



Judges 19-21

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Tape #7077
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Let's turn to Judges chapter 19. As we mentioned, from chapter 17 to the end of the book of Judges are, more or less an appendix, to the book. They do not follow a chronological order. They are just giving you little insights to the conditions of the nation at this particular period of their history.

So we have two stories. Both of them involve Levites or Priests. From the area of Mount Ephraim. In both of them there is a corruption of the priesthood, and when you have a corruption of the priesthood then you have really gotten about as low as a nation can get, from a moral standpoint. You have come to rock-bottom. The emphasis over and over again in these appendixes is pointing out the fact that there was no king in Israel, that it was a period of anarchy. For everyone was doing that which was right in his own sight. It was a period in which existential philosophy had its opportunity to show itself in the practice of life. We see how morally debased the people had become.

There was no king in Israel. Now it was God's intent that he be the king over this nation. That they should be a nation unlike any other nation on the face of the earth. For they were to be a nation that were ruled by God. He was to be king over Israel. But they had rejected God's rule. They had rejected God's law. There was no central government to enforce the laws of God. So we see how morally corrupt the nation had become and was at this particular time. So in chapter 19 we have the second of the two stories that just give us a picture of the moral conditions of the nation at this particular period of their history. It is significant that chapter 19 begins with the recognition again that there was no king in Israel at this particular time, and verse 25 of chapter 21 ends the same way, so this whole little story is prefaced by the fact that there was no king in Israel. Every man was doing that which was right in his own eyes. So, we have now the story in between this preface.

These are the conditions. No king in Israel. Everyone doing that which was right in his own eyes.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that [So] there was a certain Levite who was sojourning [or living] on the side of [in the area of] Mount Ephraim, who took him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah (19:1).

Now a concubine was as a wife but, without all the privileges of a wife.

His concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house [back] to Bethlehem judah, and was there four whole months. [So her] husband [the Levite] arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him and a couple of donkeys: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. (19:2-3)

So, you have the case of an unfaithful wife, who returned to her parent's house and the husband is out for reconciliation; and, he comes down to Bethlehemjudah and she introduces him to her father and there is a glad meeting.

The father-in-law, the damsel's father, his father-in-law retained him and he stayed with him for three days and they did eat and drink and [he] lodged there. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine [your] heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way. And [so] they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry [spend] all night, and let thine heart be merry. And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did both of them eat. And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth [is drawing] toward

evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and tomorrow get you early [an early start] on your way, that thou mayest go home. But the man [he] would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against [near] Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and there were with him two asses [donkeys] saddled, his concubine also was with him. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge [stay] in it. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah (19:4-13).

Now, they got a late start from the girl's dad's house, in Bethlehem Judah. It's about five miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. But at this time Jerusalem was occupied by the Jebusites. It was not until the time of King David, that the city was taken from the Jebusites and occupied by Israel. So the servant, it's getting evening, and he gave a wise suggestion, "Let's turn in here for the night." And he said, "No, there's strangers. I don't want to abide in the city, or stay in the city which is not an Israelite city." So they went on from Jerusalem to Gibeah, which is probably another two and a half to three miles beyond Jerusalem, towards Ramah. It was too late to journey all the way to Ramah. The sun was now setting when they came to Gibeah and so they decided to spend the night in Gibeah.

And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to [which belongs to the tribe of] Benjamin. And they turned aside thither, to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging (19:14-15).

Now in those days they did not have Motel 6's, they did not have the Travel Lodge's or any types of hotels or that type of accommodation where you could go and pay money and spend the night. Hospitality was a very major part of life and a very important part. People had certain rules concerning hospitality and it was very important to them to be hospitable to the traveler. Even to the present day among the Bedouins, they have strict rules concerning hospitality. If you receive a guest into your home, you are honor bound to protect him and to shelter him as long as he is under your roof. Now you may hate him and want to kill him, but you'll never kill him while he's your guest. You wait till he leaves. But as long as he is under your roof, you are honor bound to entertain him, to treat him royally, and to defend him. Not to show hospitality was a great sin. So the people of Gibeah were not hospitable to this man, his wife, and his servant. They were sitting there in the streets of the city, no one took them into their house for lodging.

And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even [evening], which was also of [he also was from] mount Ephraim; and he sojourned [but he was staying there] in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites. [He was an Ephraimite, this old man], and when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? [where are you going?] and whence comest thou? [where have you come from?] And he said unto him, We are passing from the Bethlehem Judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I [because I am from there]: and I went to Bethlehem Judah, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house [who has received me into his house]. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses [Yet we have enough straw and food for our donkeys]; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants [your servants]: there is no want of any thing [we don't lack anything, we have enough]. And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy [your] wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street [only don't stay in the street]. So he [the old man] brought [invited] him into his house, and gave [him] provender unto the asses [for the donkeys]: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink. Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about [encircled the house], and beat at the door [beat the door], and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly (19:16-23).

Now we have a scene that is very reminiscent of what happened in Sodom. You remember when the two angels of the Lord came to Sodom, on the mission of God to destroy the city because of the wickedness that had come up before God, in heaven, and when these two men were received by Lot, into Lot's house, the men of Sodom, in the evening, encircled the house and demanded that Lot send these two men outside, that they might actually have homosexual relationships with them. God destroyed Sodom because of this sin, but here the same thing is now happening, only in a Israelite city, among the tribe of Benjamin. The same heinous sin that perpetrated the destruction of Sodom is now happening among God's people. The moral decay into which the nation had sunk is obvious and evident here. As the homosexuals of the city are so brazen as to openly parade themselves in the streets of the city, and demand their rights, which are not really rights at all. The old man recognizes it as wickedness and as folly. Don't do this wickedness, don't do this folly.

Now because of the custom of hospitality and because women in that culture and time had very little rights, the man did something that is quite unthinkable to us. It's hard for us to relate to this, because our culture is so entirely different. You see our culture has been vastly affected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One thing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has declared and has promoted is equal rights. Recognizing women as equal with men, in the sight of God. For in Christ there is neither male nor female. We are all one, together in Him, and the Bible in the New Testament did so much to elevate the place of the woman, giving honor unto the woman, and demanding respect for the woman. And now as the years of Christian influence has affected our culture, we have such a high regard for the women however, as the pagan influences begin to prevail in our society, we see that women again are being degraded by a society that is trying to push out Christ, and push out Christianity and the Christian influence, and as it does, women are again just being made a chattel, an object of something for men to lust after and to gratify himself by his lust after, and so all the pornography and the exploitation of the woman's body and the horrible degrading of a woman, through pornography and all, bestiality and sadomasochism and so forth, horrible, horrible things, are planted in the minds of men. The woman's place of honor and respect, glory and modesty is rapidly disappearing. It is something that is of deep concern to me, because human nature, being what it is, if this continues, if the Christian influence continues to wane in our whole social order. You women are going to find yourselves back where you were. Just looked upon as an object, for the gratification of a man's sexual lust.

Behold, here is my daughter a maiden [said, look here is my daughter, she is a virgin], and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing (19:24).

Now you see that's hard for us to understand isn't it? A man willing to sacrifice his daughter, "Give the wife but, you know, don't touch the fellow." That's the world without the influence of Christianity, that is the world without a king, the lawlessness, the world without the law, without moral principals to govern them. So we see, even among the tribes of Israel, among the tribe of Benjamin, this horrible, horrible sin.

But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew [raped] her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring [dawn], they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. And her lord [the Levite] rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. [Great compassion! Get up woman! Let's go!] But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass [the donkey], and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her [body], together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds (19:25-30).

So he sent out a message, "Hey! Consider this, speak your mind, let's gather together."

Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, [all the way] from Dan [to the north] even to Beersheba [in the south], with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh. [A great gathering of the children of Israel.] And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. [The armies gathered.] (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness (20: 1-3)?

So their examining now, the situation, “Tell us what happened!”

And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel (20:4-6).

Now, you see the words and the adjectives that are used to describe the sin of homosexuality. The lewdness, the folly, the wickedness, such a vile thing, he says.

Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house. But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it; [we'll go up and punish them.] And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual [to gather together food] for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man. And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel (20:7-14):

But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities of Gibeah to go to battle against the children of Israel.

And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men. Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss (20:15-16).

The guys would just sling stones. With a sling you could sling a stone up to about a pound. And these guys were accurate. They could not miss it more than a hairs breadth, their target, with these sling stones.

And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war (20:17).

So you have the 26,000 men of Benjamin, but their facing tremendous odds with 400,000 of the men of Israel.

And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up first.

So they went up to inquire of the Lord. Now notice when they inquired of the Lord, it would seem to me their first question should've been, “Should we go up?” But there was a presumption here, “Which shall go up first?” I think that often times we offer to God sort of a multiple choice kind of a thing, but many times we even limit God in that we might not even put on the list what God wants. We say, “God shall I do this or that?” And maybe neither of them is correct. Better to say, “God what shall I do?”, rather than giving God the alternatives (this or that).

When in the New Testament before the Holy Spirit had descended upon the church, and they had then the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of the church, Peter in talking to the disciples said, “You

know Judas has committed suicide. We need someone to take his place, who can be numbered among the apostles. We need a fellow that has been with us all the while, from the time of Jesus' baptism, who can also bear witness of his resurrection. So they chose Mattathias and was it Justus?, Mattathias, Barsabas?, and they said, "Lord which of the two of these fellows do you want?"; and, they drew lots. The lot fell on Matthew. Well, in reality, neither of the two, God wanted. But they gave God the choice of the two. "Lord which of us should go up first?" There's a presumption here. "We are to go up." I think that had they said, "Lord, shall we go up?", they would not have had the defeat before the Benjamites that they experienced.

Now, their cause was right. The Benjamites should be punished for this horrible sin. What they were doing was right. They were being God's instruments of judgement upon Benjamin. That was correct. But, they weren't seeking the Lord as to the method and the manner by which they should go. A lot of times we say, "Hey, the cause is right, let's do something.", and we can get involved in reactionary kinds of situations where we are reacting to an evil in the community, but maybe not according to the plan of God. Someone gets an idea, "Hey, let's go do this!" "Oh, oh yeah, that's a good cause let's get em all!", and yet we're not seeking the Lord as to how and the methods. In other words, "Here's something that needs to be done, let's do it!" Well, yes it needs to be done, but let's seek the Lord in how to do it. It isn't everything, that I just have a right cause. That is not justification for action. The justification for action is that God has led me into this activity.

We must make sure that we are led by the Spirit of God, even in the right things that we seek to do. Because it is very possible, and the scripture is full of examples, of people who sought to do the right thing, in a wrong way; and, were not blessed of God because, they were not following God's pattern, or God's plan. I think that one of the most important lessons that we need to learn is not to develop a plan and then try and get God on our side, but seek to find the mind and the will and the plan of God, and then go at it according to God's plan. It's so easy for us to size up a situation. We say, "Look, something has to be done. Yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, it has to be done. We need to do something here"; and, "Okay what shall we do? Well, let's do this, yeah let's..."; and you get together and you devise a plan, but you don't seek the wisdom and the counsel of God in the thing. "Now we've got the thing all set, the program's all ready to go" and we say, "Now Lord, bless our program."

I am convinced that our concern for the moral decay in our society is not nearly as great as God's concern. I am convinced that our concern for evangelism of our area, is not nearly as great as God's concern for evangelism for our area, and I am also convinced that God has a plan to reach the community. Now, what is important is that we wait upon God and discover His plan, and then we work together with God, according to His plan, rather than saying, "Our community needs to be reached. Let's do this, let's do that. Let's organize together a committee and let's reach our community by doing, this, that, and the other." No, our community needs to be reached, yes. God You have a plan. You have just as great a concern for this community as we do. God, show us what is your plan, that we might Lord, yield ourselves as instruments to accomplish Your will, and Your plan for this community, and not only must the cause be right, but actually the way we approach, the remedy, must be guided of the Lord.

They presumed, "Surely God wants us to go up and wipe out the Benjamites for this horrible sin. Which of us shall go up first?" So, the Lord said, "Judah."

And the men of Israel [arose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah] went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men (20:18-21).

I mean, the Benjamites thoroughly routed them!

And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day. (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until even [even until evening], and [they] asked counsel of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him (20:21-23)).

So this time they said, "Shall we go?" The Lord answered, "Yes."

And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. And Benjamin

went forth [out] against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even [evening], and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, 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 Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand (20:24-28).

Now, this time, they waited upon God. They fasted, they prayed, and they got more than just a yes or no answer. This time, they got the directions from God. "Yes, go up and tomorrow, I will deliver them into your hands." So, the Israelites sent men on the opposite sides of Gibeah to lie in wait, actually, to hide.

And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array [in their battle formations] against Gibeah, as at other times [as the other two days]. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, and kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which goeth up [on the way back to Shiloh] to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, [and they killed] about thirty men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baaltamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore [fierce]: but they knew not that evil was near them [that is, the Benjamites]. And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah. And the liers in wait hastened, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword (20:30-37).

So, they drew the people out these fellows on the other side in hiding came out, took the city, there was nothing but women and children there, and they wiped out the city with the edge of the sword.

Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait [those who were lying in ambush], that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city. And when the men of Israel retired in [were retreating from] the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle. But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them. Thus they enclosed [encircled] the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valour. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them [there]. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valour. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to (20:38-48).

The tribe of Benjamin was virtually wiped out. They came to all the cities, destroyed them, burned them with fire, taking vengeance against the Benjamites for the sin. The sin was really limited at first just to the evil men, but then it spread to the rest of the tribe, because they refused action in delivering the evil men for

judgement, and in so doing were condoning their actions. So God brought judgement upon the whole tribe for the condoning of the actions of these evil men.

Chapter 21

Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; And said, O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel? And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (21:1-4).

Now their having a remorse over the whole thing. They come back and they think, “Oh my, we’re going to be lacking a tribe in Israel. There’s only 600 men left but we’ve all sworn that we won’t let them marry our daughters”, that means the tribe of Benjamin is going to be exterminated. So they got to thinking about this and it was a thing that really got to them. They wept before God, “Oh there’s going to be a tribe missing!” Now, again, rather than seeking God’s solution, they take actions into their own hands and again we find the case of making a vow that just got them in trouble. It wasn’t but a few weeks ago that we studied the vow of Jephthah. You remember that horrible vow, and it just created problems.

The Bible really warns us against making vows and sort of discourages the taking of vows before God. It isn’t necessary to promise God you’re going to do something, in order to obtain God’s favor. In fact, you’re more apt to receive from God, not promising that you’ll do something for Him, but just upon the mercy of God and the grace of God. Come upon that premise you’re more apt to receive from God then you are by promising God, “Uh God, now this is what I’m gonna do for you, if you’ll just do this for me Lord, this is what I’m gonna do for you.” But people seem to have a concept that I’ve got to make God some kind of tremendous promise in order to get God to work in my behalf. Not so. Not at all. God loves you and God’s grace is manifested towards us and what God does for you, He does on the basis of His grace, not on the basis of my merit or worth. But the making of the vow sort of puts it on to me, you see? “God, I’ll be worthy. I’ll do this wonderful thing for you, and thus I’ll be sort of deserving and worthy and so Lord, reward me for this wonderful thing I plan to do for you, if you’ll just do this for me.” You’re trying to bargain with God. Not necessary. Far more apt to receive if you’ll just come strictly on the basis of God’s grace. Lord, be merciful to me. Just trusting God to work in your behalf, when you know you’re not deserving or worthy. I find that taking a vow is, in a sense, to trust in my flesh. Telling God that I’m going to be worthy, that I’m going to do better, “If you just will help me now, I promise Lord, this is what I’ll do for you.”

These men made again, a foolish vow. “God, we won’t let any of our daughters marry these guys.” Now, having made a foolish vow, they do even a more foolish thing in order to cover the vow.

And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. How [what] shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them of our daughters to wives (21:6-8)?

“So, we’ve made this dumb vow,” rather than saying, “Lord that was a stupid vow, we’re sorry, forgive us.” They’re going to commit evil to cover for the dumb vow.

And they said, What one is there [is there any] of the tribes of Israel that came not [that did not come] up to Mizpeh [in other words were any of the cities not represented because if they weren’t represented, they weren’t there when we made the vow] to the Lord? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabeshgilead [And they said, “Hey! No one came from the camp of Jabeshgilead] to the assembly . For the people were numbered, and, behold [they took the census and they had numbered off the tribes and so forth], there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest [the most valiant], and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man [has had relationships with a man]. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead: and yet so they sufficed them not (21:8-14).

So there still wasn't enough, there were 600 guys and only 400 gals that they were able to take in this nefarious way. But again, you see how without law and without a king, people can justify all kinds of evil. Beware of the justification of evil. One of the weakest of all justifications is, "God made me this way." Beware of the justification of evil, because evil cannot be justified, and there is no justification for this horrible action, sending down 12,000 men to wipe out Jabeshgilead, kill all of the people that were there, the women, the children, save only alive, the young virgins, bring them back. Totally wrong. They're still missing 200. So what they do is equally wrong to supply the 200.

And the people repented them [the people were sorry] for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters [we made a vow, and so we can't give them our daughters]: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin [because we said, "Cursed is any man who gives his daughter to be married to a Benjamite]. Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly [every year] in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; And see [watch], and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man [catch everyone of you] his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. And in those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

So we see how that doesn't work. It's anarchy. Even when you have a council, it can be a evil council. What they did was inexcusable, there is no rational justification for the actions of these people. We have to be guided by the law of God. We have to be guided by principals. Unfortunately man must have laws and must have proper enforcement of laws, or else there's a total breakdown in your whole social structure.

There was no king in Israel. Everyone was doing right in his own eyes and we see the results. We see the horrible crimes that were committed against others. The Bible tells us that we should have respect for those who are in authority and have power over us, because God has appointed them.

Man needs to have laws and man needs to have enforcement of those laws. Can you imagine if we had no law enforcement in Orange County, for one week? If every law enforcement officer decided to just take off. No highway patrol, no sheriff's department, no city police departments, no law enforcement for a whole week. None of you would be safe. Driving home tonight would be the most frightening experience of your life! Because people are crazy! We need to be protected against ourselves. I was driving on Christmas day and I saw a law enforcement officer and I prayed for him. I said, "Oh God, bless that fellow. He probably would like to be at home with his family today, enjoying Christmas but, yet because of people's stupidity, they don't have enough sense to protect themselves, we have to pay him to watch over us, to make us conform to the law, which are there for our own safety and for our own protection.

We need to be governed by principals. Those who have come to Jesus Christ have become subject to the principals of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The laws are for people with no principals. Paul the apostle said that we are to love one another, even as we love ourselves. If you are governed by the principal of love, you need no law. Against such, there is no law. If you have a real love and concern for the person next to you, as much as you have for yourself, you would need no law at all. You don't need anybody to tell you to not hurt him,

or not take from him, or whatever. Laws are for the unlawful and it's a necessary part of our society.

Israel was in bad shape, and yet God still owned them as His people. What is true of Israel, is, I'm afraid, true of much of the church, it's in bad shape. Everybody's seeming to do their own thing, what's right in their own eyes. How we need to wait upon God and how we need to seek God. Out of all of this malaise.

We're going to get another story next week, and in this next story, we're going to see in the midst of the civil and religious confusion, God was working. That's always comforting to know, God is working. Though the scene often times looks rather desperate and hopeless, God is at work in the hearts and lives of those that are yielded to Him. May our hearts and lives be yielded, that God might be working in us in these days of moral corruption and decay. The beautiful story of Ruth. One of my favorite books of the Bible, and we'll be studying Ruth next week. It's great to see that in the midst of national moral decline, God is at work. Shall we pray?

Father we thank you that you are at work, and we pray that you would work in our hearts Lord, in these days. Lord we are so prone to react against the evil that we see. We desire to react against the evil. Lord there are so many times when we would like to take justice into our own hands, and we would like to bring judgement upon the transgressor. But Lord, help us, that we would not just react to a situation, but that we would seek your will, your way, your plan, your mind. And may we become the instruments Lord, through which you might, work your work, in a sad and corrupted world. Help us Lord, that we might be the salt of the earth. Help us Father, that we might be the light of the world, and may we oh God, bow our knee before King Jesus and may we follow Him. In His name we pray, Amen.

The final countdown of the old year, but God's going to give us a new one, to serve Him, and I pray that God will be with you as we are in a time of looking back and looking ahead. Looking back on the past blessings and work of God, but looking ahead to yet even a greater work of God's Spirit in our church, in our lives, in our community. May we become God's instruments, following His will, fulfilling His plan to reach Orange County. May we wait upon God that He might show us His method by which He has designed to reach this community for Jesus Christ, and then may we be instruments that He can use. May God bless you as you serve Him, may God guide you, may He anoint you, and may we together become a mighty force for God, in Jesus' name.