

The Book of  
**JUDGES**

*Testing the Heart of God's Children*



Judgment of God

Judges 20:1-48

Lesson 20

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## Introduction

The spiritual condition of Israel has decayed to the point that it resulted in the destruction of its own people. It is not clear whether these last chapters in the book of Judges are in chronological order. It may have happened closer to the beginning of the book, but put here for literary purpose, to show the degradation of Israel's condition. What there is no question about is the reference in verse 35 that states, "The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel"

Benjamin refused to put away the sin of their offending brethren, and assumed an attack position against their accusers. Based on the word of the compromised Levite, Israel unites as "one man" at the house of God. After hearing the Levite's indictment of the men of Gibeah, the people of Israel delivered a verdict and made a vow based on their own counsel. The verdict was that the men of Gibeah were guilty and should be slain. The vow was that none of the tribes represented would give their daughters in marriage to the men of Benjamin. Their hearts already set on war, they seek God's compliance with their decision. One commentator said, "His answer, with no promise of victory, is as if God is saying, 'Go ahead and go, but I won't go with you'." Until their heart is totally surrendered to His direction, they suffer great loss within their own tribes. The result drove them to fast and surrender, which brought God's victory and judgment against Benjamin's sin.

At the first census after the exodus from Egypt, there were 35,400 men of war in Benjamin (Num.1:37), and this increased to 45,600 by the time of the second census (Num.26:41). During this three-day war, the Benjamites were left with only 600 men. What a price the tribe of Benjamin paid for refusing to obey the law of the Lord! Israel's continual failure to follow God's ways to put away sin, led them down the dark path of disunity, destruction and death. God's righteous judgment on sin is death. He took the punishment for sin on Himself, in the death of His Son on the cross. He died that His children might live!

For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam. 16:7



## **Looking for Gold - What does it say?**

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

*Setting the scene: Read Gen. 19:1-11, Lev. 18:22, Deut. 17:2-13 for added insight. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.*

### **Judges 20:1-11**

1 So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah. 2 And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword. 3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the children of Israel said, "Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?" 4 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!"

8 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; 9 but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah: We will go up against it by lot. 10 We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, 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." 11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.



## Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, cross-references. Notate where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. What does God want you to know about Himself?

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## **Judges 20:12-25**

**12** Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? **13** 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. **14** Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel. **15** And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men. **16** Among all this people were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss. **17** Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war. **18** 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!" **19** So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. **20** 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. **21** Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites. **22** 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. **23** 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."

**24** So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. **25** And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.



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**Judges 20:26-35**

**26** 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. **27** So the children of Israel inquired of the Lord (the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, **28** 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."

**29** Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. **30** 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. **31** 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 thirty men of Israel. **32** And the children of Benjamin said, "They are defeated before us, as at first." But the children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways." **33** 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. **34** And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them. **35** The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword.



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## Judges 20:36-48

**36** So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. **37** And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. **38** Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, **39** whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, "Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle." **40** But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven. **41** And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. **42** Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst. **43** They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. **44** And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these were men of valor. **45** Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. **46** So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor. **47** But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. **48** 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.



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## **Boiling it Down – What does it mean?**



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 20:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:12-25 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:26-35 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:36-48 \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Refined as Gold - How can I apply it?**

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 20:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:12-25 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:26-35 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 20:36-48 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Challenge:** Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up the main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.

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### Storing up Your Treasure . . .

What did God say about dealing with wickedness? Deut. 17:2-7

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What did the actions of the old man and Levite say about them?

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How did Benjamin react to the crime of their fellow brethren? v.11-14

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Do you see any parallels between protecting sin and suffering consequences? Explain.

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What words or phrases are repeated?

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**Checking for Clarity:** See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Judges 20:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Judges 20:12-25 \_\_\_\_\_

Judges 20:26-35 \_\_\_\_\_

Judges 20:36-48 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bars of Gold:** State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

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**Flex Your Muscles:** Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?

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### **Hide Your Treasure in your Heart**

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Rom. 1:18

Radiating His Truth . . .

God gives us up to the outcome of our own sinful choices. — David Jackman

# *Message Notes*

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