

We're ready now to resume our Scripture reading this morning in Genesis chapter 19. The sun had risen on the earth when Lot entered Zoar. Verse 23 of Genesis 19.

Verse 24. Then the Lord rained. How many references back now have we seen to the flood judgment? You have the shutting of doors.

You have divine deliverance. You have warning. You have the preservation of family because of the association with a righteous man who finds favor in God's sight.

I haven't really taken the time to point all of these out, but you look at those phrases, such as the one in verse 19 where he says, "Your servant has found favor in your sight," and so forth. All of these are reminding us of things we've seen before. Of course, God, you have the rainbow and the covenant promise, and so instead of water, the Lord rains fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens.

Where else is it going to rain from? But you have the heavens. You can go back and find these identical Hebrew phrases back in the flood story. So he overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. So you get the idea now that we've been at a real close perspective. If this was a movie or whatever, the camera has been in close, and we've been having lots of great detail in the conversations and the actions of the messengers and Lot and so forth.

Now we're pulling away, and the last thing we see are these. You get the idea that this is an aerial shot here, and you've got Lot and Mrs. Lot and the two daughters fleeing, heading over to Zoar. And the messenger said in verse 22, "Hurry and escape there."

"I cannot do anything until you arrive there." So the destruction is not going to start until Lot enters Zoar. Sometime, probably just shortly before they get to Zoar, Mrs. Lot looks back.

This is the part of the story, you see all of the details of the story, but this is the one that gets seized on, is look back, turn into a pillar of salt. And we have already seen the fire and brimstone raining out, and the cities are overthrown and so forth. At what point did his wife look back? We don't know if this is a comment of before the destruction started.

How could she look back and already be inside the city limits of Zoar? Were they halfway there? The destruction had not started. She turned around and became a pillar of salt before the destruction. There's no time reference here to tell us.

The emphasis is on the attitude. The emphasis is on the action. And all of the things that we've always heard about this are true.

Israel, in the future from this point, is going to be looking back at Egypt all the time. And what happened to the leeks and garlies? Sort of forgetting the slavery and so forth. Mrs. Lot doesn't appear to remember the threat to her husband or her daughters or their visitors the night before.

All she can think about is, "Oh, my good china is still in there," or something. I don't know what she was thinking about, but she's looking back. And she became a pillar of salt.

So, the inability to pay attention to the word of the messengers at an individual level is the problem here. The sons-in-law die. The wife dies.

Lot is only, by physical force, dragged out of the path of the destruction. Even then, he waffles and whines and ends up going to a town. And God spares that town for his sake.

Then, in verse 27, we switch to the scene and the hilltop we looked at earlier in chapter 18. Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. This is the hilltop from which they could see Sodom.

Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. When's the last time we saw a furnace smoke? Remember chapter 17, with the animals that were cut in pieces, and the presence of God went between like a flaming torch and a smoking furnace? It is the righteousness and the justice of God. The righteousness of God is a light.

The justice of God is a smoke from the fire of judgment. It came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham. Another reference back to when God remembered Noah in the midst of a large destruction.

He sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. Then we'll continue forward from this point another time, or next time actually, in verse 30. What I want to do now is, having reviewed the details of this story and analyzed them to some extent, we have some unanswered questions here.

We've noted the desire of the visitors to stay in the city square. We've seen the going inside the house and being surrounded by this fanatically homosexual crowd. We've seen the offer of the daughters.

All of these things are shocking details that raise questions in our minds, and we're unclear exactly why they're happening. Well, the Word of God is its own best commentary. Turn with me to Judges chapter 19.

Judges chapter 19. This is in the latter part of the book of Judges, in the latter days of the period of the Judges, which lasted for probably around 300 years in Israel. It came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel.

This is before the time of Saul, after the time of Joshua. There was no king in Israel. There was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim.

He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But his concubine played the harlot against him and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah and was there four whole months. Then her husband arose and went after her to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him.

So she brought him into her father's house, and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. He liked him. He thought, "Hey, this is a good man for my daughter to be hooked up with."

Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him, and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there. Then it came to pass on the fourth day they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart.

But the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, notice son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way." So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry."

And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him, so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon, and both of them ate.

And when the man stood to depart, he and his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening. Please spend the night. See, here day is coming to an end.

"Lodge here that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home." However, the man was not willing to spend that night, so he rose and departed and came to opposite Jebus, that is, Jerusalem.

Remember, David is going to take it from the Jebusites sometime in the relatively near future from this point. So he came opposite Jebus, that is, Jerusalem. With him were the two saddled donkeys.

His concubine was also with him. They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent. And the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it."

But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners who are not of the children of Israel. We will go on to Gibeah." Now, Gibeah, you'll remember if you've studied the life of Saul, Gibeah is in the land of Benjamin.

That's why it's the principal city of Benjamin. So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw near to one of these places and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah." Ramah is where Samuel will eventually hold forth.

And they passed by, they went on past Jebus, went past the city of the Jebusites, Jebusites, who are not Israelites. And the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go into lodge in Gibeah.

And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night. So he's going to spend the night in the open square. Just then, an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim.

He was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. So he is a sojourner in Gibeah. Does this start to sound a little familiar? Visitors planning to spend the night in the open square, a sojourner in the town.

He raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square in the city. And the old man said, "Where are you going and where do you come from?" Verse 18, he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim. I am from there."

"I went to Bethlehem in Judah. Now I am going to the house of the Lord." He's a Levite.

He's got a place of ministry, if you will, up there in Ephraim. "But there is no one who will take me into his house. Although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant and for the young man who is with your servant, there is no lack of anything."

The old man said, "Peace be with you. However, let all your needs be my responsibility. Only do not spend the night in the open square."

So he brought them into his house and gave fodder to the donkeys, and they washed their feet and ate and drank. Very same, remember Lot says, "Come in, wash your feet, come dine with me, I'll make you a banquet." As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door.

They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house that we may know him." But the man, the master of the house, this is the Ephraimite sojourner living in Gibeah, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren, I beg you, do not act so wickedly. Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage."

He's just following in old Lot's footsteps. "Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine. Humble them and do with them as you please, but to this man do not do such a vile thing."

But the men would not heed him, so the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning. And when the day began to break, they let her go.

Then the woman came as the day was dawning and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was until it was light. The time there is significant. She staggers back to the house.

She's been abused all night by these perverted people. She staggers back as the day began to break. She came as the day was dawning.

Notice the three time references in verse 25 and verse 26. Exactly the same time that they have to drag Lot out of the city. Verse 27, "When her master arose in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold."

And he said to her, "Get up and let's be going." But there was no answer because she's dead. So the man lifted her onto the donkey and the man got up and went to his place.

When he entered his house, he's gotten back to Ephraim now with the body of this concubine, he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. And so it was that all who saw said, "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, confer, and speak up."

There's outrage at what has happened to this concubine because the Levite sends these pieces of the concubine, sends an arm here and a head there and a leg here and an arm here, divides her up into twelve pieces, sends one to each tribe in Israel saying, "This is an outrage. Look what happened to my concubine." Now, what is wrong with this picture? Who has committed the greater outrage? The men who abused the concubine or the man who sent her out to them? We see some light here on Lot because there is a deep problem here.

This man is outraged at the abuse that was done to his concubine. He sent her out there. He didn't go himself.

He didn't even have the spunk of Lot to go stand on the threshold. The Ephraimite goes out and says, "Take my daughter, take his concubine, but don't hurt the man." And the attitude of, "Well, the women are expendable."

There's been a lot of outcry about patriarchal society and denigration of women and so forth. Well, here's a legitimate case. Don't hurt the man.

Send the women out. You can have my virgin daughter. You can have the concubine.

Of course, he doesn't send his virgin daughter. He just sends the concubine. And they, unlike the crowd around Lot, they take her and basically abuse her to the point where she dies.

Well, the outrage here is the attitude toward the concubine. And there are so many things that we don't have time to go into where she is from in Bethlehem of Judea. They pass up Jebus.

There's a lot we can say about that. But here's the point. He's outraged at what these other people have done.

Where is the outrage against what he has done? Against the attitude that says, "Well, we'll put her out there as our substitute." It's the same idea with Lot. It's supposed to shock us that he offers his two daughters to the crowd.

It's supposed to be shocking because it's a commentary on what's wrong with Lot. Lot is all ready to tell other people what they need to do. He'll decide what needs to happen for the visitors, for the crowd, for his daughters, for his sons-in-law.

But he can't turn that blazing laser beam searchlight of judgment on his own soul and see how corrupt he is. And see what a big problem he's got before the Lord. His lack of righteousness, his lack of faith, his lack of turning to the Lord in time of crisis.

This Ephraimite, he thinks, "Well, I'll pass up Jebus and go to Gibeah because that's my own kind there. There are Israelites in Gibeah and these Jebusites are Gentile, pagan, heathens, uncircumcised whatever. So I'll go on to my own kind."

Well, now he's among his own kind and this is the way they treat him. This is how they're going to act. Same language is used.

"Oh, my brethren," you've got these two Ephraimites. You've got two Ephraimites who are both not supposed to be there. I do that.

But notice what happens. I want to go on and read chapter 20 here in Judges. Look at the moral indignation.

Look at the outrage that they have against the people of Gibeah for abusing this concubine. All the children of Israel came out from Dan to Beersheba as well as from the land of Gilead. And the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah.

The leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God. Four hundred thousand foot soldiers withdrew the sword. Kind of reminds you of a big church meeting.

Big stadium gathering. Let's all get together and rectify this terrible wrong. Children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.

And the children of Israel said, "Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?" So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, notice what the Bible says about, you know, the Bible says he was the husband and he is the son-in-law of the girl's father. It doesn't say anything about concubine and mistress or anything like that. You engage in relations with somebody, you're married in the eyes of the Lord.

"My concubine and I"—he still thinks she's a concubine and not a wife—"and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. The men of Gibeah rose against me and surrounded the house at night because of me.

"They intended to kill me, but instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died." Sort of leaves out his part in that.

By the way, I opened the door and tossed her out to the ravening wolves. "So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. Look, all of you are children of Israel. Give your advice and counsel here and now."

So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent nor will any turn back to his house. But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah.

"We will go up against it by lot. We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, to make provision for the people that when they come to Gibeah and Benjamin, they repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel." Seem to have left out the carving up of the corpse into twelve pieces, you know.

So all the men of Israel were gathered together against the city, united together as one man. The tribes of Israel sent men throughout all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? Now, therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men, who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel."

Is this going to remove the evil from Israel? It is evil, and they need to be removed, but is this the only evil in Israel? It seems to be a little bit of myopia here, doesn't there? But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah to go to battle against the children of Israel.

Civil war. From their cities at that time, the children of Benjamin numbered 26,000 men who drew the sword beside the inhabitants of Gibeah who numbered 700 select men. You will recall from our studies in 1 Samuel that when you see thousands, this is typically a military unit of measure.

This is not a literal thousand. This is an eleph. This is a military contingent.

It is a company-sized group. If you look at Gibeah and the territory of Benjamin, you could not physically support 26,000 people in that little space. These are 26 company-sized units besides the seven platoon-sized units that they have in Gibeah.

Among all the people were 700 select men who were left-handed. Everyone could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss. These are seven platoons of left-handed warriors in Benjamin.

Beside Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered 400,000 men. These are 400,000—400 companies. Men who drew the sword.

All these were men of war. Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?" The Lord said, "Judah first."

Again, there is a lot we could say about Bethlehem and about Jebus. The children of Israel arose in the morning and they camped against Gibeah. The men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin.

Remember Judah and Benjamin are co-located. These will be the area that David will first become king of in the near future. They go to battle against Benjamin, but God doesn't call him Benjamin.

He calls him Judah. The men of Israel put themselves in battle and were ready to fight against them at Gibeah. Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah.

And on that day, cut down to the ground 22,000 men of the Israelites. So they assume their cause is right. They go before the Lord and they say, "Lord, which one should we attack first?" God says, "Judah first."

So they go down to Judah slash Benjamin and they get their helmets handed to them. Twenty-two thousand. Twenty-two companies are slaughtered by the Benjamites.

And the people, that is the men of Israel, encourage themselves. Notice, God doesn't encourage them. The prophet doesn't encourage them.

The word of the Lord doesn't encourage them. They're not like Gideon or anybody else. They encourage themselves.

They fall back and regroup. Oh gosh, we lost 22 companies. Let's have a pep rally.

So they get back and rah, rah, rah, get themselves all pumped up. They again form the battle line at the place where they put themselves in array on the first day. Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening and asked counsel of the Lord saying, "Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?" The Lord said, "Go up. Go up against him."

So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day and cut down to the ground 18,000 more of the children of Israel. They lose 18 more companies.

What's 18 plus 22? Forty. Forty companies.

How many people are the whole population of Benjamin? Twenty-six companies. They've lost almost twice as many as the people they were going to go in and cleanse, purge out of the land.

Eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel. All these drew the sword. Then all the children of Israel, that is all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept.

They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening. They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. So the children of Israel inquired of the Lord.

The Ark of the Covenant was there in those days. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days. See, they've got a celebrity.

They've got the grandson of Aaron there. Saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin or shall I cease?" And the Lord said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. The children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day. Lots you can say about the third day.

Put themselves in battle array against Gibeah. At other times, the children of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill some of the people as at other times in the highways.

One of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah. And in the field, about thirty men of Israel. So this day, they only lose thirty men.

The children of Benjamin say, "They are defeated before us as at first." So they're cocky now. They beat them in two previous battles with minimal casualties.

The children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways." This is a wonderful text to study for military strategists. All the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar.

And Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Gibeah. I could map this out for you. It's a classic thing to see.

But basically, what are they doing? They're drawing them away from their town. The men in ambush are going to go attack the town. The men of Benjamin are going to turn and look.

The children of Benjamin saw that they—let's see, in verse 34—10,000 select men from all Israel came against Gibeah and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them. The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel and the children of Israel destroyed that day 25,100 Benjamites.

Twenty-five companies and a platoon of Benjamites. What does that leave them? Remember, there were only 26 companies of them in the whole territory. Twenty-five companies were slain and one hundred.

There were 700. So they've only got 600 men left out of the whole. They've got 600 platoons, which is not actually 600 men.

It's even less than that. They've got six platoons left in Benjamin. How did they do it? This is a classic case where the Old Testament narration will tell a story and give you the conclusion and then kind of go back and review some of the details.

Because we've already known what happened. Disaster is upon them. They get defeated.

Out of this great host, there's only six platoons left of the Benjamites. Now it's going to give us some details. The children of Benjamin saw they were defeated.

The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had sent against Gibeah. The men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah. The men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword.

The appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, whereupon the men of Israel would turn and battle. So all the men of Israel are running away. The Benjamites are chasing them.

They get further and further from Gibeah. The men in ambush go into the town, sack it, put it to the edge of the sword, and make a big bonfire in the middle. The column of smoke goes up.

That's the signal to the Israelites. Stop running, turn around, and start chasing the Benjamites. The Benjamites, in the meantime, have looked behind them and seen this big pillar of smoke.

They look behind and they're essentially going to suffer the same fate as Lot's wife. They initially thought that they had begun to strike and kill. All these 30 men are a gambit in chess.

You sacrifice a lesser piece so that you can win the game. When the cloud of smoke began to rise from the city, the Benjamites looked behind them and there was the whole city going up to heaven. You may have "in smoke" in your New King James.

It doesn't even say "in smoke." The whole city was going up to heaven. The whole city was just this hot air and smoke going up.

When the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness. The battle overtook them.

Whoever came out of the cities destroyed them in their midst. They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. Eighteen thousand, eighteen companies of men in Benjamin fell.

All these were men of valor. Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimmon. They cut down five thousand, five companies of them, on the highways.

They pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom and killed two more companies of them up there. All who fell at Benjamin that day were 25,000 who drew the sword. All these were men of valor.

Six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimmon. They stayed at the Rock of Rimmon for four months. The men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin and struck them down with the edge of the sword from every city, men and beasts, all who were found.

They also set fire to all the cities they came to. So the destruction surrounded Gibeah just like God's destruction surrounds Sodom. Then you can go on to chapter 21.

It's fascinating because they have to figure out. They say, "Well, we've taken an oath that we'll never give our daughters as wives to Benjamin." But now Benjamin is going to be cut off.

They won't have an inheritance in Israel. How are we going to rectify this? We need to go ahead and read this right quick because this is critical to understanding our chapter in Genesis 19.

Now, so they've got this big defeat. There's only say four or five hundred men left in all of Benjamin. The men of Israel had sworn an oath in this by saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife."

Then the people came to the house of God and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly and said, "O Lord God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?" So it was on the next morning that the people rose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the children of Israel and said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the Lord?"

For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the Lord at Mizpah saying, "He shall surely be put to death." You get the idea that at the pep rally one of the things they did to pump themselves up was they made all these promises.

"Oh, none of us will ever give a daughter to the Benjamites as a wife. Anybody that doesn't come up and join us is going to be anathema and be under a curse." So this is how they encouraged themselves after their first big stinging defeat.

What is the picture we get here? There is so much iniquity in Israel that when they decide that they're going to go purge the Benjamites and they go inquire of God, God says, "Sure, go on up." And God makes sure that they get discipline as well.

And they lose far more than the Benjamites do. It takes them in excess of forty thousand to wipe out the twenty-something thousand of the Benjamites. So where is the greater iniquity? Who suffers the greater loss? It tells us something about the nature of Israel.

They are so quick to look outward and condemn and find the fault and decide what other people need to do. Look at these promises. We're going to promise none of us, nobody give your wives to a Benjamite.

Anybody that doesn't come up and fight with us is going to be anathema in Israel, is going to be under a curse. So the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. What shall we do for wives for those who remain seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them our daughters as wives?"

They said, "Which one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the Lord?" And in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly.

They were probably smart. But when the people were counted, indeed, no one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. So the congregation sent out there 12,000 of their most valiant men and commanded them saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including women and children.

"And this is the thing you shall do. You shall utterly destroy every male and every woman who has known a man." So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man intimately, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin who were at the Rock of Rimmon and announced peace to them. So Benjamin came back at that time and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive out of the women of Jabesh Gilead, and yet they had not found enough for them. Because there were 600 of the men left and there were only 400 of these girls.

So the people grieved for Benjamin because the Lord had made a void in the tribes of Israel. Then the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who remain since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?" They said, "There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel.

"However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters for the children of Israel have sworn an oath saying, 'Cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.'" Then they said, "In fact, there is a yearly feast of the Lord in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem and south of Labonah."

Therefore, they instructed the children of Benjamin to take these guys aside and say, "Go lie in wait in the vineyards and watch that just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh. Then go to the land of Benjamin."

So these girls are going to come out and dance because there is a feast day to the Lord. Kidnap them and take them away to Benjamin. Then it shall be when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, we will say to them, "Be kind to them for our sakes because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war.

"It is not as though you have given them the women at this time making yourselves guilty of your oath." You didn't give your daughters. They were kidnapped.

And the children of Benjamin did so. They took enough wives for their number from those who danced whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them.

So the children of Israel departed from there at that time. Every man to his tribe and family. They went out from there.

Every man to his inheritance. In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what is right in his own eyes.

There are not many noble chapters in the history of Israel and this is perhaps one of the least. There is a lot we could look at in the details of this but if you just look at it in overview, the homosexuals in Gibeah are the least of Israel's problems, aren't they? They haven't learned their lesson after all these men have died. Upwards of 40,000 of them have died in Israel, upwards of 25,000 of them have died in Benjamin.

They have gone and put their own cities to the sword. They said, "Oh well, we are going to spare the Benjamites now. We will let them come back down, these ones that escaped."

But now we are going to take Jabesh Gilead and we are going to kill everybody. Kill the men, kill the women, kill the children. We will just save some of the virgins, and they are so despicable we will give them as wives to the Benjamites who are also despicable.

And there aren't enough to go around, so they say, "Well, we will help you get some wives. You kidnap these women from Shiloh and drag them off to Benjamin and make them your wives." What kind of people are these? These are the people of the Lord.

This is Israel. All the tribes are represented. They were drawn there by the pieces of the concubine, and this story harks back to the days of Lot.

It is just such an obvious parallel you can't miss it in Judges 19, where the Levite who is a priest, a spiritual leader in Israel, has a concubine, throws her to the wolves out there, and she is killed. He is a custodian of the Word of the Lord and he can't even apply it to himself, but he is all ready to call Israel to render justice against the men of Gibeah.

If you remember the content of Romans chapter 1 and chapter 2, you remember that Paul points out the depravity of men who have denied God, denied the knowledge of God that is in them, and have pursued their own lusts. They debase themselves. They seek the satisfaction of their own lusts.

Verse 28 of Romans 1, they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy. It just goes on and on.

Who knowing, in verse 32, the righteous judgment of God that those who practice such things are deserving of death not only do the same things but also approve of others who practice them. Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge. What is Lot in the town of Sodom? He's a judge.

He set himself up as a judge of others. For in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things. We know the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

Do you think this, O man, you who judge against those practicing such things and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? And this is a condemnation of believers who are so busy trying to straighten out the world, who are so busy pointing out the faults of others that they never look to their own souls.

This is what's happening in Israel in Judges 19 and 20 and 21. They're quick to judge, quick to go out with the sword in the name of the Lord and render judgment against these people who abuse this concubine, and they don't see their own attitudes. They're the men who are willing to throw the concubines out there.

They're the ones who are willing to slay the women and children of Jabesh Gilead. They're the ones who are willing to kidnap and abuse. It's no wonder that the outcry against these things comes up before the Lord.

It's an outcry against the hearts. It's the outcry against the evil imagination that is only wicked all the day. And it is just as heinous in God's eyes, if not more so, when it's his own people who do such things.

It's one thing to see the unbelievers in Sodom who are pagan and wicked and God is going to destroy them because of the outcry against them, and it's because of the victims of these actions. Turn with me to Ezekiel chapter—well, let's turn first to Jeremiah chapter 5.

Jeremiah chapter 5. We saw where God was willing to set up to spare Sodom in his conversation with Abraham if there were ten righteous in the city. Jeremiah chapter 5: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem.

"See now and know and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her." If you can find in the streets of Jerusalem one man who seeks the truth, who discerns and exercises right judgment, I will pardon the whole city.

Look at verse 11. "The house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt treacherously with me," says the Lord. "They have lied about the Lord and have said, 'It is not he; neither will he come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.'

“And the prophets become wind, for the word is not in them. Thus shall it be done to them.” In verse 30 of that same chapter, “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land.

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?” The whole book of Jeremiah, it talks about the condemnation of God's people.

There is not even one righteous man in the city. Turn with me over to Ezekiel chapter 14. Ezekiel chapter 14, verse 1.

Now some of the elders of Israel came—by the way, Ezekiel and Jeremiah are contemporaries, and so is Daniel—some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity.”

You can preach an entire sermon just on that. People have set up before themselves that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. This is the opposite of cutting off the hand that offends or plucking out the eye that offends.

These people have set before them the thing that causes them to stumble into iniquity. “Should I let myself be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Every one of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes according to the multitude of his idols.’”

That's what God did in Judges 19, isn't it? They were all caught up in this self-righteous indignation when they themselves were wicked, and they inquired of the Lord and God answered them. He said, “Yeah, go up.”

Go on down there, 22,000 fall the first day, 18,000 die the second day, “that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart because they are all estranged from me by their idols.” The angelic messengers grabbed Lot and his family by the hands.

God is going to seize Israel by the heart because they are estranged from me by their idols. “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

“‘For anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who dwell in Israel’”—notice the strangers in Israel have this same opportunity—“‘who separates himself from me and sets up idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I the Lord will answer him myself. I will set my face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb. I will cut him off from the midst of my people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’”

It talks more about the prophet there. Verse 11: “That the house of Israel may no longer stray from me nor be profane any more with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God,” says the Lord God.

The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, “Son of man, when a land sins against me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out my hand against it. I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it.

“Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord God. You can put the three most righteous men of the Old Testament—God says, in this land of believers—and I would only deliver them.

I would not spare. God tells Abraham, “I'll spare these pagan Sodomites, these rampant flaming raging homosexuals, if you can find ten men in the city who are righteous. I'll spare the whole city.”

God says, “You can put Noah, Job, and Daniel in Israel, and only I'll pull those three out and I'll destroy all the rest.” There's no, you're so wicked, you're so depraved, you're so backward, you've done this idolatry in your heart, I wouldn't spare you no matter how many righteous men you have in your midst or how righteous they are.

“If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they empty it and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, even though these three men were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.

“Or if I bring a sword on that land and say, ‘Sword, go through the land,’ and I cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered.

“Or if I send a pestilence”—you get the idea that God is kind of emphasizing this point—“I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my fury on it in blood and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.

“For thus says the Lord God: How much more it shall be when I send my four severe judgments on Jerusalem, the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence, to cut off man and beast from it? Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, sons and daughters.

“Surely they will come out to you and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. And they will comfort you when you see their ways and their doings, and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it.”

The overarching message of Genesis 19 and Judges 19–21, Jeremiah 5, Ezekiel 14, and we could go on to Ezekiel 22, is from those to whom much is given much is required. When we are the people of God, God will hold us to a higher standard.

God is gracious. There is grace before judgment. But we have to look to ourselves.

People are so busy wanting to have an impact, wanting to go out and straighten out others and minister to others and help them with their problems and get them out of their evil lifestyles and so forth, and we have not cleansed our own hearts. We have not gotten that idol out of our own soul that we set up that causes us to stumble into iniquity.

And it is easy to see when you look at the men in Judges, when you look at Lot and you say, “Look at what he is doing with his daughter. He is offering his daughters to these men. Look at this Levite who is putting his wife out there to be killed to save his own skin.

“‘Well, don't touch me. You can have my wife.’” Attitude toward others. The first place that this problem in our soul is going to manifest itself is in our insensitivity and our disregard of others.

It is an inherently selfish attitude, and it will show. You go over to Ezekiel chapter 22, he talks about the neglect of others. Look at verse 10 of Ezekiel 22.

“In you men uncover their father's nakedness.” This is the kind of incest that we saw with Ham and Mrs. Noah. “In you they violate women who are set apart during their impurity.”

They abuse women. It doesn't matter if they are having their monthly time of discomfort. It doesn't matter to them.

They totally disregard the woman or whatever is going on with her. “One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter.” You completely disregard—and notice, these are all women.

“In you they take bribes to shed blood. You take usury and increase. You have made profit by your neighbor's extortion and have forgotten me,” says the Lord God.

Forgetting the Lord God and putting an idol in your soul, it manifests itself in your disregard of others, your abuse, your blindness to your own abuse of others. You don't realize the damage that you are doing, and others can look at it and it is shocking.

You look at Lot and say, “My gosh, he is offering his daughter to this crowd.” We have that same kind of blindness. It is easy to see the faults in others, and yet we don't—it doesn't seem to affect us that we ourselves have this problem.