

## The Worst Story of the Bible

It is perhaps the worst story in the Bible. A Levite and his concubine were travelling from Bethlehem to Shiloh, where the tabernacle, the house of God, was at that time (cf. **Judges 18:31; 19:18**). The day was nearly over when they came near Jebus (which would become Jerusalem in David's day), but the Levite wouldn't lodge there. Foreigners lived there, and he wanted to stay among his own people. So he travelled on to Gibeah to spend the night among Benjamites, his own countrymen. However, the story might have been better for him and his concubine if he had stayed among the foreigners in Jebus.

He ended up being invited into the home of an old man. But that night, the men of the town, acting like the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, tried to accost the Levite. They attacked the house demanding the host send out his guest so the men could know him sexually. The old man refused and offered his virgin daughter and the concubine of the Levite. The men refused. However, it seems the Levite himself, in self-defense, shoved the concubine out to the men anyway. Driven by lust and fleshly passions, the men raped her all night long.

When the Levite awoke in the morning, he found his concubine lying on the threshold of the door. She was dead. He took her body to his home, then divided it into 12 pieces and sent them to the 12 tribes. This sparked the anger of the entire nation and they attacked Benjamin.

I am literally horrified by this story. To be honest, I can hardly believe it is in the Bible. It reminds me that the Bible longs to be honest. It doesn't pull the wool over our eyes or try to soft sell what really happened. But how could this happen among God's people?

**Judges 19:1** begins this story by saying, "In those days, when there was no king in Israel..." (ESV). How could something like this happen? There was no king. There was no ruler. There was no unifying power who would enforce the law of God. I believe this demonstrates that one point behind **Judges** was instruction to the king. The king was to make sure none of these kinds of things happened. It was the king's job to make sure the people knew God's will. It was the king's job to make sure the people followed God's will. It was the king's job to enforce the law when the people broke it. The king, who from David on dwelt in Jebus/Jerusalem, was to make sure this kind of atrocity never happened again.

But there is more to this than the nation simply not having an earthly king. The more fundamental point was that they were not allowing God to be their king (cf. **Numbers 23:21; 1 Samuel 12:12**). This people who would eventually want a king to be like the nations around them were supposed to be separate from and different from those nations by letting God be their king. Three other times in **Judges** this point is made (**Judges 17:6; 18:1; 21:25**). In fact, that final example is the very last verse of the book. Do not misunderstand. None of these stories is written to say these kinds of actions are remotely acceptable. This is how people who have no ruler and do what is right in their own eyes behave. But God had given them a Law. He had given them instructions. **Exodus 20:14** and **Leviticus 18:20** both demonstrate this behavior was unlawful. The King of Israel had condemned it. But these people had no king, not even God. They were only doing what was right in their own eyes.

Here is the long and short of it. God had called Israel to be holy as God is holy (**Leviticus 19:2**, et al). That is, He had called them to be distinct and separate because He is distinct and separate. However, instead of becoming distinct from the world because of holiness, they became distinct from the world because they went after sin that was even worse than the foreigners who lived among them. That is what happens when there is no king.

What does this mean for us? Consider the state of "Christianity" today. There are hundreds if not thousands of different groups claiming to be Christian. They teach different things about salvation, worship, discipleship. Some endorse immorality, looking away as their members fornicate, get abortions, get involved in homosexuality, drink indiscriminately, abuse their spouses and children. Some claim universal salvation for everyone. Some claim only those will be saved who keep Moses's law. Some claim just about every variation in between those two extremes. Some change the very nature of God and claim if you want to know what is right, you must search deep within yourself to find the divine spark. How, I ask you, is this actually different from doing what is right in their own eyes? God doesn't want us looking deep within ourselves to determine right from wrong. God wants us looking to Him, to His revelation, to His Word. There is only one way for unity. We must have the same King. And then we must actually let Him be King. We must let Him control us, discipline us, guide us. As Jesus said in **Luke 6:46**, He is really only our Lord if we do what He says.

The fact is most indicators today show that people who claim to be Christian commit fornication at about the same statistical rate as those in the world. They get divorced in lockstep with the world. They commit other sins as much

as those in the world. In fact, anecdotally, it almost seems as if the main difference between those who claim to be Christian and those who don't is that those who claim to be Christian "go to church" more than those in the world. When we let Jesus be king of our lives, this will change.

And so, the question. Are you doing what is right in your own eyes or do you have a king?

—Edwin L. Crozier