

Theme: God’s ways - and our part in them - may be mysteries to us for his ways are “clothed in clouds and thick darkness” (Psalm 97:2a). We rest in the knowledge that “righteousness and justice are served by all his works” (Psalm 97:2b).

Background: In these concluding chapters of Judges we are shown the evil the people did in the eyes of the Lord. Godlessness leads to wickedness. The barren fruit of wickedness doesn’t end with the sin of Gibeah.

I. Israel Unites – Almost (1-11)

A. From Dan to Beersheba

1. An “assembly of God”
2. 400,000 men of war
NOTE: Gathered not against the foreigners, but against one of their own
3. Benjamin isn’t invited (3)

B. Receiving testimony

1. The Levite’s “shaded” story
2. Others must testify (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6)

C. Verdict rendered

1. The men of Gibeah must die (13)
2. The judgment is against Gibeah, not all of Benjamin

D. Acting as *one* (8-11)

1. One in ten will bring provisions
2. “United as one man”

II. Benjamin Balks (12-17)

A. Excluded from the proceedings

- Might they have rendered justice?
- Instructed to “give them up” (13)

B. Mind your own business! (12-17)

- United in defense of Gibeah and their brothers

C. Blood vs. oath

1. Benjamin defends their own!
 - Their blood ties are deeper than Covenant tiesNOTE: We, too, have to make the choice.
2. Aligned with “deeds of darkness” (Ephesians 5:3,11; Romans 13:13,14)
3. The battle lines are extended
 - Open war declared – not just on Gibeah, but on Benjamin

III. Israel Seeks the Lord (18-28)

A. Who shall go first? (18)

1. Who should be in command?

NOTE: Not asking what they should *do* but only how to do what they have decided

2. 22,000 fall (Israelites)

B. Shall we continue the fight? (23)

1. Seeking directions – with tears. Yes!

2. 18,000 fall

NOTE: They were calling upon the Lord – and failing to get the desired results. Was God judging Israel, too? (Deuteronomy 13:12ff) We seek his favor and blessing – but not when we simply ask him to bless our plans.

C. Seeking the Lord's *favor/blessing* (26-28)

1. Going together to the house of the Lord
- In confession and humility

2. Assurance!

NOTE: We don't trust in our cause or strength; we must trust in the Lord. The victory belongs to the Lord! (Proverbs 21:31)

IV. On the Verge of Extinction (29-48)

A. A well-devised plan – Setting a trap

B. Too well executed

- Gibeah destroyed first; all of Benjamin's cities next
- Only 600 men remain in all of Benjamin

NOTE: This is hard to justify. Is it vindication or vengeance? Hanging over the whole account is the judgment that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Hard to justify this.

V. A Humble Response

A. What does this say about humanity?

1. The *sin* of a few men brings untold sorrow for so many.

NOTE: Our sin will never be "a private matter". The wages of sin is death – but the effect and power of sin is desolation!

2. Walking in obedience does not necessarily preclude suffering.

B. What does this tell us about God?

1. The depth of God's ways and judgments is beyond our grasp. We know that he is just and that his judgments are perfect and righteous. We are not given to know the mysteries of his purposes in every situation or circumstance.
2. He gives us a glimpse of the breadth and power of his judgment against sin.

C. How does it point us to the savior?

1. The consequences of Gibeah's sin against a sojourner in the land brought misery and sorrow to the nation.
2. The consequences of sin would be laid on one perfect and righteous man, Jesus Christ, bringing (and spreading) the promise of forgiveness, life and peace.