

Judges 08-09-12b

Let's resume our study now in this rather bizarre account of civil war in Israel, ostensibly to purge out evil, but it turns out that those who are most anxious to dispense judgment have first to be judged by God. And in the first and the second battle, their attitude is changed. God purges Israel before he allows them to purge Benjamin.

And it is a reminder, Jesus addressed a similar principle in the statement he made about ensuring that you do not have a board in your own eye as you seek to remove the moat in someone else's. We have to judge ourselves lest we be judged. And it is so easy to see what is right and what is wrong and what ought to be done when we're looking outside of ourselves.

It's much more difficult to be objective and to be ruthlessly dedicated to truth when we look at ourselves. We are our own best lawyer. We can advocate, we can rationalize, we can explain, we can sympathize, we can empathize.

We are the champion of ourselves. And everything is different. I've had recent chance to observe this naturally.

I observed it in someone else. I don't tend to see it in myself, but I participate in a little forum where people chat back and forth. And it's a moderated forum.

You have to have somebody enforcing the rules so that people won't just run amok and everything degenerates into a big name-calling match. And so there's been a lot of history on this particular chat thing. And one of the guys last year who was a miscreant and a criminally repeat offender in the sense of questioning why anybody should keep him from doing what he wanted to do and say what he wanted to say and so on, well, over the course of time, he has become himself a moderator.

And now he is the champion of fair play and the slightest hint of impropriety and he's the first to jump on it. And it seems more than ironic, it seems downright hypocritical that he used the normal latitude on the board and pushed it to its edge and beyond. The issue comes to criticism of moderators.

In the history of the board, it has been that, you know, we'll enforce the rules and not let people do name-calling and personal attacks and these bitter just wrangling back and forth. And it's not about that topic anymore. It's just a little fight.

Well, moderators will put a stop to that. But if somebody gets mad at the moderators or their policy or whatever, they can say whatever they want. And moderators have typically just said, you know, we'll be the targets of your ire and your bile and you can just throw whatever you want, we'll just ignore it.

Well, this guy has set a new standard because he's a moderator and he doesn't like being called

names. This, of course, is what he famously did last year. Well, I look at that and I say, well, it's amazing how, and because I'm also a moderator, in the moderator section that is private and only moderators can see it and talk to each other, I've rather tactfully broached this because I was one of his targets last year.

And he famously dumped organic fertilizer all over me and anybody who sympathized with me last year. I mean, just to a huge extent, I never complained. I never deleted anything.

I just let it all ride. Well, now, anybody that says, you know, I really wonder if moderation on this board, it's deleted, it's gone, you know. And I said, well, you know, I find it curious that you were so free in indulging yourself in the flexibility of the board last year and now you, you know, this is like the thought police.

I think you might be about to criticize me, so I'm deleting this post. Well, in his mind, it's all, it makes perfect sense. He doesn't see the dichotomy, he doesn't see the hypocrisy, he doesn't see the irony, which is rich, it amuses me just every day, and I'm kind of glad it's happening just for the entertainment value, but he doesn't see it.

And it's been a real lesson to me in how blind we can be when we are inside a situation. And it's a caution. I know that I am guilty of this same thing.

And I'm not always sure exactly where, but I'm sure I am. And I think we all are. And it's easy to see when Israel looks at Benjamin and says, oh, this concubine, horrible, horrible, horrible.

And yet God says, you, oh Israel, are coming into this judgment situation with a wrong heart and with a wrong attitude. Your motivation is not right. You claim to be wanting to purge evil out of Israel, but you're not seeking to serve God.

You're seeking to please yourself. You've got some other acts to grind. This is why they lose the first battle.

This is why they lose the second battle. And they've done these little overt things. They inquired of the Lord, who shall go up first? And they probably thought, well, you know, God ought to be pretty happy that we actually consulted him to find out who should lead the battle.

And then when they got their nose bloodied on the first day, and they went back, and they inquired, well, maybe we need to make sure that God is okay with this whole fraternal conflict thing. Is it okay for us to go up against our brothers, the Benjamites? And God says, go on up. And they, well, okay.

But their heart is not right. Their motivation is not pure. They are not themselves dedicated to God, and there is sin in their own camp.

And they get more than a bloody nose. They get a sock in the jaw the second day. And this cautions them.

This rebukes them. And they are now on their faces. They are in tears.

They are offering genuine sacrifices, whole burnt offerings and peace offerings to God. And they spend the whole night. They build an altar to God.

And they inquire of Phineas. And as soon as you see the name of Phineas, you realize that this is the man who was on the right side of the Baal Peor incident. This is the man who made the right call at the Jordan when they went against their brothers the last time.

Now they are in a position for God to bless them. They are doing a right thing, but they are doing it in a wrong way. And this is our regular failing.

We keep looking at a thing that we are doing, and we say, well, this is right. I know this is right. Why is it not being blessed? Why is the result turning out so badly? Why am I getting my nose bloody? Why am I getting socked in the jaw? I'm doing the right thing.

You can imagine what Israel thought. Rapists, murderers, we're going in there to discipline them. Why is God allowing us to be defeated by these lefties? And twice.

But it is a matter of personal accountability, personal responsibility to ensure that we ourselves are in a position to be used by God in that sort of mission. We are not qualified to be an agent of change or an agent of discipline or an agent of anything if we are not pure, if we are not squared away, if we have not allowed God to purge us with hyssop and wash us clean. And if our heart is not right and if our motivation is not right, it isn't what we do, it's why we do it.

It is with what heart and with what spirit we do it. That's what counts. So, once that gets squared away, and it takes three tries to get it right, but now, verse 41 of Judges 20, the men of Israel turn back and the men of Israel have been fleeing.

They've drawn them out, and the men of Benjamin forget the lesson of history. They forget AI. And it's in living memory.

Some of these men were probably there in their younger days, and they're older men now. But the men of Israel suddenly stop fleeing and turn back, and the men of Benjamin panicked, for now they see that disaster has come upon them, and it is too late. They turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst.

They, the Israelites, surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. So as far as they drew them out, remember the road to Bethel kind of comes out of Gibeah and goes east and north, and so they've gone all the way up that road. Now the Israelites have turned around and chased them all the way back, but before they could get back to Gibeah, they're being trampled and killed.

They can't get back. And all of their wonderful left-handed prowess isn't doing them any good,

because they're in a panic, and they realize they're outnumbered, they've been tactically and strategically outmaneuvered. Eighteen Eliphs of the men of Benjamin.

How many total men of Benjamin are there? There's twenty-six Eliphs. Well, eighteen of those, which is more than two-thirds of them, have been slaughtered. All these were men of valor.

So it's not like they were the slow ones or the awkward squad. They're all worthy men of valor. Why do they fall? It isn't for lack of skill.

It isn't for lack of valor. It is because they are wrong, and the judgment of God is falling on them through the men of Israel, who are now chastened, and who are in a position to mete out that judgment. And this, by the way, is sort of a miniature of what was supposed to happen in Canaan.

Israel as a purified people was supposed to go expunge and expel evil out of the land. And the reason they haven't been able to do it, this is a mini-object lesson for them. Why could they not defeat the evil Benjamites when they thought their cause was just and their mission was right? Because there was sin in their own camp, and their heart was not right before God, and they weren't doing it for the right reasons and in the right spirit.

In the same way, they have not been able to drive out the Canaanites. Why? Their heart is not right. Their spirit is not right before God.

And if they would square that away, they would have the same success in the land of Canaan that they are having against these very adept and valorous Benjamites. They easily trampled them down, these men who slaughtered them in two previous encounters. They easily trampled them down, easily defeated them, now that God is on their side.

Now that they are doing it in the right way for the right reason. So two-thirds of them fell, all these men of valor. Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock Rimon.

The rock Rimon is famous. We saw it in the book of Joshua. In Joshua chapter 15, it is given as a part of the distribution to Judah.

This is part of the inheritance of the tribe of Judah according to their families. Many of these famous towns like Ziklag, and Ein, and Rimon, 29 cities with their villages. This is a part of the inheritance of Judah.

So they are chased all this way, and they flee back toward Gibeah, and they are cut off, and they are slaughtered, and two-thirds of them fall. So now they are going to try to flee to the south-east. They tried fleeing to the south-west, and they are cut down.

So now they are going to flee into Judah, and they are going to be cut down there as well. They pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two more Elephs, after cutting down five Elephs on the highway to the rock of Rimon. So that is 18 plus 7, right? So that is 25 Elephs of

men who draw the sword.

All these were men of valor, and they have all been cut down. There are only 26,000 warriors, and 25,000 have been slaughtered. But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon.

Now this is part of my evidence for the fact that an Elephant is not a full 1,000 men, because we were told that there were 26 Elephants, 25 Elephants have been slaughtered, there are 600 men left, well, 26 minus 25 is not 600, but this is the remaining Elephant. This is the last unit that has escaped, and it is a 600-man unit. So by this measure, you could take all of these numbers, if it says that there are 600,000 men in Israel in Numbers chapter 26, well, if an Elephant is actually 600 rather than 1,000 or something along that range, then that would actually be something on the order of 360,000 men instead of 600,000 men.

And these 400,000 that have gathered in Israel against Benjamin, this would actually be about 240,000, but there are 40 contingents of 600 men each, in other words. And that sounds a little bit more reasonable for what the land would bear. If you take the numbers at face value, and you can if you want, you're welcome to believe what you want, but just be aware that if Israel is fielding an army of a full 400,000 men, this represents a population of well over 2 million.

And in these days, given what archeology has uncovered in terms of population densities and cities and what the land could support, it's difficult to believe, I mean, they would have been thick as fleas on a dog. It's really tough to believe that the land in these days could support 2 million people. If you remember the actual size of the land of Israel, we tend to think of it as a vast land, it's a tiny little patch.

There are counties in Texas bigger than the land of Israel, seriously. So just be aware, 2 million people in a county size postage stamp, it's what, 6 miles wide and 13 miles long? It's not very big, 2 million people in that much land is tough. But if you cut that down to maybe 1.2 million, that's a little easier to consider.

So it's just a thought, but evidently this 600 represents the last Elephant. They ought to make a movie or write a book, you know, they've got the last Mimsi and they've got the last this and the last that, well, they ought to have the last Elephant. 600 men fled to the rock rim and they stayed there 4 months.

And so the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin and they did mop up now, this is the clean up, little pockets, a few wounded guys raising their left hand saying oh please, oh please, whack, they slaughtered them, they wiped them all out, struck them down with the edge of the sword, every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They just, their swords were drunk with blood, they killed everything in sight throughout the territory of Benjamin. They set fire to all the cities they came to.

So all of the families in Benjamin now are comprised of children and women, smoking cities,

slaughtered animals, I mean, this is ruination. This makes hurricanes and natural disasters look like a pittance. Sherman's march to the sea had nothing on this.

This is utter and total devastation. These people are going to starve, they are going to, it's going to be a giant crater right in the midst of Israel of devastation and death. There's nobody to bury the dead, who's going to bury the dead? There are over 100,000 dead men all over this very small area.

So they turned back, set fire to all the cities. So now we come to chapter 21. The men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, we find this out in retrospect, it wasn't told to us in the first two tellings of the story, but they swore an oath at Mizpah saying none of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.

So the people came to the house of God and remained there before God till evening. Now it says the house of God, and we have to ask ourselves, well, is this the house of God sitting at Mizpah, or is this the town of Bethel? This says Bethel in Hebrew, normally the house of God is drawn out, it will be Beth Elohim or Beth Elim, it will be a longer form, and normally when you see Bethel it's a reference to the town. And I think they did go back to the town of Bethel, they came to Bethel, it's not that far from Gibeah, and it's not that far from Mizpah, it's just a couple of clicks further down the road.

So when you read this, the people came to Bethel, and they remained there before God until 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, that there is lacking a tribe in Israel? So it was, and when it says missing, and you see that in italics, well, there's a good Hebrew verb there for lacking, it's *pakad*, and here it's in the nifal, it's the passive, it's one tribe that has been caused to be lacking in Israel. So they had all of this ardor and all of this fervor and all of this righteous indignation and they have slaughtered these Benjamites all over the place, now that it's over and the battle fever has cooled, and they look around at the devastation, and they're sick at heart.

These are their fellow Israelites, these are the men they fought side by side with, these are some of the finest warriors in Israel, and most of these guys laying on the ground are not the men of Gibeah. There has been this difference of opinion, and whoever was right or whoever was wrong, as a result of it, they have slaughtered their brothers, and their brothers are lying dead on the ground, and they are sick, sick at heart. How could this come about, that we have eliminated a tribe out of Israel? And there's no means to raise them back up, because the few remaining guys, we swore an oath before the Lord, when we started this deal, that we would never let these guys marry.

And we've burned the cities, and my question is, if they don't think there's going to be any more Benjamites, what does that say about the cities and towns that they attacked? Evidently, the children have been slaughtered, it doesn't say it explicitly, but if they're concerned about there being no more Benjamites in Israel, how could they have that concern that without marriages,

there won't be any more Benjamites? That would only be a concern if all the families had been slain. Otherwise, you've got little boys, you know, the normal complement of two or three or four boys in families, and you say, well, just wait, they'll grow up, they'll repopulate, they'll intermarry, they can build their tribe back up. How many Germans did we kill in World War I or World War II? You'd think there wouldn't be any Germans left.

They were sending their teenage boys into battle in the closing days of World War II, before Hitler mercifully shot himself. But you think of the hundreds of thousands of German men that were cut down, old men, young men, there was nobody left except a few, you know, handicapped. But there's Germans all over the place.

Why? We did not slaughter their families. Contrary to all of their, you know, some of the Germans are all upset that the Americans, you know, bombed Dresden and killed civilian workers and all that. We have always, Americans have historically been very careful to try to attack combatants.

And we've gotten better and better at it with technology. And that's what we did even in World War II. We didn't go out, we didn't set out to destroy entire cities.

You know, this was the big moral quandary with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We wiped out everybody. You know, there's nobody left.

But in Germany, they've repopulated because their children are there. Evidently, there are no children left in Benjamin. And if these few guys that have holed up at the Rock Rimmen, if they don't marry and have families, the tribe of Benjamin is going to be extinct.

Like the dodo, like the woolly mammoth, like the pterodactyl. There'll just be a, you know, a memory in Israel. There will be no existing Benjamites.

So, on the next morning, verse 4, the people rose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Notice, in this new issue, they've learned something. They don't start out casting lots saying, who will be the first to go up and, you know, figure out how to fix the tribe of Benjamin.

They start now where they, at the point that they arrived at after the two defeats, peace offerings, burnt offerings, they build an altar. They go to the Lord. The children of Israel 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 this great oath concerning anyone who would not come up to the Lord at Mizpah, saying, he shall surely be put to death.

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? Now, think about it. They made these big, hairy, solemn oaths before they got their hearts right with God.

And they're still bound by these oaths. And what did they do? First of all, they said, you had better be here or we will kill you ourselves. Anybody that doesn't show up is going to be slain.

So they got everybody to the party. And then they said, everybody that's here swear an oath that you're never going to let anybody marry a Benjamin. And so, by one great solemn oath, they made sure that there were no exceptions and everybody was there.

And then by another great oath, everybody that's there can't give any family member to a Benjamin. So, they have painted themselves into this stupid corner by rash oaths, which we already know from earlier in the book of Judges is not a good idea. And so, they've put themselves in a bad situation.

And they cannot turn now and be merciful to these that they have conquered and slain. Even if they let these Benjamites go, these guys are going to be pariahs and they can't marry anybody. They would have to marry a Canaanite, which is forbidden by God himself.

Do not marry the people of the land. So, they've painted themselves into a corner from which they seemingly can't get out. So, they said, what 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.

For when the people were counted in deed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead was there. So, the congregation sent out. And so, well, we can't let these guys intermarry with the Benjamites because we've got to kill them.

So, they went out and sent out 12 Eliphs of their most valiant men, commanded them saying, go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. This is the thing that you shall do. You shall utterly destroy every male and every woman who has known a man intimately.

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. Now, this is interesting for a couple of reasons.

First of all, and I won't dwell on this too much because it's mainly of interest to those of us who study Hebrew and who wrassle over angels on the head of a pin. But you remember Isaiah 7.14. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son. And before he gets very old, certain things will take place.

This shall be a sign unto you. Remember that? Isaiah 7.14. A virgin will conceive and bear a son. Well, the word there, because that was a near-term sign in Isaiah's day to the king, a woman was going to have a baby.

But it is cited with reference to the Lord Jesus. Makes you thirsty just listening to me, doesn't it? So, a question has revolved around the use of the word in Isaiah 7.14 for virgin. In Hebrew, it's

the word betulah.

B-E-T-U-L-A-H. Have there been two virgin births in history is the question. Because Isaiah says, ask God for a sign that he's going to give you victory.

The king says, I don't want to put God to the test. I'm not going to ask him for a sign. And Isaiah says, well, this is going to be a sign for you.

A virgin is going to conceive. And before the child knows, his right hand from his left. And while he's eating, he's eating away.

There's a whole bunch of other stuff in 7.14. Well, was that a true virgin birth in those days or not? Well, betulah, it all hinges on what betulah means. Does betulah mean an actual virgin? Is that in the word? And the argument from Hebrew is no. Betulah should not be translated virgin.

Betulah should be translated young woman. And the proof for that is our passage. If betulah means virgin, then you don't have to say a virgin who has not known a man.

It's redundant. If betulah means a woman that has not known a man, you're done. Say betulah and you've said it all.

When we say virgin, we've said it all. We don't have to say, I mean, it would be kind of silly in English to say, well, a girl who is a virgin and has never had sex. I mean, that's what virgin means.

Well, if betulah meant that, you wouldn't have to add the phrase, a betulah who has not known a man. And it's repeated here a couple of times. Because it has to specify not just any young woman, but a young woman who has had no relations.

And so this tells us that betulah doesn't by itself mean virgin. So in Isaiah 7.14, a more proper translation is, a young woman will conceive. And you say, well, how is that a sign? I mean, young women conceive all the time.

Well, evidently there was a particular young woman in view. And that's a subject for the study of the book of Isaiah, which, by the way, we are going to do when we finish Judges. So we'll be there, Lord willing, before we all die or get raptured.

We're actually, you know, we're sort of making progress toward finishing the book of Judges. So I give you that hope. But when we get to chapter 7 of Isaiah, we'll delve into this.

And I will refer you back to this night and to this passage and to the use of the word betulah here, a virgin who has not known a man, a betulah. Well, what's the deal here? They're caught between two oaths. They are supposed to slaughter everybody that didn't show up because they made a blood oath, you know, cross my heart and hope to die, poke a needle in my eye.

If I will not slaughter anybody that didn't come here and cross my heart, hope to die, stick a

needle in my eye, if I allow anybody related to me to marry a Benjamite. Well, so now the tribe of Benjamin is going to be extinct and they can't have that either. So they say, well, here's what we'll do.

We'll go and we'll carry out our oath against Jabesh Gilead because they didn't show up. But we'll exclude some of the young women. And they found 400 young women who had not known a man intimately.

And they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. Now you want to talk about a trail of tears. I mean, think about this.

You know where Jabesh Gilead is? It's over on the other side. And Israelite army shows up. Here's this town.

We make love, not war. We, you know, we didn't want to go fight the Benjamites. And so here comes these 12 battalions of Israelite troops already bloody up to the elbows from the Benjamites.

And they come in there and these girls stand by and see their families hacked to pieces. Their little brothers, their parents, everybody. There's 400 girls who are not slaughtered.

Everybody else in Jabesh Gilead is wiped out. These 400 girls are force-marched back to Shiloh. What kind of a picture is this in Israel? And here's my question to you.

Is this what God wanted? Is this by the command of God? Did anybody consult Phineas? They were real sad and they offered the offerings and they burned offerings, built an altar of peace. Oh, look at what we've done. We're sick at heart.

Look at these Benjamites. And then they remember their oaths. But there is no inquiry before the Lord.

Phineas doesn't come out and speak. What would the Lord have us do? This reminds me of the 11 disciples looking around saying, well, there's an empty chair. Can't have 11 apostles.

Got to have 12. What should we do? Well, here's what we'll do. Let's, you know, have an election.

Let's find some worthy candidates who've been with us from the beginning and we'll elect somebody. And you get Matthias, who is never heard from again because it was bogus. Well, let me offer you a thought here.

Suppose that these Israelites had not done anything. Suppose that they had waited out these 400 Benjamites and as soon as they showed their faces, they starved them out. They hacked them in pieces.

They exterminated them. And now there is no tribe of Benjamin. Fast forward 300 odd years to

the days of Samuel.

Give us a king, etc. Who would not be a king in Israel? Saul, the son of Kish, the Benjamite. Because there would be no Benjamites.

Saul wound up being a curse. Saul nearly prevented God's man from coming to the throne of Israel. If it hadn't been for the grace of God and the divine intervention on repeated occasions, deflecting javelins, 80 priests at Nod slaughtered, on and on and on, you know, slobbering at Gath and not being killed by the Philistines and so on, all because he's been chased away by Saul, son of Kish, the donkey chaser, who would not have ever been born if this judgment had been carried out to the full.

Everything works together for good in the plan and purpose of God. But you have to ask the question, what if? Because this is a human solution to the problem. And they're sitting there at the house of God.

All they've got to do is turn around and ask, what about you and me? We face challenges. We have decisions to make. We have policies to set.

We have judgment to implement. We have things that we have to do. And we have the house of God within us.

Our Bethel is inside. Do you not know that your body is the temple? God dwells in you if you have God's words and keep them. God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit all reside in the Holy of Holies in our own soul.

Why do we not go to the house of God and inquire? What is the matter with us? What's the matter with these Israelites? Phinehas is standing there ready to speak. This is the hero of Baal Peor. This is the man who made the right call with Reuben Gad and Asher at the banks of the Jordan.

And he's still standing there. This is a man who stood with Moses. This is a man who served under Joshua.

This is a man who is a faithful servant of God, a faithful priest of God, ready to deliver a spiritual answer, and nobody asks. Well, we are no more possessed of an excuse than the Israelites, because we have Bethel within us. We have the faithful high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, ministering on our behalf, and there is no excuse for us to fail to know and fail to fulfill the plan and purpose of God.

There is no excuse. We just fail to turn and ask. And even as we offer sacrifices, even as we bewail and look at the sadness of various situations, why are we not asking the right questions? Why are we not getting the right answers? It is a failure of concentration.

It is a failure of dedication. It is a failure of sanctification. If we do not purge out the sin in our

lives, if we do not discipline ourselves to eliminate that which entangles us, if we do not lay aside every weight and the sin that besets us, we're going to make this kind of blind error, and we're going to end up sowing the seeds of trouble for the future.

We will sow seeds of trouble. They may not grow and bloom now. It may be a year.

It may be five years. It may be 10 years. But bad decisions now sow the wind, and we will reap the whirlwind later.

We have to ask the hard questions. We have to implement the hard answers from God. That's why we have God's Spirit.

That's why we are the temple and the dwelling place of God. That's why the Lord Jesus is our faithful high priest. And if we don't ask the questions and get the answers and act on those answers, we have nobody but ourselves to blame.

Israel here is going to suffer miserably under Saul because they let the Benjamites live here. This is a complete... This violates their oath. They think they've found a loophole, but their oath was wipe out everybody.

And they say, well, we'll not wipe out some that we said we would wipe out. So, here's this pathetic sight. These 400 orphaned girls force march to cross from Jabesh Gilead.

Well, it's a sorry day in Israel. And this is early. This is still within the lifetime of Phinehas.

And it is a harbinger of things to come. It is typical of what happened in Israel. When they ought to be faithful, they're faithless.

When they ought to be diligent, they're apathetic. And it's a powerful object lesson for us. We're out of time for tonight.

We have one more concluding lesson where we're going to wrap up our observations in this book. And then we will begin a new study in the book of Isaiah after that. Let's close tonight in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the effective way that these truths are presented to us in the pages of scripture. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will impress them on our hearts.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.