

Judges 19-21 • Civil War Among Believers

Introduction

The book of Judges is really a book about wars. Mostly it's about wars with the enemies of God who are trying to influence Israel away from Him such as the Philistines, Jebusites, etc., but ultimately it ends up telling about the worst war of all: civil war. The casualties are always worst in a civil war because they all come from the same side originally. We know that from a spiritual point of view we will engage in battle with cults, false religions, or even atheists, but the worst war we will ever know is the one with other believers, with other elements of the church.

¹Now it came about in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, who took a concubine for himself from Bethlehem in Judah. ²But his concubine played the harlot against him, and she went away from him to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for a period of four months. ³Then her husband arose and went after her to speak tenderly to her in order to bring her back, taking with him his servant and a pair of donkeys. So she brought him into her father's house, and when the girl's father saw him, he was glad to meet him. ⁴His father-in-law, the girl's father, detained him; and he remained with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

⁵Now on the fourth day they got up early in the morning, and he prepared to go; and the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Sustain yourself with a piece of bread, and afterward you may go."

⁶So both of them sat down and ate and drank together; and the girl's father said to the man, "Please be willing to spend the night, and let your heart be merry."

⁷Then the man arose to go, but his father-in-law urged him so that he spent the night there again.

⁸On the fifth day he arose to go early in the morning, and the girl's father said, "Please sustain yourself, and wait until afternoon"; so both of them ate.

⁹When the man arose to go along with his concubine and servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Behold now, the day has drawn to a close; please spend the night. Lo, the day is coming to

[Read 19:1-4]

Q: What might be important about the fact that the woman comes from "Bethlehem in Judah"?

A: This is the exact place spoken of in the preceding chapters from where false religion began and spread. The marital adultery mentioned here is almost certainly alluding to spiritual adultery as well.

Q: How might this be confirmed by her father's actions?

A: Living in Bethlehem, a place now devoted to false religion, he completely ignores the Old Testament Law where such sin is concerned and acts as if nothing has really happened. There is no accountability or concern for reconciliation.

Q: From a strict, Old Testament point of view, why might the Levites actions be surprising?

A: The wording in v.2 that she "*played the harlot against him*" means that he most likely had proof of what she did, which according to Old Testament Law demanded that she be put to death for this sin. Instead, he seeks to reconcile with her.

Point: While adultery is a biblically justifiable reason for divorce, it does not mean that as a Christian we are relieved from the obligation to make every effort to first reconcile. Just as it is possible to recover from marital adultery, so it is with spiritual unfaithfulness.

[Read 19:5-10]

Q: What is most likely taking place here? Why do you suppose the father-in-law keeps enticing them to stay?

A: The father-in-law does not want them to leave, and since he cannot force them to stay against their will, he is making every attempt to get them to remain voluntarily.

Q: Why would this be particularly bad for the Levite, to stay voluntarily?

A: First, he's a Levite and his duties would mean that he would need to be at Bethel where the Tabernacle is currently located in order to fulfill his Levitical duties properly. Second, this alludes to the problem in chapters 17-18 where a Levite voluntarily remained in Bethlehem and initiated a false religion. What is implied here is another attempt at spiritual seduction to get someone called exclusively to God's service to begin serving another god.

Q: What is the primary temptation the father-in-law employs?

A: In v.6 and 9 he repeats, "*Let your heart be merry*". It is an appeal to satisfy one's self through good company and drink. Inebriation is a biblical representation of spiritual seduction and satisfying self.

an end; spend the night here that your heart may be merry. Then tomorrow you may arise early for your journey so that you may go home.”

¹⁰But the man was not willing to spend the night, so he arose and departed and came to a place opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). And there were with him a pair of saddled donkeys; his concubine also was with him.

¹¹When they were near Jebus, the day was almost gone; and the servant said to his master, “Please come, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it.”

¹²However, his master said to him, “We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners who are not of the sons of Israel; but we will go on as far as Gibeah.” ¹³He said to his servant, “Come and let us approach one of these places; and we will spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah.” ¹⁴So they passed along and went their way, and the sun set on them near Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin.

¹⁵They turned aside there in order to enter and lodge in Gibeah. When they entered, they sat down in the open square of the city, for no one took them into his house to spend the night.

¹⁶Then behold, an old man was coming out of the field from his work at evening. Now the man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was staying in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites.

¹⁷And he lifted up his eyes and saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”

¹⁸He said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, for I am from there, and I went to Bethlehem in Judah. But I am now going to my house, and no man will take me into his house. ¹⁹Yet there is both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and also bread and wine for me, your maidservant, and the young man who is with your servants; there is no lack of anything.”

²⁰The old man said, “Peace to you. Only let me take care of all your needs; however, do not spend the night in the open square.” ²¹So he took him into his house and gave the donkeys fodder, and they washed their feet and ate and drank.

Point: *We are being presented with a picture of a Christian being tempted by the things of this world first in the behavior of the woman and then that of her father in order to teach about spiritual faithfulness.*

[Read 19:11-21]

Q: What might be ironic about selecting Gibeah over Jebus?

A: Jebus, as Jerusalem was still called then, was under the direct control of the known enemies of God whereas Gibeah was settled and under the control of the Benjamites, fellow Israelites who should have not only been friends of God but technically family relations.

Q: What might be ironic about choosing between Gibeah or Ramah in v.13?

A: Although both belong to the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeah will eventually be known as the birthplace of Saul, Ramah as the birthplace of Samuel. This might be hinting at the spiritual roots each of these come from.

Q: What was the first warning sign that something was wrong?

A: When “no one took them into his house”. The spirit of hospitality which they would normally have expected, and specifically rejected Jebus in order to attain in Gibeah, was absent.

Q: What was the second warning sign that something was wrong?

A: The one man that finally offered hospitality wasn't actually a full-fledged native of this Benjamite town. He is described as “from the hill country of Ephraim” which is where the Levite was originally described as coming from. (v.1) The only friendly face is himself a stranger in this place.

Q: What was the third warning sign something was wrong?

A: The Levite's point in v.19 is that they do not have material needs and therefore it should be visible to all that they are not going to be a burden to anyone. But the implication is that the people of that place see even the most cursory aspects of hospitality as being burdensome and a bother.

Point: *When believers no longer behave like believers it is more than likely that they have become exactly like the world they live in. The greater spiritual picture here is not of someone who is merely backslidden, but completely forsaking God and returning to their old life in the world.*

²²While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows, surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have relations with him.”

²³Then the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not commit this act of folly.

²⁴Here is my virgin daughter and his concubine. Please let me bring them out that you may ravish them and do to them whatever you wish. But do not commit such an act of folly against this man.”

²⁵But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and brought her out to them; and they raped her and abused her all night until morning, then let her go at the approach of dawn.

²⁶As the day began to dawn, the woman came and fell down at the doorway of the man’s house where her master was, until full daylight. ²⁷When her master arose in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, then behold, his concubine was lying at the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸He said to her, “Get up and let us go,” but there was no answer. Then he placed her on the donkey; and the man arose and went to his home.

²⁹When he entered his house, he took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel. ³⁰All who saw it said, “Nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!”

[Read 19:22-30]

Q: Why might this story sound familiar?

A: It sounds remarkably similar to the story of Lot living in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Q: But what is significantly different about this story from Sodom and Gomorrah?

A: Whereas the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were unbelievers practicing sin of the worst kind imaginable, the residents of Gibeah are Israelites, those who are supposed to be believers; yet they are engaging in the same, horrific sinful practices as the worst example of unbelievers of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Q: Why is it significant that the residents of Gibeah are described in v.22 as “worthless fellows”?

A: This is a specific term used repeatedly throughout Scripture to describe someone who is a complete and total non-believer, someone completely despised by God.

1. In Dt. 13:12-18 it describes people who have left the Lord and become such a bad spiritual influence that the rest of Israel is required to destroy them and everything they own in order to be rid of its influence.
2. In 1 Sam. 2:12 it describes the sons of Eli with the additional qualifying descriptor that “*they did not know the LORD*”.
3. In 1 Kings 21:8-10 it describes false witnesses presented by Jezebel in order to steal Naboth’s vineyard for the king, a story which represents spiritual seduction and deception.

Q: What does the owner of the house attempt to do?

A: He attempts to confront them with the issue of sin, entreating them, “*Please do not act so wickedly*”. (v.23)

Q: What is being taught by the fact that the men abused the women all night but released them in the morning?

A: It testifies to the greater spiritual lesson that their works, being works of darkness, could not bear the light.

Q: Stepping back a moment, what is the overall spiritual meaning of this story?

A: An attempt at reconciliation from unfaithfulness was met with unfaithfulness of the worst kind, destroying the body with which reconciliation was being attempted. The woman could be a representation of the body – the church – assaulted by believers so compromised by the world that they aren’t even considered believers in God’s eyes anymore but simply “*worthless fellows*” – the biblical term for unbelievers.

Point: *When believers turn upon believers, the result is that the body of believers is actually torn asunder by the degree of unfaithfulness present. The only resolution is going to be for the body to completely destroy and be rid of the cancerous influence.*

¹Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah. ²The chiefs of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword. ³(Now the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the sons of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this wickedness take place?”

⁴So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, “I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin. ⁵But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died. ⁶And I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the land of Israel’s inheritance; for they have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. ⁷Behold, all you sons of Israel, give your advice and counsel here.”

⁸Then all the people arose as one man, saying, “Not one of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us return to his house. ⁹But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up against it by lot. ¹⁰“And we will take 10 men out of 100 throughout the tribes of Israel, and 100 out of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000 to supply food for the people, that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, they may punish them for all the disgraceful acts that they have committed in Israel.” ¹¹Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.

¹²Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has taken place among you? ¹³Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove this wickedness from Israel.” But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel.

¹⁴The sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the sons of Israel. ¹⁵From the cities on that day the sons of Benjamin were numbered, 26,000 men who draw

[Read 20:1-17]

Q: Why is it important that everyone showed up “including the land of Gilead”?

A: Gilead described the lands assigned to tribes on the others side of the Jordan River. So “*from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead*” shows 100% participation by every tribe in Israel. It would be like saying, “the whole United States including Alaska and Hawaii”.

Q: What is the meaning of “Mizpah”, the place they chose to gather?

A: It means “watch tower”. They not only assembled there physically in preparation for what was to come, but assembled there spiritually to look over the situation in order to properly assess what to do.

Q: Why might it be significant that they “assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah”?

A: It indicates the purpose for which they’ve assembled, the enforcement of God’s Word according to Dt. 13:12-18 and not strictly out of a desire for vigilante justice.

Q: What is another way of translating “chiefs”?

A: “Cornerstones”. It’s a very graphic way of describing the totality of their purpose in assembling, that they intend to fully carry out God’s Word in this matter.

Q: What do the people do first after arriving at Mizpah?

A: They inquire as to the nature of “*this wickedness*”. (v.3)

Q: What might sound familiar about Israel’s choosing to go up against Gibeah “by lot”?

A: This is the manner in which the often went up against the enemy. They are making a statement that since according to biblical definition the Benjamites in Gibeah are indeed “*worthless fellows*”, they will be treated the way any other enemy would be treated.

Q: How did Israel specifically desire to address the problem?

A: Since the problem was with the city of Gibeah, then it wanted to destroy Gibeah per the instructions of Deuteronomy.

Q: What did Israel try to do with the whole tribe of Benjamin?

A: According to v.12-13 they tried to confront Benjamin with the sin within it by asking, “*What is this wickedness that has taken place among you?*” They provided the opportunity for Benjamin to be part of the solution.

Q: But what happened instead?

A: The whole of the tribe of Benjamin “*would not listen to the voice of their brothers*” and intervened on the city of Gibeah’s behalf causing the conflict to be elevated to a war between the whole of Israel and the entire tribe of Benjamin.

Point: *Believers have an obligation to present the truth but cannot make other people’s choices for them. Sometimes our brothers in Christ choose not to listen and pursue their own way instead. This is often the case when a group or organization is not 100% corrupt but refuses to address that element within it which is patently sinful and influencing the mainstream.*

the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered, 700 choice men. ¹⁶Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

¹⁷Then the men of Israel besides Benjamin were numbered, 400,000 men who draw the sword; all these were men of war.

¹⁸Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God and said, "Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin?"

Then the LORD said, "Judah shall go up first."

¹⁹So the sons of Israel arose in the morning and camped against Gibeah.

²⁰The men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel arrayed for battle against them at Gibeah.

²¹Then the sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and felled to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel.

²²But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day. ²³The sons of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?"

And the LORD said, "Go up against him."

²⁴Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.

²⁵Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and felled to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel; all these drew the sword.

²⁶Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ²⁷The sons of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to minister in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?"

And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

²⁹So Israel set men in ambush around

[Read 20:18-35]

Q: Why would they leave Mizpah and assemble at Bethel?

A: "Bethel" literally means "house of God" and is the place where the Tabernacle was located. It is in Ephraim along its border with Benjamin. In effect they searched the matter out in Mizpah ("watch tower") and now they're going directly to the Lord in Bethel.

Q: What is different about the way they went before the Lord the second time (v.23) from the way they came before Him the first time? (v.18)

A: The first time they merely "went up"; the second time they "went up and wept before the LORD".

Q: What is different about the way they went before the Lord the third time? (v.26)

A: This time they not only wept, but "remained there before the LORD and fasted...and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD".

Q: So why did it take three attempts before God granted them success?

A: They were physically ready but not spiritually ready. Remember that in the chapters just before this is the account of how false religion was allowed to spread throughout ALL of Israel – this was not just a problem isolated to Benjamin alone. Yes, they were supposed to address the issue of sin, but not before first addressing the issue of their OWN sin.

Point: *Revivals don't begin with the unsaved, but the saved. Judgment always begins with the house of God first. In order to drive out sin within the church overall, it has to begin at the personal level of addressing one's own sin first.*

Q: Who is ultimately credited with the victory so that we know this was as much a spiritual victory as an earthly one?

A: "And the LORD struck Benjamin before Israel". (v.35)

Gibeah. ³⁰The sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as at other times. ³¹The sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city, and they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times, on the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. ³²The sons of Benjamin said, "They are struck down before us, as at the first."

But the sons of Israel said, "Let us flee that we may draw them away from the city to the highways."

³³Then all the men of Israel arose from their place and arrayed themselves at Baal-tamar; and the men of Israel in ambush broke out of their place, even out of Maareh-geba. ³⁴When ten thousand choice men from all Israel came against Gibeah, the battle became fierce; but Benjamin did not know that disaster was close to them. ³⁵And the LORD struck Benjamin before Israel, so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day, all who draw the sword.

³⁶So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. When the men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah, ³⁷the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gibeah; the men in ambush also deployed and struck all the city with the edge of the sword.

³⁸Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city. ³⁹Then the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel, for they said, "Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle." ⁴⁰But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, Benjamin looked behind them; and behold, the whole city was going up in smoke to heaven.

⁴¹Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were terrified; for they saw that disaster was close to them.

⁴²Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them while those who came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst

[Read 20:36-45]

Q: Why was Israel not merely content to win the battle? Why did it pursue Benjamin to such extremes?

A: This is what was dictated by God's Word.

*"If you hear in one of your cities, which the Lord your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying **that some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city**, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the Lord may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, if you will listen to the voice of the Lord your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the Lord your God.*

Deuteronomy 13:12-18

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of them.⁴³ They surrounded Benjamin, pursued them without rest and trod them down opposite Gibeah toward the east.⁴⁴ Thus 18,000 men of Benjamin fell; all these were valiant warriors.⁴⁵ The rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, but they caught 5,000 of them on the highways and overtook them at Gidom and killed 2,000 of them.⁴⁶ So all of Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men who draw the sword; all these were valiant warriors.⁴⁷ But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they remained at the rock of Rimmon four months.

⁴⁸ The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found; they also set on fire all the cities which they found.

¹ Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin in marriage."

² So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly.³ They said, "Why, O LORD, God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be missing today in Israel?"

⁴ It came about the next day that the people arose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

⁵ Then the sons of Israel said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?" For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death."⁶ And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today.⁷ What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the LORD not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?"

⁸ And they said, "What one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah?" And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.⁹ For when the people were numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there.¹⁰ And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike

Q: What is the sign of God's final judgment?

A: Fire.

Q: What might be significant about the fact that the Benjamites fled to Rimmon and Gidom? (v.45)

A: Although "Rimmon" can be translated as "pomegranate", it is also the name of the Syrian false god of wind, rain and storm. It may allude to their fleeing from one false god to another rather than coming to terms with the One True God. "Gidom" means "cutting off" and represents Benjamin's final disposition both physically and spiritually as they found themselves both "cut off" from the Lord spiritually and from their inheritance in Israel physically.

Point: When a person, group, or entire organization has been investigated and confronted with the issue of sin, and steadfastly remains unrepentant and refusing to give up that sin, there is no other recourse that it can experience other than God's final judgment, its total and complete destruction. **HOWEVER:** No believer is allowed to undertake such action on their own, but only after thorough investigation of the matter and prolonged and sincere submission of it to the Lord.

[Read 21:1-25]

Q: Why do you suppose they gave such an oath in the first place?

A: It seems to mirror their outrage at what happened to the Levite's concubine.

Q: But could there be a significance about why they made such an oath at Mizpah rather than at Bethel?

A: The oath was made while they were investigating the incident at Mizpah and seems to indicate an earthly judgment from man. If it were a heavenly judgment, it probably would have been directed by the Lord when they brought the matter to Him at Bethel.

Point: The problem now is different from the original issue of dealing with unrepentant sin. Now they're dealing with how to reconcile their own judgment against a brother and how to bridge the gap of their own differences.

Q: What was the first step in reconciliation between the two groups?

A: The victor in the battle "sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly." The "righteous" group intervened on behalf of the "unrighteous" group.

Point: Ever notice that it often takes a righteous person to intercede on the part of the unrighteous? Take note of the examples of Moses, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ananias, etc.

Q: What was the second step that was taken?

A: They "offered burnt offerings and peace offerings". (v.4) They followed up the sincerity of their prayers with the sincerity of their worship and supplication.

Q: Did they render judgment against those who did not participate in the battle with Benjamin?

A: No, they were looking for those who did not send representatives to Mizpah to initially investigate the matter. (v.5) Therefore whoever was not

the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones. ¹¹This is the thing that you shall do: you shall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has lain with a man.” ¹²And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

¹³Then the whole congregation sent word and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them. ¹⁴Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead; yet they were not enough for them. ¹⁵And the people were sorry for Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

¹⁶Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?”

¹⁷They said, “There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe will not be blotted out from Israel. ¹⁸But we cannot give them wives of our daughters.” For the sons of Israel had sworn, saying, “Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”

¹⁹So they said, “Behold, there is a feast of the Lord from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah.” ²⁰And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, ²¹and watch; and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. ²²It shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, that we shall say to them, ‘Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take for each man of Benjamin a wife in battle, nor did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty.’”

²³The sons of Benjamin did so, and took wives according to their number from those who danced, whom they carried away. And they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the cities and lived

even interested enough to participate in the investigation is most likely to be experiencing the same kinds of sin and issues as found in Gibeah, or at least giving tacit approval of them.

Q: Where is Jabesh-Gilead located?

A: It’s on the other side of the Jordan to the northeast. “*Jabesh*” means “dry” and “*Gilead*” means “rocky place”.

Q: So what happened to them?

A: Basically they incurred the same judgment as Gibeah.

Q: What was the final step in the restoration process between Israel and Benjamin?

A: In v.13 Israel “*sent word...and proclaimed peace to them*”. (It’s an interesting parallel to the fact that the Gospel itself is often called “the Gospel of Peace”.) And by giving them the women from Jabesh-Gilead for wives, they restored Benjamin’s inheritance in Israel.

Q: What is the “loophole” that Israel seems to be providing Benjamin by intervening with the men of Shiloh when their daughters are taken away for brides?

A: That the men of Shiloh aren’t breaking the oath made at Mizpah to “give” their daughters in marriage to Benjamin but that their daughters are being “taken” by the Benjamites.

Q: What appears to be the final conundrum here?

A: They’re having to find a man-made solution to a man-made problem. It’s summarized in the opening and closing sentences of these chapters: “*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*”.

Point: *No one on any side of this problem from any perspective would have had any kind of problem if they had only kept God’s Word and ways to begin with and sought to return to them wholeheartedly without adding their own restrictions on top.*

Epilogue

Have you ever noticed a repeated, biblical pattern where the tribe of Benjamin is concerned? There’s an interesting cycle of which Jacob spoke when he gave his final blessings to each of his sons:

*“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And in the evening he divides the spoil.”
Genesis 49:27*

A paraphrase of this blessing might be, “He begins badly (devours the prey) but ends up well (divides the spoil).”

In this example, the tribe of Benjamin starts off badly and ends up well. In fact, it will produce the first king of Israel in Saul.

Saul will begin badly by disobeying God where the Amalekites are concerned but through his Benjamite relatives Esther and Mordecai will end up well and defeat them (represented by Haman).

The apostle Paul is from the tribe of Benjamin and starts off badly (persecuting

in them. ²⁴The sons of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went out from there to his inheritance.

²⁵In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

the church) but ends up well (as an apostle to the Gentiles).

Overall Application

We can expect to go to war with other cults and false religions, but by far the most difficult war is the one that has to be undertaken against fellow believers, people who were at one time right in their relationship with both Christ and His body the Church, but are now so unrepentant that the only option is to oppose them publicly. This can only be successful when preceded by sincere repentance and supplication on the part of the “righteous” on behalf of the “unrighteous” in order to be properly God-directed. Final judgment on the apostate only comes after judgment upon the house of God is first rendered and those truly on His side are in spiritual alignment with Him.