Judges 20-21

Review…

- **Chapter 19 - Chaos in Israel…**
  - There was no King in Israel - the theme of the last 5 chapters of Judges...
    - It was not that they did not have a king - it was they refused to follow their KING...
    - Because they rejected God they had no moral compass - the nation was in chaos...
  - Chaos in their marriages - the Levite and the Concubine (*a girlfriend*)...
    - She ended up running away to her father's house - unhappy with her relationship...
    - The Levite went after her - but was only willing to wait 4 days to get her back
  - Chaos in their communities - The Levite stopped by a city of Benjamin - Gibeah...
    - No one would take them in - until an old man came by an insisted they say with him...
    - The men of the city came to rape the Levite - instead he gave them his Concubine...
    - She crawled back to door in the morning - the Levite came out and said 'lets go!'...
  - Chaos in their values - the message to Israel...
    - The Levite took the body of the concubine and cut it up into 12 pieces...
    - Sent to the 12 tribes of Israel - what are we going to do about this / who will speak up!

Right in our own eyes… (*5 things*)

- **1st - Confronting sin… vs. 1-11** Read: Judges 20:1-3
  - 1st - The 11 tribes (*not Benjamin*) met at Mizpah - 400,000 warriors in all... vs. 1-7
    - They all wanted to know how this crime had happened - the Levite retold the story...
    - He concluded by saying - 'Now Israel must decide what should be done about this!'...
    - When we know someone is caught up in sin - there are two possible reactions...
    - We can either ignore the sin / or we can confront them about their sin...
    - Too often we ignore what is happening - justifying 'it is not our problem'...
    - People telling dirty jokes at the store / people getting drunk in the plaza...
    - What we fail to recognize is that the bad example of others does affect us...
    - And we need to be involved in the lives of those around us - taking a stand for Jesus!
    - It is also much better to confront sin / confront the person in love...
    - Than to let them live in sin - never have anyone correct them - then end up in hell!
  - 2nd - 'None of us will go home till we take revenge on Gibeah!'... 8-11
    - So Israel united and prepared to attack and wipe out the entire city...
    - God commanded Israel in **Deuteronomy 13:12-18** concerning a city that sinned...
    - They were to completely destroy a city - but only after investigating the facts...
    - Israel was about to wipe out an entire city - having only heard one side of the story...
    - And the whole city was not guilty - in fact the old man had helped out the Levite!
    - Almost as dangerous as doing nothing - is overreacting to sin...
    - Someone might make a convincing accusation - but it was just their perspective...
    - **Proverbs 18:17** - "Any story sounds true until someone sets the record straight."

- A wise man does not just listen to one side of a story - he takes the time to hear both!

- **2ND - CHOOSING SIN OVER GOD... VS. 12-17** READ: JUDGES 20:12-16
  - 1st - Israel sent messengers to Benjamin - 'turn over the evil men of Gibeah'...
    - Instead the tribe of Benjamin gathered at Gibeah to defend the city...
    - 26,000 warriors in all came to join the 700 men who lived in the city...
    - Rather than standing up for God / the Word - they sided with murderess and rapists!
    - If someone we know is caught up in sin - and we do nothing / or defend them...
    - We become as guilt as they are - we end up sharing in their sin!
  - 2nd - 700 of their warriors were ambidextrous - could use their right or left hand...
    - They were so skilled with a sling they could hit a single hair - and not miss!
      - The sling was an extremely dangerous weapon if used right...
      - Ancient writers talk about slinging a led ball so fast - it turned red with air friction!
      - It was said a skilled warrior could lethally hit a mark 200m away!
      - The point simply being - these warriors from Benjamin were VERY GOOD!
    - The word for 'not miss' is actually the word 'sin' (*Hebrew - chata*)...
      - It meant they spent A LOT of time practicing their aim - so they would not sin...
      - Unfortunately they did not spend time working on their relationship with God!
      - We might work very hard in life so that we do not 'sin' when it comes to our work...
      - But how much of our time do we dedicate to our relationship with God...
      - There are only so many hours in a day - we have to choose where we spend our time
      - Too often we invest so much in everything but God - we end up sin...
      - 'Missing the mark' - shoot for perfection but missing a relationship with God!

- **3RD - CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL... VS. 18-48** READ: JUDGES 20:18-28 / 46-48
  - 1st - Israel went to Bethel (*Tabernacle*) to ask God who should lead the attack... vs. 18-21
    - The High Priest Phinehas (*great grandson of Aaron*) - used the Urim and Thummim...
      - God answered that Judah should lead the battle - but it did not go well for Israel...
      - The men of Benjamin were defending their home - and fought ferociously...
      - So Benjamin defeated Israel - and killed 22,000 Israelites on the field of battle...
    - With 400,000 men Israel had 15x as many men as the tribe of Benjamin...
      - They were trusting in their numbers - rather then depending on the Lord...
      - If they had trusting in God - 300 men might have been enough to win - like Gideon!
      - We tend to depend on what we can see – money/resources to answer our problems
      - So God will let those things fail in our life - so we learn to depend on Him!
    - They were also fighting for a 'just cause' - punishing the wicked city of Gibeah...
      - But they were trusting in their 'just cause' - rather than in the Lord...
      - Just because the fight is just - does not mean God has called you to the fight...
      - Often people end up in battles God never intended them to be a part of...
      - As a result they end up defeated - and wonder what went wrong!
  - 2nd - Israel went and wept before the Lord at Bethel... vs. 22-25
    - They asked God - 'should they attack Benjamin again' - the Lord told them yes...
      - So Israel went up a 2nd day - and again Benjamin defeated them - killing 18,000!
      - Gibeah needed to be punished - but Israel was not ready to be used by God...

- They had not humbled themselves - and they had their own sin to deal with first...
- Before God can use us to work in other people's lives - He has to work in our own!
  - It is easy to point a finger at the sins of others - but they could easily point back...
  - We need to humbly deal with our own hearts before we reach out to help others...
  - Get rid of our sin before we 'try' and help someone else for their struggle...

o 3rd - Israel went and fast before the Lord at Bethel / offering sacrifices... vs. 26-28
- This is the first time in the Bible fasting is mentioned as a way to get help from God...
  - The Israelites finally took a moment to sit down - and focus on the Lord!
  - Too often we get so busy we never have the time to sit down and talk to Jesus...
  - Fasting in one way in which we can remove distractions - so we can hear the Lord...
  - Rather than rushing around to prepare a meal - we skip it to spend with Jesus...
  - Rather than staying up late watching TV - we get up early to listen to God!
- They learned the hard way - they were not going anywhere without God's blessing...
  - Humbled - Israel was now ready to be used by God - deal with Benjamin...
  - God answered and told them to go out again - He would give them victory!
  - Many people spend years exhausting themselves - trying to be successful...
  - Only to find one failure after another - because they are striving in their own efforts
  - Tired - feel like everything you try does not work - sit at the feet of Jesus...
  - It is only after we get directions from the Lord - we find we are victorious!
  - **Psalm 1:2** – "The Blessed man who delights is in the Word of the LORD, and in His Word he meditates day and night... whatever he does will prosper!"

o 4th - On the 3rd day - Israel set a trap for Benjamin... vs. 29-28
- The warriors of Benjamin were drawn away from the town...
  - The warriors of Israel pretended to be defeated again - 30 men were killed...
  - But Israel had divided their troops into three different armies...
  - While Benjamin fought the 1st group / the 2nd group waited near the city...
  - Once Benjamin had been lured out - the 2nd group burnt the city to the ground!
  - The rising smoke was the signal for the 3rd group to attack from behind...
- Surrounded Israel was able to kill 18,000 warriors of Benjamin!
  - I like the persistence Israel had - they did not give up after several failures...
  - So often when we give up just because things do not go our way....
  - We need to be persistent in stepping out in faith - do not give up!
  - I imagine we will be amazed at how much God wanted to do in our lives...
  - But it never happened simply because we gave up too quickly...

o 5th - Benjamin realized they were in trouble - and tried to run...
- But Israel chased them down - killing another 7,000 men along the road...
  - Only 600 men were able to escape the stronghold of the Rock of Rimmon...
  - They were able to hold out there for 4 months - in the meantime...
  - The army of Israel killed everyone in Benjamin (*man/woman/child/animal*)...
  - They burnt all their cities to the ground - leaving only the 600 men still alive!
- This was no longer justice - this was revenge for the 40,000 Israelites killed!
  - We naturally want to get back - take revenge - on those who attack us!
  - Even after they apologize - we want to hold onto our hurt - we want 'justice'!
  - **Romans 12:19** - "Never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God..."
  - But we are called to forgive - no matter what anyone has done to us - **Luke 17:1-10**

- **4TH - KEEPING THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN ALIVE... VS. 1-24** READ: JUDGES 21:1-3
  - 1st - The Israelites had made a vow at Mizpah... vs. 1-3
    - They vowed not to give any of their daughters to a man from Benjamin...
      - The problem was in their rage - they killed all the women from Benjamin...
      - Now there was only 600 men left - and no women who could marry them...
      - There was a very real possibility one of the 12 tribes would cease to exist...
    - In their anger they had been quick to make a vow - now they regretted!
      - Too often people speak - then take the time to think about what they said...
      - Better to think first about what we are going to say - the consequence of our words...
      - Then have to take back quick words - promises we wish we had not said!
  - 2nd - Finding wives for the men of Benjamin... vs. 4-24
    - Israel took account if anyone had not been there when they made the vow...
      - The problem was they had threatened to kill anyone who did not show...
      - But it turned out there actually was one city - Jabesh-Gilead that had not shown up...
      - So they sent 12,000 men and killed all the men / married women / and kids there...
      - But they kept the virgins alive - 400 of them - as wives for the men of Benjamin...
      - You would think that it would be better to break a vow - than murder a whole city...
    - The 600 men of Benjamin returned to their homes - but there were not enough wives!
      - So Israel came up with a plan - to give the men wives - but not 'break their vow'...
      - At one of the Feasts of Israel (*we are not told which one*)...
      - The 200 remaining men of Benjamin would hide in the fields...
      - They could then run out and kidnap any virgin they wanted from the festival...
      - If the virgin's family complained - the leaders would talk to them...
      - It was Israel's fault the Benjamite women were dead / they made the foolish vow...
      - So they should just let the men of Benjamin be - it was their only hope to take a wife
      - And since the father's had not given permission - it did not break the Israelite's vow!
      - So rather than 'break of vow' - they would rather allow kidnapping and rape...

- **5TH - BECAUSE EVERY MAN DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES... VS.25** READ: JUDGES 21:25
  - 1st - We are reminded again that Israel had no king...
    - As a result every man was left to do what he thought was right...
    - Including cutting up a dead Concubine - because she had been gang raped...
    - Including running out to war - without asking God what the right response was...
    - Including almost wiping out an entire tribe - man / woman / child / animals...
    - Including murdering a city - just to steal their virgin women as brides...
    - Including kidnapping and letting their own daughters be raped - just to keep a vow!
  - 2nd - What is really important in life - what is right...
    - If we do not know the Lord - if we are not learning His word - we do not know...
    - We end up doing our best to guess - and more often than not - we get it wrong!
    - We choose those things that are important to us at the moment - and ignore the rest...
    - We make sure we have nice clothes to wear on Sunday / we do not use curse words...
    - But we are also lying / stealing from our neighbor - we have missed the big picture!
    - **Matthew 23:24** - "[We] strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"
    - We need a King to reign over us - we need Jesus to be the Lord of our lives...
    - So we know what is important in life - so we live our lives to the Glory of God!