

1. Congratulations, we've made it to the final chapter of Judges. We're going to finish a tragic story that began two chapters ago about a man trained to be a priest but left that calling. His "girl" got killed by a homosexual gang, and a civil war that erupted essentially due to her death. I'll admit, this reads like a soap opera, but the sad part is it's actual history. The big question is why should we care about this? It's because the whole book of Judges including this final story reminds us of what'll happen if we turn from God's will. The reason He made us in the first place was to glorify Him with our lives. God gave us the freedom to live however we want. What He desires is that we give our freedom "back to Him" as to use our lives as living witness for Him. It doesn't mean we must be perfect. It does mean that He desires we let Him guide our lives and use our lives as a witness for Him.
 - a) Believe it or not, that leads perfectly to this chapter. Here, the Israelites feel guilty about a war they caused and the results of that war. In this chapter, the Israelites commit to a pair of foolish vows as if to say, "Things are really messed up around here. Here's what we got to do in order to deal with the mess up!" Unfortunately, those vows make life worse than it already was. It's God's way of saying, "My rules are all you need to live as I desire. It is a reminder than when we do over and above it, usually leads to disaster". When we make such vows, God expects us to honor them. That's because keeping our word means we're keeping our reputation of doing what we say we're going to do. Bottom line, this chapter is one big mess up after the other. It involves more mass killing, kidnapping, and giving of the daughters of Israelites to other Israelites against their will. In short, it's the ending chapter of a three chapter soap opera and it ends as strangely as this story began.
2. Let me ask a related question: This is the final chapter of Judges. Why end it this way? The book stopped dealing with judges (people appointed by God to lead) chapters ago. The last part of this book tells a couple of "soap opera" stories (to use my favorite term describing this story) that is all about horrid deeds that occur in Israel during the era of these judges. It's as if the author wants us to know, the Israelite problems weren't all because of external threats. They also had problems as they were willing to turn from the way God wanted them to live, to live however they want. In fact, the final verse in Judges makes that point: Everyone did, "Whatever they wanted". That is my paraphrase of the last verse. The key point of this three chapter story and of the whole book for that matter is here's what happens to a person or a group that turns from God and starts to live however they'd like to live and do whatever they feel like doing.
 - a) OK John, you're preaching to the choir again. Cut that out! If we're reading a bible study figure that we're trying our best to live, as God desires. Why should we study this chapter if it's so horrid? In other words, "This isn't me, so why should I care?" As I've been saying all through my study of this book, the great danger to any believer is turn from God as it's easy to do. Let's be honest temptation, for a lack of a better term is tempting. A desire for us to live however we want is always there! It doesn't go away with time or prayer. It is a reminder to even the most devout believer that living however we want to live (that is, for us to ignore how God wants us to live) is always a temptation away!
 - b) Let me use a biblical example to show how easy it is. If you told Solomon right after he'd finish building the temple and gave a magnificent prayer to dedicate that temple to God, I would bet he'd say, "Turn from God, what are you nuts?" God gave Solomon the spiritual gift of great wisdom. In spite of it, he married hundreds of wives. The wives turned him from God. My point is a desire to do something that wasn't God's will is a starting point from turning from Him. The Israelites who lived at that time wanted to live however they wanted to live. That's the great danger all of us face if we start compromising with how it is God wants us to live. A key point of the book of Judges is the danger of compromising with God's desire for our lives!

- c) So John are you saying I can't do whatever I want? Being a Christian means we're free to live however we want. That's not the issue. The issue is "what do we want?" If all we do care about is enriching our own lives then we've wasted the greatest gift we got, the time God's given us to live on this earth. Please understand that I'm not against downtime or a hobby we may enjoy. I'm saying that if we never use our lives to make a difference for the kingdom of God is in effect a waste of a life. That's the underlying message of Judges.
3. Nice speech. What does any of that have to do with this final chapter? Everything as this book is going to end with a bunch of Israelites making a bunch of commitments that God never desired a believer to make. It ends with killing of innocent Israelites by other Israelites. It ends with a final scene of Israelites kidnapping innocent Israelite women in order to have wives for themselves. It is one big example of "doing whatever one feels like doing" and living with the consequences of a lifestyle they choose to live thinking they're pleasing to God with a horrid lifestyle. Let me give a few details of this final chapter here:
- a) The story opens after the end of a civil war. I need to begin by summarizing the last two chapters in a few sentences, as it's all part of the same story: The last two chapters told the story of a man who had a concubine. That term refers to a "wife" with less rights. As they were traveling home to their hometown they spent the night with a stranger. Then a gang of thugs wanted to rape him. He offered his concubine to save his own life. She got raped and abused and left her for dead. In response, he cut her up in pieces and sent her pieces all over Israel. It set up a civil war between the Israelites living near the "street gang" and the rest of the Israelites. Those Israelites greatly outnumbered those defending the actions of that gang and after a series of deadly battles with the casualty counts given, the war is now over. Chapter 21 in effect deals with the "clean up" issues of that war.
 - b) The first thing we learn in Chapter 21 is after the war, the Israelites made a vow that they would not give any of their women as wives to the tribe that was almost wiped out. Know that in the course of that war, the Israelites wiped out all the women and children as well as most of the men of the one tribe of Israelites that defended the homosexual rape gang!
 - i) The rest of the Israelites felt guilty that one of the 12 tribes was almost wiped out but not guilty enough that they were willing to let any of their daughters marry the 600 survivors of that tribe.
 - c) Then of all things the Israelites took a headcount to see if anyone didn't come join the war. The purpose of that survey was because they figured if anyone failed to join them, in their mind that meant they didn't care about correcting the wrong or sided with the opposition. Nobody from one town came. A vow was made to kill everyone from that one town and only spare young virgins to give them as wives to the survivors to the tribe that lost the war. Yes this is horrid and not exactly something God endorsed!
 - d) Just when you think this soap opera can't get any weirder, it does. The Israelites still need more women for the one tribe that lost all their women. Because they made a vow to not give any of their women to men of this tribe they had to get creative! They recalled that a big dance event occurred once a year in Israel. They let the men of that almost dead tribe to kidnap girls as they danced. That way they weren't giving away their girls, just letting the kidnapping occur. In effect that's the end of the story and the end of the book. There are so many things wrong about this story, it's hard to know where to begin!
4. If you haven't figured it out by now, my lesson title is "A soap opera". Better yet, "What does God want us to learn from this soap opera?" The answer has to do with understanding what happens when we think "we can get away with a little sin" as after all, we're free to do whatever we want to do as believers. What we easily forget is sin not only has consequences for our lives, but also it has consequences to others around us. That's what this "soap opera" teaches. The Israelites make a bunch of mistakes where they think they can correct wrongs with more wrongs. What we need to learn from this lesson isn't so much the specifics of the mistakes but the attitude of the danger of not living as God desires. With that said, let's begin on the details:

5. Chapter 21, Verse 1: The men of Israel had taken an oath at Mizpah: "Not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite."
 - a) Keep in mind we're in the middle of a story. Also remember that the chapter breaks were not added until millenniums after this story was written. For all intents and purposes all of the Israelites were gathered in one place as they had just finished fighting a civil war.
 - b) Now that the civil war was over, one of the results was that one of the 12 tribes of Israel is for all intents and purposes wiped out. The war led to the death of all the women as well as the children of one of those 12 tribes.
 - c) The winning side (the other 11 tribes) had so much anger at the losing group they made a vow that nobody from the other 11 tribes would give any of their daughters in marriage to the Benjamites, the losing tribe. We learned from the last chapter that a total of only 600 men remained of about 25,000 men who were part of that tribe before the war in Israel occurred.
 - d) As a matter of record, this story did not necessarily occur at the "end" of the Judges era. It had to be at some time when no external enemy was threatened them. It's a case where they didn't have to worry about external threats, so therefore they were busy "infighting" as they had no reason to unite against external threats.
 - i) It's God's way of showing that Israel at that time weren't perfect people when they were not facing external threats. They also turned from God and messed up as the nation was also busy doing "whatever they felt like" even without external threats!
 - e) Anyway, the rest of the Israelites now had a dilemma. They didn't want one to see an end to one of the 12 tribes of Israel, as they knew God's intent to divide the land into areas to be used by each of those tribes. However the other 11 Israel tribes just fought a war with the 12th, over whether Israel should tolerate what was done by a homosexual gang there. Now that the war is over, the Israelites were busy thinking, we can't give our girls to them as wives as we're too angry at them because we lost lots of our men in our war with them. Therefore this "bad vow" was made.
6. Verse 2: The people went to Bethel, where they sat before God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly. ³ "O LORD, the God of Israel," they cried, "why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?"
 - a) One has to see the irony here. The Israelites made a vow to not give their wives to anyone of the tribe of Benjamin. Then they cry out to God, "Why should a tribe be missing?" I got to admit if I was God, I'd be screaming at them, "Why are all of you crying out to Me, you are the ones who made this mess with the war and wiping out the men, women and their children and then you all come to Me and say "Now What""?
 - b) That leads to the natural question, what should we do when we mess up? Should we seek God? Of course! Does this mean He approves of what the Israelites are about to do in the rest of the chapter? Of course not. The short version of what is coming up is the Israelites are about to murder more of their own! Obviously it's not God's will! What we have here is a classic case of "Two wrongs never make one right" or more for that matter! What is to be learned here is that when we mess up, yes we should seek Him, but it also means we're to seek His Word as a guide on how He wants us to live, even as we're messing up badly!
 - c) With the correct solution understood, let's look at the wrong solution:
7. Verse 4: Early the next day the people built an altar and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. ⁵ Then the Israelites asked, "Who from all the tribes of Israel has failed to assemble before the LORD?" For they had taken a solemn oath that anyone who failed to assemble before the LORD at Mizpah should certainly be put to death.
 - a) Anyway, the Israelites as a whole were still gathered together as a nation. They did some offerings to God showing how serious they were. Then with "mob mentality" they asked if anyone was missing. Whoever was missing should be killed. They vowed that anyone who didn't show up for the war that just ended should be killed. Let me explain further:

- b) The thinking was "All us Israelites risked our lives in this war with the Benjaminites. All of us lost people we loved. However, if anyone failed to join us, they should suffer because they failed to suffer in our cause! They're not "real Israelites" because they failed to show up today. We need to punish all of them for this! I'm sure the Israelites were scared that if they didn't attack anyone who didn't show up, God will punish them all the more! With that said, let's move on.
8. Verse 6: Now the Israelites grieved for their brothers, the Benjaminites. "Today one tribe is cut off from Israel," they said. ⁷ "How can we provide wives for those who are left, since we have taken an oath by the LORD not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?" ⁸ Then they asked, "Which one of the tribes of Israel failed to assemble before the LORD at Mizpah?" They discovered that no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly. ⁹ For when they counted the people, they found that none of the people of Jabesh Gilead were there.
- a) The short version is the Israelites "felt bad" that one of the Israel tribes is essentially not a tribe as they're down to 600 men with no women or children. They were thinking how is it we can remedy the situation? Then the Israelites discovered no one from a town called Jabesh Gilead didn't send anyone to the battle. Therefore the Israelites were thinking, we need to wipe out the men and married women in that town/city and at the same time we can take their young girls to be wives for the surviving Benjaminites.
 - b) To state the obvious, this is a horrid idea. To kill everyone in that town for failing to help out in a war is overkill (pardon the pun)! Keeping their virgin daughters alive to provide wives for the Benjaminites is another bad idea. To repeat what I stated earlier, "Two wrongs do not make a right". Let alone killing every last married man, woman, male child as well as the babies in order to provide wives for the 600 remaining Benjaminites. There's nothing good to say about this plan, but that's what the Israelites came up with.
 - c) OK John, hit us with the "why should we care" lecture as we know you're dying to do so, at this point. To state the obvious, wiping out an entire city for failing to help in a war, is just the beginning. The underlying lesson of the whole story is about group failure to do what God desired the Israelites to do, which is to live as they desire.
 - i) Let me back up to the last chapter and think how this whole situation should have been handled. First, it was wrong of the Levite to offer his concubine to this group. Second if anyone's to be punished it was just the rape gang! If the Benjaminites do refuse to let the Israelites attack the guilty group, then they could say to Benjamin, "you'll be guilty as well". Isn't that what happened? We don't know. The truth is if the Levite would have acted properly and not offered up his girl, who knows what would have happened? Even if the Benjaminites agreed to the war to protect those gang members, I'd say that still doesn't justify wiping out about everyone in a city who refused to be a part of that battle!
 - ii) Thanks for stating the obvious. Odds are pretty good we'll never have to face any situation like this. Agreed. However, any of us can start "sinning a little" and then look for ways to cover it up or figure that "two wrongs might make a right". I think of King David arranging for the death of a man because he was having an affair with his wife. It's another bible example of trying to cover our sins with more sins.
 - iii) The reason we get stories like this is to show how it's human nature to try to cover sins with more sins, and make things worse. That's the lesson to learn here.
 - d) Realize the Israelites were thinking about "killing two birds with one stone here". I'd say it was a single decision to wipe out a whole town just to find wives for the survivors of that tribe. It doesn't justify the murder of all the other people. But like King David, they want to add "sin to sin" to try to make things right! So here's a question: Why don't we read of God punishing the Israelites for this sin? The answer is He may have and it's not told how He punished them. As all Christians know, we believe in a just God who judges fairly for how we live our lives, so yes, I do believe the Israelites did suffer for this action!

9. Verse 10: So the assembly sent twelve thousand fighting men with instructions to go to Jabesh Gilead and put to the sword those living there, including the women and children.¹¹ "This is what you are to do," they said. "Kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin."¹² They found among the people living in Jabesh Gilead four hundred young women who had never slept with a man, and they took them to the camp at Shiloh in Canaan.
- a) In these verses, the Israelites put their bad plan into action. They send 12,000 soldiers with orders to kill everybody in that town except those who are obviously virgins. I am willing to bet all the women were yelling out at that point, "I'm a virgin too"! However the killing spree occurred, the point is only 400 young women were spared.
 - b) So was it fair to kill all the innocent women and children here? Why don't we read of God punishing these men for murder? Why don't we read of any consequences of this story? I would start by saying because I believe there is a God and there is a judgment day, all the men were judged as well as the Israelites who ordered this killing. The most stated line in the whole book is in effect, "Everyone did whatever they wanted to do". That's an insult as far as God was concerned because these Israelites were supposed to be His witnesses to a "lost and dying world" of how God wants us to live out our lives!
 - i) That leads to the question of how we're people judged before Jesus? In the effect it is the same way we're judged today: What do you know about God (or could have known) and what did we do with that information? A baby who was killed in this war is obviously not judged the same way as those who committed murder either before the war, during it or after. God judges all people fairly. Just because these men were Israelites does not mean they were automatically saved. Just because we say we are Christians doesn't mean we're saved either! The proof of our salvation is based on what we did with that information!
 - c) Getting back to the story, what should have been done? First the Israelites shouldn't have vowed to not give their daughters to the Benjamites. Once they were stuck with that vow, I would say the next logical step was to either get "foreign brides" or ask the leaders of the city that didn't show up (and make the vow) to give their wives to the Benjamites. All I'm saying is there were better solutions than killing everyone in town!
 - i) We can speculate all day about what could have happened. The truth is, what did occur, occurred, and now everybody has to live with the results. Our lives can be like that as well. We can say, "Yes, we messed up. Yes we should have done this or that. However the damage is done. So what do we do now?" What we should always do when we sin, confess it to God as sin and then start to live our lives as a witness for Him. God doesn't expect perfection. What He does expect is when we mess up, we acknowledge His way was right and ours was wrong and get on with our lives. Obviously a lot of decisions we make aren't based on biblical principals. In such cases, I believe we're free to do whatever we want to do as long as we're a witness for Him with our lives.
 - ii) Meanwhile, we left the Israelites sparing young virgins to be wives for the people they just had a war with!
10. Verse 13: Then the whole assembly sent an offer of peace to the Benjamites at the rock of Rimmon.¹⁴ So the Benjamites returned at that time and were given the women of Jabesh Gilead who had been spared. But there were not enough for all of them.
- a) I was thinking about this scene from the view of the surviving Benjamites. They probably all lost most of their families and friends in this war. The enemy gives them a consolation prize of new brides that were not part of their tribe! My guess is neither the men nor the women were in the best mood after all that happened. After all the young girls lost all of their families as well. I'm sure it took a long time for everyone to be happy and accept the situation. I'm sure there was a lot of anger in this situation. That leads to the topic of how do we handle anger. Let me explain:

- i) Jesus said, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45a, NIV). All I am saying is when we're angry about a situation, the best thing to do is to give that situation to God and ask for His strength and help us deal with what we must deal with. It takes time, and I've had people hurt me and I've had to pray for them for a long time in order to let that pain go. When we refuse to forgive them we're only hurting ourselves. Often we hang onto the pain as that's all we got left of a broken relationship!
 - a) Let me also separate justice from forgiveness. A person may still deserve to go to prison for something they did. Forgiving is not about letting people get away with things. It's not letting them continue to hurt us for whatever they did do. That's my point here.
 - ii) That leads back to the Benjamites and the virgins. I'm sure all of them had a lot of anger issues about the situation. I'm sure it took time for them to accept this. The point is we can't change the past, but if we're willing to forgive for how people did hurt us, we can get on with our lives and still be of use to God as we are!
 - iii) Realize from these six hundred marriages not only came King Saul (the first Israel king) but also the apostle Paul was a descendant of them. My point is good things can always come out of the most horrid of situations.
 - iv) With that said, let's hold the happiness for a moment. There is more to this "soap opera" and that's coming up in the next set of verses.
- 11. Verse 15: The people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a gap in the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶ And the elders of the assembly said, "With the women of Benjamin destroyed, how shall we provide wives for the men who are left? ¹⁷ The Benjamite survivors must have heirs," they said, "so that a tribe of Israel will not be wiped out. ¹⁸ We can't give them our daughters as wives, since we Israelites have taken this oath: 'Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to a Benjamite.' ¹⁹ But look, there is the annual festival of the LORD in Shiloh, to the north of Bethel, and east of the road that goes from Bethel to Shechem, and to the south of Lebonah."
 - a) For those who don't know, I read and listen to a lot of commentaries in preparation of my studies. My favorite on these verses was Chuck Missler. He joked, "The Israelites hired a bunch of good attorneys who found a loophole in their pledge to not give their daughters to the Benjamites". It described these verses well. Instead of letting their daughters to the remaining 200 Benjamites, the plan was to let these men kidnap girls while they danced at annual festival to God.
 - b) Like I keep saying, whenever you think this soap opera can't get any stranger it does. The Israelites are going to go along with this plan. For those of us who have daughters, how is it you'd feel about letting someone kidnap your daughter and take them to marriage as to get around a bad vow that you've made? Personally I'm not crazy about the idea to put it mildly. Remember that we're reading of a bunch of people who are "doing whatever it is they feel like doing" which means ignoring living as God wants them to live! It means the people are going along with this plan. It makes me wonder if they've told their daughters or just let it happen? Either way, it's a horrid story and once again, it is going to require a lot of forgiving in order for there to be positive marriages even after a horrid war.
 - c) Notice the Israelites thought they were pleasing God by doing this. It was done at a party to honor God. The parents let their daughters do this knowing that instead of having a big wedding party to give away their daughters, they are letting them be kidnapped by those they were just at war with. The Israelites also thought they're pleasing God by not going back on their vow. As I said in the beginning, the reason we're not to go back on our word even if we make a bad vow, is our "word is our bond" and can we be trusted otherwise. It is a case of God expecting us to keep our word, even in very bad situations! Obviously it's not to count if say, we make a vow to murder someone or something similar!

12. Verse 20: So they instructed the Benjamites, saying, "Go and hide in the vineyards ²¹ and watch. When the girls of Shiloh come out to join in the dancing, then rush from the vineyards and each of you seize a wife from the girls of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin. ²² When their fathers or brothers complain to us, we will say to them, 'Do us a kindness by helping them, because we did not get wives for them during the war, and you are innocent, since you did not give your daughters to them.' "

 - a) Here is where the "justify our sins" section comes in. When the families complain about their daughters being kidnapped for marriage, we'll say, "it was all our faults because we didn't provide wives for them due to our vows!" These verses also tell us that the families of the girls were not in on the kidnapping plan until after it occurred!
 - b) We also get the details on how this occurred. The Benjamites who didn't have wives were told to hide in the vineyards. When the girls danced, they were to jump out in to get a girl for themselves! Now there's a way to pick out a bride! Can't you just see the couple fights that occurred many years later? "Hey I picked you out and I can throw you away". Or if the wife said, "We wouldn't be in this mess if you hadn't fought against all the Israelites to begin with and have to result to kidnapping in order to get a wife!" I'm guessing that not a lot of these marriages had a "happily every after" lifestyle. In short it's another example of a failure to live as God desires we live and watching the consequences play out. If we get anything out of this lesson it's the idea that there are long term consequences to failing to live as God desires.
 - c) You know the old expression, "Truth is stranger than fiction"? It's certainly true here!
 - d) Anyway, we're a few verses away from wrapping up this lesson, which to the cheers of all my readers will be shorter than most of my lessons! Let's continue:

13. Verse 23: So that is what the Benjamites did. While the girls were dancing, each man caught one and carried her off to be his wife. Then they returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the towns and settled in them. ²⁴ At that time the Israelites left that place and went home to their tribes and clans, each to his own inheritance.
 - a) Here is the actual kidnapping and the epilogue of the story in two verses. The Benjamites went back to the territory where they lived. Remember that most of their towns got wiped out by the war. Therefore, they had to rebuild where the towns where they lived with the wives that were given to them or captured by a kidnapping.
 - b) Here's the strange part. This is not only how the story ends, it's also how the book ends. It sort of leaves us hanging asking, "Why didn't God step in? or why did He allow all of this horrid stuff to occur? Why end the book like this? In effect, the answer is in the final verse of the book of Judges:
14. Verse 25: In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
 - a) There's the book of Judges in one line! As I've stated many times in these studies of Judges this line is meant as an insult. When it says "no king", don't think of David or even Saul, it is a reference to not letting God be the king over our lives. God separated the Israelites so that they'd be a witness for Him. The same way God separates Christians today to be His witnesses to nonbelievers! So how do you know if God has separated you? Easy, if you've dedicated your life to be used to make a difference for Jesus, you have been separated. It must be accepted. If you haven't what are you waiting for? Not only is it the path to live forever, it's also the best way to live out one's life here and now.
 - b) What about how much we've messed up? Welcome to the club. All we can do is own up to our mistakes, tell God how we desire to live as He wants us based on His Word and we make the best decisions we can under those guidelines. That's what living the Christian life is all about.
 - c) OK, I admit, I'm preaching to the choir again. Let me wrap it up by reminding ourselves of the reason why this "soap opera" is in the bible in the first place! To remind us believers of the danger of turning from God and taking matters in our own hands!

- i) It's the danger of thinking, I want to be pleasing to God and I'll go over and above how the bible expects me to live. I'll be a "supersaint". Remember that salvation is only based on our trust that Jesus is God, died for our sins and is Lord (yes, it's the tough one) over our lives. It's when we (all of us) fail at any moment to let Him be that Lord is when we really start to mess up. That includes trying to go over and above what the bible expects of us. That's my message for this week in a nutshell!
15. OK, I promised to lighten up for this last lesson and I mean it. For the sake of my newer readers, I always include a bibliography after the last lesson of all my studies and one appears on the next page if interested. Thanks as always for reading. If you like what you've read, besides sending a thank you note to me, the best thing you can do is pass it forward. I'm referring to using your life to make a difference for Jesus. Pray about how you can be used of God. Tell Him, you dedicated your life to serving Him. Your life is His business. Ask Him how and when He wants to use your life for His glory. Take the time to work with other believers to find a way of doing what you like to do in order to make a difference for Him. That's the best way I can pray for everyone here and that is my closing prayer. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #7 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries on Judges are listed first, and then bible-wide commentaries. They're listed in alphabetical order by author. References to audio commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Judges by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® and MP4® (video) format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on Judges by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at <http://northcountrychapel.com/studies/>.
3. Commentary on Judges by David Guzik. It is available for free in audio and text format. The web address is http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.htm Mr. Davis quotes a lot of famous authors from the 19th and 20th Century on these books and I've used some of those quotes.
4. Commentary on Judges by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. His studies on Judges are also on Youtube.
5. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers". I go through the notes of this study bible in the preparation for each lesson.
6. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source.
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm.
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229.
9. I also refer sometimes to J.P. Moreland apologetic ministry which is at www.jpmoreland.com and Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org I also quote from Dennis Prager on many Jewish issues. He is a nationally syndicated radio broadcaster. See dennisprager.com.
10. Also quotes a lot by Dennis Prager, a devout Jewish (non-Christian) man who has a syndicated radio show around the United States.
11. My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them in this list.