

## Judges 19

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to Judges 19? Tonight we're going to study the final 3 chapters and wrap up the book of Judges, and although it's a lot of verses to go through, much of it is in a story narrative that simply doesn't need much commentating on. These final grizzly chapters in the book of Judges shows how utterly immoral and ungodly the people had eventually become.

The title of tonight's message is TRAGIC

Let's pray

1 And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. A concubine was legally bound to the man, but with fewer privileges than a wife. She was considered his property.

2-4

2 But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months.

3 Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. 4 Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there. So far so good! This sounds like a sweet tale of a restored marriage...

5-9

5 Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way."

6 So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." 7 And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. 8 Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate.

9 And when the man stood to depart—he and his concubine and his servant—his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home." For 5 days this father-in-law managed to hold on to his little girl, and stall her husband's departure.

10 However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. "Bethlehem to Jerusalem was just a few miles - they hadn't been on the road very long.

11-15

11 They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it."

12 But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah." 13 So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw

near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah.” 14 And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. 15 They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night. This is a subtle clue something was wrong in Gibeah. When there’s no hospitality among God’s people – a people who have been shown such hospitality by God - something is wrong.

16-18

16 Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. 17 And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”

18 So he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, He was headed for Shiloh to worship at the Tabernacle. After all he was a Levite. He had duties.

19 although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything.”

20 And the old man said, “Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square.” " The old man is adamant-you can’t spend the night in the city square-and we’re about to find out why...

21 So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

22 As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men,[fn] surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!” These men were homosexual rapists. Their conscience had been seared. Natural, sexual intercourse with a woman no longer satisfied them. They were controlled by perversion and violence.

Their request was the same request made by the homosexuals who surrounded the house of Lot in Sodom in Genesis 19.

Which means, during the time of the Judges, Israel was as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah.

23 But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. Remember, in ancient times hospitality was a sacred trust. A house guest became the God-given responsibility of the host. But this old man is no hero, as his next words are blood curdling...

24 Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man’s[fn] concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!” What kind of a man throws his own daughter out to a gang of ruthless rapists?

25 But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go. The Levite was supposed to be a man of

God. Here's a clue why the concubine had run off with another man and gone home to Bethlehem in the first few verses. The Levite had probably been abusive to her in years past.

Here in verse 25 we learn that savages spend the whole night raping the woman.

26-28

26 Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light.

27 When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. 28 And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place. The woman was dead. She'd been raped and murdered while he slept.

29 When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb,[fn] and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. " He dismembers the corpse, packs the pieces on his donkey, and turns it loose. He decides that such a terrible crime should not be hidden. The people of Israel need to know what's happened

30 And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!" The nation was outraged at the savagery of this brutal crime.

Chapter 20

1 So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. Dan was the northern-most city in Israel. Beersheba was the southern-most. “From Dan to Beersheba” was a proverbial way of saying “north to south”

2-5

2 And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword. 3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.)

Then the children of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?”

4 So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, “My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. 5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. Notice how the Levite spins the story. It’s the truth, but not the whole truth. He fails to share his own cruelty – how he threw the woman to the mob.

6-7

6 So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. 7 Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!” Something needs to be done... what do you suggest

8 So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; 9 but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah: We will go up against it by lot. 10 We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel." 11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as **one man**. The nation comes together in unity and decided to bring justice to the people of Gibeah. But the plan does not go as expected...

12-14

12 Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? 13 Now therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men[fn] who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!" But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. 14 Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel. It's tragic that whenever a gruesome, perverted act gets committed there's always someone to defend the guilty party. Here it's the children of Benjamin. Today it's the ACLU, or Planned Parenthood.

15-17

15 And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men. 16 Among all this people were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's

breadth and not miss. 17 Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war. You'd think 400,000 battle ready troops would overwhelm 26,700 Benjamites – but a couple of factors even out the battle. Gibeah was a remote, mountainous city that was easily defensible. And the Benjamites had 700 left-handed, sling-shot, snipers. As the Israelites climbed the hilly terrain the snipers could pick them off one at a time.

A civil war is breaking out in Israel.

18 Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God<sup>[fn]</sup> to inquire of God. They said, “Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?”

The LORD said, “Judah first!”

19 So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. 20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21 Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites. Benjamin wins a surprising victory. Israel sought the LORD - yet they were defeated. And this won't be the only time

22-25

22 And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day. 23 Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, “Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?”

And the LORD said, “Go up against him.”



24 So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. 25 And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.

Israel keeps losing!

Evidently God used the Benjamites as His temporary instrument to discipline the other tribes. This isn't anything new, God also used the Canaanites, Midianites, Philistines and later the Assyrians and Babylonians to be His instruments of judgment against Israel.

26-28

26 Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God<sup>[fn]</sup> and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 27 So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, 28 and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?"

And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into **your hand**." God allowed the two days of defeat for the purpose of humbling the nation. Now as they seek the Lord in fasting and sacrificing, God responds and tells them He will deliver the Gibeonites and Benjamites into their hands.

29-48

29 Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. 30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at

the other times. 31 So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32 And the children of Benjamin said, "They are defeated before us, as at first."

But the children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways." 33 So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba. 34 And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites<sup>[fn]</sup> did not know that disaster was upon them. 35 The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. 37 And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. 38 Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, 39 whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, "Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle." 40 But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven. 41 And when the men of Israel turned back, the

men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. 42 Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst. 43 They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. 44 And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these were men of valor. 45 Then they<sup>[fn]</sup> turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. 46 So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor.

47 But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. 48 And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to. As a result of this civil war, there remained only a 600-man remnant from the tribe of Benjamin.

## Chapter 21

1 Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, “None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.”

Considering Israel’s anger against the tribe of Benjamin, this oath to never allow their daughters to marry into the tribe of Benjamin probably seemed like the right thing to do. But this foolish oath had unforeseen consequences

2 Then the people came to the house of God,<sup>[fn]</sup> and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, 3 and said, “O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to

pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?" The tribe of Benjamin is now 600 men shy of extinction. And since they made an oath to not give their daughters to marry the, they can see the extinction of Benjamin on the horizon.

And because they made that oath in verse 1, the 11 tribes of Israel cry out as if this is all God's fault!

4 So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The people seem to be worshiping, but they're not waiting on the Lord, for they're about to push every panic button in sight, trying to figure out what they can do to rescue the tribe of Benjamin on their own and prevent them from quickly going extinct.

5 The children of Israel said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death." 6 And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. 7 What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?" After having their time of worship, their obligatory "morning devotions" so to speak, the Israelites try to come up with their own plan to rescue Benjamin, expecting God to bless it.

8-12

8 And they said, "What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?" And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. 9 For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead (the city) was there. 10 So the congregation

sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. 11 And this is the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately.” 12 So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. They slaughter all the men and non-virgins of the city of Jabesh Gilead, and capture 400 virgins. Why-to give them to the tribe of Benjamin.

13 Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. 14 So Benjamin came back at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them. Only 400 of 600 men received a wife.

15-21

15 And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel.

16 Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?” 17 And they said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. 18 However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.’

19 Then they said, “In fact, there is a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.”

20 Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, "Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, 21 and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of Benjamin. They come up with another plan to try and solve the problem. Hide in the bushes and when the babes start to dance... just grab a wife!

Rather than go through this charade, they should have simply confessed their sin of making a foolish oath and done the right thing instead of trying to make two wrongs equal a right.

22 Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for it is not as though you have given the women to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.' "Hey, you didn't give your daughters to Benjamin they were just taken. Your oath is still intact.' It was all a ruse to go around the oath that they had made!

23 And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. You may want to jot down 1 Samuel 9, because we'll see that the tribe of Benjamin provided Israel with its first king (Saul).

24 So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

The last verse of Judges sums it all up...

25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The nation had plunged into a period of confusion, and chaos, and carnage. And it seems America is not far behind!

But aren't you glad that we have a king?

The book of Judges actually plays out in the lives of people we know who don't have a relationship with Christ. They scheme, strategize, make plans, and it all leads to frustration and chaos because they haven't submitted to King Jesus.

We need to pray for prodigals, and our leaders, and our nation, tonight!!