

Judges 08-08-22a

This is Friday the 22nd of August 2008. We're in the book of Judges. We start a new chapter tonight, chapter 19.

We get more Levites, more Bethlehem, more excitement than any roomful of people have a right to expect. But we will begin as we always do by going to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration and remember that we are here by God's grace.

We are sustained by God's grace and the person of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful that in a world of changing values and uncertainties and vagaries and different winds that blow in various areas, there is a constant, there is an anchor, there is sure and solid ground given to us through your Word. We thank you for its eternal truth.

We thank you that we have the opportunity to spend time studying it and in fellowship together coming to a better understanding of it. We pray that your Spirit will teach each one of us and transcend the limitations of the presentation or of our own understanding so that we can partake of the truth that informs us of your character and your person and gives us insight into the glory and the eternal future that we will share through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name.

Amen. Well, the book of Judges has been quite the adventure story beginning in the closing days of Joshua and the elders that followed him. And then we saw all of those seven great cycles, then the eighth cycle with Samson, the one we've just concluded.

And then we get a retro. Samson is all the way down in the time of Eli and his sons Hothni and Phineas. And while Samson is down there bringing down the house on the people in Gaza, why you have the Philistines capturing the Ark of the Covenant and taking it to the house of Dagon.

And we've seen that he's got the body of the fish and the head of a man, or in some cases the other way around, the head of a fish and body of a man. We know in the case of where the Ark went that he had the body of a man because his hands, it doesn't say his fins broke off, his hands broke off on the threshold. And ever after the priests of Dagon had a superstition about stepping on the threshold because they, well, you know, even Dagon couldn't survive this threshold.

It's a powerful piece of rock. But all of this is going on. So the book of Judges has spanned a couple of centuries now from the days in the high 1300s BC.

Remember 1440, 1445 is the Exodus, 40 years of wandering. You get down to 1405, 1400, you go into the land, seven-year conquest, all the days of Joshua. You get down into the 1300s and the elders that follow Joshua gets you down into the mid-1300s.

And then a hundred years later, it's 1200s. A hundred years later, it's 1100s. And a hundred years later, it's the 1050s or so.

And this is where Samson is. It's circa 1050. So we've covered a span of around 300 years and some change in the book of Judges.

Then we saw after the Samson story is complete, in chapter 18, we have the story of this Levite. What town is he from? What town is the Levite from? It's very important, most important element in the whole story, practically. He's from Bethlehem.

He's been dwelling with the people of Judah, but he's a ne'er-do-well Levite. He's a malcontent Levite. He's a worthless son of Belial Levite.

And he doesn't want to stay down there amongst all those positive believers like Boaz and Obed and Jesse and the stock from which King David is going to spring in the town of Bethlehem. He doesn't like it down there. Those people are not his not his sort.

He needs to find people with whom he's comfortable. So he leaves. He leaves Judah and he goes north and he keeps going north until he finds the most worthless area in Israel.

He goes to the mountains of Ephraim and he finds the place where we saw Micah and his little, you know, he robbed his own mother and then gave the money back and made a false worship up there. And then the Danites came and stole it all from him. And he's crying the blues.

How can you steal my false worship idol? And how can you steal my Levite? Well, we saw that. That was all in chapter 18. You remember that.

And it is important, but all of this is back early, early in the history. We've gone back in time now. We're back two, three hundred years before Samson now in the early days.

And we know this how? Who is the Levite? Who did the Levite turn out to be? He is the son of Gershom. And Gershom is the son of Moshe, Moses. That's the reason everybody was after him and saying, oh boy, Micah wants to set him up and make him the priest in his land because he's Moses' grandson.

He's got name recognition. Who can argue with the grandson of Moses presiding over your idolatrous golden ephod, and your couple of idols, your molten idol, and your carved idol, and your shrine, and all the rest of this folly that he just invented out of whole cloth. But it's got the imprimatur.

It's got the stamp of legitimacy because, well, looky here. Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, is my priest. And what is the message we take away from that? It's always interesting to go back and look at these old parties and all of their doings in the Old Testament.

But you have to ask yourself, so what? What is the big so what from that whole chapter? Is it possible to think that you're doing a right thing and point to something and say, you know, it's

like nobody knows the song anymore, but it's forever emblazoned in my mind. Debbie Boone used to sing this song, You Light Up My Life. You give me hope to carry on.

You light up my day. But the line in the song that just really stuck in my craw is, I mean, this is the son of Pat Boone. I mean, she's the daughter of Pat Boone, who was the son of Daniel Boone.

But Pat Boone, he's a big figure in the Christian world. And Pat Boone and Debbie Boone, his whole family, Christian, they've been all over Christian television and Christian this and Christian that. And so Debbie Boone got on the radio and she had a crossover hit into the mainstream, You Light Up My Life.

And one part of the song says, It can't be wrong if it feels so right. Well, excuse me, but most things that are wrong feel right at the time. That's why people do them.

They feel great, you know, momentarily. So, You Light Up My Life, you know, it can't be wrong if it feels right. So Micah takes this false idol stacked on top of a false base with a false ephod and a false shrine and a false priest.

He sets the whole thing up in his house and he says, It can't be wrong because Jonathan's presiding over it. He's the grandson of Moses. How can this be wrong? What is the moral of this story? And it goes beyond just any one particular thing.

When we go to the Word of God, we don't proof text. We don't take one verse that says, Whatsoever you ask in my name, my Father will grant it. Can you just make any old prayer and expect God to grant it? Jesus said, Whatsoever you ask in my name.

If I say, In Jesus name, I pray for a new Lexus. I want a 2009 Lexus, leather seats, heat, everything. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus said, Whatsoever you ask in my name, my Father will grant. We need a little bit more information, don't we? You can't just take one thing and say, This is right. My prayer is right.

There is a verse in the Old Testament that is oft quoted on TVN. The Trinity Broadcasting Network gives various programs and affiliates and it's little various preachers to get on there and various large well populated auditoriums and they say, Bring your tithes into the storehouse and the windows of heaven will open and blessing will shower down or words to that effect. Can you just take that one verse and say, Look, what I'm doing is right.

I brought a tithe into the storehouse. So where's my blessing? You cannot take one verse. You cannot take one thing and say, Because this one thing is right, this whole thing is right.

Even in a town, you've got to have ten righteous people before God will spare it. You can't just have one righteous guy. Lot could not save Sodom, could he? You know, Abraham, that wise man, bartered God down from 50 to 40, 30, 20 and got down if there were just 10.

But you can't save a town on just one righteous person. You can't have one right element in your argument or one right element in your justification for a thing. It's got to comport with all of the testimony of Scripture.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, any given element of life has to comport with Scripture. And you can't just pull one verse out of its context and say, This is my justification. Micah can do that.

Well, is Moses God's man or not? Is this man the blood descendant of Moses or is he not? Well, yeah, he is. So then anything Jonathan says goes. No, it doesn't.

This is going to be the seedbed of evil in the north of Israel. And what do the Danites do? The Danites go up and massacre a town. You know, people talk about Sodom and Zion gassing the Kurds and you find the things of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Pol Pot, you can find Ho Chi Minh. Lots of people have gone in and committed massacres. The tribe of Dan in Israel.

People like to point to the Old Testament Israelites and say, Well, look at these people of violence. If they really studied their Bible, they could point to a legitimate case of massacre on the part of the tribe of Dan. They went up and wiped out a completely peaceful town of unarmed civilians who weren't harming anybody.

Went up there, slaughtered them, men, women, and children, without any divine command whatsoever. God did not assign that land of the Sidonians to Israel. They went outside what Joshua had assigned to their tribe or to any other tribe.

Slaughtered harmless peaceful people. These people were like the Amish. They were just sitting there trying to grow their crops and live and stay out of everybody's hair.

They'd gotten well away, didn't have a militia, didn't have any defenses. They were just, you know, the peaceable kingdom with the lion laying down with the lamb. The Danites came up there and just slit their throats, gutted them, slaughtered them, splashed their blood all over everything, and took their town, took their land, took their stuff, took Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the grandson of Moses, and set him up as their priest, set up all of Micah's pagan idolatrous stuff, and that became the worship center in northern Israel.

It was seven different ways, an abomination, and they justified the whole thing because this guy's Moses' grandson. You just can't do that, and you and I have a responsibility to look at ourselves, to look at the things that we do, and say, am I justifying this on some sort of flimsy pretext, or am I actually trying to live in a way that is pleasing to God? Now, that theme is going to carry forward into our chapter tonight. That was all history from last time.

Tonight, we go to chapter 19. Now, this is sort of like a this is like a game show. This is like a challenge.

This is like a puzzle that you get on the, you know, Tulsa Daily World that we used to get when I was a boy. They had the comics on the back page of the Daily Paper, and across from that, they had two or three little puzzle things. They had the crossword.

They had the crypto quote. That was my favorite, where it's a substitution code, and one letter stands for another. And you would think, well, how hard can that be? Well, it is hard because the quotes that they pick are very non-standard.

You know, they would put something in there like, able was I, ere I saw Elba, or something. Well, that's not like normal text. You can't always use a frequency table, which I memorized, by the way.

At the time, it may have changed, but in those days, the letters of the alphabet, in order of most common occurrence, were E, A, O, I, D, H, N, R, S, T, and then the rest of the alphabet. But E is the most, everybody knows that, E is the most common letter in standard text, and then A, O, I, D, H, N, etc. And so you could use that and say, well, you know, if there's an X that occurs more than anything else, maybe that's an E. But the people who make the puzzles say, well, I know that's what you're going to think, and so I'm going to purposely pick a quote that when I revert it, the most common letter, and it's going to be W, and you're going to put E's in there, and it's going to take you like an hour and a half to solve it.

Well, this is going to be a puzzle. This chapter for tonight, chapter 19, is a puzzle. So you've got to watch for the clues.

See if you can resolve this. Ask yourself this question, Why in heaven's name did God put chapter 19 in the Bible? You have to ask yourself this question. So keep that question in mind.

We're going to read the first part of this, and just ask yourself now, why is this here? God evidently wanted to expend the space for an entire chapter of the Bible on this content. It came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel, but there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. Oh, wait a minute.

Did I slip a chapter? Am I back in 18? Seems like we just got through having a Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. We just had Bethlehem in Judah.

The Levite in the last chapter was 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. So 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. This is all where now? We're in Bethlehem. We're in Judah.

When the father of the young woman saw him, the Levite, he was glad to meet him. Now his

father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him. He stayed with him three days.

They ate and drank and lodged there. Then it came to pass on the fourth day they arose early in the morning and the Levite stood up to depart. But the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, refresh your heart with a morsel of bread and afterward go your way.

So they sat down. The two of them ate and drank together. The young woman's father said to the man, please be content to stay all night and let your heart be merry.

So he has spent a day and now he's going to spend the night. So then the next day when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him. So he lodged there again.

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, the 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 opposite Jebus, that is, Jerusalem. Now, notice it's still Jebus at this point. Who's going to turn Jebus into Jerusalem? David.

And this is a long time hence. This is way before that. With him were the two saddled donkeys.

His concubine also was 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. Anybody remember anything about Gibeah? What's the capital city of David in Israel? Ultimately, he starts in Hebron, but ultimately Jebus, Jerusalem, is David's capital city.

What was the capital city of David's predecessor, Saul? Gibeah. This is Gibeah in Benjamin. This is Gibeah that will eventually be Saul's capital city.

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. Now, what do we know about Ramah? Whose city is that? The prophet Samuel. That's his town, Ramah.

So, we're several hundred years before the events that are given to us in 1 Samuel, but we've got a lot of significant elements here. We've got Bethlehem, the birthplace of David. We've got Jerusalem, the capital city of David.

We've got Gibeah, the capital city of Saul. We've got Ramah, the capital city of Samuel. So, all of these things would conspire to be of interest to people in David's day and following, looking back in history, wouldn't they? It would be kind of like reading about Sam Houston, or Stephen F. Austin, or George Dallas, or whatever this place is named for, to find out the early history.

You know, there's a lot of people who go to Houston or live in Austin, and they don't really know the story of Sam Houston. They don't know the story of Stephen Austin or the other founders. Those guys were some amazing men.

I would wager that most of you do not know the full story of Sam Houston and the role that he played, unless you've gone to high school in the state and taken history of Texas. But it's worth looking into. There were some great men who founded this state.

And it's of interest. If you live here, you say, hey, that's interesting. Well, this would be of interest.

We're trying to answer the question, why is this chapter here? First of all, it's going to be of great interest to people living in David's day and after, who are very familiar with the later history of these towns. So, that's sort of part A of our answer. Remember, this is a puzzle.

We're looking for clues. So, we keep going here. Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, verse 15.

They turned aside. So, you've got the picture here. This guy has been down in Bethlehem, but he's trying to get back to Ephraim.

And he has gotten as far as Jebus. The servant says, let's turn aside. The sun's going down.

Let's find a motel. The man says, I don't want to turn in here. There's a bunch of pagan Jebusites in here.

I want to stay with Israelites. So, he gets a little further into the territory. Remember where the tribe of Benjamin has their territory? It sits right atop Judah.

Benjamin is in that zone between Judah and all of northern Israel. And the line runs right through Jerusalem. So, they cross that line into the territory of Benjamin.

And now they're in the town of Gibeah of Saul. It'll be of Saul eventually. But this is the town of Gibeah.

It's in the tribe of Benjamin. Okay, that's where we are. Who's he got with him? Two donkeys, servant, concubine.

Concubine is probably right. And you know that whole thing of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem. Well, this is going the other way.

You've got a man leading a donkey with a concubine on it heading the other way. She's not

about to have a baby. She's just riding.

But you could take a Christmas card and get the general appearance. It would look very similar. He's leading her along.

What's on the other donkey? Supplies. The man and the servant are walking, leading the donkeys. There's a woman on one donkey, supplies on the other.

They're in Gibeah. Sun is setting. Sun is sinking slowly in the west.

So, the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside to go into lodge in Gibeah. 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.

Now, people in David's day wouldn't necessarily think of this. But you remember Mary and Joseph going the other way. You've got a man leading a donkey, woman on top.

No room at the inn. No place to stay. Well, this is sort of the reverse, going the other way.

But this is not in Bethlehem. This is in Gibeah. So, he's in the open square.

What do you have in the open square of one of these towns? Well, it's kind of a trick question. There's nothing. It's an open square.

There's nothing there. He's visible to everybody around. This is the point.

There are buildings and houses ringing this square all around. And he's there. It's not like the people of the town don't know that a stranger is in town with a spouse.

Obviously, a traveler. Two donkeys and a servant. And what is the rule in the Middle East from that day to this? For thousands of years, what is the rule? What do people pride themselves on in that part of the world? Hospitality.

It is an indictment of a household. Even the Bedouin will take their enemies in and treat them to hospitality before they slit their throats. I'm talking about in the old days.

I'm not saying anything against modern Bedouin. In the old days, you travel around the desert. Well, they come in and whine you and dine you and then kill you.

Because they are noted for their hospitality. But this is an early warning sign. This is the minor key music playing underneath this scene.

Because they're sitting there and something bad is about to happen. This is an inhospitable town. Notably so.

Indubitably so. Egregiously so. And so they're sitting in the open square.

This is just wrong. Any ancient Near Eastern person reading this city would say, What? They came to the town and nobody took them in? That's just wrong. So, just then, an old man came in from his work in the field at evening.

He is from the mountains of Ephraim. He's not from around here. He's not a Benjamite.

He's not from the town of Gibeah. He's been out doing some contract labor in the fields. He's down here earning some money so he can go home and live in Ephraim.

He was staying in Gibeah. He's rented a room there. And he's down there doing contract labor out in the fields.

He's one of the last guys to come in. He put up the stock and watered them and wiped them down and put away whatever his implements were. And he's the last guy to come in before they shut the city gates.

The men of the place were Benjamites. He's not. He's a stranger there.

He's a visitor as well. So, when he raised his eyes, he saw. How many times in Scripture have you seen this? He lifted his eyes and saw.

When he lifted his eyes, he saw. The traveler in the open square of the city. The old man says, Where are you going and where are you coming from? Which is a long way of saying, What are you doing here? Sitting in the open square in the dark.

The man says, We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah. That's where we're from. I am going toward the remote mountains of Ephraim.

Where this guy happens to be from. I am from there. This Levite says.

I went to Bethlehem in Judah. Now I am going to the house of the Lord. I am going toward the remote mountains of Ephraim.

He says. I was in Bethlehem of Judah. Now I am going where? I am going to the house of the Lord.

Is there a house of the Lord in the mountains of Ephraim? Do we know of any house of the Lord in Ephraim? Of any shape, size, or description? Who has established a house of the Lord up in Ephraim? Micah. This is in the days of Micah. Remember Micah? He started out with his son, and later got the other Levite.

How does this guy who has been in Bethlehem of Judah know that there is a house of the Lord in the remote mountains of Ephraim? Well, he's been living up there, and he is an associate of Jonathan. He's not Jonathan. He's an associate.

He's another Levite that's been roped into the service of this thing. You've got to have more

than one Levite, ultimately. You've got a lot of stuff going on.

You've got a shrine to polish. You've got images to maintain. You've got sacrifices to offer.

You've got an ephod to run. You've got a whole thriving business there. So this could be a cousin.

It could be just some other guy. I don't know if he's related, because he's a Levite. He says, there's only one house of the Lord that's ever been in the mountains of Ephraim, and that's Micah's house.

He's going to Micah's house. There is no other house of the Lord, of any shape, size, or description, but that in the mountains of Ephraim. So this gives us a chronological tie.

This is in the days before the tribe of Dan came and hijacked this whole thing up north. There is no one here who will take me into his house. And this is peculiar because it's not like we're going to be a big load on the pantry here.

I've got straw and fodder for the donkeys. Where is that? It's on the back of one of the donkeys. I've got bread and wine for myself.

Where is that? Sitting on the back of a donkey. What are the elements, by the way, that he's got? Bread and wine. He has just come from where? Bethlehem.

Which is what? House of bread. These are clues. Just accumulating these clues.

Have you ever played one of these games where you're on an adventure? You're like a first-person video game person. You have to wander around in the rooms. You see a thing.

Will it let you pick it up? Well, I'll put that in my bag. I might need it later. If you've ever done these little adventure things or seen somebody else do them, you have to accumulate stuff because you know you're going to need it later.

If there's a sack of gold laying on the floor, well, can I pick that up? Yes, I can. Well, I'll put it in my inventory. Oh look, here's a broken broom handle.

Well, I'll put it in my inventory. I might need it later. We're accumulating these clues because we're going to need them later to figure out why this chapter is here.

No one will take me into his house. I have straw and fodder for the donkeys. I have bread and wine for myself and for the female servant and for the young man who is with your servant.

There's no lack of anything. He's talking to this old man who, because he is old, is of rank. And so the Levite says, I am your most humble and obedient servant.

The female, this concubine, my wife here, she is your humble and obedient servant. And this other young man who is with your servant, who is my servant, there's no lack of anything. All

we need is a roof.

We've got chow. So the old man says, Peace be with you. However, let all your needs be my responsibility.

Only do not spend the night in the open square. And again, ominous music is playing underneath this. Whatever you do, don't stay out here after dark.

People are saying, hmm, why is that? So this seems to be quite the blessing. This man from Ephraim who has rented lodgings in the town takes this man, his concubine and his servant, and the two donkeys, and all of his gear to the rented lodgings. He brought him into his house and gave fodder to the donkeys, and they washed their feet and ate and drank.

They washed their feet. We just went through a whole... How many lessons did we go through in John on washing the feet? John chapter 13. And they ate and drank.

So far, so good. What a blessing. The man from Ephraim rescues him from some unknown fate out in the middle of the open square after dark.

Although, the story is not over. Verse 22. As they were enjoying themselves, sitting down to a nice repast, donkeys are munching away, the concubine is clattering about with pans and dishes.

Here is the stuff. The servant is in there bringing things. 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 carnally, it says here in your New King James. Well, you know, if you've been through Genesis 19 a lot, this sounds eerily familiar. So the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, Know my brethren.

They're not actually his brethren. He's not a Benjamite. He says, Know my brethren, my fellow Israelites.

I beg you, do not act so wickedly. Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. What is the outrage? The first outrage was, nobody offered the man hospitality.

Secondly, now they're going to violate the hospitality that this Ephraimite elderly man is offering them by dragging them away from their meal outside to do who knows what. So, do not commit this outrage. Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine.

Let me bring them out now. Now, I will tell you, irregardless of whatever any commentary or whatever else says, there is only one woman here. This elderly gentleman doesn't have a virgin daughter with him.

He's down there doing contract work in the fields. The only virgin daughter present is not so

much a virgin at all. It is the concubine.

There is only one woman present. It's the concubine that belongs to the Levite. There has been a scrambling and some tampering with the text here.

But just to clarify things, there is only one woman. It's the concubine. He says, Look, here is my virgin daughter and concubine.

Let me bring her out now. This is what the guy is saying. Humble her and do with her as you please.

But to this man, do not do such a vile thing. One of the ways we know this is the proper reading of the text is as you go on, there is only one woman that comes out. There is only one woman that is violated.

There is no further mention of any virgin daughter because there is no virgin daughter. It's just a scrambling of the text. There is even probably a little bit of a reminiscence of Lot talking about his daughters.

So, the men don't heed him. The man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And it's hard to know who makes this offer.

Is it the man from Ephraim or is it the Levite who is also from Ephraim? The upshot of it is, and we may not be able to reconstruct things exactly, but people are surrounding and they want the Levite and his servant. They want the men. These are men.

They want the men. Bring out the Levite. Bring out the young man who is his servant.

We want to play games with them. No. Look.

Here is one woman. And she comes out. So, the men took the concubine.

The man took his concubine. And this is the Levite. And it's important who is the actor here.

The only guy who does anything right here is the Ephraimite who offers hospitality. He is not at fault. The Levite offers the concubine.

They take the concubine. And she is outside with these perverted men. They knew her and abused her all night until morning.

And when the day began to break, they let her go. They have dragged her off elsewhere in the city. 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.

So, after she has been carnally abused, she staggers back. Notice the door is locked. She can't get in, so she drops on the threshold.

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. I can't think of a more insensitive passage anywhere in the Bible than he throws the woman out to these perverts.

They do God knows what. She comes back and collapses on the thing. He opens the door.

It's bright. The day is dawning. And, well, let's be going.

Obviously, she is in some sort of bad shape because there was no answer. And the reason there is no answer is she has died. She has died as a result of her maltreatment.

She is a corpse. He says, Rise, let's be going. Well, she doesn't rise because she's dead.

So the man lifts her onto the donkey, lifts her corpse onto the donkey, and he got up and went to his place. He takes her body the rest of the way from Gibeah to the mountains of Ephraim where his home is. Okay, well, this is part A. He's going to slice her and send the parts around Israel and so on.

Excuse me. But this is a good stopping place for our purposes. What has happened here? A horrible thing has happened in this town of Benjamin.

And we need to figure out how the pieces of this puzzle that we've collected so far fit together. So let's go back. First of all, at the beginning of the chapter, we are told, It came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel.

Now this is a refrain in this part of Judges that is repeated several times. We saw it in chapter 17, verse 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, meaning what? Obviously there's no king. There's not going to be a king until Saul.

So, what is this really saying? Well, in 17.6 of Judges, in those days there was no king. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. There is no authority to enforce the standards of the law of Moses.

So, everyone is a law unto himself. You can either choose on your own to be obedient, to pursue God's plan and purpose, or you can do what you think is right. And there's no consequence.

Nobody is going to come down and haul you before the congregation of Israel. The congregation of Israel is in the early part of being scattered throughout the land. And it's decentralized.

And nothing has replaced Moses. Nothing has replaced Joshua. Nothing has replaced the council of elders.

Remember the Judges, the 70 Judges that were in place at the behest of Moses' father-in-law,

Jethro, he said, look, you need to appoint some judiciary here. That's all fallen apart and nothing has taken its place. So, you can do what's right to you and you don't have to answer to anybody.

That's what we are being reminded of. We were told that in Judges 17.6. We were told that at the beginning of the last chapter, Judges 18.1. In those days there was no king in Israel. People could decide they didn't like their inheritance as a tribe and go somewhere else.

That's what happened in 18. The tribe of Dan just pulls up stakes and says, we're going to go attack somebody that God didn't even tell us to attack, peaceable people that don't even have a sharp stick, and we're going to take their stuff. We were told that again in Judges 18.7. The five men who did the recon for the tribe of Dan departed.

They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. There's nobody to call them to account if they go rape, pillage, plunder, burn down, and massacre an entire village of people.

Nobody's going to call them to account. So this is now the fourth time that we have been told in the space of two chapters. This is the fourth time we've been told there is no king in Israel.

And what does it mean here? This Levite is moving about in a land that has no central government. There is no law enforcement. This is like the Wild West.

So he's a Levite. He's in the remote mountains of Ephraim. And he is actually in or near Micah's house.

He is an associate in some way, because he's going to tell the guy later, I'm going to the house of the Lord. Well, he's going to Micah's house that is quote-unquote the house of the Lord. It's not really.

So he took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. Now, this is not the Catholic priesthood. Levites marry.

Otherwise, you run out of Levites pretty quick. You know, they have to marry and have little baby Levites who will grow up to be more Levites, right? There's nothing wrong with them marrying. But why does it say a concubine? Why is she not? He took a wife.

What's the difference in a wife and a concubine in Israel? Concubine is a second-class wife. This is someone who is from the ranks of the slaves. She was a slave woman, or she was a woman who did not carry the status or the standing to rate the regular marriage contract between families and so on.

And why would this be? How would he end up with a concubine from Judah? Well, there's something wrong here. No family in Bethlehem of Judah would contract a marriage with this

Levite. People in Bethlehem are smart.

This is an area where you can't just go and be a ne'er-do-well. That's why the first Levite had to leave. Well, this guy has come down there because probably the other Levite told him, Hey, there's some things you can do down there in Bethlehem.

So he goes down there, but he's got to get this concubine not in the legitimate way. That's why she's a concubine and not a wife. She's from the ranks of slaves, or she is somehow not worthy to be contracted for and have a dowry paid and do all the usual rituals.

So, her father evidently farmed her out in some way, shape, or form, and she ended up as a concubine. So, it says, the concubine played the harlot against him, in verse 2. This is what the Masoretic text says, played the harlot. However, with the change of a couple of small letters, you get the reading that is reflected in the Septuagint, which is, she became angry with him.

Why would she be angry with him? Because he is mistreating her in some way. And she said, I'm going home to my father's house, and she left. Which reading is correct? It's hard to say.

Which one is more easy to explain? It is much easier to explain the scribes and your Levitical types who are overseeing the text protecting themselves and saying, well, he was right. She did something wrong, rather than he did something wrong. It's easier to explain the text changing at an early time to, she played the harlot.

Because, although the man would still be wrong, if she played the harlot, what does the law in Leviticus say? That's death penalty. But everything is so messed up, it's hard to know what the deal is. I will just tell you, my suspicion is that the Septuagint reflects the original reading.

She got fed up with him, and she wanted to go back to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a nice area. This is where the godly people live.

This is where Boaz lives. This is where people do things according to the law. Remember, Boaz said, I can't take care of you, Ruth and Naomi, unless we check with the other kinsmen first, because that's what the law says.

Down around Bethlehem in Judah, that's where people still abide by the law of God. And she doesn't like it up there, and she says, I'm going home. This is messed up up here.

And so she went home. So she went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and she was there four whole months. So her husband arose and went after her to speak kindly to her, and to bring her back.

Literally, it says, to speak to her heart. He wants to appeal to her. Why does he need to appeal to her for her to come back? If she played the harlot, why does he want her back? It doesn't make any sense.

I think she doesn't like his operation up there in Ephraim. She got there and thought, Whoa,

this is not anything like what I was led to believe it would be. I'm upset with you.

I'm going home. So he wants to come and try to wheedle her to come back. That's the deal.

So he takes his servant and a couple donkeys with him. Two men, two donkeys provisions. He goes down to try to woo her back.

Well, that's the background, and that's where we're going to stop as we take our break. But who is in the right and who is in the wrong here? Who is trying to get back to where things are right? Who is trying to take a person who lives in the place where things are right and take them up to where things are wrong? The person goes up there and says, I don't like it here where things are wrong. I'm going back to where things are right.

Well, he's coming down to try to pull her back to where things are wrong. That's the situation. We know what's going on in the mountains of Ephraim.

We've already done chapter 18. And we also know from the book of Ruth what's going on down in Bethlehem of Judea in these early days, in the days of the judges. We know about Boaz and Salmon and Obed and Jesse coming from this area.

Well, that's our background. So let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see what happens when he arrives at the father's house.

That's the key to this whole chapter. That's what we'll pick up when we come back.