

**Saturday, May 4**

**All passages taken from Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996.  
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189.  
All rights reserved.**

**Judges 19:1 - 20:48**

**19 1** Now in those days Israel had no king. There was a man from the tribe of Levi living in a remote area of the hill country of Ephraim. One day he brought home a woman from Bethlehem in Judah to be his concubine. **2** But she became angry with him and returned to her father's home in Bethlehem. After about four months, **3** her husband set out for Bethlehem to speak personally to her and persuade her to come back. He took with him a servant and a pair of donkeys. When he arrived at her father's house, her father saw him and welcomed him. **4** Her father urged him to stay awhile, so he stayed three days, eating, drinking, and sleeping there. **5** On the fourth day the man was up early, ready to leave, but the woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Have something to eat before you go." **6** So the two men sat down together and had something to eat and drink. Then the woman's father said, "Please stay another night and enjoy yourself." **7** The man got up to leave, but his father-in-law kept urging him to stay, so he finally gave in and stayed the night. **8** On the morning of the fifth day he was up early again, ready to leave, and again the woman's father said, "Have something to eat; then you can leave later this afternoon." So they had another day of feasting. **9** Later, as the man and his concubine and servant were preparing to leave, his father-in-law said, "Look, it's almost evening. Stay the night and enjoy yourself. Tomorrow you can get up early and be on your way." **10** But this time the man was determined to leave. So he took his two saddled donkeys and his concubine and headed in the direction of Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). **11** It was late in the day when they neared Jebus, and the man's servant said to him, "Let's stop at this Jebusite town and spend the night there." **12** "No," his master said, "we can't stay in this foreign town where there are no Israelites. Instead, we will go on to Gibeah. **13** Come on, let's try to get as far as Gibeah or Ramah, and we'll spend the night in one of those towns." **14** So they went on. The sun was setting as they came to Gibeah, a town in the land of Benjamin, **15** so they stopped there to spend the night. They rested in the town square, but no one took them in for the night. **16** That evening an old man came home from his work in the fields. He was from the hill country of Ephraim, but he was living in Gibeah, where the people were from the tribe of Benjamin. **17** When he saw the travelers sitting in the town square, he asked them where they were from and where they were going. **18** "We have been in Bethlehem in Judah," the man replied. "We are on our way to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim, which is my home. I traveled to Bethlehem, and now I'm returning home. But no one has taken us in for the night, **19** even though we have

everything we need. We have straw and feed for our donkeys and plenty of bread and wine for ourselves.” **20** “You are welcome to stay with me,” the old man said. “I will give you anything you might need. But whatever you do, don’t spend the night in the square.” **21** So he took them home with him and fed the donkeys. After they washed their feet, they ate and drank together. **22** While they were enjoying themselves, a crowd of troublemakers from the town surrounded the house. They began beating at the door and shouting to the old man, “Bring out the man who is staying with you so we can have sex with him.” **23** The old man stepped outside to talk to them. “No, my brothers, don’t do such an evil thing. For this man is a guest in my house, and such a thing would be shameful. **24** Here, take my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. I will bring them out to you, and you can abuse them and do whatever you like. But don’t do such a shameful thing to this man.” **25** But they wouldn’t listen to him. So the Levite took hold of his concubine and pushed her out the door. The men of the town abused her all night, taking turns raping her until morning. Finally, at dawn they let her go. **26** At daybreak the woman returned to the house where her husband was staying. She collapsed at the door of the house and lay there until it was light. **27** When her husband opened the door to leave, there lay his concubine with her hands on the threshold. **28** He said, “Get up! Let’s go!” But there was no answer. So he put her body on his donkey and took her home. **29** When he got home, he took a knife and cut his concubine’s body into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each tribe throughout all the territory of Israel. **30** Everyone who saw it said, “Such a horrible crime has not been committed in all the time since Israel left Egypt. Think about it! What are we going to do? Who’s going to speak up?”

**20 1** Then all the Israelites were united as one man, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, including those from across the Jordan in the land of Gilead. The entire community assembled in the presence of the LORD at Mizpah. **2** The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel—400,000 warriors armed with swords—took their positions in the assembly of the people of God. **3** (Word soon reached the land of Benjamin that the other tribes had gone up to Mizpah.) The Israelites then asked how this terrible crime had happened. **4** The Levite, the husband of the woman who had been murdered, said, “My concubine and I came to spend the night in Gibeah, a town that belongs to the people of Benjamin. **5** That night some of the leading citizens of Gibeah surrounded the house, planning to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she was dead. **6** So I cut her body into twelve pieces and sent the pieces throughout the territory assigned to Israel, for these men have committed a terrible and shameful crime. **7** Now then, all of you—the entire community of Israel—must decide here and now what should be done about this!” **8** And all the people rose to their feet in unison and declared, “None of us will return home! No, not even one of us! **9** Instead, this is what we will do to Gibeah; we will draw

lots to decide who will attack it. **10** One-tenth of the men from each tribe will be chosen to supply the warriors with food, and the rest of us will take revenge on Gibeah of Benjamin for this shameful thing they have done in Israel.” **11** So all the Israelites were completely united, and they gathered together to attack the town. **12** The Israelites sent messengers to the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What a terrible thing has been done among you! **13** Give up those evil men, those troublemakers from Gibeah, so we can execute them and purge Israel of this evil.” But the people of Benjamin would not listen. **14** Instead, they came from their towns and gathered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites. **15** In all, 26,000 of their warriors armed with swords arrived in Gibeah to join the 700 elite troops who lived there. **16** Among Benjamin’s elite troops, 700 were left-handed, and each of them could sling a rock and hit a target within a hairsbreadth without missing. **17** Israel had 400,000 experienced soldiers armed with swords, not counting Benjamin’s warriors. **18** Before the battle the Israelites went to Bethel and asked God, “Which tribe should go first to attack the people of Benjamin?” The LORD answered, “Judah is to go first.” **19** So the Israelites left early the next morning and camped near Gibeah. **20** Then they advanced toward Gibeah to attack the men of Benjamin. **21** But Benjamin’s warriors, who were defending the town, came out and killed 22,000 Israelites on the battlefield that day. **22** But the Israelites encouraged each other and took their positions again at the same place they had fought the previous day. **23** For they had gone up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the LORD until evening. They had asked the LORD, “Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again?” And the LORD had said, “Go out and fight against them.” **24** So the next day they went out again to fight against the men of Benjamin, **25** but the men of Benjamin killed another 18,000 Israelites, all of whom were experienced with the sword. **26** Then all the Israelites went up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the LORD and fasted until evening. They also brought burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. **27** The Israelites went up seeking direction from the LORD. (In those days the Ark of the Covenant of God was in Bethel, **28** and Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron was the priest.) The Israelites asked the LORD, “Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again, or should we stop?” The LORD said, “Go! Tomorrow I will hand them over to you.” **29** So the Israelites set an ambush all around Gibeah. **30** They went out on the third day and took their positions at the same place as before. **31** When the men of Benjamin came out to attack, they were drawn away from the town. And as they had done before, they began to kill the Israelites. About thirty Israelites died in the open fields and along the roads, one leading to Bethel and the other leading back to Gibeah. **32** Then the warriors of Benjamin shouted, “We’re defeating them as we did before!” But the Israelites had planned in advance to run away so that the men of Benjamin would chase them along the roads and be drawn away from the town. **33** When the main group of Israelite warriors reached Baal-tamar, they turned and took up their positions.

Meanwhile, the Israelites hiding in ambush to the west of Gibeah jumped up to fight. **34** There were 10,000 elite Israelite troops who advanced against Gibeah. The fighting was so heavy that Benjamin didn't realize the impending disaster. **35** So the LORD helped Israel defeat Benjamin, and that day the Israelites killed 25,100 of Benjamin's warriors, all of whom were experienced swordsmen. **36** Then the men of Benjamin saw that they were beaten. The Israelites had retreated from Benjamin's warriors in order to give those hiding in ambush more room to maneuver against Gibeah. **37** Then those who were hiding rushed in from all sides and killed everyone in the town. **38** They had arranged to send up a large cloud of smoke from the town as a signal. **39** When the Israelites saw the smoke, they turned and attacked Benjamin's warriors. By that time Benjamin's warriors had killed about thirty Israelites, and they shouted, "We're defeating them as we did in the first battle!" **40** But when the warriors of Benjamin looked behind them and saw the smoke rising into the sky from every part of the town, **41** the men of Israel turned and attacked. At this point the men of Benjamin became terrified, because they realized disaster was close at hand. **42** So they turned around and fled before the Israelites toward the wilderness. But they couldn't escape the battle, and the people who came out of the nearby towns were also killed. **43** The Israelites surrounded the men of Benjamin and chased them relentlessly, finally overtaking them east of Gibeah. **44** That day 18,000 of Benjamin's strongest warriors died in battle. **45** The survivors fled into the wilderness toward the rock of Rimmon, but Israel killed 5,000 of them along the road. They continued the chase until they had killed another 2,000 near Gidom. **46** So that day the tribe of Benjamin lost 25,000 strong warriors armed with swords, **47** leaving only 600 men who escaped to the rock of Rimmon, where they lived for four months. **48** And the Israelites returned and slaughtered every living thing in all the towns—the people, the livestock, and everything they found. They also burned down all the towns they came to.

### **John 3:22 - 4:3**

**3 22** Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people. **23** At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. **24** (This was before John was thrown into prison.) **25** A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing. **26** So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us." **27** John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it

from heaven. **28** You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' **29** It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. **30** He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. **31** "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. **32** He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! **33** Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. **34** For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. **35** The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. **36** And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."

**4 1** Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John **2** (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). **3** So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

#### **Psalm 104:25 - 35**

**104 25** Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small. **26** See the ships sailing along, and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea. **27** They all depend on you to give them food as they need it. **28** When you supply it, they gather it. You open your hand to feed them, and they are richly satisfied. **29** But if you turn away from them, they panic. When you take away their breath, they die and turn again to dust. **30** When you give them your breath, life is created, and you renew the face of the earth. **31** May the glory of the LORD continue forever! The LORD takes pleasure in all he has made! **32** The earth trembles at his glance; the mountains smoke at his touch. **33** I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath! **34** May all my thoughts be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. **35** Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth; let the wicked disappear forever. Let all that I am praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

#### **Proverbs 14:22 - 23**

**14 22** If you plan to do evil, you will be lost; if you plan to do good, you will receive unending love and faithfulness. **23** Work brings profit, but mere talk leads to poverty!