

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes:  
Saving the Worst for Last  
Judges 19-21

**I. Final section of the book**

- A. First part (1-3:6) – Israel fails to drive out Canaanites, did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.
- B. Central part (3:7-16) – Spiraling Cycle of sin, judgment, and God’s rescue.
- C. Final section (17-21) – Israel refuses to obey God as king and does what is right in their own eyes.

**II. The Depths of Depravity That Can Come from Rejecting God’s Rule (19)**

- A. A levite, a concubine: unfaithfulness in Israel (19:1-9)
- B. An ominous scene (19:10-21, cp Gen. 19:1-3)
- C. Sodom revived . . . in Israel?! (19:22-26)
- D. The levite’s response (19:27-30)
- E. What are we supposed to learn from this chapter? (cp. to Genesis 19)
  - 1. Benjamin, a tribe in Israel, has a city which looks like not just like the Canaanites but Sodom.
  - 2. To reject God’s authority and word is to fall back to what is right in our own eyes.

**II. Depravity Leads to Destruction (20)**

- A. Israel’s response: They gather as “one man” (20:1-13)
  - 1. Israel assembles “as one man” (1, 8, 11)
  - 2. We are glad they are united in opposing this wickedness, but it is a bit tragic  
Davis writes, “*Now why couldn’t Israel ever get that united against the Canaanites or the Midianites or the Ammonites or the Philistines? Why is it that when Israel can really get itself together it is against—Israel?*”<sup>1</sup>
- B. Benjamin stands with the wicked: extradition refused (20:12-17)
  - 1. Benjamin had its own form of tragic unity
  - 2. They stand with the men of Gibeah
  - 3. God would call for justice, but they do what is right in their own eyes in protecting the evildoers.
- C. Three battles (20:18-48)
  - 1. First battle (20:19-23) - Judah is routed
  - 2. Second battle (20:24-28) - They attack and are routed again
  - 3. Third battle (20:29-48) - They destroy Benjamin and put them under the ban ... kind of.
    - a. In some sense, we must see this as what all Israel deserves.
    - b. God had warned them that if they acted like Canaanites, they’d be under his judgment, just like the Canaanites (Deut. 8:18-20)

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, [\*Judges: Such a Great Salvation\*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 214.

### **III. A New Crisis, The Same Mindset - Everyone Doing What is Right in Their Own Eyes (21)**

- A.** Now we see the new crisis brought about by the battles (21:1-3)
1. They all made oaths to not give their daughters in marriage to Benjaminites
  2. What is ironic is that in 3:6, we saw that when Israel entered the land, they weren't worried about breaking the covenant with Yahweh and intermarrying with Canaanites (see Deut. 7:2-4).
- B.** Solution 1: Destroy another city except for its unmarried women (21:4-15)
1. What they needed was a godly king to help them sort out how to honor God in all this...but we don't get that.
  2. Instead, we get them doing what is right in their own eyes (cp. to Pharisees keeping their man-made vows while ignoring God's commands).
  3. When people do what is right in their own eyes, it isn't that they don't have good sounding rationalizations for why they do what they do. The problem is that we marshal our reason against God to get what we want.
- C.** Solution 2: Kidnap young women from a dance festival (21:16-24)
1. Another sign of a culture living by what is right in its own eyes is living by how it feels about the situation.
  2. In the end, Benjamin isn't wiped out, but the final verdict shows that the way this was accomplished was not right in God's eyes.
- D.** The final word of Judges (21:25)
1. They become king in their own eyes when God is not King.
  2. And this sets us up for the book of Samuel, where Israel gets a king.
    - a. Who is the first king? Where does he hail from? Saul, from Gibeah of Benjamin. A king like the nations.
    - b. Then, God gives them David from Bethlehem of Judah. He will fail in many ways, but he repents (God's word and authority rule). And ultimately, the Davidic throne will have a perfect king – Jesus.
- E.** What we learn a lot from these last chapters
1. Living by what we think or feel is right (rationalizations, living by feelings) leads to a total breakdown in society as well.
    - a. We can carefully apply national decline issues to our day
      - (i) We are not Israel (they were a theocracy living in covenant with God)
      - (ii) We live in the church age, under the New Covenant.
    - b. But, the national decline in Israel is the same reason every nation declines
      - (i) Rejection of God as the authority and source of truth
      - (ii) Doing what is right in our own eyes (being our own authority and truth)
    - c. It makes people unable to treat others around them justly (cp our own dehumanizing immorality, abortion, etc.)
  2. The biggest thing we learn is that we need God to graciously send a king and give us a heart that wants to do what he says is good and right.
    - a. It is grace that God didn't wipe out Israel as a whole in Judges (or all people in the Flood, or Adam and Eve when they rebelled, or you and me before coming to Christ).
    - b. It is grace that he will raise up David and promise that an everlasting and perfect king will come from his line.