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Judges 21

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Judges 21

Topics.

- Israel cries before God, “why should Israel be lacking one tribe?”
- Israel builds an altar and offers burnt and peace offerings.
- Israel takes 400 virgins from Jabesh-gilead and brings them to Shiloh.
- Israel gives 400 virgins to the 600 men at the rock of Rimmon.
- Israel carries off another 200 women from a place near Shiloh.
- The Benjamites return to their inheritance and rebuild their towns.
- The eleven tribes return to their tribes and family.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Israelites forgot the LORD, and worshipped false gods, so the LORD removed His protection and blessings from them, which resulted in them being oppressed by their enemies and crying to the LORD for deliverance. In answer to their prayer the LORD raised up twelve Judges to deliver them, but not Judges as we think of Judges today or preachers of righteousness, but rather military leaders and fighters, that led Israel to triumph over their enemies and delivered them from their wicked behaviour.

Most suppose that Samuel (considered by some to be the last Judge) wrote some parts of the book, while other parts were written at a later time by someone of his generation or a later generation. The primary purpose of the Judges is best articulated in the following words, “The LORD raised up Judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. (Judges 2:16). For an overview of the entire book see the title:

- Overview of the Book of Judges (at the beginning of the index).

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

All Israel assembled before the LORD at Mizpah, and a Levite man told them all that had happened to his sexually abused murdered concubine, Israel asks Gibeah to hand over the guilty men. Instead of handing them over they gathered 26,700 men of Benjamin to go to war against Israel, and Israel gathered 400,000 men to go to war against Benjamin. During these battles Benjamin destroyed 40,000 Israelites and Israel destroyed 25,000 Benjamites. Six hundred Benjamites hid themselves at the rock of Rimmon for four months. Israel destroyed all the Benjamites they found in their city and towns. At the end of the war only 600 men survive out of all the tribe of Benjamin.

JUDGES 21:1-3

- **Judges 21:1-3:** Now the men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, “No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.” ² And the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God, and they lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. ³ And they said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel?”

There is no previous record of the oath, they had made not to give their daughters to the Benjamites, however, after hearing the account at Mitzpah (Judges 20:1-4) that the Levite man gave of his concubine being brutally and sexually abused and murdered, Israel made the oath to destroy those who had abused and murdered the Levites concubine. Though it is not recorded, it appears that they at the same time entered into the oath that they would not give their daughters to the Benjamites. Later in this chapter we read, if anyone did give their daughters to the Benjamites they would be cursed (Judges 21:18) (i.e., an anathema would be set upon them), meaning they would be cast out of the society of Israel. Which means this was not just an oath, but an oath that came with a curse.

BETHEL AND THE TABERNACLE

In the previous chapter Israel inquired of the LORD at Bethel and offered burnt and peace offerings, because the Ark was there, which means the tabernacle and high priest would also have been at Bethel.

- The people of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, “Who shall go up first for us to fight against the people of Benjamin?” And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up first.” (Judges 20:18).
- Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ²⁷ And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. (Judges 20:20-30).

Now that the entire tribe of Benjamin has been destroyed except for 600 men, we again see the people going to Bethel and sitting before God to lament until evening, the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin.

2

THE TABERNACLE AT BETHEL OR SHILOH

Some feel the words, “the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God,” (v2), should be understood to refer to Shiloh rather than Bethel, because the tabernacle was generally known to be at Shiloh. Perhaps the following will help clarify some of this confusion,

It is true Shiloh was the place where God first made his name dwell

- Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first. (Jer. 7:12).

And in the book of Judges, we read:

- So they set up Micah’s carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh. (Judges 18:31).
- So they said, “Behold, there is the yearly feast of the LORD at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel.” (Judges 21:19).

However, the following verse shows that the tabernacle was at Bethel, at different times:

- Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. (1 Sam. 10:3).

The expression, “going up to God,” means going up to the tabernacle and Ark of God, or the House of God. Since the tabernacle was moveable, it is possible that at various times, as the occasion required, it was moved to where the Judge resided, or to where the congregation assembled, especially since we read in the book of Samuel that he judged Israel all

his life going on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah. (1 Sam. 7:15-16), which means that it is possible, they relocated the tabernacle and ark year by year to be where the Judge resided. At this present time the tabernacle was at Bethel, we know this because in the following verses we read:

- Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ²⁷ And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. (Judges 20:26-27).

Naturally the high priest with the ephod would move with the tabernacle, the Ark, and take with him the jewelled breastplate and the Urim and Thummim that was placed in it. Since Shiloh was never to be a permanent place for the tabernacle, it is easy to accept it being moved to Bethel at this time, especially since the name Bethel means, House of God, and it was a very convenient place for the tribes to gather together at this time.

Bethel, Shiloh and Jerusalem: were all sites for the tabernacle, one following the other, after the Israelites entered the Holy Land to conquer it. It was the portable sanctuary that for 369 years was the epicentre of religious observance and sacrifices as the Jewish people travelled. The final place for the tabernacle (actually, a replacement tabernacle built by David) was in Jerusalem—where the Temple was later built by his son Solomon.

Why is this come to pass: (v3) this is not so much an inquiry into why the war took place or why the tribe of Benjamin was now almost extinct, because the reasons for these was obvious and self-evident, but rather it is a wail of regret and a cry to be enlightened as to the best way to heal the divisions and of preventing further calamity.

The name Israel: even though the unity of the tribes had been torn apart the repetition of the name Israel three times in this prayer (v3) shows that the nation had not yet lost its sense of collective unity.

One tribe lacking: the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely destroyed, except for six hundred men who had saved themselves in the rock Rimmon (Judges 20:47), but there were no woman survivors that they could take for wives to give birth to children and repopulate the tribe, which means unless some provision could be made for the tribe of Benjamin would be totally extinct in a very short time.

When they foolishly made the oath not to give their daughters to the Benjamites it was not their intention to exterminate the tribe of Benjamin, but now the circumstances were such that the tribe would perish, this threw them into great perplexity, for unless some answer could be found to solve the dilemma their impulsive and foolish oath would bring about the extinction of the tribe of Benjamin.

JUDGES 21:4-7

- **Judges 21:4-7:** And the next day the people rose early and built there an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. ⁵ And the people of Israel said, “Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?” For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the LORD to Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” ⁶ And the people of Israel had compassion for Benjamin their brother and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel this day. ⁷ What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them any of our daughters for wives?”

They built there an altar: (v4) some say, at this time it is not certain whether the tabernacle and altar was at Bethel or at Shiloh, however, in verse two we read “the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God,” and now we read, “the next day the people rose early,” which shows that the people are still at Bethel.

- The people of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, “Who shall go up first for us to fight against the people of Benjamin?” And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up first.”¹⁹ Then the people of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah.²⁰ And the men of Israel went out to fight against Benjamin, and the men of Israel drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah. (Judges 20:18-20).
- Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.²⁷ And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. (Judges 20:26-27).

Though the tabernacle had been moved to Bethel, it appears that another bronze altar for sacrifices was built, some believe this was not a new altar, but a repairing of the existing one, but this is hardly likely since the following verse shows that the altar at Bethel had been recently used for sacrifices:

- Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel (the House of God in KJV) and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. (Judges 20:26).

It is hardly likely they would be repairing an existing altar that had been so recently used, but rather building another one, which was not unlawful to do in the outer court of the tabernacle, especially when the number of sacrifices was so vast a second altar was required. This second altar was no doubt needed to cater for the multitudes of sacrifices offered.

Much like King Solomon, when the temple was completed built a larger altar because the bronze altar for sacrifices was not enough to receive the multitude of burnt offerings, the grain offerings and peace offerings.

- Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.⁶⁴ The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings. (1 Kings 8:63-64).

This shows that it was not unlawful to have more than one altar, when there was such a vast number of sacrifices that a single altar was not enough to receive them, which would be the case here, since all eleven tribes are meeting together to offer sacrifices. At Israel's appointed feast such a large number of sacrifices were offered over a period of days, but here it appears they are offering them on the same day, or at least as quickly as possible.

JUDGES 21:8-12

- **Judges 21:8-12:** And they said, “What one is there of the tribes of Israel that did not come up to the LORD to Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead, to the assembly.⁹ For when the people were mustered, (numbered in KJV), behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there.¹⁰ So the congregation sent 12,000 of their bravest men there and commanded them, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword; also the women and the little ones.¹¹ This is what you shall do: every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall devote to destruction.”¹² And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

Jabesh-gilead: The following verse clearly shows that Jabesh-gilead was on the other side of the Jordan River.

- The people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land. (Joshua 22:9).

It was beyond the River Jordan and lay within the territory of eastern Manasseh, about fifteen miles east of the Jordan, and was, according to certain historians, the capital of Gilead. The name Jabesh survives only in the Wady Yabes (running down to the east bank of the Jordan).

The oath and the taking of wives: the oath that the tribes had pronounced at Mizpeh imposed on them the obligation of punishing the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead for not joining them in the fight against Benjamin. It also appears that during the Israelites raid on Jabesh-gilead in fulfilment of their oath, they had the additional goal of taking wives for the 600 Benjamites that had survived the war.

Which tribe did not come up in the assembly: (v5) when they were summoned to Mizpeh, to consult together about the affair of the Levite's concubine, because they had made a great oath not to give their daughter as a wife to Benjamin and in a very impulsive and foolish manner, they attached a curse (anathema) to it.

Not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there: (v9) the absence of inhabitants of the single town of Jabesh-gilead was clearly noticed. This is the first time Jabesh-Gilead is mentioned.

Strike the women the little ones every male and woman: (v10-11), these words, manifest the extreme unreasonable and ungodly fury of the Israelites. The horror of the massacre manifests the fierce passions of men living in times of gross spiritual darkness. How true are the final words of this book, "for at this time everyone was doing what they consider right in their own eyes." (Judges 21:25).

The horrific words, "strike the women, the little ones and every male and women," (v10-11) is a manifestation of the human mind being totally processed and deceived with an evil obsession. It is difficult to comprehend that they imagined that God would be more pleased and more honoured by an action so extremely contrary to His nature and abhorrent to His character, than if they had instead come before the LORD, and repented of making such a rash, impulsive and foolish oath and appealed for His pardon.

Sadly, history shows that this is not the only time that those confessing to be God's people have thought to honour Him by cruel and merciless acts which are abominable to Him. We only have to think of the cruel havocs made by religious zealots, persecutions, wars and tortures throughout different ages and countries. These acts witness how far the mind of man is capable of shocking blindness and error that it should think that the God of love, He who is love itself, would be pleased or honoured by acts of the most barbarous cruelty.

They brought 400 virgins to the camp at Shiloh: (v12) the words, "young virgins" embraces those who had not lain with a man which was judged by their age and by their unmarried state, unless as some think, they were examined by matrons. The fact they could spare these 400 women raises the question, "if the oath allowed them to spare these young women, why could they not also spare the innocent women and children and only punished the guilty?"

The only reasonable answer seems to be that they gave rage and fury the higher priority, rather than justice and mercy. The following verses show that children were not to be put to death because of their fathers.

- Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deuteronomy 24:16).
- But he did not put to death the children of the murderers, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. But each one shall die for his own sin." (2 Kings 14:6).

They brought them to the camp at Shiloh: the words, “in the land of Canaan,” are added because Jabesh-gilead was not in the land of Canaan, but in the land of Og king of Bashan on the other side of the Jordan River, which is not in the land of Canaan. It was from here that the 400 virgins were taken. Sometime after the Israelites war with Benjamin was over, Israel moved their camp to Shiloh, and it appears also returned the tabernacle to its more usual and central location at Shiloh (about 17km from Bethel).

JUDGES 21:13-14

- **Judges 21:13-14:** Then the whole congregation sent word to the people of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon and proclaimed peace to them. ¹⁴ And Benjamin returned at that time. And they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead, but they were not enough for them.

About four months after the war (Judges 20:47) Israel sent some peaceful messengers to the six hundred survivors who had hidden themselves at the rock of Rimmon. They promised the Benjamites they could safely return to their desolate towns in peace. Putting confidence in the assurances the Israelites had given them of peace and safety the six hundred Benjaminites returned with the messengers to the people of Israel. Upon arriving Israel gave them the four hundred virgins that they had brought from Jabesh-gilead for their wives, however, they were still be two hundred short.

JUDGES 21:15-18

- **Judges 21:15-18:** And the people had compassion on Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶ Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?” ¹⁷ And they said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe not be blotted out from Israel. ¹⁸ Yet we cannot give them wives from our daughters.” For the people of Israel had sworn, “Cursed be he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”

Cursed: (v18) the word cursed here means that an anathema would be placed upon whoever breaks this vow. This means that they would be utterly cast out of their tribes, their families and the nation of Israel and would not receive any of the benefits of being one of its citizens.

There must be an inheritance: (v17) the elders gather together again to consult how they could fetch another two hundred women for the other two hundred, Benjamite men who had none, because the tribe of Benjamin must have that part of the country that was given to the tribe by divine lot for their inheritance (the inheritance promised by Jacob and Moses, and given by Joshua to the tribe of Benjamin).

This part of the Promised Land belonged to the six hundred surviving Benjamites and to all their descendants. Now that the other eleven tribes had slain all the Benjamite women, they were obliged to find other women for the men of Benjamin for the following reasons:

- The tribe could multiply greatly and raise offspring to fill the land.
- The tribe could raise children to manage and till their land, rebuild their cities, cultivate their olive and vineyards.
- The tribe would not die out and be swallowed up by any other, for no other tribe was to possess their inheritance.

That a tribe be not blotted out: (v17) the inheritance of Benjamin had to be restored. To have the twelfth portion of land in the country that God promised Israel. The fact they did not drive out of the land all the pagan nations, would not only prove to be a continue thorn amongst them, but

also be a dishonour to the nation and to God. The tribe of Benjamin never quite recovered this crushing defeat, even though Ehud the second Judge and Israel's first king (Saul) rose out of the tribe of Benjamin, and their tribe was often honoured by the residence of Samuel, they never reached the status of the more powerful tribe of Judah.

JUDGES 21:19-22

- **Judges 21:19-22:** So they said, "Behold, there is the yearly feast of the LORD at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah."²⁰ And they commanded the people of Benjamin, saying, "Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards²¹ and watch. If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin."²² And when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, 'Grant them graciously to us, because we did not take for each man of them his wife in battle, neither did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty.'"

A feast of the LORD in Shiloh: (v19) most scholars seem to agree that this feast most likely refers to the feast of tabernacles, for the following five reasons:

1. The fact it is called, "A Feast of the LORD," shows it cannot refer to any local civil festival or fair kept for various celebrations.
2. The tabernacle was in Shiloh.
3. The feast was celebrated with great joy, singing and dancing.
4. It was the only feast at which the Jewish virgins were allowed to dance.
5. It was at the time the fruits of the earth were gathered in.

The dancing was only the unmarried daughters of Shiloh, no men or married women were involved. Obviously, this public dancing made them an easy prey:

A place which is on the north side of Beth-el: since the location of Shiloh was very well known to all Israel, some may wonder why such a detailed description of its location is given here. Following is the most likely reason, the intention is not to describe the exact location of Shiloh, which was well known, but a place close to it where at the time of the Feast of the LORD, the daughters of Shiloh would go to, and dance a dance of celebration for the vintage (harvest) of the vineyards.

Snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh: (v20) it is now the time of year when the vintage (harvest) of the vineyards was gathered, which is why the elders of the congregation (v16-17) tell the two hundred Benjamites who wanted wives to go to the vineyards near the tabernacle in Shiloh and hide themselves amongst the branches and leaves, which would be in full bloom, making it easy to hide themselves amongst, while they waited for an opportunity to snatch a women from the cover of the leaves and grapes of the vine

When their fathers or brothers complain: (v22) the Israelites will basically say to the families of Shiloh, you should be gracious to us, because we did not come by war and kill a husband and take his wife, nor did you freely give your daughters to us, so you are not guilty of breaking the oath you made with all of Israel at Mizpah (v1) not to give your daughters to the Benjamites. Such unsound reasoning and justification as this, make a mockery of making an oath and illustrates the wisdom of the following words of the Lord:

- Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool,

or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil. (Matthew 5:33-37).

Even though the families are not guilty of any wrong doing, they are going to be enormously grieved and emotionally distraught not only by the fact that their daughters had been taken by force, but also that they were forced to marry a man they did not know or choose. How true are the following final words of this book:

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

The Israelites reasoned with the families of Shiloh in the following way, they asked them to overlook the offence, because all eleven tribes of Israel had forced the Benjamites to take such drastic action in the following two ways:

1. By making an impulsive and foolish oath before the LORD not to give any of their daughters to the tribe of Benjamin.
2. By killing all the innocent Benjamite women both married and unmarried, they could have taken care to at least spare a sufficient number of married women since their former husbands were slain and of the unmarried women as would be necessary, especially since there was absolutely no need to kill the women.

The Israelites then appeal to the grieving parents, by basically saying, "since we have forced the Benjamites into this terrible situation the least we can do to unite the tribes and prevent one tribe of Israel becoming extinct is to overlook what has happened and let it pass. We are left to suppose that this appeal to the parents whose two hundred daughters were seized was sufficient to pacify them or at least enough to prevent them from taking any violent action.

JUDGES 21:23-25

- **Judges 21:23-25:** And the people of Benjamin did so and took their wives, according to their number, from the dancers whom they carried off. Then they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the towns and lived in them.²⁴ And the people of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and they went out from there every man to his inheritance.²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Each man took his wife, which highlights the fact they did not practice polygamy, because its very clear they did not allow it in this case, even though it would have allowed such a diminished tribe to multiply far more quickly. Little by little they repaired their cities and buildings as their numbers, increased. No doubt they immediately returned to their inheritance which was very near the place they had kidnapped the daughters from, before the daughter's parents could take any action to remedy the grievous, undesirable and unfair situation. Jewish writers say, that in later times, the Benjamites were permitted to marry with other tribes because the oath only bound those present at Mizpeh, for they point out that it only states, "there shall not any of us," and does not go on to include their sons, so in time the tribe of Benjamin became numerous again.

In those days there was no king in Israel: (v25) there was at times a high-priest (Judges 20:28) and elders (Judges 21:16), and Judges who had some authority, but there was no single supreme governor, such as Moses and Joshua. During this time there was no one who had national authority and power sufficient enough.

- To punish public wrongs, whoredoms, and idolatries.

- To restrain the increase of sin and corruption within the nation.
- To restrain the abuse of God's law and keep the people in a national state of godly order.

Everyman did what was right in his own eyes: (v25) this verse, occurs word for word in (Judges 17:6), it is very likely the author of this book inserted this verse at chapter seventeen so the reader would clearly understand that the horrors that follow are not according to the will of God but the will of man, and closes the book with the same verse for the same reason.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

It is a principle of God that He will never force us to do anything, but rather justly leaves those who cherish and indulge their corrupt appetites and passions to themselves, under the power of their own sins, for they will eventually bring upon them sorrow and ruin. God always remains true, He proved Himself true to the promises He made to Israel, for He remained true to both His blessings and His threatening's, for He is bound to do what He has covenanted to do.

The LORD was with the Judges who He raised up, and so they became saviours to Israel, but Israel was not thoroughly reformed, for they were infatuated with the idols of surrounding nations and so persistently (some would say pigheadedly) repeatedly returned to their own wicked ways. It is interesting to notice, that God's punishment upon Israel was in accordance to their wickedness, in that they served the gods of the nation's surrounding them and God made them serve the worldly powerful princes of the nation's round about them. God spared the Canaanites, and in this way, brought punishment upon them, it could be said, Israel was beaten with their own rod of disobedience.

Israel's constant backsliding, evidences the following principal of faith, that those who have forsaken the good ways of God, which they had once known and professed, commonly grow indifferent toward Him and deeper in sin. The Scriptures clearly highlight how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts are, but many are not willing to believe it, until, after flirting with sinful temptations and embracing them they find by sad experience it to be true.

The importance of strong leaders: the first generation which had lived through some great era's when they had a strong godly leader and God's hand and favour was upon them retained memories of His power. But when that leader fell, it was like switching of a powerful electric magnet, and all that it held together falls to the ground inactive and lifeless, which shines a brilliant spotlight upon the importance of raising up strong godly leaders, that can step into a vacant spot when needed. Sadly, the events spoken of in the book of Judges are in accord with the general tendencies of our old fallen nature, in that as long as some strong and godly personality leads a nation or a church, that nation and that church will in almost all cases remain true to their early passion, faith and zeal.

Two lessons Israel's history teaches us:

1. **Firstly:** that we are always in danger of being hindered, no matter how well we may be running the race, if we do not keep our first vision of God's greatness as Creator of all things and source of all life, and of Christ's love and grace that delivered us from death and saved us to eternal life as our highest love, we like Israel could stumble at anytime.
2. **Secondly:** if the Lord Jesus Christ is not residing in the highest place of our mind and the deepest place of our heart, and is not made King over our lives and over our choices, and if we have little interest in doing what is right in the eyes of God, we like Israel of Old will always be in danger of being hindered in our faith and our walk with the Lord.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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