

Judges Ch 19-21

As we read through and consider these last few ch of the book of Judges, the book will close in a manner that has sadly been consistent throughout the entire book, with each man doing what is right, not in God's eyes but in his own eyes. And that will always lead to disaster, in a personal sense, in the lives of those around you, and it can spill out into a national crisis as we'll see tonight. I can't tell you how critical it is to bring everything in our lives, all of our ideas our plans our hopes our actions before the Lord. That we seek scriptural counsel in the things that we do or to weigh out our thoughts as to whether or not they're even warranted. The bible has nothing good or positive to say about the individual who does what is right in his own eyes but rather is filled with exhortation and rebuke in order to bring about repentance. The bible does not coddle sin, but rather it deals with it very pointedly and directly so that God's people might continue on with God's will for their lives unencumbered by the ramifications of sin. And the bible has several scriptures that address the individual who does what is right in their own eyes, the proverbs bring it up over and over. We read in Prov 3:7 "*Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*" Did you catch that; "depart from evil" is in the context of being wise in your own eyes. Prov 12:15 "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.*" Prov 16:2 "*All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.*" In other words not many people just set out (especially in the Christian arena, people that are legitimate lovers of God) to do something that's destructive or blatantly wrong, they do what they believe is right, but God searches the heart. Something that we're incapable of properly evaluating ourselves, that's why David asked the Lord to search his heart and show him what was there. Because sometimes there's a wicked motive in my heart that (when left to myself) I can't discern or pick up on; I'm doing what is pure in my own eyes, but deep in my heart something else is going on and we need God to reveal that to us. Prov 21:2 again, "*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.*" Prov 26:12 "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" Prov 26:16 "*The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can answer sensibly.*" In other words it's easier to do what I feel is right in my own eyes then discipline myself to heed the multitude of counsel that's scripturally centered. Prov 30:12 "*There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness.*" And finally Isa 5:21 "*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!*" So you see not much on the positive side to say when it comes to those who act on personal judgment and justification rather than seeking God's counsel and disciplining their lives to heed His word rather than our own personal convictions, even though they may have no bearing on God's word. And these last few ch are really probably the most unfortunate records of all the bible in that there's little to no redemptive qualities to be found in them, they just go from bad to worse. And the worst part of it would seem to be that all of the things that happen in these last three ch could be a common occurrence on the 10:00 news virtually anywhere in our nation. Ch's 17-18 dealt with spiritual anarchy, a Levite who wasn't content where God had called him, he wanted a bigger better opportunity for himself. Refused to stay simply where God had called him and it led to multiple disasters. These ch's deal with moral anarchy, which leads ultimately to a nationally epidemic that nearly eradicates the tribe of Benjamin all together.

These 3 chapters can be summed up in 4 words, rape, revenge, rebellion and reaping, and as you'll see there's not a whole lot to be pulled out of these ch in regards to commenting on the facts and so much of this time will be spent in reading.

Vs1-3

Now a concubine was more or less a wife with out rights, she was a legal wife but she was more like an indentured servant than a wife, she could bear the husband children but they wouldn't necessarily share in the inheritance. But she goes out commits adultery on the Levite and then goes back to dad's house. Now listen, there is nothing here worth condoning except for the fact that it appears as if this Levite is willing to forgive his wife, God's 1st choice is always forgiveness. But she was out of line in cheating on him #1 which is the obvious, and then 2ndly something that may be a little more subtle, but it was wrong of her to go running back to daddy. The bible says for this reason man shall *leave* his mother and father and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. Listen, marriage equals leaving a cleaving, if you have a problem in your marriage work it out between you two and the Lord. If you need scriptural advice seek it out from your pastor or an elder or someone you can trust to give you sound biblical advice regardless if it's what you want to hear or not. Mom and dad have a tendency invariably to mess things up, they generally have their child's best interest in mind as it seems right to them and if that jerk is hurting you (emotionally) being impossible to live with then you need to get rid of him or you need to tell her to take off. I read somewhere that the 3rd leading cause for divorce is in law related. Seek God's word, not mom or dad's word, I'm not saying don't honor your folks; I'm saying follow the biblical mandate for your own personal life. But with this situation this dad knew that his daughter had blown it and seems glad that this fella is willing to try to patch things up and reconcile the relationship.

Vs4-12

Jerusalem wasn't Israel's until the time of David and so the Levite thinks it wouldn't be safe to turn in where he wasn't around at least his own countrymen, maybe he thought that since it was a known thing that Israel was seeking to dominate the land he wouldn't be a very welcome guest. And so he says lets keep going, another 4 or 5 miles and we'll stay in a city that's occupied by Israelis.

Vs13-15

Now we're already getting warning signs that something is wrong here with the people that inhabited Gibeah. Why, because it was a common custom that you were to take strangers in, in that culture, they didn't have comfort inns and holiday inns and so when you would enter into a certain city, you would go to the open square and it was the custom to be taken in as a guest and have your needs tended to. Because when you're traveling you may need some hospitality yourself and so they were to do to others, as they would have others do to them. And not only was it culture it was commanded of them Lev 19:33-34 says, "*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.*"

And again in Lev 25:35 *“If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.”* And the same is true for the child of God today, the bible teaches us to be hospitable to others Heb 13:1-2 *“Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”* And so by the very nature of the fact that they refused to help him out, the yellow lights are flashing regarding the godly state of this particular city.

Vs16

So again, it wasn't a Benjamite that took him in, it was someone from his own land. He's on his way back to his place from a long days work, he sees this guy and is all, “hey what are you doing out here, it's not safe to be out here after dark.” And the Levite says, “well, we're on our way home but we don't have anywhere to bed down, I've got everything I need and we're no burden but it looks like we're stuck.” “Well, where are you from?” “Ephraim,” “Really, me to, why don't you come with me and I'll put you up.” And so that's what happens, notice.

Vs17-24

Hmm, now where have I heard this before, this is the same thing that happened in Sodom that brought the wrath of God right down on the city and now it's happening in the midst of His own people. These guys are pounding on his door wanting him to send this new guy in town out to them so that they can force him to engage in homosexual relations with them. Now, I have to commend this guy at 1st for even seeking to stand up to this violent mob. Can you imagine taking someone in and then your living room starts getting shot up and sprayed with bullets and the people outside say we want that man you've got in your house, give us him and we'll let you live. Would you step out on the porch and say, “hey guys, c'mon let's think about this, don't act this way, it's not right.” Or would that guy be out on your front porch in a New York minute? This man seeks to reason with them and then to his own shame even offers them his own daughter. I can't imagine such a concept in my own mind but it shows you #1 where the people were at, how debased they were as a nation. And #2 How far Jesus Christ has brought the rights of equality for women. Prior to Jesus Christ women were seen as little more than property, even today go into societies that haven't been introduced to the gospel or, the Muslim religion or other religions and women are practically like cattle to them. Owned property with little to no rights of their own, but it was through Jesus Christ that women were elevated to their proper place, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek male or female, we are all one in Him. There is equality in Christ, but at this point in Israel's history Christ hadn't come, and so their treatment of women in many ways mimicked the cultures around them.

Vs25-26

Again kind of shows you where this Levites heart was at, in order to save his own skin he just shoves his wife out into the mob and apparently goes to bed, he doesn't know when she's trying to make it back, he doesn't rush out to meet her. Maybe he thought it would teach her not to cheat on him anymore, I don't know but one thing is for sure, he was radically debased in his own heart. He did what was right in his own eyes, hey, better her than me.

Vs27-28

No, help, no affection, just get up it's time to go! (Finish vs)

Vs29-30

I find it hard to believe that this Levite could dismember the body of his wife this way. But what's he doing, he's seeking revenge, and so he's sending the 12 tribes a telegram they'll never forget. Can you imagine the shock of getting a body part in the mail with a message attached to it saying, these men killed my wife and I want revenge. Well, his message was heard, the nation was outraged and so the entire nation sent representatives to hear what had happened in order to do what they needed to do to rectify the situation.

Ch20

Vs1-2

So you can see that this crime was enough to shock the conscience of a nation, and they were willing to deal with it by whatever means to rid themselves of the violators. But today murder and rape seem to be common news. What a sad indictment against our country.

Vs3-7

Now here's where the problem continues to escalate, and it's ironic to hear a Levite ask the counsel of the tribes of Israel since they were to go to Levites for counsel who would then direct them in God's word. He should have called them all together (in a humane fashion) told them what happened and what God's word says is to be the ramifications, which rape, and murder are both punishable by death according to the law of God. But he doesn't counsel them as to what they should do, but asks them what they think should be done, what do you think is right, what's right in your eyes?

Vs8-11

They agreed together to wipe out the violators.

Vs12-14

So now the rebellion sets in; they tried to reason with Benjamin and said listen, just give us the guys that did this and we'll kill them and put this wickedness away. But Benjamin said no way, more loyal to their tribe than to the Law of God. And there are those who attribute their stubbornness to patriotism, seeking to protect their citizens, but regardless of their motives, they were in clear rebellion to the word of God. And when sin isn't exposed, confessed and dealt with through means of proper ramifications, it pollutes people, societies and entire lands. No man sins unto himself, and a lot of people seek to justify sexual sin especially it seems in the light of, well, the only one I'm hurting is myself, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. The story is told of a ship crossing the Mediterranean. And one of the passengers cut a hole through the side of the ship, and the sailors came to him and demanded to know what he was doing.

And he said, “What difference does it make to you? The hole is under my own bunk.” And if you see the absolute absurdity of that story, then you’ve just gained a critical insight into the biblical understanding as to the nature of sin. People are all about doing their own thing, and the freedom to do what they want whenever they want, and then wonder why the boat is taking on water and we’re all going down. It’s because no one lives to themselves and no one sins to themselves, the sins of these men are going to cause the downfall of thousands.

Vs15-16

So there were 26,700 men who were prepared to meet 400,000 and of the 26,700, 700 of them were like snipers with their slings that never missed. Now Benjamin means son of my right hand, but here we read where these men who used the sling were left handed, I’m not sure if there’s relevance but it’s interesting

Vs17-25

Now I have to confess here that I don’t know for sure why the Lord is allowing Israel to be defeated. There’s a lot of speculation, but since the bible doesn’t tell us, that’s all it is. It sort of reminds me of when God was bringing judgment upon the nation in the book of Habakkuk and He wasn’t going to tell the prophet what means He was going to use. Of course I’m paraphrasing but the Lord’s like, “Even if I told you, you wouldn’t believe it.” And the prophet’s all, “try me” and so the Lord says alright and He tells him. And the prophet is all, “I can’t believe it” why would you use a nation more wicked than us to punish us, and the Lord was all “see, I told you, you wouldn’t believe me.” Sometimes we just don’t grasp why the Lord lets certain things happen, often times when someone approaches me and the comment starts out with a, “why would the Lord.”

That’s usually all I need to hear, I don’t know why the Lord let’s a lot of things happen the way they do. And I probably wouldn’t believe it if He told me. God’s ways aren’t my ways, and His thoughts aren’t my thoughts, and here we just have a circumstance that I for one just aren’t sure as to why God let this happen this way.

Vs 27-28

So even though there was great loss, it drove them to their knees before God and it could be that that was what the Lord had been waiting upon, a genuine humility and seeking of His direction.

Vs29-48

So they lured them out causing them to think that they were losing and when Benjamin began to pursue them, the ambush struck the city and then when they turned around and saw their city up in smoke they panicked began to run and Israel pursued them such to the point that when it was all said and done only 600 men of the tribe of Benjamin were left alive. So a massive slaughter that’s very similar to Joshua’s taking of the city of Ai. And I don’t know that there’s any significance but do you remember how long the Levites wife stayed with her dad? 4 months, how long did these men stay in hiding? 4 months.

Ch 21

Vs1

So now we're getting a little hindsight information. When they all gathered at Mizpah and were taking their oath to deal with Benjamin they had all vowed not to give any of their daughters to the men of Benjamin as wives after they wiped out these men, well now they've wiped out practically the whole tribe and Benjamin is facing extinction.

Vs2-3

This is interesting, the men of Israel practically annihilate Benjamin and then they blame God for letting it happen. But I find that we do the same thing, we violate God's word, we ignore His exhortations, we don't listen to His leading, therefore we rebel or over react and then we say thanks a lot God, my life is a mess. Do what's right in our own eyes and blame God for the results; we see it all the time.

Vs 4

Now this seems real spiritual but don't be fooled they're about to push every panic button in sight.

Vs5

Boy, it just keeps getting deeper and deeper doesn't it, now they're about to reap the results of their foolish oath. They should have just repented and done right by Benjamin, but instead they're all who didn't help us out, I know lets wipe them out and take the virgins from them and give *them* to Benjamin.

Vs6-14

So this mess only provides Benjamin with 400 wives, but the problem is that they need 600. Now again take note of the fact that they're not seeking God's counsel, they're doing what's right in their own eyes. At no time do we read where they inquired of the Lord in this to see what He would have them do and so it just keeps going from bad to worse.

Vs15

The Lord didn't make anything void, they did that, He promised victory, but never told them to unmercifully slaughter them with in an inch of extinction.

Vs16-22

In other words every year when we all go to Shiloh to celebrate, when the young virgins come out to do their traditional folk dances, just hide in the bushes and when you see a gal you like jump out and snatch her. They're giving them permission to kidnap their daughters so that technically they're not giving them to them to violate the oath, but rather they've been taken. And then when some gals dad gets upset we'll calm them down and say hey, you're not in violation because we know you didn't *give* her to them. It's a matter of semantics and really, again they just should have repented of their foolish oath and none of these things would've had to happen.

Vs23-25

And so this book closes with a land that is confused, chaotic, bloodied and beaten. We've seen adultery, rape, murder, revenge, rebellion, over reacting and reaping, why? Because there was no king to rule over them, so everyone did what was right in their own eyes. And our lives are much the same, confused, chaotic or beaten and battered until we submit and acknowledge Jesus as our King. It doesn't matter what's right in our own eyes, it's about what does God's word say? And until we can submit to the authority of Christ as King in our lives it'll be one sin leading to the next to covered up by the next and so on. But submission to Christ brings order and peace to our lives.