

JUDGES

In this lesson, we begin to conclude our study of the book of Judges by looking at one example of the moral degradation that highlights how low the sin in Israel reached throughout the time of Judges. With a cycle of sin, punishment, and restoration repeating throughout this period in Israel's history, we are given a glimpse of one of those periods of sin, and the war that resulted with the Benjamites.

Our scripture text for the lesson is Judges Chapter 19, which is centered around an atrocity against the concubine of a Levite. In our final Judges lesson (Lesson 10), we will look at Israel's response to that atrocity, as well the tribe of Benjamin and how it was saved from total annihilation.

Read Judges Chapter 19 and consider the following:

1. What story is recounted in Judges 19:1-15?
 - a. ANSWER 1: In Judges 19:1-10, a Levite is having difficulties with an unfaithful concubine, who has fled to her father's home. The Levite travels to her father's house to bring her back home. After arriving at his father-in-law's house, he spends five nights with the father-in-law before starting the long journey back.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In Judges 19:11-15, we note that the Levite and his concubine travel throughout the remainder of the day and into early evening, at which time they arrive at Gibeah, a Benjamite city, and sit in the city square.
2. Why did the Levite decide to press on in order to stay at Gibeah, rather than stopping at Jebus? (Judges 19:12-13)
 - a. ANSWER: The Levite wanted to stay in an Israelite city, not one controlled by the Canaanites.
3. How were the Levite and his concubine welcomed when they arrived at the city square in Gibeah? (Judges 19:15)
 - a. ANSWER: The text in Judges indicates "but no one took them in for the night." Isn't it ironic that the Levite pressed hard to get to one of his fellow Israelites' cities, only to find that they are not warmly received. Clearly there were big issues with the tribes of Israel; in this case, a total lack of hospitality is evident.
4. Judges 19:16-21 indicates that a man then offered hospitality to the Levite and his party. Do we note any possible reasons why the man was so kind to the Levite? (Compare Judges 19:16 with Judges 19:18. Where had the old man come from, and where was the Levite going?)
 - a. ANSWER: Both were from the "hill country of Ephraim."
5. Compare the old man's admonition about staying the night in the city square with Genesis 19 and the story of Lot and Sodom. In particular, look at Genesis 19:1-11, then list the similarities between those verses and Judges 19:16-26:
 - a. ANSWER 1: In Judges 19:20, the old man warned them not to spend the night in the city square, since it was not a safe place. Lot also provided a similar warning to the angels in Genesis 19 regarding Sodom.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In Judges 19:21, we observe that after arriving at the old man's house, the old man made sure that his guests' feet were washed, and that they were fed and rested. This was also the case for Lot and his guests.
 - c. ANSWER 3: In Judges 19:22—just as with Sodom in Genesis 19—the men of Gibeah surround the house of the old man and they shout the same thing at him as they did to Lot, 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.' Notice that in both stories, the men want to have sex with the male guest(s), and not the women in the house.
 - d. ANSWER 4: In Judges 19:23-24, the old man goes out to calm the crowd and offers his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine to them for sex, just as Lot had offered his two virgin daughters. It is incredible that this was somehow seen as "normal"—particularly given that the story of Sodom and its destruction would have been well known to the Benjamites who inhabited that region.
6. On the other hand, in this story, we see one dramatic difference between the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom vs. this sad story at Gibeah. What happened, as recounted in Judges 19:25-26? Remembering that these are God's chosen people from the tribe of Benjamin, what do we observe them doing?
 - a. ANSWER: We see people who should have known better turned into ravaging men driven by their lusts and unbridled passions, raping and killing the Levite's concubine; leaving her for dead at the doorstep of the old man's house where the Levite was staying.

7. What did the Levite do when he awoke in the morning? How do we assess his behavior as well? (Judges 19:27-29)
- a. ANSWER 1: In Judges 19:27, we observe that all of this violence apparently took place outside the door of the house where the Levite was staying—and yet it appears that the Levite did not think much about it until after he got up that morning and opened the door to see how she was doing.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Judges 19:28 tells us that the Levite, after finding the concubine dead on the doorstep, loaded her body on a donkey and headed for home. It is also interesting that no comments or dialogue between him and the old man or with the men of the city take place (or are recorded). It appears that the Levite quietly loaded the body on his donkey and headed home.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Judges 19:29 indicates that, after arriving at home, the Levite does the unthinkable; as he took his knife and, "cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel."
8. Did the Levite accomplish his purpose, i.e., spreading the word regarding the abhorrent behavior demonstrated by the Benjamites at Gibeah? (Judges 19:30)
- a. ANSWER: His actions incited all of the tribes of Israel, who said, "Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something!"
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As we consider this lesson, it is hard to imagine the inhumane things mankind—even those chosen by God—can do to each other. It is equally important that we do not react in kind when such atrocities occur. In the next lesson, we see that God will lead the Israelites in bringing judgment to the Benjamites. However, He does this in an orderly and just way—just as God judges us and the world around us today. We must always be in prayer that we will never repay evil for evil, even when it might seem like the right thing to do at the time.

Have a blessing-filled week everyone!

In Christ,

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