

Judges 08-08-27a

This is Wednesday, the 27th of August, 2008, in another one of our special sessions. I love the fact that we're small enough to flex and just meet whenever we need to. We are continuing tonight our study in the book of Judges.

We're in chapter 19 and 20. We'll take a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we will dive directly into our passage. We have a lot to cover tonight, so let's begin.

Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to look at the truth of your word in the book of Judges. We thank you for this passage and the truth that it contains. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you will recall, I think, the rather dramatic story of the Levite who began in the hill country of Ephraim.

He got himself a concubine down in Bethlehem, brought her back up to live, but she didn't like it. She got angry with him and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem. He waited four months, and then he went after her to retrieve her.

She welcomed him into her father's house when he got there, but then he didn't want to leave, and he stayed there a couple of extra days, and when he did leave, he left late. He traveled from Bethlehem up to Jebus. It's about a six-mile journey, and realized that he was not going to make it to his destination in Ephraim at that pace.

His servant suggested, well, let's turn aside to Jebus and rest for the night. We'll do the rest of the journey tomorrow. The master said, oh no, that's a town of the Canaanites.

We want to stay with our brothers, the Israelites, so let's keep going. So they continued on to Gibeah, which is about another six miles. Of course, by this time it's getting pretty dark, and nobody takes them in, so they sit in the city square.

Another Ephraimite man, an elderly man, comes in. He's one of the last guys in from the fields. Comes in through the gate, sees them, and invites them to his evidently rented lodgings because he's not from there.

He's not a Benjamite, and he seems to be doing contract labor. So he takes them in. He's an elderly man.

We're told several times that he's old, and all of these details have significance. And you remember that as they are eating and making merry in there that suddenly there's commotion outside, and the men of Gibeah have come to demand that the guest be turned out so that they can have their lustful way with him. And the elderly man comes out first and protests and says, men, you shouldn't be doing this kind of thing.

Ultimately, the Levite sticks his head out the door and says, here, take my concubine, which they do. And come morning, she's dead on the doorstep. He is on his way out the door, pretty much trips over her, says, well, come on, let's be going, and she doesn't get up.

So he puts her on the donkey, takes her home, chops her up, sends her out to Israel. And this is going to lead to a convocation of the elders of Israel, the leaders of Israel, and they're going to call to arms, and there's going to be great retribution for the tribe of Benjamin. But we want to go back and just parse and interpret some of these details just very quickly.

We're not going to dwell on this or agonize over it, but there are a lot of significant details that are given to us for a reason. Let me start by asking you this question. Why could this story not have started in the middle? Why couldn't the story just have been, behold, there was a Levite traveling from Bethlehem to the hill country of Judea with his concubine.

He stopped in Gibeah. All these bad things happened. Why do we get so much backstory? Do we really need to know that there was a four-month separation, that he went down, he stayed all of these days? Why do we have all of that prehistory? Isn't the real issue what happens in Gibeah on this night and the death of the concubine and the rallying of Israel to try to bring about retribution or justice or whatever? This is the question that I ask myself.

What does all of that preceding material contribute? Why is it there? It's not necessary to understand the offense of the Gibeites, is it? Doesn't seem like it's necessary to me. Why do we need to know that? Let me offer you a few suggestions here in this. We have the benefit of hindsight in a lot of cases in Scripture.

We can look and say, you can see prefiguring in the Levitical offerings of the work of Jesus Christ, where for them it was anticipatory. But if you remember that this compilation, and especially this portion of the book of Judges, when is it put together? This part is put in after there is a king in Israel, right? We're told several times, at this time there was no king in Israel, parentheses, like there is now. You know what I mean? So knowing that, we know when this was offered to Israel for correction, rebuke and instruction and righteousness.

And so we know how much history is already available to them at this time. This would have been circulating in this form circa 1000 B.C., 900 B.C., sometime after you've got David and Solomon on the throne. With its uncomplimentary picture of Gibeah, you wouldn't expect this to have come to publication in Saul's reign.

Gibeah is his city. This would not have been very flattering, very uplifting. Saul, knowing him, wouldn't have allowed it to circulate.

So we expect that this would have been probably in the days of Solomon, would be my guess. So this tells us something, because there are certain things that are hindsight, even for the original audience of this book, and this is really important. So we're going to start kind of in the middle and work our way out.

We're going to start at the point that the Levite approaches Jebus. And then I'll backtrack a little bit to look at some of the earlier details. But at the point that he approaches the Jebusite city, what does he say? What does he say to his servant? The servant says to his master in verse 11 of chapter 19, Come, let us turn aside into the city of the Jebusites and spend the night in it.

However, his master said to him, We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners who are not sons of Israel. So his criteria is sons of Israel good, not sons of Israel bad. We don't have any reason to think that this is of any consequence at this point.

We will go on as far as Gibeah. And we know Gibeah is an Israelite town. And so as they continued to travel, and that was at the halfway mark of this day's journey, they'd gone about six miles, they'd go about six more miles, and it's getting very dark.

He says to his servant, Let's approach one of these places. We will spend the night in Gibeah or Ramah. So they passed along and went their way, and the sun set on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin.

And so at the point that they are taken in by the Ephraimite elderly man, and this noise and commotion takes place outside the door, we begin to see eerie similarities to the story of the angelic visitors to Lot. And there are incredible similarities here. If you lay the two stories side by side, you have phrases like the men of the city surrounded the house in both stories.

There are 24 identical phrases, identical words, identical terms in the story from Genesis 19 and in the story from Judges 19. And there are a total of about 40. I mean, those are exact equivalences.

I think there are 16 phrases that are exactly the same in both stories, and there's another 24 that are changed just because of the context. A word that was singular here might be plural, or the form of a verb might be changed, but basically there are 40 direct points of correspondence where you can make a one-to-one, connect the dots between Genesis 19 and Judges 19. It's extraordinary.

It is not accidental. The story here is designed by God and recognized by the author under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and he intentionally uses the language of Genesis to point out the similarities of these two episodes. Why? That's the fundamental question.

When we answer this question, why, you can see, as we expand out from this center point, why all of this backstory is in here. But think about it. The man came to Jebus and wouldn't go in because they're foreigners, right? He wants to be with his own people.

So when he goes up to Gibeah, where is he? He's in Sodom. By going on to the people that he claims are sons of Israel, this is a commentary on the degeneration of the people of Israel once they have gotten into the land. They were supposed to go in and drive out the Canaanites.

They were supposed to drive out the kind of iniquity that was represented in Sodom and

Gomorrah that God himself destroyed with fire and brimstone. And instead, the men in Gibeah have become the Sodomites. And this Levite, who is supposed to be a spiritual leader in Israel, bypasses Jebus, which is, in the day when this is circulating, this is the capital city.

This is David's throne town. This is where the Ark of the Covenant rests. This is where the temple is probably under construction or has been built.

And the Levite passes that by because at the time, well, it's Jebus. And I think out of 27 lists of the inhabitants of the land, 22 of those 27 lists include the Jebusites as Canaanites. So he bypasses the Canaanites and goes to Gibeah and ends up in Sodom.

It's worse than if he'd gone to the Jebusites. And so this correspondence is intentional. And once we see that this is kind of the centerpiece, this is the theme of what's happening, you back up and say, well, now, why did I have all of this front matter in the story, all of the details? And if you think about it, and I admit that this is a little bit, you could view this as maybe reaching a little bit, but it is suggestive to me that this woman from Bethlehem was probably a worthy woman, a woman worth having.

And the Ephraimite Levite originally recognized this and went to get her. And she is sort of the prize. If you think of the Levite as representing what Israel was supposed to do and the woman as representing the fulfillment, this goes back to the garden.

Man is incomplete without the woman. He needs a help meet for him. The two shall become one.

Israel is incomplete without the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose. And it is as though in Bethlehem of Judah you have the fulfillment of God's plan. And this Levite from Ephraim comes down and finds her, but he doesn't make her a first wife.

He half-marries her. She's a concubine. She's not a full-fledged, this is my wife, this is going to be the mother of my heirs, and so on.

It's a semi-marriage. It's a second-class relationship. He is only partly committed to her instead of fully committed, like he would be with a first wife.

We don't know why. That detail is not given. And I think intentionally so.

And it reflects the idea that Israel half-embraced God's covenant and God's plan and God's purpose for the nation. And they initially said, oh yes, fine. And they embrace it, they enfold it, they marry themselves to it, but they are not fully committed to it.

They haven't really loved God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength. It's a mixed motive sort of thing. He takes her up to the mountains of Ephraim, but she is incompatible with his life.

He is not in the right place. He is not doing the right thing. He is up there associated, obviously,

with the Micah corrupt worship.

And she cannot abide that. And I think the correct translation is not that she played the harlot, but she became angry. This is not what she signed up for.

This is not where she should be or who she should associate with. She can't tolerate that. And so she leaves and returns to her father's house in Bethlehem.

And you can see that as Israel loses sight, once they are in the land, once they have possession, they've gone to the mountains of Ephraim, literally, they've come across the Jordan with Joshua, they've conquered the land, they're in there, and now is the time to worship God and to honor God and to have fruit from that marriage, so to speak. Instead, it dissolves. And the purpose of it and the reason for it, pictured as this woman, departs.

And for four months, he doesn't do anything about it. And that four months, I think, sort of represents the 400 years between coming to the land in 1400 B.C. and the Davidic kingship, the good monarchy that finally gets going on all eight cylinders in 1000 B.C. You have that 400 years, and it's represented by those four months. There are always echoes and larger reverberations in God's Word.

You see repeated fulfillments, like the Spirit being poured out of all flesh. You can see it on individuals. You can see it with Jesus and his disciples.

You can see it on the day of Pentecost. And all of those are ripples preceding the actual fulfillment of Joel. And your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams, and so on.

In the same way, there is another 400-year period between Abraham and the Exodus, where Israel, oh, yes, well, okay, we're down here, Joseph. But then between Abraham and the Exodus, there is this gradual loss and deterioration, and hardly anybody is even looking for God for that 400-year period. And so these are echoes and reminders.

And so for four months, the man is okay without this woman. But then he finally says, well, I need to go get her. And so he goes down to Bethlehem, and she receives him.

He's here to get her, and she says, okay, fine. Come into my father's house. Come in and get to know my father, so to speak.

And so that's what he does. But then he's all interested in the hospitality. And it's not an exact correspondence.

You don't say, well, God the Father is keeping Israel from going back and fulfilling their mission. But in this story, he gets enamored with the food and the drink and the entertainment and the rest and so on that is in this house. And he doesn't go consummate this marriage, have offspring, fulfill the first divine prerogative, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, love your

wife and be one flesh and all of that.

He's all tangled up with her father, and she disappears from the picture. And when he does finally decide that he's going to go on and live his life, his timing is wrong. His timing is off.

He waits too late in the day to start, and he is overtaken by darkness. Now, another thing, if you don't mind marking your Bible, let me point out a few things as you go through this. The notation in verse 9, when the man arose to go along with his concubine and servant, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, Look, the day has drawn to a close.

Please spend the night. The day is coming to an end. Spend the night here that your heart may be merry.

Then tomorrow you may arise early for your journey so that you may go home. Now, if he had heeded the father's advice, either leave early in the morning or stay a day and leave early the next morning. Don't stay part of a day and then leave late.

If he had said, OK, fine, I'll stay one more day, all would have been well. The story wouldn't even be in Scripture, probably. But instead, he was not willing to spend the night.

But notice what it says. And if you don't mind underlining or circling, the day has drawn to a close. The day is coming to an end.

You don't want to travel in the night. How many Scriptures? I don't need to give you the references. For we are not children of darkness.

We are not of the darkness. We are not of the night. We are of the day.

Walk as children of light. Jesus says, walk while you have the light. The day is coming when it's going to be dark.

Walk while you have the light. God is light. In Him is no darkness at all.

And when it's time to travel, you don't travel in the dark. And there is a time for everything in God's plan. And if he had heeded the Father's advice, he would have been fine.

But he chooses his own time. And he leaves when the day is drawing to a close. The day is coming to an end.

And so in verse 10, it says that he was not willing to spend the night, so he arose and departed. And in verse 11, notice again, the day was almost gone. The servant says, we need to turn aside.

Spend the night in it. The master said, we will not turn aside. We'll go on.

And so in verse 14, they passed along and went their way, and the sun set on them near Gibeah. All of these time references, if you think about Bible stories, how often do you get this

many time references? These are significant just by their frequency and their repetition. So verse 14, the sun set on them.

They're in the dark in more ways than one. And so they turned aside to enter a lodge in Gibeah. They entered.

They sat down in the open square of the city. And verse 15, for no one took them into his house to spend the night. They are in the night, and they have no protection.

They have no hospitality. Stark contrast to the preceding night where they were in the Father's house, and they had everything. They had security.

They had food. They had merry hearts and so on. Everything was great at the house of the Father.

Now he's running his own schedule, and he's out there and he's got nothing. And in verse 16, the man coming out of the field from his work at evening. This man, this old man, represents the elders, the preceding generation.

Remember the elders who had served with Joshua, and they still carry that momentum forward? This man has integrity. He still has the values of hospitality. He still has the old covenant, Mosaic law concern for his fellow Israelite.

And he says, you can't stay here in the open square. The man says, look, I've got all the stuff. I can take care of myself provision-wise.

We just need a place. The guy says, no, no. The guy feeds him out of his own store of fodder and his own store of food.

This is the old values. This is the earlier generation that still tried to heed and follow God's word. That's what the elderly Ephraimite man represents.

And this is, again, why it's possible to kind of straighten out this rough spot in the middle when the two men are at the door and who says what and what gets offered gets scrambled. But this elderly Ephraimite, he represents what Israel used to be and what they aren't anymore. It's not old men in Gibeah that are staggering around saying, bring out your guests.

These are the youths. These are the sons of Belial. And this is the new generation that knew not Joshua, so to speak.

So again, you had that at evening in verse 16. And no man will take me into his house in verse 18. We have everything that we need.

So when you get to verse 20, the old man said, Peace to you. Let me take care of all your needs. However, do not spend the night in the open square.

So he took them in, washed their feet, ate and drank. They were celebrating the men of the city in verse 22. Surrounded the house, pounding the door.

And this is where you start getting those 40 direct correspondences to Genesis 19. I mean, in Hebrew, this is just like pounding on your head with a hammer 40 times. Anybody that's even read Genesis, in Hebrew especially, could not help but see that this is such a close parallel.

So you have all of these. And so ultimately, there's only one girl involved. This Ephraimite, as near as I can tell, didn't have a virgin daughter.

He gets elbowed out of the way by the Levite. And the Levite offers the concubine. Now, this also is a reminder that the feminists love to come to the Bible and say, look at these patriarchal guys who care nothing for women and look at these biblical examples.

Listen, the Bible records this because this is a sign of depravity when a society has disregard for human life. And I don't preach anti-abortion sermons, but it is a fact that when a society disregards human life or is very selective about which human lives they are going to value, it's a sign of degeneracy. It's a sign of depravity and departure from the principles of the Word of God.

And this callous indifference to the fate of this woman is a sign of great evil. You can look at generations or sections of our country in the past that had racial insensitivity and racial bigotry, and it's the same thing. It's an evil on its face.

Everybody can recognize that, but it is a sign of spiritual degeneracy. And the sad thing is that in a lot of cases people wrap themselves in the cloak of the Word of God and try to justify their actions and they would go to church on Sunday and then go stick a burning cross in somebody's lawn a couple of days later. And you can't just wrap yourself in your Levitical robes.

You can't wrap yourself in your Christian robes and think that God is not going to see that and judge it. So this episode takes place and the woman comes down and it's not clear exactly at what point she dies. Is it at the Levite's hand? Is it as a result of the abuse that she suffered during the night? She was alive when she came to the door, but by the time he cuts her up in Ephraim, she's not alive and we don't know exactly whether she was unconscious, just unable to speak, or she's already dead.

It doesn't even say. But here's the point. If you think again to that larger view that this woman from Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David and ultimately the city of the Messiah, is callously tossed out the door to satisfy men who are essentially Canaanites.

They have become the Sodomites and to satisfy their gross, sensual appetites, everything that that woman represents is callously tossed out the door and virtually stepped over. You would think all through the night, and again you can circle those time references, they raped her and abused her all night until morning and they let her go at the approach of dawn. And you would think, well, all of this darkness that has descended over this story and has characterized this

bad part of the story, well, now it's starting to lift and with the dawn would come hope.

But the dawn reveals death and the dawn reveals the callousness of the Levite and the dawn reveals the results of everything. It isn't hopeful. The woman isn't delivered.

In this story, there are no angels who blind the Sodomites. Why? This is Israel who has taken up the mantle and is personifying and impersonating Sodomites. And the judgment is going to take a different form.

So as the day began to dawn, the woman came and fell down at the doorway of the man's house until full daylight. And it is a reminder that to the last, there is the opportunity to lay hold of, if this man had been listening and watching and concerned about the concubine, he might have been able to nurse her and protect her or do something. Even as a result of his callous indifference, something could have been done.

But he's not even looking for her. It's well into the morning before he opens the door and by that time, it's too late. And he has missed the opportunity to have any future with that woman in the same way that Israel is going to ultimately miss the opportunity to have any future with that covenant with God.

They fritter it away. They sacrifice it to sensual lusts among their own people in their own land. They do it to themselves.

He says, get up and let us go. There's no answer. He places her on the donkey.

When he enters his house in Ephraim, he took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces limb by limb and sent her throughout the territory of Israel. I've been thinking about this some more and it finally dawned on me why it was easy for him to do this. What's his identity? He's a Levite.

What do Levites do for a living? Keep your finger here and turn back to Leviticus chapter 1, verse 6. Remember Leviticus 1. You remember those chapters. Chapter 1 of Leviticus is which offering? Whole burnt offering. The offering of personal dedication.

What does it say in Leviticus 1? And this is generally cut between the long bones. He's going to skin it and then he's going to cut it up. And so out of each limb, you're going to get two pieces.

That's eight right there. You've got the torso. You cut that into three pieces.

Nine, ten, eleven. And then the head makes twelve. And so he is basically treating the body of this concubine like a Levitical sacrifice.

And he's cutting it up. He knows how to do this. He's been trained in it.

He's a Levite. He knows exactly where to use the knife. He knows exactly how to sever it between the joints.

They never break the bones, but they sever it at the major joints. So he cuts her up like an animal sacrifice and sends her throughout Israel. Twelve pieces.

And think about it now. How many tribes are there in Israel? Not counting the Levites, there's twelve. With the Levites, there's thirteen because you've got Ephraim and Manasseh out of the tribe of Joseph.

There's technically thirteen tribes. He cuts her into twelve pieces. Who doesn't get a piece? He doesn't say, but you would think, well, it's either the Levites or the Benjamites because ultimately, when they come up to give you, the Benjamites are going to resist.

So did Benjamin get a piece and Levi didn't? The Levites are scattered all through the land anyway. I expect that of these twelve pieces sent throughout the land, one for each tribe. There is a piece sent to Benjamin as well.

The Benjamites ought to cleanse their own house. They've got an evil city. And they ought to rise up and be purging out the leaven out of their own house.

And so Benjamin gets a piece just like all of the other tribes. Levi didn't contribute warriors for battle. They're the spiritual guys.

So he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb. This is piece by piece, just like Leviticus 1.6, centered throughout the territory of Israel. All who said it said, nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day.

And again, when you think about coming up from the land of Egypt and you think about this opportunity from the standpoint of the writer who is writing in the days of the monarchy, the United Monarchy, it's a reminder that that 400-year period of the Judges in its entirety, and that's why this is at the end rather than at the beginning. You would think, well, if somebody was editing this book of Judges and this is an early story, why wouldn't they edit it in at the beginning, put it in its early place between chapter 1 and 2 perhaps? Why do they put it at the end? Because it's another view. It's taking the 400-year period of the Judges and kind of turning it sideways and through this story giving us a view of the whole thing.

This is the problem. From the days of Joshua until the days of the monarchy, what did Israel do? Israel basically treated the opportunity from God and the commission from God like the Levite treated this concubine. Let her go away, made a half-hearted attempt to get her back, and then at the first opportunity sacrificed her to the lusts of Israel itself, which is no different than the Sodomites, and basically lost it.

And this is a warning. This is a warning because had it not been for the revival under Samuel, had it not been for the spiritual renewal and revival that took place in his days, there would have been no David. There would have been no Solomon.

There would have been no glory days for Israel. It's only because they turned back and trusted God. Remember, Ebenezer, the stone of help.

And if you've been through 1 Samuel, you know the tremendous spiritual turnaround. The nadir is the defeat of Israel and the loss of the Ark of the Covenant with Hophni and Phinehas and the wife that names her son Ichabod. And then under Samuel, he plows the Word of God into the hearts of people doing that circuit preaching for years and years and years.

And it is the prophet Samuel and the teaching of the Word of God under Samuel that revitalizes, that resurrects hope and opportunity in Israel. The nation is still there. It is never too late.

It doesn't matter how far you sink. If you're alive, there is still hope and there is still opportunity. And Israel, you would think, well, at the end of the book of Judges, they should have just disappeared.

But there is a generation that responds to Samuel and there's a generation that is going to support David ultimately after some more purging under Saul. So this is another suggestive view and I think it helps explain why we have all of that early detail about the Levite. He is supposed to be the leader in Israel.

It's sort of like when you look at Herod or you look at the kings in Israel in the books of Kings and Chronicles where they sort of personify the attitude of the nation. And the Levite personifies the attitude of the leadership in Israel that ought to be one thing and is in fact something quite different. Well, the reaction after he sends these pieces is what we have in chapter 20.

We saw the beginning of this last time. All the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba. This is a stock phrase that was current in the days of the monarchy.

It wouldn't have applied in these early days because Dan wasn't up north yet. Including the land of Gilead. Again, this is a reference to the transjordan and the two and a half tribes that are over there.

They came out. The congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah. Now this Mizpah is only about four miles from Gibeah.

It's really close. There is a Mizpah right there in Benjamin itself, but this is a Mizpah that's about four miles away. So they're very close.

And it says they took their stand in the assembly of the people of God. 400,000 foot soldiers. Now, this is a difficult number to digest.

Mainly because it's so big. 400,000. You would expect that out of roughly ten tribes that are sending troops here because Benjamin does not participate.

So just rounded off to ten tribes, that would be 40,000 men from each tribe. This is 40,000 men of fighting age. This is enormous.

Maybe it actually was, but the word here again is LF. And we're going to see when they start talking about how they do the logistics here that I think these are, I personally believe that LF and some of these other terms mean large unit without specifying numbers. They just didn't have the technology and they didn't have the need to get down to specific numbers.

So 400,000 whatever you want to call this, I think probably battalions. And what this basically means is 400 battalions. And you could imagine that if each of ten tribes donated 40 battalions, a small battalion of say 250 guys, that's more reasonable.

If you look at the land of Israel, if you look at the area around Mizpah and you try to imagine assembling 400,000 people, just giving them water would be impossible. It's physically not possible to put that many people in that kind of a space. It has to mean something else.

It's just not physically possible. So I would suggest that these are, I think LF is battalion. And a commander of thousands is a commander of a battalion.

And there's probably 200 guys maybe in a battalion. 250, something like that. So the sons of Benjamin heard the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah, not difficult, four miles away.

So the sons of Israel said, tell us how did this wickedness take place? So the Levite tells the story and of course we saw the preponderance of the first person pronoun. He's the aggrieved party, it's all about him. This lack of objectivity and sense of personal grievance that he is the one that has been wronged and the concubine is sort of incidental makes sense, again, if you step back and look at this suggestion I made earlier, that this really pictures Israel and the mission, the opportunity.

You think of the church as the bride of Christ and what an opportunity there is for the church to reflect Christ, for the head of all things is Christ. He is the head of the church. He is going to be the firstborn among many brethren in the church.

And we are his reflection. The woman is the glory of the man and the church is supposed to be the glory of Christ. And the opportunity to be a light to the Gentiles and to reflect the character and the glory of God to the world is the woman.

That's the opportunity that Israel had and that's what this concubine reflects relative to the Levite. And that's what he loses by disregard and by letting her go for four months and then going and getting wrapped up with the father and then sacrificing her to the perverts. So when he tells this story, it's all about him.

And you can see this, Israel gets very self-centered. They want their piece of the pie. They want prosperity.

They want material wealth. They want to increase their flocks and herds. They want offspring.

They want a lot of things. And they're not really looking at God and their purpose and their mission and their destiny as a nation. And this is common to man.

We have difficulty. You and I have difficulty remembering that we are believers and we are not our own. We have been bought with a price, a precious price.

And it is our purpose and our mission and our function to glorify God in our bodies, in our lives. You are not your own, for you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, in your day-to-day life.

Don't throw your concubine out the door to be savaged and eliminated. But we have difficulty remembering. And when something bad happens, then we feel aggrieved personally.

We don't grieve for the loss of God's glory. We don't grieve for the lost opportunity to serve and to reflect and to participate and to be the overcomer and to be the participator in the things of God. We say, oh, look what happened to me.

Look what I lost. Look at the pain I suffered. Look at what I didn't get.

And look at what those people had that I don't. And it's all about us. And you see that in the way he tells the story here.

It's a very twisted and self-centered version. The concubine almost doesn't even show up in the story. So it's a powerful picture.

It's another reminder that the nation of Israel in the Old Testament represents the individual believer in the new for the purposes of application. As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the individual in the Church Age. And we cannot afford to be a self-centered, self-seeking Ephraimite Levite.

We cannot afford to underappreciate that woman from Bethlehem that represents the best of blessing and the best of opportunity that God has for us. She shouldn't be a concubine and she shouldn't be getting dragged off to Ephraim to be subjected to false worship. Where is the Ark of the Covenant? That's where the Levite should be.

He doesn't even know where it is. He says he's going to the house of the Lord. He's going to the house of Micah and the false ephod and the carved and graven images.

And we don't want to make that mistake. So there's a lot of powerful application in the details of the story and I think that's why it is stretched out so far. But in this story now, fully half of it is going to be given over now to the reaction of Israel to the first section which we have just finished.

So when we come back from the break, we'll look at the second half of this story. It's almost

evenly split. This is like 50 out of 103 verses now that are going to be devoted to the reaction of the nation of Israel.

Are they going to show some spiritual horsepower, some spiritual understanding? We'll see when we come back.