

# The Christian Arsenal

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## JUDGES 17:1-21:25

For sixteen chapters in the *Book of Judges*, we've seen the people of Israel go around and around the same downward spiral of sin...**first, they would sin, then God would give them over to servitude and then they would make supplication to the Lord, and He would save them from their servitude. Then, it would start all over again!**

No matter how often God warned them, or how many times they were defeated by their enemy, or how miraculously God delivered them from their enemy, **they refused to learn the lesson of wholehearted obedience to God.**

In the sixteen chapters of the *Book of Judges* that we've already studied, the focus has been upon the judges God raised up to deliver the people from their enemies. We've seen **Deborah** and **Barak** and **Gideon** and **Jephthah** and **Samson** and others. But, in these last five chapters we don't see any judges. We don't even see any invasion of the enemy.

What we **do** see in these chapters are two stories and these two stories are designed to give us insight into the moral and spiritual condition of the times.

Have you ever been to a movie and seen a "flashback." That flashback was to make the plot clearer for you to understand. Well, in terms of chronology, these last five chapters of the *Book of Judges* do not follow the career of Samson that we saw last week...but rather are flashbacks given to us so that we might better understand the depths to which the children of Israel had sunk.

There's a twice repeated verse that we find in these chapters...**17:6 and 21:25**... "in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes."

Listen, Beloved, the Israelites did not do what was **wrong** in their own eyes. Oh no! They were absolutely convinced that they were doing what was **right!**

Theirs was a society filled with violence, idolatry, ungodliness, and gross immorality, and yet these folks had strayed so far from the Lord that they had convinced themselves that what they were doing was **right!!** And when you stop and think, that's the scary thing about it.

This is what makes the *Book of Judges* so practical for us today! We live in a society which has no standards. All you have to do is turn on television to see that every man does what is right in his own eyes! We live in a "If it feels good, do it!" society.

Well, we're not going to go into these stories in great depth today. We're just going to see an overview of them, and then draw some applications for our own lives as we conclude our study in the *Book of Judges*.

### *Judges 17:1-6...*

Here we see a mother and a son. The son, Micah, had stolen from his mother, but when he heard her pronouncing a curse upon the one who had taken her silver, he got scared and brought it back to her.

Then, we see the mother "wholly dedicate" this silver to the

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LORD. **How much silver was it?** 1100 pieces...but look at **verse 4**. They were both thieves, weren't they?

The son stole from his mother...the mother stole from God.

But, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

**Verse 5** tells us that Micah made a **shrine**, he made an **ephod** (a garment for a priest), he also made **household idols**, and then to top it off...he consecrated one of his sons as his own **personal priest**.

Well, on the surface, it looks as though Micah is a very "religious" man, doesn't it? I mean, he did all he could do to make worship convenient for himself, didn't he?

But, we need to understand that God is not impressed with "convenient worship." **Convenient worship is surface worship**. God desires sincere worship from His children.

He had his own ephod, he had his own idols, he had his own son as his priest.

**Verses 7-13** of this same chapter tell us that a young Levite man from Bethlehem showed up in town and Micah went to him and asked him to be his priest. Maybe Micah's son wasn't doing a great job and after all, this man from Bethlehem was a Levite. So, Micah thought, "why not hire **him** to be my priest?"

**Verse 13**... Now what's so wrong with all this? It sounds good, doesn't it? But, let's just think about some things that made this wrong...

All priests were Levites...but not all Levites were priests. **Verse 7** doesn't say this man was a priest..it simply says he was a Levite. I think if this man had been a priest, the Scripture would have called him a priest.

At any rate, he linked up with this man, Micah, who, by the way, don't forget, had his own **ephod**, his own **idols**, and his own **shrine**. Micah wanted a proper Levitical priest and the Levite wanted a job...so suddenly the Levite is an ordained member of the clergy...and everybody lived happily ever after...

**UNTIL...**

Some Danites, some men from the tribe of Dan, appeared on the scene.

Let me just say a few words about the Danites. The Danites did not go in and possess the land that was given to them...instead, they had been living somewhere else. (**Joshua 19; Judges 1:34**)

So, at this point in Jewish history, the Danites had two choices...

They could repent of their unbelief and trust God to keep His word as they defeated the enemies they were **supposed** to defeat...

Or, they could simply forget what God had given them and could look for a new area...a place where some folks were **unprepared**, and **undefended**, and **vulnerable** and mount a sneak attack against **them** and get **their** land. (It was a little place called Laish, and we'll see that in just a minute or two.) **This is what the tribe of Dan had chosen to do.**

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They chose the easy way...they didn't want to fight a prepared enemy...that would take too long and that would take too much effort...they wanted to fight an unprepared enemy.

Now, I know you and I have never done anything like this. **I mean...we've always, unhesitatingly gone where God has told us to go, haven't we?** We've never, ever taken the easy way...we've always trusted God and taken the way He's led us, even if that way is extremely hard and difficult!

Yes, well...these Danites arrived and you know what they did?

They stole Micah's **idols and his ephod**, and not only that but they stole **Micah's priest**. They simply upped the ante for the priest who was serving Micah. They offered him more money and a bigger congregation, and since he wasn't a man of God anyway, he just went with them.

Well, Micah comes along and tries to get his stuff back and his priest back and the Danites told him to go on back home if he knew what was good for him. Micah just can't win for losing, can he?

**18:27-31...**

Before we leave this story...let me just say this about the tribe of Dan. If we were to look over at the **Book of 1 Chronicles**, when the list of the tribes and families of Israel is given, Dan is the only tribe which is totally ignored. And in **Revelation 7**, when John lists the twelve tribes of Hebrews from whom the 144,000 believers will come, Dan is not mentioned.

Also, we need to notice all of these folks were "religious" folks. I mean, they had their **idols**, their **graven images**, they had their **shrines** (even if they had to steal them, they had them...). **They even had their own personal priests**. We've said before...Religion is man's attempt to get to God. But Christianity is God's way to get to man. These folks had everything but a heart set on God!

**You see, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**

**And, sadly, we see the same thing in our society. Plenty are "religious." Some folks have taken Christianity and they have made it conform to their idea of how God should be worshiped. Some folks just simply worship other gods...they are sincerely religious, but they are also sincerely wrong.**

Well, let me just set the stage for the next several chapters...

**Chapter 19** tells of yet another Levite who had a concubine who had not only been unfaithful to him, but had gone home to her father's house.

The Levite decided she must not be coming back, so he went to her father's house to get her...stayed the biggest part of a week, and then he and the girl left and on the way back home they were taken in and given lodging by a man in Gibeah.

**19:22-30...**

To make a long story short...all the tribes of Israel gathered together to take revenge against the Benjamites for doing this horrible thing...

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Now, if ever they needed the guidance of Jehovah, it was now. But, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

It doesn't seem like a very fair battle...26,000 Benjamites against 400,000 Israelites...**only one tribe against all the other tribes.** However, the territory of Benjamin was very hilly and the men of Israel found out that it was much easier for the Benjamites to defend it than for them to attack it. After the first two battles, 40,000 men of Israel died and they decided they better go to God for direction and in the next battle the men of Israel killed all but 600 of the men of Benjamin. **And apparently, from what follows all of the Benjamite women were killed.**

**The last part of this story concerns a vow.** The men of Israel had made a vow that they would give none of their women to the remaining survivors of the tribe of Benjamin. Then, after making that vow, they regretted it. They knew it meant that the tribe of Benjamin would be totally wiped out.

Well, they got real busy and devised a plan...really two plans...

**Plan A:** They would go against Jabesh-gilead because they had not sent anyone to fight with them against the Benjamites. They went against these folks and when the dust settled, they found 400 virgins and they brought them for the Benjamites.

Well, that was all well and good (**if you weren't a Jabesh-gileadite**) but that still left 200 men of Benjamin who would not have a wife.

So, they went to

**Plan B: Verses 18-25...**

**Have you noticed the downward flow of all this?** How in the world could these folks who were God's chosen people do these things? Where did the problem begin?

The answer is not immediately apparent, but notice **Judges 20:27-28.** These two little verses describe **spiritual sin...** **"The Ark of the Covenant of God was at Bethel in those days."**

If we're not careful, we'll miss the significance of that statement. From **Joshua, Judges** and **1 Samuel**, we know that the tabernacle was in Shiloh, and the Ark of the Covenant belonged in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in Shiloh. The ark was holy, and no one was to view it, except the high priest once a year. **But the holiness of God had been so cheapened that the high priest had allowed it to be taken out of the tabernacle and transported to Bethel, in direct disobedience to God.**

**Let me tell you something, Beloved...the root of all sin is a weak conception of the holiness of God. If and when we don't view Almighty God as holy, you can mark it down, we are going to take Him lightly and we're going to take His commandments lightly and we are going to sin.**

One sin always leads to more...this **spiritual sin** led to **sexual sin.** Then, we see a **cheapened view of life**, as well as a **loss of human dignity and worth.** It is expressed in this passage of Scripture in the **rape at Gibeah**, the **deseccration of a woman's body**, the **slaughter of Benjamin**, the **massacre at Jabesh-gilead**, and the **kidnapping at Shiloh.**

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There are many other sins, but as I said before, have you noticed the downward flow? We lose our sense of the holiness and the greatness of God, and soon we find ourselves on a downward spiral that will continue and continue until we finally come in brokenness and humility to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, aren't you glad you came this morning? I mean, hasn't this lesson just lifted your spirits and blessed your hearts?

You know, there's about a three thousand year wide gulf that separates this old book and the year in which we live...and the modern advances in technology and communications and medicine and every other aspect of our lives make it feel like an even larger gulf, doesn't it?

But, if we really think about it...this gulf begins to shrink, doesn't it? Human beings accomplished incredible feats during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We put men on the moon, spanned continents by supersonic jet and telecommunications, and isolated causes and cures for diseases that used to kill millions. Our knowledge is truly an incredible thing. But, our wisdom is sadly lacking!! What does Scripture say? ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!!"***

The same principles that applied to those folks back then still apply to us today. Let me just mention a few of these principles.

## 1) The motive for your moral behavior is of utmost importance.

**Why you do what you do is as important as what you do.** Let me explain what I mean.

For years, many said that premarital sex was wrong because of the possibility of a child out of wedlock. **But now two things have changed that argument...birth control and a new acceptance of casual relationships.** If the only reason for sexual purity is a fear of unwanted pregnancy, obviously sexual immorality is now entirely appropriate.

**See, if your moral behavior is not grounded on the moral absolutes of God's Word, you will end up doing what is right in your own eyes.**

## 2) Our world's "new morality" is degrading and dehumanizing.

The world says, "Do your own thing." **But, just because a man believes something to be right does not make it right.** There are broken lives and shattered dreams in the wake of the new morality. Folks have become enslaved by it. And that did not take the Lord off guard. Peter said that by what a man is overcome, he is enslaved. And, men and women have become enslaved to the new morality of this world.

## 3) Theology and morality cannot be separated.

**The only certain basis for morality is the character of God and the Word of God. Right and wrong are not what men think they are, but what God says they are.** Men don't decide what is moral...issues of morality are determined by a holy and righteous God

## 4) The only answer to the world's "new morality" is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Many Christians have given people the impression that the Christian faith is a pleasure-denying, joyless, legalistic kind of life. The truth is exactly the opposite. To live in the will of God is both joyful and exciting. He leads us down a path that is not only safe, but good!

**5) We must not only know God's answers, we must also apply them to our lives.**

**We must constantly go beyond instruction to application.** We can have ALL the answers, but if we don't apply those answers to our everyday life, what good is it to **have** the answers? I mean, many of us think as we leave Sunday School or church... "What did I learn from the lesson or the sermon today?" But, may I suggest to you that the next question should be, "What difference will it make in my life this week? **I need to ask myself that question and you need to ask yourself that question!!**

Well, let's see if we can wrap this up...

When we study the **Book of Judges**, we're reminded that these things were written as examples for us. We're to look at these people's lives and learn from their example. We're to look at these people's lives and be warned either **not** to follow their example or **to** follow their example.

We've mentioned the seriousness of sin. I just want to say this...no matter what great things we've done for God, no matter how upright our walk has been before Him...we all can fall into great sin if we take our eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the lesson we see in the lives of  
Gideon and Samson.

Beloved, if you ever think you've "arrived"...think again!! Satan does more to harm the children of God by getting us to believe we've arrived.

He tells us...no need to study God's Word very much anymore...  
no need to pray very much anymore...  
no need to come to church very much anymore...

**But God says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."**

But, also the **Book of Judges** and all the Old Testament was written, Paul said, "**for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope... (Romans 15:4)**

If this book tells of strong men made weak by self-confidence, it also describes weak men made strong through faith in God and by His mighty power. I've used a great little book entitled **Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay** written by Gary Inrig, in much of my preparation for our lesson each Sunday. I believe Mr. Inrig couldn't have chosen a better description for the men in the **Book of Judges**, do you?

These men had feet of clay...but God gave them hearts of iron.

See, Paul said that the instruction we get from the Old Testament should give us hope. If there is hope in seeing how the Lord gave weak men hearts of iron then, when the Holy Spirit merely came upon them from time to time, how much more hope does even the humblest believer have now that the Holy Spirit abides in us?

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Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong."

God's strength doesn't **remove** human weakness...it **transforms** it!

You and I serve a risen Savior. He sits at the right hand of Almighty God!!

You and I live by the power of the dear Holy Spirit. He gives us strong hearts of iron!!

You and I hold in our hands the complete, inerrant Word of God!!

**What I'm trying to say is that the resources that you and I have in Christ Jesus are far greater than anything these judges knew!!**

However, the issue remains the same...

There can be no victory apart from an obedient fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Him today? Are you certain that He is your Savior and Lord?

Was there ever a time in your life when you knew you were a sinner and you knew you needed a Savior and you knew you could not save yourself?

**May God help you and me to be different for having studied the *Book of Judges*. As we live in a nation where there is no king and everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes, may God help us to bow our knee to the King of kings and the Lord of lords and to do only what is right in His eyes.**

**May God help us to have hearts of iron even though we have feet of clay.**