

Moral Crisis in Israel Judges 19

Introduction

Few chapters in the Bible are as dark and gloomy as Judges 19. However, even though this chapter tells a horrible truth, we must remember that Jesus' death on the cross was the darkest hour for mankind in all of history. The crucifixion was the murder of our innocent and pure Savior at the hands of sinners. At the same time, the resurrection was the most magnificent act of God in all of history. Pastor Paul Viggiano teaches, "the most evil deed ever perpetrated by the most sinful of people is, at the same time, an act of God's grace and mercy for which we will worship Him forever" (Branch of Hope OPC, Torrance, California).

The Bible tells the truth. There is no 'spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down,' as Mary Poppins might say. That means, the Bible is clear and to the point; it doesn't try and make it easier for you to hear the truth, nor is it concerned with upsetting you. Mankind is wicked and **depraved** and will spend eternity in Hell unless he repents. That is the 'medicine' that we must accept. Sadly, many people never take this medicine because of their stubborn hearts.

As this study on the book of Judges has shown, the judges were not perfect people. In fact, some of the judges make you wonder, "Why did God use him?" None of us is perfect! When the Pharisees brought a woman condemned to be stoned by the Law to Jesus, He said, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first* (John 8:7)." And one by one, each person left without throwing a stone at the woman because every one was a sinner.

Christians have a battle going on inside of them between their old sin nature and their new nature in Christ. The battle lasts until they

die. Thankfully, most of us are never as bad as we could be because of prayer, example, teaching, guidance, and moral and spiritual growth. Only a small percentage out of the millions of humans commit acts so evil that mankind is horrified and asks, "how could someone do something like that." Don't forget what Jesus said about throwing a stone. Some say, "Well, I'm not as bad as him!" The truth is you are! I am! "There but for the grace of God go I," meaning if it weren't for God's work inside of us, we could do the same thing. All of our sin crucified Christ. He paid the full price for our sin (1 Corinthians 15:3). And, as stated earlier, there has never been a more evil act than the crucifixion.

Outline of Judges Chapter 19

- I. The Levite Pursues His Concubine to Bethlehem – Judges 19:1-10
- II. The Levite Faces Perversion in Gibeah – Judges 19:11-24
- III. The Levite Sends a Message – Judges 19:25-30

I. The Levite Pursues His Concubine to Bethlehem - 19:1-10

This is the third mention of the fact that *in those days there was no king in Israel*. The writer has saved this story for last, even though it happened at the beginning of the judges period within Israel. It would seem that this story is held back so that it can be the **climax** of the book. Remember that proper study of the Bible requires us to understand the **context**. So ask yourself, "Why would the writer wait until the end of the book to tell this horrible and tragic story?" When do you save something for last? There are two reasons to save something for last. It's the best (as in the birthday present from grandma) or it's the worst (as in the lima beans for dinner). This story (and the chapters that follow) is the writer's best example of this

book's purpose. Ask yourself, "Why did God put this in the Bible? What does God want me to know about Him from this book of Judges?" The answer begins with *In those days there was no king in Israel* and ends with the last verse of the book *everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (21:25). In other words, in those days, the Israelites ignored the true King and did what they wanted which was to take God's place (be their own god). God put this book in the Bible as a reminder that without Him, mankind is evil, corrupt, wicked. God wants us to know He is good. He had mercy on the Israelites time and time again, and He has mercy on us over and over again. God wants us to know He is love. He sent His Son, to be perfect for us, because we could not do it. Then His Son conquered death by rising from the dead. He gave us hope. Let us not forget that hope as we look at the story of the Levite and his concubine.

A concubine was very much like a wife, but without the title. She had a lower status and sometimes was a slave or servant that a man took to be his wife. If a man did not have much to leave as an inheritance, then he might take a concubine instead of a wife. This concubine of the Levite was unfaithful to her husband in some way, and she left her husband, returning to her father's home.

After four months, the Levite followed her to Bethlehem *to speak kindly to her*. It seems that he wanted her back. His father-in-law was delighted to see him and entertained him for three days. The Levite was ready to return home after these days passed, but the father talked him into staying longer. He said, *Let your heart be merry*. When the Levite finally gathered his concubine, servant, and donkeys to leave, it was late on the fifth day.

II. The Levite Faces Perversion in Gibeah – Judges 19:11-24

In spite of the hour, the Levite traveled the short distance to Jebus (later named Jerusalem). His servant suggested they stay there for the night, but the Levite refused. He said they

would not stay in a city of foreigners *who are not of the children of Israel*. Thinking that a pagan city would be more dangerous than an Israelite one, he chose to press on to Gibeah.

Around sundown the travelers passed from the territory of Judah into the territory of Benjamin. Night was coming, and they stopped in the main street of Gibeah. The custom was to welcome travelers and invite them to spend the night. Either people of Gibeah ignored them, or they were already safe in their homes before dark. At last, an old man arrived from work in the fields. He was not a Benjamite, but had moved to Gibeah. He, like the Levite, was from Mt. Ephraim, and he offered to lodge and care for the travelers for the night. He expressed that they must not stay out in the street.

At the man's home, the travelers were enjoying themselves when there was a great commotion outside. *The men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door*. Their intention was to do harm to the Levite.

Several times in Scripture, groups of people are called *sons of Belial*, *scoundrels*, *rebels*, *base fellows*, *wicked* or *worthless rogues* (Deuteronomy 13:13; 1 Samuel 2:12, 10:27, 25:17, 30:22; 1 Kings 21:10; 2 Chronicles 13:7). These are people who serve Satan's purposes by **disruption**, rebellion, and promoting evil. They were horribly determined to abuse the Levite for their selfish, sinful desires. They did not think of him as a human being made in God's image, but as an object, like a cat plays with a mouse (the difference being that the cat does not have a moral conscience).

The writer of Judges is making a strong comparison to the scene that had taken place long ago in the city of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-8). Travelers arrived there in the evening and were encouraged not to stay in the street overnight. They were provided lodging and the host served his guests. Men of the city surrounded the house demanding the travelers be given over to them so that they could harm the men. In

both stories, the host begged the townsmen to not behave so wickedly. Both times, women were offered by the host to take the place of the men.

Sadly, there are also contrasts (differences) between the stories. In Sodom, the townsmen were foreigners. In Gibeah, the townsmen were Israelites. In Sodom, the women offered were not abused; in Gibeah the concubine dies from the townsmen's torture. Both events ended in tragedy. Sodom was eventually destroyed and only Lot and his family escaped (except Lot's wife) the judgment. Gibeah launched a civil war and Israel would never again be united as one nation of twelve tribes.

It is hard for us to understand how the hosts in both events could offer the women to take the men's places. In western culture the common belief is that protecting "women and children first" is most honorable. However, understanding the reasons why the hosts might have made such offers, helps us to understand the culture of those times. Many eastern cultures and customs place higher value on the man. As has been pointed out so many times in the book of Judges, there was no law. It was anarchy; each person did what was right in his own eyes. Another eastern custom was for hosts to offer their guests protection. (Evidently, the concubine status made her unworthy of being considered a guest.) Lastly, the hosts seemed to think that offering the women for abuse by the men would make for a less **offensive** sin. In other words, don't steal a man's wallet, just take his cash. Don't cheat on a test, just change your grade on the report card. Don't lie to your mom, just don't tell her what happened. Sadly, this is a misunderstanding of sin and its necessary judgment (James 2:10).

III. The Levite Sends a Message – Judges 19:25-30

The concubine is offered in the place of her husband who hands her over to the townsmen himself. The evil townsmen torture and abuse the woman so much so that she is dead by morning.

The Levite, preparing to leave, finds his concubine on the doorstep. His words to her seem remarkably uncaring, *Get up and let us be going*. But, she does not get up, she is dead. The Levite picks her up, places her body over a donkey, and returns home. The Biblical language shows the man cutting up the woman's body as if dividing up a sacrifice according to the bones. The Levite wrapped her in 12 pieces and sent one to each of the twelve tribes by messengers.

The message and desired response were quite clear. Three things were said. First, no such deed had been done since Israel had left Egypt and become a nation. Second, they should give it thoughtful consideration. Third, they should take advice regarding action and then speak. Silence or ignoring what had happened was unacceptable. †

Prayer

Ask God to keep your heart sensitive to sin and to give you a humble attitude knowing you have received from Him what you do not deserve.

Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Vocabulary

depraved - marked by corruption or evil, perverted

climax - the most interesting and exciting part, the high point

context - words spoken or written near another word or group of words to give clearer meaning

disruption - something making it impossible to continue in the normal way

offensive - rude, insulting

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 15

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. ? (Thought Question) Name some of the sins that led up to the travelers spending the night at Gibeah.

2. What three things were said when the 12 tribes received the package and message from the Levite?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 20:1-14.

3. a. From verses 1 and 2, what was the result of the Levite's alarming action?

- b. What did all the people of Israel want to know?

- c. ☆ (Memory Question) Was the Levite's description of what happened totally truthful? If not, in what way(s) was it not?

4. What did all the people decide to do after hearing the Levite? Circle the correct answers.

return home repay the vileness Benjamin had done go up against Gibeah

find another concubine for the Levite assemble an army fast and pray

5. a. What did the tribes do before going up against Gibeah?

- b. Did the people of Benjamin listen? What did they do?

DAY THREE: Read Judges 20:15-25.

6. What was the size of each army?

Benjamin _____

Israel _____

7. a. What did the tribes of Israel do before the battle?

b. What answer did they receive?

c. What was the result of the battle?

8. What did the Israelites do after the battle? Circle T (True) or F (False). If the answer is true, give the verse where it is found.

a. T or F vs._____ They all went home.

b. T or F vs._____ They formed a battle line.

c. T or F vs._____ They cursed God.

d. T or F vs._____ They encouraged themselves.

e. T or F vs._____ They asked counsel from God.

f. T or F vs._____ They wept.

g. What did God tell them to do?

9. What happened on the second day?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 20:26-35.

10. a. List five things the people of Israel did next.

①

②

③

④

⑤

b. How did God encourage them?

11. a. What strategy did the people of Israel use this time?

b. What was the result?

12. Fill in the blank. _____ defeated Benjamin before Israel.

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 20:36-48.

13. a. Using the following verses, describe the Benjamites thoughts and feelings.

Judges 20:36

Judges 20:39

Judges 20:41

b. In verses 44 and 46, what kind of soldiers were the Benjamites?

14. a. How many of men of Benjamin escaped?

b. Referring back to verse 15, how many men of Benjamin had been killed in the three days of battle?

15. a. What do you think caused the tribes of Israel to win?

b. What do you think caused Benjamin to lose?

c. What lesson do you learn from this?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 15

*"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."*

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

1. . **depraved** evil ignored corrupt

2. . **context** meaning advice proof

3. . **offensive** kind rude gentle

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
context	something making it impossible to continue in the normal way
depraved	rude, insulting
offensive	the most interesting and exciting part, the high point
disruption	words spoken or written near another word or group of words to give clearer meaning
climax	marked by corruption or evil, perverted

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.

_____ - people living together in _____ communities with shared laws, _____, and values

_____ - a _____ in which a country is ruled by religious leaders

_____ - a false religion and its _____; considered dangerous and/or extreme

_____ - a case or box where _____ objects are placed and worshiped

_____ - dedicate to a _____ or holy purpose

_____ - taken and held prisoner especially in war

WORD BANK

worship
government
society
captivity

religious
shrine
cult
organized

consecrate
theocracy
traditions
sacred