

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"The Outrage at Gibeah"

Judges 19:1-30

Introduction

1. The final chapters of Judges give evidence of the dreadful degradation of the nation Israel. Idolatry and moral corruption prevailed. Sin was rampant.

2. Chapters 17 and 18 indicate that as a result of the low spiritual ebb of the nation, there was failure to occupy the land as promised, failure to honor God and His worship arrangements, and failure to uphold honesty. The record stands: Israel sinned and that dreadfully! What a report to us of these New Testament times to heed (1 Cor. 10:11).

3. The present chapter affirms the same moral disorder in the nation. It is placed early in the period of the Judges, like the previous two chapters. Why? Because of Phineas, son of Eleasar, who was active during and before the conquest period (Num. 25:7, 11; Josh. 22:13, 31 ff.) and was still the high priest (Judges 20:28). So, this is not a chronologically based chapter, but a moral one. All the judges have been mentioned, save Eli and Samuel, but the sin remained! How sad!

4. The final three chapters are a triad: 1) Evil (murder and sexual orgy)--chap. 19. 2) War (Israel and Benjamin)--chap. 20. 3) Resolution (to repopulate Benjamin)--chap. 21. Take the first section and observe the five major relations of evil:

1. A WOMAN vv. 1, 2.

The evil situation focuses on a Levite and his concubine. The Levite was sojourning (v. 1) on the side of Mt. Ephraim. This means he was an outsider. Certain cities were assigned to Levites (Josh. 21). The concubine had returned home for one year and four months (v. 2). It is true that concubinage is frequent in the Old Testament, but this was not the original intent of God's will (Gen. 2:24). Monogamy is the standard; polygamy is the error. Here is a case of polygamy. There is no reported polyandry in the Bible.

2. A FAMILY vv. 3-10.

The Levite went after his concubine to return her. He spoke endearing words to her (v. 3). Literally, he spoke to her heart! The account is clear that the Levite had great difficulty getting away with his concubine from her

home. He was urged again and again to eat and enjoy himself. The verb "comfort" implies to "stay the heart" (Gen. 18:5). This phrase suggests that when the stomach is filled, it presses against the diaphragm and so against the heart which rests upon it and is literally supported. However, the Levite finally departed when the day was pitching its tent (drawing toward evening, v. 9). This late leaving posed a problem for housing. The Levite by-passed Jebus (Jerusalem) which was controlled by the Canaanites until David's time (1:8, 21; 2 Sam. 5:6, 7).

3. AN EPHRAIMITE vv. 11-21.

Apparently, the Levite sat at the gate or arranged to sleep in the open air at Gibeah. He felt this was better than at Jebus, for it was occupied territory. This proved to be a disaster. An old Ephraimite took him and his party in for the night. While hospitality was expected in the Old Testament, the New Testament urges it upon the saints, particularly for elders (1 Cor. 16:15; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).

4. A CITY vv. 22-25.

It was at the house of the Ephraimite that the outrageous acts of immoral sexual sins commenced. The "sons of Belial" means "sons of worthlessness, base fellows". They wrought folly (wantonness) with the Levite's concubine. They had been offered the daughter of the Ephraimite, but took their choice of the stranger. This brings the entire gamut of sexual disorder to the fore. Sodom was bad because they were not of Israel (Gen. 19), but Gibeah is worse because she was within Israel! The standard had been set concerning adultery, homosexuality, incest, etc., as opposed to the heathen (Lev. 18). The New Testament is clear on matters of sex (Rom. 1:24-32). There was no excuse then, nor is there now for support of sodomites, lesbians, homosexuals, or the like. God's standard is clear and untainted!

5. A NATION vv. 26-30.

The butchering of the concubine by the Levite and sending her parts, limb from limb or "according to her bones" (Hebrew), is unbelievable for the nation. But it is recorded. It is a demonstration of the terrible depths to which the nation had dropped. It was the Levite's way of saying that if this sin were not avenged, it might be that other women would be hewed to pieces.

Conclusion The heart is dreadfully sinful (Jer. 17:9). Even "chosen people" without adherence to God's Word demonstrate the evil heart! There is one solution to the need of man: God's cleansing power through sacrifice which is Christ.