

COMMUNION



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CONCUBINE

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Introduction

Judges 19 contains one of the most horrific stories in all of scripture: a man and his concubine come to the town of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. Hours later, they have secured no lodging, so a kindly old man puts them up in his home. That night, wicked men surround the old man's home and shout, "Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him" (Judges 19:22). The old man refuses and implores the mob to abandon their wickedness but they refuse. To appease them, the traveler sends out his concubine, whom the mob rapes and abuses throughout the night (Judges 19:25). In the morning, the traveler finds his concubine dead on the doorstep, her hands stretched out as if reaching for the door. In his agony and rage, the traveler cuts up her body into 12 pieces and sends a piece to each tribe of Israel.

For years, I was troubled that this story was even in the Bible, and I struggled with questions: How could the traveler just hand over his concubine to save himself? Did God view this as a lesser evil? How could such a heinous thing happen among God's people? What possible truth could be gleaned from such an ugly incident?

Happily, the Lord showed me that this story isn't in the Bible just to turn our stomachs. Like the rest of scripture, it testifies of Jesus (John 5:39). I just needed my eyes opened. This booklet is the result of the Holy Spirit's ministry of revelation in my life. I pray the Spirit of the Lord will redeem this story through the unveiling of Christ, just as He did for me.

Communion and the Concubine

Judges 19:22-28

Two Natures

We begin with the wicked men of Gibeah surrounding the house of the kind, old man and demanding to have sex with his guest. The old man tries to dissuade them, but they refuse. In response, the owner of the house says, “Look, here is my virgin daughter and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don’t do such a disgraceful thing” (Judges 19:24). In the end, however, it appears only the concubine was sent out: “So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go” (Judges 19:25). So immense was the suffering of the concubine that by the time her master found her at daybreak, she was dead (Judges 19:27, 28).

Christ was both Son of God and Son of Man. These two natures are seen in the virgin daughter and in the concubine. The virgin is the divine in Christ, that which was never violated by the flesh, in which worldly desire was never able to conceive sin (James 1:14, 15). The concubine, on the other hand, is Christ’s human nature, of which Paul says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). This is why, in the story, only the concubine actually gets sent out to the lustful mob. The Bible says that God condemned sin in Christ’s flesh “in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us” (Romans 8:3, 4). In that sense, the sins of the world were laid, not on the Son of God, but on the Son of Man. With the destruction of Christ’s flesh, sin was dealt with once and for all (Hebrews 7:27). However, without the virgin nature of the Son of God, God would have no basis for raising Christ from the dead. That nature is pure love, the love God is, and did not deserve the punishment of death (1 John 4:16). Without that eternal nature which pre-dated the fall, and did not whorishly mix with sin, the Last Adam would have differed nothing from the First (1 Cor. 15:45).

Handed Over

It is disturbing to note that the concubine was handed over to her aggressors. God the Father also handed over His Son. In a certain aspect, Jesus gave His life willingly: “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18). The concubine also seems to have gone willingly for the Bible records no protest from her lips. “[A]s a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Nevertheless, the willingness of Jesus does not change the fact that Jesus was given over to His enemies, tied-up and imprisoned, rushed through a sham trial, and then marched out of town to be executed—all by the Father’s leave. Once Jesus said, “Not my will,” He was completely under the Father’s power, and the Father placed Him completely under the power of darkness (Luke 22:53). On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23). The sinful mob, then, achieved nothing other than what God had already planned.

The Heart of Handing Over

Though the Father handed over His Son, we should not imagine that He did it coldly. To give up His own Son, His only Son, was an unfathomable loss. Every piece of flesh taken from Jesus's body by a whip must have left its mark on the Father's heart. Every thorn that bit into Jesus must have also torn the Father. Every nail that pierced Jesus must have pierced the Father, and when Jesus's heart stopped, the heart of God Himself must have stopped. The darkness that covered Jerusalem, the bereaved shuddering of the earth, the angry splitting of rocks, and all that occurred at the moment of Jesus's death reflect the Father's grief and agony (Matt. 27:45, 51).

The torment of the concubine's master is also felt rather than spoken. When he discovers his concubine's body, he acts callous, as if nothing happened: "Get up; let's go" (Judges 19:28). But the whole account throbs with sorrow and suggests he did not know what to do. He behaved like a man in denial, a man paralyzed by shock. It is clear, from the beginning of the story, that he loved this woman deeply. She had been unfaithful to him and had left him to return to her father's house, her birthplace, in Bethlehem (Judges 19:2). Despite this, the Bible says, "After she had been there four months, her husband went to her to persuade her to return" (Judges 19:2, 3). Apparently, his unwavering commitment and love for her won her over because they were returning home from her father's house when they stopped in Gibeah for the night.

Some might object that women were considered property in those days. The husband wasn't in love, he was going after what belonged to him, just as he would go after a stray donkey. But most of us wouldn't risk a long, dangerous journey just to retrieve "damaged goods." Surely there were other women in the husband's town. Why not replace her with someone close at hand? But he did risk the journey, and when he got there, he had to persuade her to return. That means he had to spend time reasoning with her, imploring her, bearing the rejection of her hesitancy. Why would he endure such things if she was only another stray animal? He would not. He truly loved her. And when he found her, arms rigormortized and unable to drag her body any further, he was stunned. His very soul curled up into a helpless ball.

Handed Over with Christ

Paul speaks of fellowshiping in the sufferings of Christ (Php. 3:10). Does knowing Jesus mean that God will hand us over? Knowing Jesus—really knowing Jesus—means that we will experience what He experienced in some measure. Outward circumstances will, of course, vary from those of Jesus, but we will share the inward and qualitative dimension, the spiritual dimension, with Him. Consequently, we can almost expect that we will know what it is to be handed over by the Father. Again, circumstances will differ in type and degree. That is, being handed over will not necessarily mean execution or suffering of the magnitude that the concubine went through. But sometime after we have earnestly prayed that we might know Jesus more deeply, that we might be more fully changed into His likeness, we may find ourselves in a painful, distasteful, or uncomfortable situation, apparently against our will. We will find that we have been handed over to circumstances that do not please us, and yet we did not realize that when we prayed to know Jesus we were saying "Not my will," and were placing ourselves under God's power.

This thought is very troubling to us unless we understand God's heart in handing us over. As with Jesus, God is deeply touched when we suffer. It is, after all, His Son suffering in us, so the Father feels it as acutely as He did when Jesus suffered in His flesh. The fact is, there are

places in us that are so self-loving that we would never willingly die to them. Because of His great love for us, God will hand us over so that the Holy Spirit can finally bring death to those recalcitrant places in our hearts. Even though Jesus agreed to die, He, in His humanity, would have been unable to whip Himself, mock Himself, or nail Himself to the cross. The redemptive suffering we needed would not have occurred unless the Father handed over His Son, unless things happened that were not the will of the Son but were the will of the Father. When we find ourselves handed over, then, it is essential to remember that God loves us, that He is suffering with us, and that He has handed us over because of His profound grace in our lives.

Judges 19:29-20:8

This Is My Body

When the concubine's master finally mustered the wherewithal to act, he did something almost as shocking as the gang rape itself: "he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel" (Judges 19:29). This act seethes with such rage that we can get a sense of the wrath that God Himself poured out as He judged sin in Jesus's flesh. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). However, in Judges 20 we learn that the concubine's master was a Levite, a priest of Israel. In this, we can also see the Son. Before the cross, Jesus held up the Passover loaf and said, "This is my body, given for you" (Luke 22:19). Then He broke it into twelve pieces and gave a piece to each of His disciples. By giving His body and blood, Jesus was acting as our priest. Through His death He brokered a new covenant in which He removed sin and imparted His own life to us: "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). This is what communion symbolizes.

One New Man

Judges ends rather darkly with the statement, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 21:25). During the time of the Judges, the Israelites had all but lost the vision of the kingdom God had called them to be. God's vision was sidelined by the pursuit of personal interests. But the breaking and parceling out of the concubine's body had a unifying effect on the tribes of Israel. Judges 20:1 says, "Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out as one man and assembled before the LORD in Mizpah." This was the first time Israel had experienced unity since the time of Joshua. Yet this was not a unity brought about by any leader, but by communion in the concubine. David is often given credit for the unification of the tribes that happened under his reign. While David's role is undeniable, it is doubtful if the unification of Israel would have occurred had it not been for the death of this nameless concubine generations earlier. She was the mustard seed, the least of all seeds, that fell in the ground and died. David's kingdom grew from that seed (John 12:24; Matt. 13:31, 32).

Later in Judges chapter 20, scripture says, "All the people rose as one man" (Judges 20:8). This looks ahead to Christ's resurrection. By breaking Jesus's body, God destroyed the self-determination and hostility that marks the old man, Adam. Christ then rose as one New Man: "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and

in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph. 2:15, 16).

Paul says, “And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Cor. 10:17). Communing with Christ causes us to participate in His death and resurrection. Through this communion we come into the union of the New Man. In Him we find a head and king. We no longer do as we see fit.

Judges 20:8-17

Not I

In this account, no tribe is mentioned by name except Benjamin (who committed the atrocity against the concubine) and Judah. Judah led the Israelites in battle, one of the first times we see prophecies about its rulership fulfilled (Gen. 49:10; Numb. 24:17). Throughout Judges 20, then, it is the one man, and not any leader or group, that stands out: we see the Israelites inquiring of the Lord together, facing their enemy together, weeping and repenting together (Judges 20:18, 20, 26).

We also fall in behind the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. His is the only name by which the New Man is known (Rev. 3:12). Under His scepter we move as one. Individual members function in their particular callings, but they do not function so as to distinguish themselves above others. Instead, all the members give themselves up by one Spirit unto the expression of One: “not I, but Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 2:20). When this reality is not working in our hearts, the One New Man is eclipsed by individual men or ministries. In this case, we are not the New Man, we are just old men gathering in churches. It isn’t that we can’t hear the Lord’s voice, minister in the way He directs, or experience victory individually. Each of us definitely has a measure of grace (Eph. 4:7). But none of us has “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” on our own (Eph. 4:13). It is the whole measure of Christ’s fullness, and not just a personal measure of grace, that God is calling us to experience. It is the whole measure of Christ’s fullness that God desires to manifest in the world.

No Greater Love

To give perspective, it should be said that manifesting the New Man does not necessarily mean abandoning local fellowships or denominational affiliations, though walking in the New Man would undoubtedly transform both. While the tribes of Israel aren’t named in Judges 20, we know they did not cease to exist. Like the tribes, individual churches and denominations have their unique histories and contributions to God’s work. The New Man is not about obliterating individuality but about individual persons and groups laying down their lives for friends who are often quite different from them (John 15:13). In fact, it could be argued that without differences there would be little need for mutual sacrifice. Moreover, walking in the reality of the New Man means much more than adopting the label “non-denominational.” According to Paul, those in Corinth who said, “I follow Christ,” were just as fleshly and just as responsible for division as those who said, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos” (1 Cor. 1:12).

Similarly, we shouldn’t think the New Man means doing away with leaders. Certainly, the tribes of Israel had leaders installed by God for the good of His people, and those leaders

were integral to the unified functioning of the tribes. While we can't ultimately look to any man or group of men to bring about the unity of the New Man, we certainly won't enter into that reality without leaders who understand it and walk in it themselves.

Judges 20:18-28

House of God

Sadly, even those who were supposed to be devoted to God were as devoted to themselves as anyone else. Priests mainly promoted their own ministries and were consumed by the need to make a living and not by a zeal for God's house (Judges 17:7-13; John 2:17). In some cases, such as Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas, the ministers were far worse than the rest of the people (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 34, 35). Consequently, the ministry of the Lord was almost non-existent.

Following the concubine's murder, the Israelites said, "None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house" (Judges 20:8). Instead, they began to gather at Bethel, which means, "House of God" (Gen. 28:17-19). The ark of the covenant was there, along with two priests who remained faithful to the Lord and His covenant (Judges 20:27, 28). Here, sacrifices and true worship were again offered to the Lord (Judges 20:26). The people repented and drew near to God. Ministry of the true God flourished. At other times, the ark was found in a tent or temple where sacrifices and service to God also occurred. But the concubine laid the foundation of a house which the Israelites became as they gathered at Bethel.

When God buried His Son, He laid the chosen and precious cornerstone of His eternal temple. 1 Peter 2:4 & 5 say, "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Too often, ministry is an arena for self-promotion instead of spiritual self-sacrifice through Christ. True ministry will only flourish in a house dedicated to God's glory and not to any man's, a house built as each stone gives itself up to be joined to God's cornerstone.

The Word of God

During the time of the Judges, "the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions" (1 Samuel 3:1). God told His people He would dwell and speak from above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:22). But the Israelites gathered to tree groves or high places—shrines where they sought God according to their own understanding and not according to what He had revealed (Judges 17). They sought Him but could not find Him because He remained above the ark. They gathered in the name of the LORD but did not gather to the LORD. But when the concubine was killed, the Israelites gathered to the ark at Bethel, and they heard the word of God once again.

We must gather to the broken body of Christ as to the ark of the new covenant or we will not hear the word of God. If we gather for some other reason, we may hear preaching from the Bible, but we will not hear God's word because God has spoken in His Son (Heb. 1:1).

Outside of the Son, there are many scriptural things to gather around—moral values, spiritual gifts, prosperity, worship, prayer strategies, faith, and others. We gather to these things as to shrines where we seek God according to our biblical understanding and not according to the

Son. To be sure, we diligently study the scriptures but we do not necessarily come to Jesus (John 5:39, 40). Consequently, there are Jesus-es and gospels preached throughout the church which are based on the Christian reasons people have come together and not based on Christ (2 Cor. 11:4). But unless we come to Jesus, God's word will remain a parable to us (Matt. 13:10-13). We will hear Jesus but not really understand Him. We will gather in His name and do mighty works but not know Him (Matt. 7:21-23; Mark 9:38; Acts 19:13-16).

God is good and will meet us whatever our understanding of Him is. He will move among us, do miracles, and minister because He causes His sun to rise even on those who reject Him (Matt. 5:45). When God blesses us, then, we should not assume that He is also sanctioning the way we relate to Him. Prophecies, miracles, and supernatural provision happened abundantly while the Israelites wandered in the desert, yet God did not intend for them to remain there. Always the cloud was pressing on toward the promised land. Everything God did in the desert was an attempt to draw Israel into their inheritance. Likewise, God will meet us in whatever way He can, and His Spirit will continually move so that we may be drawn into the full inheritance of the Son.

Judges 20:28-36

Victory

Self-interest, division, the absence of true ministry and of the Lord's word left the Israelites vulnerable to oppression from enemies. Periodically, a Judge would arise, and portions of God's people would experience liberty. But Israel was never free from oppression as a whole. Although the land was the Israelites' inheritance, it didn't mean much because they could not fully possess it and rest in it.

The concubine's death galvanized Israel. Through her, God led Israel in triumph (Judges 20:35; 2 Cor. 2:14). Israel means, "He overcomes with God," and the people are referred to as Israel all through Judges 20 (Gen. 32:28). On one level, Israel seems to overcome militarily. But we must never forget that their unity and strength depended on the breaking of the concubine's body. The real victory was won when she died and Israel raised out of their crippling divisions. In a sense, the army of Israel just embodied the victory of the concubine and conquered because of her.

God triumphed over all our enemies through the cross. He did away with the old man, destroyed the works of the devil, crucified the world, and swallowed death in victory (Rom. 6:6; 1 John 3:8; Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:54). The only fight left to the church is the fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). As we believe Christ's total victory, we overcome with Him, and see His victory appropriated in our lives (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4, 5). We overcome because the One who overcame at the cross lives in us. We are His body. Unity and strength come from our Head. The writer of Hebrews urges us to enter into Christ's great salvation with the words, "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:12, 13). As we believe together we possess and rest in the inheritance of Christ's salvation.

Conclusion

These chapters from Judges leave us with a clear message. God accomplished His eternal plan through the cross: He created One New Man, He laid the foundation of His house, He defeated every enemy (Eph. 3:11). Today, the Lord is calling us to the communion table (Heb. 3:7, 13). As we commune with Christ—becoming like Him in His death and resurrection—we enter into and experience all that God has made us to be in His Son.

Outside of Christ it's every man for himself. The rape and murder of the concubine show us just how black our independence can be. Few of us have committed rape or murder, perhaps. But we all share the nature capable of those crimes. The sinful nature manifests differently in each of us. But God does not judge the manifestation of sin, He judges sin. He does not judge between sins, He judges between Adam and Christ. Sin is not a matter of degrees but of nature (James 2:10, 11). In fact, even the good things we do by the fallen nature receive the same judgment as the worst evils—death.

We must see what we are so that we do not hope in ourselves but in Christ. The Israelites were unable to turn from their own way. Their unity and victory flowed from the concubine's death. We too must rely fully on the death and life of Christ. He is the way (John 14:6). The power of the cross is sufficient to transform us from self-seeking to self-giving, from divided to united, from mere men to the New Man (1 Cor. 3:3). "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Eph. 3:20, 21).

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The word is not just knowledge about God. Rather, as John 1:1 says, “the Word was God.” It is hoped that the reader will not just receive knowledge or teaching about God but God Himself. “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”

(John 17:3).

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