

Joshua, Judges & Ruth

In Those Days There
Was No King in Israel

Lesson 9 • June 12 • Judges 17-21

Everyone Did What Was Right In His Own Eyes

As our rollercoaster survey of *Judges* concludes, we'll hear the same thing four different times in these final chapters:

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his _____ eyes. (17:6)

In those days there was no _____ in Israel. (18:1)

In those days, when there was no king in _____... (19:1)

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own _____. (21:25)

What impact did that have? What did life in Israel look like when everyone did what was right in his own eyes? *Judges 17-21* gives us three sad examples:

- *Judges 17*: a man named _____ stole 1,100 pieces of silver from his own mother. When he told her the truth and gave it back, she dedicated the silver “to the LORD” so that a silversmith could make a carved image and a metal image. Micah put those idols in his house, made a shrine, an ephod, and some household gods. He “ordained” one of his sons to be “_____ priest.” Later, when a young Levite from Bethlehem was looking for a place of his own, he came to the house of Micah. When Micah found out that the young man was a Levite, Micah “ordained” him to become “his priest” and even said, “Now I _____ that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest” (17:13).
- *Judges 18*: the tribe of _____ had been unable to settle in the territory originally given to them (*Josh 19:40-47*) because they had failed to completely conquer it (*Judg 1:34-35*). When five of their spies come to the house of Micah and find the young Levite serving as a priest there, they bring an army, steal the idols of Micah, and convince the Levite to be a priest for the tribe of Dan. In 18:30, we find out that the priest's name is _____, a descendant of _____.
- *Judges 19-21*: a certain Levite had a concubine who was unfaithful to him and went to her father's house in Bethlehem for four months. When the Levite got her back, he stayed the night at Gibeah with an old man who warned them not to spend the night in the city square. That night, “the men of the city, _____ fellows, surrounded the house.” To save himself, the Levite seized his concubine and made her go outside, where she was eventually killed. When he got home, the Levite divided her body into twelve pieces and sent them throughout all Israel. This leads to war between Israel and Benjamin where many thousands of people die and many young Israelite women are taken captive as nothing more than property.

Why? How? How did the descendants of Abraham slip from “the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel” (2:7) to the ugliness in *Judges 17-21*? It's a sad story. Let's talk about it...

For Class & Family Discussion:

- In **Judges 17:1-3**, we read more than one strange thing. What just sounds “off” to you in these verses?
- In your own words, how is Micah out of bounds in **17:5**? How does **17:13** give us even more of a window into his mindset?
- We read about more than one Levite in **Judges 17-21**. Who were the Levites, and how does that detail of the tribe these men belonged to make this an even sadder story? How does **18:18-20** give us a window into the mindset of the first Levite, who was actually a descendant of Moses (**18:30**)?
- The ugly details we read in **Judges 19:16-22** sound very similar to an older, very ugly story in **Genesis 19:1-5**. What is being revealed about Israel in this terrible account?
- Some of the language in **Judges 17-21** sounds even older. Do you remember what we’re told in **Genesis 3:4-6**? How is this same problem all over these last chapters in *Judges*?
- We heard four different times in **Judges 17-21**, “in those days there was no king in Israel” (**17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25**). Why do you think that keeps getting highlighted at the end of *Judges*?
- Even though these are ancient stories of people who lived a very long time ago, there are powerful lessons we need to learn. Do people still “do what is right in their own eyes” today? If so, what does that look like and sound like in the 21st century? What happens when people do what is right in their own eyes? What impact does it have?
- If we’re going to do better, what do we need to recognize, remember, and practice?