



March 15, 2024

### **Lessons from Judges 19-21**

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here in east Texas. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

An interesting event happened recently for my wife and me. A neighbor lady who lived a block or so away whose husband is deceased came up to my wife while she was out walking, explaining that “she had locked herself out of her home”. Because her cell phone was inside the home, she was unable to call a locksmith, and asked Gayle for help. Gayle called one but it would be 2 plus hours for anyone to possibly come to the neighbor’s aid. Subsequently Gayle came home, explained to me the situation, and as we were talking the lady came to our door and again asked for help. Having to find alternate ways into homes while working as a Firefighter years ago, I thought I could at least check the home out, and sure enough we were able to get in rather quickly without damaging anything. After she brought us back home in her car, she began to talk with us and ask about us. The long and the short of the story is once finding out I was a pastor she began to tell her story about “religion” and when her husband was alive. In the course of the conversation (which was quite lengthy due to her talking), she made a statement about the Old Testament and its relevancy. When I responded with “we believe the whole Bible, inclusive of the old and new testaments together...” it segued into some interesting dialect. One such comment intrigued me when she stated “the Old Testament was simply about lots of people killing each other, nothing else!” I could see how someone might come to this conclusion, depending on how much of the Old Testament they have read.

If you and I are not careful it is very easy to fall in a similar pattern of missing critical parts of God’s Word throughout the Old Testament and relying on mostly

Christian Living in the New Testament. We can come to some conclusions that miss what is needed in our relationship with our Creator.

God's Word inclusive of both testaments clearly records inspired words that should help us not only in our day to day lives, but with careful study define where we are today in the culture of this world and how it is affecting each of us.

Speaking of the Old Testament, there is an interesting comment made about the events that took place as recorded in the book of Judges. "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 21:25) A similar comment is also made in Judges 17:6; 18:1 and 19:1. Of course, the people were supposed to look to the Lord as their king and to His laws to guide them. The leaders of the community were supposed to make judgments concerning unlawful behavior. (Deuteronomy 17:1-7) If the matter was more complicated or difficult to determine, they were to go to the priests and Levites and judges who had jurisdiction in that location. (vs 8 -11).

What happens or happened when the process is or was not followed and individuals take matters into their own hands? The result of that is not good and a bad situation can escalate into a real disaster.

What lessons might we learn from the events of Judges 19-21?"

Let's review the events recorded there. Judges 19 describes the story of a Levite taking a concubine for himself, but she was a loose woman and "*played the harlot*" and returned to her father's house. The Levite went after her to "sweet talk" her into returning to him. After spending a number of days at the father's house, the Levite, his servant, and the concubine finally left late in the day and eventually arrived in the city of Gibeah shortly after sunset. An old man returning from his field work invited them to lodge with him. During the evening as they were eating, "perverted men" (Judges 19:22) beat on the old man's door and demanded to have him surrender the Levite to them for engaging in sexual activity. The old man offered his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine

instead. The perverted men disregarded the old man but the Levite took it upon himself to bring his concubine out to them. She was raped and abused and assaulted during the night. When the Levite arose the next morning and opened to the door to go on his way, the concubine lay dead at the door. The Levite thought she was sleeping and callously and uncaringly told her to get up and be off on their journey. When he realized she was dead, he took a knife and cut her body into twelve pieces and had the pieces sent to all the territory of Israel. It's quite a graphic story to say the least!

The response was dramatic. 400,000 armed men showed up to inquire about what happened. The Levite related what the evil men had done with a spin that avoided disclosing his part in the events. The assembled Israelites proposed assembling an armed force out of the tribes to confront the tribe of Benjamin and demand that the evil doers be handed over for capital punishment. The Benjamites refused to bring forth the guilty men and assembled an army to confront the Israelite army assembled at Gibeah. The Israelites inquired of the Lord to determine who should be at the head of the army to engage in battle. Judah was to be at the head of the army. They engaged the army of Benjamites in battle but the initial skirmish resulted in 22,000 Israelite casualties. The Israelites again inquired of the Lord at Shiloh as to whether they should continue to battle the army of Benjamites. The answer was yes, but in the battle the Israelites suffered 18,000 more casualties.

The Israelites returned to Shiloh and wept and fasted until evening and then offered sacrifices. They inquired of the Lord again through the high priest Phineas. The answer was to continue the battle and that the Israelites would be victorious the next day. The Israelites developed a plan to lure the men of Gibeah out of the city, and then the Israelites assaulted the city and were victorious. They slaughtered many of the Benjamite soldiers. The Israelite soldiers proceeded to pursue the fleeing Benjamites and also attack a number of Benjamite cities killing the inhabitants and burning the cities. "*But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon*" (Judges 20:47) The story thus far, but more killing was yet to occur. We'll continue discussing the events next time

and comment on the events, sins, wrong actions, and judgments that led to this disaster...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Hoefker', written over a circular scribble.

Scott Hoefker

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