

Judges 21

February 9, 2012

V. 1

How we need to be so very careful, **not** to make a rash oath, or an empty promise to God!

Ecclesiastes 5:2 "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few."

But - what do you do if you **do** make a rash oath that would require you to sin in order to keep it?

Of course, we know (at least we should) that God would not hold us to most oaths made in the heat of the moment, an oath that would require us to sin in order to keep it.

(e.g. Saul & Jonathan – 1 Samuel 14:24-30; 36-46 - both justice and mercy – **must** be exercised)

V. 2-4

They look soooo good!

They went to church, they were there till evening, they were not ashamed, lifting up their voices, crying, they pretended like they cared about God and His people. They woke up early the next morning, built an altar, offered sacrifices, burnt offerings and peace offerings.

They look soooo good – but the fact of the matter is – **they're not!**

And, they may have been religious in a certain sense, but their religion in no way showed them the true way of God. These are people who are just going through the motions, pretending they're communicating with God, but never really intending to discover God's will, and do God's will.

V. 5-12

If they really spoke to the Lord, not pretending, but really intending to do God's will, God would have told them, either A, "Let it be," or B "Your vow was rash, give them wives from own tribes."

God **definitely** would **not** have told them to kill and kidnap!

"You shall not murder," God said, in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17.

Exodus 21:16 "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death."

In God's Word it was clear, both killer and kidnapper were to be put to death.

But the nation of Israel ignored the dear clear Word of God, and they commissioned 12,000 men, to worsen the sin, by killing all the males, all the children, and all the women in the Jabesh-Gilead who were not virgins.

They were the nation of Israel, they prayed to the God of Israel (v. 3), they were lamenting over what had happened to Israel (v. 3), and yet they were acting like Jacobs!

It's difficult to pinpoint exactly what Israel means. Some say it means "governed by God." I've read, "prince of God," "rule with God," even "God prevails." So, I don't know if I'm going to be certain as to the meaning of Israel; but I do know the meaning of Israel's former name - "Jacob" - it means "heel catcher, conniver, and manipulator."

Here we see Israel acting like Jacob.

They pretend like they're praying.

"I have an idea!"

Reminds me of that TV show, "I Love Lucy" (she would get that look in her eyes)

We're not called to act on ideas that pop into our brain, we need to act on God's Word and will, revealed in Scripture that He plants in our heart.

Maybe you're here today, and you say, "I don't know the bible." We'll, begin to study it with all your heart as if your life depended on it - cause it does. And if you're a new believer, and you don't know the Word, then get to know someone who does know the Word, and ask them for Godly counsel. Not that they control your lives or tell you what to do, but they show you God's Word and will, the specific Scriptures that apply to your situation.

Otherwise you might end up like these guys - they "prayed" and decided:

We'll murder some more innocent people (including the women and the children) we'll have them kidnap wives for themselves.

"What shall we do?" (v. 7)

"They said" (v. 8)

They asked, what shall we do...but **who** did they really ask? (themselves)

This happens again in v. 16 and 17. They're talking to themselves.

Nowhere do we read, "and God said..."

But it's not over:

V. 13-15

They make peace, with their 600 surviving brethren from Benjamin, they give them the women they kidnapped, but the problem is, they only have 400 women.

Some might be impressed with their grief in v. 15, but when you look a little closer, consider the question, "**why** did they grieve?"

They grieved for the sinners, and **not** the sin.

Nehemiah 1:4 "So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *for many* days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven."

Ezra 9:6 "And I said: 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than *our* heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens.'"

1 Corinthians 5:2 "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Psalms 119:136 "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because *men* do not keep Your law."

They **clung** to the wrong word.

They **cried** for the wrong reason.

They **counseled** in the wrong direction.

V. 16-23

One time someone saw W.C. Fields reading the Bible, and they were surprised, not supposing him to be a Bible reader, so they called him on it, "Mr. Fields, I didn't know you were a believer in the Bible," to which he replied, "just looking for loopholes, just looking for loopholes."

V. 24-25

But once again, we see the explanation for the nation - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." – Judges 21:25

(17:7; 18:1; 19:1)

What was the problem with Israel?

They **clung** to the wrong word.

They **cried** for the wrong reason.

They **counseled** in the wrong direction.

They **crowned** the wrong king (themselves).

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but it's end is the way of death."
(Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

Let the Lord be King of your mind, your heart, your body, your soul; your young, your tongue; your ears, your hands, your feet; your every day, your every way; your every moment in time, don't commit the crime of crowning yourself the King.

Surrender again, and again.

Believe and receive, for the first time:

Zechariah 9:9 ""Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."

Judges – wow - what a book! In the end – it's a story, actually the history of the terrible **place** people end up without the Lord; but...it's also a story of amazing **grace** where people end up who are in Christ, where people who are really God's people – they were still God's people, and that is an absolutely amazing grace.