

Judges

In a word: Self-Destruction

In a sentence: This book shows that despite all the promises Yahweh kept, the people of Israel were utterly unfaithful, loved other Gods, and spiraled into the depths of sin- they need a king who can bring them out of this mess and teach them to love Yahweh.

Whole Bible Themes

• Land

- In Judges the land promises features large primarily because the places where Israel failed to faithfully drive out the Canaanites lead to massive sin and idolatry. God will keep his promise despite their brokenness, but there is deep wickedness among Israel that pollutes the land and will (according to Deuteronomy) lead one day to their exile.

• Dwelling/Temple/Relationship

- As we move further geographically from Judah we move further into the exile of separation from Yahweh- by the end of the book there is an utter disregard for Yahweh and ignorance of him.

• Royal Priesthood, Image of God & Redemption

- This book presents perhaps better than any other the absolute depth of sin, how it spreads and infects and how it destroys God's image in humanity. The hope of this book is that a king can come who can stop the bleeding (spiritually speaking).
- Canaan characterized by idolatry that leads to sexual sin, child sacrifice, and violence and this is exactly what Israel devolves into.

• Royal Seed & War of the Seeds

• Blessing/God is With Us/God Fights for Us

- When the people will simply trust Yahweh and lean on him, he is with them and fights for them, but whenever they forget him or trust in themselves he is against them- just as he promised.

• Covenant & Faith

• A Few Applications

- 1. Israel is no better than the nations which surround it- they need a new heart.
- 2. God is merciful and fights for his people even when they forget him.
- 3. (especially in 17–21) Israel's spiritual waywardness might be mitigated through a faithful king who could guide the nation to love and obey Yahweh.

Structure

- starts with death of Joshua and tells of Israel's utter failure-- they become **just like Canaan**
- **This book is structured more by geography than chronology- it moves further and further away from Judah/Jerusalem.**
- 1-2 setting stage - canaanites not fully driven out, so they just adopted the canaanite practices. This led to a cycle of judges and sin and rescue.
- 3- 16 growing corruption (6 main judges, progressively worse)
 - Gideon, starts great, but spirals real fast
 - 10-12 Jephthah- military thug, they ask him for help because he's known for winning battles-- but he is so ignorant of Yahweh he offers to sacrifice his daughter which is what Molech would have wanted not Yahweh..also where are the elders to stop this foolish vow as the law called for?!
 - 13-16 Samson is the worst..life begins looking like he'll be different and devoted, but no... he is the anti-Levite.
 - However, God continues to carry his people through Spirit empowerment.---
- 17-21 total corruption (from begging in?)
 - 17-18- private priest private temple private idol, dan kills peaceful city-- might makes right
 - 19-21- sexual violence that leads to first civil war
- Israel had no king- stage is set for a wise king who can bring order and righteousness.
- the book is organized geographically not chronologically

Exegetical Notes

- Introduction (1:1-3:6)
 - Chapter 1
 - 1:1- the book starts by setting up the exact problem that is going to plague the rest of the book- who is going to lead them?? Israel needs a king because with no king, everyone does what is right in their own eyes.
 - 1:1 this is beginning the exact same way as Joshua but there is no Joshua to take the place to be the next leader.
 - 1:2 Note that Judah is the tribe that is supposed to be associated with kingship and when Judah is in the front things are going to go well
 - 1:16- note Moses's father in law's family seem to be believers and experience the blessing promised to those who trust in the God of Israel
 - 1:21 this is the beginning of a series of very ominous notes- Israel is successful but not fully obedient and thus problems begin to arise.
 - 1:24-26 this is meant to be a bit of an anti-Rahab story, again an ominous note- Rahab believed but this guy leaves the people of Yahweh and rebuilds his old city instead of joining them like Rahab did.
 - 1:28 this will become a refrain "but they did not drive them out completely" and soon major issues will come from this failure to obey Yahweh.

- The rest of chapter one develops the ominous notes much further and simply lists all the unconquered areas. Whereas things looked mostly good within Joshua's lifetime, the people have received the land but through their unfaithfulness they are now unable to actually claim what the Lord has given them.
- Chapter 2
 - 2:1-6- There are a bunch of mini quotes from Genesis 3 here that basically show Israel going through a new Fall- "what is this you have done" "bring forth thorns" "angel of the lord" -- Israel is a failure to be a kingdom of priests and be a new restart of humanity
 - 2:7 the ominous notes continue in this introductory section - they served the Lord "all the days of Joshua" with the unspoken implication that once Joshua died, things went downhill.
 - 2:10 this is the preliminary death knell "a generation who did not know the lord or the work he had done"
 - 2:11-12 and...immediately they commit adultery (spiritually)- this is exactly what Joshua said would happen even though the people said "we will serve Yahweh!!!"
 - 2:14 the language of "sold" is supposed to echo the Exodus- their disobedience is going to reverse the Exodus and send them into slavery again.
 - 2:15 "hand of the lord"- this phrase will come up over and over and was used first to speak about the plagues of Exodus but now God's hand is against Israel
 - 2:16-23 **This is going to be the paradigm of the book**- Israel does not love Yahweh, they are basically sent back to "Egypt" (slavery to pagan nations), they cry out, God raises up a judge, they are rescued, cycle starts again.
 - Some important things to keep in mind:
 - this cycle will be a downward spiral, note the language in verse 19 "whenever a judge died they turned back and were worse than their fathers".
 - the judges often overlap and are basically leaders of sections of Israel and never the whole nation. The whole period covers about 300 years.
 - By using language linked to Egypt (like "afflict" and "oppressed" v.18) the author is trying to make a two profound theological points: first, when Israel breaks the covenant God sends them figuratively "back to Egypt"- this will be very important as the OT develops and secondly; the pattern of Israel is actually one long downward spiral beginning with the golden calf- they are basically like a wife who committed adultery on her wedding night and then it just keeps getting worse and worse...the point is to highlight that the human heart is broken and needs saving and that the Law is not capable of truly changing the people.
- Chapter 3

- 3:5-6 this is super ominous because it is exactly what Moses and Joshua warned would happen if they mixed in with the Canaanites.
- 3:7 This is the beginning of a series of section headings that begin "the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord"
- 3:9 Othniel is the gold standard of judges, nothing bad is said of him, he's from the tribe of Judah which is the tribe which should be ruling, and it's all very downhill from here.
- Section I (3:6-17)
 - 6 major judges, 6 minor judges. 2 sets of 3 of the big ones- - meant to show that the sin has permeated all of Israel
 - Judge 1- Othniel (3:7-11)
 - 3:8 note they serve 8 years, in Judge 2 they serve 18, and 3 they serve 20 (it gets worse and worse)
 - 3:10- God gives this massive king into the hand of some tiny judge- God fights for his people.
 - Judge 2-Ehud (3:12-)
 - The entire story here has lots of sexual overtones and the theological point is actually to use comedy to show that Eglon's sexual rebellion leads to his death.
 - 3:12 there is some wordplay going on here- Eglon means little calf and we find out that Eglon is a very fat man, so there is humor there, but also we see that they people "served"(same word for worship) Eglon and our minds should be stirred when we hear they "worshipped the little calf" and think back to their unfaithfulness in Exodus 32.
 - 3:15- more word play here- he is the son of the right handers, but he uses his left hand- and the idea is probably that he had skill in his left hand that would allow him to surprise people- it may also mean he is handicapped.
 - 3:15 note he is a Benjamin, we are beginning to move away from Judah, and things are beginning to descend into chaos.
 - 3:16 the words for two edges is actually two mouths in hebrew- more wordplay- the two mouths will go into and "eat up" the fat "little calf"
 - 3:20 probably more wordplay here too- the "two mouthed sword" has a message for the king.
 - 3:26 the idols are dead just like the king and they can't do anything
 - 3:29 "strong" is actually "fat" like the king.
 - Notes on sexual overtones
 - -not everyone agrees on the sexual overtones but I think they are there, and they are more obvious in Hebrew though as you mentioned still visible in english -Ehud is described in Navy Seal like terms- Benjamin is a fighting tribe, left-handed is a play on the fact that ben-

jamin means "son of my right hand"- but this oddity is actually a James Bond like stealth power. Then he "makes for himself" a sword. The idea being that they didn't have swords since they were serving a foreign king and also the style of sword he makes is shorter and more "spy-like" than normal - adding to the James Bond/navy seal image, - some commentators see a sexual image in a "short sword" that he "thrusts" into Eglon— I'm not totally sure here, might be a stretch - Eglon means fat little calf and his description as fat is both supposed to be contrasted with Leviticus "all fat is the Lord's" but also supposed to picture him as "soft" basically the antithesis of Ehud's masculinity - the fact the Ehud comes with a "secret message" suggests that maybe he knows Eglon commonly accepts "secret messages" from other men..this is confirmed when Eglon has him come alone into the chamber to deliver the message. This is totally crazy- you wouldn't ever let your king be alone with another dignitary- because they might get assassinated! But it seems that this was a somewhat common practice because the servants allow it- also Eglon's location is described with words that aren't for official business but more like personal chambers. -the "thrusting" of the sword is suggestive -some commentators say the language of relieving himself can refer to either going to the bathroom or sexual activity so there's a play there. -I also read that its supposed to be hilarious to the Hebrew readers that these servants are caught in such a tricky spot by their king's sin- basically they need to go in to check on him but they won't because they are embarrassed to (or have been commanded not to) and this tension is exactly what allows Ehud to escape. So basically the sexual deviance and fatness are exactly what lead to this kings downfall. -I also think there is intentional literary arrangement to have this at the beginning but then by the end of the book Israel has become Sodom and Gomorrah themselves and fall into much worse sexual deviance

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- Minor Judge 1- Shamgar (he is potentially a sojourner- using a tiny non-weapon, God rescuing weak people)
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- Chapter 4
 - Judge 3- Deborah (she evidences a feminine attitude and suggests that her rule is a shame to the men of the nation)
 - this chapter is a chiasm and the middle is v14 "the Lord goes out before you"
 - 4:3 the slavery time. is extending
 - 4:3 chariots are like tanks and this is a very powerful army

- 4:4- note the language is not "raised up" here- the judges cycle is beginning to break down- might be suggesting you to wonder, "where are the men?"
- 4:8- this is an exact copy of what Moses says in Exodus 33- I think this is negative because he should be saying it to Yahweh but he says it to Deborah-- BUT despite Barak's weakness of faith he is still mentioned in Hebrews 11 as one who does have faith
- 4:9 Deborah is a complementarian
- 4:11 this is a scene change- and this guy is part of Moses' father in law's family
- 4:19-20 she is being described in motherly terms
- 4:21 God uses unlikely people and things to defeat the seed of the serpent
- Chapter 5
 - 5:2 verses 2 and 9 are repeated
 - 5:6 it is not a safe time in Israel right now
 - This passage is worth studying in detail and working through to get a more fleshed out idea of the previous chapter.
- Chapter 6
 - 6:1-10 this echoes Genesis 14 where Abraham rescues Lot with the Amalekites and Midianites
 - 6:5 this is a reversal to when Israel is described as multiplying in the land back in Exodus
 - 6:7-10 note the contrast- he rescued them in Egypt but not they have not obeyed and therefore the exodus will be reversed
 - 6:8 the fact that the lord raises up a prophet is a reminder that the military defeat isn't the main issue- but their sinful love of false God's
 - 6:7-10 the Exodus terms are meant to set us up to think about Gideon in terms of a new exodus
 - Judge 4- Gideon- we are now in the second set of three judges
 - 6:11 winepress is in a low spot, but the you don't want to beat wheat out here...he is hiding from the midianites...he is not very courageous
 - 6:12 this is a hilarious greeting- Gideon is fearfully hiding down in the winepress
 - 6:13 Gideon has some faith and humility (v15)
 - 6:21 just like Moses received signs when commissioned so does Gideon
 - 6:27 Faith(he obeys) but he is still fearful
 - 6:28-30 this is the men of Israel who are so upset!
 - 6:36-40 what Gideon does looks similar to the Urim and Thumim, this isn't really right, but Yahweh is really patient and kind with him. Also, note the weakness of Gideon's faith. The author is trying to say- don't do this! Gideon is testing God. He knows what God has told him, but won't do it.
- Chapter 7

- this story is similar to Genesis 14 (Abraham saves with 318) and then a battle with David and 400 men in 2 Samuel.
- 7:2-3- 32,000-->300 God wants to make clear it is his power that gives victory
- 7:4-6 I think he is getting rid of anyone with military instincts
- 7:12 Israel was supposed to be like the sand of the seashore but now their enemies are
- 7:16-17 this victory mirrors the fall of Jericho in that the victory is completely Yahweh's work
- 7:25 the story begins with fearful Gideon at a winepress and now in their victory they pursue Zeb to the winepress
- Chapter 8
 - Israel is now fighting amongst itself and even in verse 5 and 8 they won't help Gideon.
 - Gideon is about to fall apart here
 - 8:15-21 Gideon has now become a violent bloodthirsty warrior who is self-centered
 - 8:22- Keep in mind Deuteronomy 17-18, God is supposed to pick the king
 - 8:23 Gideon says the right thing, but then lives the wrong thing
 - 8:24-28 this is exactly like Aaron in Exodus 32, he's making an idol
 - 8:28 last time in Judges that we see "rest"
 - 8:31 notice also what Gideon names his son- "my father is king"
 - 8:30-31 anytime we see many wives there is evil about to come. Also he is multiplying wives and gold like the king is not to do.
 - 8:32-33 despite the wickedness of Gideon he is still a man of faith who seems to have restrained the Baal worship--- people are complicated and noone is totally wicked or totally good- God saves through weak people.
- Chapter 9- this chapter is the anti-king (remember judges shows they need a righteous king)
 - Judge 5- Abimelech
 - this is one of the darkest chapters- Yahweh is not mentioned and we see the darkness and death of when they worship the Baal's
 - 9:1-2 do you want a comittee or a strong ruler?
 - 9:2 "leaders" here are "Baal's" increasing the feeling that it is a time of idolatry
 - 9:5 he kills all seventy of his brothers here (the chapter of death)
 - 9:7-21 the only surviving brother uses a parable using trees to show the foolishness of the people for choosing this king- they have chosen as king a bramble bush. This is stated from mount Gerazim where blessing should come- but he is showing that kingship should bring blessing but it doesn't
 - 9:28 this is a reverse of Abimelech's argument.
 - 9:29-33 these guys are basically thugs

- 9:46-49- this is exactly what Jotham's prayer asked for
- 9:50ff this is a king who just wanders around killing but he is "randomly" killed by his head being crushed by a woman
- 9:55 what was the point of all this? Nothing- everyone just goes home.
- 9:57 God will achieve poetic justice on those who pursue wickedness.
- Chapter 10
 - 10:6-8 the cycle repeats again
 - 10:13-16 the lord is patient and kind and doesn't want them to suffer
- Chapter 11
 - The son of a prostitute- a prostitute in Israel?!? The people of Israel are becoming Canaanites
 - No compassion for Jethro
 - 11:7 Now you want me?!
 - 11:12-28 Jephthah seems to like diplomacy and is a somewhat wise military leader- his argument is that they didn't pick this fight, God gave it to us, and its been 300 years, why are you picking this fight now?
 - 11:29 the spirit empowers leaders to do what God desires to be done, but that doesn't mean Jephthah is doing the right thing.
 - 11:30 the word "whatever" is ambiguous- and when he says whatever comes out of the doors- he has in mind a person-- this is the child sacrifice of the Canaanites- not anything Yahweh would want...also..Leviticus 4:6 and other passages call for leaders to protect people from foolish vows..but noone knows their bible here. Extremely sad.
 - 11:34 this sounds just like Miriam- and she is only child- this is a point of contrast between Abraham and Jephthah- he is not obeying a test but he is doing wickedness.
 - 11:37- if the dad doesn't know the truth neither will the children
 - Jephthah is in Hebrew 11- sometimes the Lord saves some really wicked people. This is a gut check...do you really believe salvation is by grace? At some point he repented of this. Sometimes the nicest people in the world, trust themselves and not Christ.
- Chapter 12
 - 12:1-7 summary: Jephthah gets in an argument and it leads to 42,000 deaths among Israel- the tribes are now devouring one another!
 - 12:7 Where is the rest?!? there is none now... Israel is falling apart.
- Chapter 13 - Judge 6 Samson
 - 13:1 The period of the judges was coming to an end. It is supposed that at the same time as Samson, Eli was walking around. Eli being the guy who raised Samuel. We see a change this time with the people. They don't even see that

they have a problem. They don't even cry out to God to deliver them. This time, God just sends them a deliverer.

- 13:4 The child was to be a Nazarite. He needed to be separated to the Lord. He needed to not drink wine, not cut his hair, and not be around a dead body. The outward sign of his separation is his hair. He is to be totally devoted to Yahweh.
- Chapter 14
 - 14:2 notice the same pattern we have seen with Eve, and in Numbers and other places- seeing, craving, taking... here Samson "sees"
 - 14:2 marrying philistines is directly forbidden because of the danger of idolatry but samson doesnt seem to know or doesnt care. Verse 3 will suggest he doesn't care.
 - 14:3 echoes Eve seeing the fruit being good to the eyes.
 - 14:5 Vineyard-- Nazirites are not even supposed to eat grapes!! (Numbers 6)- theological point- his lust is driving him to break his devotion to Yahweh.
 - 14:8 another breach of his Nazirite vow.
 - 14:12-13 this is absolutely foolish- thirty changes of clothes would have cost a fortune
 - 14:15 Samson's lust is going to begin getting him into trouble
 - 14:19-20 more evidence of Samson's violence and his lack of commitment to his promises to his wife.
- Chapter 15
 - 15:4 Samson's solutions to his problems is violence-- keep in mind, Samson almost certainly looked like a relatively normal man, because everyone is surprised by his strength, yes it is super-human, but it is likely he was probably not hugely muscled- as people are surprised at his strength.
 - 15:5-8 this quickly begins looking like gang violence with retaliations after retaliations
 - 15:16- Samson has basically become like Lamech way back in Genesis 6, not good. Also note "fresh" - he probably touches another carcasse here-- he is basically the anti-nazirite.
- Chapter 16
 - 16:4 His lust once again is going to bring pain on him and everyone around him.
 - 16:16 the hard pressing is what happened with his wife earlier- his enslavement to lust will destroy him.
 - 16:19 The final destruction of all that marks him as a Nazirite
 - 16:23-26 Samson was enslaved to lust previously and it has led to full physical enslavement and now the nations believe their God to be superior.
 - (by the way this gives a model for understanding failed leaders at least to some extent, and for being realistic about how we evaluate ministries and people..blessing doesn't equal faithfulness)

- Chapters 17-21 (Notes courtesy of Connor Hass and Winston Weber)
 - These final chapters recount three episodes that go together and could be considered a trilogy centered around Bethlehem (Judah) Final major section of the book. Two stories giving a vivid impression of Israel's distance from Yahweh and from obedience to torah. "Every man does what is right in his own eyes." All of this points dramatically toward the need for a godly king in Israel to carry the nation back to Yahweh so they can fulfill their purpose in God's plans for the world.
 - The Story of Dan
 - Micah is a thief who creates household idols with stolen silver, he finds a Levite to be his priest, and all seems to be going well in his world. Then Danites come along and end up taking Micah's priest, his household gods, as well as a peaceful and unsuspecting city.
 - Progression of the story
 - 1. Micah makes household gods.
 - a. Micah (who is like Yahweh?) the thief uses stolen silver to make gods at the urging of his mother.
 - b. Her blessing is Yahweh's curse. I'd rather be cursed by my mother and blessed by Yahweh, not the other way around.
 - c. It seems like everything is going well to Micah, but that's just the problem. There's no godly king to keep things in check in Israel; what he is doing is subject to no one's judgement but his own.
 - 2. Micah hires a personal priest.
 - a. A Levite enters the frame, one who should have been helping in the spiritual leadership and oversight of the nation. He "just happens" to come to Micah in the hill country of Ephraim...
 - b. Micah can't believe his luck and asks the priest to stay with him. The priest is happy to have such a generous benefactor, likes his pay, and probably likes being the head hanzo at a personal shrine.
 - c. Micah is now convinced that Yahweh will prosper him, because he doesn't just have any priest, but a capital-L Levite.
 - 3. Dan looks for land and spies encounter Micah.
 - a. Danites on the prowl for an inheritance of their own send spies who "just happen" to run into Micah. They're impressed by the operation he has going on, and proceed with courage after receiving divine endorsement through him.
 - b. They are happy when they find a sleepy town to pillage and seize for themselves. It seems to them to be God's provision, but

in fact they've already shown themselves to be faithless failures.

- c. Oh by the way, no godly king is around to keep an eye on all of this (v. 1).
- 4. Dan steals Micah's idols and priest.
 - a. They just take their brother's stuff. With a menacing show of force at the man's gate. Not cool.
 - b. They are especially keen to get the priest. He will somehow legitimize the entire operation. And they bribe his cooperation with the enticing vision of being priest to an entire tribe—he should have been priest to all of the nation!
 - c. The priest's "heart is glad." He skips out the door with the Danites, gods tucked under one arm and ephod under the other. He's meant to be a keeper of the spiritual structure in Israel but he is bafflingly unaware of the way things are and why they are that way. Everything screams, "foolishness!"
- 5. Dan gets away with it, taking gods, priest, and city.
 - a. Micah's petulant tantrum is rife with irony—"you take my gods that I made..." Any faithful Yahweh-worshipper would have laughed. "Micah, you're mad because the gods you made are being taken? Something created that can't defend itself isn't much of a god!"
 - b. The Danites are on the one hand victorious over Micah (they "took" his things and his priest) and on the other shown to be fools, excited about a personal priest which violates Yahweh's command, taking a city which Yahweh never gave them, and setting up an opposing system of worship which persisted throughout the entire existence of the northern kingdom (!).
 - c. Finally, the gut punch finish to all of this... Who is this unnamed Levite? Oh snap. It's Jonathan... Son of Gershom... Son of... Moses?! No! Yes. Two generations from Moses and this is where we've landed. Spiritually, morally, rationally—we're miles and miles away. Things are not good in Israel. Not good at all. The cancer is on the inside of God's people. Maybe a king can make things better.
 - Irony that reveals folly Micah's name means "who is like Yahweh?" Sad here that he reduces the incomparable Yahweh who cannot be tamed or confined to a sad little silver idol, which would have been a dime a dozen in the ANE.
 - Micah steals his mom's silver (invoking a curse), but when he restores it she blesses him. Humorously (and darkly), as she

blesses him and invoke's Yahweh's name in her appeal to the son to make carved and graven images, she runs afoul of the very first curse laid on unfaithful Israelites in Deuteronomy 27:15. Micah can escape an earthly curse and even receive blessings, but he can't escape God's curse.

- A levite "stumbles upon" Micah's settlement—a stroke of providential grace! No. Micah interprets providence inappropriately, thinking he's blessed by God to receive a priest when in fact his entire religious operation is detestable to Yahweh and violates myriad commands. Dan finds a quiet town and assumes "God has given it into your hands." In fact, they had already failed through faithlessness to possess the land they were given, and the entire point of the conquest was to show God's strength against a strong people, not a weak people (cf. Num 13 and the report of the spies there). Dan says that it is elohim's doing to give them the land, but in fact they have already been unfaithful to Yahweh, and moreover they're now going to bully a quiet town of Laishians.
- The Levite, meant to be a priest involved in spiritual leadership and oversight of Israel, is hiring out his services to the highest bidder. "The priests heart was glad." "Surely Yahweh is blessing me to be invited by such a mighty company to be their priest!" No. Again, we are violating not only explicit commands in God's law but the entire purpose of the priesthood serving at Shiloh.
- Important Passages that Give Background... Deut. 27:15 — "'Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.' Ex. 20:4 — "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." Deut. 12:1 — "These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. 2 You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 3 You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their

name out of that place. 4 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. 5 But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, 6 and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 7 And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. 8 "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes, 9 for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the LORD your God is giving you. 10 But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, 11 then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. 12 And you shall rejoice before

- the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. 13 Take care that you do not offer your and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. Deut. 12:19 — Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land. Numbers 13:27–29 — 27 And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan." 1 Kings 12:27–30 — 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." 28 So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. The Story of Benjamin Men from the tribe of Benjamin commits a heinous atrocity against a Levite's concubine in Gibeah, prompting all Israel to unite against Benjamin in retaliation. The resulting civil war decimates the tribe of Benjamin, reducing them from 25,000 fighting men to only 600. Israel then kills and pillages to secure wives for these men so that the tribe of Benjamin does not

die out completely. This final story in the book of judges emphasizes the incredible wickedness in Israel during the time of the judges and points towards the hope that things might be better under a godly king. Introduction burnt offerings at any place that you see, 14 but at will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, the place that the LORD

- We are in what we've titled the Bethlehem Trilogy—three connected stories rooted in the earth of a little town, Bethlehem, pointing out both the horrible sins in Israel during the times of the judges and the hope that might arise from a godly king. If you can permit me to take some liberties with the titles and order of the original Star Wars films we have...
- The Return of the Danites
- Israel Strikes Back
- A New Hope
- Today we are looking at Volume II of the trilogy, Israel strikes back. Really it is a story about how the tribe of Benjamin does evil, how Israel retaliates, and the aftermath of a bloody civil war. Evil, war, aftermath. Of the three stories in the Bethlehem trilogy, it is by far the ugliest. It is one of the ugliest stories in the entire bible. The evil we see here reveals a new depth of the covenant unfaithfulness in Israel. It shows us the wicked potential of the human heart under the control of sin. It shows us how truly desperate our need is for outside intervention; if left to ourselves, we will only arrive at places of horrible, horrible sin. Volume I showed us that sin pollutes and corrupts our attempts at religion. Volume II shows us that sin pollutes and corrupts every aspect of our being and makes us do unbelievably stupid and evil things. Let me give you an illustration, then we'll get into the story.
- This final story in the book of Judges proceeds in three acts: crime, war, aftermath. The crime is a horrible, heinous act of sexual assault that shows Israel as no better than Sodom. The war is a civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin is nearly entirely destroyed by the rest of the tribes of Israel. The aftermath is a cobbled-together attempt to salvage Benjamin's lineage through murder and pillaging. What do we see? 1) The sin that has poisoned the human race is within the hearts of the Israelites as well. Despite their privileges they are susceptible to forsake Yahweh and live like the seed of the serpent. 2) There remains some hope for Israel in the anticipation of a good and godly king, someone who could rule over Israel and guide the people to love Yahweh from the heart and live in obedience to his law.
- Understanding the Narrative 19:1 — We have another Levite in this story and another connection to Bethlehem. Connects it to previous and following story. 19:1–9 — Levite enjoys great hospitality from his concubine's father in law. Sets the stage for the contrast coming in Gibeah. 19:10–15 — Better hospitality would

have come from Canaan! 19:12, the man's statement is dripping with tragic irony: "We won't turn aside with these strange people, who are not from among the sons of Israel... Imagine how they would treat us!" 19:22–26 — It's hard to really get just how horrible this is. All sin is evil but sexual sin violates God's good purposes in creating humans at a very fundamental level.

- It is a violation of the creation, because it attacks the purity and beauty of a gift God gave to illustrate the intimacy of the marriage relationship. For this reason—it is a personal violation unlike any other, because it strikes at something so deep within the person.
- Note the almost perfect symmetry between this story and Gen 19: Judges 19:22–26 [22] As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." [23] And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. [24] Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing." [25] But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. [26] And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.
- Genesis 19:4-11 [4] But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. [5] And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." [6] Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, [7] and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. [8] Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." [9] But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. [10] But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. [11] And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.
- Why is it significant that Israel is put in parallel to Sodom? Sin spoils all people indiscriminately and comprehensively. **Israel is now Sodom, within two**

generations of Moses.

- The reversal of the curse will not come from the human race. Israel desired a godly king (though even the king would not be the solution they hoped for).
- People needed a law written on their hearts. A total renewal from within. What about for us? We are more sinful than we fear we could be. Far more sinful. Every part of us is polluted. We trust in the same hope that sustained the godly Israelites during all these years of struggle and failing—God will make all things right through the messiah.
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