

Day 257 - THURSDAY: September 14th

Judges 19

Judges 19:1-30 NKJV

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months. Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there. Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood 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, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate. And when the man stood to depart—he and his concubine and his servant—his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, 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). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master,

"Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it." But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah." 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." And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night. Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?" So he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything." And the old man said, "Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank. As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!" But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day

began to break, they let her go. Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light. 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 us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place. When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!"

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "The disastrous war against the Benjamites began with a single incident, the brutal gang rape of a Levite's concubine. As horrible as this incident was, we still might wonder how it was able to spark such a major war.

There are two major relevant factors involved in what happened, one cultural and the other historical. The cultural factor involves proper treatment of a guest. Life in the Middle East has always been difficult, and to cope with the arduous conditions of nomadic life an elaborate system of social customs was developed. One social custom required every person to kindly entertain a guest, to provide comfort, lodging and food for a brief period to any stranger who happened upon one's camp, even if that stranger was a member of an enemy tribe in a time of peace. If the due benevolence was not shown, it was deemed an act of hostility and impiety before God. If the offense was serious enough, clan or tribal wars could be ignited.

A second factor was the persistent memory of what God had done to Sodom and Gomorrah—not only from the Pentateuch but even, no

doubt, from regional stories passed down through generations. The filthy, abominable behavior of the inhabitants of these cities and others around them was a major factor in the cry that went up to God against them. The destruction against Sodom and her neighbors was so complete that even today their exact whereabouts remain unknown. By comparing the behavior of the Gibeahite "sons of Belial" (Judges 19:22) and the old man (Judges 19:23) with the conduct of the men of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-5) and Lot (verses 6-8), one should be able to see a very clear parallel.

Factoring the understanding of these elements into the story, one can see why an incident of this nature could ignite such a war. The Levite was a representative of God, to whom the Gibeahites were extremely inhospitable and showed open and flagrant impiety. Knowing the social requirements to care for the traveler, the natural conclusion was that such an affront would be repaid with vengeance by the One the Levite served—God. Therefore action needed to be taken.

Of course, the Levite does not appear very God-oriented, surrendering his concubine to be abused as he did and being so cold and uncaring toward her the next morning before he knew she was actually dead. The Ephraimite's offer to surrender up his own daughter does not paint him any better. We see here the low status that women had in that society. Truly, this story is utterly horrendous all the way around. It illustrates how low things had sunk—to the depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah. The prophet Hosea later cited this episode as one of the most corrupt events in Israel's history (Hosea 9:9; Hosea 10:9).” [END]

I don't have anything additional to add to this terrible event.