history, life and times of these people, the value of faith and relationship with the LORD, etc.

Which of the judges impressed you the most?

Share your thoughts with those in your group.