Fall 2024 – Adult Sunday School

Three Rivers Presbyterian Church

11/3/24

**Lesson 18 – Judges**

(All Scripture English Standard version unless otherwise noted; *italics*, underlining, color & ‘greyscale’ mine)

Dr. Miles Van Pelt

*Survey of the Old Testament*

ot501-18

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/learn/institute/ot501-survey-of-the-old-testament/ot501-18-judges>

**I. Introduction**

A. The judges

B. Contents

C. Historical context

D. Purpose

E. Genre

F. Date and authorship

**II. What and Who are the Judges?**

A. Modern consensus

B. Internal assessment

C. External assessment

**III. Outline and Content**

A. Main sections

B. Characteristics of the judges

C. Major judges

**IV. The Gospel Promised Beforehand**

**I. Introduction** (00:13):

Welcome to the lecture for the *Book of Judges*. The *Book of Judges* is the second book in the former prophets recording that period of time where Israel was in the land from 1406 BC to 586 BC. The title of the *Book of Judges* is a translation of the Hebrew word *Shofetim* **שפטים**, which is a masculine, plural, substantival participle… It means *to judge* or *those who judge*, so *judges*. This type of *judge*, however, is not like any of our modern-day judges. Most of our modern-day judges don't wield weapons. The judges in the *Book of Judges* however, deliver God's people from oppression and the subjugation of the enemy. They render judgment on the enemy and call God's people to faithfulness.

**A. The Judges** (00:55):

So, think of it this way, when you think about why would they call *judges* *judges* ? |Why not just call them *saviors* or *deliverers*? They are called that as well, but why the official title “*judges*”? It's because we think of a *judge* as a courtroom official. They are officials of God's covenant administration, but their job is to bring judgment on the nations. So, their job is to bring judgment on the nations on behalf of Yahweh. They're the *instrument* of Yahweh's judgment. So that's how we need to think of the *judges* and why we call them that. I think it is way better than thinking this or that.

In the *Book of Judges*, the only person who acts in an official judicial capacity as we conceive of it, would be Deborah, the prophetess, and then she calls Gideon to help her bring judgment, and so they do that together. I love the *Book of Judges*. It's one of those books that have been lost to the church, I think. It's called *functional de-canonization*, just like the *Song of Songs*, we know it's there, but we just avoid it as much as possible because we don't understand it.

Back in the mid-90s, again, if you've heard me mention Gordon Hugenberger a couple of times, I heard him give a couple of lectures on the introductions to the *Book of Judges*. There's two introductions, and he was arguing there for a *positive assessment* of the judges. I was shocked by that because I've always grown up thinking the judges were wicked dudes. He thought of them this way, if the judges were called by God, they were morally flawed, but God used them to accomplish His will. I'm the same way, I'm like judges, I'm morally flawed, but maybe God can use me to accomplish His will. But again, that's a *wrong interpretation*.

I was put on this path those many years ago, and it's been over 25 years, and I've been hot on the trail of these judges forever. They're so intriguing and wonderful, it's great. Hugenberger is about to start on the *commentary* [Apollos Series)] as well, it'll be out in a few years. So, you can see all this stuff coming out with the commentary a little bit on it, but it's much smaller and only will outline some of the basics. So, wait for the Hugenberger commentary or buy them both.

**B. Contents** (02:49):

So, what are the summary of the contents? Let me tell you about the *Book of Judges*. It's real easy, all right. I'm going to say this several times. There are two introductions that run from chapter one into the middle of chapter three. Then there are two conclusions that are in the last chapters of the book, 17-21. Then there is a big section in the middle, it's like the *judge sandwich*. There are 12 judges, 6 major judges, 6 minor judges and 1 anti-judge, *Abimelech*.

The *major judges* are *major* because the account of their judging is longer and the other ones are just like one or two verses, a real summary kind of thing. The whole goal was to get to 12, which represents the 12 tribes of Israel, but we only have six lengthy accounts that is. Whenever I teach or preach, I've preached to this before, and I even have a t-shirt that says it on it because I wanted the kids to engage them. I have in the *Book of Judges* are two introductions and two conclusions, 12 judges, 6 major, 6 minor, and 1 anti judge, *Abimelech*. On the back of my shirt it had a big *Abimelech* with a big cross through it in the back, just so you know he was the anti-judge. I still have that shirt. I wear it when I teach the *Book of Judges* every year and I think everyone likes it. So that's what it is.

**C. Historical Content** (04:11):

We're going to see that played out. You're going to see it here as kind of a formal outline for the *Book of Judges* over here, but I'm going to show you the way in which the Hebrew mind conceived of the outline of the *Book of Judges*. Historical context, when did this stuff happen? It's basically *post-Joshua* and *pre-Samuel*. We will think of Samuel as the last judge. *Post-Joshua* and *pre-Samuel*. Samuel is not in this book, but Samuel does do some judge stuff. So basically from 1350 BC to 1050 BC.

A number of passages in the Old Testament, historical books, refer to the time of the judges as identifiable periods in Israel's history. So, Ruth, for example, these things happened in the period of the judges, and then there's some others. These books also contain some references to individual judges of which the most notable is 1 Samuel 12:11, where Samuel was rehearsing some of the stuff and he mentions a bunch of the judges.

The *earliest event* *mentioned* in the *Book of Judges* is the death of Joshua, *twice*, both in chapter 1 and chapter 2. The *latest datable reference* appears in Judges 18:30. There it says, "*The Danites set up for themselves the idols and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses and his sons were the priests for the tribe of Dan, it's foreboding*." And it says, "*Until the time of the captivity of the land*."

So, they're referring to... that's the north, the *captivity of the land* in the Northwest 722. So, the *earliest event recorded* is Joshua's death, and the *latest event* kind of there is *captivity of the land*. Now, that could have been added later by someone in the exile period or something like that, so we can think of that.

**D. Purpose** (05:39):

The purpose of the book is to describe Israel's incessant, unfaithfulness to the Lord. In general, the *Book of Joshua* presents a *positive* picture of the people of God, the *Book of Judges* however, the people of God are portrayed as *faithless, covenant-breakers*. Let's compare two statements in *Joshua* and *Judges*.

Here's Joshua 24:31, "*Israel served the Lord throughout the time of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel*."

Then it says in Judges 2:10-12, "*After the whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, the one they're just talking about in Joshua, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals*."

That's the *refrain* that's going to begin every major *judge* episode, *Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord*, and *they served the Baals*, *and the Asherah*, etc. So, as they forsake the Lord their God, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt, they followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them, they provoked the Lord's anger. So, you can see, this generation serve the Lord, this generation made the Lord very mad.

This *Book of Judges* will also prepare us for *kingship* and the *monarchy* that we're going to come across in Samuel and Kings. Four times in the two conclusions, there's going to be this phrase, *in those days, there was no king in the land,* and on the *first* and *fourth* one, it's going to add to it, *and so everyone is doing what's right in their own eyes*. That's going to be kind of a big *theme* there that runs through it, *kingship* and the *monarchy*.

And it's going to be very *pro-Judah* and *anti-Benjamin*. The *Book of Judges* is *pro-Judah* and *anti-Benjamin*. Why? Because David is from the line of *Judah* and Saul is from the line of *Benjamin*. So, the horrific events at the end of the book, the raping of the concubine, and then cutting her up, and the war that ensued, all happened in *Benjamin*, all happened in *Gibeah*, that *Saul's* *town*. And so, we're going to see how that plays out. When the Lord picks Saul to be *a king like all the other nations*, you asked for it, you've got it and so it's important to know that we're going to be seeing that.

**E. Genre** (07:49):

In terms of genre, it's classic Hebrew narrative, it's a combination of *events* and *speeches* recorded, it's *theological history*. There is also in it though, a *poetic song*, *Deborah's song* in Judges 5. There are the *fables of Jotham*, there's this *fable of Jotham* about burning brambles and Judges 9. Then Samson brings down several really cool *riddles* that provokes the Philistines to rage. So that's kind of what we're looking at.

**F. Date and Authorship** (08:16):

In terms of date and authorship, like the *Book of Joshua*, the *Book of Judges* is anonymous, we don't know who wrote it. Again, some traditions attribute *Samuel* to be the author of it, but this is impossible to prove without any internal or external evidence. The reference to the *captivity of the land* in 18:30, means that it was at least revised or updated after that time. So, you could see them in *exile*. This would be a great book in *exile*, they could use it to explain the fact, why do we go in *exile*? We were *unfaithful*. We were *unfaithful*. We were *unfaithful*. We were *unfaithful*. It's again, evidence and the case, these are documents.

You can think of this way. Like I said, the prophet Isaiah *is taking Israel to court*, and is going to bring in two pieces of evidence, so we have this evidence. So, evidence one is *Joshua*, where the Lord is completely faithful, fulfills all His promises. Then evidence two is going to be *judges*, where Israel's completely unfaithful to keep their end of the deal, you can see how that works. So, in covenant administrations, it's all *documented* and *legal*, and that's what we have here. There's no excuse to ignore this way of doing things.

**II. What and Who are The Judges?** (09:21):

**A. Modern Consensus**:

What and who are the *judges*? Modern consensus, you ready for this? I'm not even going to quote where it comes from because I don't like what it says. So, I got this from somewhere, it's not from me. The modern consensus, here we go, *Ehud* is the deceptive left-handed assassin. *Barak* is the coward. *Gideon*, the coward and the backslider. *Jephthah*, the man who sacrificed his daughter. *Samson*, the violent sex addicted Nazarite. All right, that's how they think of him. In our modern world that we've been raised to think about this way, that's the prevalent way to think about him right now. In fact, I only know three people who have written anything on this who think differently in the modern era, not in the ancient world.

What's an alternative? This is something that the *judges* are portrayed as *positive figures* in the *economy of the administration of the covenants*. All I'm going to argue, this may shock your drawers off, types of Christ. All of the *judges* are types of Christ and we'll see that later. According to Judges 2, *they were raised up by the Lord to deliver God's people and to provoke obedience to Yahweh in their lifetime*. They secure *rest* *for the land* and are c*lothed or empowered by the Spirit to accomplish the calling of God in their lives*, and they *all* do it.

Number one, *the judges were raised up by Yahweh to save or deliver his people from the oppression of the enemy*. Look at Judges 2:16, *the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them*.

Number two*, the people of Israel did not listen to the judges because of their idolatry. So Lord raised them up and the people rebelled against the judges just like they rebelled against Yahweh.*

It says here, "*Yet, they did not listen to their judges for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked and who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord and they did not do so*."

All right, so you can see the author of the *Book of Judges* contrast the *people* with the *judge* himself. Oftentimes, commentators argue that the *judge* is just like the *people*, but that's not the case. The *judge* is set apart by or from the *people*, I want you to hear that.

Next, we have, they were *raised up by God*, *the people don't listen to them*. Third, *the Lord was with the judge* and as such, it becomes one of those Mosaic things. Just like Lord is with *Moses*, just like Lord is with *Joshua*, the Lord's going to be with the *judge* by the power of the Spirit and fighting for Israel. The *promise of the divine presence* normally manifests in the sending of the Spirit to clothe the *judge* or to enable him to deliver from the enemy is what's at work in the *judge*. The *judge* is always going to be the instrument of deliverance. The *Lord* is always the agent of deliverance. The *Lord's* doing it; the *judge* is the Lord's sword. It's like the state is the arm of the Lord kind of thing.

**B. Internal Assessment** (12:23):

Whenever the Lord raised up *judges* for them, the Lord was with the *judge*, that's that *divine presence thing*, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the *judge*. So, for the whole duration of the life, the rest in the land or the rest of the land, not the remaining of it, but actual physical rest of the land, freedom from enemies was maintained as long as the *judge* was alive. So, we need a *judge* that can't die, that's part of that part. But when the *judge* died, check this out, 2:19, this is all in chapter two, is going through this list that I gave for you, but *whenever the judge died, they turned back and we're more corrupt than their fathers going after other gods serving them and bowing down to them, they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways*.

So, there's going to be, in the *Book of Judges*, Dan Block in his commentary on the *Book of Judges* talks about the Canaanization of Israel, the Canaanization of Israel, which means Israel was supposed to go in and wipe out the Canaanites so they wouldn't become like them. But more and more in the *Book of Judges*, you see Israel would becoming like the Canaanites because they did not expel them. By the very end, the *tribe of Judah* is portrayed as Sodom and Gomorrah and the Israelites will wage holy war against them. They almost sort of destroy the whole tribe.

That's the *internal assessment* of the *judges* in the *Book of Judges*. You can see that in chapter 2, there's the Lord raising them up, the Lord is with them. He helps them even when people disobey. He gives land rest during their life and when the *judge* dies, you can see it all unravels again.

**C. External Assessment** (13:49):

Are there any other places in scripture or *outside of scripture* that talks about the *judges* in a positive way? There happens to be. In 1 Samuel 12:11, it said, "*The Lord sent Jerubbaal, that was Gideon's new name, Barak, Jephthah, and Samson, and He delivered you from the hands of your enemies on every side so that you live securely*." Notice He didn't impugn them at all when you had a chance in this kind of *farewell speech*. Like saying, "*And now you're acting just like them*." Contrary to the fact, they were the ones who were set apart from the people and saved the *judges* or saved the *people*.

Remember, earlier I talked about that book, Ecclesiasticus, by Ben Sira, written about 200, translated about 132 BC, in the *intertestamental period*? He's actually the oldest commentator on the *Book of Judges* that we have. And he says here, this is in Ecclesiasticus 46:11-12, if you want to go look it up, everyone's favorite book, he's talking about a whole host of things. And he says, "*The judges too, each when he was called, all men whose hearts were never disloyal, who never turned their backs on the Lord, may their memory be blessed, may their bones flourish again from the tomb*," [thinking about resurrection] "*And may the names of those illustrious men be worthy born by their sons*."

Now, again, none of the *judges* were sinless, but what he's saying is *in the administration of their covenantal duties, raised up by the Lord to do, they were faithful*. So *sinful* like us, but they were *faithful*. We know *Moses* and *Joshua* were *sinful* but they were *faithful* in God's household. The Book of Hebrews even says *Moses* was faithful in God's household. So even stronger, I think though, is what we have at the end of the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews is the *great hall of faith* with people like *Abraham*, and *Sarah*, and *Moses*, and *David*, why they threw these jokers in there is beyond modern commentators' comprehension.

But listen to Hebrews 11:32-39, and after I read the names of who's there, I want you to read what they're commended for and if you've read the *Judges* before, I want you to think about all of the different connections to the lives of the *judges*. So, I'm going to begin with this. He's at the end, the author of the *Book of Hebrews* is at the end of the *hall of faith*, he's looking at the clock like, “*ahhhh, I got to wrap this up*."

Then he says, "*And what more shall I say? The clock is ticking, I do not have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah for the judges, David, Samuel and the prophets who,"* [get it] "*Through faith, by faith*," [What did they do?] "*Conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions*," [Samson], "*Quenched the fury of the flames and escaped the edge of the sword whose weakness was turned into strength and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead raised to life again, others were tortured, refused to be released so they might gain a better resurrection, some faced jeers and flogging, while others were chained and put in prison*, [Samson] *they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were put to death by the sword, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted mistreated.*

What does it say about them? *The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised*.

So, the burden remains at the feet of the *modern commentator* to defend their position, that is now on Hebrews 11 because I'm going to stand and say, *you've got to let scripture interpret scripture*. I'm going to look through the lens of Judges 2, Hebrews 11, and sandwich those *judges* in that interpretational scheme. I'm trying to get them out of some trouble. The fact that *Gideon* wants a sign or asks for a sign is not a negative thing, *Moses* gets the same thing. The fact that he needs to be encouraged and go down and see a dream recounted and the thing about a big barley wheel rolling and the thing does not mean that he lacked faith. It means what he was about to do scared the heck out of him and he did it in spite of that.

So, when you do what you're supposed to do in the midst of *fear*, we normally call that *courage*, not a *lack of faith*, depending on the way in which you're looking at it. You can ask me specifics at the end. So outlining contents, as indicated before in the *Book of Judges*, there are 2 introductions, 2 conclusions, 12 judges, *6 major*, *6 minor*, and *1 anti-judge*… *Abimelech*. The *Book of Judges* records the accounts of the *6 major judges* in *2 parts* or *panels*, and I'm going to show you that. The *position* or *distribution* of the *minor judges* remained something of a mystery. Perhaps they marked climactic major judge events. At the very least, the inclusion of the *6 major judges* gives us a total of *12 judges*, a number representing the *house of Israel*, the *12 tribes of Israel*, the *12 patriarchs*, or the *12 apostles* or *disciples*, something like that.

**III. Outline and Content** (18:43):

Here's the structure of the *Book of Judges*. I'm going to look over here on the wall, on the TV and you can see here, that I begin with the introduction and I have a two, an A, and a B.

1. **Introduction to the Judges [1:1-3:6]**
2. The Crisis of Israel’s Inheritance (*land*) (1:1-2:5)
3. The Crisis of Israel’s Faith (*idolatry*) (2:6-3:6)
4. **The Judges [3:7-16:31]**
5. The *First* Three Major Judges (3:7-5:51)
   1. **Othniel** (Major) \*… 3:7-11
   2. **Ehud** (Major) *Again*… 3:12-30
   3. Shamgar (minor) 3:31
   4. **Deborah**/**Barak** (Major) *Again*… 4:1-5:31
6. The *Second* Three Major Judges (6:1-16:31)
   1. **Gideon** (Major) \*… 6:1-8:35

*Abimelech* (*anti-judge*) *9:1-57*

* 1. Tola (minor) 10:1-2
  2. Jair (minor) 10:3-5
  3. **Jephthah** (Major) *Again*… 10:6-12:7
  4. Ibzan (minor) 12:8-10
  5. Elon (minor) 12:11-12
  6. Abdon (minor) 12:13-15
  7. **Samson** (Major) *Again*… 13:1-16:31

1. **Conclusion to the Judges [17:1-21:25]**
2. The Crisis of Israel’s Faith (*idolatry*) (17:1-19:30)
3. The Crisis of Israel’s Inheritance (*tribe*) (20:1-21:25)

The *first* is the crisis of Israel's inheritance, they're having trouble *occupying the land*. In fact, what we're going to get is it's going to begin with this weird war with *Adoni-Bezek*, where they're going to cut off his thumbs and toes and make him eat under a table where he dies in Jerusalem, a subjugated king who dies in Jerusalem. In this *introduction*, there's 30 verses devoted to *Judah* being successful in the vast majority of their exploits. Right after that, there's one verse, *Benjamin* can't do it, so it's a very big contrast there.

**A. Main Sections** (19:28):

Then there's the crisis of Israel's faith, where we're reading some of that earlier. There's a *covenant lawsuit*, the angel of the Lord shows up and he says, "*You're guilty of breaking my covenant, I'm going to raise up judges, this is what they're going to be like, but you're not going to listen to them*." Then we get the *first judge*. So, it's the crisis of Israel's inheritance, they can't get it, the crisis of their faith, they can obey, A and B. Then we get to the *judges* and there's going to be two sets.

There's the first three major judges, *Othniel*, *Ehud*, *Deborah*/*Barak* with the minor judge *Shamgar*. He's the guy who kills the Philistines with the ox goad. Usually, these guys don't have weapons like *Samson*, jawbone of an ass, and you've got *Deborah*/*Barak*.

Then you've got a second three major judges, and I'll tell you how I get in the second three in a minute. You've got to have *Gideon*, *Jephthah*, and *Samson*, a whole host of *minor judges* sprinkled in there. Do you see all those? The rest of the five appear in here. So, you've got to *Tola*, *Jair*, *Ibzan*, *Elon*, and *Abdon* and you've got *anti-judge* right there, *Abimelech*. Then notice the *conclusion* at the end, you have the same thing, but in *reverse order*, see the B and the A, how I labeled it there, it's not A, B? You've got the crisis of Israel's faith, idolatry, and the crisis of Israel's inheritance. They're going to lose a tribe. The *Benjaminites* are going to be exterminated, almost all of them.

So do you see that *symmetry* A, B, *two sets of three*, B, A. I'll say it again, A, B *two sets of three* B, A? It’s easy to memorize. Now that's a very Western kind of way of looking at things, to *outline* it like that.

There's a guy named Bob Chisholm, teaches at Dallas Seminary, he's written a commentary on the *Book of Judges*, a lot of journal articles, great Hebrew guy. He noticed, that in the six judge accounts, the *opening formula* is slightly different in the *first* and in the *fourth*. Then, *two* and *three* and *four* and *five* and *six* all match. It goes this way, I'll just tell you how it goes in English. It says, "*And Israel did that which was evil in the eyes of Lord*," number one. *Israel did again, that which was evil, and Israel did again, that, which is evil.* Do you see the added *again*? In Hebrew, it's very easy to see this because the word “*again*” is actually a big verb on the front of the sentence, probably we have to translate it again for all kinds of weird reasons.

**Othniel** (3:7)

7  And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

וַיִּשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיַּעַבְדוּ אֶת־הַבְּעָלִים וְאֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרוֹת׃

**Ehud** (3:12)

12  And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,

and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel,

because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

**וַיֹּסִפוּ** בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיְחַזֵּק יְהוָה א

ֶת־עֶגְלוֹן מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל

כִּי־עָשׂוּ אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה׃

**Deborah** and **Barak** (4:1)

1  And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD after Ehud died.

**וַיֹּסִפוּ** בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וְאֵהוּד מֵת׃

Then you go to Judge *four*, *the children of Israel did evil*, no *again*. Then, again, *they did evil*, and then, again, *they did evil*. This is one of the ways Hebrew does discourse and has [inaudible 00:22:02] shake things. They start off with something, one way. Then they follow it with “*and*”. They start out another way, then follow it with “*and*”. Remember how I told you about that with *Deuteronomy*, so that's how it happens.

So, what we see here, is we see our *two introductions* right here and our *two conclusions*. Then we have our *first three major judges*. There's *Othniel*, *Ehud*, and the *Deborah*/*Barak* team. Then there's *Gideon*, *Jephthah*, and *Samson*. Remember, these *start* and this one has the *again*, this one has the *again*. This one has the *start* and this one has *again*. If I lay it out for you in Hebrew, you would say, "*Oh yes, it's so simple*." But again, you just have to look at the big picture. You have to look at these little features.

Also, it's interesting that the *Deborah/Barak* narrative and the *Samson* narrative, are *double* *judge* *narratives*. Remember how in the *days of creation*, days 3 and 6 were *double creation days*. So, days 3 and 6 are *double creation days*. How are they *double creation days*, you ask me? Great question. They're *double creation days* in this way, they *double up* on many things.

So, with *Deborah/Barak*, first, there's not *one* deliverer, there are *two*, so is *Deborah/Barak*. Second, there's not *one* leader of the enemy army, *Jabin*, but there's also *Sisera*. So, you've got *two* and *two* there. There's not *one* account of the events here, there's *four*, the *narrative*, and *five*, the *poetic retelling* of it. And so, there's all kinds of things that are *doubling up* there. It's an *intentional literary device*, that's why this is short, longer, longest, like that. So, you've got all these. What else can I remember off the top of my head? I know there's more, but I just can't think of them, but that's fine.

Samson is a *double narrative* in this way. *Samson* has *two* *periods of 20* in his *judging*. So, in 13, it's his birth narrative, which is a really weird thing to have a *judge* with a birth narrative, I'll explain it. Then in 14 and 15, he has his *ministry to* *Timnah* and at the very end of that says, "*And Samson judged Israel 20 years*."

Then you have 16, which is *ministry to Gaza*. That's the whole *Samson* and *Delilah* thing and where he stays with the prostitute, takes the gates, and then destroys their temple. It says, "*And then Samson judged Israel for 20 years*." So, there are *two judge narratives*. He judged Israel for 20 years, but they divided it into *two accounts*, so it's just like they do here. So, you've got a *double* one there.

One of the things I argue is that this is the way, which is what they're trying to do. Well, you've got *one* minor judge here, *two* minor judges here, and *three* minor judges here. Each of these minor judges are marking climactic figures.

*Deborah/Barak* is the first climactic one, then *Jephthah* heightens the issue because they've got some serious stuff going on at the end there that's difficult to think about. Then down here, we've got the *Samson* judge narrative, where the judge actually dies delivering Israel. His greatest active deliverance occurs in his death where it says, "*And in his death, he killed more Philistines than in his life.*" You can already begin to hear *the* *gospel* *promised* in that one.

So that's the *structure*, it's pretty cool. It's the *un-creation* of Israel. Bob calls it, the *Canaanization* of Israel, which is true. They're becoming more and more like Canaan. So, they're being *uncreated*. They start out here, remember, relative like *Judah* is conquering the land, the generation of *Joshua* is still there. *Joshua* is mentioned twice in one and two. Both *introductions* begin with the statement that *Joshua is dead*. Then by the end, in these two *conclusions*, so this is everything's kind of *good* right now because Joshua's just died, but this is *bad, bad, bad*. In 19, 20, and 21, that's the whole concubine, and the raping of the concubine in Gibeah. Then the Levite goes back, cuts her up into 12 pieces, sends them out, and all of Israel is to come and wage war against them. And it's at the Lord's command, to wage holy war on them. There's a lot of life lost there.

If you think about it, it's an amazing story in some sense, because this one man, whose wife left him, went to get her. They were coming home, she got killed, and he went to war for her. Does that make sense? It's very romantic. It's your favorite Valentine's story? Would you wage war in the world if they beat me up or something like that? So, it's the *un-creation* of Israel.

So, this is how I like to think about it because, again, sometimes people get really excited about seeing *chiasms*, and all of a sudden they see one on every page of scripture, so I understand this may be overly box oriented for me, but I don't think it is, I think I've seen it only three times in scripture so far. I've seen this in *creation*, this here in *Judges*, and I've seen it in the *Canon*. I'm not surprised by it though, because that's how *typology* works. I've seen it in the *tabernacle*, I've seen it in the *temple*, I've seen it in *Ezekiel's vision of the temple*, I've in it in the *apocalypse's vision of the temple*, they're all the same. Does that make sense? With slight modifications and so, this is just an easy way to think about it.

Basically, chapter 1, Israel is having a hard time possessing the land. Chapter 2, God's raising up *judges* because they're unfaithful and they're being sold into the hand of their oppressors. They're worshiping foreign gods, so they're being subjugated by the nation that they're submitting to, which is not good, they're not supposed to do that. Chapter 3 is the beginning of the raising up of judges. *Othniel is the paradigm judge*. It's a no-frills judgeship. Chapter 3:7-11, he's the shortest of the minor judges. It's *16 contiguous independent clauses* without any background, foreground, or subordinate clauses. It's just like, this happened, this, it's the most boring story in the world.

But what it does is, it *sets the standard*, it becomes the *paradigm* to which all the other judges are to be viewed because it has *seven* parts. Each *judgeship* thing has *7 parts*. Some of them have *6* or *5* or they tweak on it but the vast majority of it stays the same.

So, here's what it is, number 1, *Israel does evil in the eyes of the Lord, idolatry*. Number 2, *Yahweh sells or gives Israel into the hands of oppressors*. There are two verbs there, one is “*to sell*”, one is “*to give*”. So, they *sell out* Yahweh, He *sells* them into the hand of their enemies. Number 3, *Israel cries out for help*. Number 4, *Yahweh raises up a deliverer, savior, judge*. So, he can be called, the Hebrew word for *deliverer* is *moshiya* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) and *to save*, *yasha* (יָשַׁע). These are *moshia’s*, (*saviors*), and *Yahsha's* (*deliverers*). They actually use the verb *Shofetim* (שֹׁפְטִים).

**B. Characteristics of the Judges** (29:08):

In fact, you can think of the *judge* as having 3 characteristic features about them.

(1) they *judge*, or *bring judgment*.

(2) they *save* or *deliver*.

(3), they *have the spirit*.

Those are 3 qualities of a *judge*. They *judge* or *bring judgment*, they *save*, they *deliver*,…

(4) … and they *have the spirit to do so*.

(5) *Yahweh delivers as people, with the judge serving as the instrument of salvation*.

(6) *the land has rest, for X amount of years*.

(7) *the judge dies*.

So,

(1) the people do evil.

(2) Yahweh sells or gives them over.

(3) Israel cries out after a certain amount of years of oppression, the dates are different.

(4) Yahweh raises up the savior or a judge.

(5) Yahweh delivers.

(6) the land has rest.

(7) the judge dies.

**C. Major Judges** (29:58):

What I'm going to do is I'm going to go through the other *6 major judges* quickly and then I'm just going to show you how we can tackle some of the more difficult things like with *Jephthah* and *Samson*. I can't go through every difficulty in this time, I teach a course on this book for a whole semester, so it's a lot. So, I'm trying to jam 40 hours into 30 or 45 minutes.

**Ehud** delivers Israel from Moab, king of Eglon. *Eglon* means “*little cow*”. Now, that's important because *Israel's worshiping those gods* and it takes us back to the *golden calf* episode. *You can take* *Israel out of the golden calf* scene but *you can't get the golden calf out of Israel*. So, they're worshiping *Eglon* and he's a really fat dude. He has a *word from the Lord* for that king and it's the *sword of the Lord*. Remember he makes a sword, he's a lefthanded dude. The *Benjaminites* were lefthanded warriors, they were excellent warriors. We see at the end of the book; they're killing all these Israelites because they're so skilled. It doesn't say he's *lefthanded*, it says he's *bound in the right hand*, meaning they were trained to fight lefthanded. So, he's a lefthanded assassin.

So, he makes a sword, puts it on his other arm and he says, "*Oh, Eglon, I have a word from the Lord for you*." They get together secretly and he shoves that sword all the way in. The fat covers over the hilt, the dung comes out, he dies, and he escapes. Then they all go and kill all the land. It says all of his words are real fat too and they just slaughter them. So, this is a terrific story…

So, ***Deborah*** and ***Barak*** deliver Israel from the *Canaanites* in a way that recalls the Red Sea deliverance from Israel. *Horses*, *chariots*, *judgment by water*, *song of commemoration*, *double judgment narrative*. So, remember just like *Moses* and *Miriam* sing a song after the Red Sea, so *Deborah* and *Barack* sing a song after the Red Sea and recounts that.

So, when you're thinking about that, when you're reading the *Deborah/Barak* thing, remember it's the Lord saving and delivering. *Barak* is willing to go and not have it credited to him, which people say he lacked faith or was a coward, but he didn't need the glory. We see *Jael* at the end killing his *Sisera* by jamming a stake through his head and then hammering it down, crushing the head of the serpent. So, all these great things.

**Gideon** delivers Israel from the *Midianites*. *Gideon* more than any other judge in the *Book of Judges* is styled as a second Moses figure, his *calling*, and everything. There are the *fleece signs*, we could talk about that later. They are not to determine God's will for your life, just so you know, they're not to do that. Don't let them do that, I'm just warning. You go get Bob's commentary, he'll tell you exactly how to use them in three years. But until then, don't set out a fleece, it's entirely wrong.

What's amazing about *Gideon*, by the way, in his *calling*, "*I'll be with you*," and the Lord tells him how *he'll be with him* *as a mighty man of war.* He says, "*Go unleash your strength*." What's Gideon's strength? The fact that *the Lord is* *with him* *as the mighty man of war*. You can see it, and it's mistranslated in English so we have to figure that out, but we have to have Bill do that on interview committee again. It's got a very unique statement, with all the other judges. The Spirit comes on the *judges*, but with *Gideon*, it says, *the Lord put on Gideon and went down to destroy and defeat*. So, he is like wearing a Gideon jacket and Gideon's the one who's... They try to make him king and he says, "*I won't rule over you, my son won't rule over you, Yahweh rules over you*." So, there's this famous statement Gideon is saying, "*The Lord is your king, baby, I'm just the instrument*." It's an amazing story.

**Jephthah**, is the rejected son of a concubine. They force him out, so he won't have any inheritance with him. He's got 70 brothers, think about that. They call him back to deliver and he delivers. And he's a diplomat, he doesn't want to fight. He comes and says, *"Hey, this is our land, you don't need to take it*." They say, "*Oh no, it's our land*." Then he rehearses the history of Israel in a way that's just remarkable that many of us probably couldn't do in terms of detail.

So, he was in the land of Tob, like going to Sunday School all the time, so he had it in his brain. He delivers, but he makes his *vow* and everyone says it's a foolish *vow* because he ended up having to kill his daughter. So, they impugn his character. We will come back and I'll show you he did not kill his daughter. The *vow* wasn't rash, the *vow* was made under the control of the Spirit, it says “*the spirit came on him and he made a vow*”.

So, if you're going to impugn his *vow*, you're going to impugn the Spirit coming on him to do this stuff. Well, I'll just tell you right now, what you'll see, is that the language is not of *death*, but of *virginity*. She'll never be *married*, she'll be given to something like *full-time temple service*, which we knew happened back then.

You can see, I'll just read it to you real quick and then we'll spend more time on Samson. It's at the end of Judges 11, where it says *Jephthah's tragic vow*. They always set you up for it in the *headings*, those *headings are not original to the text*.

It says, “*then the spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead. And from Mizpah of Gilead, he passed on the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, if you'll give the Ammonites into my hand, whatever comes out of my house, or whoever comes out of my house when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord's and I'll offer it up as a burnt offering*."

Now he probably didn't imagine that a goat or a dog was going to run out of his house. When men came home from war, the women went out to dance. We see that with *David*, we see that earlier in the *Gideon* narrative and the *Deborah/Barak* narrative too. They're talking about the men coming out and dancing. So, he probably thought one of the women of his household would come out, could have been one of the servants or something like that, but happened to be his daughter.

*Then, Jephthah came home to Mizpah, and behold, his daughter came out with tambourines and with dancing shoes. She was his only child*, [you see that, *only child*?]

What's interesting about out that, the word appears only in a couple of other places, and it's the same designation applied to *Isaac* in Genesis 22. It's the *same sacrifice*, the *whole burnt offering*. We know offerings can be *metaphorical*, like in Romans 12, “*therefore offer your bodies up as a living sacrifice*”. So, we know that's possible.

Then it says, *for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, cannot take my vow back*. She said to him, "*My father, you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has got out of your mouth now that Lord has avenged you on your enemies, the Ammonites*."

So, if it was *death*, which one of you would've said that? It would've been the big, oh, no. Then she says, strategically, she said to her father, "*Let this thing be done for me, leave me alone for two months, that I may go up and down on the mountains and weep, for my virginity, not for my life, my virginity and let my companions go with me*."

Now, what I was thinking initially was, she wanted a 3-month head start running out of town so she can avoid being *executed*, that's the thing. But no, she's weeping for the *virginity*.

Then it says, “*and he said go, then he sent her away for two months, and she departed, she and her companions and wept for her virginity on the mountains*”. Virginity again. At the end of two months, she returned to her father who did with her according to his vow that he had made. Then it says in Hebrew, *that is,* *she never knew a man*, and it became a custom in Israel. They're missing that *that* *is* in English. It just says here *she never knew a man*, but it's very important *that*. It says he did to her exactly what he had *vowed*, *that is*, *she didn't know a man*.

So never once is *death* mentioned here, but three times, four times, *virginity* is mentioned. So that's the defense of that, you can get more of that in a couple of other places, but just at least now we're trying to save time by just doing that a little bit.

**Samson** is the sixth, final, and climactic judge in the *Book of Judges*. He is raised up by the Lord to deliver Israel from the *Philistines*.

His account begins with a *special birth narrative* that is almost identical to the *birth narrative* of *John the Baptist*. In fact, the New Testament authors, shape the *birth narrative* of *John the Baptist* after *Samson*. Judges 13, a *birth narrative*, an angel Lord appears to the parents who says, "*You're going to have a child*." The parents struggle to believe. The offer goes up and they say, "*Oh, that was the Lord*." They're afraid that they're going to die. Then the commission of the child is told, *he's going to begin to save Israel from the Philistines. He's going to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the mothers*. Then it says *and the Spirit of the Lord, unstirred him*, just like *John the Baptist*, and stuff like that.

There are *7 birth narratives* in the Bible, *7 birth narratives* in the Bible. They're *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Esau*, the *12 patriarchs*, all with fertility problems. Then there's *Samson*, *Samuel*, *John the Baptist*, and *Jesus*. And they all share similar traits and they're all covenant officials.

In fact, let's think of it this way too, there are usually *two different operating systems* going on here, either it's the *preservation of the seed*, like with *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and the *patriarchs*, or *it's a deliverer to save*, like *Samson*, *Samuel*, *John the Baptist*, something like that. Only *Jesus* is *both* of those things. Only *Jesus* is the *promised seed* and the *promised savior* in one. So, you can see how those seven, surprise, surprise, *birth narratives*, climax in *Jesus*. It's an amazing thing.

Both *Samson* and *John the Baptist*, begin a ministry that will be completed by someone else. *Samson* begins to save Israel from the Philistines, *David* finishes it. *John the Baptist* begins to do the baptism and calling people home, *Jesus* finishes it. Stages in two, right?

So, *Samson* is *David's* forerunner, just like *John the Baptist* is *Jesus'* forerunner. They both have *birth narratives*, they're both *moved by the spirit*, they're the only two guys in the Bible, *Nazarites for life*. They both *eat honey*. Isn’t that weird that there's only three people in the Bible who eat honey? They both *eat honey*, *Jonathan's* the other one. They're both *betrayed by women under death*. So, you can see how the New Testament authors are modeling *John the Baptist's* ministry and career after *Samson*. That's an amazing thing to me, *patterns, patterns*.

He goes down to Timnah, sees a woman there, and that event provokes controversy. He ends up killing a lot of people there in Timnah, in the fields, and destroying their fields, which he's born to do. Samson's job description was to be a Philistine assassin and he did it. He's the only judge who does it without any armies, all alone. It says when he goes down there, because his parents were saying, "*Hey, don't marry a Philistine girl, marry a good Jewish girl*." It says, "*His parents did not know that this is from the Lord. Because he, that his Lord, was seeking opportunity against the Philistines*”. So again, the text tells you how to read it. I know I'm going fast, but I'm trying to at least steer your boat, in a slightly different direction, you can arrive later.

In the next one, you've got the whole *Samson* and *Delilah* thing. In verses 1-3 of chapter 16, you can go to chapter 16, it says that Samson went to Gaza, slept with a prostitute, got up in the middle of the night, took the gates and the doors, which, for a fortified city, would've been thousands and thousands of pounds and marched 40 miles to Hebron which is opposite. That's CrossFit baby.

Now, he could not have done that without the empowering of Spirit. Samson was not a muscle-bound dude. If he were a big muscle-bound like jacked dude, then Delilah would've known the secret of his strength. He was probably nerdy. He was always doing riddles and getting people in trouble like that. He's probably like one of those Eddie Haskell figures in the past. So, you have to think of it this way, he wasn't big and jacked. He was a normal guy who actually looked weird because he was a Nazarite for life, which means you can never cut your hair. So, he looked like a crazy man, that's what he looked like, a skinny, crazy man.

People often impugn Samson's night with the prostitute there saying that's one of the things, he's a womanizer like, "*Oh, he wanted this Timnite girl and as soon as she dies, he has to go to the prostitute's house*." It never says in the text here, and I've actually written a little article on this a long time ago in ministry and leadership, but I probably can't find it. It says there, Samson went to Gaza and there he saw a prostitute and he went into her. That's kind of a wink, wink thing.

People always assume, some translations say, *and he slept with her*. Backtrack, one, the exact same expression occurs in the *Jael* narrative. It's when *Barak* sees *Jephthah* and goes into the tent and it says *he went in to her tent*. They add the word *tent*, which is not in Hebrew, just so you know, that there wasn't any illicit activity going on. The same word is actually used of the *two spies* that go to Jericho to spy it out. *They went in* *there* and actually, there's more sexually explicit language in that account than there is in the *Samson* one.

What was *Samson* doing in Gaza staying with the prostitute? The same thing the *two spies* were doing in the Joshua account, *spying out the city* because he had to take it. That was his job, he's a Philistine assassin. He did it by taking the city gates. That's the first thing you do when you sack a city. You tear down its gates, so you have access and then you destroy its temple. That's what he does in the next scene.

So, it's this whole picture of *Yahweh's faithfulness*. In fact, in the *patriarchal narratives*, both to *Abraham* and *Rebecca*, part of the patriarchal promises say that *you'll possess the gates of your enemies*. So, in this event, God is reminding us through Samson, that *he's still faithful to his promises even though they're being oppressed by the Philistines*. So, there's no illicit activity going on there unless you read it into it.

Prostitutes weren't just prostitutes, they also kept inns. The only other option was to go to the middle of the city and stay in the gate or stay in the city square until an elder would come and say, "*Where are you from? What are you doing? Come stay with me*." Well, he was there to wage war against him, not to have fellowship with them. It's what gets the *Levite* in trouble later on, yeah.

Then, it just says *he loves this woman, Delilah*. Delilah deceives him, he loses his powers, and he's blinded. Now he's totally weak and blind, he's been humiliated and subjugated in the Philistine temple, just like the *Ark of the Covenant* will be later when they go to the temple of Dagon. When he's in the temple, *he achieves his greatest deliverance in his death*. It says, and I'm going to read this to you here and then we'll be done because it'll get us to *the* *gospel promise beforehand* here.

Barry Webb's done a lot of work on the *Book of Judges* and he wrote a serious reading of the Samson story, part of this thing in *Reformed Theological Review*. Webb does not take my positive view of the judges. Even though he says this about Samson, "*His birth is announced beforehand by an angel, his conception is miraculous, he's rejected by his own people, its leaders bind him and hand him over to the pagan overlords. His saving work is consummated in his death, a death in which he brings down Dagon and lays the foundation for deliverance to be more fully manifested in the future.*"

In other words, here in this most unlikely figure, we see possibly, more clearly than anywhere else in the Old Testament, the shape of things to come. He says, "*Too bad, he's such a bad guy*." What's interesting then too, *his family comes and brings him back and buries him*, which means they were conceiving it as *honorable*, not *shameful*, what had happened there.

**IV. The Gospel Promised Beforehand** (45:23):

The *Judges* form part of that *great cloud of witnesses* that call us to fix our eyes on *Jesus*, the author, and perfector of our faith. They are *witnesses* of what is to come. So just as *Jesus* had to lay down His life to achieve His greatest victory, we see that happening in *Samson*. Just as *God* had to give up His one and only son in order to achieve His greatest victory, we see that in *Jephthah*. With *Gideon*, it cost him all 70 of his sons, his whole family. So, we see that he had to give up his whole family for that.

So, we can see he's right, these are *images* and *shadows* of things to come. The *Book of Judges* is a remarkable book that 6 times over causes you to fix your eyes on *Jesus*.

It's also remarkable that, hey, if I were going to mention some of the *Judges* in the hall of fame, faith thing in Hebrews 11, I might do *Othniel*, *Ehud*, and maybe *Deborah*. But it happens to be these four guys right here, [*Barak, Gideon, Jephtha* and *Samson*] that are the most maligned in modern commentaries. So, *be as shrewd as vipers and as innocent as doves* when it comes to this business, all right?

**Discovering the Gospel in Judges – Tim Keller**

Gospel in Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olwO8NHIdm0>

I mean right there is the essence of it… God says *I'm never ever…* he says *I will never break my Covenant with you, but you're breaking your Covenant with me*… So, here's the question: will God *unconditionally* love the people even though they disobeyed him or will he punish them and disavow them and destroy them because he's dissipative? In other words, is the Covenant that God made with the children of Israel *conditional* or *unconditional*? Is it one of *unconditional love* or is it *conditioned on their obedience*?

So, we're looking at the *gospel* in every single book of the Bible. We're looking at each book of the Bible and asking… *what is this about… what is this book about*, and then secondly *how does this book contribute*

*to the storyline of the Bible*… *how does it move the storyline along*, number three *how does it point to the gospel of grace* and lastly *how does it point to Jesus himself*?

So, now we get to the *Book of Judges* and um… the *Book of Judges* comes after the *conquest,* that is to say after the children of Israel had moved into the promised land and they had taken it up as their as their land and they had developed a society. And as we have said all the way from the *Book of Genesis* to here, the thing that has driven the biblical storyline is *the* *promise to Abraham*… that his descendants would become a great nation, they would own the land and therefore become an actual society, and that they would be a witness to the Nations by the way in which they uh… they've been witness to the glory of God by the way in which they lived in in that land.

And up until the end of the *Book of Joshua* it looks great; we have God fulfilling his promise, uh he um brings them out of Egypt, he grows them into a great nation in Egypt, he brings them out of Egypt in exodus, he gives them the law and the Tabernacle, he gives them the law that they have to obey, and the Tabernacle with the sacrifices for uh forgiveness, when they disobey, he brings them through the Wilderness, an entire generation dies off because they're really unwilling to go into the promised land and take it. But the second generation goes in, they're given a final uh statement from Moses about how to live there, Joshua leads them in pretty successfully, and that's how the *Book of Joshua* ends. It looks like… *hey we did it*… *the promises have been fulfilled*… and it looks like *salvation is around the corner* *because the world is going to see who God is,* *and the whole world is going to turn to God because of the way in which Israel lives in the land*.

And the *Book of Judges* starts a whole new series I believe, a whole new chapter in the in the storyline of the Bible. *Judges, 1-2 Samuel*, *1-2 Kings*, *1-2 Chronicles,* uh shows that… no, the children of Israel are not going to live the way they should in the land… they are not going to be able to actually be the witness of the Nations that they should be.

Now, it starts here in the *Book of Judges* because the *Book of Judges* can be outlined as a series of cycles of *decline, revival* and then *deeper decline* and *revival* and then *deeper decline* and *revival*. That's how you can understand it. In fact, you could outline the *Book of Judges* by verses 1-3… talks about the *cycle* and then after that it goes through these cycles all from chapters 4-16 and then into 17-21. I'll get to it in a minute. It shows how deeply the children of Israel had declined spiritually in the land… that they were supposed to take a possession of and build a god-honoring society. Every time the children of Israel fall into idolatry, then that leads to a kind of slavery. then they cry out and God sends them a judge or a deliverer, a savior who saves them, but then after that they go into an even deeper decline.

And this happens through a whole series of Judges: *Othniel*, *Ehud*, *Shamgar* *Deborah* and *Barak*, *Abimelech*, *Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Gideon, Elon, Abdon, Sampson*. There's a whole slew of these people. And in the beginning, *Othniel* for example and *Deborah* are particularly good judges, but as you go along, you'll see that every time that there's *idolatry, slavery, decline, crying out,* *a revival with a deliverer*… every time the deliverer gets more and more flawed. When you get to *Jephthah*, when you get to *Samson* (Samson's a mess and I won't go into much more detail… I mean he's famous of course because of his strength but read him, he is an absolute mess).

And so what's happening is… all through the *Book of Judges* is becoming very, very clear, that something else is going to have to happen or Israel is just going to be a complete failure.

There's two places where the *Book of Judges* says this Judges chapter 17 and chapter 21 says… *there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes*. And what that is saying is… people were not going to follow the law of God the way they were living in Israel at that time, which was tribally, which was without a central monarchy, without a central King, and so the *Book of Judges* is saying… we're going to have to get something, because otherwise, the people are just going to keep declining into greater sin, paganism, idolatry, etc. So, Judges is at the beginning of a new part of the Bible in which it says… unless there's some kind of divine intervention there's no way that the promise is going to be fulfilled, that Israel will be a light to the Nations, and Israel be able to bring Salvation.

It's interesting, by the way, that the biblical storyline is really driven ahead not only through *Judges* but through the rest of the next few books by a tension that is perfectly put together in Judges chapter 2 verse 1… where God says… *I will never break my Covenant with you, yet you have disobeyed me*… and then he says *Why have you done this? Now I will not drive the people out before you and they will become snares for you*. I mean right there is the essence of it. God says *I'm never ever*… he *says, I will never break my Covenant with you, but you're breaking your Covenant with me*.

So here's the question… will God unconditionally love the people, even though they disobeyed him, or will he punish them, and disavow them, and destroy them, because he's dissipated? In other words… is the Covenant that God made with the children of Israel *conditional* or *unconditional*? Is it one of unconditional love or is it conditioned on their obedience? And what's interesting is… the *Book of Judges* never resolves that question. And as we're going to see, it's not resolved throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

It's very easy to say… *well God basically just loves us* … that's the liberal view… or some people say… *no, no unless you obey God is going to destroy you*, that's the conservative view. But the *Book of Judges* does not take the liberal or the conservative view. In fact, the rest of the Old Testament leaves us in a lot of tension… is the Covenant *conditional* meaning you have to obey, or is it *unconditional* meaning God's just going to love us anyway? And that answer is never given until we get to the cross where we actually see that Jesus Christ obeyed God, fulfilled the Covenant perfectly, so that God could love us unconditionally. So, it starts right here… and *Judges*, you know begins the a chapter.

Let me just talk about as we've already talked in a way about the *principle of Grace*, because if you take a look at *Samson* and Jephthah, all these, all these… *Gideon* even, *Gideon* is kind of a wreck too… he's good and bad. Basically, what you see is this… here's to me a *theme of Judges*… *God relentlessly offers his grace to people who do not deserve it, who do not seek it, and never appreciate it, even after they've been saved by it*… oh, you see that again and again in the *Book of Judges*. So, it's really is pointing forward to God's grace even though it doesn't really explain how God can be so gracious to us. If he's a holy God, how can he do that it's never resolved in the *Book of Judges*?

But here's the other thing, to say two things… when you get to the very end of the *Book of Judges* it says it gives you a terrible, terrible story… it's about a Levite who has a concubine, which is a second class wife frankly, and he's in a town, and the people come and try to uh… the nasty people in the town uh… and this is a town I guess in the *tribe of* *Benjamin*… they come and they try to uh rape him. And what he does is, he sends his wife outside so they can rape her and they rape her and they kill her. And when he finds her dead the next morning, he goes home he cuts her into pieces, sends them to all the other 12 tribes, and says… *look at what a horrible thing has been done*. And all the other tribes uh… there's a civil war between *Benjamin* and the rest of the uh… children of Israel. But you know, the Levite doesn't explain how he sacrificed his wife to save his own skin, and it's just a terrible ending. And that's the way the *Book of Judges* ends, and it's really… and then it finally says… *there was no king in Israel… everybody that was right in his own eyes*.

And what it was saying is… *look, how bad things are… unless we get a king, we're never really going to be okay*. But of course, we know that even after God gives them a king that won't be enough either… we're going to have to have a greater King which is Jesus himself. So, there's a sense in which *Judges* is pointing to Jesus the great king.

But let me just suggest one other thing… when you read the end of *Judges* and you say… *why in the world is this even in the Bible*… *this is terrible…* *this man sacrifices his wife to save his skin and then uses her as an excuse for a civil war*… *this is just terrible*… how can you, when you look at he's such a terrible husband, how can you not think about the true husband Jesus Christ? He didn't sacrifice us in order to save his skin, he sacrificed his skin in order to save us. Jesus is the true husband that the terrible husband at the end of the *Book of Judges* points to. Jesus is the real judge, the real deliverer that the bad delivers like *Samson* and *Jephthah* point to, and the good deliverers like *Deborah* and *Othniel* point to. He's the true judge, he's the true deliverer, he's the true husband, he's the true king, and without him there is no hope. And that's what the *Book of Judges* says, and yet there's plenty of hope because we have Jesus Christ. So, Judges is pointing forward to that, and that's good news! Thank you.