

Judges 19-21 • Worse than Sodom and Gomorrah

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Judges chapter 19. I've said in the past, that it's probably a good thing that the whole Bible has never been made into a movie for a couple of different reasons. Number one, it would be incredibly long. But it would also be rated X, if it were shown in detail.

These last 3 chapters of the Book of Judges, I'm going to tell you right off the bat, they are horrific. And I think that there have probably been some people who have read through these chapters; these last 3 chapters of Judges, and wondered aloud, why in the world did God put them here in the Bible? What is the purpose for this thing?

Well, God has been showing us here in these last 5 chapters of Judges, the first 2 of which we did last week, and now these last 3, He's been showing us what happens to a people, both religiously and morally, when they lose sight of God's Word.

When they stop focusing on and following the truth that is laid out for us in God's Word, as it relates to how we approach God, how we relate to God. That's kind of the religious aspect. Although if you know me, you know me enough to know that I don't like that word. But it's just about the best we can come up with.

And then there's the moral aspect when we lose sight of God's Word. In other words, when we stop fearing God, and the moral decline happens, this is also something that is going to be highlighted in these verses.

In fact the chapters we dealt with last week, you'll remember we dealt with how it affects us religiously. Remember we talked about how it's anybody's game, you come up with your own religious rules. You ordain who you want to be priests. You decide what you're going to do, how, when, why you come up with your own rules. You basically come up with your own religious system.

Do you think we've done that over the years? Are you kidding me? When you look into just even Christianity and church life, and you go through and you say,

all right, let's just separate that which is biblical, from the things that we do that are unbiblical, that really have no basis in the Bible, you would be shocked to find how many things we do.

And of course, the more formal a church becomes, the more they've added to the Word of God. The more formality they heap onto things, typically. We start coming up with names for people that are nowhere in the Bible. In fact, sometimes we do things that are contrary to the Word of God.

Do you know that Jesus said in a religious context, you're to call no one father. He's not talking about a family context. That's just dad. But in a religious devotional context, He said, “...*call no (one) father..., for you have one Father...*” (Matthew 23:9) But do we do that in some aspects of Christendom? Sure. Sure. See we've added things. We've added all kinds of things because we've gotten away from an adherence to the Word of God. Well, it happens.

Well, and then we deal with the issue of how moral darkness begins to take over when we get away from the Word of God. We're going to see it in these chapters and we're going to see it in technicolor, horrific though it may be. But we don't have to read this, these three chapters, do we? To figure out where a nation goes morally speaking, when they lose their mores based upon the Word of God. We know what that's like because we just have to, we're living in it.

We're living in the United States of America. We're living in the midst of a nation that has rejected largely the Word of God and the moral values that are in the Word of God. And we have just decided to do our own thing.

And I actually tweeted this note earlier today, but as a nation we sometimes like to think that we've lost, we have no concept today of right and wrong. Actually, that's not true. The world that we live in today is still very concerned with right and wrong. They've just redefined it. They still have it.

They have their own emphases on right, and what is right and what is wrong, and their own adherence to those things. And what they believe, they believe very strongly. Like the world today is really, really big on the issue of tolerance, and that is considered, intolerance is considered wrong always. And you guys know what intolerance is defined or how that is defined in the world. It means disagreement with any lifestyle or philosophy or way of life. That's considered intolerance.

In other words, if I say, I don't, I believe that your lifestyle is wrong. Let's say I'm talking to someone who's living outside of marriage. They're living together.

They're having physical, husband, wife relations in a marriage relationship, but they're not married. And I confront them and I say, well according to the Scripture, that's wrong. They would consider me to be intolerant and that would be something that would be really looked down upon hugely in our culture, okay? But that's because we've rejected the moral values of the Word of God, and we've embraced our own. We've come up with our own. So we're still really big on right and wrong, we're just, we've redefined it. We've set our own course, right, in this world.

Now you and I, as believers in Christ, we're trying to get back We're trying to focus, and to stay focused on the wisdom of God's Word as it relates to right and wrong, good and bad. And that's difficult in the culture in which we live.

It was extremely difficult for the culture of Israel as well. And we see that in these chapters as well. They are given to us here to portray for us. In case, by the way, anybody was asking, God, why did You put these in here? They are given to show you and I just how dark, dark can get. They're here to show you and I how bad, bad can be.

And this is nothing less than Israel's Sodom and Gomorrah. The only difference is, the real Sodom and Gomorrah was pagans. They were a pagan town. This is, these are Jewish communities. Jewish towns. This is the Jewish nation, which has tumbled now into a Sodom and Gomorrah type lifestyle. So buckle up.

Verse 1 of chapter 19. *“In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a certain Levite was sojourning (or travelling) in the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, who took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. ² And his concubine was unfaithful to him, and she went away (meaning she ran off) from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there some four months.” (ESV)*

So she was unfaithful, she was sexually unfaithful to him. A concubine was considered to be a servant wife, particularly if a man had married a woman who could not bear children. Those men would often take a secondary or even tertiary wife and they would be concubines. And they were considered wives in the legal aspect of the term, but they were second class citizens in the family. And their children would be second class in terms of the rights of children to receive an inheritance from the father. Okay. So a concubine was not a lifestyle that I think any woman would probably ever desire.

And let me just say something too. Just because you read about concubines in the Bible doesn't mean that God ever approved of them. He did not. Never.

Concubines are in the Word of God because we are simply reading stories, accounts of these people and it was never God's plan. We get to the New Testament when we talk to Jesus and we hear Him speaking of the issues of marriage. He says, from the beginning, it was God's intention that it would be a man and a woman. One man, one woman that would constitute a marriage. And that was God's intention from the beginning but man came up with his own rules, right?

In fact, we see the very first multiple wives situation in the Book of Genesis, came from the line of Cain in the Bible, right? It was the ungodly lineage of Cain where we first see a polygamy happening in, in the Scripture. So please understand that just because something in the Bible, does not mean that God approves of it. Not at all, right?

In verse 3, it says, *“Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back. He had with him his servant and a couple of donkeys. And she brought him into her father's house. And when the girl's father saw him, he came with joy to meet him.”* So this is the girl's dad.

“⁴ And his father-in-law, the girl's father, made him stay, and he remained with him three days. So they ate and drank and spent the night there. ⁵ And on the fourth day they arose early in the morning, and he prepared to go, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, “Strengthen your heart with a morsel of bread, and after that you may go.” ⁶ So the two of them sat and ate and drank together. And the girl's father said to the man, “Be pleased to spend the night, and let your heart be merry.” ⁷ And when the man rose up to go, his father-in-law pressed him, till he spent the night there again. ⁸ And on the fifth day he arose early in the morning to depart. And the girl's father said, “Strengthen your heart and wait until the day declines.” So they ate, both of them.” You can tell this his father-in-law doesn't really want these folks to leave.

“⁹ And when the man and his concubine and his servant rose up to depart, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, “Behold, now the day has waned toward evening. Please, spend the night. Behold, the day draws to its close. Lodge here and let your heart be merry, and tomorrow you shall arise early in the morning for your journey, and go home.”

¹⁰ But the man would not spend the night. He rose up and departed and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem).” Which you know as a city won't be taken for the Jews specifically. Although there were some Jews around there, but it was still in used or lived in by other nations at that time. And *“He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys, and his concubine was with him. (and) ¹¹ When*

they were near Jebus, the day was nearly over, and the servant said to his master, "Come now, let us turn aside to this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it." ¹² And his master said to him, "We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, (see, it is not occupied wholly by Jebusites, Jews at this time) who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah." ¹³ And he said to his young man, "Come and let us draw near to one of these places and spend the night at Gibeah or at Ramah." ¹⁴ So they passed on and went their way. And the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin,"

So they're in the allotment of land that was given to the tribe of Benjamin, all right? *"¹⁵ and they turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. And he went in and sat down in the open square of the city, for no one took them into his house to spend the night."* Stop there for just a moment.

This is your first sign that something really serious is going on. No one took them into their home. It was of the utmost importance to people living in this part of the world to show hospitality to foreigners, or to travelers, I should say. And actually, the Jews were told in the Law to show that same kind of hospitality, even to foreigners, because God told them, you too used to be in a foreign land, so show hospitality even to foreigners.

But especially to a brother Jew, it was odd indeed for no one to take this man in. He and his concubine, and servant, have come into the city and they've basically gone into the center and they've just sat down and they're just waiting there for someone to invite them over to their home. That's essentially what you would do. There's no motels or anything like that, so they're just waiting for someone to invite them in. Well, no one does. This is odd. This is very strange.

But as we go on with the chapter, we're going to learn why no one wanted to invite them in. It's because the people, specifically the men of the city, they knew would want to prey upon these individuals in a physical, sexual way, and no one wanted to be on the receiving end of the wrath of the perverted men of the city by taking these strangers into their home.

Nor did they want to be responsible for their safety because once someone came into your home in the Middle East, you are responsible. In fact it's said if you go into the enemy, into the home of, rather, of your enemy in the Middle East, you are safe. Because there is a belief, a strong philosophy in the Middle East that when someone takes you into their home, they will guard your life with their own. They will literally lay down their lives for you, if necessary, to protect you

once you come under their roof, alright? Nobody wants to do that with these three people who are there. Okay.

Verse 16. *“And behold, an old man was coming from his work in the field at evening. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was sojourning in Gibeah. The men of the place were Benjaminites. ¹⁷ And he lifted up his eyes and 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 And he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, from which I come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to the house of the LORD, (the house of the Lord at that time would have been Bethlehem in Shiloh) but no one has taken me into his house. ¹⁹ We have straw and feed for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and your female servant and the young man with your servants. There is no lack of anything.””*

In other words, he's saying, we don't even need provisions. All we need is a place, a roof over our heads. We have food, we have stuff for the animals. We really don't need to be taken care of. We don't lack anything.

“²⁰ And the old man said, “Peace be to you; (in other words, Shalom) I will care for all your wants. Only, do not spend the night in the square.””

Now he's not afraid that it might rain. This man knows and understands that this city has been given over to sexual perversion, and he is telling them, listen, you come to my house, whatever you do, do not spend the night here. This is not safe. This is not a safe place to be. You come to my home.

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

(and) ²² As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, (it says) worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, “Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.””

And that is a Hebrew euphemism when it says to know someone, it's speaking of sexual activity, to know. All right. They're literally, these men are literally saying, bring your guests out so that we might have sex with them. That's exactly what they're saying and you can tell that by the response of the man.

It says, *“²³ And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into*

my house, do not do this (look at this, this) vile thing.” So he even refers to this as vile.

But, lest we think that this man necessarily is virtuous, look what he says next. *“²⁴ Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing.”*” There's no excuse for this kind of acting. There's absolutely none.

Again, the reason this story is being given to us in the Scripture is to highlight the depravity that Israel has sunk to during this season of darkness here in Israel, because they have gotten away from the Word of God. And believe me, it gets worse.

It says, *“²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. ²⁶ And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.*

²⁷ And her master rose up in the morning, and when he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold.”

And it's unthinkable, but his response to her, *“²⁸ He said to her, “Get up, let us be going.” But there was no answer. (and he realizes now that she's dead) Then he put her on the donkey, and the man rose up and went away to his home. ²⁹ And when he entered his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. ³⁰ And all who saw it said, “Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak.”*” Stop there, please.

Hard to know what to say when you read through a chapter like this. Again, unspeakable crimes. And it also I think speaks of, again how far they've gotten from the Word of God in their treatment and attitude toward women.

But you need to know that when there was a call to war in Israel, it was not uncommon for them to take an animal and sacrifice it, and cut it up, and send the pieces to the different tribal areas in Israel, as a call to war. It was just, when

people would see those things, they would realize they were being called up to war and that was, it was a fairly common sort of a thing.

To do this with a human being, obviously this is the only time that it happens in the Scripture. It is horrific beyond imagination and we're going to see in the coming chapter how the nation of Israel responds.

It says, *“Then all the people of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah. ² And the chiefs of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 men on foot that drew the sword. ³ (Now the people of Benjamin heard that the people of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the people of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this evil happen?” ⁴ And the Levite, the husband of the woman (and I want you to notice what he says) who was murdered, answered and said, “I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. ⁵ And the leaders of Gibeah rose against me and surrounded the house against me by night. They meant to kill me, and they violated my concubine, and she is dead. ⁶ So I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel, for they have committed abomination and outrage in Israel.””* Stop there.

That's what is called, revisionist history. In other words, better known as, one man's side of the story. I don't know if you're aware of it, but it is never a wise thing to listen to one man's side of the story alone, and yet we do it all the time. Somebody comes to us and they have a horrific story to tell about how they've been treated, and we immediately take up an offense for that individual without hearing the other side of the story.

There's a proverb that I want to show you on the screen here from Proverbs chapter 18. It says,

Proverbs 18:17 (ESV)

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

Isn't that an interesting proverb? It basically says that the first one to speak up is very convincing until somebody else comes up and begins to ask questions, and perhaps even give another angle or perspective to the story, and then

suddenly... And that's what our court system is supposedly based on. Or how the court system uses the symbol of a balance of weights as that picture of justice because justice needs to be balanced. If you listen to one side of someone's story you're going to have an imbalanced view of what's actually going on. And the Proverbs agree with that. It's just it's unwise to listen only to one person's story and their side of the story.

And that's exactly what the people of Israel are getting here. Notice this man says nothing about the fact that to save his own skin, he forced his concubine outside into that crowd, where she was gang raped all night long. He says nothing about that. He says nothing. He basically, he makes it sound like they forcibly came, and grabbed her, and took her, and it was all he could do to just get back into the house and be safe on his own.

Oh, it sounds very terrible. But it's very common thing for people to, when they're speaking of a situation, amplify the sins of others while at the same time minimizing, or even ignoring their own. And that's what we see this Levite doing.

And so he says to them, after he tells his one sided story, *“⁷ Behold, you people of Israel, all of you, give your advice and counsel here.”* In other words, he's challenging them and saying, what are you going to do about this?

“⁸ And all the people arose as one man, (meaning, they were united in their attitude) saying, “None of us will go to his tent, (in other words, we're not going to go home) and none of us will return to his house.” Because this situation is so dire, it needs to be taken care of now.

“⁹ But now this is what we will do to Gibeah: we will go up against it by lot, ¹⁰ and we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand of ten thousand, to bring provisions for the people, that when they come they may repay Gibeah of Benjamin for all the outrage that they have committed in Israel.”” What they're saying is they're going to go to war.

Guys, this is what we're, this is a civil war in Israel. That's what we're talking about. This brings about a civil war in Israel. And that's exactly what they're planning. *“¹¹ So all the men of Israel gathered against the city, united as one man.”* Stop there for just a moment because this sounds like the first honorable thing that we've heard in this whole chapter, or these two chapters. This seems like, okay, they're finally doing something about it. This was horrible. This was terrible.

Well, thankfully, the people of Israel were horrified by what they saw, and what they heard, and now they're rising up in righteous indignation, and they're going to do something about it. Wrong. Oh yeah, they're rising up and they're indignant but it's not righteous indignation.

Do you guys remember last week? Those of you that were here. We heard about and read about the Danites, or the tribe of Dan, that simply got restless and decided they wanted to carve out a little piece of the land for themselves.

So they went up and they found this unsuspecting, completely against the Lord, they found this unsuspecting people. Slaughtered them; men, women, and children. Took over the land and began to worship their own pagan deities. You remember that? And that was what we dealt with last week.

And we talked about how they were coming up with their own religious system, their own religious ideas, and their own religious practices. And that's what was going on. And the Danites did it.

Do you know that when the nation of Israel heard about that, they were supposed to act. Let me show you this from Deuteronomy. This is in Deuteronomy chapter 12—13, I'm sorry, beginning of verse 12. It says,

Deuteronomy 13:12-15 (ESV)

“If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to dwell there, that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword.

“If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to dwell there, that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword.

Now, this is what they should have done when they heard about the Danites now, they're doing it. And gladly, so, they're doing it at the response of this

woman who was raped and murdered by the Benjamites. And we're glad for that but you can tell how far they've gotten away from God. When they heard about what the Danites did, that was met with a yawn. This is met with indignation, but not righteous indignation.

Had they been a righteous people, they would have been indignant about all the things that were going on in Israel that were contrary to the Word of God, including what the Danites did by setting up their own pagan deities, and worshiping, and drawing people away. So you see, they were horrified because it looked horrible. And it was horrible, make no mistake about it. It was awful.

But Christians, please understand that spiritual adultery is no less horrible in God's eyes. Do you understand how we as Christians, we're guilty of just picking and choosing the sins that we think are the worst. We do that. We just get all up in arms about certain sins. And we talk about them and we vilify them above, and beyond other sins. And then we'll sneeze or wink at some sins that we, it's the culture...

And things like a couple living together outside of wedlock. I mean, who even thinks about it much anymore? And yet does God consider it a violation of His Word? Yeah, absolutely. But we've gotten to the point now where it's become so common in our culture. Sure. That we're like, yeah... Sex outside of marriage. Yeah.

But then we come up with these other sins that we're just on the hunt for. And we act all righteously, indignant about this sin. We grab those people that are thrown and we're... But we're yawning at these other things that are going on, just like the Israelites did. And it's wrong. Guys, sin is sin. All right?

I want you to, I want you to keep in mind that the Israelites were not a hundred percent for the Lord. They were angry that this took place, but their hearts are not fully to the Lord. And you need to understand that as we keep reading and what we see here.

Verse 12. *“And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What evil is this that has taken place among you?” And now they're saying, “¹³ Now therefore give up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel.””*

What are they asking? They're saying, we're not, we don't want to go to war against all of you. Their beef isn't against the whole tribe. They're saying, guys, they're going to the people of Benjamin and they're saying, what is this? We

want you to look into it. And we want you to bring the people who are guilty of this crime out, so that we can deal with them. They're asking the Benjamites to give the guilty men over for punishment. All right? And there's frankly nothing wrong with that.

But I want you to notice the response, because we're in the middle of verse 13. *"But the Benjaminites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel."* That means they would not give up their brothers for judgment.

And *"¹⁴ Then the people of Benjamin (added insult to injury and) came together out of the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the people of Israel."* They're going to start a civil war over their prideful support of these men who are guilty of sin.

What should they have said? They should have said, you're absolutely right, this is horrific. We are going to do an investigation, we're going to find out who is guilty of this horrific crime, and we're going to deliver them to you. And we'll be in on the judgment that takes place. That's what they should have said.

But they said, no, these are our brothers. We're going to protect them. In fact, we're going to fight for them. They're literally fighting for their right of their brothers to live the way they want to live, even if it's perverted sin like this.

"¹⁵ And the people of Benjamin mustered out of their cities on that day 26,000 men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who mustered 700 chosen men." All right? So you can see they've got what, 32,000 men? Is that what it comes to?

"¹⁶ Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; (I don't know why that's necessary for us to know) every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. (that's interesting) ¹⁷ And the men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered (look at this) 400,000..."

Okay, next to the what, 33—it's 33,000 men of the tribe of Benjamin. And against 400,000 men of Israel. You think, oh, this is a slaughter. The men of Israel are going to just waltz in here and just take this thing. I mean, good grief. Right? *"...all these were men of war."*

Verse 18, *"The people of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and inquired of God, 'Who shall go up first for us to fight against the people of Benjamin?' And the LORD said, 'Judah shall go up first.'"*

But I want you to notice something about what the Lord told them. He didn't guarantee victory, did He? He just said, okay, Judah goes first. That's all.

What happens? *“¹⁹ Then the people of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. ²⁰ And the men of Israel went out to fight against Benjamin, and the men of Israel drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah. ²¹ The people of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and destroyed on that day 22,000 men of the Israelites.”* That's what you call a black eye and a bloody nose.

They came out against the Israelites and they destroyed, they killed 22,000 men. And here we're reading this and we're going, wait a minute. Israel had come out to, because of this horrific sin and the Benjamites in this first squirmish came out victorious. Why did God allow that? Why did God allow the Israelites who seem to be in the right here, to be beaten back? Remember I said earlier that this was indignation, but not righteous indignation.

Listen, the whole nation of Israel has been straying from God. And frankly the horrific response to this sin is somewhat hypocritical. Because they've been letting all kinds of things get by in their culture, except this one. This one they decided, just like we Christians, we come up with our pet sins, and we say, well, that's where it stops.

But God wants us to go back and say, wait a minute, let's look at our lives and let's see where else we are violating the Word of God. In other words, let's investigate our own hearts before we pick up anything to go against somebody else.

What did Jesus say? He says, you look at your brother who's got a speck in his eye, and you say to your brother, oh, here, let me help you get that speck out of your eye. And you don't realize there's a plank in your own. He says, first, go take the plank out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to help your brother take the speck out of his. (Matthew 7:3-5) And that's the principle that is being overlooked here by Israel.

And so they go out to war against Gibeah because they have not done that prayer that will come of David later on where he will say, search me and know me and see if there be any wicked way in me. (Psalm 139:24) That was David's prayer. They didn't do that here. That heart is not in them. And so they're just going out to war thinking, we're going to go out and we're going to bloody their nose, and we're going to do this and that. And they're beaten back. Lose 22,000 men.

“²² But the people, the men of Israel, took courage, and again formed the battle line in the same place where they had formed it on the first day. ²³ And the people of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until the evening. And they inquired of the LORD, “Shall we again draw near to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin?” And the LORD said, “Go up against them.””

Again, you will notice God does not guarantee victory here. Again. Made no promises. But *“²⁴ ...the people of Israel came near against the people of Benjamin the second day. ²⁵ And Benjamin went against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed 18,000 men of the people of Israel. All these were men who drew the sword. ²⁶ Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.”*

You get what's going on? They're starting to really realize that there's more to this whole battle thing and being this just crusader for right, than just simply seeing one particular wrong and going after it with a stick. They're realizing that the responsibility on their part is to come before God, and inquire of Him, and to investigate their own heart. Now they're fasting before God. They're crying out before God. They're saying, oh God look what's going on here.

“²⁷ And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸ and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days), saying, “Shall we go out once more to battle against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we cease?” (now look what the Lord says this time, the Lord says) And the LORD said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand.” Notice the difference there. Now comes the promise. Finally.

“²⁹ So Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah.” That means they had some of the men hiding. ³⁰ And the people of Israel went up against the people of Benjamin on the third day and set themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. ³¹ And the people of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city. And as at other times they began to strike and kill some of the people in the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, and in the open country, about thirty men of Israel. (basically died) ³² And the people of Benjamin (took that as a sign and they) said, (okay, this is going our way, and they, he says) “They are routed before us, as at the first.” But the people of Israel said, (alright) “Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways.” ³³ And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place and set themselves in array at Baal-tamar, and the men of Israel who

were in ambush rushed out of their place from Maareh-geba. ³⁴ And there came against Gibeah 10,000 chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was hard, but the Benjaminites did not know that disaster was close upon them. ³⁵ And the LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel, and the people of Israel destroyed (look at this) 25,100 men of Benjamin that day. All these were men who drew the sword. ³⁶ So the people of Benjamin saw that they were defeated.

The men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin, because they trusted the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah.” In other words, we’ll let them take care of it. And ³⁷ *Then the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gibeah; the men in ambush moved out and struck all the city with the edge of the sword.* ³⁸ *Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in the main ambush was that when they made a great cloud of smoke rise up out of the city* ³⁹ *the men of Israel should turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel.*” You can tell he's telling the story over again, in a little bit more detail.

And “*They said, “Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.”* ⁴⁰ *But when the signal began to rise out of the city in a column of smoke, the Benjaminites looked behind them, and behold, the whole of the city went up in smoke to heaven.* ⁴¹ *Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were dismayed, for they saw that disaster was close upon them. (and)* ⁴² *Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them. And those who came out of the cities were destroying them in their midst. (and)* ⁴³ *Surrounding the Benjaminites, they pursued them and trod them down from Nohah as far as opposite Gibeah on the east.* ⁴⁴ *Eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell, all of them men of valor.* ⁴⁵ *And they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon. Five thousand men of them were cut down in the highways. And they were pursued hard to Gidom, and 2,000 men of them were struck down.* ⁴⁶ *So all who fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men who drew the sword, all of them men of valor.”*

I want you to notice, and this is why they're giving us all these numbers. Look at verse 47. This is the point. ⁴⁷ *But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon and remained at the rock of Rimmon four months.”*

And what that means is they were spared. So there were, of all of Benjamin, of all the men, only 600 survived. You might say, well, now wait a minute, but these are just the fighting men. Maybe there were other men that didn't go and fight that survived.

Actually no, because as you go on and read in the end of the chapter, it says, *“⁴⁸ And the men of Israel turned back against the people of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, the city, men and beasts and all that they found. And all the towns that they found they set on fire.”* So they went and wiped out the Benjamites, all but 600 men.

So here's a tribe of Israel that is now only having 600 men left. That's it. No women, no children, just 600 men who escaped, and were spared.

Now, I really don't have time, well I tell you, to read Judges chapter 21, so I'm going to tell you what's going on here, okay? It talks in chapter 21 about 2 oaths that the people of Israel took in the heat of battle, and they were not necessarily wise oaths at all.

The first one was, we will give none of our daughters to the men of Benjamin because of this sin. We will never... They made an oath before God, may God curse us, we will never give any of our daughters to the men of Benjamin because of this sin.

But they made a secondary oath, and that was any of the people of Israel who didn't heed the summons to come out and fight against the Benjamites, we're going to go kill them too. So they took inventory of all the people who responded to the call to battle, and they found out that the people of Jabesh Gilead did not heed the call.

Well, they came up with an idea, and they said, wait a minute, okay, we got to go fight against the people of Jabesh Gilead because we took an oath. We're going to kill anybody who didn't come help us to fight the war. So they're going to go do that.

But they thought, they started to think twice about their oath to never give any women of their daughters to the men of Benjamin because what that would mean is those 600 men of Benjamin would be forced to marry outside of all Israel. They would have to marry Gentiles and that tribe would go away. It would be just assimilated into the Gentile peoples.

And they began to be very sorrowful over the idea that one tribe of Israel would be lost forever. So they came up with an idea. We're going to go to Jabesh Gilead and we're going to wipe out all the people but if we find any virgins among the people there at Jabesh Gilead, we'll spare them, and we'll give them to the men of Benjamin; those 600 men of Benjamin.

So they went to Jabesh Gilead, wiped out the city. Found 400 virgins and gave them as wives to the men of Benjamin. But obviously there were 200 men who still did not have wives.

So they said, okay, we've got to come up with another solution. Okay, here's what we're going to do. They went to the men of Benjamin and they said, all right, here's what we're going to do.

When we come together for an annual feast, we'll be celebrating and we'll probably, we probably will be looking the other way. When we're out there having a good time, hooping it up and celebrating, you guys just hide in the weeds and trees nearby. And at night when the girls are all out there dancing and celebrating, just come out and we'll look the other way. And you 200 men who don't yet have a wife, you just come and grab any of our girls, and it won't be because we gave them to you. You took them.

See, we're not guilty, because we made an oath. We would never give our daughters to you in marriage, but we'll let you take them. They even told him how to do it. It's the most ridiculous thing.

They're still coming up with their own rules. They're still coming up with their own way of doing things. They're finding ways to circumvent what they had agreed to do before the Lord.

I want you to look with me in here, and I want you to notice just with me, the very last verse of the book, because you just got to see that. Because it sums up everything.

“²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” In other words, what I say is right. I don't care what you say. I don't care what God says. I don't care what the king says. It's what I say sound familiar. We're living it in our nation today.