

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 19

- Vv. 1- 9 *The Levite in Bethlehem.* The Levite from Ephraim had taken a concubine from Bethlehem-judah. When she was unfaithful to him, she returned to her father's house and stayed there for four months. The Levite went to Bethlehem-judah to ask her to return to him. The kind hospitality of the woman's father caused the Levite to linger longer than he had originally intended to stay.
- Vv. 10-15 *The Levite lodged in Gibeah.* The continued pleading of the woman's father prevented the Levite from leaving Bethlehem-judah until the day was so far spent that he could not reach his home before nightfall. When he came to Gibeah, he stopped and intended to spend the night in the street.
- Vv. 16-26 *The death of the concubine.* An old man coming from the field at the close of day saw the Levite in the streets and took him, his servant, and his concubine to his house. The wicked men of the city insisted that they be allowed to commit acts of sexual perversion

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with the Levite. Instead, the Levite gave his concubine to them, and they mistreated her all the night long until she was left dying at the door of the host's house.

Vv. 27-30 *Israel alerted of the sin in Gibeah.* The Levite took the corpse of his concubine and dissected it into twelve pieces. He sent this evidence of the wicked deed done in Gibeah to all the tribes of Israel.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Hospitality is ageless.* When Abraham was given a revelation of God's intentions of destroying Sodom, three men came to him as he sat in his tent (Genesis 18:1). Abraham was concerned for the comfort of these strange visitors, and he entertained them royally. The father-in-law of the Levite took the Levite into his house and kept him there for more than four days. He was still reluctant to see his guest leave. The old man coming from the field in Benjamin took the strangers from Ephraim into his house. Christians are enjoined not to forget to show love unto strangers "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). Gaius, the recipient of the third epistle of John, was commended because brethren and strangers were welcome in his house (III John -5-8).
2. *The imagination of man's heart is evil continually.* In the days before the flood it was said that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Sodom and Gomorrah became so wicked that God could no longer spare these twin cities. Not even ten righteous people were found there, for God said He would spare them for the sake of ten

righteous people (Genesis 18:32b) Once again in the days of the judges the darkness of men's hearts is revealed in the tragic death of the Levite's concubine.

3. *Love rejoiceth not in evil.* There were some good people left in Israel. When they saw the evidence of the crime in Gibeah, they 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 until this day. Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds" (19:30). The Apostle Paul said that love never rejoiceth in unrighteousness but rejoiceth with the truth (I Corinthians 13:6).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Crime at Gibeah and Its Punishment 19:1-21:25

The Levite and His Concubine 19:1-30

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

4 And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and

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the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

6 And 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 all night, and let thine heart be merry.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

8 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 eat both of them.

9 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 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 on your way, that thou mayest go home.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him.

11 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 into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

12 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.

13 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.

14 And they passed on and went their way; and the

sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.

15 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.

16 And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites.

17 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? and whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.

19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing.

20 And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.

21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

22 Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at 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.

23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I

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pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

24 Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, 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.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

26 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.

27 And her lord 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.

28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

29 And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

30 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.

I. When did the evils recorded in this chapter take place? 19:1

The death of the Levite's concubine occurred sometime during the period of the judges. It was described as the era when "there was no king in Israel." Once again

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the Bible student needs to be reminded that this event probably did not occur after the death of Samson, Chapters seventeen and eighteen tell the story of the establishment of the idolatrous worship set up by the men from Dan. Chapters nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one tell the story of the death of the Levite's concubine and the civil war which followed. Both appendices following the close of the sixteenth chapter of Judges are designed to give insight into the life of the period.

2. *What were the evils of concubinage? 19:2*

Concubines did not have the ties of family devotion and were easily led into sin. The concubine of the Levite played the harlot against him and eventually returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. She remained separated from her husband for four months. In the days of Abraham, Hagar was used by Sarah to raise up a son by natural means instead of waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled through herself. As a result, jealousy came into Abraham's family; and eventually Hagar and Ishmael were forced to flee (Genesis 21 :21). God had never intended for a man to have more than one wife. The two were to become one flesh and live together in all the blessings of matrimony.

3. *Why did the woman take her husband to her father's house? 19:3*

The Levite spoke kindly to his concubine who had sinned against him and fled from him. He wanted to persuade her to return with him to the land of Ephraim. As a result of his kind approach to her she gladly brought him to her father's house. Her father was pleased to meet the Levite and entertained him royally.

4. *What indications are given of the easy habits of the time? 19:5*

They seemed to be in no hurry to end a visit. No

pressing duties called them away. The three days which

were spent in the house of the concubine's father were devoted largely to eating and drinking. Their hearts were merry, and none of them seemed to be particularly distressed over the unfaithfulness of the concubine. There are no national calamities to upset the domestic scene, and the passage presents the picture of a time of great tranquility.

5. *Why did the woman's father insist on his staying?*

19:7, 8

The concubine's father seems to have been especially happy to have his daughter's husband in his house. One gets the impression from reading the narrative that this was the first time the man had met the fellow who took his daughter to be a concubine. Normally a man would arrange for some kind of dowry before he could take another man's daughter to be his wife or concubine. Even if the father of the concubine had already met the Levite, he was glad for him to make this journey from the north country to his home in Bethlehem. After he arrived, he wanted him to stay as long as possible.

6. *What was the distance traveled? 19:10*

From Shiloh to Bethlehem would be not more than a day's journey. It would have been rather easy for the Levite to make the trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in less than half of a day. He could have traveled then on his donkey from Jerusalem to the house of the Lord during the rest of the day. Since he did not get an early start, however, he was able to travel only as far as Gibeah before the sun went down.

7. *Why did the Levite refuse to stay in Jerusalem? 19:12*

The Israelites had failed to drive the Jebusites from the citadel which was later called Jerusalem. Joshua had defeated the southern coalition which was led by Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem. The territory including the

site had been assigned to the tribe of Benjamin, but the Benjamites had failed to drive out the Jebusites. As a result, we read that the Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem until the day of the writing of the book of Judges (Judges 1 :21). It was not until David took the city after his seven-year reign at Hebron and made it his capital that Jerusalem came finally into the possession of the Israelites. Since the inhabitants of the site of Jerusalem were not Israelites, the Levite was afraid to stay among them. He felt that these Canaanite peoples would be antagonistic towards him, but he little dreamed of the trouble he would find in a city belonging to one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

8. *Where was Gibeah? 19:13*

Gibeah was in the territory of Benjamin, just north of Jerusalem. It was the home of Saul, who became Israel's first king. The site of the settlement was on the top of a hill north of Jerusalem. From this vantage point the inhabitants could see all the way to the Jordan valley on the east. They could see the hill country of Ephraim to the north. To the south lay the city of Jerusalem. On the west, the hill country of Judah rose to the horizon.

9. *Where was Ramah? 19:13*

Ramah was another height on still farther north from Gibeah. The Levite felt that he would be able to make it to Gibeah or Ramah before the sun went down, and for that reason he did not accept his servant's proposal that they spend the night in Jebus. Ramah was the home of Samuel (I Samuel 1:1) . The word itself means "height," and both Gibeah and Ramah were no doubt in sight as the Levite spoke about them.

10. *Why did the man sit down in the street? 19:15*

The Levite did not find any inn where he could find public lodging. No acquaintance lived in the city. When

he sat down in the street, no man had invited him to his

house. He was preparing to spend the night in the street. Travelers are often forced to this extreme; and people of ancient times would lie on the ground, spread their large coats over them, and wait for the coming day. The Levite felt safer in the streets of a town than in the open highway where robbers and wild animals would threaten his safety.

11. Where had the old man been working? 19:16

It was customary for people to live in the villages and go to their fields to work during the day. When the sun set, they returned to the villages in order to find protection. As they lived together, they were able to protect one another. In addition, they enjoyed the fellowship as the men sat in the gates of the city and discussed the events of the day. Fellowship sometimes degraded into corruption as it had in Gibeah. These people, too, felt safer inside a city's walls than in the open field.

12. Where was the house of the Lord? 19:18

The Tabernacle was in Shiloh. Joshua had made arrangements for its being set up there before he died (Joshua 19 :51). Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun distributed the land to the children of Israel *as* they met in Shiloh at the door of the tent of meeting. The Ark and the Tabernacle remained in Shiloh until the days of Eli when the Ark was captured by the Philistines. *13. Why did the man of Gibeah take the Levite to his*

house? 19:20

The man who came out of the fields to lodge in his house in Gibeah was also of Mount Ephraim. The rest of the people were members of the tribe of Benjamin. For this reason the Levite found a ready reception in the house of the old man, for the Levite, too, was from Ephraim. Furthermore, the hospitable host must have realized the wickedness of the community and feared for the safety of the Levite as he

proposed to stay in the street.

14. Who were the sons of Baia? 19:22

This constantly recurring phrase is transliterated in the King James Version. In the American Standard Version it is translated. These men are called "certain base fellows," They were wicked, and the imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only wicked continually. Eli's two sons, who committed lewd acts with women who served at the Tabernacle, were also called by this name (I Samuel 2:12). In addition, it is said "they knew not the Lord." Certainly any man who acts as these men did are men who do not know, at least do not serve, the Lord.

15. Why did the host try to stop the men? 19:23, 24

The lord of the house felt that it was a special crime for these men of Gibeah to take a stranger who had found hospitality in his house and treat him shamefully. He did not rebuke them very sharply, At least he did not say that this was a sin against the law which God had given to the people of Israel by Moses. He simply called it folly and based his objection on the fact that the man had been invited to be a guest in his house.

16. Who brought forth the concubine? 19:25

The host had a daughter, a maiden; and he offered her to the base men who had come to get the Levite. He also told them that the Levite had a concubine and he offered to bring these two women out to them in order that they might humble them and do with them what seemed good to them. The men did not hearken to the host, however; and it is apparent that the Levite himself took his concubine and brought her forth unto them. He must have overheard his host trying to save him by offering his own daughter and the concubine. He was willing to make this sacrifice and give his concubine to the men who abused her all night.

17. Why did the Levite dissect his concubine? 19:29

The Levite cut his concubine into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He wanted them to have this vivid evidence of the terrible crime which had been committed in Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul, when he was asked to be king of Israel, sent a message with similar vivid evidence as he cut up his oxen and sent them around among the tribes of Israel. This was Saul's way of calling the people of Israel to war (I Samuel 11 :7). The Levite must have hoped for the people of Israel to come to Gibeah to punish the wicked men who had killed his concubine.

18. What message was sent with the pieces? 19:30

There is no record of any written message going with the pieces of the concubine which were distributed among the tribes of Israel. It must have been clear to the recipients of this bloody testimony, however, that they were expected to do something about the crime. As a result, the reaction was quick. Those who considered the deed said that nothing like it had ever happened throughout all the time Israel had spent in Canaan. Such a wicked deed could not be allowed to go without punishment.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 19

1. Where was the home of the Levite?
2. Where was the home of the concubine of the Levite?
3. How long had the Levite stayed in the home of his father-in-law before he started to go home?
4. On what day did he finally depart?
5. Where did the servant of the Levite propose staying all night?
6. Where did the Levite want to go before stopping for the night?
7. Where did they finally stay all night?

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- 8, In what tribe was this city?
9. Where did the Levite tell his host he was going?
10. Into how many pieces was the concubine dissected?