

MAY 5

Judges 21

Vs. 1-7 This event just keeps getting worse. What I find interesting in all of this is that Israel asks God about fighting, but they don't appear to ask God regarding a solution to the problem with Benjamin and where to get wives for them. They sought God for something difficult like fighting and then, when their lives weren't at stake, they said, "We can figure this out on our own." I've always wondered why there was no direct question to the Lord and why there was no answer.

It seems to me that things had fallen apart with the worship at the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant was easier to move, and possibly they moved the inner sanctuary (Holy of Holies) with it. In 1 Samuel we have the ark being moved and brought into battle, and afterward, the ark is separated from the tabernacle for years. It seems then, that Phinehas brought the ark to Bethel, but the tabernacle and altar and lampstand, etc., remained in Shiloh. So when they sacrificed at Bethel, they needed to build an altar.

Even in their worship and inquiry, there is something here that is not right. The Lord doesn't say anything. The verdict, *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*, was spreading like a cancer in almost everything that happened in Israel. Keep in mind that this event and the event in chapters 17 and 18 happened within the first 60 years Israel was in the land.

V. 5 The oath they took doesn't seem to have been from the Lord, but rather, it was what the leaders thought was a good idea. This is reminiscent of Jephthah and the misguided vow he made. It made some sense that anyone who didn't send a representative to the battle was in some way saying they agreed with the men of Gibeah or didn't think cleansing the land was important.

Vs. 8-12 Somehow this doesn't strike me as just or smart or honorable. It just seemed good to them and they got 400 brides out of the deal. And the death toll that Benjamin is responsible for kept rising.

Vs. 19-24 The next big idea was to allow 200 men from Benjamin to kidnap the young women from Shiloh. Brilliant!?!?! I wonder how God would have weighed in on that idea if they had asked Him.

V. 25 This verse seems to give the commentary on all of this activity. They did not inquire of the Lord. They followed their own mind and "god" thoughts and feelings.

As disciples, we don't want to be wooden and rigid in seeking God's will, but we don't want to just live by good and godly feelings. I think it is good for us to consider God in every decision we make, just to stay in the habit. If we can just buy thing after thing, and watch show after show, go where we want and do what we want, without really laying it before God, I think we might be kidding ourselves. Maybe we're not really following God and His Word at all, just our "god" thoughts.

Ephesians 5:15-17 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Ruth 1

As Samuel is writing the history contained in Judges and in Ruth, God is also using him to help the nation accept the upcoming kingship of David. Although David would not become the king of Israel until after Samuel's death, Samuel had already anointed David as king years before he died.

We've noticed that Bethlehem appears in these last stories in Judges. Bethlehem is also the main stage of the story of Ruth. This last story about Benjamin will also be important as we enter 1 Samuel, since the first king of Israel, Saul, will be from Benjamin. In the 380 years after the near destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe grew. King Saul will be from this infamous area and in his first battle, the battle that brings him into prominence as a king, it will be to protect the people living in Jabesh-gilead. That city would have been near and dear to the tribe of Benjamin since that's where many of them have ancestry to that city through their great-great-grandmothers. Unfortunately King Saul will become the mortal enemy of David, so God is showing the nation of Israel the importance of Bethlehem so they will welcome a couple of very important men who will be born there.

V. 1 This took place during the days of the judges. The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 415, suggests that this might have taken place during the judgeship of Gideon. Who knows? Since we know that Ruth's son will be Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David, these time references put this event a couple of generations before Samuel and Samson.

V. 2 Notice with this story, and in the last two stories in Judges, there is another mention of Bethlehem. This area of Israel was taking on dominance, and this story in particular points to God's selection of David as king. So then, even in all of this history, God's plan of redemption is working. A tribe, Judah, has been given a privileged standing and now the region around Bethlehem and Jerusalem is becoming, not just the geographical center of Israel, but the redemptive center as well.

Vs. 1-14 I don't know that Elimelech did anything bad in leaving. I don't read that it was somehow God's punishment that all these guys died. We have the advantage of seeing God's plan in this. They didn't. As disciples, we learn not to judge God because of chaos in our lives. God is working for good.

It looked like one of the boys married OPRAH, but alas, it is really ORPAH.

Vs. 15-18 Somewhere in this, there is not only loyalty, but also great faith on Ruth's part. She was literally turning her back on her previous way of life. Whatever this family was doing, even in dying and doubting their way, they were a testimony to these two women. Ruth couldn't find a home anymore apart from Naomi and her ways, and part of "her ways" was the worship of Yahweh. Apparently Ruth fully believed in Yahweh.

Vs. 19-22 One irony we see here that Naomi didn't see was that she came back bitter and empty in her own eyes, but we see Ruth with her. Bringing Ruth back was probably the point of the entire ten-year adventure. God had been in control and He was still in control.

V. 22 They returned around the time of the Passover. There is a lot of redemption going on here. The BKC also mentions the frequency of the forms of the word, *return*. This morning I was reading that the pairs of apostles Jesus sent out, preached the gospel "that men should repent" ...that is, the gospel says to turn from sin and turn toward God. I think that the image of turning or returning is part of the early story in Ruth.

John 4:4-42

You know this story, and you'll make lots of great observations.

Vs. 4-6 Just for trivia, this place is probably Shechem from the OT (Joshua 24:32). A lot of history took place there, in particular, the blessings and curses and the renewal of the covenant in Joshua 8:33-34.

Vs. 7-15 I think the most instructive thing for me was that Jesus understood this situation as being laid before Him by His Father. I think this is one of those situations that shows us how Jesus abided in the Father and how we as disciples abide in Christ.

Vs. 16-18 This was the Spirit giving Jesus some insider information at a critical time.

Vs. 19-26 I've read this story several times and have never understood, as many preachers say, that she was trying to get Jesus off onto a side issue. It seems to me that when she realized that Jesus was a prophet, she asked a question that was important for her, and Jesus gave her a very direct and sensitive answer. Her response shows she had an open heart.

Vs. 27-30 Apparently you didn't talk to strange women. This was culturally stretching for the disciples. I always chuckle at the people going out to meet Jesus, especially since she told them that Jesus knew everything she had ever done. You might have had a lot of scared husbands and suspicious wives running out to speak to Jesus first.

Vs. 31-38 And then Jesus used this to teach His disciples what we are supposed to be doing on earth.

V. 34 Somehow I think this needs to be truer of me and all of us with each passing day.

V. 35 I believe this. Lord, help my unbelief.

Vs. 39-42 What an amazing story. The Father created the situation; the Spirit supplied the information and nudged the Son; and the Son saved the lost and trained His disciples. Somehow I think this has something to do with abiding in Christ.

Psalm 105:1-15

This is the first of three days we'll be reading this psalm. It is probably written by David to unify the nation in worshipping in Jerusalem. David is confirming that the present events are God's blessing as promised in the promise to Abraham to save and bless Israel and draw all nations to Him through Israel.

Vs. 1-6 The peoples are the nations or Gentiles. Notice that Israel is always identified in Abraham. Notice the commands of celebration: call, make known, sing, tell, glory, rejoice, seek and remember. This would preach.

Vs. 7-11 Now notice the words, *He* and *His*. This is the God who makes covenants, and promises His love and faithfulness.

Vs. 12-15 And not only does He promise, He proves it with His power.

David is using God's faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, to motivate the nation to follow God in the covenant with Moses. The covenant with Moses said that if they obeyed, God would bless them as a nation. The covenant with Abraham says that God will redeem Israel and use them to offer redemption to all nations. Both covenants stood side by side, but faith in the promise to Abraham enabled the people to pursue God in obeying the covenant under Moses.

Proverbs 14:25

The truth saves. Period. No amount of "foggy speak," even Christian "foggy speak," saves lives. Disciples should lovingly tell people what their master says and let Him take the heat.