

## September 15

**Scriptures:** Read Judges 19

**Key Verse:** "...No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, take counsel, and speak up!" (Judges 19:30)

### Overview

In the previous two chapters, we saw a decline in the religious condition of Israel; now, in the remaining chapters, we see a shocking example of the terrible decline in their moral condition, especially in the tribe of Benjamin, and the repercussions, which led to a civil war.

Having a concubine was a common practice among the Israelites, as was polygamy. These were ancient customs which we should not try to judge from our century's standards; rather, we must try to understand the imperfect conditions in which they lived and their limited knowledge of God. Nonetheless, it is surprising that a Levite had a concubine. This, in itself, shows a moral decline among those called to God's service.

Without a king to govern and forcibly lay down the law, each town or tribe did as it pleased (v.1). Unfortunately, the unsuspecting Levite and his concubine, while traveling, came to lodge for the night in the morally decadent town of Gibeah, one of the twenty-six Benjamite cities (Josh.18:21-28). They had decided to stop there rather than in the Jebusite city, because the inhabitants of Gibeah were fellow-Israelites. There were no inns at that time so they naturally expected hospitality from their brethren. Hospitality in the Middle East is regarded almost as a sacred duty, but no Benjamite showed them kindness; only a fellow Ephraimite took them in for the night. As a resident of Gibeah, he must have known it would not be safe for them to remain in the city square.

In Gibeah, however, they were not even safe in the man's home. The perverted men of the city came and demanded that the host hand over the traveler so they could abuse him in homosexual activities. Their hearts were set against God and far from the holiness that God had demanded of them; therefore, they were first defiled from within their hearts, which led to outward defilement and terrible sin (Mark 7:21; Rom.1:24-32). The whole situation was very similar to what happened at Lot's house in Sodom (Gen.19:1-9), and a comparison shown that they considered homosexuality the worst sexual sin. However, to offer the woman instead was equally wrong and ungodly.

The Levite, as well, was wicked in a different way; in order to protect himself, he selfishly gave them his concubine and, without consideration for her, retired for the night. In the morning, his attitude toward her was still cold and unconcerned (it is easy to understand why she had left him and returned to her father's home, v.2). Although the men had horribly abused her all night, it seems he did not become upset until he realized she was dead.

The Levite then cut up her corpse and sent a portion by messenger to each tribe. This was a drastic and shocking measure done in an attempt to stir up moral indignation among all the tribes and elicit their help for retribution. He was successful, for every tribe felt responsible to take

action against the wicked men from Gibeah who committed such an atrocity in Israel (chapter 20). The horrible crime was shamefully remembered in Israel for centuries to come (Hos.9:9; 10:9), and even at that unruly time the people admitted that never before had such a terrible thing happened among the children of Israel (v.30). They, of all nations, were supposed to be the purest and most holy. This incident awakened them to their responsibility before God to keep His covenant people and land free from such evil. Likewise, the covenant people of God today have the responsibility to see that His Church remains pure and holy before Him.

### **Prayer**

Oh God, raise up in Your servants a righteous anger against sin, that we might be a church “without spot or wrinkle”