

# Judges

Judges 1:1-21:25

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-04-28

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Introduction - this is a very relevant book for our times

Judges is a book that contains some of the most wonderful stories in the Bible. What child has not been delighted in the stories about Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and Samson? But this book also has stories that make you sick to your stomach because they illustrate the depths to which human depravity can take us - including some of those heroes of the faith. And God intended them to make us sick to our stomachs. It's brilliantly written in a way that you do not delight in evil; you hate it. Sin should always make us feel ill.

Second, this book is a powerful exposition of the irrational cycle of sin that cultures frequently go through. It starts with small compromises by the first generation, expanded compromises in the next generation, then a full-scale slide into sin, then God's discipline (usually with civil government - showing you that God does not think a lot of most civil governments), and through the misery brought by civil government God brings the people to repentance, then deliverance, and that leads to a re-commitment of the people to God's law. The chart of the cycle of sin that's on the first page should be burned into our memories and give us fear of any kind of compromise.

Third, this book shows that without revival America is headed toward very tough times as are most countries in the western world. In a December 1951 speech, General Douglas MacArthur, gave what I consider to be a perfect summary of at least part of the message of Judges. He said about America,

In this day of gathering storms, as moral deterioration of political power spreads its growing infection, it is essential that every spiritual force be mobilized to defend and preserve the religious base upon which this nation is founded; for it has been that base which has been the motivating impulse to our moral and national growth. History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline. There has been either a spiritual reawakening to overcome the moral lapse, or a progressive deterioration leading to ultimate national disaster.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Gen. Douglas MacArthur in a speech to the Salvation Army, Dec. 12, 1951. See John Stomer, *The Death of a Nation* (Florissant, MO: Liberty Bell Press, 1968), p. 128. See also John Eidsmoe, *God & Caesar - Christian FAith & Political Action* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), p. 68. Also see, "Letter: General Douglas MacArthur's 1951 speech is more appropriate in today's America". General Douglas MacArthur's speech, [www.mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com). 1951.

I think he is right - there are only two options before our nation - repentance or disaster in some form. And you might think, OK, why didn't disaster happen in America? And the answer is that God used General Douglas MacArthur and other heroes to turn our nation back to God in those days. There was a genuine repentance seen throughout the land that even affected politics. Those were the years when Congress produced a massive report with documentation that our nation was founded to be a Christian nation and to follow Biblical laws. Those were the years when "under God" were added to the pledge of allegiance. Those were the years when "In God we Trust" became our national motto. It was not a perfect revival, but it was a turning back to God that parallels some of the revivals in the book of Judges.

So fourth, Judges is not simply a warning about compromise and sin; it is also a book about the wonderful faithfulness of God's grace in the face of sin. Part of that grace is God's disciplines upon His church. That is an act of grace. When the church is comfortable in its sins, God makes the church experience suffering. He doesn't want us to be comfortable in our sins. He loves us too much to do that. So while this book does display the utter ugliness of sin, it also displays the beauty and richness of God's grace.

## **I. Christology of Judges**

I want to look first of all at the Christology of Judges because it is rather unique. Each of the deliverances that those Judges brought stand as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who rescues us from the clutches of Satan. So the Christology of this book is mainly found in the judges themselves, though this book also shows atonement for sin through sacrifices. I won't be looking at the sacrifices as much this morning because we have dealt with them extensively in the previous books.

Between the books of Judges and 1 Samuel, there are seventeen judges in all. Some (like Othniel and Gideon) were warrior rulers. Samuel was a prophet. And two of them were priests (Eli and Samuel). So cumulatively, they represent a picture of Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King. And because of their failures, the people were looking forward to the Ruler, Prophet, and Priest (the Lord Jesus Christ) who would not fail them. Even the failures in this book are designed to point to Christ. No one of these judges was God's final solution. Only the Lord Jesus Christ has the ability to bring worldwide peace and righteousness. And He will do so.

So these judges restored people to God through the sacrifices and they committed the people once again to God's Law. So both Law and Gospel are

anchor points for this book and show Christ's own commitment to both Law and Gospel. That is the Christology of this book in a nutshell.

## II. Key word is judge

The key word is judge. That's all I will say there. I think that should be pretty obvious.

## III. The structure of the book

Double Introduction (Gives the general principles which will be operative in history of book)		History of the Judges										Double Appendix (Gives two examples of how irrational and depraved God's people can become when they compromise with world)					
		Othniel	Ehud	Shangar	Deborah/ Barak	Gideon	Abimelech	Tola	Jair	Jephthah	Ibraz (Ibzan)	Elon	Abdon	Samson	(See chart below for historical placement of the judges according to Usher and FN Jones.)		
Failure	Causes	Cycles of shalom, then apathy/compromise, then lawlessness, then bondage/judgment, then repentance, then God's deliverance, then shalom										Idolatry of Dan	Lawlessness of Benjamin				
1	2:1-3:6	3:7-----16:31										17-----18	19-----21				
305 years of backsliding, tyrannical oppression by states, and deliverances																	
Occurrences of the phrase "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD" below																	
	2:11	3:7, 3:12		4:1	6:1	10:6						13:1					

And if you look at the visual outline of the book on the first side of your outlines, you will see the logical structure that Samuel, the author of Judges, gave to us.

In the first two chapters there is a double introduction paralleled by a double appendix in the last five chapters. The bulk of the book in between (chapters 3-16) gives an exposition of the subject matter that are introduced in the introductions and expanded upon in the appendixes, and it does so by going through the lives of 14 judges. So that is the overall structure. You've got a theological introduction, a theological conclusion, and illustrations of it through 14 judges in between.

### A. A double introduction showing the principles at work in this history

Let's look at the introduction first. Chapter 1 recounts some of the characteristics of the first and second generations of Israelites after Joshua died. It's obvious from the record that they were not perfect, but let me quickly outline seven fantastic characteristics of the people living at that time - both the first and the second generation.

- Verse 1 shows that they were committed to the task that Joshua had given to them, even after Joshua had died.
- Verse 2 shows that they were attentive to the Lord. That is such an important characteristic of nations that are blessed.

- Verses 3-4 show that they were obedient and very decisive in their obedience.
- Verses 5-7 shows that they were sensitive to sin and injustice, and they inflicted on the pagan king Adoni Bezek the justice he deserved. He called himself the Lord of Lightning, and he was going to be brought down by the true Lord of lightning. And you might think that it is quite odd that they would cut off his thumbs and toes. It's the Biblical lex talionis principle - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. So just as he had cut off the toes and thumbs of other kings, his toes and thumbs were cut off. And just as he put many to death, he is put to death at Jerusalem, after he gets to watch them burn his city up in flames. It is not cruelty. It is perfect justice.
- Verses 8-14 show tenacity in their conquest, with Caleb and his son-in-law showing heroism that does not die.
- Verses 12-15 show that faith can be audacious in its expectations. I don't see either Caleb's promise to his faithful generals (any of whom would have been worthy of his daughter) or his daughter's request for the upper and lower springs as being in any way negative. Both of those things show the boldness of faith.
- Verses 16-20 show tremendous courage.

But that was a transitional generation. God's work cannot all be finished in one generation - it is a multi-generational calling. And that is why covenant succession is so important if there is to be compounded kingdom growth over time. This chapter illustrate two pretty good generations. But sadly, this book illustrates the disappointing reality that without consistent covenant succession, you will never get the compounded growth of the kingdom (that's a very important concept - the compounded growth of the kingdom) that God prophecies will eventually happen through Jesus, the final and perfect Judge. The glory years of the millennial reign will show non-stop covenant succession generation after generation. It will be so awesome. And no one but Christ will be able to get the glory for that, because no one but Christ has the ability to sustain non-stop covenant succession.

So this chapter shows the breakdown of covenant succession so that we can avoid the same problems. When the previous generation passed the baton on to their children, their children were satisfied with less than what God had called for. And verse 21 says, "But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day." The crazy thing is that they shared the city; they shared that city despite the fact that the previous generation had completely dispossessed them of it. For some reason they saw some advantage to doing so. There was some pluralistic thinking that was going on in their head.

The next verses (verse 22 to the end of the chapter) show a mixture of doing God's will, but not doing it all the way. For some reason several of the tribes

were satisfied with putting the Canaanites under tribute rather than destroying them. Why not make money from the Canaanites rather than destroying them? It amounts to the same thing, doesn't it? And God says, "No. It does not amount to the same thing." God explains that this failure to take the conquest was not an issue of lack of ability. It was a matter of moral compromise. Too many times we justify our laziness and moral compromise with the excuse that the task is impossible. But with God being on our side, that is a lousy excuse.

### **The principles at work in this failure (2:1-3:6)**

Chapter 2 backs up to the time just before chapter 1:1. Chapter 1:1 starts with "Now after the death of Joshua." But in chapter 2:6, Joshua dismisses the people. He is clearly alive. So it is going back in time. That's why I say that this is a double introduction. Rather than being chronological, the introduction and the conclusion are theological overviews of the period of the judges - in other words, the whole period of chapter 3-16.

Chapter 1 is one snapshot of the period that is going to be discussed in this book, and chapter 2 is another snapshot of the same period. Chapter 1 uses some examples to show the failure and chapter 2 uses some examples to show the underlying causes of that failure.

In terms of causes, some of it involves the influences that the Canaanites had upon Israel's children, much like the Canaanites have been educating the children of Christians for the last few generations in America. Chapter 2 will give in a nutshell the series of cycles of sin that are going to be going on throughout this book and that inevitably lead the next generation to fail to be consistent Christians or to abandon the church altogether. This book explains why Christians today are leaving the church by the hundreds of thousands. Some people are mystified, but if you read the book of Judges, there is no mystery.

#### ***A failure to take God at his word (2:1)***

#### ***Compromise always hurts (2:2-3)***

#### ***Repentance can lead to renewed faithfulness (2:4-6 with 1:1-26)***

So some of the compromises and failures to conquer had happened even before Joshua died. Starting to read at verse 1. This is chapter 2:1.

Judg. 2:1 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I

said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. 2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? 3 Therefore I also said, "I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' " 4 So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 Then they called the name of that place Bochim [which means weeping]; and they sacrificed there to the LORD. 6 And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

OK - cool! They are going to be recommitted to possessing the land once again. So all of chapter 1 happens immediately after verse 6 - after Joshua dies. The temptation to compromise had happened even with the faithful generation. But their repentance (that is key) led to very faithful actions until that generation died out. Chapter 2:7 says,

So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

And we know from verse 8 how long Joshua lived - he died at the age of 110. Joshua died in 1424 BC (according to Ussher's Biblical chronology). So there were 20 years of pretty decent faithfulness and another eight years before the elders who were part of the initial conquest had died off.

***But failure to pass this to the next generation (2:7a-9), ensures that even less is passed on to the third generation (2:10)***

***This in turn can lead to sinful compromise (2:11-13)***

But chapter 1 already informed us that the children of the second generation were willing to make treaties. When the first generation was willing to make minor compromises with the Canaanites (which, granted, they repented of), the second generation went a step further and the grandchildren were willing to embrace Baal worship entirely. That's the way human nature goes. It may not seem like much of a compromise in the first generation, but compounded growth of covenant succession guarantees growth of both good (if it is nurtured) and of evil (if it is ignored).

So verses 10-15 speak to the grandchildren. Chapter 2, verses 10-15.

10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who

despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

***God then brings them into bondage and distress (2:14-15)***

***Once there is repentance, God raises deliverers (2:16)***

So these were Christians who were trying to plunder the wisdom of the pagans, and God allowed them to get plundered instead. They cry out, and God gives judges. The judges rule for a time according to God's laws, but eventually the people compromise again:

***And God repeats this sequence as many times as is needed (2:17-23)***

Verse 17b says,

They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. (v. 17b)

***God uses statism as a tool of punishment (2:14,16,18,23; 3:1-5) of sins such as intermarriage (3:6)***

And this cycle keeps repeating. God uses evil governments to afflict His people, the affliction makes them cry out to God, God raises judges who turn the hearts of the people back to Him. That's the pattern. I'll only read two more verses to illustrate it. Verses 18-19 say,

18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers [you see, there is that compounded growth of evil over the generations - if it is not dealt with; - "they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers"], by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

So chapter 2 summarizes the cycles of sin found in the heart of the book. If you look at the graphic on the first side of your outlines, you will see the cycle of sin graphically displayed. And over the 350 years that this book covers, Israel went through that cycle at least seven times. That's amazing when you think about it. It's certainly amazing in terms of God's patience, but it is also amazing that people don't learn from their history.

But I also find it amazing that this is almost a mirror image of America's history. America not only parallels approximately the same amount of time but also similar experiences. Every sin in the book of Judges (including the

horrifying one of rape and cutting up a woman in chapter 19) has been seen in our nation multiple times. And it's not just Jeffrey Dahmer - it has happened a number of times.

We have moved from being a confederation of Christian republics that served the Lord during the colonial era to a nation-state 350 years later that rivals any Baal state or Molech state described in this rather gruesome book. None of those tyrants had the world-wide interventionism, none of them were spying on all their citizens, and none of them had agencies that control every facet of life as badly as America does. We tend to be blind to America's evils, but when you compare our evils to the evils in Judges, it makes me very concerned about America and Western civilization.

Tony Cauchi is correct when he says that America has a remarkable, ...similarity to the experience of Israel during the period of the Judges in the Old Testament. The same cycle of sin and apathy, decline and defeat, desperate prayer for God's help and, finally, His powerful intervention, characterizes every revival. Perhaps there is a clue here regarding where today's church should be concentrating her efforts.<sup>2</sup> Because people are all over the place on their lists of revivals (with many books skipping very significant ones), I want to sketch out the six major awakenings that have been documented by various historians of revival.<sup>3</sup> I think if I do this it will let you see in a much bolder way how this book is applicable.

- The First Great Awakening of 1727 was under the leadership of George Whitefield. That was largely a reformed movement and resulted in perhaps the most massive shift in cultural morals in American history. America went from gross immorality, high crime, gangs terrorizing the seaboard, rampant pornography and immorality, and numerous highwaymen to a time when sheriffs and police officers were virtually unemployed because of the almost non-existent crime rate, and a shift towards righteousness in politics, and churches being packed. The evil we are experiencing today is not new in history. We have gone through this downward spiral a number of times and been rescued out of it. So 1727 began the first great awakening. Sadly, however, the next 65 years saw a great deal of France's pagan academic scholarship invading America's academics, and in the next generation immorality began to thrive once again. It's got the book of Judges written all over it. And by the way, you can see some of the secularizing humanistic influences of France on our Declaration and Constitution. Neither document was perfect.
- The Second Great Awakening happened 65 years after the first one, and went from 1792 and onwards. It produced not only social changes, but massive

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2 <http://www.revival-library.org/index.php/pensketches-menu/historical-revivals/general-overview-of-revivals>

3 There are a number of sites that document the awakenings in America, some lumping one or more together, but Tony Cauchi rightly distinguishes six at his helpful site, <http://www.revival-library.org/index.php>

missions movements. And actually, this revival hit the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany and other countries. Robert Haldane is a famous leader of this period in Europe and Timothy Dwight was an American representative in the Reformed camp. In some places, this reformation was substantial and produced holiness, whereas in other places it was largely emotionalism. The good effects probably lasted about 30 years. This is the difference between Reformation and Revival - revivals tend to be short-lived.

- The Third Great Awakening of 1830 had good men like Asahel Nettleton and manipulators like Charles Finney in America. I don't have a lot of respect for Finney, but God did use him to lead people to Christ. Some people call this the Second Great Awakening, but it really is the third one. Wales had powerful preachers like John Elias, Christmas Evans, and William Williams. James Caughey was an evangelist who ministered in the United States, England, and Canada. Scotland had the likes of Thomas Chalmers, Robert Murray McCheyne, W.H. Burns, and William Chalmers Burns. This great awakening spread even to Scandanavia, Central Europe, South Africa, the Pacific Islands, India, Malabar, and Ceylon. It lasted till 1842 - so about twelve years.
- The Fourth Great Awakening was 15 years later. It started in 1857 and produced massive growth of the church in Canada, America, Europe, Western Russia, Australia, the South Seas, South Africa, and India. So it too was a worldwide movement. In America, 50,000 people a week were being added to the church, which is an astonishing number when you consider that the population was only 30,000,000. 1,000,000 came to Christ out of Britain's 27,000,000 population. And the breakdown of Great Britain is that Ulster saw 100,000 converted. Scotland saw 30,000, Wales saw 100,000, and England alone saw 500,000. Moody, Sankey, Charles Spurgeon and others were used powerfully by God. Were they all Reformed? No, they weren't. God is not dependent upon Reformed people to bring revival. He uses anyone whose heart is captured by Him. Hudson Taylor, Lord Shaftsbury, and many other notables sprang from this movement of God.
- The Fifth Great Awakening started in 1880 and lasted till 1903, and largely revolved around D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Andrew Murray in South Africa, and John McNeil in Australia.
- The Sixth Great Awakening is really a collage of numerous revivals around the world. The most famous of these revivals was the Welsh Revival, but its shock waves were felt all over America. Though there were solid men involved in these revivals, the revival was sadly marred with Pentecostal extremes and various forms of Perfectionism like the Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Finneyist Perfectionism, and the Higher Life Movement. All of those movements had men of God in them, but they were horribly marred by bad theology, just like some of the revivals under Judges in this book were weak and marred - and we will look at that shortly. Yet God still used these men to bring many people back to the Lord.

And I give those revivals because I think they parallel the cycles of Judges in many ways. Reformed people like to criticize some of the leaders in America's Great Awakenings, but compared to Samson, Gideon, and Abimelech, the leaders of each of those six Great Awakenings were saints. So there are parallels between leaders. But there are parallels with how

short-lived the effects of each revival was as well. It seems that they only lasted one or two generations at the most, and then things were bad again.

Part of the problem was that parents failed to give consistently Christian education and discipleship, preferring to let the Canaanites disciple their kids in the public schools. And they said, “Well our kids went to government schools and they turned out OK.” But they missed the point. There may have been staying power in the kingdom, but they cut off the compounding kingdom growth.

I will admit that part of the problem was formalism in the church. And part of it was children seeing compromise and hypocrisy in the parents and then either leaving the faith or justifying their own even greater compromises.

What we need today is not another revival, though I would welcome that too. What we need today is a major Reformation. A couple of the Great Awakenings approached the level of a Reformation, but was never totally complete. America and the world church desperately needs a full-scale Reformation, not simply another revival.

***B. A history of 15 cycles of shalom, compromise, judgment, deliverance, and shalom (3:7-16:31)***

**Bondage under Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, and deliverance under Othniel (3:1-11).**

So let’s take a survey of the heart of this book. Chapter 3:1-6 shows a backslidden condition of the church once again. And God made them suffer severely under Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. These Jews were so backslidden that they had married unbelievers. Just as God raised up preachers in America and Europe, God raised up Othniel, filled him with the Holy Spirit, and after delivering the people in warfare, he judged the people.

To judge them should not be thought of as being in terms of the modern state or even the later kings of Israel. A judge had two main functions: 1) First, to protect the people by military leadership when that was necessary - but not with a standing army. 2) Second, to reestablish the law of God as the laws by which Israel’s judges would judge court cases. He acted as a court of appeals, but his main function was to teach the judges at the local levels God’s laws and encourage God’s people to get back to the law of God. Like Eli and Samuel, Othniel was not a substitute for local judges. He was simply a court of appeal. Under the Judges it was usually a very decentralized government similar to our original Articles of Confederation.

And he was successful in bringing the people back to the law of God. So the land had rest for 40 years. That may not seem like a long time. Why does God allow short-lived revivals? Why doesn't He change people for all time? It's a complicated problem and I'm not sure I have an uncomplicated answer that is adequate. But if I were forced to give a simple answer, it would come under three headings:

- First, God is sovereign, and His providences are sometimes mysterious. I know that may seem like a cop-out, but I think it is true. Only God can bring revival or reformation, and He brings it when and where He wishes. But He also stirs up people to pray for such revival. So until the church begins crying out to the Lord in prayer, we will not see revival. So that is the human side of it. But God is sovereign over revivals.
- Second, the book of Judges shows why parents must pass on the faith by engaging in Christian education, as commanded in Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy 6 demands homeschooling - it demands that parents disciple their children by applying the Word of God to how they rise, walk, work, eat, and sleep. YOU can't do that if the children are gone eight hours a day. To fail to disciple our children in all of life automatically means that the covenant succession will be short-lived. You might have some staying power, but you are not compounding the growth. There is no way that twelve years of intense discipleship into paganism from first to twelfth grade can do anything but destroy covenant succession. The lure of free education has been disastrous to Christianity in America. There will never be compounded growth of the kingdom without consistent Christian education. Why do we homeschool in a radically biblical way? Because we want compounded kingdom growth.
- And third, God insists on antithesis even by faithful believers. If our generation will not consistently apply God's law to all that we do, why should the next generation not follow suit, or be even less consistent? God has set up laws of cause and effect, and one of those laws is that compromise begets more compromise. When you sow one dandelion seed, the next generation will have thousands of dandelions. If each generation is faithful to pull up all dandelions as soon as they appear, there will be very few dandelions to deal with in each generation.

One side note is that Othniel's name (in chapter 3:5-11) means, "God is powerful" or "God is my protector." It shows faith on the part of his parents, and being as he was the brother of Caleb, that makes sense. And interestingly, neither one was ethnically from Abraham. They were Kenezites who had become Jews. But it shows that it is faith and faithfulness that matters, not ethnicity. He was not ethnically a Jew; he was a Jew by conversion. So even first and second generation Christians can be as faithful in passing on the faith as Caleb was. Don't be discouraged if you are a first generation Christian.

Let me make three additional applications from Othniel's life.

Verses 1-2 make it clear that war is Biblical and legitimate. God deliberately allowed tyrants to exist in order to teach His people war.

Verses 6-7 show that intermarriage between believers and unbelievers is a grave sin that receives God's judgment.

Verses 9-10 shows that secession of a portion of a country from an ungodly country is a legitimate aspect of interposition. The secession of the southern states from the north in America was perfectly legitimate. I don't agree with all of their reasons for doing so, but secession is allowed in the Scripture.

There is a lot of other very practical stuff in that section, but we need to move on.

### **More bondage under Eglon, king of Moab, and deliverance under Ehud (3:12-30)**

The second cycle is in verses 12-30. Once again the church tolerates sin in its midst and God brings discipline - once again through statism. Eglon, the king of Moab, was a tyrant who exacted onerous tribute from Israel. I view taxes as one of God's disciplines to humble us. Taxes is never a good thing; it is a discipline.

Ehud was a civil representative of Israel. By God's Spirit he planned a daring assassination attempt in order to rescue Israel. It's a fun story that results in war, but a war that Israel won. This time the land had rest for eighty years. That's enough time for a third generation to grow up and decide if they will walk in the ways of their parents and grandparents. More on that later.

But this section teaches us several things:

Is it OK to break forced treaties? I believe so. Verse 15 indicates that they were under a treaty to bring tribute. But it was a forced treaty, not something voluntarily entered into. And it was an ungodly treaty.

Are assassinations allowed? I believe so - if they are done by a legitimately elected civil magistrate. Verses 12-25, chapter 4:21, and chapter 5:24-27 all indicate that assassination of a tyrant is a good thing. It is sometimes the most efficient way to gain freedom and with the least loss of life.

Is deceit and intrigue allowed during time of war? Yes. Joshua already showed this to be the case by God's direct command, but in verse 19 we see this Spirit-anointed leader doing so once again as an act of war. During war, deceiving the enemy is allowed. You don't need to have conscience

problems about that if your military asks you to do that - with the enemy.

Are national armies allowed? Verses 27-29 would indicate so, but Numbers would specify that it should be voluntary and should be divided up under locally run units.

General Stonewall Jackson used many passages like this from Joshua and Judges to teach war-ethics and war-strategies. There is a great deal that we can learn from this book that we can't get into today.

### **Bondage under the Philistines, and deliverance under Shamgar (3:31)**

Now, based on the introductory two chapters, we can assume that after eighty years, Israel followed the cycle of sin and experienced God's hand of discipline from - yes, you guessed it - a wicked state. God doesn't have a high opinion of centralized civil governments. The Old Testament does not look upon centralized bullying police states as good in any other way than to oppress a corrupt people. The people get what they deserve just like citizens today get what they deserve. Thankfully, our God is a God of grace and mercy, and God raised up Shamgar to deliver Israel - presumably after they repented. And I say presumably because God already gave us the principles of how these cycles work in chapter 2 so that God wouldn't have to constantly repeat himself in these stories.

But there is a historical detail that I want to point out - your modern establishment study bibles that follow Thiele's errant chronology have Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, and Gideon as all ruling at the same time. But even worse, they later are forced to put Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibaz, Elon, Eli, and Samson as having rules that all overlap at some point.

In contrast, if you look at the chart that I have made (based on James Ussher and Floyd Nolen Jones' books) you will see that I have all the judges in this book as being sequential. Modern revisionist historians don't see these judges as being sequential, and it leads them to numerous blatant contradictions. For example, what is the very next verse? It says, "When Ehud was dead..." and then it goes into the history of Deborah. If Deborah comes after Ehud, they can't have contemporary judgeships. Chapter 10:1 says "After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola." Tola clearly comes after Abimelech. Verse 3 says, "After him arose Jair." It is plainly silly to say that those three ruled contemporaneously, yet several modern study bibles say exactly that because they are following establishment unbelieving scholarship.

Now they try to reconcile it by saying they only ruled over tiny portions of Israel. But they still have two problems. The text clearly says that one ruled after the other died. Furthermore, there is no evidence that these judges only ruled part of Israel. Chapter 10:2 says that Tola judged Israel - not part of Israel, but Israel. Verse 3 says "Jair judged Israel." Etc. Yet there are charts galore on the web that have these judges all mixed up and bundled together and only ruling over tiny portions of Israel.

And you might wonder why there are such radical differences of viewpoint on this today. The first reason is that the Evangelical church of today has followed Edwin Thiele in making the secular chronologies of Assyria and Egypt primary and has forced the biblical chronology into those secular and errant chronologies even when it makes massive contradictions in the Bible and even when it clearly makes the Bible's history of the judges 44 years too short. Why would they do that? My guess is that it is because of a lust for academic respectability with liberals. It is after all hard to buck the establishment when most evangelical pastors have been trained by the establishment. In any case, Biblicists should not follow Thiele since he did not operate with Biblical presuppositions. In his book he says,

If the Biblical chronology seems to be at variance with Assyrian chronology, it may be because of errors in the Hebrew records...<sup>4</sup>

Uh uh. The Assyrian records are not infallible. In fact, nobody agrees with the Assyrian records in their earlier highly exaggerated figures, yet they insist that the later ones are absolutely accurate. For some strange reason evangelicals follow Thiele blindly. I can show you numerous places in the Bible where Thiele either changes the Bible, assumes there is a mistake (or scribal error) in the Bible, ignores key verses that contradict his thesis, or says that it can't be reconciled.<sup>5</sup> At one point he has to make a third Hebrew kingdom out of thin air in order to rescue something irreconcilable on his system. He made up five co-regencies out of thin air. I highly recommend the chronology of James Ussher,<sup>6</sup> especially as it has been retooled by Floyd Nolen Jones.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Thiele, E., *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951.

5 Some examples: on Thiele's interpretation, Uzziah is made king eight years before he was born. Ridiculous. He butchers the meaning of 2 Kings 15:25,27. Even though Thiele admits that the text of 2 Kings 17:1; 18:1-2, and 18:10 do not fit his chronology, he insists (based on his synchronism) that Uzziah had to have been a co-reigning king for 24 years (with zero evidence), and Pekah had a 12 year overlap of reign with other kings. See Floyd Nolan Jones in footnote 6 for excellent interactions with the major problems in Thiele's thesis. Also see this brief analysis <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-history/evidentialism-the-bible-and-assyrian-chronology/>

6 James Ussher, [\*Annals of the World: James Ussher's Classic Survey of Ancient World History\*](#) (Master Books, 2003)

7 Floyd Nolen Jones, [\*The Chronology of the Old Testament\*](#)02939530-b9d4-4f2c-9036-bd498ade973e (Master Books, 2005)

But I give that background information to illustrate that the church of today is so in bed with the world's wisdom that most modern evangelical scholarship is highly tainted. Thankfully, that is not so of Creation Ministries International or Answers in Genesis. They are putting out some fantastic stuff.

### **Bondage under Jabin, king of Canaan, and deliverance by Barak and Deborah (4-5)**

I love the story of Deborah and Barak in chapters 4-5. Though Barak later became a great leader in Israel, Deborah had to coax and push him to do the right thing. She did not use her prophetic gift as an excuse to take over his role as political leader. In fact, the very opposite was true. When you read the passage it is quite clear that Deborah did not lead the army, did not recruit soldiers, did not fight, and did not even lead Israel as a civil magistrate before or after the war. She was a judge of disputes by divine inerrant prophesy, and thus fulfilled only one of the functions of a judge. Thus if people were to disobey the inspired revelation that she brought they were said to be disobeying "God" not her. She was not ruling over them. She was simply a passive vehicle for God's inerrant revelation. Consider the following points:

- First, chapter 4:6 makes it clear that Barak was commanded to lead, not Deborah. History by itself is not normative; God's commands are. And even apart from the law of God (which is clear), this historical account gives God's command for the male to lead: "'Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops...?' So Deborah herself says, 'It's a man's job. You do it, Barak.'"
- Second, the fact that Barak didn't want his God-given leadership role in verse 8, and the fact that Barak may have theoretically disobeyed that command (though I don't think so), does not empty the command of its obvious meaning. Thus, however you interpret the de facto leadership that happened, it cannot justify ignoring the de jure command for leadership of the state in the Scripture. Now, I happen to believe that the de facto and de jure can be reconciled perfectly. But even if that was not the case, the de jure commands of God clearly indicate that men alone were to lead in civil government. And Deborah by divine inspiration said so.
- Third, verses 8-9 clearly indicate that Barak's need of Deborah's moral support was a shame, not something to be imitated today. How could this possibly be seen as shameful conduct on an egalitarian interpretation? It wouldn't be shameful if feminists are right. But the text is clear that it was shameful for Barak to lean on Deborah so heavily. Shameful conduct should not be imitated; it should be avoided.
- Fourth, Deborah kept insisting that Barak take his leadership role, as women should do today (4:10,14,15). She insisted on male headship of the army (4:6) and of government (5:2) and only saw herself as "a mother in Israel" (5:7). Being "a

mother in Israel” is quite different than being “the mother of Israel” or being the head of the state. In the two capacities she did act in, she is listed as being under the authority of a man: as judge she was “a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth” (4:4). In composing the prophetic song, we find that Deborah sings with Barak (5). But she actually takes a back seat in absolutely everything else. We find that Barak takes leadership in drafting an army (4:10). It is Barak that Sisera sees as the head of the army (4:12). Barak takes leadership in the fighting (4:14,15,16,22). And Hebrews summarizes the events of these two chapters simply by mentioning the valor of Barak (Heb. 11:32). The story of Deborah is not a justification for female politicians. It is the opposite - it is a clear rebuke to men who won't lead.

And on my KayserCommentary.com web blog, I have a number of exegetical points that show Deborah to be a marvelous rebuke of modern feminism. I love the character and role of Deborah. She was a marvelous woman who knew her place under God and who was super confident in that role. And yes, she was willing to rebuke men who failed to lead. And I say, “Good for her. We need more of her kind of rebukes to modern wimpy men.”

But let me quickly list a few applications that may be of interest to you:

Chapter 5:8 says, “...not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.” And the rest had their weapons illegally. But 40,000 had zero weapons of defense or offense. Throughout history tyrants sought to disarm the people, whereas leaders who were actually interested in liberty always insisted on an armed citizenry. These judges always rearmed all of their citizens and kept them armed throughout the duration of their judgeship. Any government that seeks to disarm its citizens is by definition a tyrannical government that should repent.

Interestingly, when Israelite citizens were disarmed by tyrants and could not obtain first class weapons, they perfected alternative weapons. Shamgar in 3:31 has a homemade weapon as did Ehud. Jael is praised as a woman for killing a man with a tent stake (5:24-27). You use what you can get. But the value of being armed can be seen throughout the book as well. In Judges 3:27 Ehud calls all Israel to arms, but doesn't supply those arms. The Bible expects citizens to already have them and know how to use them. Even Jesus said, “he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Luke 22:36). In Judges 5 there is praise for Israelites who quickly responded to the call to arms (v. 9) that was given by the recruiter (v. 14). Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher are criticized for not having the courage to be involved in the uprising (vs. 16-17). Even stronger language is given to the city Meroz: ““Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants bitterly,

because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” If you don’t want God’s curse on you, you better pay attention to that verse. That verse indicates that it is a moral responsibility to have arms and to be prepared to use them when a civil magistrate calls for righteous interposition. The people were cursed when they didn’t respond to the recruiter. With each of the Judges this was an assumed responsibility.

And I have had to cut a bunch of stuff out of my sermon, but the section under Deborah and Barak is a very practical section for Christians to understand.<sup>8</sup> If I preached through this book I would spend more than a year plowing through the incredibly practical issues it addresses.

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8 Here is a small sampling of other practical issues: Chapter 5:15-16 indicates that good leaders need to be able to make fast decisions. It says that the leaders of Reuben spent so much time discussing the viability of Deborah’s plan that the battle was won before they could even reach a decision: Among the divisions of Reuben there were great resolves of heart. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, to hear the pipings for the flocks? The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart. It is good to thoroughly think through an issue when there is time, but sometimes that is not possible, and you need to make a speedy decision or fail. In terms of whether women can ever disobey their husbands, there is a fascinating section with Jael, in chapter 5:17 and following. She engaged in activities which many would rebuke, yet God praises her for them.

- In chapter 4:17 she broke a treaty that her husband had made with Jabin. Logic tells us that this probably also meant that she disobeyed her husband. Submission is not blindly going along with evil. In this case, to obey her husband would have involved her in siding with God’s enemies who were seeking to harm God’s people.
- In verse 18 she lured Sisera into a trap.
- In verse 18 she also lied to Sisera telling him that he had nothing to fear, when in reality he had everything to fear from her.
- In verses 18-21 she violated the social norms for hospitality. Of course, 2 John 10 tells a New Testament woman to violate the social norms of the time related to hospitality as well. It says that you shouldn’t invite heretics into your home for hospitality. That would be supporting evil.
- And then in verse 21 she killed Sisera with a tent peg. There are many who believe it is a sin for women to learn self-defense fighting, but here was a woman who used what she was adept at using (a tent peg) to kill her enemy.

And look at God’s evaluation of her in Deborah’s inspired song, in chapter 5:24-27.

24 “Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents. 25 He asked for water, she gave milk; She brought out cream in a lordly bowl. 26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen’s hammer; She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, She split and struck through his temple. 27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead.

It includes the phrase “Most blessed of women is Jael,” a phrase used of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Obviously God had a high regard for her. And God makes clear that He approved of each of these actions as well. Verse 25 approves of her deception, and of her breaking of the rules of hospitality. Verses 26-27 celebrate her so-called murder. Is it ever right to disobey your husband? Matthew 10:34-37 and Luke 14:26 make it clear that there are times when women must disobey their husbands in order to be pleasing to God. Is it ever right to break an oath or treaty? Every time a person comes to Christ, he is breaking treaty with Satan. Many of the Reformers had to deal with this issue since they had vowed not to marry so that they could be married to the church. They taught that false oaths must be repented of and broken. So you can see that the book of Judges is full of practical helps that we are barely touching on.

## **Bondage under Midian and deliverance by Gideon (6-8)**

In chapter 6 we see another cycle of sin leading to bondage and then deliverance by Gideon. The bondage this time was for only 7 years. There is nothing in God's book that says we must suffer for the much longer times that are sometimes listed in this book (such as the 40 years mentioned in chapter 13:1). As soon as people repent, they can have deliverance.

But another application is that since God brings the sinful actions of tyrants as a spanking stick to discipline His people, a proper response to God is needed rather than simply moral outrage against the tyrants. Louis DeBoer said,

Ultimately, what is the church confronting when it faces the issue of tyranny? We may say we are dealing with wicked men. We may go a step further and say we are not dealing with mere flesh and blood but are confronting principalities and powers, even Satan himself. But ultimately we are dealing with God. He is the great first cause of all things. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, 'it is with Him that we have to do.' If we face the question of the problems of tyranny squarely, we cannot possibly do so apart from the recognition of its source and its place in the providential purposes of a sovereign God who works all things according to His purpose.<sup>9</sup>

So rather than complaining about the increasing tyranny in America, we should recognize that this is God's tool to bring the church to repentance, and the sooner the church comes to repentance, the sooner the tyranny can be removed. We are looking at things backwards when we start with politics. Without repentance there is no deliverance.

Anyway, Gideon starts off as a fairly good Judge, who illustrates incredible faith in God as his army is whittled down to 300 men who win a battle against a vast multitude. The story of the trumpets and lamps is an inspiring story. I love it. It's probably my favorite story in Judges.

But the story of Gideon begins a list of judges who also have character flaws and who goof up big time. Gideon engages in murder against fellow Israelites who refused to help him. That is so petty. But worse, in God's eyes he is a murderer. He sets up an idol (a competing ephod) which leads Israel into idolatry. So he is definitely not a perfect example.

While the story as a whole has many spiritual lessons we can benefit from, there are four more I want to highlight:

First, it is written in such a way as to make it clear that God's war is not ultimately against flesh and blood, but is a war against the demon-god, Baal,

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<sup>9</sup> Louis DeBoer, "The Fundamental Tactic for Resisting Tyranny," in Gary North (ed), *Tactics of Christian Resistance: A Symposium* Edited by Gary North (Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1983), p. 13.

and all other demons. Demons can easily make our own allies compromise just as they made Gideon compromise. And in America we are largely facing a demonic onslaught that can't be solved with politics alone.

Second, the story of Gideon shows that our trust cannot be in human judges. Though they were types of Christ, they could definitely let Israel down - and several did. Though Gideon was for the most part good, he became compromised by acting like the world on some levels. And let me give a minor example; he named one son, Abimelech, which means "My father is king." No - Judges were not supposed to act like kings, but Gideon started to, and his sons took it a step further and became a wicked tyrant.

Third, Gideon's story highlights the evils that result from polygamy. Just as Leviticus 18:18 clearly condemned Jacob's polygamy (don't ever think that God approved of Jacob's polygamy- Leviticus 18:18 indicates that God didn't want that to ever happen again), this story condemns Gideon's polygamy. It is virtually impossible for a polygamous father to adequately disciple and discipline his children and pass on the faith intact. Look at any polygamous marriage in the Bible and you will see disaster coming from it - with no exceptions. And the 72 children of Gideon were a royal disaster; an utter disaster.

And fourth, there is a tendency for God's people to overlook serious sins in their heroes, but they should not. Gideon's idolatrous ephod is a case in point. That should have disqualified him as judge - period. Not only does Israel put up with this compromise (just as Americans tend to put up with compromises in their favorite politicians), they eventually worshiped the ephod. We see similar things happening today with Christians covering for President Trump even when he is aggressively pushing the sodomite cause internationally and in America. Has he done a lot of good things? Yes, and we praise him for those good things, but that does not mean we will cover for him doing bad things.

In any case, as a result of Israel's idolatry, God uses the sons of Gideon to punish the Israelites with their own homegrown tyranny. Again, politics alone will never solve America's problems. If Christians continue to trust in politics to save them, God will increasingly make politics the spanking stick that will bring pain to our derriars.

### **The anti-christ Judge, Abimelech, and God's use of him to judge the children of Gideon who had become arrogant (9)**

And this is especially illustrated with Gideon's son, Abimelech, in chapter 9.

Israel is so disgusted with the tyranny of Gideon's sons that they engage in a revolution by siding with the rhetoric of Abimelech. And it is only empty rhetoric. His heart was far from God. Certainly Abimelech gets rid of 70 of Gideon's problem sons, but because he doesn't follow Biblical process, he is treated as a murderer by the narrator. And in order to win, he resorts to pragmatism and aligns himself with both believers and Baal worshipers. So God uses Abimelech (a homegrown tyrant) to punish Israel.

These Israelites don't learn. They try revolution to overthrow their revolutionary tyrant, and it backfires on them. Then they turn to Gaal to deliver them in another attempted revolution, which also backfires. Revolutions always backfire - that's the message of this section. And by the way, the American War for Independence was not a revolution; it was a just war. But these attempted revolutions backfired. Abimelech destroys the city and goes on a rampage. The history of revolutions shows that revolutions just spawn more tyranny and more revolutions. Abimelech's tyranny was only stopped by a woman who throws a millstone over the wall onto Abimelech's head in their battle of self-defense. And by the way, though women aren't allowed in the army, they can certainly engage in self-defense. I think it is a wise thing for women to learn some self-defense. In any case, I see Abimelech as an anti-Christ who served Baal and an anti-judge. He illustrates the problems of Christians treating politics as a Messiah. The author of Judges does not disguise his absolute contempt for Abimelech. There is nothing positive about him.

### **Tola's deliverance of Israel from Abimelech's homegrown tyranny (10:1-2)**

Not until chapter 10:1 does it say that a judge actually delivered Israel in a truly biblical sense once again. And Tola judged Israel for 23 years.

### **Jair's judgeship (10:3-5)**

With Tola's death in chapter 10:2, the position of Judge transferred to Jair in 10:3, and he ruled for 22 years. So there appears to be no cycle of sin there. Cycles of sin are not inevitable. That's an encouraging part of the book of Judges. You could theoretically go from one Judge to another for several generations with no falling away if each generation would guard their hearts and train their children.

But Jair's children had something wrong with them. It seemed to be pride based. They had aspirations for kingship. Smaller compromise in parents leads to greater compromise in sons.

There isn't much space given to Tola and Jair simply because it doesn't fit Samuel's purpose of showing the disaster of trusting in politics. Those were two politicians who seemed to work out fairly well. But we are already seeing problems with the children of Jair.

### **Bondage under the Ammonites and God's deliverance through Jephthah (10:6-12:7)**

But a lot of time is devoted to Jephthah. Even though Hebrews 11:32 says that Jephthah was a believer who conquered the Ammonites by faith, his life was so messed up that it is no surprise that he quickly degenerates into acting like a tyrant himself. Like the later King Saul, he is anointed with the Spirit of God in chapter 11:29, and he gets an army together that crushes the Philistines. So far so good. But his biblical ignorance causes him to make and fulfill a rash vow in verses 34-40, and he sacrifices his daughter. This is absolutely disgusting and horrendous behavior for a believer to engage in, and the book does not justify his behavior however you interpret that sacrifice. Some people think that she just was devoted to the temple and could not get married and other people think that he killed her as a sacrifice. But either way, it was a vow that should have been repented of. You can admire his desire to keep his word, but sometimes vows must be repented of, and the Reformers spoke a great deal about that when monks and nuns took vows of celibacy when they didn't have the gift of celibacy.

Anyway, Jephthah's lack of humility and lack of other biblical qualifications for rulership makes him engage in a virtual genocide of the Ephraimites. What we are seeing as this book progresses is that the judges reflect God's character less and less, no doubt because they are less and less familiar with the Bible. Pragmatism becomes the name of the game more and more. Mercifully, God only let Jephthah rule for 6 years.

### **Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon are passed over rather hurriedly (12:8-15)**

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon are passed over rather hurriedly in chapter 12:8-15, but it appears that their judgeships are simply a holding pattern for the next 25 years. And verse 14 hints that though they might have been better than Jephthah, and were for sure better than Abimelech, they all had some of the problems of the modern conservative movement. They were trying to conserve old values rather than radically returning to Biblical values. And it illustrates that a conservative movement simply does not have the spiritual power to hold back the downward slide of the people into depravity. This

book does not in any way honor conservatism. Instead, it is a cry for God's people to return radically to the law and the Gospel.

### **Bondage under the Philistines for 40 years, and deliverance by Samson (13-16)**

For forty years God places Israel under severe bondage to the Philistines as His judgment for their backslidden condition. Chapter 13:1 says, "The LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years." That's a long time to suffer, but God is willing to let His people suffer as long as it takes to bring them to repentance.

Once repentance happens, God raises up Samson, a man who does not in any way reflect the God of the Bible in these chapters. But according to Josephus, his earlier years were years of "extraordinary virtue."<sup>10</sup> The author deliberately skips over those years and focuses upon his later compromises. And the reason is that the author is trying to get his readers to not put their trust in men and to realize that princes do not save; only God does.

I'll only focus on one story - the story of Samson eating honey from the lion. The whole section is full of compromise. Israelites were not supposed to marry Canaanites, yet Samson does. In chapter 14:5 a lion tries to attack Samson, and the Holy Spirit enables him to tear the lion apart. On a later day, he returns to the Philistine family with his parents, and in verse 8 he checks out the carcass of the animal. He finds that a hive of bees had taken residence inside the carcass.

We aren't told the reason that Samson wanted to go off the path and take a look. I am assuming that it was to satisfy his curiosity. But according to the laws of a Nazarite in Numbers 6 he should have restrained himself and stayed as far away from possible contact as he could get. Even the smell of the decaying animal should have kept him away. Now I doubt that he had any intention of defiling himself by touching the animal, but the point is, he allows his curiosity to get him close to sin. He is beginning to flirt with danger. This is the character flaw with Samson.

Now that he sees the dead lion there is another temptation that comes along. Look at the second sentence of verse 8. "And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion." Nowadays we have all the sweets that we want and we probably wouldn't be tempted by this in the least. In fact, I doubt if most of you would bother to climb a tree to get some honey, because the stings would not be worth it. But this would be a temptation for

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<sup>10</sup> Josephus, Antiquities V, viii, 12.

him, because sweets didn't come along very often. Samson saw something that he wanted, and yet in order to get it he would have to come very close to sinning if not actually falling into sin. Does he pass it up because of the danger of defilement? No, he risks the danger. He gets close to danger.

Verse 9 says,

He took some of it in his hands [and in order to do that he had to carefully reach into the carcass without touching the carcass. Nazarites were not allowed to touch carcasses. So he took some of it in his hands] and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

Why didn't he tell them? He probably didn't want them to be shocked at how close he came to defilement. His conscience was no doubt at work.

But this is merely an illustration of what was at work in other areas of his life. Samson must have known the dangers that he faced when he visited the harlot at Gaza and when he talked with Delilah. The enemy was waiting in the wings to destroy him. They were out to get him. And yet he flattered himself that he could flirt with the temptress without getting trapped.

My father gave me very, very sound advice when he told me not to see how close I could get to sin without sinning, but like the Nazarite, to see how far away from defilement I could get. Samson flirted with danger when he went to see the carcass. That flirtation led him to further temptation when he saw the honey, and before he knew it, he was violating his code by actually plucking the honey comb out of the carcass.

And this same pattern happens over and over again in young Christians' lives. They flirt with temptation in their Androids or iPhones. This is a book that shows the downward slide that Christians can easily get into if they are not ruthless in fighting against their own inner depravity and ruthless in separation from outward contamination.

### ***C. A double appendix to reinforce the central warnings of this book with two stories (17-21)***

And the book ends with two stories taken from the earlier section on the Judges to illustrate how bad things can get if the church does not maintain antithesis.

#### **The idolatry of Ephraim and Dan (17-18)**

Chapters 17-18 show the astonishing superstition, lack of doctrinal awareness, acceptance of idolatry and compromise that even the Levites (in

other words, the church pastors) had. It's astonishing the degree of spiritual blindness that this Levite had. Pragmatism and moral compromise were the name of the game. Yet rather than pointing fingers, we should note that the evangelical church of America has been just as blind in the last generation.

- We can expect unbelieving liberal pastors like Nadia Bolz-Weber to rail against chastity and to make her gross sexual statuette, but the degree of hypocritical unchastity in the modern evangelical church is astounding. Though the statistic that 80% of self-identified evangelicals have engaged in premarital sex has been questioned by the Gospel Coalition,<sup>11</sup> everyone admits that it is way too high.
- Second, abortion is not just a phenomenon in the liberal churches. It occurs throughout evangelical churches as well. 70% of women who get abortions consider themselves to be Christians, and 23% identify as evangelical born again Christians.<sup>12</sup> How did that happen? It is the fruit of a lawless church. While evangelical leaders have actually become stronger on this issue since the 1970's, top evangelical pastors supported abortion way back into the 60s. For example, in 1969, the former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, W.A. Criswell actually welcomed and hoped for a Roe v Wade, saying, "I have always felt that it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person, and it has always, therefore, seemed to me that what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed." That was the W.A. Criswell, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1971, the Southern Baptists approved a resolution that said, "we call upon Southern Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother." Now, certainly, that has changed. But it illustrates that Scripture is not the foundation for much of Christianity. We keep following the cycles of Judges.
- I hate to pick on the same denomination, but they are supposedly the flagship of evangelicalism within the USA, so I think they are fair game. Granted, not every case has gone through the courts yet, but the number of pastors in that denomination that have already been convicted of sexual assaults on children and being caught with child pornography in their possession is astounding. We are talking pastors here - pastors like the Levite in the next story! Currently there are charges in process against a total of 380 pastors and ministry staff and 700 children being represented legally as having been assaulted. The majority of those have already been proven to be true. The denomination has not denied that these things have happened, or that sexual misconduct has been swept under the carpet in the past. Over the past two decades I have seen similar things happening in many different denominations. It sickens me.
- And is it any wonder, when confidential polls of pastors show that 57% of senior pastors and 64% of youth pastors struggle with pornography, which in the

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11 <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/premarital-sex-and-our-love-affair-with-bad-stats/>

12 <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Care-Net-Final-Presentation-Report-Revised.pdf>

definition means they regularly watch it.

- Then you have evangelical and reformed denominations going soft on the concept of sexual orientation even in this past year.

And the list could go on with other moral issues, doctrinal heresies, socialism, endorsement of public schools, which are really government indoctrination centers, evolution, ecumenical dialog with apostate churches, embracing occult medicine, egalitarianism, etc., etc. So this is definitely a relevant book for our times.

### **The lack of moral sense in the clergy (19:24) and the lawlessness of Benjamin (19-21)**

The last story (given in chapters 19-21) is horrifying. It showcases moral problems on every level of society, including the clergy. While it shows the horrible trajectory of ignoring homosexuality, it also shows the horrible insensitivity of this Levite to his wife. He allowed her to be gang raped to save his cowardly skin. It shows an entire city that had descended into homosexuality rather rapidly. And it shows an entire tribe that takes tribal loyalty more seriously than the criminal behavior of that city. The whole story stinks! It shows moral sensibilities completely skewed and it leaves one feeling sick. God wants us to feel sick over these sins. He wants us to turn to His ways, rather than using the wisdom of man.

Now, there is one more phrase that I want to comment on. Four times in these last five chapters it mentions “In those days there was no king in Israel,” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). They are deliberately spaced. And the stories begin and end with a fuller expression, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6 and 21:25). This was not an expression intended to teach that kings would solve this problem of human depravity. The reason I know that is that the same author wrote most of 1 Samuel, a book that shows that Saul had become even more corrupt than the Judges.

Instead, what that phrase was designed to communicate is that even with the Biblical ideal of almost-libertarianism - of God alone being King and people having a huge degree of freedom, tyranny is unavoidable if the church does not follow God’s law, but instead does what is right in their own eyes. Yes, God’s ideal civil government is almost libertarian - it allows a great deal of liberty for citizens to sin. But that does not mean there are no repercussions to the citizens’ bad decisions. Immoral libertarianism will always lead to tyranny - God’s spanking stick. That is the message of the last section and that is the story of the whole book. It tells them that centralized politics is not Savior, and Libertarianism is not Savior, but God alone is the solution to

our problems. The whole book is a story of grace that comes with repentance. As 2 Chronicles 7:14 phrases it,

...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Brothers and sisters, this book calls us to be part of a massive movement of repentance in America. I'm so glad that the Activist Mommy, and the Benham Brothers, and many other organizations are calling for this repentance. Kathy and I spent a day joining them in fasting and repentance for our nation in March. I have done so again in this past week. May the Lord indeed grant such repentance to the West. Amen.