

**JUDGES**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Judges chapter 19 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we will finish up the book of Judges, which was a very dark period for the nation of Israel as the people did what was right in their own eyes, and that was not good! Last time we looked at the spiritual apostasy that took place and tonight we will see where that spiritual apostasy lead to, moral apostasy as the children of Israel become more wicked than the nations around them! Can that happen? You bet it can and you will see that in our study this evening.

Now the timeframe here is probably early on in the book of Judges because in Judges 20:28 we see Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron mentioned. Thus, it could not be too far into the book of Judges that these events took place and you will see how quickly a people not only can fall into spiritual apostasy as we saw last week, but also moral apostasy because they have turned away from the Lord. With that said, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 19 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

**JUDGES 19****VERSE 1a**

1. Here is the crux of the problem, they did what was right in their own eyes and that is never good! It is as the Lord said in Jeremiah 17:9, “**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately (incurably sick) wicked; who can know it?**” The Lord knows our heart and what we see here is that God is showing us the history of Israel. And when He does this He does not hold back. He tells it like it is. God does not make us look better than we are. He knows what is going on inside our hearts and in time that will overflow into actions. If our heart is wicked, so too will be our actions, and that is what we have seen in the book of Judges and this little introduction to this series of events is setting the stage for this horrible story that we will be reading about.

**VERSES 1b-4**

1. Here we see a Levite, not Jonathan that we read about in the previous chapters, but he was from the remote mountains of Ephraim. That tells me he was out in the wilderness, not in the Levitical city he was to be in and thus, he is doing his own thing. Because he is not walking with God he does not marry a woman but finds a concubine in Bethlehem and takes her. A concubine was a legal partner but did not have the same status in the home as a wife did. And this Levite disregarded God’s plan for a couple and that was marriage, not this partnership!

2. But, after some time, we don't know how long, she goes back to her father's house and has an affair. And for this Levite, it took him four months to finally decide that maybe he should go after her and he does. Some commentators credit the efforts of this man for going after her, trying to reconcile this relationship, but as we will see as this story progresses, he is not a very good guy!

3. So as he arrives at his father-in-law's house this woman's father is excited to see him, maybe wanting his daughter out of his house or seeing the lifestyle she is now living, is hoping that this reconciliation will put an end to the way she was living! Whatever the reason they have a drunken party for three days! Here was one of the spiritual leaders of the nation and as this nation walked in darkness, what is he doing? He is partying it up! That should not be.

4. Now the church has adopted this idea of entertaining their members and I am not against having fun but there is a time to be entertained and there is a time to be instructed in holiness, to draw close to God, but instead, many today are feeding the flesh and they are wondering why they are having so many problems. Case in point.

Listen to what this church in Glendale Arizona has concluded as important in the instructing of their members.

“ . . . Terey Summers, Arizona's actress of the year, likes to stage skits in the sanctuary instead of having ministers preach from the pulpit. ‘People today aren't interested in traditional doctrines like justification, sanctification and redemption,’ the pastor concluded.”

- Newsweek, Dead-end for the Mainline?,  
Kenneth Woodward, August 9, 1993

It is time for the church to wake-up and get serious. What do you mean you are not interested in the fundamental principles of the Christian faith? What are you giving your people then? You are entertaining them and not strengthening them in the faith! It is not a time to party when a war is going on. God wants us to be a holy people and you won't become holy through entertainment but as you are taught the Scriptures and the Spirit of God opens them up to your life! That is how you grow and yes, you have a choice to obey or do your own thing.

#### VERSES 5-10

1. I think this man's father-in-law likes to party with his son-in-law; he doesn't want him to leave. Which is interesting, he wanted his daughter to go, but he is enjoying the drinking with this Levite!

2. Now, at the end of five days of drinking and eating this Levite decides it is time to go even though his father-in-law wants him to stay longer. And it is getting late and they travel some 5 miles from Bethlehem to Jebus, which is Jerusalem. At this time Jebus was a Jebusite stronghold because the tribe of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites as we were told in Judges 1:21. And here is the problem, it was getting late and it was dangerous to not only travel at night but to be out at night. So what were they going to do? Let's read on and see.

#### VERSES 11-15

1. Now this is interesting. This Levite did not want to stay in Jebus because he was worried about this enemy and what they might do to them, so they push on some 4 more miles to Gibeah, why? This is where the tribe of Benjamin settled, this was family and thus, they felt much safer resting here for the night than with the enemy. But as they arrive in Gibeah, look at the coldness of the people. No one opened their home for them so they would not have to sleep out in the streets. And that was a common practice of hospitality back then but I think it is just an indication of how cold the hearts of the people were at this time.

In fact, we are told in Leviticus 19:33-34, **“And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”** But they were not practicing this because they were not walking with God! (Leviticus 25:35, Matthew 25:35, Hebrews 13:2)

VERSES 16-21

1. This Levite had all his supplies, food, straw for the animals, drink, but was missing only a place to lay down, someone's home that would be opened up to him for shelter. There were no Holiday Inn's he could check into. And who comes to help him but this old man, a fellow brother from the mountains of Ephraim, opens up his home to this Levite and the people who were traveling with him. They were to be safe and secure under the shelter of his roof, for this old man was fully aware of how dangerous it was to sleep in the open square. None of the people, the native people of Gibeah cared for strangers, they would not open their home to strangers!

VERSE 22

1. What in the world is going on here? These were God's people, a holy people, a special people that were to shine the light of God to a world in darkness and now they are living in darkness. These wicked men beat on the door and as there was no response the Hebrew indicates that their beating on that door got louder and louder. And what was the request of these men? That they may have sexual relations with this Levite man that was in the house! It is what the men of Sodom were saying in Genesis 19:5. Thus, during the time of the Judges the people of God were as bad as the people of Sodom! And if you think this is bad, listen to what takes place now!

VERSES 23-26

1. There is so much that is wrong here. Now some say that this man who opened his home to the Levite was just following the law of the day regarding the safety of people that are in his home. But what about this man's concubine and then his own daughter, he was willing to let these men abuse them sexually to protect this man. I don't care what the rules of hospitality were, this was wrong. And then it does not end there; this Levite just gives to them his concubine to do what they want. And all night long they abuse her till morning and then they let her go! Do you see how a people who have turned from God, who are in spiritual apostasy will end up being morally bankrupt and they will do whatever they feel is right in their own eyes. That is what we see here and that is what we are seeing in our own nation! One writer put it this way. He said, "Don't ever take lightly the evil results of sexual perversion and homosexuality, terrible acts of violence and sadism go hand in hand with these same forms of immorality within our own loose and indulgent society." We see this in our society today and yet, like in Gibeah, it is just ignored!

2. Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts Judges 19:25, "**But they wouldn't listen to him. Then the girl's husband pushed her out to them, and they abused her all night, taking turns raping her until morning. Finally, just at dawn, they let her go.**"

George Williams makes this observation regarding what has taken place here. He wrote, "It would have been better for the Levite to have spent the night with the heathen than with the professed children of God, for the latter had already become viler than the former." What a sad state of affairs this is and it is not over yet!

VERSES 27-30

1. Do you really think this Levite loved his concubine? I don't! Look at how heartless he is. These men have abused her all night, she is lying on the ground and he walks by her and tells her to "Get up!" Come on, how heartless people can become when they turn from God! And when he sees that she is dead he takes her home and cuts her in pieces and sends her pieces to the 12 tribes in Israel! And keep in mind, he was a Levite and maybe a priest and he knew how to cut up the sacrifices and that is what he is doing with his concubine. He wanted the other tribes to get this message of what took place but you would think there should have been a better way.

2. Now, as we move into chapter 20 we are going to see that Civil War is going to break out because of what took place with this man's concubine. But again, why wasn't anything done before this all transpired. These men did this before, it was not the first time and yet nothing was done and as this was going on in Gibeah, I believe it was going on in some of the other tribes also! Why? Because there was no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes!

**JUDGES 20**VERSES 1-2

1. So all Israel gathers together, from Dan in the North down to the Beersheba in the South for this atrocity that has taken place in Israel. This blemish needed to be removed and they were prepared to take care of it!



VERSES 3-7

1. So as all Israel gathered together they ask this Levite what happened and he explained to them all that took place, except, he forgot to mention that he was the one that threw his concubine out to this men to abuse her sexually. He put his own spin on it making him look good! But again, we can look at his actions and they just reflect where his heart is at and it was not with the Lord! And now this Levite throws it back to the children of Israel, asking them what they are going to do about this evil act that was done upon his concubine!

VERSES 8-11

1. So the children of Israel agree that the inhabitants of Gibeah who perpetrated this evil upon this woman would have to be dealt with, they needed to be held accountable for their actions and they were to be put to death.

VERSES 12-17

1. Here again we see the sad condition of the hearts and minds of the people of Benjamin. The children of Israel wanted the men of Benjamin to hand over these men from Gibeah who had done this crime, murdered this woman. That sounds reasonable and I am sure that everyone knew who did it, they knew the lifestyle of these men, the things they did was not a secret with the people of Benjamin, but they did nothing about it. And now, they refuse to hand these evil men over. They would rather protect them than protect the innocent! They should have been outraged over what these men did but instead they are upset with Israel and they are ready to go to war and fight against their own brethren for these evil men! Benjamin is ready to fight for their freedom and what a mistake that was! How messed up they were!

2. It is as Isaiah said, **“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”** Isaiah 5:20. That is what Benjamin was doing and that is what many do today. Why did they do this and why do people do this today? I believe it is the philosophy that they have been taught and now they are living out. “I may not do what you are doing, but that is okay, everyone has the right to do what they want” philosophy! And groups like the ACLU, many lawyers and others will fight for these people who have done atrocious crimes, who are living in sin and they, like the people of Benjamin don’t even think twice about the ramifications of seeing these people set free! They are standing up for evil and coming against good. And that is truly our nation, may we wise up and return to the Lord and do what is right and not what is evil!

3. So we see the people preparing for Civil War. The people of Benjamin were able to gather 26,000 men plus a Special Forces group of 700 who were left handed and able to sling a stone some distance with precision and accuracy! For the rest of the nation, they had 400,000 men ready for battle. Obviously this does not look good for the people of Benjamin, they are far outnumbered even with their Special Forces!

### VERSE 18

1. Now as you read this you might come to the conclusion that the children of Israel did what was right, they inquired of the Lord who should go first in battle. I don't think they were right on this one. You see, they did not ask the Lord **IF** they should go into battle but **WHEN** they do, who will go first. They are assuming that the Lord wants them to battle against the entire tribe of Benjamin and I don't believe that is the case.

2. We do this at times. We want to do something and we basically ask the Lord of the two options that we want to do, which one do you pick? That is wrong because maybe the Lord does not want either option. Be open. Here with Israel it was an emotional issue and maybe that got the better of them and they decided that they were going to take care of this problem instead of seeking the Lord and what He wanted to do. It is as Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" First we are to seek His will and as we do His will becomes our will and we do those things that are right and are pleasing to Him!

VERSES 19-21

1. How can that be? The children of Israel had the men of Benjamin outnumbered 15 to 1! Thus, how can the children of Israel lose 22,000 men when they inquired of the Lord about who should go first in this battle and the Lord told them that Judah should go first? Because Judah was to always go first, that was not the issue. The real issue was this, were they to go to war in the first place? I don't believe this is what God intended and when you see the results, you will understand why. Thus, as they are out of God's will here, we see 22,000 men die! There is always death and destruction when we are not where we should be; doing what the Lord desires us to do.

VERSES 22-23

1. Once again they come before the Lord seeking what they should do, if they should go to war and the Lord does tell them to go, but I get the idea here that this is what Israel wanted and not what the Lord wanted, at least not yet. You see, the children of Israel were no better than the people from the tribe of Benjamin and yet they are willing to wipe out an entire tribe because they are self-righteous and looking down upon the evil of this tribe instead of the evil that is in their own hearts. Again, the reason I say that is look what happens in this next battle.

VERSES 24-25

1. On the second day of battle the children of Israel lost 18,000 men and thus, in two days, against an army that was smaller than they were, they lost 40,000 men! You see, I don't believe that this was the perfect will of God for the children of Israel but His permissive will! We see this in II Kings chapter 20 with King Hezekiah. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord told the King to get his house in order, he was going to die. And the King wept and cried and the Lord called Isaiah to come back and tell the King that he has 15 more years added to his life. And you would think that was great, but it is not.

God's perfect will for King Hezekiah was that he was going to die now, but because of the carrying on of the King, God allowed His permissive will to be carried out. Was that bad? You bet. In those 15 extra years he had a son born to him named Manasseh. And Manasseh was a very wicked king, a very evil king. Not only that but Hezekiah received a get well card you might say from the king of Babylon and he let his representatives see all the wealth of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and that will spark some interest to the Babylonians to come and take that wealth away from them! You see, the perfect will of God was much better than the permissive will of God! May we not forget that and stop fighting for things that the Lord doesn't want us to have!

VERSES 26-28

1. Here we see the men of Israel repenting, fasting, offering sacrifices, they were broken and this was the place they needed to be. Did the tribe of Benjamin need to be rebuked for not handing over these evil men? Absolutely but not destroyed. These evil men needed to be destroyed, but they wanted to fight and again, I don't believe this is the perfect will of God in this situation because, as we will see, the entire tribe of Benjamin is almost wiped out.

2. So as they inquire of the Lord, as Phinehas the high priest asks the Lord what they should do, the Lord tells them to go and fight and they will have victory, that is a promise from God and it will come to pass!

VERSES 29-32

1. They are now tricking the men of Benjamin into thinking that they are winning this battle as before as the children of Israel are on the run, but they have set up an ambush against the men of Benjamin and they will wipe them out!

VERSES 33-48

1. Israel was victorious this time, almost completely wiping out the tribe of Benjamin. Only 600 men survived this civil war from the tribe of Benjamin. With this three day battle the tribe of Benjamin lost 26,100 men! This was a tremendous slaughter and great victory for the children of Israel but a very sad day when brothers will fight against brothers.

2. Yes, the men that committed this murder against this woman should have been put to death, but I don't believe God wanted them to wipe out the tribe of Benjamin. But now only 600 men are left in this tribe and that is not good. How will this tribe survive or will there be only 11 tribes of Israel? Let's read on and see.

## **JUDGES 21**

### **VERSE 1**

1. Yes they were angry with the men of Benjamin and they took out their wrath upon them and in their anger they made this foolish vow. That none of their daughters will be given over to the men of Benjamin as a wife. It might of sounded good at the time but in reality, if they went through with this, then the tribe of Benjamin would die out!

2. As Christians, we need to be careful not to let our anger get the better of us. I have heard people make excuses for their anger, that it was a "righteous anger" and sorry, I don't believe it. You see, the righteous anger that Jesus displayed was not because the people were against Him, but what they were saying about His Father! When we are angry it is because of what someone else has done and that is wrong! And by this vow, they thought they were getting their vengeance out upon the tribe of Benjamin but vengeance belongs to the Lord not to us!

VERSES 2-3

1. Now isn't that an interesting prayer! They destroyed 26,100 men of Benjamin, besides the women and children and they made that vow that no daughter of theirs is to marry a man from Benjamin, which would wipe out that tribe, and now they come before the Lord wondering how this happened. They did it to them! "Why has this come?" give me a break! You see, now the reality of their actions has set in and they realize this was not such a good idea and that vow, which they have to keep, was foolish and it jeopardized the tribe of Benjamin, bringing them on the verge of extinction! Don't we do that? We do what we want and then something bad comes and we come before God crying out to Him, "Why has this come?" and the reality is, we brought it on ourselves! Be wise; be careful before you rush into something.

VERSES 4-5

1. I guess these guys like to make oaths and this one was made before they went into battle. It was very simple. Any tribe in Israel, any group of people that refused to go to war against Benjamin would be put to death! Why were they even concerned about this? Because they had to rectify the previous vow they made regarding giving their daughters to the men of Benjamin as you will see. And again, it is not pretty!



VERSES 6-15

1. So as they check their records about who did not go to war with them against Benjamin, the men of Jabesh Gilead showed up on the list. Now here is the solution to their problem. If they wipe out all the men, women and children from Jabesh Gilead, except those women who were virgins, then they can give these women to the men of Benjamin. How evil are they? They are willing to wipe out an entire city to fix a problem they caused in the first place instead of asking God for a solution to their problem! I don't care how you slice it; two wrongs don't make a right!

2. Several years ago I was talking to a man who said that he was a Christian and at that point I had no reason to doubt it, he came to church and he seemed to be genuine. This man was divorced and he had remarried and had a child with his new wife and they had been married for several years now. And he said to me that he felt he was living in adultery because he divorced his first wife and married this woman and felt that God wanted him to divorce his second wife and marry his first wife. Well, I just couldn't let that go by and I told him that he is married and has a child and God is not going to have him divorce his wife to fix the mistake he made in the first place. Two wrongs don't make a right. Well, he didn't like what I said and shortly after that I saw him no more. Don't be foolish and don't rush to decisions and don't make foolish vows, walk by faith in the Lord, following His leading that is in His Word! The men of Israel were not doing that and look at the mess it brought about, an entire city wiped out because of their foolish vow.

3. And isn't it amazing how easily they forgot the wickedness of the men of Benjamin. They wiped out almost the entire tribe in battle, and then they just say, "Let's forget about what has happened!" The men of Benjamin did not repent of their actions and yet Israel was willing to forget what has happened. It is amazing how easily they were guided by their emotions. And they still had a pretty big problem for they only were able to gather together 400 virgins from Jabesh Gilead after they wiped everyone else out and they are still short some 200 women, there were 200 men of Benjamin still needing wives. I wonder what they will do? I will give you a hint, they will not seek guidance from the Lord but they will come up with another plan to help solve this problem and that is never good when we come up with the plans!

#### VERSES 16-23

1. Instead of repenting of their foolish vow, they continue to look for loopholes to get around the vow. Now in breaking the vow, that is not good, but this is worse! In Shiloh, where the tabernacle was located, where God dwelt and they worshiped God there, they had a yearly feast and thus, the solution to their problem. No, not ask the Lord, that is very simple minded, they came up with their own plan. As the virgin women of Israel danced, the men of Benjamin that needed a wife would come and steal them away! That is better than asking the Lord? Give me a break! Now if their father's or brothers of these women questioned their actions they would tell them that it was okay because they did not give them their daughters but these men from Benjamin took them, and thus they did not break their oath to God. Thank God that they did not break this vow!

2. Now if you think that was bad back then, it still goes on today. Jews still find loopholes in the Law to allow them to do things that the Law tells them they are not to do. For example, every seventh year the land was to rest, but what some of the Jews will do is hand over the land to an Arab for that seventh year and then come back and retrieve it in the eighth year. A good loophole but that is not what God had in mind. Also, in Israel everything closes up on the Sabbath, but if you want to remain open you would have your Arab employee run your business for the day. Times have not changed much.

3. Now we as Christians would never do that, would we? Of course we would and of course we do! God tells us not to do something and we come up with loopholes why we can do those things. God says don't date an unbeliever and we come up with the idea of missionary dating! There is no such thing! God says don't steal from your employer and we say that they owe it to us; they don't pay us enough in the first place. Folk's, loopholes are not to be used so we can sin. God tells us what is best, He does not want us to make foolish vows or if we do make them, don't do another wrong to make the first wrong right!

4. One last point here. The tribe of Benjamin did survive and out of this tribe will come the first king in Israel, King Saul! Now don't think that if it wasn't for the children of Israel coming up with this plan Benjamin would have been obliterated! Not at all. God has a plan and God has ways that are beyond our ways, may we trust in Him and walk in the path that He has set for us!

VERSES 24-25

1. Now look at what is taking place. Everyone goes back to their homes as if nothing has happened. Life just continues on amidst all the immorality that is around them. And the reason again for their failure, in case you have missed it, is that the Lord was no longer important to them. He was not reigning on the thrones of their hearts and they thus were doing whatever they felt was right in their own eyes. What did they do? They committed murder, sexual immorality, homosexuality, idolatry, civil war, stealing and I think you get the picture. Right was wrong and wrong was right. This is what happens when there is no recognized king over Israel or any people; you have moral, political, social and spiritual chaos!

2. People wonder why our nation is so messed up. Why we have so many problems.

Here it is, “**In those days there was no king in Israel: everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**” Judges 21:25. We have our own standards of what is right and what is wrong and that does not work because the heart of man is evil!

David Guzik shows us where we are at by describing some advertising slogans. He wrote:

This is certainly the spirit of our age. We can think of this reflected in advertising slogans from our generation, within recent memory: Nothing is taboo . . . Break all the rules . . . To know no boundaries . . . Relax: No rules here . . . Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road . . . We are all hedonists and want to do what feels good. That's what makes us human . . . Living without boundaries . . . Just do it. The message is the same: "You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you."

- David Guzik

Folks, when man follows his own way, when he does his own thing, it ends up being the way of death and not life. That is what Solomon tells us in Proverbs 16:25, "**There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**" Thus, man apart from God is in trouble and we can clearly see that today!

3. The book of Judges closes with confusion, bloodshed, anarchy, spiritual apostasy, moral decay and it is not a great place to end. But as we get into the book of Ruth next time, it is the story of the kinsmen redeemer, Boaz who is a type of Jesus Christ, our Kinsmen Redeemer! And what a beautiful picture it is, as we will see next time. You see, in the midst of all this chaos, there is Christ who wants to set us free. May we listen and obey!

4. As I close tonight let me leave you with these words from J. Vernon McGee as he wrote in his commentary on the book of Judges:

Here in this twentieth century the heads of state would do well to study the Book of Judges. Back in 1928, when the depression first began, a brief editorial appeared in the staid [serious] Wall Street Journal, which went something like this:

What America needs today is not Government controls, industrial expansion, or a bumper corn crop; American needs to return to the day when grandpa took the team out of the field in the early afternoon on Wednesday in order to hitch them to the old spring wagon into which grandma put all of the children after she washed their faces shinning clean; and they drove off to prayer meeting in the little white church at the crossroads underneath the oak trees, where everyone believed the Bible, trusted in Christ, and loved one another.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible, Vol. II, p. 86

If we want to fix the trouble in our own lives, in this nation, in this world, the only lasting way is by coming to Christ. He needs to be the center of our lives. May we learn the lessons God has given to us in the book of Judges for if we don't we are doomed to repeat them!