

Judges Overview

An historical record of downward spirals...the senseless struggles of a people who no longer wanted to be governed by God (perhaps never really wanted to be)

Deut 9:24 Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

Deut 10:12-13 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

A very turbulent time in Israel's history...450 years (Acts 13:20) of "dark ages" of apostasy between forms of government...theocracy and monarchy

The human instrument through whom this book was written is unknown, but widely believed to be the prophet Samuel, whose ministry bridged the time of the judges and the time of the Jewish kings

Judges: not "super lawyers" appointed/voted on by men but military leaders raised up and empowered by the LORD to execute the judgment of God on the enemies of God on behalf of the people of God

Theme: spiritual apostasy and lawlessness...the book of "not following Joshua/Jesus"
Ch 17:6 In those days *there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

The Jews had an aversion to authority – both God and man
Immorality celebrated...Ten Commandments were routinely broken
Result: lawlessness, confusion, chaos

Basic outline

- I. Roots and consequences of Apostasy (Ch 1-2...bleeding into Ch 3)
- II. 7 downward cycles...Apostasy in action (Ch 3-16)
- III. Depth of Apostasy (Ch 17-21)

What happened?

Each downward spirals begins with compromise, ends with confusion

Compromise, a device of the devil, is not a radical, overnight shift in one's belief but a gradual shift/walking away...over time and in small increments

Compromise is not selling your soul to the devil in one fell swoop but denying the Lord with each small step of defiant independence or lust or humanistic reasoning

7 cycles of

- sin
- suffering
- supplication
- salvation

7 downward cycles of

- Compromise..."coexist"
- Apostasy
- Oppression...at the hands of those with whom are "coexisting"
- Repentance
- Peace

Oh...the value of history!

By learning from history we can learn from the mistakes of those who lived before us...
or live their very same mistakes if we don't learn

By history we understand why things are the way they are...in USA, the world, Christianity

For example...does the name Neville Chamberlain mean anything to you?

- Did his strategy in dealing with an evil madman/terrorist work?
 - Appeasement...there was no appeasing Hitler
 - Compromise...Hitler paid only lip service to compromise
 - Coexist...the "superior race" would not coexist
- Is "Neville Chamberlain" and his failed strategies alive and well today?
- Can we expect a different result in dealing with today's terrorists?

The theme of spiritual apostasy and lawlessness is a contemporary theme...2 Thes 2:3-4

Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This book speaks of contemporary USA and Christianity...not following Jesus

President Woodrow Wilson once spoke of the futility of a nation that forgets its heritage.
A far more penetrating question: What happens to the nation that forgets God?

We have the Book of Judges thru 2 Chronicles (last book in Hebrew Bible) to give us the
history of Israel as they did just that.

We have the example of Germany between 1918 and 1945 as they did just that.

We will consider American history in the light of those histories.

Frank Wright, Pres and CEO, National Religious Broadcasters:

“Just as nature abhors a vacuum, a culture which drives out every vestige of God
from the marketplace of ideas inevitably finds it has sown seeds that it will reap in
the whirlwind.”

The Book of Judges...and all human history...is a tragedy.

Will we learn from it before it is too late?

What is the pose in our nation?

[smartphone absorbed]

What should the pose be?

[on knees, on face before God]

Micah 6:8 He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD
require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly
with thy God?

Yet natural man who is all-wrong wants nothing to do with the God Who is all-right

Judges Chapter 1

I. Judges 1:1 – 3:6 Roots and consequences of Apostasy

v1-2 who shall go up for us...to fight:

What is the first issue the nation faces after the death of Joshua?

Who will lead them into battle...because

- they are in a fight against very powerful and determined enemies
- they are still at war!
- there remains much work to be done

Answer:

- Judah will lead (Gen 49:10)
- The Lord will fight...”prepare” the battlefield for them

Spiritual reality on earth: spiritual warfare

- We are in a “fight to the death” with a very powerful and determined enemy
- We are at war every day...in a strange land behind enemy lines!
- There has been war on earth since Gen 3 and every human being has been involved in it...most never knew it

Who will lead us?

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Captain of our salvation

Ex 15:3 the LORD is a man of war

Num 21:14 the book of the wars of the LORD

We are soldiers in the Lord’s army!

2 Cor 10:3-5 battlefield defined (mind)

Eph 6:10-18 equipment and weapons

2 Tim 2:3 we must endure hardness...it is not easy

The God Who went before Israel to “prepare” the battlefield goes before us as well

v3 Judah said unto Simeon:

Why Simeon?

- blood brothers
- Simeon’s inheritance is an “island” within Judah’s
- it only makes sense for them to fight together

v4 Judah went up and the LORD delivered:

Notice

- Judah went/led...”Go!” in v2 and they faithfully obeyed
- The LORD was faithful to fight/deliver

The enemy on the ground...the Canaanites...

- confederation of city/states
- idol worshippers...cultists

did not stand a chance against the Lord and His army

The Lord “gave” the cursed idol worshippers (Gen 9:24-27) to His army...
giving Judah nine victories in this chapter

v5-7 Adoni-Bezek:

The first victory over the Canaanites was at Bezek, over its wicked king

- inhumane treatment of 70 less powerful kings
 - cut off their thumbs and big toes
 - forced to “forage” for food like dogs under Adoni-Bezek’s table until the day they died
 - humiliation – physical mutilation made those men
 - impotent...unable to
 - hold a sword
 - march into war
 - stand in battle
 - flee from an enemy
 - disqualified them from office
- fled in the face of a stronger opponent
- recognized the justice of God in his “just deserts”

Have many Christians had their “thumbs and big toes cut off” by Satan,
groveling before, humiliated by, and impotent to fight him?

Remember...our Captain and Lord Jesus Christ is the game-changer Who makes
everything new and Who provides the Ultimate technology to His army
We fight in His strength and power, not our own...
and the devil MUST flee from us

Satan, the god of this world, is a cruel master...an evil terrorist
But, our King is greater...no contest!

The Lord will rebuke Satan and put him under our feet shortly (Rom 16:20)
Satan is going to get his just reward!

v8-11 the children of Judah:

The military campaign of Judah against the Canaanites continues

- Jerusalem:
 - home of the Jebusites
 - on the border with Benjamin
 - 1st time in history that is in Jewish hands...but not completely until the stronghold/fortress was taken by King David (1 Chron 11, 2 Sam 5)
- mountain region
- south (Negev)
- the valleys
- Hebron
 - location of the tomb of the patriarchs
 - formerly “city of the giant”
 - taken by Caleb
- Debir

v12-15 will I give Achsah my daughter to wife:

Caleb...”last man standing”...last living former slave in Egypt (v1)

Regarding the conquest of Debir...

- Caleb offers his daughter as wife to whoever takes the city
- Othniel (“force of God”) does and claims his bride...kissing cousins

- Achsah boldly asks her father for a blessing...life in the wilderness (water is life)
- Her father “over-gives”...life below and life above
 - Heb 4:16 and Eph 3:20

v16 the Kenite:

Moses’ in-laws left Jericho and moved to Arad...home of the Whittens

v17-18 Judah went with Simeon:

Judah kept their word (v3)

The Lord gave them more victories...over

- cultists living in the “watchtower” (Zephath)
- the cities of the Philistines...a trouble spot to this very day

v19-20 but could not drive out:

Caleb's victory in Hebron over the three giants (Num 13 and named in v10)

But then, after all those victories...Judah's campaign stalled because of superior technology by the enemy... or because of something else?

Deut 20:1-4

In the battlefield of the mind and in the realm of faith...

which is superior "technology":

- chariots of iron or spears and arrows
- the Word of the invisible God, Creator of heaven and earth

2 Kings 6:16

1 John 4:4

Thus, the important warning to Christianity...Gal 3:3, John 8:32, John 15:4

So now begins a tale of incompleteness...a tale of not finishing well

v21 Benjamin did not drive out:

Benjamin does not finish the job either, in spite of help from Judah/Simeon
Fierce resistance not put down, enemies not driven out, will result in continual resistance, continual trouble/struggle...thorns in their sides

Num 33:55 coming to pass, just like God said it would

If we grow weary or complacent and do not steadfastly 2 Cor 10:3-5...
we will have continual trouble/struggle/frustration...even defeat

v22-26 the house of Joseph:

Initially, the two tribes of Joseph (double-portion inheritance of firstborn) were successful...in cleansing Bethel ("the house of God") because the Lord gave them the victory

But elsewhere in the enduring battle...

v27-29 Neither did Manasseh...Ephraim:

Neither Manasseh nor Ephraim finished the job.
The Canaanites were determined...more determined than the tribes of Joseph

Although ruled by the tribes of Joseph, the Canaanites remained thorns in their sides as well

v30-36 Neither did:

Also unable to finish well, not following Joshua...were the tribes of

- Zebulun
- Asher
- Naphtali
- Dan

Echoing 7 times thru this first chapter..."neither did drive out"
v19, 21, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34

As warned by the Lord, this does not bode well for Israel

Big trouble is brewing

e.g. Zidon's holdout (v31) will produce...Jezebel

e.g. the Amalekites' holdout will produce...Haman

"Coexist"...in our lives or in Christianity...is a strategy of:
compromise, apostasy, and oppression/pain...until repented of

3 levels of application

1. Individual
2. Christianity
3. national

1. For us as individual disciples/followers of Jesus Christ...

- Salvation is an event
- Sanctification (John 3:30) is a process that lasts a lifetime here in Satan's dominion
 - Matt 16:18...taking no prisoners
 - 2 Peter 3:18...His strength and power
 - 1 Cor 9:27...we need to get out of the way and follow by faith

The enemy has strongholds in our lives and clings to them with determination.
But if we stop fighting...being on the offensive...we get ravaged by a powerful
enemy who is determined to destroy us

If we were to fight by following Jesus, we would have His victory in every area of
our lives, not frustration or defeat (Rom 7)

The level of victory in our lives is a function of our surrender and obedience

Holdouts in our hearts...

areas of our lives we refuse to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ...

Compromises with the world and it corrupt "theology"

"Coexist"-ing with the condemned world...

produce big trouble for us and great pain in our lives

That is why the Holy Spirit warns/instructs us in “the art of war”...holiness

1 Cor 15:33

2 Cor 6:14-18

Holiness...without which no man shall see the Lord, says Heb 12:14...
is diametrically opposed to Compromise and Coexist

2. Christianity (vs Church) has a broad strategy of Coexist...
 - it does not bode well for the church...just as we see in Rev 2-3
 - is deceived because the strategy is consummately flawed...
 - God will not peacefully coexist with idols and idol worshippers
 - Satan will not peacefully coexist with God and Christ-worshippers
3. We have cause to be deeply concerned about the direction our nation is headed...and greater cause for deep concern about what the Church is doing about it

We see these problems in USA as political problems...
but they are spiritual problems
The paralysis of our political process should tell us that

Politics has never changed the world
Only Jesus Christ can solve the problems we face...
including problems He clearly sees that we as a nation do not

e.g. the celebration of immorality...the homosexual lifestyle that is
all the rage and is increasing being imposed on God's people

He has judged these behaviors in the past...why would He stop/change?

The period of the Judges was a very dark period in the history of Israel
The period of Nazism was a very dark period in the history of Germany,
the entire world...and the Church, which

- was betrayed by that nation's elite
- was seduced by false promises
- compromised, choosing to “coexist” rather than condemn Hitler with a unified voice and oppose his politics

Those who chose to not compromise and not to coexist...suffered

Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor:

“The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment (Darwinism)...I’m absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Treblinka were ultimately prepared not in some ministry of Berlin, but rather at the desks and lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers (universities).”

Is not the same philosophy proclaimed as undeniable truth in all our universities?

Is not Christianity being seduced right in front of our eyes?

Has not Christianity in this nation adopted a strategy of Coexist?

Is not the Bible-believing, Christ-following Church being betrayed by this nation’s elite...and being diminished/minimized, step-by-step... including Christianity?

Why is the Church silently just “going along” vs loudly opposing?

Being a devoted follower of Jesus Christ was foundational for America’s first citizens

That is increasingly becoming an act of treason against the State!

Forty years ago, Francis Schaeffer predicted that one day we would wake up and to our amazement discover that the America we once knew was gone.

Is that day not here?

Are we influencing the world and our nation...or are they influencing us?

Are we the Salt and Light Jesus commanded us to be where He has planted us?

We live in

- perilous times
- exciting times...
 - the faith of God’s people really counts today
 - we have an opportunity to truly stand separate and apart, displaying the life of Jesus Christ
 - we, the citizen’s of the kingdom of the God of all the earth, are this nation’s most valuable citizens
 - much is expected of us

Let’s put our armor on and get into the battle!

No compromise, no prisoners!

Judges Chapter 2

We must read the Word of God carefully, not speedily
We must meditate on it, not read it with a “fast food” mentality

v1-3 angel of the Lord:

“An angel of the LORD” in v1 and “The angel of the LORD” in v4 says

- I made you go up out of Egypt
- I have brought you into the land
- I swore (made a promise) to your fathers,
“I will never break My covenant”
- You have not obeyed My voice
- Why have you done this?
- I will not drive them (enemies) out from before you

Who has said and done these things?

Who has led them and fought for them?

Ex 23:20-33

Without Whom would Moses not proceed, not even with an ordinary angel?

Ex 33:1-3, 12-15

To Whom is Israel accountable, a created angel or God the Creator?

Who is “The Angel of the LORD”?

Pre-incarnate Son of God, God the Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:18)

Appears in OT to

- Hagar in Gen 16
- Abraham in Gen 22 (sacrifice of only beloved son)
- Moses in Ex 3 (burning bush...I AM...Gospel of John)
- Balaam in Num 22
- Gideon in Judges 6
- Samson’s parents in Judges 13
- David in 2 Sam 24 (when numbered his army)
- Elijah in 1 Kings 19 (post-victory blues)
- 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in 2 Kings 19

He came from Gilgal...site of

- 12 memorial stones from Jordan River when crossed on dry ground
- The Lord rolling away the reproach of Egypt...lifting them up
- “last supper” of manna
- Joshua’s bare-footed meeting on holy ground with Captain of the Lord’s host

The Lord's command to Israel: utterly destroy...take no prisoners...
not to compromise and make friendships, alliances, coexistent treaties
Jesus asks a piercing question: Why have you done this?
It is as if they quickly forgot God...His power, grace, mercy, holiness...
and their history with Him since Moses was sent to deliver them

Jesus does not wait for an answer...He knows why
The only possible remedy: repentance

v4-5 wept...Bochim:

Why are the weepers weeping here in "Weepers"?

- convicted and repentant?
- sorrowful (but unchanged by godly sorrow that leads to repentance)?

Is their sacrifice sincere and heart-felt...or just window-dressing?

Tears and words can flow easily...the heart is revealed in time

So...how did we get here, to the piercing question of v2?

v6-10a every man unto his inheritance...all that generation:

The people had followed Joshua/Jesus and continued to as long as Joshua and their parents lived

Thus comes to a close the Joshua Chapter in Israel's history...
the nation had faithfully followed a

- faithful leader/follower
- those who were eyewitnesses to the mighty works of God
(Joshua 3, Joshua 6, etc)

Time marches on...there is no time to "kick back"

The job of every generation is to raise up the next generation..."heart transplant"
(Deut 6:4-12, Prov 22:6)

The next generation has the teachings and the memorials of the previous
generation (Joshua 4) and by faith can expect to see great works of the
LORD as well

Ministry of huge importance and rewards in heaven: Children's Ministry

But notice...the battle to cleanse the land of spiritual filth (Canaanites) is...
personal

Every man in every generation must fight to take and cleanse that which has been
appointed to him

If he/you/I don't...who will?

v10b-13 another generation...knew not...forsook the LORD:

How did the previous generation...the generation that conquered the land of Canaan...do in raising up the next generation, in transplanting their heart?

Not so well...

Perhaps did not diligently teach them

- The Word of God
- History with God

and the paramount importance of both in order that it go well for them

Perhaps they were “too busy”

- conquering a land
- making a better life for the next generation
- working to make ends meet

What does God think about excuses?

There are NO excuses for not training up the next generation in the Word and in History

Left to themselves without Godly supervision and instruction, the “natural” child will do what is natural...evil

- forsake/leave the invisible God...
the Self-Existent Elohim
- follow and worship false gods rather than the true God (I AM)...not follow Jesus
- become enslaved to those false gods...
idols that were worshipped carnally
 - pornography
 - fornication
 - gross immorality
 - acting like animals vs man created in the image of God

Even a born-again child of God must not be “left alone” to “find their own way”

How quickly and often we turn to the flesh and away from the Spirit!
Rom 7:18, 24-25

The previous generation must accept their God-given responsibility to “stem the tide” of the “natural man” with diligent instruction of the next generation in the “supernatural”, the greater reality upon which hangs their children’s eternal destination

But the next generation, those children, must accept the responsibility for their own walks

“knew” not (v10b) = “yada”

Seinfeld: “Yada, yada, yada” = “I know, I know, I know”
Can’t tell them anything...they already “know” everything

“did”...made a choice

Did so...chose...to not know, to not follow, to not worship,
to become enslaved

And are held accountable for their choices (Ezk 18)

v14-15 LORD delivered...spoilers...greatly distressed

The Lord did not take their disobedience lightly...He gave them over to “spoilers”
enemies that would plunder their nation and destroy their peaceful, carnal
way of life

Since He was no longer fighting for them, they could not stand against their
enemies

If they would not fight against the idol worshippers and cultists, they would fight
against the hand of God...which is far more distressing

So what?

What does Israel forgetting God have to do with us?

Does any of this apply to us and our nation?

We have seen a radical and sudden shift in the morality and spirituality of this nation in the past
80 years...the past 50 years in particular...and it is accelerating
between my parent’s generation (“The Greatest Generation”) and my generation

What has happened in the last 80 years...in this and the previous generation?

Broadly speaking, what happened in Israel (v6-15) has happened, is happening in USA

- God-fearing nation has become a God-forgetting, then a God-forsaking nation
- (Great) Depression and oppression (by Hitler in Europe) have given way to prosperity
and a moral free-for-all
- dependence upon God has given way to independence from God

How did the foundation of our nation...Biblical Christianity...become a “fairy tale” to be
summarily dismissed and ridiculed?

How did our nation get hijacked?

- Legal system
- Science
- Education
- Media
- Entertainment
- “Faith”

Who/what are the hijackers?

And where were the watchmen on the wall?

Both generations are to blame and must accept their responsibility

- The Greatest Generation...our parent’s generation
 - conquered a world...saved the world from godless fascism and communism
 - made a better life for their children
 - but did not diligently teach the Word of God or USA’s History with God
- My generation
 - is extraordinarily carnal/idolatrous –
pornography, fornication, adultery, etc sexual immorality –
and are enslaved to them (Rachel Welch comment: sex addicts, porn)
 - have forsaken the Lord in favor of false spiritualities
(even in “Christianity”)
 - have provoked the LORD to anger...Who has given us many warnings and
opportunities to repent
 - are not diligently teaching the next generation the Word of God and History

It is imperative that we look at what happened, is happening from the proper perspective...

- root problems vs symptoms
- Big Picture vs details
- God’s vs man’s

The plagues of sexual immorality, pornography, breakdown of the family, etc
are symptoms and details...not root problems, only parts of the Big Picture

The Big Picture: Satan’s unrelenting attack on

- God
- The Word of God
- The image of God

What affected our parent’s generation that led to Great Depression, World War, not diligently
teaching the Word of God and USA’s History with God?

Their parent’s generation

A powerful attack of Satan came thru a man angry with God about the death of his only daughter
The man's name is Charles Darwin
In the 1860's his work on Evolution...published in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*

The Theory of Evolution...and the godlessness and racism/hatred in its heart...taught:

- the universe is self-existing and not created by the Self-Existing God...
making the Bible completely irrelevant
- man is a highly evolved animal...
not made in the image of God
- suffering and death came before man...
negating "sin" and the need for a Savior and the Cross
- the age of the earth is billions of years...
Biblical record is not true

Note: a very bad theory because there is no supporting evidence

In the 1870s, social planners grabbed "Darwinism" and began implementing it in cultures...
"Social Darwinism"

Christianity was diminished and isolated as an aspect of life...
the LORDship of Jesus Christ over every aspect of life was denied

We can see clearly the fruit of Social Darwinism

Teaching children that they are animals vs man made in the image of God
resulted in them acting like...animals

A "trend" that continues and seems to be in full bloom

- lawlessness
- explosive sexual immorality
- bullying
- gang violence
- hopelessness...suicide

In this same time period, our nation's marketplace of ideas was brimming with choices

- USA a "melting pot" society
- religions of immigrants from all the nations, religions opposed to the faith of the founding fathers of our nation (Bible-believing Protestant Christianity)

In that marketplace, the One True and Living God of Israel was not diligently and uncompromisingly represented while

- God, the Word of God, and the image of God were attacked
- foreign gods have crept in and flourished

Even the “marketplace of Christianity” became confused with aberrant ideas
Cults that denied biblical orthodoxy and worshipped false gods appeared in USA and
went into the world...

thorns in the sides of Biblical Christianity and traps for millions of citizens (v3)

- Mormonism...1820s in western NY
- 7th Day Adventist...1863 in New England
- JW...1870s in PA
- Christian Science...1879 in MA
- Worldwide Church of God...1930s in OR

Darwinism/Evolution and Social Darwinism in the State and in “Christianity” became the
headwaters of secular humanism

Humanism – man is the center of everything, the be-all and end-all...man is god

Within Christianity, Liberal theologians in the Christian seminaries mixed the
Christian world-view and the humanist world-view...e.g. theistic evolution...
and the Word of God was no longer held to be inspired, inerrant, or infallible

Faith in a God Who hears, sees, cares, and acts...and saves...became passé and “reason”
ascended to the throne

The Word of God is diluted

“believers” now “pick and choose” from the Bible...

Truth...a Person, Jesus Christ...became a relative concept
man became the authority and the judge of truth

“translations” that deny the deity of Jesus Christ were published and flourished
(e.g. Muslim-friendly translation)

Confusion became the order of the day in Christianity when God was forgotten
Resulting in a spiritual, moral free-for-all...and no opposition to the humanism

Humanism crept in, blossomed, and roared in the 1930s...and the Church was silent
In USA, the Christian world-view was gradually being replaced with the
humanistic world-view we see in every aspect of our culture today

What was forgotten/rejected:

The founding and governing laws of our nation

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Constitution

are based on a Higher Law...the Word of God

The Higher Law of the Word of God has been subtly replaced with Humanism...
the natural end of which is and will be – Judges 21:25

We must learn lessons from Israel...and Nazi Germany

We may view Adolf Hitler as the Ultimate Social Darwinist and Humanist
A key strategy in implementing his plan: Separation of Church and State

Hitler did not discourage people from going to church, said he would not interfere with the church...as long as the church

- taught things that were “for the good” of the people (he was judge)
- did not interfere with temporal matters (his business)

The Nazi Party platform in Article 24 provided for “liberty for all religious denominations in the State so far as they are not a danger...to the moral feelings of the German race.”

After he was elected chancellor, Hitler distributed a photo of himself leaving a church to “demonstrate” his religious sympathies...

Hitler was initially friendly/peaceful with the state church but as his power grew, he

- sought to remove every vestige of influence the church had in Germany
- systematically imposed a Christianity-hostile “higher law” of Social Darwinism and Humanism

School prayers were banned

Crucifixes were removed from classrooms

Christmas was turned into a totally pagan festival

Singing Christmas carols and Nativity plays were forbidden in schools

Resurrection Sunday (Easter) was turned into a holiday to celebrate the arrival of spring

State Healthcare was withheld from “unproductive members of society”

- the very young and the very old
- the impaired and the weak
- “inferior” races

He redefined “tolerance”, “freedom”, and “fairness” to minimize Christianity

He created a flurry of new laws to legislate “abuse of pulpit” and then accused pastors of breaking them...in order to silence them in their pulpits

He wanted a “toothless Christianity” subservient to his political agenda

He used intimidation and economics (controlling salaries in the state church) as means toward his ends

The state church responded by turning inward

- as an organization, not involved in national politics
- teaching people to worship God in their hearts...but not to speak in the political sphere of the nation

The state church did not equip the German people to righteously oppose the political, financial, and moral abuses all around them...

The church chose appeasement, co-exist...they chose to compromise their calling

God was removed from German culture....the nation forgot God...

And Hitler's Nazism filled the void

In humanist USA that has forgotten God, we are re-living history, even recent history

- School prayer is “illegal”
- Christmas is a commercial abomination
- Easter has lost out to “Spring Break”
- Human life has been made cheap
 - Abortion/infanticide
 - Euthanasia
 - Government-regulated healthcare
- “Freedom”, “Tolerance”, and “Fairness” have been redefined
- God, the Bible, and Biblical Christianity have been removed from government, law, education, and the workplace
- Christianity is social, all-inclusive, Cross-less...toothless and compromised

In humanist USA, “political correctness” is stifling the freedom of speech as effectively as did Hitler in Germany

In humanist USA, the Theory of Evolution is taught as undeniable fact in every public school and university

Indoctrination under the banner of “Education”

In humanist USA, many millions of dollars from Saudi Arabia have been accepted from dozens of universities to establish Middle East Studies Departments...poisoning our college youth with Islamic, anti-American, anti-Israel propaganda

In humanist USA, 7th graders in public schools in parts of the nation are taught a 3 week course on Islam

- choose a Muslim name
- dress like a Muslim
- take a field trip to a mosque
- memorize verses from the Koran
- memorize fact cards about Islam
 - (propaganda, talking points of Al Queda and PLO)
- analyze Muslim prayer

Indoctrination under the banner of “Education”

Basis: fear of Muslims and their reaction to “free” examination in the marketplace of ideas they claim is “blasphemy”...
coexist and cowardly appeasement vs courage to oppose

Note: What will happen in US legal system and/or church (Chrislam) compromises with Islam and Sharia Law?
Apostasy and oppression

In humanist USA, Christianity is minimized
UNC-G has ordered a Christian club to allow non-Christians as leaders and members

In humanist USA, sexual immorality (fornication, homosexuality) is celebrated and promoted
For the Church to teach what the Bible says is “hate speech” and will not be tolerated by the State

Hate crimes legislation has passed in both Senate and House of Representatives
Homosexuals and Muslims cheer!
Revoking 501c3-status of Christian churches is a threat to keep pastors quiet

The Bigger Picture battle is the Higher Law...not the natural fallout of the counterfeit higher law

Make no mistake: the issue is a spiritual issue, not a political issue
Humanism is a religion, not a political platform...arose in early 1930s
The Supreme Court defined secular humanism as a religion equivalent to theistic and non-theistic religions (1961, *Torcaso v. Watkins*)

Note: Who twisted “separation of Church and State”?
Secular humanists, believers in a counterfeit religion

Religion is separating the Church from its founding mission...to be in the State
Humanist religion is seeking to remove the Church (Biblical Christianity) in our nation

The Church has been fighting the wrong battles...symptoms vs problems

The banner under which we are losing our freedoms in USA today...”Freedom”
The banner under which we are not tolerated is “Tolerance”
The banner under which we are treated unfairly is “Fairness”

Where we are as a nation today is not the result of some conspiracy...
albeit Satan is the master conspirator...
but the result of the Church forsaking its calling to be salt and light in our nation

What we see in our nation is the “expected result”...not the “expected end” (Jer 29:11)
But, now that we know what happened...what will we do about it?
That is how we in this generation will be judged

Christianity is, but will the Church be paralyzed by fear and intimidation?
The 1st Amendment was not written so that atheists, agnostics, Muslims, and
secular humanists can subjugate Bible-believing Christians!

Jesus’ piercing question in v2 is for our ears!
Let him who has ears let him hear!

We must fight the right battle while we still have any freedom to do so

These times provide incredible opportunities for the Church to

- be salt and light
- stand up and be counted
- speak...to share the Good News of Jesus Christ
(vs the bad news of all other religions)
- prove our love for Jesus and show the love, humility, grace, and meekness
(which is NOT weakness) of Jesus

We dare not give to Caesar that which belongs to God!
Matt 22:21

We dare not compromise or abandon the Higher Law!

We must not think it will be easy
Phil 1:29

Biblical Christianity is not for the faint of heart or the comfortably complacent

We must not be silent, we must not turn within
We must go boldly to contend for the faith and for the eternal souls all around us who have been
deceived by a counterfeit “higher law”

We are this nation’s most valuable citizens...that is the mantle God has placed on us

We, the children of God, must draw “Red Lines”...”dems fightin words!”

- Handling of the Word of God...Deut 4:2, Rev 22:18-19
- Origins taught in our Education System – Creation and Evolution compete for truth
- Abortion is murder
- Homosexuality is a sin, an attack against the image of God
- Separation of Church and State...Matt 22:21, Deut 8:11-20, Deut 10:12-13

For Such a Time as This

- Pray...for favor, revival
- Prepare yourself...get ready and stay ready
- Engage one person with
 - The Gospel
 - The history of USA
 - God’s warnings to USA
 - Red Lines

Heb 11:22-31

Last time...”Why have you done this?”

Compromise

Which leads to apostasy...falling from God into evil

This time...the Pattern for Ch 3-16...Apostasy in action

v11-16 The Pattern for Ch 3-16

The “ball” starts rolling with Israel compromising with unholy, ungodly people

By NOT

- being very courageous to keep and do the Word of God in the face of hostile neighbors
- cleaving to the LORD (Gen 2:24) and forsaking the seductive advances of false gods
- being diligent to love the LORD that loves them and fights for them
- remembering that not one thing of God’s Word to them has failed
- singing the Song of Moses (Deut 32) to help them remember

Israel

- faced an angry Jesus with a piercing heart examination
- faced their enemies on their own
- lived with
 - thorns in their sides
 - sharp sticks in their eyes
 - spiritual booby-traps at every turn

The Pattern of apostasy starts with compromise and leads to

- Israel does evil (v11-13)
- The Lord opposes Israel (v14-15a)
- Israel cries out to the LORD when greatly distressed (v15b)

The LORD raised up judges:

Then, in His mercy...the LORD raised up a deliverer/savior,
who would be the proxy for The Judge/Deliverer/Savior

And the oppression would be lifted from Israel

All better now, right?

We’re good, right?

Wrong

The cycle would go from bad to worse

v17-19 yet they would not hearken:

Fundamental problem: the hearts of Israel were not changed.

In the cycle of Apostasy initiated by compromise and co-exist,

Israel acted like dogs...“howling” at the sun and moon and stars rather than bowing down to the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, the God of AI&J

They would do so until it got too painful to “co-exist” with people who had no desire to coexist with them

Then their God, in keeping with His nature, had mercy on them

- for the LORD delights in mercy (Micah 7:18)
- for no Father likes to hear His children groan under the oppressive hand of an enemy

And...when life was “good” again, they went right back to their vomit

Prov 26:11 As a dog returns to his vomit, *so* a fool returns to his folly.

They could not

- learn from the Word of God or history (previous generations or theirs)
- stay the course
- continue
- abide
- finish well

They would not

- humble themselves
- admit/confess/repent of the error of their ways
- stop being stubborn

Israel...having a stiff-necked aversion against authority over their lives... would simply not listen to and obey the LORD

So when the judge died and the pressure was off...

and QUICKLY after the pressure was off...

back Israel went to spiritual adultery (evil)

Each successive generation was even more idolatrous/adulterous than the previous!

Rather than growing in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior, they stubbornly deteriorated

Their hearts were unchanged...hardest thing in God’s creation

Their faithfulness was short-lived...insincere, not committed (not believing)

The relationship between God and Israel is characterized in Scripture like a marriage (Jer 31:31-33, Is 54:5, Hosea)

Israel’s “heart of a whore” grieved her Husband

“repented” = grieved...

Num 23:19 God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

He was grieved that He had to chastise them in order to change their behavior...
but they would not change...by their free will choice

btw...no surprise

Deut 31:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

God was grieved to hear Israel groan...needlessly because of Her own infidelity
But God is longsuffering with His Wife
He loved them too much...with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3)...to spare the rod,
which in His hands was for their benefit

Israel was stubborn...not an admirable character trait in the eyes of God

Can anyone here relate to the Jews?

- Compromise with the world? (sex, alcohol, drugs, relationships...)
- Suffering...physically, emotionally, spiritually...as a result?
- Crying out to the Lord in agony?
- Being delivered by a loving merciful Savior?
- Stubbornly going right back to the vomit?
- An unchanged heart in some aspect of life? (off-limits to Jesus)

Jesus' desire is that we live our lives choosing Him above all else...always.

Living by faith, in the Spirit...seeking Him to satisfy our spirit

The biggest snares in the walk of a Christian that more than anything else lead to apostasy?

- Emotions (seeking the satisfaction of the soul...a rollercoaster)
- Sensuality (seeking the satisfaction of the body...insatiable)

When our lives are governed by our emotions or the lusts of the flesh, we are ensnared/trapped in bondage
(that we deceive ourselves into thinking is freedom)

And it is our stubbornness that prevents the Deliverer from “springing the trap”
and setting us free

Beware the stubbornness in your heart!

Billboard on Eastbound I-10 outside of Indio...headed out into the desert:
This year millions of men will die of stubbornness

As the witness of Jesus Christ on earth, is Christianity any different than Israel in its cycle of apostasy?

Christianity is concerned with

- the building
- the number of people in the pews
- pleasing men
- entertaining the goats

The Church, the Body/Bride of Christ, is concerned with

- people...the building of God
- issues of the heart
- feeding the sheep
- pleasing God

Christianity is an organization with a shielded “CEO”

The Church is a living organism with a hands-on, loving Good Shepherd

Christianity “messages” the Word of God to make it non-offensively inclusive...redefining “relevant”

The Church is faithful to the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit that divides and is sharper than any two-edged sword that cuts to and heals the heart of the matter

Gal 3:1-3

[New 10 Commandments]

Man-centered, man is the basis of all things (humanism)

Man is first, God is last

“Sin” is swept away by diluted, misleading language

God is offended by sin...and so is man!

But God reveals sin while man turns a blind eye to it

What to do with the Sermon on the Mount?!

In our “viral” world...expect to see more of Just10

Gal 4:9, 11

Unchanged...back to the vomit

Theistic evolution...mixing what cannot be mixed

Divorce rates...no different than the heathen

Infidelity...all sorts of sexual sin (porn +)

Gal 5:17

Neither will compromise...compromise is a death spiral

v20-23 the anger of the LORD:

The jilted and jealous Husband was hot with anger

Israel's transgression...willful sin...had consequences...

forewarned consequences (curses in Deut 28)

Israel's disobedience resulted in severe thorns in her sides

To those who can relate to the Jews...who

- keep going around the same mountain
 - are by their own choice "trapped" in a vicious cycle of sin
- why does the Lord...your Bridegroom...not "just fix it"?

He is testing you, proving you, refining you...

The aspects of your life in which you are the lord...He wants

He wants to be LORD of all your life

He wants you to want Him to be the LORD of all your life

Everything God does/allows has a Divine purpose...

for His glory and our eternal good

The thorns/trials/afflictions are tests – will we run to Jesus or away from Jesus?

Ps 24:1...except the heart of man He created in His own image

And He wants that...with all of His heart He wants our hearts!

And Him having all of our heart is the very best thing...for us.

Why are we so stubborn?!

What good does having the best teachers...Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Jesus...

if a people/person will stubbornly choose to not learn?

The Pattern of apostasy that follows compromise that shapes this period of time and this book

1. Israel compromises and does evil vs good
2. God allows an oppressing conqueror
 - a. Mesopotamia (Ch 3:5-11)...Othniel
 - b. Moab (Ch 3:12-31)...Ehud
 - c. Canaanites (Ch 4:1 – 5:31)...Deborah and Barak
 - d. Midian (Ch 6:1 – 8:32)...Gideon
 - e. Civil War (Ch 8:33 – 10:5)...Tola and Jair
 - f. Philistines and Ammonites (Ch 10:6 – 12:15)...Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon
 - g. Philistines (Ch 13-16)...Samson
3. Israel cries out to the LORD
The power of prayer, confession, and repentance
4. God raises up a judge to deliver them
5. All is well while the judge lived but as soon as he died...
back to the vomit and the cycle starts over

On display:

- the determined unfaithfulness of Israel
- the immovable faithfulness of God to His Word/promises/covenant

Judges Chapter 3

v1-4 left those nations:

Since

- Israel was
 - self-willed and independent
 - unfaithful
 - compromising and co-existing
 - stubbornly stiff-necked
- The LORD desired
 - to test Israel
 - “keep the pressure on” them
 - teach all generations of Israel “the art of war” (holiness)

The LORD allowed the enemy nations to remain in His land

- the Philistines...producing Goliath
 - Ashdod
 - Ashkelon
 - Ekron
 - Gath
 - Gaza
- all the Canaanites...producing Haman
- the Sidonians...producing Jezebel
- the Hivites

to prove/test/display their dependence vs independence

Does the loving God test and chastise us?

Yes!

Heb 12:1-11

Does the loving God want to teach us the “art of war”...

holiness without which we cannot see Him (Heb 12:14)?

Yes! Spiritual warfare

Eph 6:10-18

2 Cor 10:3-5

2 Tim 2:3

The phrase “LORD of hosts” appears 244 times in the Bible

“host” = army

Ex 15:3...every day between Gen 3:15 and Rev 20:15

Includes our 1st day, our last day, every day in between

God uses the trials/tribulations/afflictions of life to teach us to fight...

- weapons training
 - prayer
 - Sword of the Spirit
- mind of a warrior
 - humility
 - meekness (NOT weakness)
 - lowliness
 - Truth...the Person and Captain we are following
 - Love...Matt 5:44
- effect we are to have in battle
 - to smell like Jesus in a rancid world
 - salt and light in a decaying, dark world
 - holiness in a profane world

Holiness...like freedom...must be fought for

Does the Lord warn us about not fighting for holiness?

Yes!

2 Cor 6:14-18

Does the all-knowing God not know if we will obey his Word?

Yes, He does!

We do not...we need to know because it is our eternity that is at stake,
not His

We must learn from Scripture and the history of Israel...

things that are beautiful and pleasing to God

- humility
 - Self is consummately proud
- faithfulness
 - the flesh is always unfaithful to God and others
- holiness...no compromise
 - difficult for American Christians because of our form of government
 - democracy (vs Sovereign Monarchy)
 - fueled by compromise (King does NOT compromise)
 - nothing holy about us...Is 64:6

If we do not learn...we will fall away...become apostate

2 Peter 2:20-22

John 3:3...followed by Phil 3:3 or Gal 3:3

We must

- be very courageous to keep and do the Word of God in the face of hostile neighbors
- cleave to the LORD (Gen 2:24) and forsaking the seductive advances of false gods
- take good heed to love the LORD that loves them and fights for us
- remember that not one thing of God's Word to them has failed

If we do NOT...we will fall away...become apostate...QUICKLY

2 Tim 4:2-4

1 Tim 4:1

2 Thes 2:1-3

1 Cor 9:27

We are at war...be strong and of good courage

Do not stop following Jesus...wherever He leads

Do not turn to the right or to the left

Do not be discouraged by the cares of this world

Do not be deceived by

- psychology...man-centered belief system
- traditions...of men that make Word of God of no effect
- the deception of material wealth...Mammon fails, is failing
- "success"...numbers, appearances

Can a church that compromises the Gospel succeed?

Of course! It is not offensive to the world, it appeals to natural men

Large congregations and beautiful buildings are not indications of a
Divine ministry

Faithfulness to the Word of God is the indication of Divine ministry

Large building or small building or no building

Large congregation or small congregation

The Lord hears our groans...

Rom 8:22-23, 26

But let us be not silenced by the world that opposes our Lord!!

For Such a Time as This

- Pray...for favor, revival
- Prepare yourself...get ready and stay ready
- Engage one person with
 - The Gospel...love and grace to be forgiven
 - The uncompromising Truth

Objective this week:

We've lost our nation...let's fight to take it back, one POW at a time
Invite a loved one, friend to worship with us...to hear the Word of God

Continue

Abide

Finish Well

Learn

- humility
- faithfulness
- holiness

Last week...the pattern of apostasy

This week...it begins – not putting away strange gods and not inclining their hearts to the LORD

v5-7 dwelt among...did evil:

1st Cycle of Apostasy

Two things are always connected –

1. dwelling among (v5)
 - compromise, co-exist
 - intermingled vs utterly destroyed
 - intermarried vs remained holy/separate
2. doing evil (v7)
 - bowed down to false gods
 - served their flesh (sexual, pornographic)

Note: Even the pagans knew daughters were given to son and sons to daughters...

Not sons to sons or daughters to daughters

v8 anger hot against...sold them...served:

Dwelling among and doing evil leads to...consequences
(unavoidable consequences)

The Lord is jealous, will not tolerate spiritual infidelity

So He sold Israel to the Mesopotamians;

if they refuse to serve Him,

loving, merciful, gracious, compassionate, kind, slow to anger,
let them serve an angry, cruel, oppressive, violent master

In this 1st cycle, they served “Cushan-double wickedness”

Doesn't sound like it is going to work out very well...

v9-10 cried unto...raised up:

After 8 years under the heavy hand of a cruel taskmaster, Israel cries out to the Lord; it took 8 years of being greatly distressed to surrender to rule of the Lord their God!

Stubbornness is self-defeating

At which time the Lord raised up a deliverer – Othniel

- “force of God”
- exceptional “bloodline” with a top notch role model...Caleb, the “last man standing”
- courageous...took Debir (Ch1:11-13, Joshua 15:15-20)

The LORD raised up His deliverer by coming upon him...

- The LORD in reality is their Deliverer
- for the purpose of going out to war.

The judge and the people had to go...

but the LORD fought and delivered the enemy

Acts 2...Holy Spirit came upon...and the 120 went out...to war

Eph 6:10-12 strong in the Lord and the power of His might
wage war against the enemy...spiritual entities

In their personal and passionate love for Jesus Christ, they went to war
against the kingdom of darkness and to rescue the lost souls around
them

It wasn't one doing the work of evangelism, it was all of them!

Behind every face they saw the face of the Son of God

Notice the “doesn't say Trinity” nature of God...the Personalities of *Elohim*

1. LORD...different than
2. Spirit of the LORD...different than
3. Angel of the LORD (Ch 2:1, 4)

v11 rest...died:

Delivered by the LORD using His deliverer, God's land and God's people had
rest/peace...for 40 years, as long as Othniel was alive

Will Newton's First Law of Motion be at work?

*A body in motion remains in motion unless it is acted on by an external
force. If the body is at rest it remains at rest.*

Will Israel remain at rest, ruled by their God? No...

- the rest is short-lived
- the motion is acted upon by an internal force...their wicked hearts

v12-14 did evil again:

Rather than remaining at rest and continuing (in motion) with the LORD, Israel reversed course...went right back to the vomit
Thus begins the 2nd Cycle of Apostasy

Depending upon the Lord in times of trouble is easier than in times of peace and prosperity
(The Lord used persecution to fuel the spread of the Gospel, not prosperity)

It is that internal force...our sin nature...that must be radically changed by God if we are to be made right...and to stay in right relationship with Him
God does not wink or “shine on” our evil

So the Lord raised up another kingdom (Dan 2:21)...the Moabites, descendants of Lot by incest

Eglon rounded up other ancient enemies of Israel

- Ammon...also descendants of Lot by incest
- Amalek...Ex 17 (Moses, Aaron, Hur, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation), the manifestation of Gal 5:17 (until Rev 21:1)

Moab, Ammon, and Amalek...all of whom harassed Israel during their time of wandering...ganged up on Israel and put her under heavy-handed subjection for 18 years

v15 cried out...Ehud:

This time, it took 18 years of oppression for Israel to bend their knee and surrender to God's rule over their life

When they cried out, God was faithful to raise up another deliverer...Ehud

- “united”...God and His people, as intended by God
- tribe of Benjamin...fierce warriors
- left-handed and ambidextrous
 - [Judges 20:11-16](#)
 - [1 Chron 12:1-2](#)

Ehud had a plan...he would lead Israel's delegation to take the tax/tribute payment imposed by Eglon

- money
- food...grain, fruits, veggies
from the land flowing with milk and honey

v16-17 made him a dagger:

And he would carry a concealed weapon – a sharp, two-edged sword measuring 12-15 inches
(Hebrew word translated “cubit” is found only here in OT Scriptures)

The length of the sword is such because

- it could be concealed
- it would need to be that long to get thru all the fat to the guts of Eglon

Eglon...a self-indulgent, very fat man

- unable to run away from an attacker
- not agile enough to defend himself

v18-19 sent away...went out:

Ehud presented Israel’s tribute/tax to Eglon ...
no doubt Eglon was delighted to see all that food!

Ehud then heads home with the rest of his entourage, going with them as far as the graven images that marked the border with Israel.

Then, he returned to Eglon...with a secret!

Everybody loves secrets!

That’s why there are not any secrets!

The hardest thing for people to keep is a secret

Perhaps Eglon thought Ehud’s secret was

- a special bribe for a special favor
- some juicy G2/military intelligence from an ambitious wanna-be spy
- some flattering words to stroke his ego

So...knowing whatever Ehud has is for his eyes/ears only, Eglon urgently clears the room of his people so he and Ehud can have a private meeting

“Oh...goodie!”

v20-22 message from God:

Eglon met Ehud in his private quarters on top of the building
Ehud's secret for Eglon – a message from God (*Elohim*)!
Eglon stands up to “get it”...and Ehud gives it to him!

Ehud reaches for his concealed weapon...sharp, two-edged sword...
with his left hand

- he is not going to miss
- his strongest, steadiest hand

He drives the sword home with such force into the softness of Eglon's belly that
his sword sinks to the handle...and is swallowed up in Eglon's fat
The wound is instantly fatal...and in death, Eglon vacated his bowels

We wield our sharp two-edged sword (Heb 4:12)

- without mercy...to do damage to the kingdom of the devil
- with mercy...not to hurt but to benefit other souls

- not like a heat-seeking missile or a bunker-buster, a message of death
- like Divine words that are spirit and are Life

v23-26 Ehud escaped while they tarried:

To buy time for his daring escape, Ehud locks Eglon's body in the parlor...
an upper room to catch the cool breeze for comfort and ventilation

The closed, locked door is a message – Stay out! Do not Disturb!
“He must be in the loo taking care of ‘business’.
Let him have his privacy.”

Eglon's attendants waited and waited...whistling uncomfortably
They waited until they were confused about what was going on in there!
They took the liberty to unlock the bathroom door...as it were...
only to find the king dead, lying in his own mess.

Confusion now reigns in Moab.

With the delay and the confusion, Ehud escapes back to Israel

v27-30 blew a trumpet...Follow:

Given a way of escape provided by the LORD, Ehud sounds the alarm and exhorts Israel to

- follow him following the LORD...
- stop following their flesh and their idols.

His rallying cry:

- Time to strike now, while confusion reigns
- Victory thru surrender!

The nation rallies and conquers the shallow waters of the Jordan River

- to prevent the “homeland” Moabite army from entering Israel
- to prevent the occupying Moabite army from fleeing to Moab

In control of strategic places...the crossing points...Israel slays 10,000 Moabite soldiers and the occupation ends

The peace that follows is the longest one in the Book of Judges...80 years

In the spiritual battle in which we are engaged, The Deliverer’s cry to us is the same –

- the time to strike now (2 Cor 6:2)
- Victory thru surrender!

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Deliverer, has control of the strategic places...
the crossing places...

He has the keys of hell and death (Rev 1:18)

There is no escape the judgment of God for the unrepentant unbeliever who refuses to stop following idols

They only escape from the wrath of God is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ,
(1 Cor 10:13, Rom 5:1, Heb 4:1)

v31 after him was Shamgar:

After Ehud died lived a man named Shamgar who delivered Israel by putting down Philistine uprisings with a 10 foot ox goad

In Ch 3...2 cycles of apostasy that are examples given to us for our learning

The people of God are warned against compromise and co-existence

2 Cor 6:14-18

1 Cor 15:33

If Christianity compromises/co-exists/intermingles/unites with even a small portion of

- Humanism
- New Age
- Evolution
- Gnosticism
- Cults
- Ecumenicalism

who will “divide and conquer” who?

What happens when Christianity compromises with the world?

Let’s consider Church History from Jesus’ perspective:

- Commendation...Ephesus and Philadelphia
- Condemnation....Pergamos, Thyatira, Laodicea

What happens when Christianity intermingles/co-exists/compromises/unites with humanism?

The Word of God is no longer held as inspired, infallible, inerrant...
the foundation of the faith crumbles and the house falls

What happens when a nation founded on the Word of God embraces humanism?

Humanism divides and conquers...

- order falls into chaos
- the blessings of God become curses from God

Economy will falter and crumble until the people cry out for a strong leader to fix it

Sometimes that strong leader will create a crisis to generate the cry for a strong leader...

and an economic nightmare becomes a political nightmare (loss of freedoms)

Lenin, Hitler came to power because they understood, “It’s the economy, stupid!”
and people are willing to surrender freedom for food and economic security

Laws of the land will become oppressive when man is the lawgiver instead of God
(Gen 6:4, Rom 7:18)

The goal of “separation of church and state” is to elevate man to position of lawgiver, not accountable to The Lawgiver

That land will see laws such as

- Public expression of Christianity is criminalized
- Bibles, Crosses, Christian posters are not allowed in schools, government offices, workplace
- Public crosses are removed
- Biblical exposition deemed offensive by homosexuals and Muslims is legislated as “hate speech”

- Same-sex marriages
- Schools teaching homosexuality and parents deprived of opposition
- Homeschooling declared as unconstitutional unless the state-approved curriculum is taught
- Christian radio (as we know it) becomes illegal
- Bible studies with more than 10 people need a religious permit to meet, even if in someone's home...

the Church driven underground, separated out of the State

Media will not cover the news objectively, it will

- actively participate in "writing" the news, managing the "news" reported
- be an extension of the political process vs an independent "watch dog"
- unelected branch of the Government...propaganda machine for the elite

Schools will become a vehicle of indoctrination vs education

Lenin: "Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted."

Hitler practiced it...Hitler Youth in 1930s

Hitler: "When an opponent declares, "I will not come over to your side," I calmly say, "Your child belongs to us already...What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community."

ACT-UP (militant homosexual group) admitted that the model they used to formulate their strategy came from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

What happens when a nation forgets the God upon whom it is founded?

A pastor can be arrested for reading the Bible in a public place...charged with

- intimidation (reading the Bible was a "threatening" act)
- impeding an open business (DMV was closed)
- trespassing...on public property

Citizens can talk about anything...except the Word of God

Acceptable behavior can be defined by public opinion, not the Word of God

USA needs a spiritual revival...to be "united" with the "force of God" to throw off the heavy yoke of a cruel taskmaster that has slowly, steadily changed a God-fearing nation into a God-forgetting and even a God-rejecting nation

NOT a Cross-less social Gospel seeking to meet the emotional and physical needs of men.

Addressing symptoms vs the problem does not bring fundamental social change.

But the Gospel of personal salvation that meets man's spiritual needs and leads to true social change...addressing "the heart of the problem"

Example: Massive change in European cultures due to the Industrial Revolution

The social changes (symptoms) in France were treated at the physical level...
failure to treat the problem led to the French Revolution

The spiritual revival in England (Wesley) addressed the spiritual need of men first
and then, as a result, their emotional and physical needs...and England
was saved from its own Revolution

Laws were wrong, were disobeyed because they violated the Higher Law of God,
and were changed...slavery, for example

If there is to be a spiritual revival in USA, what people must stand up?

Christians...genuine Christians, not pretenders

Genuine Christians MUST be involved, must be active, must be vocal!

However, the great defect with many a Christian is...laziness

The vast majority of Christians in USA do not want to be involved...
not even in their local church.

If they go to church, they go and leave as soon as possible rather than connect to a Body,
and invest themselves in others

Many a Christian does not wage a diligent battle against the human condition...sin nature
And falls captive to a cruel taskmaster.

Freedom as individuals and as a nation stems directly from John 8:31-32

We have neglected, wandered from, forgotten that...and wonder why we are losing our
freedoms

Hoodwinked...with no one to blame but ourselves

We need the "force of God" to be "united" with the Lord for Him to deliver us!

The only cure for spiritual laziness is the Spirit of the Lord upon...which stirs

- passion for Jesus
- seeing people as Son of God sees them...seeing His face behind theirs
- agonizing over them as the Lamb of God does

We must go back to the Cross...be filled afresh with the Spirit of Christ

What is needed when a nation forgets God?

Change is needed...in the spiritual condition of this nation!

Or else...John 12:47-48

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to
judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects me, and receives not my
words, hath one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall
judge him in the last day.

As “Christians”, are we

- fearless, daring warriors like
 - Othniel...”force of God”?
 - Ehud...”united” with our Lord?
- fat and sassy, comfortable, complacent blobs like Eglon...incapable of
 - defending ourselves from attack
 - escaping danger because we are too fat?

What comes out of our belly?

- torrents of Living Water (John 7:37-39)
- that which must be vacated (Rom 16:17-18, Phil 3:19)

Are we secure in our “Way of Escape”....and calling on other to also escape before it is too late?

We must learn

- To fight
 - We are commanded to go into battle...the battle that never stops
 - The battle belongs to the Lord
 - Jesus goes before us...He will not leave us or forsake us
 - It is our reasonable mindset to be strong and of good courage
 - It is our reasonable service to follow Jesus with focus and determination...
wherever
 - Our strength is God Himself – the Word of God and the Spirit of God
- Divine ministry (vs social work)
 - A callings vs a hiring
(Gal 1:1)
 - Accountability to the Caller/Author and Finisher
(Gal 1:10-11)
 - Inspired by God vs instructed/indoctrinated by man
(Gal 1:12)
 - The true and pure Gospel
(Gal 1:6-9)
 - Spirit-led
(Gal 2:2)...Gospel-centric
 - Spied out and attacked by the enemy
(Gal 2:3-5)
 - Uncompromised
(Gal 2:11-14)
- Our calling
 - To make disciples...cure the spiritual ills of the world
 - Not social work...cure the social ills of the world
 - To preach the Gospel...pleasing to God and offensive to man...humility
 - Not to do only social work...pleasing to man and puffing us up,
making us feel better about ourselves
 - To be broken and poured out...feeling good only about Him Who
Alone is Good
 - LH is not a social work but a Gospel work
 - To plant churches
 - To preach the Gospel to the nation and its abandoned children
 - To make disciples
 - To send lights into the darkness

The best way to learn how to fish...is go fishing
vs listening to a fisherman tell you fishing stories

The best way to learn how to fish for men...is to go fishing!

And don't worry about the size of the catch...that's the Lord's business
Ours is to go fishing

Judges Chapter 4

v1-2 again did evil:

The 3rd cycle of apostasy...the 3rd trip to the vomit for Israel...came

- after the judge Ehud died
- after 80 years of peace and prosperity

Given the sin nature of man, what happens to a people when they get comfortable and prosperous?

- spiritually complacent...open to deception and compromise
- independent from God
- proud
- self-indulgent...becoming slaves to their lusts
- turn from God that gave them the peace and prosperity

Happened repeatedly in

- Israel
- Christianity...every movement of the Spirit has ended in the flesh (Gal 3:3)
- USA in last 50 years
- lives of individual believers

Since Israel were slaves to their lusts, the Lord sold them like slaves... to bring them back to Himself

This time to Jabin...“Pharaoh”, “Abimelech”, “Caesar”...king of the Canaanites

Jabin’s “strongman” was Sisera

v3 Israel cried...chariots of iron:

After 20 years of being completely dominated...even crushed...

by the Canaanites and their vastly superior military technology,
(chariots of iron...much stronger and heavier than wood)

Israel finally cries out in pain to the Lord their God for deliverance

Pain is not weakness leaving the body, pain tells us something is wrong

- pain (physical, emotional, or spiritual) happens in this tortured world
- pain can be self-inflicted...every time Jesus is not Lord

To not act on the message of an intense, enduring pain is irrational.

Why does fallen man like pain so much?

Why do we, as God’s children, put up with so much pain before we cry out to the Lord in complete surrender?

After 8, then 18, and now 20 years of stubbornly enduring pain and
after all else has failed,
Israel turns to prayer

When do we really pray?

When we are desperately floundering in “I can do it myself”
When we are between a rock and a hard place and we cry like children
When we are wits’ end and all “logic” flies out the window
As a last resort vs the first “instinct”

Yet it is prayer that nourishes and develops the life of Christ in us

The purpose of prayer is not for us to

- whine like spoiled children in order to “get things” we want from our Father
- babble on about things the all-knowing God knows better than we
- direct the Almighty in what He needs to do and how and when
- “fill the air waves” with religious noise/static (vain repetitions)
- impress God and man with our piety and eloquence

The purpose of prayer is

- humble ourselves before a holy God...
 - acknowledging our powerlessness
 - acknowledging His all-powerfulness
 - and being ready to listen to what He has to say
- for God’s will be done on earth, not our will be done in heaven
- to reveal the Presence of God indwelling our lives that we would get to know our God more intimately
- to change our severely limited perspective
- for God’s holiness, order, and purposes to be accomplished in and thru us...to change us vs to change our circumstances (Amos 3:3)
- offer thanks and praise and adoration, requests for guidance and wisdom, etc in accordance with His nature, not ours

Our flesh hates prayer...we would rather proudly endure extended periods of
crushing by merciless man/Self than pray as our Father desires us to
But there is no good thing in our flesh and the flesh can never please God
The Spirit of Christ in us must subdue our flesh and keep it in chains

Feed/nourish the spirit with prayer and the Word of God
And the Word of God tells us to pray

- without ceasing
- with boldness

v4-5 Deborah:

Deborah...

- wife
- prophetess
- judge (only woman judge in Book of “not following Joshua”)

There is a significant issue here,

not because God is a chauvinist (He is not!)

- Miriam...jealous of little bro, temporary leprosy
- Huldah...Josiah, found/read Book, enquire of LORD, went to her, revival
- Isaiah's wife
- Anna...widow, baby Jesus

but because He is a God of order

God's order (1 Cor 11:3...leadership)

1. God
2. Man/husband
3. Woman/wife

God created Adam (work the land) then Eve (care for the children and home)

There are differences between men and women designed by the Creator!

And different “assignments”...He gave to man the responsibility to lead

The men in this 3rd stage of Israel's Dark Ages are conspicuous in their absence

Deborah is both prophet and judge because men had forsaken their
God-given responsibility of leadership

Due to the weakness of male leadership, God turned to a woman

No man would step up so the Lord raised up/strengthened a weaker vessel

Clearly we see Deborah is very capable...but that is not the issue

God's order is the issue

v6-7 Barak...Mount Tabor...river Kishon:

Deborah was judge, but not a military leader like the other judges

The military leader of Israel was Barak

The LORD of hosts, thru His leader Deborah, commands Barak (“lightning”) to
go to the

- camp...Mount Tabor
- battlefield...river Kishon (more of a stream that turned into a swampy quagmire when it rains)

He has strategically (vs randomly) selected

The Lord is in complete control of this...and every...situation (including yours!)

v8-10 If you will go with me:

The Lord thru Deborah has commanded Barak to go
Barak responds to Deborah, not the Lord –
“Only if you go with me!”

Different than Moses’ similar words to the LORD in Ex 33:15

“Fine!

I’ll go with you but this will result in no honor for you but for a woman.”

Was it not enough that the LORD of hosts was going before him?
What kind of a soldier is this, hiding behind a woman?!

This whole set up seems backwards

Yet...[Heb 11:32](#)

I suspect he was familiar with the terrain of the battlefield and “knew” it
favored the enemy chariots.

So he was reluctant to accept the plan, unlike Joshua and the Lord’s plan
to take Jericho

But...with the Lord’s leading lady in camp with him...

he obeyed whole-heartedly and never looked back

v11 Heber the Kenite:

The Kenites were descendents of the Midianites and
Heber was a descendent of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law

They lived off by themselves, away from the rest of the family

It appears that he did not agree with the rest of the family making peace with
Jabin (v17), who was oppressing Israel

v12-13 they showed Sisera:

The Kenites (but not Moses’s in-laws) passed along to Sisera some
military intelligence about the movement of Israeli troops

Brimming with confidence, Sisera acted on that G2 by going...
right where the Lord led him

v14-16 LORD discomfited Sisera:

On the appointed day of battle, known only to the Lord, Deborah says to Barak,

“Rise up!
It is time to fight!
This is the day the LORD will deliver Sisera into your hand.
Is He not the One that goes before you...not me?!”

And on that day, the God who sends and withholds the rain sent rain...lots of rain

Because of the resulting flash flood, the stream Kishon became

- a river...[Ch 5:21](#)
- a swampy quagmire

And just like that...suddenly...the battlefield that favored the enemy chariots now favors the foot soldiers of Israel

The strength of the Canaanites became their weakness and the weakness of Israel became their strength

The chariots of iron...heavy, ponderous...got stuck in the mud, worthless in battle
The infantry of Barak now had the overwhelming advantage over the “tanks” of Sisera

Note: I am willing to bet that the Lord did not send the rain until Barak moved out...by faith

Confusion and fear enveloped the Canaanite army and they fled...

only to be run down and wiped out

The only survivor: Sisera

Note: This same “turn of events” happened on April 16, 1799 when Napoleon defeated the Ottoman (Muslim) Turks in the Battle of Mount Tabor (same place)

Like Barak, we see the battlefield before us (the world) and cannot help but realize it overwhelmingly favors the enemy.

We are behind enemy lines, after all.

But the Maker of heaven and earth Who fights for us can turn the tables faster than we can say “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”

Rom 8:31
1 John 4:4

We must obey whole-heartedly...by faith...and watch God glorify His name!

Obey while He tells us to wait quietly...not conferring with flesh and blood
(Phil 3:3)

Ex 14:13 Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD,
which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom
ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more
forever.

2 Chron 14:8-12

2 Chron 16:1-3, 8-9

(a rebuke for conferring with flesh and blood, trusting the Syrians)

2 Chron 20:15-17

Lam 3:25-26

wait: “standing under”, “active enduring” vs doing nothing
(we must be taught to wait...wait training = trials)

Obey when He says, Rise up!

Moving forward in the power of the Holy Spirit
Running without being weary, without fainting
Following with unwavering determination

Back to the battle and its lone Canaanite survivor

v17-20 Jael:

Sisera flees to what he thinks is friendly confines, to what he thought would be a
safe haven

(but this Kenite family does not share the other's allegiance to Jabin)

He is tired, probably soaked to the bone, and thirsty

Heber's wife, Jael

- coaxes Sisera inside her tent
- covered him with a warm blanket
- got him a little warm milk

All comfy, Sisera gives Jael some instructions to protect his hide...
then drifts off the dream land (only to wake up in Hades)

v21-22 nail...hammer:

When he was sound asleep, Jael silently took a tent peg and a hammer...
and knew how to use them because women were responsible to put up the
tents in the Bedouin culture...
and she nailed Sisera to the floor!
And then some (Ch 5:26)

Sisera died shamefully at the hands of a woman...
hiding in fear, not with honor battle.
And v9 came to pass for Barak...no honor for him either.

This battle is a story of

- 2 women
 - one to start the war to free Israel
 - one to finish the war
- 2 military men
 - one a cowardly lion turned roaring lion
 - one a roaring lion turned cowardly lion
- 1 Almighty God
 - for Whom nothing is impossible
 - Who gets all the glory

v23-24 God subdued:

The battle belongs to...the Lord
He defeated the mighty Canaanite army
Never again would the Canaanites rise up to oppress His people Israel

History = His story

Our role: obey

- Walk by faith...more than enough evidence is given us
- Wait upon the Lord...He is good to those who wait on Him
- Don't keep Him waiting...when the appointed day is now

Regardless of how things might look, the truth is 2 Cor 12:9-10
Be true to the Reality of life...be weak and let God do what He alone can do and
wants to do for our eternal good and for His glory!

2 Thes 3:3

Col 3:3

Take-aways from Ch 4

1. Men – act like men and lead...be a real man!
By following the LORD

David's last words to his son Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-3)
The Son of David's words to us (1 Cor 16:13)

2. Pray
 - without ceasing...1st instinct vs last resort
 - with boldness...being changed vs asking circumstances to change
3. The Lord is in complete control of every situation

We see the battlefield before us (the world) and cannot help but realize it overwhelmingly favors the enemy...but the Maker of heaven and earth Who fights for us can turn the tables faster than we can say "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

The Lord probably will not turn the tables until we move out...by faith
Obey to His "wait training"
Wait...believing
Obey to move out and not keep Him waiting
Move out...believing

Judges Chapter 5

Last week: God intervened to give Israel a stunning military victory over the very powerful Canaanites

This week: A song of victory...that began with desperate prayer, crying out to the LORD in anguish

v1-2 sang...Praise ye the LORD:

With great exuberance, Deborah and Barak sing a duet to praise the Lord
(ala Moses in Ex 15 and David in 2 Sam 22)

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise Him for His glory, majesty, power

And PTL specifically for avenging the oppression of the Canaanites...
when the people volunteered to fight a very intimidating enemy

Those who volunteered responded

- to the movement of the Spirit of God
- by faith
- being available vs able (Ch 3:1-2)

When they responded to His Spirit, God avenged them...
unconditional surrender leads to victory!

When we offer our lives as living sacrifices in response to the moving of
the Spirit in our lives, we see God do amazing things!

v3 kings...princes:

This song is “addressed” to the LORD (Self-Existing) God (*Elohim*) of Israel,
to Whom belongs all glory, honor, and praise

It is sung (vocal “sing” and play a musical instrument “sing”) also for the ears of

- Israel, God’s people...of that time and of the future
- all the nations...then and even in our day

The message to the nations, generation after generation:

To fight against Israel is to fight against the God of Israel...insane!
Gen 12:3 is still in effect!

v4-5 Seir...Edom...Sinai:

Deborah and Barak praise the Lord for His power...previously displayed when Exodus from bondage + Appearance on Mount Sinai + Leading into the Promised Land

As it relates to the battle in Ch 4, the “weapons” of the Lord are introduced...
torrents of rain and flooded streams
i.e. creation (“nature”) vs swords, bullets...things He made vs man made

Are the weather and the forces of “nature” under control of Satan,
the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2)?

God The Creator has absolute control of all of His creation...
natural and supernatural, spiritual and material

Before the Lord intervened against the Canaanites, what was life like in Israel?

v6 highways...byways:

a. economic

Because of the oppression and injustice of the Canaanites

- highways (wide, caravan routes) were abandoned because of all the thieves
- byways (narrow, crooked, off the beaten path) were used by the Jews

Thus, the economy of Israel was severely hamstrung, all but strangled

v7 inhabitants of the villages:

b. political/social

Civilian leadership was virtually non-existent...no man would stand up
Until Deborah stood up to nurse and nurture the nation

Thus, a disorderly society

v8 they chose new gods:

c. religious/spiritual

The core reason why they were

- oppressed by the Canaanites
- their economy was hyper-depressed
- leadership was disorderly

was because they chose new gods...

rejected the True God in favor of false gods

At the root, the problem was spiritual

The result of their spiritual fornication/idolatry was

- war...continual conflict, no peace/rest
- “give me all the guns”...disarmed, stripped of all weapons
(making chariots of iron all the more terrifying)
- bitter and humiliating defeat
- cruel oppression by the heavy hand of the Canaanites
- intense suffering

All their pain was self-inflicted because they chose new gods

Is “choosing new gods” a phenomenon unique to the Jews?

In our day, Christians are choosing new gods...ecumenicalism moving toward

- the One World Religion in Rev 13
- the great whore in Rev 17

[read from Yale doc...<http://www.yale.edu/faith/acw/acw.htm>]

While thousands of Arabs and former Islamic believers are coming to Christ and experiencing forgiveness and the new birth by the uncompromising and offensive Cross, American ministers are turning to *Chrislam*

Check the list for the names with which you might be familiar (consider their spheres of influence!!)...there are 500+ ministers that have signed this apostate covenant identifying YHWH the God of Israel and the ancient Nabatean moon god allah of Islam as the same “God” for the sake of advancing a Social gospel...
peace without the offensive, dividing Gospel of the Prince of Peace

NOTHING could be further from the truth!!!!

The God revealed in the Bible cannot be the same god presented in the Koran!

[2 Thes 2:1-12](#) (peace on man’s terms is unrighteousness!)

[1 Thes 5:1-3](#)

All who make an unholy alliance or covenant with God’s enemy will suffer the same fate as the enemy

What is God’s view on “Common Word”, Yale’s response, signers, Chrislam?

[1 Tim 4:1](#)

Jesus foretold us this

[Matt 13:31-32](#)

We will stick to Jesus and His ways, not to the world and its ways!

We will teach the Bible and only the Bible, God’s inspired doctrine

[1 Tim 4:16](#)

v9 My heart is toward:

Deborah and Barak are singing from their heart...it goes out to those who
volunteered to fight chariots of iron with sticks and staves,
with farm implements

And the Lord's heart...and hand...went out to the volunteers, also...
when they stood to fight!

The LORD's heart...and hand...goes out to all who volunteer to stand for
the truth and fight against all the compromises that plague Christianity
today...

they/we are a mere remnant opposing very powerful forces WITHIN the Church

v10-11 Speak ye:

Singing after-the-fact...

“Say thank you to the Lord and His volunteer army all you

- merchants...rich and influential
- governors
- who now travel without fear
- been delivered from the thieves lying in wait at the watering places
(ala Ex 2:17)
- now can go to the gate and actually get justice

Be grateful for the righteous acts of our God.

PTL!”

v12-13 Awake...arise:

When the Lord's heart went out to His people, He called Deborah and Barak to
stand up and follow Him

The Lord would lead His people to freedom
He would give the survivors in Israel dominion over Jabin and Sisera
He...and His volunteer army of unarmed soldiers

The Lord will lead His people to freedom...John 8:31-32

He will give the survivors in Christianity dominion over the enemy...Rev 3:8-10

Some of the tribes would fight and some would not

v14-18 Out of:

The tribes who by faith did stand up, march, and fight against “impossible odds”

- Ephraim
- Benjamin
- Machir/west Manasseh
- Issachar
- most notably...Zebulun and Naphtali

The tribes that did not fight but stayed away

- Reuben
- Gilead...Gad and east Manasseh
- Dan
- Asher

More on this in a moment...now a word about the battle

v19 kings came...took no gain:

In this corner, weighing in with 900 chariots of iron...the Canaanites

When Sisera was given the military intelligence by the Kenites regarding the Israeli troop movements, the Canaanites marched

Not just Jabin but all the confederated kings of the Canaanites

The other kings did so at their own expense, which they figured to recoup with the spoils of war

Sisera led the confederated army to Megiddo and the brook Kishon... nothing more than a creek/”crick”, really

[describe from vantage point of standing on Mount Carmel]

v20-22 fought from heaven:

And in this corner, with a reach beyond the stars of heaven...the LORD God of Israel

When Barak moved out to fight against the iron chariots of Sisera, the Lord fought from heaven...

with rain, lots of rain in a very short period of time

The Lord was willing that the creek did rise...

and all 900 chariots of iron got stuck in the mud

Strength became weakness (Canaanites) and weakness became strength (Israel)

The tables were turned and a mighty victory was snatched from certain defeat

No nation or confederation of nations can prevail against the LORD God of Israel.
Satan and his counterfeit christ do not believe this...but will learn the hard way in the Battle of Armageddon

No covenant of religious men can “hold water” in the presence of a jealous God.
The counterfeit trinity coming does not believe this...but will also learn the hard way

But...remember that not all the tribes responded to the call to fight

v23 Curse ye Meroz:

With a blessing for the faithful comes a curse for the unfaithful

The curse comes from Whom?

The Angel of the Lord...Jesus Christ

The curse is upon whom?

Those who did not by faith come out and fight

Those who in their unbelief were unwilling to get involved

We need to take note of those who were unwilling to fight this day so we might be warned in our day

- Rueben (v15-16): faint-hearted, deliberated and resolved to not get involved, pre-occupied, disinterested, compromised
- Gilead, Dan, and Asher (v17): too busy with business, too self-absorbed, simply could not be bothered or interrupted
- their excuses pale all the more in the face of Zebulun and Naphtali who jeopardized their lives for the true God

To those who carry His name but out of fear/unbelief are

- complacent
- compromised
- too busy
- unwilling
- unavailable

to get involved in the fight

(following by faith the Lord Who fights and to Whom the battle belongs),
Jesus has some stern words...no Christian has an excuse!

Our heart should be like Deborah's...and

- David's (1 Sam 17:45-51)
- Mordecai's and Esther's (Esther 4:13-16)
- Barnabas' and Paul's (Acts 15:25-26)
- Paul's (Acts 20:22-24)

James 5:10-11a Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.
Behold, we count them happy which endure.

Jesus never promised "spa living" for His followers!

v24-27 Jael:

Deborah and Barak now sing of the battle's heroine...
Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite

This courageous woman single-handedly

- "disarmed" the mighty commander, the Canaanites' strongman
- sent him off to sleep with a large bowl of warm milk vs a cool, refreshing drink of water
 - that which seemed "better" actually was "worse"
 - that which seemed to "honor" actually "shamed"
- took the hammer to his head...knocking senseless, knocking out
- nailed him to the floor
- crushed his head with the hammer or cut off his head with a sword

The battle-tested commander was out-manuevered by a humble woman
The waster of Israel was wasted

v28-30 The mother of Sisera:

The tables were turned on Sisera...and on his mother
Both expected an easy victory and much booty...both were mistaken

Sisera's mother kept looking out the window for her little boy, the hero of the
Canaanites, to return

Her attendants attempted to comfort her...she

- either comforted herself
- or she knew deep inside he was not going to return but was in denial
"He must be busy dividing the spoils of war."

Islam (culture of 7th century Arabia): women are property of their husbands.

The world in the 21st Century is bowing in fear before 7th Century Arabia

v31 So let all thine enemies...them that love:

The duet of Deborah and Barak concludes with

- a shout of victory
- a declaration of fact, henceforth and ever more

So let all God's enemies perish at His hand

- ignobly
- shamefully
- a "diseased head" crushed or cut off

So let all those who "love" the Lord shine as the noon day sun

- action...against "impossible odds"
- participatory vs stand-off-ish (John 14:15, Luke 6:46)
- standing up and getting involved in what He is doing
- following...which will jeopardize comfortable, cozy lives

The song of victory...began with desperate, at-end-of-self prayer (Ch 4:3)

Prayer is a battle...oftimes, prayer is the battle!

We put on the armor of God (Eph 6:10-17)...

for the purpose of prayer (Eph 6:18)

Prayer in the life of the believer is the "strategic ground" the devil wants
and relentlessly attacks, discourages, and distracts to gain

Prayer is not hard...overcoming our flesh, the world, and the devil is hard

If we struggle in prayer it is because the enemy is gaining ground

Thus, we must be soldiers

- disciplined
- trained in
 - “art of war” (Ch 3:1-2), to “war a good warfare” (1 Tim 1:18)
 - the Sword of the Spirit (Rom 10:17 to fight effectively)
- be watchful, alert, discerning
- rigorously conditioned to endure the promised hardships
- calm in the heat of battle...
 - not doubting, reacting vs uncertain, thinking
- steadfast...resolved
- unshakable confidence in the Supreme Commander

With our armor on in order to pray...we are

- able to stand against the wiles of the enemy
- overcomers
- more than conquerors

If ever there was a time to be a part of the Lord’s volunteer army...it is now!

Judges Chapter 6

How many Gideon's do we have here this morning?

v1 Israel did evil:

This is the 4th cycle of apostasy, the 4th trip back to the vomit for Israel...
did the nation quit singing the song of Deborah?

Whatever the reason, the nation is no longer seeking the Lord

v2-6 Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites:

Therefore, because His people were no longer seeking Him, the God of Israel
raised up another enemy to oppress His people...
chastisement to restore vs punishment to destroy

The oppression by the Midianites may be the most severe in the Book of Judges

- the nomadic desert dwellers came up annually
 - like a plague of locusts every harvest time to steal the food of the Jews
 - with their "chariots"...camels...capable of long distance raids
- the Jews went into hiding, any place they could find to get out of sight

After 7 years of debilitating fear and near starvation, Israel cried out to the Lord.

v7-10 the LORD sent a prophet:

The Lord heard their cry...and answered via an unnamed prophet

The Lord's answer:

"How many times have I delivered you in the past?
To jog your memory, here are a few examples....Egypt, Canaan.
To remain a free people all you had to do was to obey My voice.
But you have not obeyed My voice.
(Ask Baal to save you.)"

According to God's righteous justice, they do not deserve to be delivered.
But the God of Israel delights in mercy...so what follows is a marvelously
merciful work of God

- in one weak man
- in the entire nation using that one weak man

v11-12 the Angel of the LORD:

We have previously seen The Angel of the LORD

Ch 2:1-4

Who is “The Angel of the LORD”?

Pre-incarnate God the Son, Jesus Christ

Appears in OT to

- Hagar in Gen 16
- Abraham in Gen 22 (sacrifice of only beloved son)
- Moses in Ex 3 (burning bush...I AM...Gospel of John)
- Balaam in Num 22
- Israel in Judges 2
- Samson’s parents in Judges 13
- David in 2 Sam 24 (when numbered his army)
- Elijah in 1 Kings 19 (post-victory blues)
- 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in 2 Kings 19

Jesus appears to Gideon on his father’s land...Gideon is doing what?

Threshing wheat IN a winepress...hiding from the Midianites

To this fearful man, Jesus says what?

“The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor.”

Jesus is speaking in the singular...directly to and only to...Gideon.

Israel is crying out to the LORD for deliverance from the Midianites...
and the LORD appears to a man cowering in a hidey hole?

As we move thru Ch 8, pay attention to what kind of a man Gideon is...
fearful and doubtful

Yet Jesus calls Gideon a “mighty man of valor”?! (Wait for it....)

v13 Gideon said:

Gideon’s speaks of the LORD (that is with him) as if He were not there.

“Yeah, right.

If the LORD is with us, why have all these bad things happened to us?

(“us” vs “me”...not hearing Jesus’ use of the singular, personally)

Where has God been?

He has not ‘been there’ for us like He was for our fathers...

He has forsaken us and abandoned us.”

How many Gideons are here this morning?

Before we go any further into this conversation,

- Who has forsaken and abandoned Whom?
- Can a people reasonably expect to be blessed by God when they continually disobey and dishonor God?
- Would 'bad things' ever happen to us if God is with us?
Sure...Phil 1:29, 2 Tim 3:12

Let's go on...

v14 the LORD...Go:

Who initiated this conversation?

The Angel of the LORD

To whom did Gideon respond?

The Angel of the LORD

Who is speaking to Gideon?

The LORD

The Angel of the LORD = the LORD

John 1:18...approx 1250 years before He was born of a virgin

John 10:30

Going back to v12..."I AM with you..."

So there is Gideon, complaining about the LORD...to the LORD, to His face!

How many Gideons are here this morning?

In His mercy and loving kindness, the LORD is gentle with this fearful and doubtful man He is going to raise up

The LORD calls Gideon to be Israel's next judge...military leader to throw off the oppression of a much stronger enemy.

He gives Gideon a simple command: Go

- in your might (What might? What does the LORD see that we don't)
- you shall save Israel (by your hand I will save Israel)
- I have sent you
- I want to use you to change everything

v15 Oh my Lord:

“Excuse me...do you know who you are talking to?
You must have me confused with another guy.
I’m the last guy you should be talking to!”

Not exactly your Type A personality...not a hard-charging go-getter
Not a George Patton type of guy...not a West Point candidate, for sure

Gideon cannot fathom that the God of Israel...
sitting beneath that oak tree talking with him face-to-face,
although he doesn’t know it yet...
could or would use him to do anything!

Gideon is honest in his self-examination...easily sees his weaknesses and readily
points them out

“My tribe is the 12th man on this team...the water boy!
My family is so poor we cannot pay attention.
And I am the youngest son, the 100 pound weakling.

He is, in his own eyes

- weak and poor
- not worthy and not qualified

But he is, in God’s eyes...the perfect man for the job!

God comes to us when we are weak...because His strength is perfected in
our weakness

v16 Surely I will be with you:

For all those (valid) reasons Gideon cited...

”I will be with you!
You will utterly defeat the Midianites because I AM with you.”

Note: With v12...same 2 party conversation – ”I” = “The LORD”
The LORD is revealing Himself to Gideon (John 1:18)

The presence of God makes us useful in His hands

- qualifies all our disqualifications
- enables all our inabilities
- empowers all our weaknesses
- obliterates all the “good reasons” why we think the LORD cannot use
us

v17-18 show me a sign:

Gideon is on board now, right?

Not quite

“I just don’t know about this...show me a sign that You are the LORD and that talking with me.”

Really?

Before the LORD responded (choosing not to respond), Gideon is off to bring an offering...an act of worship every angel would immediately halt... just ask the Apostle John (Rev 19:10 and Rev 22:8)

v19-21 the Angel of the LORD...the staff:

After much

- time
- effort
- sacrifice...an ephah of flour in these days would be of great value

Gideon presents his offering to the LORD

The Angel of God (*Elohim*) tells His chosen servant to present the offering

- on a rock...an altar of sorts
- pouring out the broth as a drink offering

Then, in accepting Gideon’s offering and in giving him a sign, the Angel of the LORD (Jesus)

- touched the offering with the end of His staff
- fire erupted out of the rock/altar, consuming the offering
- walked away

Perhaps the sign given Gideon was a shadow of the Cross of Jesus Christ and the Ultimate Deliverance by The Deliverer

- staff = wood
- offering = Lamb of God
- broth = poured out blood
- fire = wrath of God
- after which Jesus returned to the right hand of the Father

v22-24 Alas...thou shalt not die:

Fearful and doubtful Gideon no longer doubts Who was talking to him
(v17)...but his fear is intensified

Ex 33:18-20

Again...the Angel of the LORD = the LORD

To calm His servant, the LORD speaks...words of peace

John 14:27

Gideon receives God's peace, erecting an altar named for the Person with Whom
he was talking..."Jehovah is peace"

The Author of this Book certifies that this was a real event at a real place
involving real people

v25-26 throw down the altar...cut down the grove:

Later that same night, the LORD speaks again to Gideon

"My deliverance starts here, at your home.

Tear down the altar of Baal (Canaanite god, male deity).

Cut down the grove (to Asherah, Canaanite goddess, female deity).

Build a proper altar unto the LORD your God on this same rock.

Slay your father's 2nd bull...the one 7 years old

(7 was unlucky to Canaanites but sacred to Israel...figures!)

Offer the bull as a burnt offering...100% consecrated unto the LORD.

Use the grove for firewood."

Let's think about this command...

Where is the altar to Baal and the grove to Asherah?

At Gideon's father's house!

Who, therefore, is the priest to Baal and Asherah?

Gideon's father

What is the LORD telling Gideon?

Honor Me above your father

1st Things 1st – before casting out the oppressors, you must cast out
the reason for the oppression

Get right to get delivered

The God of Israel will NOT co-exist with false gods...God's people
must not compromise with false gods

v27 took ten men...did it by night:
Gideon obeyed, did he not?

But notice the nature of Gideon's obedience

- still fearful...did it at night vs in the day (Matt 10:28)
- he had help...10 men

v28-30 Who hath done this...thy son:

When the men of Gideon's hometown were coming to his father's house for morning devotions, they got cold slap in the face... but they did not say, "Thanks, I needed that!"!

They are outraged!

Their entire place of worship got a radical makeover... and they wanted someone's head.

After a hasty investigation, they demanded that Joash produce his son Gideon so they could kill him.

v31-32 Will ye plead for Baal:

Joash's response is remarkable!

"If Baal cannot save himself, how can he save you?
If Baal is god, he will deal with Gideon."

Rather than joining in the outrage of the Baal worshippers, the priest of the Baal worshippers is convicted by the bold and righteous actions of his fearful, youngest son

Perhaps Gideon's father was the first person to repent of idolatry.
Perhaps having led these people into idolatry, his son will lead them out.
(Gideon, again, is a perfect choice by God)

Watch the broadening influence of a faithful man of God on

- his father
- his family
- his tribe
- the surrounding tribes
- all Israel

v33-35 Midianites...gathered together:

“They’re baaack!”

For another round of v3-5

But this time “the Spirit of the LORD clothed Himself like a garment with Gideon” and, with the “breath of God”, Gideon blew the trumpet of God to gather Israel to go to war

Who are the first people mentioned?

The former Baal worshippers of his hometown

v36-40 let me prove...with the fleece:

Gideon is still weak and fearful and doubtful God could/would use him in any capacity, much less this one as military leader of Israel

In his fear and doubt, Gideon “puts out a fleece”...twice

Asking for more signs from God

To encourage the weak man He has chosen, the LORD does as Gideon asked... twice

Should we in our walk with the LORD put out fleeces, seeking a sign?

No!

- It didn’t “work” for Gideon...he needed another fleece
- Our fearful and doubtful natures are quite adept at “rigging” the fleece to get “dew on it”
- Unnecessary if we trust the Jesus Christ without fear and doubt
- We walk by faith, not by signs (1 Cor 1:22)
- We should simply obey...hear, believe, act...without staggering at the promises of God

Gideon could not or would not believe the Lord wanted to use him...weak and unqualified

Have you ever felt like Gideon?

How many Gideons are here this morning?

Sometimes the trial we face is

- believing God wants to use us
- believing the promises of God are for us personally

We stagger at the promises of God because, rather than conquering the enemies of our soul

(1 John 2:15-17), we are enticed and deceived by them...to our own hurt

We allow things in our lives that we know are harmful to us...

Yet we do not take the bold, righteous stand to tear them down, cut them out of our lives, and consecrate ourselves to Jesus Christ

Thus, we surrender our joy and peace...and our confidence in Jesus Christ

But, in our weakness, God comes to us and promises us victory and freedom

He says to us, "Do this first."

Go home...tear down the idols and raise an altar unto Me

Idols and oppressors at home:

- TV
- Internet
- magazines and/or books
- vocabulary and tone of voice you would never bring in here
- friends who would rather die than step foot in here
- consumables in your refrigerator or pantry...indulgences you cannot part with

Jesus says, "Tear them down, clean up your home, make a covenant with Me."

And be encouraged by Gideon!

He did what the Lord told him to do

He did it timidly and with help, not boldly or fearlessly...but he did it nonetheless!

And the Lord called him a "mighty man of valor"

Gideon was not a macho, macho man...he was a weak man called mighty by God

It takes strength to see and point out to the Lord our weaknesses (He does see clearly)

It takes courage to tear down the idols in your life and to consecrate yourself to the

LORD (no advancement to lift oppression until we do)

Still, Gideon struggled that he might actually be a part of what the Creator of heaven and earth was doing, struggled that he could actually be useful in the hands of God

He was honest about those struggles...and willing to "be wrong" about being useful to God

If Gideon can do it, you can do it!

The LORD was with Gideon...He is with you too!

Rest assured:

- The LORD does speak to you...lowly, weak, unqualified, fearful, doubtful you
- God comes to us when we are weak...because His strength is perfected in our weakness...and promises victory ([2 Cor 12:9-10](#), [Is 66:2](#))
- The LORD does want to use you in a mighty way (Eph 2:10)
look (Light shine with the beauty of holiness),
sound (His Word), and
smell (gracious, merciful) like Jesus to EVERY person with whom you come into contact
- The LORD sees mighty men and women of valor!
- Go home and clean house...and watch what the Lord will do in and thru you!
- Be whole-hearted and passionate in your devotion to Him

Judges Chapter 7

Gideon...

- fearful
 - hiding in his father's winepress threshing wheat
- doubtful
 - as to Who was speaking with him...
needed a sign to convince him
 - that God could or would use someone as unqualified and unworthy as him...
needed 2 fleeces to get off the dime
- called
 - a "mighty man of valor"
 - to judge Israel (military leader)
 - to tear down the altar of Baal and cut up the idol of Asheroth
 - erect a proper altar and sacrifice unto the Lord
- obedient
 - not boldly or fearlessly
 - reluctantly
 - nevertheless...

We notice that in the account of Gideon's ministry (Ch 6-8) the irony of God's ways...

- fear and doubt by God's servant
- the weak following the Lord whose strength is perfected in our weakness

The LORD is working in His people

Let's set the scene

v1 Gideon...Harod:

More irony

The LORD of hosts has gathered His "mighty man of valor"

(Gideon = "warrior") at the well of Harod ("spring of trembling")

Note: a stop on the Tour in Israel

There The LORD will assemble His army to fight against the Midianites

The scene is the Valley of Jezreel...adversaries on opposite sides,
separated by several miles

- south: His army
- north: the Midianite army

v2-3 too many for me:

32,000 unarmed men of Israel responded to Gideon's trumpet blast in Ch 6:34
In the camp of the Midianites are 135,000 proven and armed soldiers (Ch 8:10)
Israel is outnumbered by more than 4:1, not to mention the weapons advantage

The Lord takes stock of the situation and says,

“We have a problem, Gideon.

This will never do.”

(Gideon: Amen! I could not agree more!)

“There are too many with you for Me to give the Midianites into Israel's hands.

I know the pride of My people – they will steal My glory if this many men go with you.”

(Gideon: [gulp!] I was afraid you were going to say that...)

“Tell all those who are fearful and afraid to go home.”

(Gideon: Might that include me by chance?)

The primary work of the LORD is...in the hearts of His people

Deut 20:1-8...

which I highly doubt Gideon would have invoked on his own

Yet Jesus keeps the Law to ensure the glory is rightly placed

Result: 22,000 of the 32,000 abandon ship

In this we see a couple of things the Lord does not like or want

The Lord does not like a “fair fight”...

He wants His people outnumbered and “outgunned” so He and He Alone can be praised

Note: Creator vs any or all creatures is NOT ever a fair fight

The LORD does not want to use the fearful in battle.

Fear...the absence of even a mustard seed sized faith...

debilitates, paralyzes, endangers, is contagious,
useful to the enemy

But imagine the sinking feeling in Gideon's heart...but at least he has as many men as did Barak when he went against Sisera!

Well...hold on

v4-5 yet too many:

“This still will not do, Gideon.

Lead the 10,000 down to the spring of Harod (“spring of trembling”) so I can
purge them...with a simple drinking contest.

Those who

- lap the water like a dog...go over there
- bow down on his knees and puts his face in the water...go there.”

What does this mean?

- Either
 - those who lap are diligent and wise, eyes up and alert,
ready for war, consecrated
 - those who bow are
 - doing as they do when worship Baal
 - love the LORD but indulge vs consecrate Self
- Or
 - those who bow are courageous and self-confident
 - those who lap like a dog are still afraid...but have faith the
size of a mustard seed

Given the deep meanings in the Word ala the meaning of “Harod”...

I am going to go with latter

What is the result of the 2nd thinning of the ranks?

v6-8 By the three hundred:

The score: 300 lap-ers and 9700 bow-ers

Gideon may be thinking,

“Well that was not so bad, I guess.

I still have 9700 men.”

Then the LORD presents His volunteer army – the 300 who are still afraid

but have

- small faith
- no self-confidence

300...

- less than 1% of the original gathering of the men of Israel
- 3% of the “not afraid enough to go home”
- outnumbered 450:1

fits

- the nature of their “commander” (Gideon...Ch 6:12)
- the nature of The Commander-in-Chief (LORD of hosts)
- the name of the place of their purging
- the ways of God Whose strength is perfected in our weakness

[Hayley Branch Stroud](#): So in our morning "time" together Elizabeth says "grandpa, grandma, church". haha! She just loves church!! :)

Taking liberty with that for the sake of an illustration: she likes to pray, so...

What is more effective in the hands of God?

- the power of the combined special forces of USA military?
- the big money of Warren Buffet and George Soros?
- the small prayer of a child, the faith of a small child (Elizabeth)?

Oh the power of the faith of a child...pure, simple, unquestioning
(vs the “strength” of men)

So Gideon has his army – 300 afraid, unarmed, untrained, and inexperienced
soldiers following a fearful and inexperienced “general”
301 “mighty men” will go fight 135,000 hardened soldiers

In the eyes of the world, they don't have a prayer!!
Actually, that is all they have...and that is all they need because the
Almighty God goes before them

The Creator of heaven and earth does not need any of us to accomplish His will...
He chooses to show Himself mighty to the

- humble
- weak
- broken
- faithful...even mustard seed sized
- few

You cannot be too small to be used by God, but you can be too big.
Sometimes trials are allowed to make us smaller in our own eyes

God is looking for vessels thru whom He will be glorified, praised, honored
Take His glory and He will put you on the shelf, unusable

v9 the same night...Arise:
Later that night, the LORD tells Gideon...and Gideon alone...to go spy on the
camp of the Midianites
Why?
Because He has delivered...past tense, done deal, an accomplished fact...
the Midianites into Gideon's hand

All Gideon has to do is...go

v10-11 But if thou fear to go down
But the LORD knows His servant – fearful and doubtful...
even after the sign and the fleeces

So Gideon could go with Phurah (“foliage”...shrubby behind which Gideon
could hide, even though one's armorbearer had his charge's back)

The LORD tells Gideon to “wiretap” the sentry post to hear their testimony of
what is going down

The enemy's testimony...vs the LORD's word...will encourage Gideon

And Gideon, because he was in fact afraid, took Phurah...
not boldly or fearlessly going but nonetheless obeying

v12 grasshoppers...camels:
The two Jewish spies see an intimidating and daunting sight

- a confederate army – Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east
- spread out like locusts...135,000 strong and armed to the teeth
- innumerable war machines and cargo transports (had a harvest to steal)

One of these two armies is vastly outnumbered and outgunned!

v13-14 a dream:
Shaking in their boots and barely able to breathe, Gideon and Phurah hear the
most amazing G2 (military intelligence)

“Akmed, I had the strangest dream last night!
A cake of barley rolled into our camp and destroyed the king's tent!”

“Oh, Abdullah! This can only be the sword of Gideon, a real man of Israel,
courageous and mighty, because the True God has given all of us to him!”

[gasps and the sound of knees smiting one against the other]

v15 he worshipped:

What does Gideon do when he hears the testimony of the enemy?

- worships the True God of Israel Who has been with him, speaking to him and leading him
- rejoices and is encouraged...victory is assured...because the enemy is more afraid of him than he is of them!
- returns to his base camp and gives the command he had been given

“Move out!

The LORD has delivered...past tense, done deal, an accomplished fact... the Midianites into your hand.”

Gideon is

- faithful and obedient...more boldly now
- humble...your hand vs “my hand” (v9)
- not about to steal any of the Lord’s glory

v16-18 divided three companies:

Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, Gideon divides his army into three companies of 100 men to make his army “look bigger” (in the world, size matters)

Deployed as the Lord instructs, Gideon’s army will appear to have the Midianites surrounded

Then Gideon “arms” his army to also make them “look bigger”

- trumpet...to sound a ‘call to arms’
- empty pitchers...clay vessels
- torches...to put in the clay vessels and hidden until the perfect moment

“Follow me as I follow the LORD!

And, to tap into the word implanted in the enemies minds by the LORD (v14), shout this victory shout.”

A rather pathetic collection of weapons and a curious plan for 300 scaredy cats, for such a victory shout, wouldn’t you say?

But as faithfully as Gideon obeys, his army obeys

v19-20 blew...broke...held...cried:

At the changing of the guard at the beginning of the 2nd of 3 night watches... 10pm...when alertness/watchfulness is at its lowest, (perfect timing)

- 300 trumpets/shofars are blown...continuously
- 300 clay pitchers are broken
- 300 torches are waved
- 300 men shout of victory at the top of their lungs

v21-22 the host ran and cried and fled...sword against his fellow:
Perfect plan, perfect timing...The LORD is there, His is fighting!
And He sows confusion in the camp of the enemy and strikes fear in the hearts of
135,000 enemy soldiers

The armed and proven soldiers of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east

- are startled and terrified by this surprise attack, thinking they are vastly outnumbered and outgunned
- run around screaming like school girls
- flee...to the prophet Elisha's hometown
- killing each other as they go...
 - Midianites killing Amalekites?
 - Amalekites killing the people of the east?
 - people of the east killing Midianites?

300 vs 135,000...who was vastly outnumbered and outgunned?!

Where is the real battle?

In the hearts of God's people

- fear the LORD and follow Him, regardless of how afraid we may be?
- fear man and go home and miss out on what the Lord is doing?
(Heb 4:1)

v23-25 the men of Israel...the waters:

When the rout is on amongst a confused and terrified enemy, the nearest tribes
join in the battle

They do now...whereas they did not before

Perhaps most of all the 31,700 who were sent home by the LORD?

The men of Israel capture the strategic places and cut off the escape routes
120,000 of the 135,000 enemy soldiers are slain...including "raven" and "wolf"

How many Gideon's are here?

How many "300 lap-pers" are here?

Do we believe the promises of God...done deals, accomplished facts?

Would it help to hear what the enemy is saying about us and our God?

Do we have to go there to be encouraged and to worship the Lord before we go as commanded?

Victory is the easy part after we believe the LORD and consecrate ourselves to His plan,
His timing, and His LORDship

Then...His Light breaks forth and chases away the forces of darkness

2 Cor 4:7 with Matt 5:14-16

Don't be a part of the many who, after the fact and by sight vs by faith say,
"Wow! I could have done that!" (but didn't)

Heb 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into
his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

We can right do "that" now!
We are sufficiently armed and prepared and experienced right now...
because the LORD of hosts is with us!

Who is the only One that could accomplish the things we have seen with LH?
(we are like one of Gideon's companies in that fight)
Hudson Taylor: "All we have is 87 cents....and all the promises of a mighty God!"

The enemy is vastly outnumbered and outgunned!
Strength is NOT in numbers...the world's metric
Strength is in the LORD Who is our sufficiency
Everything we need is in Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation
He is the Source, Sustainer, and Preserver of our lives
His Word is given for our comfort, encouragement, and edification

What intimidating and daunting enemy are you facing?
What enemy has repeatedly ripped you off by dominating and decimating your life?

- drugs and/or alcohol
- pornography or some other sexual sin
- materialism
- anger
- critical, demoralizing spouse or employer
- hypocrisy (can you look yourself in the mirror and actually say...)

May I remind you

- The final enemy, death, has been defeated
- Draw near to God, resist the devil and he MUST flee
- We have been given power over demons (1 John 4:4)

Arise! Go!

The LORD fights using His volunteer army – the 300 who are afraid, but have

- small faith
- no self-confidence (Phil 3:3)

Judges Chapter 8

Ch 6: Gideon the man and his calling...

We are all fearful and doubtful, unqualified and unworthy, and weak

Ch 7: Gideon's army and the victory...

Don't worry when the Lord thins the ranks – size does not matter

Ch 8: What!?

v1-3 did chide...anger was abated:

What!?

After responding to Gideon's call in Ch 7:23-25, the men of Ephraim are furious with him?!

Justly?

No

Ch 7:1-8

If they have a beef, it is with themselves...or with the LORD

So what is the issue with these hotheads?

Their proud and glory-seeking hearts

Pride, jealousy, envy...which is precisely why the LORD did not use them

Gideon did NOT respond with pride or condemnation, or even defend himself.

“Hey, back off!

When the LORD talks to you like he talks to me, then we'll talk.

When you become as useful to the LORD as I am, I'll listen.

Besides, I did call on you but you did not respond...if you had not been 'as brave' at the beginning as you are now...

Phooey on you! You're wasting my time.”

Gideon responds with...a soft answer...grace, humility, meekness, diplomacy.

“What I did was nothing compared to what you did!

I only started it, you have finished it; you guys really cleaned up!”

Prov 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

James 1:19-20

let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

v4-9 Succoth...Penuel:

Gideon and his 300 men are in hot pursuit of the kings of Midian,
to put an end once and for all to the oppression under which Israel has
suffered so deeply.

It has been a long night already and the army is

- weary
- hungry

Their pursuit takes them to the Jewish village of Succoth where Gideon asks the
town's leaders for provisions for the army...who respond with ingratitude.

“You want us to get involved, to help you?
Why should we give you any of our bread?
What's in it for us?
Do you have the kings of Midian bound and captured?
They have 15,000 armed soldiers...you only have 300 unarmed and
untrained men!
Get real, Gideon – you are on a fool's errand so we will not get involved
and we will not help you!
We are just going to park it right here and worry about ourselves.”

What?!

Taunting and denying the very one thru whom the LORD has saved their
miserable hides...their own brethren, to boot?

I do not sense fear in Succoth but

- indifference or contempt...either translate into ingratitude
- selfish independence...heart to serve Self vs serve others

Gideon takes note and makes promise...then resumes the chase

The army comes next to Penuel, site of Jacob's wrestling with the Lord in Gen 32.
Same request, same response

What!?

Gideon again takes note...and makes another promise

Immediately after the miraculous victory by the Lord on their behalf,

- weeds of ingratitude sprout (possibly only thing uglier in man's heart
than jealousy is ingratitude)
- seeds of division are sown...tares sown by the devil

Before we voice our outrage about Israel...let's take a cold, hard look at the Church and see that indifference, ingratitude, hearts to serve self vs others are also issues in the Church

The USA is a consumer-oriented society.

In talking with many pastors over the years, it seems many Church-goers in USA bring that consumer mentality to church

- shop around, looking for “what’s in it for them”...the best deal
 - what they can get vs what they can give
 - what they can take vs what they might have to invest
 - how they can be served vs how they can serve
- hop around to “upgrade” their consumer experience at church
 - size and eye-appeal of facility (“More resources!”)
 - size and programs of Youth and Children’s Ministries
 - the “status by association” with “successful” church
 - entertainment value of the pastor and worship team

And many churches market themselves to and cater to “consumers” as any business enterprise would...chasing the money (lifeblood) to be successful
The Church has not changed the American culture but embraced the culture

I am NOT saying that the existence of different kinds of churches is wrong.

- Go into a bait shop and you will find many types of bait, depending on what kind of fish you are trying to catch...
The Fisher of men uses many kinds of bait.
- No single church can minister to “tastes” and preferences of all people
- One thing should be paramount, according to Jesus –
the Word (Luke 10:38-42)

So I am not saying the variety of churches displayed in the Yellow Pages is wrong or harmful...the variety speaks of creative Genius of our God

What I am speaking of is a selfish, “What’s in it for me” attitude of

- getting for Self without giving of Self
- taking for Self but not sharing the burden of others
- go/no go based on alternatives...the most self-pleasing alternative being selected

“Church” is NOT all about “me”...it is ALL about Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is not a menu item...

He is the Lord of the universe, the King of the whole earth

He will not compete in a market of self-gratifying shoppers

His followers (a subset of Church-goers) are...servants

1. Him...it is what we GET to do, set free to worship!
2. others...how we serve Him
3. self-last

The Church is

- NOT just another commodity for Americans to consume
- a living Body...
 - to please the Head...not a shopping mall to please Self/flesh
 - to serve/minister to others...not a spa to be pampered by others
- a gathering of people (should be known for their love)...not a building
- hospital filled with hurting people...not a social club or country club
- an army of servants...not a cooperative of consumers
- a family of givers...not takers
- happens before service, after service, throughout the week
- about receiving and giving – a “flow thru” vs “hoarding”
 - giving worship unto the Lord...in song, prayer, Word, offering
 - receiving strength and encouragement to give another...

Acts 20:35

- Mary AND Martha...sitting AND serving
(must receive to have something to give)
- caregivers coming to the aid of hurting people
- ministers being touched by Jesus to meet the needs of
needy people (roles change, all are both)
- servants being served by Jesus then serving Jesus by
serving others

As a church we advance in the fight against the forces of darkness all around us
by giving to others vs getting/consuming for Self

My first pastor: “The best cure for your problem is to go serve someone
else.”

We love and serve Jesus Christ by loving and serving His people...
and He heals/strengthens/comforts His servants

How can The Body of Christ push back the forces of darkness if church-goers are
shoppers and hoppers,
serving themselves vs investing themselves to serve others?

Christians need to come to worship services with an attitude of

- worship (something we give) vs consumerism (taking all we can)
- How can I help? vs What is in it for me?

The growth of a church body takes time and effort...

how can it grow

- if people are not willing to invest their
 - time?
 - effort?
 - resources?
 - lives?
- without servants?
 - heart of a servant: see a need and meet it...
 - joyfully, thankfully, “invisibly” unto the Lord

Is this a body of believers in which you are willing to serve, to invest yourself?

If so, I encourage you – look for the needs of others and be a part of meeting those needs

Always the greatest need and the greatest place to serve – the Children’s Ministry

e.g. babies and toddlers on Wed night

babies and toddlers on Sunday morning

Our battle is long and arduous...all of us must serve in the Lord’s army if we are to advance against the forces of darkness

Gal 6:9-10

worship is an active verb...God-centered, others-centered

v10-12 Zebah and Zalmunna...children of the east:

Gideon seemingly attacks the 15,000 like he did the 135,000...

a surprise attack (this time via an out-of-the-way path)

The enemy is in hiding...confident in their safety

And then came...sudden destruction

Did Succoth and Penuel not know that the Lord destroyed 120,000 of the 135,000 soldiers that marched into Israel using Gideon and the army of 300 unarmed, untrained men?

Was Gideon on a “fool’s errand” to finish the job by destroying merely 15,000?

Israel has been oppressed by

- Midianites...descendants of Abraham and Keturah
- Amalekites...ancient enemy = “flesh”
- the children of the east...Arabians/Ishmaelites (v24), descendants of Abraham and Hagar

So what are the remaining 15,000 “children of the east”?

The enduring consequence of Abraham’s lapse of faith...

the consequence of forgiven sin

This consequence remains to our day

v13-17 came unto the men of Succoth:

With Zebah and Zalmunnah in hand, Gideon returns to some unfinished business
First, in Succoth and then in Penuel

In Succoth, Gideon

- captures and interrogates a young man, who writes down all the names of the 77 leaders
- displays the kings of Midian about which those leaders had taunted him and railed against him and refused to provision his army
- punished those leaders, making good his word in v7

In Penuel, where the entire town was like-minded with the leaders of Succoth, Gideon

- “gets the last word” again
- destroys the tower and kills all the men

Gideon was a man of the Word...God made His Word good and
Gideon made good his word

God never speaks to hear Himself talk...

He does not make idle threats, He makes promises

Gideon did not make idle threats, he made promises backed by the Holy Spirit

The leaders of Succoth and the town of Penuel learned a very painful lessons –

- God hates pride that results in ingratitude
- Gal 6:7-8

Gideon now returns his attention to Zebah and Zalmunnah...

they have served their purpose and it is time for judgment

v18-21 What manner of men:

Gideon speaks of an attack on Mount Tabor and men the Midianites killed there

- an unknown time but earlier than Ch 6 (not recorded in Scripture)
- his brothers were killed in the attack

Perhaps why Gideon

- was hiding in fear in his father's winepress when the LORD appeared to him (Ch 6:11)
- responded as he did to the LORD (Ch 6:15)...he, the youngest, was the only survivor

Now, the tables are turned and Gideon is the unmerciful avenger of blood!

To dishonor the two kings of the Midianites, Gideon commands his firstborn son to kill them

But...like father, like son...Jether is fearful

The kings taunt Gideon ("Man up!") so he does the deed, avenging the blood of his brothers

He also plunders the kings by taking the crescent-moon-shaped insignia/lucky charms from their camels

In about 1800 years from this event, Mohammed will consolidate his military power in Arabia by banishing the many hundreds of pagan Arabian gods and making the Arabian moon god, Allah, the god of a new religion...with himself as its only prophet

The consequences of Abraham's lapse of faith "haunt" Israel and the rest of the world to this day

v22-23 Rule over us:

The Midianite kings are dead...and the men of Israel want a king...

a monarchy like the nations around them vs the theocracy of God as their King...what!?

Which army was vastly outnumbered and out gunned – 300 or 135,000?

The anti-theocracy sentiment that blossomed in Samuel's time has roots here in the time of the Judges

Gideon is humble and meek and has a clear understanding of leaning on the arm of God vs man so he is very quick to decline

He will not take the bait but immediately points to the King of Israel

Blessed are the people whose King is the King of kings!

v24-26 desire a request of you:

Gideon turns down the throne but asks to share in the plunder...

his portion was that which he had personally taken from the two kings

He asks for just a little portion from each man...the earrings

And the men gave to him...cheerfully

The Lord loves a cheerful giver...for He is a cheerful Giver of every good and perfect gift!

v27 Gideon made an ephod:

What!?

The ephod was part of the High Priest's apparel and along with the Urim and Thummin, was used to discern God's will

What is Gideon thinking!

It may not be what it appears.

I do not believe he made an idol...he is in the Hall of Faith, after all,
and no idolater can enter the Kingdom of God

I believe he made a memorial whereby he and his family and all Israel
would remember the King of Israel Who fights for them

However...given the utter depravity of the human heart and the depth of sin in our
fallen nature...as displayed for all of us by Israel ...this thing became a
real problem later, after Gideon died...ala

- brass serpent formed by Moses (2 Kings 18:4)
- "relics" in RCC
- Shroud of Turin

Man is quick to

- forget the Creator he cannot see and instead worship the creation he can see
- worship the blessings rather than the Blessor

Religious artifacts are traps for the weak-in-faith

This is undoubtedly why God secured the Ark of the Covenant and Noah's Ark

v28-29 was Midian subdued:

Israel never had a problem with Midian again...the Lord saw to it

Then Gideon...retired

v30-31 sons of his body:

Gideon retired but he was not sitting around doing nothing!

By his many wives he had 70 sons!

And by his “half-wife” he had another, which we will see much of in Ch 9

This is NOT God’s definition of marriage, which is:

one man and one woman until death

Not...

- One man and many women
- One woman and many men
- One man and another man
- One woman and another woman
- One man and many men
- One woman and many women

And God changes not so His definitions change not!

v32-34 as soon as:

Gideon dies and...what!?

Right back to the vomit goes Israel!

The LORD God Almighty, the God of the Covenant, is out

And “Baal of the covenant” is in

- Usurper
- Destroyer of men’s souls
- Counterfeiter
- The devil

It is as if they needlessly went to an outhouse...and jumped in!

Oh, how utterly filthy is idolatry in the eyes of the One True God!

Oh, the ingratitude toward the God Who saved them!

v35 neither showed they kindness:

What!?

Consummate ingratitude and disloyalty

How quick is fallen man to forget the goodness of God

How spiritually unhealthy is complacency

How weak is the flesh in the ways of God

What abominable turncoats we quickly can become

Never stop fighting the enemy who never stops roaring and hunting

Guard your eyes, ears, mouth, mind, heart

Get close and stay close to Jesus (Word and Spirit)

Continue, abide, be faithful to the very end

Serve the King of Glory by serving His people

Is 40:28-31 waiting is active...like “waiter” (server)

Next Week: Civil War as the seeds of division blossom

Judges Chapter 9

Perhaps the lowest point in the tragic history of Israel in the 450 year period of the Judges

- Civil War – brother against brother
- Betrayal – ambition, self-promotion, and betrayal

Ch 8:30-31

v1-2 Abimelech...his mother's brethren:

Gideon's maidservant/concubine/half-wife was a Canaanite woman from Shechem

His son by this woman was named Abimelech ("my father is king")

Cultural background to help us understand

- Abimelech is of his mother's family not his father's...disinherited
- If "my father is king" then I am king also!

Abimelech knew **Ch 8:22-23**

Whereas the idea certainly did not appeal to Gideon, it did to his son named "my father is king"

He really "took to" his name!

So he goes to...

- his mother's family, with whom he is living
- his maternal grandfather's family
(the "greater" family of which her family was a part)

with a secret plot to get the position he is rightly due
(at least, in his own mind)

"Which is better for you:

- 70 kings ruling over you...or 1 king ruling over you
- to be lorded over by Gideon's 70 Jewish sons...or to be led by one of your own

Keep in mind that I am one of you, not one of them."

- he is of their bone and flesh
- his blood is part Gideon's (paternity test)

In his ambition and self-promotion, Abimelech is hatching a shameless power play

Note: Why does God define and ordain marriage as one man and one woman until death?

Because every other definition leads to human tragedy

v3-4 He is our brother:

Abimelech, naturally, finds a very receptive audience for his message

“He will be easy on us...the sons of “Baal will contend”

(who contend with our god!) will be harsh with us.

With our brother on the throne, we will re-gain the upper hand over the Jews.”

So, from the temple of their god (Baal of the covenant/satan), who is

- a counterfeit
- a usurper
 - “to seize by force without legal right”
 - “to use without authority or right”

they pay Abimelech 70 pieces of silver (does not seem like much to me)

With which Abimelech hires mercenaries...worthless, immoral scoundrels...
to do his bidding

Immediately, the bad tree bears bad fruit...and it will get worse

v5 slew his brethren:

A man is as the god he worships

The usurper and his scoundrels march to Gideon’s house and murder the 70 sons
of Gideon

upon one stone: an execution

Gideon’s son executed his sons just as the kings of Midian had executed
his brothers

Bad blood leads to bloodshed

Such tragedy for God’s servant, an honorable and humble man

Yet...Gideon’s youngest son, Jotham, escapes the blood bath!

- the hand of God is upon the events in men’s lives...providence
- scoundrels can’t count (the cost of following a usurper)

v6 made Abimelech king:

His competition eradicated, “my father is king” is made king,
his ambition and self-promotion realized thru betrayal

The shameful coronation was in Shechem

- Jacob buried the idols (“strange gods”) of Leah and Rachel before going to Bethel (“house of God”) in Gen 35:4
- in the valley between Mount Gerazim (blessing) and Mount Ebal (cursing and altar and copy of Ten Commandments) in Deut 27-28, Joshua 8:30-34
- a covenant was made between Joshua and the children of Israel in Joshua 24:25-26

Baal Berith...Baal of the covenant, Satan...is

- defying and defiling the covenants of the God of Israel
- deceiving the people of Shechem...thinking they are being blessed, they will be cursed

But...Who gets the last Word – satan or the LORD God Almighty?

v7-15 Jotham...lifted up his voice:

God preserves Gideon’s youngest son and puts him on Mount Gerazim...
the mount of blessing...to curse

- the usurper Abimelech
- the ungrateful people of Shechem

The curse comes in the form of a parable

A parable is a spiritual truth that is simultaneously

- understood by those who believe the Word of God
- not understood by those who do not believe the Word of God
- trees
 - people of Shechem
 - wanted a king and not God to be their king
- olive tree
 - noble, valuable tree
 - honorable ministry to God and man
 - humbly refuses the promotion and honor/praises of man
- fig tree
 - most common fruit tree
 - bearing much good fruit
 - humbly refuses the promotion and honor/praises of man

- vine
 - not a tree
 - bearing joyful fruit unto God (drink offering) and man
 - humbly refuses the promotion and honor/praises of man

- bramble
 - Abimelech
 - thorn bush...symbol of the curse
 - menace to travelers
 - worthless...good for only burning and that only as kindling
 - fire hazard to crops and trees

 - accepts the promotion and honor/praises of men if the trees will bow themselves to him and find shade under him
 - trees bow to a thorn bush?!
the most worthless elevated to king?!
 - a thorn bush provide any shade?!
ludicrous, absurd
this thorn bush is as pompous as the little horn of Dan 7!

 - if the trees do not bow to him, will destroy/devour by fire
 - Abimelech's heart revealed by God to the people
 - a threat
 - a prophesy of judgment

v16-21 if you have done truly and sincerely:

Jotham then gives the "sense" of it to cause them to understand

"My father

- fought for you
- risked his life for you
- delivered you from the oppression of the Midianites.

Betraying him by murdering all his sons...is that a right and proper way to show your gratitude?

Is it right in God's eyes to return evil for good?

Can you without any guilt hail the son of a slave as your rightful king?

If so...rejoice in each other's company...you deserve each other.

If not...with God as my witness...you will destroy each other, and deservedly so."

Then this "prophet" runs for his life and lived in a village called "well"

v22-24 three years...treacherously:

Trouble was not long in coming

After three years, time to reap what was sown...

discord among those who sowed discord among God's people

The King of the whole earth, the Lord of the harvest, the LORD of all creation
dispatched an evil spirit to "confuse" the traitors

Those who followed Abimelech in his wicked, self-promoting scheme,
turn on him

Behind the scenes

- God is against Abimelech and the men of Shechem
- The prophesied curse is coming to pass

God will send an evil spirit to do His will?

- sent one to proud King Saul several times (1 Sam 16-19)
- sent one to Baal-worshipping King Ahab (1 K 22)

v25 liars in wait...robbed:

First point of attack: the town's revenue stream

The men of Shechem rob the tax revenues from the trade routes

vs letting them continue to go to Abimelech

v26-29 Gaal...would I remove Abimelech:

Into the "unraveling" comes this man named Gaal...

- an opportunist named "loathing"
- able to win the allegiance of the people of Shechem (backbiting)

The congregation at Shechem is out of sorts with "my father is king"...

"loathing" will be their new champion

At harvest time, "loathing" and his followers get well lubricated with wine...
and then (part played by Foster Brooks or drunk uncle) comes the

- manipulation to un-do v1
"Abimelech is really a son of anti-Baal...he is not really one of us.
Let's return to who we are – descendents of Hamor (time: Jacob)
Why should we serve a descendent of Jacob?"
- Big Talk
"Oh, if only I could lead you!
I would get rid of this self-promoting king who has
misappropriated the funds of this congregation!
I would be a much better leader for you!
Hey, Abimelech: I challenge you to a fight!"

Alcohol is a counterfeit joy and a usurper of reason

- distorts the truth
- clouds the mind, further confusing a confused mind
- deceives as a pain-killer and confidence-builder

v30-34 Zebul...anger was kindled:

Abimelech's governor of Shechem gets wind of the traitorous plot
and is outraged

He

- warns Abimelech of the impending rebellion
- proposes a plan to thwart it

Abimelech

- goes with Zebul's counter-attack
- has Shechem surrounded come daybreak

v35-41 Gaal saw...spoke:

At daybreak, the big talking opportunist named "loathing" goes to the city gate...
perhaps a little hung over from the revelry the prior night

Abimelech commands one of his columns to march

Gaal sees it and calls it out to Zerul, who stalls for time

"Your eyes are playing tricks on you.

All that wine you drank is still messing with your eyes."

Abimelech puts another two columns in motion...and Gaal sees them too

"No! I may have a headache but I am seeing what I am seeing.

Check it out!"

Zerul taunts Gaal

"Where is all your Big Talk now, Hot Shot?

The very people you trashed last night are coming to get you!

Time to back up all your boasting, pal."

Gaal, goaded by pride, engages Abimelech in battle...and is routed.

The boastful, opportunistic insurrectionist goes down to decisive defeat.

Thus...the men of Shechem get theirs (Just Deserts, Part 1)

Bad blood leads to bloodshed

v42-45 city...fields and slew them:
Just Deserts, Parts 2 and 3

The traitor Abimelech slays the traitors of Shechem

- in the city
- in the fields

More brother-against-brother bloodshed

Then, in his boiling revenge, Abimelech razes and ritually defiles the city

Intent: never to be inhabited again

v46-49 the tower of Shechem:

The soldiers/watchmen of Shechem retreat to the temple of Baal/satan

Rather than tear down the temple like he did the city, Abimelech...burns it down.

Just Deserts, Part 4

v20 is fulfilled in part...the bramble bush king destroys the trees

Parts of trees were used to burn the "trees" (v8)...judged themselves

v50-54 woman...millstone:

Well, gone is Abimelech's HQ...by his own hand

So, perhaps, to establish another base of operations, he goes to conquer Thebez

Abimelech employs the "burn it down" strategy again...

and gets a millstone-to-the-dome in the process...by the hand of a woman

- upper millstone
 - 18" in diameter
 - 3" thick
 - 20-30 lbs
- from a height of 30 feet, perhaps
- right on the noggin

Abimelech gets his...

- Just Deserts, Part 5
- v20 fulfilled completely...Abimelech destroyed by the people

Ambition, self-promotion, and betrayal lead to disgrace and self-destruction

Abimelech dies disgraced

- fatally wounded by a woman
- run thru by his armorbearer...more "honorable"

Note: The 1st king of Israel...a man after their own heart...

also told his armorbearer to run him thru

v55-57 God rendered:

What happened to Abimelech and the people of Shechem?

“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the LORD.

God’s hand is on the affairs of man...He repays the wickedness.

The ungrateful betrayers were

- opposing God, not man
- calling judgment upon their own heads

Take-aways

The shameless betrayal and senseless bloodshed in Ch 9 is not unique

- Lucifer betrayed God (Is 14)
- Adam God (Gen 3)
- His brothers Joseph (Gen 37)
- Saul David (1 Sam 18-31...but David remained loyal)
- Absalom David (2 Sam 13-18...hung out to die by his pride)
- Ahithophel David (2 Sam 13-18...died dishonorably)
- advisors several kings (divided kingdom)
- Judas Jesus
- His brethren Jesus

1 Cor 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

A tree is known by its fruit...betrayal is fruit of the original Betrayer

Matt 3:7-10

Matt 7:15-20

Matt 10:16-22

Matt 12:33-37

John 12:42-43

loyalty is revealed over time, especially in trying times

“Civil War”...the worst kind

It grieves God and scars the Body of Christ

Ps 75:4-7

Prov 3:35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the
promotion of fools

Gal 6:7-8

Power play begets power play

Intrigue begets intrigue

Betrayal begets betrayal

Bad blood leads to bloodshed

Why Rom 16:17-18

Oh, the sweetness of “being in one accord”...one heart and one mind (of Christ)!

Seek the “way of escape”

Prov 18:10 The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous run into it,
and is safe.

Ps 18:1-16

Any enemy able to burn down our High Tower?

Since Jesus Christ is Lord of all, we are Lord of...absolutely nothing

Rom 12:9-21

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is
among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to
think; but to think soberly

Gideon did not...40 years of peace

Abimelech did...the judgment of God

Judges Chapter 10

Last time...a usurper starts Civil War

- Intrigue begets intrigue
- Betrayal begets betrayal
- Bad blood leads to bloodshed

This time...Back to the Vomit VI and a wonderful example of repentance/reconciliation

v1-2 Tola:

Post-Abimelech (usurper) Israel needed some healing!
For that work God raised up Tola to be His judge/military leader
(6th of this period)

About the names...

- Tola (“worm”) and Puah (“a blast”)...names of Issachar’s first 2 sons
(Gen 46:13, 1 Chron 7:1...500 years earlier)
- Dodo (“loving”)...a form of David (“beloved”)?

Note: “Loving” never goes extinct!

About the places...

- a son of Issachar leaving his inheritance to live in pre-Samaria (?) in
the territory of Ephraim?!
- to be near the Tabernacle in Shiloh?

About the circumstances...

- no mention of any enemies or distresses
- Tola served faithfully as the Lord ministered to His people

v3-5 Jair:

After the peaceful administration of Tola, another peaceful administration by Jair
Similar circumstances

- no mention of any enemies or distresses
- Jair served faithfully

Noteworthy...

- Jair is the first judge from east of the Jordan River
(Gilead is Manasseh East)
- The judges come from many different tribes...
 - God is not a respecter of persons
 - The man is not special, the man’s God is special

v6 Israel did evil again:

After two peaceful administrations, Israel...goes back to the vomit AGAIN

- worshipped the false gods of the godless nations around them
 - Syria: Hadad and Rimmon
 - Zidon: Baal and Ashtaroth
 - Moab: Chemosh
 - Ammon: Molech
 - Philistines: Dagon and Baal-zebul
- outright abandoned the God of Israel...did not even pretend to worship Him
- brazen covenant-breakers and Law-breakers

They sowed to the flesh...

v7-9 anger...sold...vexed and oppressed:

...and of the flesh they reaped corruption

- the fierce indignation of The Almighty Who is a consuming fire
- sold into slavery...
 - to fierce enemies
 - to pagan gods
 - cannot be pleased
 - do not forgive
 - angry
- broken and crushed by the Philistines (west of Jordan River) and Ammon (east of Jordan River)

The consequences of sin are...unavoidable and awful

v10 cried unto the LORD:

Coming just as they are...broken and crushed...Israel cries out to the LORD

Now...but not until after 18 years of torment...they readily

- admit/confess their two-fold guilt
 - abandoned their God...One True and Living
 - embraced false gods...demons
- understand that the root problem is spiritual
 - when the spiritual is wrong, everything is wrong
 - when the spiritual is right, everything is right

v11-14 I will deliver you no more:

Via an unnamed prophet (Heb 1:1), the LORD chastises/rebukes them

“You come to Me crying again, wanting Me to deliver you...AGAIN!?”

I have already delivered you from

1. the Egyptians (Moses)
2. the Amorites (Moses east of Jordan and Joshua west of Jordan)
3. the Ammonites (Ehud in Ch 3)
4. the Philistines (Shamgar in Ch 3)
5. the Zidonians (unrecorded)
6. the Amalakites (Moses in Ex 17 and Ehud in Ch 3)
7. the Midianites (Gideon)

Yet you continue to offend Me, disrespect and dishonor Me, and throw me to the curb in favor of “flesh-pleasing” idols.

I’m done...I have forgiven and delivered you these 7 times

(accountable to know history), I will not deliver you anymore.

Go ask the flesh-pleasing gods you have preferred to Me to help you.

No help there!

Ps 115:4-8

Wow and whoa!

Is the longsuffering God really fed up?

Is the longsuffering of God finite?

Is it possible to “push God too far”?

Has God cast away His people?

God forbid! (Rom 11:1)

Consider:

God gave His Word to AI&J...and

- God cannot lie
- God’s Word cannot fail

He also delivered them an 8th time (new beginning) – the Canaanites
(Deborah and Barak in Ch 4)

God

- delights in mercy (Micah 7:18)
- is eager to forgive (Matt 18:21-22)
- is gracious...willing to give what is not deserved

So...the LORD certainly wants to get their attention

- My will will be done...and we can do this the easy way or the hard way – you choose.
- A god who cannot deliver you is not worthy of your worship and devotion

v15 We have sinned; do thou unto us:
Israel again confesses their sin and appeals to the mercy of the merciful God

“Because we know You are good and just/fair, any punishment You chose to do to us is highly preferable to anything our enemies want to do to us.”
So they throw themselves on the mercy of the Court in Heaven
As did David when he sinned

2 Sam 24:1-4, 10-15

- willful sin against the Word of God
- rejection of good counsel
- convicted of his great foolishness
- confession of sin
- cry for forgiveness
- of Door #1, Door #2, and Door #3, opted for the Lord’s hand vs man’s

2 Sam 24:16-25

- the LORD was merciful, His anger but for a moment
- David owns his sin, grieved the consequence of his sin on his innocent lambs...the heart of a shepherd
- action...built an altar on the future site of the Temple
- did not offer a sacrifice that did not cost him anything
- reconciliation...hearts right with God

v16 put away the strange gods:

Without being told to (because they knew full well right from wrong), Israel

- threw away their idols...cleansed their places of worship as they had cleansed their hearts
- returned to serving (waiting on) the Lord

Repentance...

- a gift given by God and received by faith by the offender
- a 4-step reformation (right relationship...return and forgiveness)
 1. starts in the heart of God...conviction
 - God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth (2 Tim 2:25)
 - God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (Acts 11:18)
 2. is received in the humbled heart of man...confession
 3. bears fruit...action, not words, to return to God
 - bring forth fruits meet for repentance (Matt 3:8)
 - the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:20)
 4. is completed by God...reconciliation

v17-18 What man is he that will fight:

Adversaries assemble...

Israel in the place where Jacob and Laban erected a memorial/witness

Next: "Who will lead us?"

Victory waiting to happen...which we will examine next week

Heart check time...is your personal relationship with God right? (you = you, me, each)

Perhaps...being honest before the all-seeing and all-knowing God...

you can relate to Israel returning to her vomit

Abandoning the God Who washed you of your sin by His blood...

or just pretending to worship Him while living your life independent of Him...

and devoting your life to a demon (idol, false god)

- Mammon – material wealth and possessions
- Molech – child-sacrifice for convenience
- Chemosh – pleasure...alcohol, drugs, etc
- Ashtaroth – sexual lust and immorality

Multiple iterations of bondage to/deliverance from insatiable self-indulgence

Have you, in that vicious cycle, heard God tell you to go ask the gods you have chosen to help you escape the most miserable place on earth – Self –

because He is sick and tired by being

- jerked around?
- taken advantage of?
- dishonored and offended?

Wow and whoa!

Listen up...pay very close attention...to what God is saying in Ch 10!

- My will will be done...and we can do this the easy way or the hard way – you choose.
- A god who cannot deliver you is not worthy of your worship and devotion

Do you think God cannot or will not forgive you?

Listen to what Jesus taught in Luke 15...regarding what is necessary for reconciliation

v1-2 His ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19) is not understood
He will teach it in 3 parables (remember the definition of “parable”)

v3-7 Parable #1...the lost sheep

v8-10 Parable #2...the lost coin

v11-32 Parable #3...the lost son aka Prodigal Son

v11-12 division

v13 willful sin

v14-16 broken and crushed

v17 end of Self, the most miserable place on earth

v18-19 revelation/conviction and confession before God

v20 action and change of course (repentance)

v21 confession before man

v22 reconciliation

v23-32 God’s ministry of reconciliation not understood...v1-2

3 Parables teaching the same truth

The details in Parable #3 (lost son) apply also to Parable #1 (lost sheep) and
Parable #2 (lost coin)

Are you living in sin and want to be reconciled to God?

Do as Israel did in Ch 10

Do as the lost son did in Luke 15

Throw away the demons you have chosen and serve the One True and Living God

Do “the 4 Step”...conviction, confession, action, reconciliation

Do you want a prepared heart to serve the Lord?

What does it mean to have a prepared heart to serve/wait on the God of Israel Who
desires mercy, is eager to forgive, and sets us free indeed?

- Believe...His every Word
- Trust...do His every Word (by faith)
- Humility...decrease so He can increase, think not highly of Self

- Selflessness...love/agape Jesus vs love/indulge Self
- Undivided devotion...love/serve Jesus with whole heart

- Sacrifice...your life as a living sacrifice
- Be holy because He is holy (set apart)
 - Get rid of all your old “dead man” friends!!!!
 - Make new friends with like-minded believers
 - Backsliding/returning to the vomit ALWAYS involves old friends

To do these things to have a prepared heart to love and serve the Lord, you will know

- heartache
- suffering
- persecution (2 Tim 3:12)

- great fear (Acts 5:5, 11)

- great grace (Acts 4:29-33)
 - the “747” of Grace...Luke 7:47
 - he who is forgiven much loves much and he who is forgiven little loves little
 - aka “grace experience” – broken and crushed, forgiven, set free

- great power (Acts 4:33) to preach the Gospel...with words and your life (Eph 4-6)
 - to open the eyes of the lost
 - to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God
 - that they may receive forgiveness of sins
 - that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance
 - simply preaching and teaching the Word of God...saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

Who here wants great power to love and serve Jesus?

Luke 11:9-13

Great power...God the Holy Spirit...is

- the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49)
- but for the asking

The Spirit-filled and Spirit-led person will love and serve Jesus with great power
If you want great power, stand up...now ask the Father!

Judges Chapter 11

Last week: Israel is broken and crushed and has confessed, repented (fruit worthy of...action), and been reconciled with God

v18

This week: The LORD raises up His judge...a social outcast

v1-3 Jephthah...mighty man of valor...son of a harlot:

This is background information, perhaps occurring during the time of [Ch 10:6-9](#)

Introducing the LORD's next judge

- Jephthah
 - "God opens the womb"
 - of the region of Gilead (Manasseh, son of Joseph)
- a mighty man of valor
 - strong, courageous
 - man of virtue (moral excellence and righteousness)
 - man of substance...not an "empty suit"
- son of a harlot
 - by a man named Gilead of the region of Gilead
 - disinherited and despised by the "true" sons of Gilead

So here we have a start ala Abimelech...but will have a different end because has a much different character

The social outcast escapes persecution by fleeing to a locale whose geography is unknown but in context, further east than Gilead and Israel

There he attracted other social outcasts...of questionable character...

- worthless, reckless, scoundrels
 - debtors
 - refuse and offscourings
 - orphans and illegitimate children
 - whosoever would come to him
- and made them mighty men of valor as was he

Just as will David in about 100 years to come
(1 Sam 22:1-2...his mighty men)

Just as Jesus has been doing for about 2000 years after being despised by
His brethren and "run out"

v4-8 in process of time...why are ye come unto me now:

When hostilities start, the elders of Gilead (the region), perhaps, in response to their question “Who will lead us?”, are given God’s answer – Jephthah

They seek and find, and methinks with great humility in keeping with their change of heart in Ch 10, ask Jephthah to be their captain/savior
(In future hostilities, Israel will seek, find, and cry out to their Messiah)

“Pardon the interruption, sir, but will you please lead us into war?”

“Seriously? I thought you hated and despised me.

You gave me the bum’s rush out of my father’s house and out of town.

I was not good enough for you then, why am I good enough for you now?

What happened, why would you even think of asking me such a question?

What has changed?”

The “Therefore” implies words were said that are not recorded here...perhaps

“Our hearts changed, God changed our hearts.

Please forgive us as God has forgiven us.

We did reject you but now...”

But what is recorded here...

“We need you...your strength and courage, your virtue and substance,
your character.

We want/need you to lead us.”

As this remarkable conversation continues, notice Who takes center stage.

v9-11 the LORD deliver them...the LORD be witness:

“Is this a trick, are you trying to punk me?

If

- I return home with you
- the LORD delivers the Ammonites into my hand,

will I really be your ruler...not just in war but also in the peace afterwards?”

“The LORD be witness if we are not sincere in following the LORD and you.”

So Jephthah returns home to Mizpeh and is made ruler and military leader/judge
the captain of their salvation

He is accepted by all the people, including his brothers the sons of Gilead

Sweet unity among the brethren vs division (Abimelech)

Why?

Or should I ask, “Who?”

Who is Center Stage in the negotiations?
The LORD

Jephthah:

- gives glory to the LORD in advance, knows Who the King of Israel is, a Godly man intent on following the LORD and therefore worthy of being followed
- gives himself to the LORD...Is 6:5-ish

Elders of Gilead: “Swear” by the name of the God they are following

Everybody is following the LORD...the LORD is LORD of all

Thus, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity... possible only when Jesus Christ is Lord of all!

v12 sent messengers:

The first thing Jephthah does is to send ambassadors/diplomats to the king of Ammon to understand what the beef is in “my land” (Ch 10:8-9)

Jephthah is negotiating from a position of strength...God is with him
And, in obedience to the Word of God, he first gives peace a chance

Deut 20:10-12

What is required of ambassadors who carry the message of the head of state?
To faithfully, boldly proclaim his message

Rom 8:31

2 Cor 5:20

Matt 10:7-14

Rom 12:18...but do not compromise/change/dilute the King’s message by seeking unity at the expense of Truth

v13 took away my land:

The king of Ammon accuses Israel of stealing his land and he wants it back... peaceably (implied: “Or else I will take it violently.”)

Peace for land...not a new tactic of Satan in his attempts to annihilate Israel
The king of Ammon sings that song, it has been sung since, and now the whole world is singing it

The king of Ammon’s assertion, however is false
And it still is (Joel 3:2)

v14-18 Israel took not away:

The king of Ammon's assertion is historically false
So to set the record straight, Jephthah gives a concise history lesson
(history is important!)

“You have your facts wrong, so your claim and provocation are wrong.
When Israel came up out of Egypt...

- by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of our God
 - because He was leading us to our Promised Land
- we did NOT take your land or your cousin's land (Moab)...
because your land was not our Promised Land.

We

- WALKED THRU the Red Sea (has Ammon ever done anything like that following your god?!)
- sent our diplomatic corps to the king of Edom asking his permission to simply pass thru his land to get to our land...
we did not trespass but our request was vehemently denied.
- then sent the diplomatic corps to the king of Moab on the same mission...and again were denied

We respected the borders of our neighbors and the decision of their kings...
we did not trespass on their lands, in obedience to our God:

Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau *for* a possession. (Deut 2:6)

Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land *for* a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot *for* a possession. (Deut 2:9)

And *when* thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon *any* possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot *for* a possession. (Deut 2:19)

Jephthah continues his history lesson...

v19-22 the LORD God of Israel delivered:

“Then we sent our ambassadors to Sihon king of the AMORITES with the request to pass thru his land.

Sihon not only had the same nasty disposition and the kings of Edom and Moab and closed his borders to us, he attacked us.

But that didn't work out so well for him because he was really fighting against our God...the one Who parted the Red Sea as He led us out of Egypt.

Obviously...at least to us...he didn't stand a chance and the LORD God of Israel gave the Amorites to us and...to the victor goes the booty...

including all their land, the land you are disputing (v13) and claiming to be your (Ammon's) land.

Deut 2:36-37

Deut 3:15-16

So, truth be told, you are trying to steal our land rather than Israel having stolen your land as you have claimed!

Your argument with me is false.

You are a liar and a thief. (whose children?!)

v23-24 the LORD God...Chemosh:

“Learn from Sihon's fatal error – you are fighting against the LORD God of Israel Who gave us the Amorite's land you fraudulently claim was the land of the Ammonites.

Check your records and consider your Opponent...your beef is with my Master, not me His servant.

Rather than trying to steal God's land, why don't you expend your energy possessing the land your god Chemosh is giving you?

You keep all your god gives you and we will keep all that our God gives us.”

v25-27 Balak:

“And if that sticks in your craw or if you don't believe me regarding Sihon, check out how effective Balak was in pushing us out of this land you want that our God has given us.

Balak failed...300 years ago!

The LORD God of Israel has a 'No Refunds' policy.

This has been our land for many centuries...

- why are you just now filing a claim?
- why have you not until now tried to take back (steal) this land?

Bottom line: Israel has done you no wrong and you are trying to intimidate us and rip us off.

No deal...we do not negotiate with terrorists.

You can appeal to the Judge of the whole earth...

btw, that would be the LORD God of Israel.”

So then and now:

1. What right do Israel's enemies have to take the land?
None
2. Why not take the land their gods have given them?
Their gods are false, God of Israel has set their borders
(Acts 17:25-26)
3. Are the Ammonites any more powerful than the defeated enemies that preceded them?
No
4. Why now stake a claim, when they had opportunities before?
Who knows
5. Israel is innocent, her enemies are guilty
6. Let God be the Judge.

v28 hearkened not:

The historical and spiritual truth was rejected.
"Don't confuse me with the facts!"

Does every person with whom you share the Gospel come to saving faith in Jesus Christ?

No...they do not want to be confused by the facts...set in their right mind.

v29 the Spirit of the LORD came upon:

Truth is rejected, peace is rejected...that leaves no option but war

The Holy Spirit came upon Jephthah and he took the fight to the Ammonites
Another shadow, as we are given the King's message of Truth and peace
and fighting intense spiritual warfare against those who reject it

Matt 28:18-20

Go

Acts 2:1-4

upon

Matt 16:18

I will build, gates of hell

Eph 6:10-12

not against flesh and blood

v30-31 Jephthah vowed a vow:

Appealing to the LORD for victory over the Ammonites, Jephthah opens his mouth inadvisably and vows a vow of consecration unto the LORD

Back to the battle...it belongs to the LORD and He gives Jephthah and Israel a resounding victory

v32-33 the LORD delivered:

Given

2 King 6:16

Elijah, Syrians

2 Chron 32:7

Hezekiah, Assyrians

1 John 4:4...

we have no need of such a vow in the time of our trial

v34-35 his daughter...only child:

The “whatsoever” of his vow is...his only child, his daughter,
singing and dancing for the victory the LORD has given her father.

“Noooooooooooo!

What are you doing out here!?

I cannot renege on my vow!

Eccl 5:1-5

How does Jephthah’s daughter react?

v36-37 do to me according:

She submits to her father...and trusts the LORD

“Do to me as you vowed to the LORD Who has again delivered His people.

But, to help me get my heart right with the LORD before you fulfill your vow,
give me 2 months with my friends to lament/mourn my virginity.”

v38-40 she knew no man:

What happened?!

Good Christians disagree on what happened to Jephthah’s daughter

1. Jephthah offered his daughter as a human sacrifice
2. his daughter was dedicated to a lifetime of service to the LORD

In my mind, there is no controversy, no doubt –
she was NOT offered as a human sacrifice
but dedicated her life to serving the LORD

Why do I have NO doubt about that?

1. Context
 2. Scripture interprets Scripture
- God's character...expressly prohibits human sacrifice
 - Gen 9:5-6
 - Gen 22 God stopped, provided a substitute
 - Num 3:12/Num 8:18 Levites as substitute for firstborn
 - a form of worship to the false gods, devils, destroyers of life
 - 2 Chron 28:1-5
 - 2 Chron 33:1-9
 - Jephthah's character...godly, virtuous, righteous
 - Internal evidence
 - Jephthah's history lesson is indication that he had a firm grasp of Scripture (prohibits human sacrifice")
 - v30-31 is preceded by v29...the Holy Spirit came upon
 - "it" in v31 reveals his intent
 - Having defeated the child-sacrificing Ammonites, Jephthah would be allowed by the Almighty to then sacrifice his only child?
 - his daughter's response was not that of someone about to be slaughtered
 - lamented her virginity vs agonized over losing her life
 - went away for 2 months and returned vs ran away never to be found again
 - Reaction of the Jews
 - not outrage or contempt (2 Kings 3:26-27)
 - recounted/commemorated Jephthah's daughter... perhaps even celebrated her lifetime of dedicated service that was submissive to her father and honoring to God
 - External evidence
 - Jephthah is in the Hall of Faith (Heb 11:32)

What happened?

- the vow of "God opens the womb" closed the womb of his only child
- the womb of Jephthah's daughter was "put to death"
- the line of Jephthah died with his virgin daughter

Application

- Preach Are we to meddle with the dominion of the god of this world?
Absolutely!
- Go!
Give peace a chance...
- share the Gospel of peace with someone
 - invite someone to church to
 - hear the Gospel of peace
 - meet the Prince of Peace, our King and Lord
- If they reject the truth
- do not compromise the truth for “unity at any cost”
 - persist until the Lord tells you to stop
 - move on...the results belong to God, not His messengers

Teach

- 1:40 No one is mortal...everyone is immortal
Everyone lives somewhere forever!
We get to choose where – heaven or hell
- Jesus loves you
He paid the price to pardon you...forgive your sins that separates you from Him
Believe...know
- true love
 - a real, glorious hope
 - genuine peace
 - joy unending
- Anybody want Jesus?
Anybody want to be against Jesus, be His enemy?
Stand up and be counted!

Judges Chapter 12

v1-3 Ephraim gathered themselves...not call us:

Déjà vu all over again

Just as the Ephraimites reared their ugly head after Gideon's victory in [Ch 8:1](#) claiming Gideon did not give them a chance to "go out and play", they do so again after Jephthah's victory

So upset are they that they threaten to burn his house down...with him in it!

But, as he did with the king of Ammon, Jephthah sets the record straight with a clear presentation of the truth

- Jephthah DID call on the Ephraimites to help...they chose not to
- Jephthah risked his life for Israel...they did not
- the strong hand and outstretched arm of the LORD delivered Israel... Ephraim's "help" was not needed (man is no help...Ps 146:3-6)
- no help, no booty

Therein lies the "heart" of the matter...what the men of Ephraim were really upset about is that they had no share in the booty and the glory.

They wanted the reward without taking any risk (booty)...

they wanted that which was not theirs (glory)

Despicable (dethspicable ala Sylvester)

v4-6 Jephthah gathered together:

Presented with the cold hard facts, the undeniable truth, Ephraim disses/taunts Jephthah and the Gileadites

"You guys are 'wanna-bes, living over there on the other side of the Jordan River. You are nothing but run-aways, wandering gypsies...punks."

Jephthah's reaction:

"You dare try to steal the LORD's glory?

You threaten me and mine?

You dis me and my honorable people?

Game on!

Jephthah, like he did with the Ammonites, takes the fight to the Ephraimites...

- Civil War #2, brother against brother (both are descendants of Joseph...Ephraim and Manasseh)
- makes the first move, a brilliant strategic move – capturing the crossing points on the Jordan

At the checkpoints, the Gileadites would discover “friend or foe” with a simple request: “Say Shibboleth”

The meaning of the word is not important (ear of corn, stream, branch), the pronunciation was the point
The Ephraimites had a slightly different dialect, discerned in “sh” sound, which they did not have

“Say, ‘Shibboleth.’
“Sibboleth.”
“Kill him.”

Or in a more modern vernacular...
“Say, ‘Suffering succotash.’
“Thuffering Thuccotash.” (Sylvester)
“Get him out of here.”

As odd as this may sound, it has been a technique of discovering “friend or foe” in many Civil Wars, including the American.

v7-15 judged Israel:

Here are the 4 judges of Israel in this 31 year time span...
8th thru 11th judges

After Jephthah’s challenges, nothing worth recording...
but that does NOT mean the downward spiral that defines the period of the Judges is not happening...for it is

But notice that God is an Equal Opportunity Judge Maker

Judges Chapter 13

v1 Israel did evil again:
Sure enough...Israel goes back to the vomit yet again

During the deceptive “quiet” of the previous administrations,
a very subtle invasion was taking place

A people known as the “Sea Peoples”

- from the region of the Aegean Sea
- militant, maritime culture
- pushed out by Shamgar (Ch 3:31) over 100 years prior
- recently expelled from Egypt by Ramses III
- settled (uncontested) on the coastal area of the land of Canaan
- established 5 cities
 - Gaza
 - Ashkelon
 - Ashdod
 - Ekron
 - Gath
- harassed Israel for over 200 years
 - at one point going to Shiloh and destroying the Tabernacle
 - superior military technology (iron...1 Sam 13:19-22)

They conquered by force...and by assimilation – absorbing and converting
Modern example: corporate mergers...identities and cultures are lost

Israel was slowly being assimilated by, merged into, the Philistines
By this Great Merger, Israel was in danger of losing their identity as a people,
as God’s holy people

This 40 year oppression is the longest during the time of the Judges...
the “Philistine Invasion” was the most grave threat Israel had faced

Is this a unique situation in the history of the world?

This is the Islamic way – conquest/complete domination by assimilation and force

- Egypt etc in 1040 Window from Arabia
- France (as we learn from history)
- England
- USA...Islamic Invasion

Western Civilization is facing its gravest threat since...

Spain defeated the Moors, the last attempted Islamic Invasion

Christians and Muslims fought in Europe for 800 years (711-1492) before
Catholic Spain finally pushed them back into northern Africa

Well...they're back!

And using democracy to impose Sharia Law/Caliphate/World Empire
This nation, England, France are in danger of being lost...at the ballot box

Understand the times and do not be deceived – we are losing our nation...
subtly and silently at first and then...what does history teach us?

[Letter from Pastor Chuck] (received 1 hour after I typed these notes)

Back to Israel and the Philistine Invasion...what does God do?
He raises up a one-man army to stem the tide of this life-threatening merger...
Samson

v2 certain man of Zorah...wife was barren:

The next scene in the war declared by God on Satan takes us to

- the territory of Dan
 - long thin between Jerusalem and the Med Sea
 - the Philistines are strong...leading to the northern migration of the Danites in Ch 18
- the village of Zorah
 - 14 miles west of Jerusalem
 - across the valley from Beth Shemesh (“house of the sun”), a Philistine stronghold

So where did Jephthah get his “take the fight to the enemy” mindset,
his “fighting spirit”?
From God the Holy Spirit, coming upon him

Where is the Church to get her “take the fight to the enemy” mindset,
her “fighting spirit”?
From God the Holy Spirit, coming upon us

Does the Church have a fighting spirit?

No, the Church has a spirit of “tolerance” and complacency...
which grease the skids for assimilation!

The Church needs the Holy Spirit upon her!

The God of Israel is taking the fight to the god of the Philistines...

The God of Israel is/will take the fight to the god of Islam, humanism, etc
We are soldiers in that fight

Where in Ahwatukee can we take the fight to the god of this world?

At the high schools

Pray about: [passing the baton]

Will take an army of people (one man in Christ)...
if interested in enlisting, let me know

There in Zorah is a man named Manoah (“rest”, as in Noah) and his wife
However, Mrs Manoah/Mrs Rest is barren...she is not at rest
Being childless was a heavy burden and great shame in that culture

- Jephthah’s daughter
- Sarah
- Hannah
- Elizabeth

For all my sisters who can identify with this intense heartache, remember:

- “Jephthah”...God opens the womb
- the births of
 - Isaac...when God opened Sarah’s womb
 - Samuel...when God opened Hannah’s womb
 - John the Baptist...when God opened Elizabeth’s womb
- Come talk to me/Monica about Nathan, Kathryn, and Matthew

v3-5 the Angel of the LORD:

Enter...The Angel of the LORD...pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, God the Son
(Gen 22 with Abraham, Judges 6 with Gideon)

Who is also called in this chapter

- A Man of God (Is 7:14, Is 9:6, John 1:14)
- The Man of God
- The Man
- The Angel of God
- God

Jesus appears to Mrs Manoah with Good News – she will conceive and give birth
to a son!

But not an ordinary son, a son called by God from womb to tomb...
a Nazirite (“separated, consecrated”) his entire lifetime

Jesus lays out the definition of a Nazirite as laid out in Num 6...
with 2 notable exceptions

Unlike the conditions laid out in Num 6, this son’s vow will NOT be

- temporary – but will be for his entire lifetime
- voluntary – for the choice and the calling are God’s

Why is that...why not temporary and not voluntary?

Not voluntary: Israel is facing its most dangerous threat and

God is intervening to save His people from “disappearing”

Not temporary: this son will BEGIN to deliver Israel from the Philistines,
a battle that will take centuries

This Nazirite vow placed upon this child by God will be the central theme...
the essence...of his life

v6-8 A man of God:

The news is too good to keep to herself!

“Manoah, I just had the most wonderful Visitor...

I don't know His name and I'm not sure where He came from...

But He told me my heart's desire – to conceive and bear a son!

We are going to have a baby...a baby boy!

And He has a plan for our son...he will be used by the Lord his entire life!”

(How many other Jewish mothers could make that claim!

The lowly have been lifted up.)

Manoah's response was to...pray

“Lord, please send the Man of God again.

We want to be pleasing to You, we want to make sure we understand and do exactly as You say.”

Note: The Angel of the LORD was sent by the LORD...
as Jesus said of Himself 42x in the Gospel of John

v9-12 God hearkened to the voice of Manoah:

Manoah was not unbelieving of the Good Report, he wanted to diligently honor God with obedience, so The Father sends His Son again

Again Jesus appears to Mrs Manoah, who beats feet to get her husband
Manoah follows his wife with great anticipation

“Are you the Man Who spoke with my wife?”

“I am.” (interesting response)

“What is our son's calling and what are we to do to prepare him for it?

How will this yet unborn child begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines?”

v13-14 all that I said:

“The answer to your questions – all that I have already told your wife.”
And Jesus repeats Himself, this time speaking to Manoah.

What is the term of their son’s Nazirite vow?

His entire lifetime

When does the Nazirite vow of their son begin?

“Let her (his mother) beware.”

“She may not eat...drink...”

“I commanded her.”

The lifetime Nazirite vow begins...at conception!

When does life begin?

At conception...the only controversy/debate is in the mind of rebels

That means abortion is...murder, the shedding of innocent blood –
the work of the devil

Gen 9:5-6

v15-16 make ready a kid...offer a burnt offering:

Manoah hears the Angel of the LORD loud and clear,
and in keeping with his culture,
offers his Guest hospitality and fellowship – a meal

Jesus said,

“I will not eat your food.

Matt 4:4

John 4:32, 34

Worship the LORD...this is not a social visit.”

an offering of complete consecration

Matt 6:9 Our Father...hallowed by Thy name

John 5:43a I have come in My Father’s name

John 10:25 the works that I do in My Father’s name

Jesus always glorified the Father...even before He was born of the virgin

v17-18 What is thy name:

When Mrs Manoah came with the Good News of the first visit by the Angel of the
LORD, she said she did not catch His name.

So Manoah asks, so he knows who to thank and honor in about 9 months

“Why do you ask Me what My name is...it is Wonderful.” (full of wonder)

Is 9:6 (i.e. deity...God become man)

Mildly put, Jesus is Wonderful, amen?!

v19-22 kid...rock...ascended in the flame...God:

Manoah does worship the LORD God...offers a perfect young goat
(not a maimed or sick or old or leftover goat)

He offers it on an altar, a God-made rock (Jesus is our Rock, the Father's altar)...
and the most amazing thing happened!

Jesus returned to heaven in the flame!

The God is a Consuming Fire (Deut 4:24)

- Flames came down upon Mount Sinai...
and God spoke to Israel
- Here, flames go up from the rock to heaven...
and God ascended back to heaven

And Manoah and his wife worshipped Him – on their faces,
now realizing that the Angel of the LORD was God Himself manifest to
them to bless them and deliver them from the enemy

The revelation and the commission complete, God departs...
now it is time for man to obey

Then...”reality” sets in for Manoah –

“We are dead because we have seen God!

He is holy...we are not!

Woe is us...we are undone!”

Ex 33:20

Is 6:1-5

Later, in a greater revelation...John 1:18

v23 But his wife said:

While Manoah (“rest”) is freaking out, Mrs Manoah is the voice of reason

“Why would God kill us?

He is not a capricious or malicious God.

He is a loving and merciful God.

Let's look at the facts:

- He received our burnt offering, our worship
- He told us future events...the miraculous birth of our son
- If we die, our son cannot be born...and God is a liar...
but He cannot lie.
- He told us these things (v5b) now (v1).”

Mrs Manoah simply took God at His Word, not

- reading anything into it
- adding to or taking away from it
- spiritualizing it

v24 bore a son...Samson:

The Angel of the LORD/God made good His Word to Manoah and his wife...
He said it, He meant it, He did it

Enter arguably the most

- amazing
- pathetic
- tragic

character in all Scripture...

Samson (“sun”) who will be God’s one-man army against the Philistines

God is taking the fight to the god of the Philistines, bringing forth a servant
named “sun” in the town across the valley from the “house of the sun”
Samson grew and the LORD blessed him...was actively involved in his life

To Manoah and his wife, an unspeakable gift, a blessing

Yet, we know the story, Samson will break every aspect of the Nazirite vow and
not be a “sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2)

- Prov 10:1 A wise son makes a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother
- Prov 15:20 A wise son makes a glad father: but a foolish man despises his mother

v25 Spirit of the LORD:

Involved in Samson’s life are

- The LORD...God the Father
- The Angel of the LORD...God the Son
- The Spirit of the LORD...God the Holy Spirit

I cannot in my finite mind understand or explain the “Trinity”, the Triune nature
of God, the Creator of heaven and earth

But His Word clearly reveals His nature...and I simply take God at His Word

Next time...the one-man war on the Philistines begins

The strongest man in Israel is from the weakest tribe...
God the Holy Spirit is his strength (not his hair!)

What can we take away from Ch 13?

1. Wake up to the Great Merger

- Islam
- Humanism
- Ecumenicalism

threatening our nation and trying to assimilate us whereby we will lose our

- identity
- culture
- freedoms

It's high time to take the fight to the enemy in our Greatest Threat

Eph 6:10-12

for the battle is spiritual and belongs to the LORD

Matt 5:44

our role in the battle

[CID Retreat]

2. The prophets always spoke with wonder when they spoke of God
They were awestruck with wonder at the wonderful things God did

May we have a child-like faith that is continually awestruck with wonder at the things God has done, is doing, and will do!

May we always expect God to do something wonderful!

- In our lives
- In this church
- In the high schools in town
- In this nation
- In Egypt

3. We have received God's revelation and His calling...it is now time for us to obey

1:40

The Angel of the LORD (100% God) became Man (100%) to deliver us from the god of the Philistines, etc of the world...John 1:1 14, 29

The Light of the world did not come to BEGIN that, but to FINISH it...John 19:30

Jesus fought a One Man war against Satan and his entire gang to rescue whosoever would believe in, trust in, commit their lives to Him

He became weak for us...but did not sin

He was the burnt offering...and He ascended back to the Father

And He defeated the final enemy...death

He is calling you out of Satan's empire of darkness and into His kingdom of light...
will you believe?

He wants to take the fight to the enemy of your soul...will you follow Him?

Judges Chapter 14

Last time...the announcement, calling, and birth of 12th judge: Samson from the tribe of Dan
This time...a tragic story if ever there was one begins

Samson...for whom we have more history than any other judge...was

- miraculously announced – to a barren woman
- moved upon by the Holy Spirit while he grew up
(to empower him to do the task for which he was chosen)

- courageous fighter
- “world’s strongest man”

- consumed by great weakness (lusts, shameful debauchery)
- fiercely independent – did what is right in his own eyes

- a man with issues that was used by God
- tragic – oh, what might have been

The history of Samson revolves around

- his Nazirite vow
- 3 women
 1. The woman of Timnath
 2. The prostitute of Gaza
 3. Delilah

v1-3 woman in Timnath...pleases me well:

Several decades after Ch 13:24...

Samson is cruising around the Philistine town of Timnath that is 4 miles from his home...

when a good-looking woman catches his eye

Immediately in his story we are introduced to the great weakness of a very strong man – the lust of his flesh

And notice where he is – in enemy territory

He seemingly has no problem hanging out with the enemy,

thereby participating in the subtle assimilation process that

- so gravely threatens Israel
- he was called and raised up to begin to throw off

In the first few words of the ministry of Samson...the Nazirite is not holy

Samson goes home and, in a tone of voice I think was disrespectful,
issues an order to his parents:

“Today in Timnath I saw a pretty woman walking down the street...
pretty woman, the kind I like to meet.
She really pleases me (my eyes).
Go get her to be my wife.”

“Son, really?
Are there not any pretty Jewish women that have caught your eye?
Why would you go shopping among the Philistines?”

“I like who I like.
This is my life!
(It does not matter to me that she is displeasing to you and God.)
Get her for me!”

With a “Don’t make me repeat myself!” attitude

Samson...

- dishonors his father and mother...Eph 6:1-3 looms
- is a rude and crude young man in a rude and crude time of Israel’s history (1 Cor 15:33)
- has no hesitation in disregarding the Law of God (holy/separated...do not inter-marry, per Ex 34:16, Deut 7:3)

Can anyone relate to Samson...thought and acted like Samson?

How grieving for Manoah and his wife!

- Godly people
- parents who faithfully raised their son according to the Nazirite vow God had given him
- loved the Lord and served Him with joy

Yet...salvation is not inherited, it isn’t a “birthright”.

Salvation = to be set free from bondage

Salvation is by personal faith in Jesus...

and Samson has faith only in himself

Samson...as un-bind-able as we shall see...is in bondage

Freedom comes only by submission and surrender

As much joy as they had in Samson’s birth, they had sorrow in his life

From this point forth, Samson’s parents know only sorrow because of their son

Can anyone relate to Samson’s parents?
(perhaps you could also relate to Samson...)

Q: How can an unholy, not-saved deliverer deliver Israel?

v4 knew not that it was of the Lord:

How can an unholy, not-saved deliverer deliver Israel?
In the hands of the holy, sovereign, all-powerful God

This does NOT mean that God

- approves of Samson's choices/behavior/words
God disapproves –
Samson is contrary to His Law and his vow
- foreordained Samson's choices/behavior/words
God did not foreordain –
Samson of his free will made his choices,
God in His foreknowledge knew those choices and
“planned” accordingly

God uses everything – Gen 50:20, Rom 8:28 – and He is not done yet either!
The bad choices of man in no way prevent God's will from being done

v5-9 a young lion:

Samson and his parents

- are on their way to Timnath...for Samson's wedding to that Philistine woman
- get separated (they are separated in more ways than one)

As Samson is walking by himself

- a young lion...strong, fierce, threatening, maybe even hungry –
not an old and tired lion
- roared...but Samson's parents did not hear

The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson and he tears the young lion to shreds
with his bare hands

Can you imagine? Could any of us do that?!

We have been given the power of God to fight the roaring lion!

1 Peter 5:8	our adversary is a roaring, hungry, hunting lion
James 4:7	does not stand a chance against the children of God
Matt 10:8	His called ones have the power of Jesus over devils
Mark 6:7	gave them power over unclean spirits
Luke 9:1	power and authority over all devils
Mark 16:17	that believe, in My name they shall cast out devils

But, back to Samson, what happens in the process?

Samson's Nazirite vow is broken – he has touched an unclean (dead) thing

Q: When was Samson's Nazirite vow broken – when he touched the unclean thing with his hands or in his heart sometime earlier?

About the lion, Samson doesn't care...nor does he tell his parents who do care

Safe to say that his Nazirite vow means nothing to Samson

Samson despises God's ways

v10 Samson made there a feast:

In keeping with the local wedding customs instead of the Word of God,

Samson throws a 7-day drinking party

The assimilation continues...there is much archaeological evidence that the Philistines were big beer drinkers

And another part of his Nazirite vow is broken –

no wine (vine) or strong drink (grain ala beer etc)

v11-14 put forth a riddle:

Samson did not come with any of his friends...he may not have had any friends

(was a loner...despising Gen 2:18 and Prov 18:24a)

So his wife's parents bring 30 Philistine men to be his drinking buddies

At the beginning of the wedding feast, perhaps to test the wit of his newfound friends or to display his wit to those guys, Samson proposes a bet on a riddle he is dying to share.

“You tell me the answer to the riddle by the end of the feast and I will give each of you a linen sheet and a change of clothes. (big money!)

If you fail to tell me the answer to my riddle by the end of the feast, each of you owe me a linen sheet and a change of clothes.”

(the gambling man is putting 30:1 odds on the bet)

“Ok! We'll bite!”

And Samson gives his riddle, the answer to which only he could know because it concerned the “lion shredding” incident

Looks like Samson is trying to

- pick a fight
- puff himself up
- take advantage of his “friends”

v15 Entice thy husband:

They mull it over for all 7 days but, obviously, cannot solve Samson's riddle...
so they go to Plan B: accusing and threatening his wife

“Trick/deceive your husband into giving us the answer...or we will burn you and
father's house to the ground!

We don't take too kindly to being set up like this by you!”

With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Accusations, condemnation, and threats – the devil's way

When you hear accusations, condemnation, and threats...

know who is speaking

When you make accusations, condemnation, and threats...

know whose mouthpiece you are

v16-18 dost but hate me...he told her...she told:

Samson's wife had been begging him to tell her the answer to the riddle all feast
long (v17a)

“I'm curious, what is the answer, Sammy dearest?”

“That is for me to know and for you to find out.”

“But I'm your wife!”

“I haven't even told my parents (whom I love)...

why would I tell you (for whom I lust).”

But now, on the last day of the feast and after her life was threatened, she turns on
the water works.

“You don't love me!

You hate me!”

Boo hoo hoo hoo

She is manipulating her husband

Deceit and manipulation are the devil's way

Being honest and open are God's way

Note: conversation at the mosque regarding relationship priorities:

1. god (vs God)

2. parents

3. family (not wife because she will automatically nag you)

Samson couldn't take it...
 didn't have the strength to hold out to the end of the day...
and tells his wife the answer to the riddle...
 who immediately betrays him by telling his "friends", her kinfolk

The 30 Philistines come triumphantly with the correct answer...
 and Samson knows who gave it to them
Methinks he is really hot under the collar

Brothers – do not mimic Samson's words!
 Whereas he may have honestly been speaking his mind,
 he is rude and crude without control of self...don't go there

Sisters – do not mimic Mrs Samson's words
 Be open and honest with your husbands,
 do not deceive or manipulate them

v19 slew thirty men:
 Samson storms out of his own wedding feast and out of town...
 the Spirit of the LORD upon him
v4 is coming to pass

Samson the One Man Army marches 20 miles to Ashkelon...
 a city of the Philistines because they took it from the Danites (his people)
There he killed 30 Philistine men, took their clothes, and returned to Timnath to
 pay his bet

 "Keep the change you filthy animals!"

Then, still fuming mad, he returned home...to his parents' house...alone

v20 wife was given:
 Seeing his new son-in-law storm off in a rage...and knowing why...
 Mrs Samson's father gave Samson's wife to Samson's best man!

This sounds like big trouble just waiting to happen!

Judges Chapter 15

v1-3 wheat harvest...shall I be more blameless:

Well, after he had cooled off...in May/June, the time of the wheat harvest...
Samson return to Timnath and his wife

He is bringing her a goat...

- giving her something in order to get something from her
- visiting her like a prostitute (Gen 38:15-17)

His (ex) father-in-law is flabbergasted to see him!

“You left so suddenly and violently I thought you were divorcing my daughter.
So I gave her as wife to your best man.
But since you are back...son...take a good look at her younger sister –
she is even more pretty, don’t you think!
Do we have a deal?”

“Oh, I’m going to make you Philistines pay for this!
I am going to settle the score, and I am totally justified in doing it.”

Now starts a vicious cycle of revenge that will end in the death of both
“Dirty Sammy” and thousands Philistines

v4-5 foxes...firebrands:

God’s One Man Army on a mission captures 300 foxes (how?!)

He tied their tails and torches together...

imagine the hue and cry of the animal rights groups...

making 150 wild, panicked “fire bombs” that destroyed the Philistines’ harvest...

- shocks – piles of harvested wheat
- standing grain – wheat not yet harvested
- vineyards
- olive orchards

A devastating “scorched earth” attack that is an unmistakable act of war on an
agrarian society

v6 Who has done this?
Samson is correctly fingered as the attacker...
but the Philistines take revenge by executing/burning with fire

- Samson's wife (who betrayed him...Ch 14:15)
- Samson's father-in-law (who betrayed him...Ch 14:20)

v7-8 yet will I be avenged:
"Oh, now you've gone and done it!
You have really made me mad now!
You are so going to pay for that!
I will not rest until I have my payback!"

And he beat them to smithereens...all by himself.

Then he retreated to friendlier territory.

v9-11 the Philistines went up...men of Judah:
Philistine reinforcements pursue Samson to Etam, in Judah.
Remember, the Philistines have iron weapons and
the Jews have sharp sticks

The Philistines state their intentions – to arrest Samson and do to him as he had done to them

Revenge – the devil's way, the world's way
God's way – the Golden Rule, loving one's enemies, forgiveness, grace

The intimidated, cowardly men of Judah

- do not confront the Philistines
- confront Samson

"What are you doing to us?
Are you trying to get us all killed?
Have you forgotten who is boss around here?
What did you do to them, anyway?"

"Only what they did to me."

Such is the vicious cycle of revenge that fans the hatred in the world
Have you ever exacted revenge for a wrong done to you?
How did it work out for you?

v12-13 we will bind thee:

“Well, Samson, here’s the deal.

To safeguard ourselves, we have come here to tie you up and to deliver you to the Philistines, who want to kill you.”
(at least they are honest!)

“OK.

But promise me that you will not kill me yourselves.”

“Deal.

We will tie you up very tightly and turn you over to our enemies but we will not be the ones to kill you. (we will let them do that)

Hold still, Mr. Universe....we just want to put these new ropes on you...”

What is up with these men of Judah?!

- fear man but not God
- have no “fighting spirit”
- apathetic and pathetic!

v14-17 Lehi...new jawbone:

When the Philistines see Samson being brought to them, cuffed and secured, they let out a cry of triumph

But that, turns out, was a bit premature!

The Spirit of the LORD fell upon Samson again...

and the new ropes binding him became like burnt cotton...
unable to bind/secure anything, much less Mr. Universe

The Philistines have all the weapons of war so Samson just makes use of what is handy – the jawbone of a recently dead donkey

Once again his Nazirite vow is broken – touching an unclean thing

Whereas Is 54:17 is true of Israel, it is not true for the enemies of Israel

In the hands of God’s One Man Army, the jawbone of a donkey was a lethal weapon!

Single-handedly Samson slew 1000 Philistine soldiers

Which means the men of Judah did not lift a finger to help out or join in!
Colossal is their failure of faith

This episode is filled with word play

Lehi – “jawbone”

ass = “chamor”

heaps = “chamora”

In “jawbone”, Samson made a “donkey” out of them using a donkey’s jawbone

Methinks the Sovereign Almighty God has a sense of humor

v18-19 was sore athirst:

It’s not easy killing 1000 men with the jawbone of a donkey...
such work leaves you with a powerful thirst!

This is the first recorded instance of Samson calling out to the Lord...
and it is to satisfy his flesh

God supernaturally provided a drinking fountain...from the same jawbone
The jaw of death is also the jaw of life

Samson called it “the fountain of one calling”

v20 twenty years:

So Samson judged Israel for 20 years...of which Scripture is silent
Twenty years of silence...and false “peace” – the cessation of hostilities

Samson is the last of the judges...until Samuel

We resume his story...and lessons from it...next week

But so far...we can take-away

- free will of man and the sovereignty of God...His will WILL be done!
- the folly of revenge...vengeance belongs to God, the all-knowing
- understand the source of all accusations, condemnation, threats, manipulation

- Can we identify with Samson...perhaps living like him right now
 - loving the world
 - pride
 - driven by lust
 - rude and crude
 - despising God’s ways...because of unbelief
- the price of unholiness/worldliness...assimilation, pain, and destruction
1 John 2:15-17
- the children of God have the power of God over all devils

Judges Chapter 16

God's One Man War on the Philistines continues
This time...the fall of a tragic figure

It was not a function of "if" Samson would fall, but of "when"
I wonder how many Samson's are here this morning...tragic falls by self-centered
weakness

v1 saw there a harlot:

The beginning of Samson's end starts with a 2nd Philistine woman...
a prostitute in Gaza

Gaza was one of the 5 Philistine cities...large, wealthy city on the trade route
with Egypt

Note: the wealthier the city, the thicker and stronger the protecting
walls and gate

What is Samson doing there?
He is up to no good.

- Pride: "Stop me if you can!"...arrogantly taunting the Philistines

Red flag: let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall
1 Cor 10:12

- Lust of the flesh: "shopping" again to satisfy his lust...
has a fatal attraction for Philistine women

Red flag: I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the
lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and
the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to
the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
Gal 5:16-17

Samson is able to rip a lion to shreds with his bare hands and
to kill 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey...
but is too weak to conquer/control his own lust and pride

Samson's downfall...himself
He is his own worst enemy
Seeking only his own selfish interests

Do you know any Samsons?

v2-3 laid wait...gate of the city:

By now, of course, Samson's is well-known and hated by the Philistines
When they realize he is in town, they set a trap and lay in wait for him at the
city gate

- locked at night...Samson will be locked in and unable to escape
- in the morning pounce on him like jackals on a wildebeest and kill him

Problem: Samson didn't stay until morning

- he was finished with one item on his agenda (lust)
- now it's time for the other item (Stop me if you can)

Samson takes care of that agenda item...

by ripping the city gate right out of the ground!

- constructed of wood...heavy, durable wood like cedar
- as thick and as tall as the walls...perhaps 40 feet high and 4 feet thick
- perhaps covered with metal sheets to protect against attack by fire
- something so massive would need a heavy duty bar to lock the doors
- archeological speculation: weigh 2-4 tons

The Philistines trusted in the city gate to stop Samson...

Samson thought it would make a nice trophy for him and Israel.

So Samson puts the city gate on his shoulders and

- walks about 40 miles
- uphill...Hebron is Israel's highest city above sea level (where Gaza is)
at 3300 ft

Now we enter the final stage of Samson's life...it centers around a 3rd Philistine
woman

v4 Delilah:

Delilah

- "languishing"...to become weak or feeble...
which is precisely what Samson will do
- another prostitute? (methinks so)

Samson is ruled by his weakness...lust for "strange women"

In Book of Proverbs, "strange woman" refers to false religious systems
that seduce men away from God and to destruction

v5 the lords of the Philistines...Entice:
The Philistines know Samson is with Delilah
(only prostitutes entertain strangers...this one in particular)
So the 5 lords of the Philistines...one per city...also proposition this prostitute
“Trick/seduce Samson into revealing the source of his strength and how we can
conquer him...
And each of us will pay you 1100 pieces of silver.
5500 pieces of silver for this information.”

To get the magnitude of the bribe...

- price of 183 slaves
- estimated to be over \$38,000 (about 3000 yrs ago)

Delilah is a “working girl”...working for money, not patriotism or honor...
the 5 lords of the Philistines have her complete attention

v6 Tell me:
The working girl gets right to work – wasting no words...no verbal seduction!
She is about as subtle as a train wreck!
“Come here, big, strong, and stupid. I have a question for you.”

v7-9 seven green withs:
Needless to say, Delilah uses her non-verbal “charms” on Samson
Samson is “game”...he obviously likes to play games, even deadly games.
And he must know the character of his little “playmate”
Round 1: being tied up with seven green/fresh cords (not brittle by exposure to
the elements) will turn me into a common man
(a stupid question deserves a stupid answer, I guess)
“Amazingly”, seven green/fresh cords appear...
special delivery by the 5 lords of the Philistines...
and Samson lets Delilah tie him up!
Note: there are the Philistine goons hiding in the bedroom...”ready”
Money-motivated Delilah tests Samson’s strength...and learns that seven green
cords on Samson are like a cotton thread over an open flame
Samson probably thinks this is great fun...who will hoodwink who?!
Is he glorifying his gift from God...or himself?

v10-12 new ropes:

Delilah is less amused than is Samson
So she tries again

Round 2: new ropes that have never been used will make me like a
98 pound weakling

Note: did not work earlier (Ch 15:13) so why would they now?

Just like that, Delilah is in possession of new ropes
The same test...the same “joke’s on you” laugh by Samson

“Did you really think you were going to hornswoggle me?
Gotta get up pretty early in the morning to pull one over on me,
Peaches!”

v13-14 weave seven locks:

Delilah is bamboozled...but greedily persistent, plying her trade for her own
self-interest

Delilah gets Samson to sleep but before he drifts off to sleep, she asks again

Round 3: put my 7 (dread) locks in your loom over there and I’m done for!

Delilah did the weave
The same test...the same test result

Samson may be laughing at her...
her loom is ruined and in pieces on the ground...
it’s time for Delilah to ramp it up or lose all that money!

v15-17 say, I love thee:

“How can you stand there and tell me that you love me?!
You and me...we are worlds apart!”

With contrived devotion, Delilah manipulates this weak strong man
She applies pressure and turns up the heat.
Not playing around anymore, she “nags him to death”

Samson could not take it...
was too weak to fight off the onslaught of this woman...and he caves
Worn out, he reveals to her the last part of his Nazirite vow that remains unbroken

Note: Esau-esque in weakness of flesh

Before we move on...

- Ladies: 1 Peter 3:4 vs manipulation, pressure, nagging
- Men: know your weaknesses and do not go there!
God does not play games with holiness

v18-19 Delilah saw:

With the eye of a cold-hearted prostitute, Delilah could see that this was the “real deal”.

So she quickly summoned the 5 “johns”, the lord of the Philistines

“I broke him!
Come now...with my money.”

While the lords of the Philistines were mustering, Delilah...
with the efficiency of a real pro...gets mighty Samson asleep

Then with heartless cruelty, she

- calls for a barber
- performs a preliminary test of Samson’s strength...
beating him herself, perhaps with pent up rage

Most frequently, the driving motivation of female sex trade workers is
NOT money...but the destruction of men, whom they hate
because men have abused/disrespected them

v20-21 he knew not...put out his eyes:

Her torture test passed...so she executes the standing test of Samson’s strength
Samson proclaims he will again get the last laugh on Delilah...but he is so wrong

To instruct His servant in righteousness, the Spirit of the LORD left Samson...
Samson is on his own, per his repeated self-centered choices

Therefore, when the Philistines swooped in, he was powerless against them

- plucked out his eyes...the judgment of God on that which was his
weakness and downfall – the lust of his eyes
- bound him hand and foot with brass chains
- threw him in prison
- made him a grinder of grain...with a hand mill
 - lowest form of slave labor
 - usually given to a female slave

Gen 4:7 And if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And unto you *shall be*
its desire (to rule over you)

Samson has been blinded, bind-ed, and grinded by sin.

The most tragic part: Samson did not even know that the LORD had left him.

His strength was not in his hair but in the Spirit of the LORD...

and his Strength was truly gone because he has now broken every part of his Nazirite vow

How many Christian men have fallen to pride and lust of the flesh...

- blinded by their sin...opposing themselves
- bound by the snare of the devil and taken captive by him
- calloused to the conviction of the Holy Spirit calling him to repentance
- angered by the warnings and rebukes of brethren who love him
- nonchalantly grieving the Holy Spirit
- and never even knowing that the Lord their Strength had “left” them
 - no fellowship, no communion
 - on a painful march to the end of Self...where they might again hear His still small voice calling him to repentance

v22 hair began to grow again:

Utterly humiliated...the proud abased...Samson had a lot of time to think about

- his Nazirite vow...holiness despised
- his life...the haunting regret of “Oh, what might have been...”

With the passage of all that time...his hair grew back

From the Philistine perspective – someone took their eye off the ball

From God’s and Samson’s perspective – the strength is still gone because it was never in his hair

v23 gathered...sacrifice unto Dagon:

One day, the 5 lords of the Philistines were gathered together for a feast, celebration/sacrifice to their god Dagon

- god of Nineveh (Jonah) – part human, part fish
- god of the Philistines – grain god
 - Samson is grinding grain, in subjection to the grain god
 - from grain came their very favorite beverage – beer

Any celebration of Dagon in the temple of Dagon would certainly include...

lots of beer!

The Philistines are having a gigantic kegger!

As a part of their celebration, the lords of Philistines break out with their equivalent of “Allah akbar!” ...”Our god is greater!”

Wrong!

Their god is a powerless counterfeiter

The Sovereign God of AI&J delivered Samson to them...

- to break him finally
- to continue His war against their god

v24 the people:

The people join in the chorus in the same misguided celebration, rejoicing that their god is greater...delivered the one who

- let loose the 150 foxy firebombs
- made a donkey out of them with the jawbone of a donkey in a placed called “jawbone”

v25 make us sport:

When everybody is good and sauced, they call for their trophy Samson to be put on display to entertain them

With acts of strength so they can be amazed?

No...he has no strength (even though is hair is growing)

With acts of weakness so they can mock and curse him

v26-28 feel the pillars...called unto the LORD:

The 3000 Philistines in attendance think they are getting the last laugh
Samson, formerly the world’s strongest man, is being publicly humiliated
for his pathetic weakness

He asks the boy...another Hebrew slave, perhaps...to help him find the pillars
of the temple of Dagon so he can lean on them

He is bone tired by even these acts of weakness

(John 15:5...he/we can do nothing without the Lord our Strength!)

There, Samson for the 2nd time calls out to

1. LORD...Yehweh/Jehovah
2. Lord GOD...Adoni
3. God...Elohim

“Remember me (who has so shamefully despised the Nazirite vow You
put on my miserable, pathetic life).

Strengthen me...just once more. (You alone are my Strength)

Avenge me (how they have treated Your servant).”

v29-30 took hold...all his might:

Strategically placed between the two middle, load-bearing pillars upon which the integrity of the entire structure rested...

Samson...knowing he would die also...gives it one last, mighty heave-ho

And the LORD answered his prayer...to remember, to strengthen, and to avenge

In Samson's life we see a truth of God – God makes no attempt to hide the warts of His servants

God alone is perfect and He alone is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory

In Samson's death, as in Stephen's death (Acts 7), we see a truth of God – sometimes God uses the death of His servants in a mightier way than He used their lives

Will the Lord use our deaths in a mightier way than He uses our lives?
Are we willing to let Him?

v31 buried him:

The Danites come down to retrieve Samson's body and to bury him in the burial place of his father Manoah ("rest")

Lessons from the life and death of Samson...

- what Samson had...and what he had not
- what Samson valued...what he despised...and when

1. Samson had great authority without accountability

He was the judge of Israel...and He was the Ultimate Loner...NOT a good thing!

Gen 2:18

Heb 10:25

Gal 6:1-2

We are called to be open, honest, and transparent with each other...

because we need each other!

You cannot be a Christian alone...because Christianity is the Body of Christ

If the devil can get someone alone...they will fall

People in the Bible and throughout Church history who have fallen...were alone

Even men after God's own heart like David!

I may be preaching to the choir...but maybe I'm not

Do you come here and leave here...and never get involved in other people's lives?

You are playing a deadly game

Church essentials...Acts 2:42...include fellowship

2. Samson had fame without greatness

Samson was a celebrity...a larger-than-life figure

But he was not a great man...he was a miserable and pathetic man (self-centered)

A great man is...a reflection of Jesus

- a servant of God and others
- humble and meek
- gracious and loving
- holy

3. Samson had selfish, lustful sensuality without guiding, loving morality

We are all created sensual...within boundaries (marriage...one man and one woman)

e.g. Song of Solomon...Jesus is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride

Outside those boundaries, our unchecked, indulged sensualities greatly offend our

Creator

Sexual sin is very frequently mentioned in the Bible...carrying among the most serious consequences

Beware, be checked

4. Samson had consecration unto God without communion with God...he had no spiritual life

A Nazirite vow was an outward display of an inward consecration
His Nazirite vow had only an outward façade...no inward substance

Christianity in the Laodicean period of Church history (with Sardis and Thyatira) is an
outward show of consecration...without communion with God (Jesus vomits)

I do not read many books by contemporary authors...
too much powerless psychology and “How to” in my own strength
I read the old guys (19th, 18th, 17th centuries) who had “Who” and the Cross
as their focus

When we know “Who” and Him crucified, the “How to” happens...
He is our Strength

Christianity is not

- a cultural demographic in a democracy
- a social club in an entertain-me, celebrity-oriented society
- a “body-building” business enterprise

Christianity is

- communion with God...displayed in a simple, devoted, holy lifestyle
- the Body of Christ...a living organism birthed to worship and serve Jesus
Christ, the Head of the Body
- the Bride of Christ...a glorious work of God, a gift from the Father to the Son

Simply saying you are a Christian means nothing...
communion with and unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ means everything

Does your soul pant for God...or for the things of the world?
Are you following Jesus...or leading your own parade?
Are you a soldier in the Lord’s Army...or are you an army of one?
Do you deny Self for His glory...or indulge Self for your own glory?

5. Samson had humiliation...and restoration

At the end of Samson’s life

- everything is gone
- he has been reduced to a blind, weak slave

But at the end, Samson was a changed man!

- that which he had valued, he now despised
- that which he had despised, he now valued

In the last moments of Samson's life, he has

- Consecration AND Communion – “I need you, LORD!”
He despised consecration without communion

Note: Why does God allow/send such terrible trials into our lives?
So we would desire communion with Him as much as He does
with us

- Authority AND Accountability – he had the help of a little lad
He despised authority without accountability
- Glory AND Greatness – brokenness, humility, meekness
He despised glory without greatness
- Morality – accepting life within God's boundaries
He despised sensuality without morality

And where else do we read the name Samson in the Word of God?
Heb 11:32

Every man here can identify with Samson...but will every man here learn from Samson?
Supernatural strength stripped by natural weakness

- pride
- lust of the flesh/eyes

May we not come to the end of our lives and bitterly mourn, “Oh, what might have been!”

Do not waste your life, your resources, your time, your energies on...your Self
Do everything unto the Lord, as we have been commanded
The Lord will not bless that of which He is not Lord
Give and do everything to the One who alone is worthy of all praise and honor and glory

Read the Word of God...and

- be blessed: comforted, encouraged, edified
- be amazed: discomfited, terrified, staggered
- see yourself in all the characters, warts and all...and learn from them

Do not dodge the hard questions or the hard sayings in the Bible...

Jesus did not dodge anything in order to save you!

Jesus came to the world with very hard sayings and deeply probing questions for man...

And He is looking for commitments, not professions.

Judges Chapter 17

The last section of the Book of Judges...Ch 17-21

Depths of Apostasy – Spiritual and Moral Chaos

A “look back” on the ruin in Israel...not a continuation after Samson

v1-2 Micah...silver...cursed...blessed:

Typical of life in Israel during the time of the judges...Micah

- “who is like Jehovah”
- NOT Micah!
 - a spoiled brat!
 - an idol worshipper
 - a thief

Micah steals his mother’s 1100 shekels of silver...a ton of money, as we will see!

When she discovers her wealth was ripped off, Micah’s mother...

within earshot of her son...curses the thief

“Spooked” by his mother’s curse, this superstitious man decides to come clean

His mother’s reaction to learning her own son ripped her off?

To offset her curse...now that it would be upon her son...she blesses her son

(I would have been knocked into next week if I had done that!)

James 3:10

Confusion in the basic social unit, the family

Bad behavior being rewarded...permissiveness...children ruling the roost...

will turn out badly for both parents and children

Family relationships without

- order and boundaries
- consistent, reliable, loving consequences for bad behavior

are train wrecks...

- everybody gets hurt
- no one is ever happy

Parents: teach your children well – you are NOT their best friends!

To correct them is to oppose them...no one likes doing that

But they are opposing themselves so if you truly love them,
you will oppose them to correct them

Reign them in now or they will reign over you later

Spoiled brats suffer...and make everybody else suffer along with them...

for the lack of boundaries and parental instruction/chastisement

“Parental blocking and tackling”...Bible is the Playbook

v3-4 restored...wholly dedicated...image:

A peculiar/bizarre situation gets even more peculiar/bizarre

After the thieving son gives back his mother's silver, she speaks out of both sides of her mouth...she a liar and a two-faced hypocrite!

"I had wholly dedicated to the LORD the 1100 pieces of silver (Jehovah)...by giving it to you to make two idols."

1. wholly...1100 pieces are dedicated...
yet she gives only 200 and keeps 900 for herself
(where did Micah learn to be a thief?)
2. dedicated to the LORD...so Micah can have two idols made
(where did Micah learn his double-mindedness?)

The Law of God says...[Ex 20:1-7, 15](#)

If Table 1 of the Law is broken, Table 2 will be broken too

If parents do not live according to God's Word, neither will the children

The children watch their parents...and follow suit

Both mother and son have broken both Tables of the Law

Apostasy had become profitable for mother and son...and the silversmith

v5 Micah had:

With

- two idols and a collection of household gods...false gods
- a shrine...false temple (ala grottos of Mary, Buddha, etc)
- an ephod (false priestly garment)
- a false priest of his own hiring and making

Micah has started his own religion

(like Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, etc)

He has a private form of worship that is

- illegal (contrary to the Law of God)
- a complete counterfeit

Who is god in Micah's house?

Micah

v6 every man...right in his own eyes:

There has been a catastrophic failure in Israel – the nation has forgotten God

Num 15:38-41

Deut 12:1-8, 28

Ps 9:15-20

Micah was not alone...he was typical

Every man zealously pursued that which pleased himself

Every man was his own law...the Law of God was the law of no man

Lawlessness and apostasy rule!

“I know what is best for me...I am the master of my own destiny.”

“My truth is different than your truth...both are OK.”

“30 Days” episode Matt watched in Summer School

(“Straight Man in a Gay World”)

Went to a homosexual roommate’s church

- woman pastor
- lesbian
- “God does not care about our sex lives.”
- “The Bible says ‘ Do not kill’, but you were a soldier; we found a way around killing, can’t we find a way around sex?”
- “If God made us the way we are, why would He want to change us?”
- “If you are right, I would have to get rid of my partner and go straight; do you really think that is what God wants?”

Relative truth yields confusion and danger

Absolute truth yields order and safety

Freedom is found only in...absolute truth and order based on submission

Apostasy happens when

- a nation forgets God
- the finite creature thinks he knows better than the Infinite Creator and rebels against the authority God has placed over his life (every man has an authority over his life)
- a man is his own master
- a man pursues what is right in his mind and what his eyes see

Problems with this line of thought, this “heart disease”

- finite denies or does not believe the clear warning of the Infinite
Prov 14:12 and Prov 16:25
- our eyes lie to us with amazing regularity

TV program called “Head Games” on 6/18/12

1. food tasting: lemon-flavored Jell-O with tasteless red food coloring

Subject responses to “What is the flavor?” were based on

- appearance
 - “Berry”
 - “Cherry”
 - “Not watermelon...”
 - not the truth...“Lemon”
2. people talking on a cell phone did NOT see a clown riding by on a unicycle

Distraction/focus of another sense “blinded” the open eyes

3. conspicuous sales clerk in a sporting goods store helping a customer
 - neck brace
 - eye patch
 - ball cap
 - while eyes diverted (survey, another customer, “spill in aisle”)
 - sales clerk progressively changed his appearance
 - took off neck brace
 - switched caps
 - switched eyes covered
 - changed color of his shirt
 - took off cap
 - took off eye patch
 - and none of the customers noticed
4. woman dressed in a red dress (alluring, sexual) vs white (purity) dress
 - turned more heads: 20 in 5 min vs 1 in 30 min
 - got more help to buy a \$1 bottle of water: 38 of 50 vs 8 of 50
 - got more help getting across a street...even carried vs ignored

“Magicians”/illusionists mess with/manipulate our eyes

Satan is the master of distraction

Yet we stubbornly believe our eyes...

a physical sense so easily tricked, deceived, distracted...

And we stubbornly do not believe what God says

- Infinite
- unchanging
- cannot lie
- John 17:17

If our eyes lie to us, we must live by...faith (Heb 11:1, 6)

Example: perhaps this single most difficult “dimension” of believing God and following Jesus – tithing

2 Cor 9:6-7

cheerfully/free will, will reap as sow

Prov 11:25-28

Mal 1:6-8

Mal 3:8-10

God owns EVERYTHING...expressed in the Bible as

- the cattle on 1000 hills
- all the gold and all the silver are Mine
- the earth and the fullness thereof

We own nothing, we are merely stewards of whatever we have been given

All to be used for His glory, not our self-indulgence

1 Cor 4:2 calling of a steward is faithfulness

Stewardship is liberating!

By grace, God gave us EVERYTHING that lasts forever...Eph 1:3

A healthy heart is a grateful heart

We show our gratitude by

- trusting Him with our finances...even if all we have is 2 mites
- worshipping Him with our giving

Spiritual growth: To trust in the God that says “Trust Me”

vs in the money that says “In God we trust”

Spiritual growth only comes by...faith – our response to God’s revelation
(active, doing, working out what God has worked in)

My calling is to

- follow hard after Jesus
- lead by example, living a righteous life before God and man
- encourage you in the faith
- “teach”/feed you so you can grow in the faith
vs doing what is right in your own eyes...so let’s explore that.

Forms of “doing what is right in your own eyes”

- JW, LDS, Islam, Buddhism, New Age...every religion of man
- psychology
- philosophies of men – humanism, rationalism, materialism, experientialism
- traditions of men
- ear-tickling, Cross-less Christianity
- private interpretations of the Word of God

A more uncomfortable form of “doing what is right in your own eyes”...
 requires a look within our own hearts
 Which of these are “doing what is right in your own eyes”?

<u>Our Way</u>	<u>God’s Way</u>	<u>Note</u>
100%	0%	complete rebellion, dead man walking/zombies
90%	10%	
50%	50%	
5%	95%	
0%	100%	“arrived”...no one this side of eternity

Which of these “middle cases” are “doing what is right in your own eyes”?
 Don’t know yet
 Let’s add a dimension...

<u>Our Way</u>	<u>God’s Way</u>	<u>Settled: Y or N</u>
90%	10%	
50%	50%	
5%	95%	

Settled/Halted/Stopped:

- not willing to deny self, suffer, grow, decrease, love any more than right “here”, a place of my choosing
- wanting a relationship with Jesus on “these” terms, terms I dictate
 - I will not change, will not let Jesus change me, in “that”, that which I will cling to and not release to Jesus
 - I will not give Jesus “that”, something or someone... money, possession, relationship, lifestyle, a “treasure” of the world
 - I want Jesus and that something or someone...equally important to me, both are needed to make me happy
- not willing to be broken “there”
- self-imposed stunted growth and stagnation...
 - ”This is as far as I want to go with Phil 1:6.”
 - growth is the evidence of life...living waters NEVER stop
 - stagnation is the mark of death
- anything less than Is 6:5, 8...anything less than ALL

When we halt God's "change agents"...denying, growing, decreasing, suffering...
our walks with Jesus become settled.
Anywhere we have "settled"...gone as far in the relationship with Jesus as we
care to...we are doing what is right in our own eyes.

God's Truth...His ways, His "right"

- is absolute...black and white, binary
- is not "50 shades of gray"...any settled shade of gray is
"doing what is right in your own eyes" (heart disease)

v7-9 young man...a Levite:

Meanwhile, down in Bethlehem, an unnamed Levite

- has abandoned
 - his calling – to serve in the house of God
 - his assigned place – Bethlehem is NOT a Levitical city
- is on a journey seeking
 - employment
 - a place to make a living

This Levite happens upon Micah's house

"Where are you coming from?"

"I am a Levite from Bethlehem..."

I'm not bragging, I'm applying for a job!"

At this time in Israel, the Law of God does not govern the people of God

God chose the Levites to serve Him in His house vs
the firstborn of every family in every tribe

The Levites did not get a land inheritance...land and herds to work...
He was their inheritance

God provided for His servants the Levites with the tithes and offerings of
the other tribes from their working of their land

Typical of other Levites, this Levite is looking for a place to make a living
because the tithes and offerings have stopped coming into the
house of God

God was not the Lord in the lives of the people

He was not first...His rightful place

He was not even last

He was left out altogether...and

- the house of God went neglected
- the service of the Levites in the house of God was not
appreciated

v10-11 be unto me:

In the brief conversation turned job interview, Micah tenders an offer of employment to the Levite

“Live here!
Teach and guide me spiritually.
Be my own personal priest.
I’ll make it worth your while.”

Note: Is the Levite even qualified to be a priest
(priests were of the line of Aaron, not all Levites were priests)?
Why would that even matter to Micah?

The compensation package includes

- room and board
 - a clothing allowance
 - spending money
- (if 10 pieces is sufficient for 1 year, 1100 pieces is...)

The Levite probably thinks this is his lucky day and gladly accepts Micah’s job offer...becoming a hireling

He has compromised his calling...
serving a false god vs The True God

The Levite is also doing what is right in his own eyes

v12-13 Micah consecrated the Levite:

Consistent with the rest of his lawlessness, Micah does that which he has no business doing – consecrating a private priest

And, in keeping with the apostasy of the times, he thinks he will be favored/blessed by the LORD because he has the “good luck” to have hired an “official” priest,
giving his own religion greater legitimacy
because

- all roads lead to God
- everybody goes to heaven
- hell is not a real place

Micah

- superstitious and religious...not in right relationship with God
- ignorant of the Word of God
- self-deceived
- is his own god...and justifying it in the name of the LORD
- blasphemer...NOT blessed of the LORD

Nobody is where they should be because they have not put God in His rightful place – King, first, foremost

In the apostasy of the time of the judges, we have

- moral free-for-all
- relative truth
- rampant materialism

Sounds like USA!

Because God is not in His rightful place – King, first, and foremost

But let's get personal...

- Where is God in our moral boundaries –
 - we live within all His boundaries
 - none of His boundaries
 - or some compromised version of both?
- Where is God in the truth you hold –
 - He is the Truth...Bible is the Final Authority in all matters
 - Biblical truth is mixed in with tradition, philosophy, and religion
 - or we are our own truth?
- Where is God and worshipping Him in your household budget –
 - first
 - last
 - or absent altogether?

Do you want to grow in your faith, in your walk, in your relationship with Jesus?

Make Him Lord of all...your boundaries, your Truth, your budget

Do you want to do what is right in your own eyes...or in God's eyes?

Can you trust your eyes?

Can you trust God's Word?

Will you trust God's Word?

2 Tim 3:16-17

Judges Chapter 18

Last time...began to explore the depths of apostasy

- Everyone doing what was right in their own eyes
- Micah started his own religion
 - made idols
 - set up a shrine
 - made an ephod
 - hired a Levite to wear the ephod and officiate in his idolatrous shrine

This time...this counterfeit religion “goes tribal” on its way to going national

v1 there was no king...Danites sought:

Repeated because of its importance – there is no king in Israel

- God is King but His authority is despised and rejected
- Lawlessness and confusion reign...civil and spiritual

Focus is now turned to the tribe of Dan

- weakest tribe (after Israel committed whoredom with the Moabites and the Lord’s subsequent plague...Num 26)
- prophesied to be Gen 49:16-17 (introduce deception)

Their inheritance in the Promised Land was

- between Jerusalem and Med Sea (by lot in time of Joshua)
- a Philistine stronghold in times of the Judges

The Danites strived for their inheritance but were not able to conquer their land.
Why not?

Not committed to the Lord...the contrast to Caleb (old giant-killer)

They are not settled in their land...

they are tired of a hard life living out of a suitcase, as it were

v2 sent...five men:

The tribe of Dan wants

- more security
- an easier place in which to live

So they dispatch a Recon Team of 5 Special Forces men to find “greener grass”

They do not go south...Negev Desert

They go north...rich fields, forests

v3-5 by the house of Micah:

By chance

(Ha! No such thing in the creation of an all-knowing, Sovereign God)
they walk by the house of Micah

And they heard a familiar voice...the Levite from Bethlehem!

- Was it the accent/dialect?
- Was it the “professional speech”?
- Was it the voice of someone with whom they have had personal contact?

Whatever, the Special Forces Recon Team stops to investigate

- Who brought you way out here?
- What are you doing here?
- Why are you here?

The Levite gives them his whole story

It does not phase the 5 scouts that this Levite had become a hireling in a false religion, a mercenary

They ask him to ask God if their mission will be successful

They obviously do not know that God is not listening to this mercenary
Perhaps the Levite does not know this either!

v6 Go in peace:

The Lord oversaw the casting of the lots by Joshua...

He gave Dan that land between Jerusalem and the Med Sea

The Lord knows all facts of all time and does not change His mind

He has not sent them north to steal someone else's land...

- they are acting on their will vs His
- they are trusting in themselves and not in the Lord
- they are walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit

The Levite did not pray...if he prayed he could not hear

He simply tells the Danites what they want to hear...he tickled their ears

Speaking presumptuously for the Lord, the Levite assures the Danites that God is with them

Deception has a voice...deception speaks of a false peace and a false blessing

v7 came to Laish:

Spying out the land that is a part of Naphtali's inheritance,
the Recon Team comes to Laish

- a Zidonian outpost (heritage of Jezebel)
- isolated
 - far from home (Zidon)
 - no military treaties/alliances
- doing what is right in their own eyes also...
no local government authority to "reign them in"
- living
 - peacefully
 - securely
 - prosperously
 - shamelessly
 - care-lessly...not a care in the world

v8-10 What say ye:

The 5 men have seen enough...time to return to base to give their mission report

"Get up, let's go!

That land is lush and roomy.

The people are vulnerable!

We can easily steal their land.

Our life will be so much easier there!

It is a ready-made home!

Obviously, God is with us!

(v5-6) undoubtedly a part of their mission report)

What are you waiting for?!

Why do you sit there not saying anything?

Come on!!!"

Their report resonates with this lazy, covetous tribe

v11-14 six hundred men:

Still...the entire tribe does not move north...

only a raiding party of 600 armed men go to establish a colony

The 5 Special Forces Recon Team leads them...to Micah's house

"In this house is a ready-made religion...but for the taking.

You know what we have to do..."

v15-17 the Levite...took:

The entire raiding party takes up a position by the gate of Micah's house

They "greet" the Levite and chat with him by the gate...

while the Special Forces "break and enter" to steal the ready-made religion of Micah

v18-20 What do ye...Hold thy peace:

The Levite sees what is happening and protests

"Hey, hey, hey!

What do you guys think you are doing?!"

"Hold on there, padre!!

Bite your tongue for a moment and listen.

We have a proposition for you –

- Come with us.
- Be our priest.
- Is it better for you to be the priest of one family or of an entire tribe of Israel?"

The mercenary Levite thought about this opportunity for a BIG promotion...
for about one NY second

"Sold!

I am definitely your man!

(I got me a big congregation...instantly!)"

He gathered up the man-made, ready-made religion...

and slithered into the midst of the Danite raiding party,
opting to not give his 2 weeks notice to Micah

A mercenary is

- selfish
- untrustworthy
- disloyal
- in constant search of "greener grass"
- contemptible

v21 little ones...carriage:

They have taken what they came to get so the raiding party gets
back on the road...with

- their children
- their livestock
- their moving vans

These 600 families have left their tribal inheritance...and they are not going back!
They are convinced that the grass is greener is Laish!

v22-24 What aileth thee:

After the Danites are long gone, Micah pursues them...and catches up to them

“Stop, thieves!”

“What’s your problem, Bubba?
Why are you making such a scene?”

“Seriously?!
You dare ask me what is my problem?!
Are you joking me?
You have stolen my religion and taken off like a bunch of bandits!”

v25-26 Let not thy voice:

To which the Danite raiding party has a violent, threatening response.

“You want a piece of us?!
You had better shut up before we kill you and your family!”

They summarily dismiss Micah and go on their way.

Micah, defeated, sulks back to his god-less home

- abandoned/betrayed by his priest
- robbed of his religion (he made...v24)

Who was god in Micah’s religion?
What kind of a god was Micah?

v27-29 Laish...smote...burnt...Dan:

The Danites arrive at and exterminate the citizens of Laish, who were

- minding their own business
- unsuspecting
- vulnerable

On the rubble of Laish they built Dan...Tell Dan
(site of the nature hike in Israel)

v30-31 Jonathan:

In what is now known as Dan, the tribe of Dan

- totally abandoned the Tabernacle of God in Shiloh
- set up their own private sanctuary and religion
- lived lives committed to idolatry...led by this Levite and his descendants

The city of Dan became the center of idolatry in Israel

Jeroboam's/Israel's northern shrine for one of two golden calves
(modeled after Micah's carved or molten image?)

Starting at this point, the tribe of Dan led Israel (Northern Kingdom)
into idolatry...

until Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians in about 700 years

Amos 4:6-12 (to Northern Kingdom...shudder!) 5x "not returned"...prepare
Amos 5:26-27

The grass was not greener elsewhere because Jer 17:9 and Ch 17:6

The fruit of Micah's idolatry/fornication/self-made religion...is staggering!

- infected a family
- infected an entire tribe (Dan)
- infected an entire nation (Israel/10 tribes)
- far-reaching, devastating consequences...future even to us

Rev 7...Levi vs Dan because Dan was not a faithful witness...in either place!

"Those who have a weakness for idolatry cannot be permitted to witness
in a day when Satan incarnate, the Antichrist, is pointing to a statue
of himself in the Holy of Holies and demanding to be worshipped."

Donald Grey Barnhouse

Yet...in the list of tribes given an inheritance in Jesus Christ's Mill Reign...Dan
(Ezk 48:1)

The King of Israel is faithful even when Israel is not!

John 1:17

And who is in the center/midst (v20) of it all, of this national calamity?

The heretofore unnamed mercenary Levite is ID'ed...

- Jonathan
- son of Gershom
- son of...who?

KJV, NKJV, NASB: Manasseh

NIV, ESV (NKJV and NASB in margin notes): Moses

Which is it?

- a. The young man is repeatedly identified as a Levite
How can a man from the tribe of Levi also be from the tribe of Manasseh?!
- b. Gershom was the son of...Moses (Ex 2:21-22)
That makes Jonathan the mercenary, idolatrous, false priest...
Moses' grandson
The grandson of Aaron (God's chosen priestly line) is alive
(Judges 20:28)...so could Moses' grandson

What has happened?!

1. The scribes, to protect/honor the name of Moses, inserted a letter

Hebrew has consonants only...no vowels

Why the name of God (YHWH) is unpronounceable

Moses' name appears as "msh"

Manasseh's name appears as "mnsh"

The original manuscript had..."msh"...Moses

The scribes superscripted (italicized) an "n" to deflect this shame from Moses their hero

Wow!

Perhaps why v3!

Who was in the very center of leading the tribe of Dan,
then 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom into idolatry
and judgment and the wrath of God?

The grandson of Moses!

2. Passing the baton from generation to generation...was dropped
Every generation must have its own revelation of God and make its own decision to believe in and follow Jesus or not
Faith and salvation are not inherited...every generation must lay hold of the promise of God
Every generation must establish and maintain their own personal relationship with Jesus

Deut 6:1-15

No heritage is immune...not even the children of Moses

- the Lawgiver
- the servant of the Lord
- the friend of God

Amos 5:4, 14

Gal 3:18-29

Apostasy happens...when a generation of believers fails to teach their children the absolute, unchanging Word of God
Apostasy has happened in USA...who is to blame?!
Amos 4:12...and 1 Peter 4:17

Our only hope is the King of Righteousness!

Most important ministry in any congregation: teaching the Word – to adults and to our children

Judges 18...my desperate, fervent prayer for CCA

We would not sink to the level of the Danites

- grow weary and discontent “living out of a suitcase” until the Lord provides
- leave our place to pursue an easier place, grass that is greener in our eyes
- follow an ear-tickling celebrity pastor right into destruction

We would not sink to the level of Jonathan, grandson of Moses

- presumptuous in carrying the name of Jesus
- opportunistic in our service to the Lord
- despising our heritage, becoming apostate

We would steadfastly remain faithful to the Word of God to the very end, come what may (Is 10:20...the remnant stay upon the Lord in truth)

We would not do what is right in our eyes but what is right in God’s eyes

Can it possibly get any worse in Israel?
Come back next week

Judges Chapter 19

Ch 17-21 reveal the depth of apostasy in Israel during the times of the Judges
Speaks of the entire time period vs continuous after Samson

Ch 19-20...déjà vu and a shocking atrocity
The depths of human degradation is mind-numbing

v1a no king in Israel:

An important reality: no authority, no restraint on wickedness in man's heart

- Moral free-for-all
- Relative truth vs absolute truth
- Lawlessness and confusion

Satan is the author of confusion...God is the God of order

God's order is based on humility and submission...these do not exist in Israel

Hosea 10:3 We have no king, because we feared not the LORD

v1b Levite...Ephraim...Bethlehem:

Is this the same Levite, Jonathan the grandson of Moses?

Don't know for certain but doubt it...yet there are striking similarities

The apostasy in Israel is both religious (Ch 17-18) and social (Ch 19-20)

This Levite has a shameful relationship...only carnal for convenience

Concubine:

- Less-than wife
- 2nd class wife
- Common law wife
- Live-in girlfriend/fiancé...playing like married but not

Ladies...if you are a live-in girlfriend (so prominent and acceptable in our immoral society), you are somebody's concubine

That is nothing to be proud of, nothing God-honoring

Repent and move out

Gents...if you have a live-in girlfriend, repent and move out

Be a man and make the relationship honest and orderly before God
or break it off

v2 played the whore:

Not too surprisingly, out of a shameful relationship comes shameful behavior
And it is not going to end well, either

v3-10 speak friendly...three days...fifth day:

The Levite, after four months, seeks reconciliation with his concubine
I believe his motive is strictly carnal.

His father-in-law is delighted to see him...and what follows is the ancient Eastern custom of hospitality

We experience this in Egypt

- “You must eat!
- The very poor putting out a feast for their guests...honored
- They not eating anything until guests have eaten their fill

After much hospitality is extended to him, the Levite and his entourage leave Bethlehem...8 miles SW of Jerusalem/Jebus

Notice: the Levites’ heart is revealed in v10

- 1st billing – the two donkeys
- 2nd billing – his concubine
He has no respect for her...
and has more concern for his donkeys

v11-13 Jebus...Gibeah:

They got a late start so by the time they get to Jebus, the servant suggests pulling over for the night...

Jebus was the stronghold of the Jebusites (not conquered until David did)

The Levite objects, declaring he would rather go another 5 miles to the Jewish town of Gibeah than stay in a pagan town

On the surface, a good decision

Choose: Hospitality by pagan Jebusites or by children of Israel?
Easy! By children of “governed by God”

In hindsight and in reality...a most regrettable decision

The citizens of Jebus probably had a higher moral standard than did the citizen of Gibeah

God’s people will behave worse than the pagans

v14-15 no man took them in:

So the Levite and his entourage take the next exit...but they were given a shameful reception by the citizens of Gibeah – no hospitality

This should have been a red flag!

Hospitality in the East is like a sacred duty!

Even this past week Egyptian Bedouin kidnappers treated their American hostages like honored guests!

v16-21 lodge not in the street:

The Levite etc are hanging out in the city square...to the shame of the entire city breaking an ancient social custom

They would be no burden, are self-sufficient

Along comes another “stranger”, not a local but an itinerant worker from Ephraim He insists the Levite etc come stay with him, all expenses paid

“Just don’t stay here in the plaza!”

He must know the nature of the citizens of Gibeah

As we will now see, life in Gibeah is in a shameful state

When God’s Word and ways are rejected, society quickly disintegrates

v22 sons of Belial beset...beat...bring forth:

Good fellowship in the old man’s place is rudely and shamefully interrupted.

Sons of Belial

- sons of the devil
- sons of hell
- wicked
- perverted
- worthless

storm the house

- surround it
- beat at the door...pounding on, hurling themselves at to break down

demanding the old man surrender his guest (the Levite) to their shameful homosexual lusts

Gen 4:1 “knew” = sexual relations

Sodomites on the rampage...sound familiar?

Déjà vu Lot’s house in Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 19)

v23 do not so wickedly...not this folly:

The old man responds as did Lot – confronting the sodomites and pleading with them to not seek this vile thing, this disgraceful abuse, of his guest, which would be a gross violation of his sacred duty of hospitality

In clear and unchanging words, the Creator speaks of how the sin of homosexuality offends Him

Lev 18:22-25

Lev 20:13

Deut 23:17

1 Kings 14:24

1 Kings 15:11-12

1 Kings 22:46

2 Kings 23:7

Rom 1:24-28

1 Cor 6:9-10

1 Tim 1:9-10

2 Tim 3:1-5

homosexuality in Israel

Asa did what was right, removed sodomites

Asa finished that cleansing task

homosexuality came back, Josiah cleansed it

very serious words!

Law given to reveal our offenses

Paul's last words

Ps 119:89 Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

When God's Word and ways are rejected, society quickly disintegrates

In USA's moral free-for-all,

- homosexuality is
 - gaining popular approval...even "cool"
 - gaining legal status...State marriage laws
 - a lightning rod...point of division in politics and church
 - sin blamed on God..."God made me this way!"
 - perversion awaiting God's hot displeasure
- homosexuals' most important need is
 - justifiable forgiveness of a just and merciful God
 - repentance...agree with God and make the correct choice

Back to Gibeah...

How vile is the lust of the homosexual predators?

How disgraceful is their sin?

v24 my daughter...his concubine:

So vile and so disgraceful that the old man offers his very own daughter and the Levite's concubine as "bait" to these perverted men to satisfy their lust... rape and sexual abuse of innocent women is "better" than homosexual sin

A shameful, lawbreaking compromise...just like Lot offered

Lev 19:29 Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness

Desperate circumstances do not call for desperate measures by man, they call for desperate faith in God

v25-26 not hearken...took his concubine:

The perverse men were so lathered up in their wicked lust that they were not in a frame of mind to talk about it

So the Levite grabs his concubine and throws her to the rabid wolves... does not protect her in order to save himself, unlike 3 men this week in Aurora CO, including Alex Teves

Shameful

- cowardice...by the Levite
- cruelty...by the Levite and these "men" of Gibeah
- inconsideration of another...by all

The sons of the devil gang raped the woman all night long

The evil loves the darkness but hates the light...and scatters at morning's light

The concubine struggles back to the old man's home, fighting for her life
She collapses at the threshold

Q: Who is more worthless – the wicked, self-centered, self-indulgent men of Gibeah gang raping the concubine

or

the wicked, self-centered, self-preserving Levite sleeping peacefully, completely unconcerned about what was happening to his concubine?

Q: If man is "good" (humanism, evolution), why are events like this in the Bible?
Because man is NOT good (Rom 7:14-18)

Slowly fading from our self-centered, self-indulging, self-preserving society

- bravery to do the right thing
 - *What Would you Do?*
 - the right thing has been corrupted and made "relative"...Is 5:20
- compassion/consideration for others (i.e. love)

v27-28 Up, and let us get going:

The Levite wakes up from a restful, refreshing sleep...and ready to go home!
He has written off his concubine...her life meant nothing to him!

As he was leaving, he almost trips over her!

When he sees her lying at the threshold, he says, "Get up! Let's go!"

But she was dead.

The Levite loads up her dead body and carries on to his home

Shameful

- disregard for the well-being of another human being, created in the image of God
- contempt for women

And what happens next is nothing short of horrifying!

v29-30 took a knife...twelve pieces:

When the Levite gets home, he dissects her...as a Levite would a sacrifice...
and sends a gruesome, bloody FedEx package to all 12 tribes of Israel...
including Benjamin

His highly disturbing message is to

- communicate the blood guiltiness of all the tribes for what happened in Gibeah
- rally the nation into action

Saul would later dissect a team of oxen and distribute the pieces to the tribes of Israel to rally them to war against the Ammonites threatening Jabesh...
but there is a vast difference between a brute beast and a human created in the image of God!

This episode is the low point in Israel's history between the Exodus and the Exile
Something must be done about this outrage!

Note: 400 years later, Hosea would prophesy against Ephraim (N.K.)

Hosea 9:9 deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah

Hosea 10:9 Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah

Judges Chapter 20

v1-3a all the children of Israel went out:

The nation is shocked into action

All the tribes respond, even the 2½ tribes on the other side of the Jordan...
all except Benjamin that is

400,000 soldiers from the 11 tribes respond to the call to arms

They are unified against this gross wickedness – the Fed Ex package

Early in the time of the Judges, the entire nation rallies

In between, only a few tribes ally

At the end of the Judges, Samson was a one man army (no one rallies)

v3b-7 Tell us how:

The tribes demand an explanation for their bloody Fed Ex package

The Levite tells the story...but not the parts of the story that reveal his own
shameful wickedness

Mr. Teflon...no blame is going to stick to him

He is justifying his sin but demands the nation pass judgment on the sin of
Gibeah

Someone else's sin never justifies my sin

v8-11 by lot...take ten:

“We are going to teach Gibeah a lesson they will never forget!
We will not stop until this folly is corrected!”

One tenth...40,000...will be quartermasters and cooks

v12-14 through all the tribe of Benjamin:

The “offended” tribes give the offending tribe a chance to make it right by
surrendering to justice the rabid, perverted men of Gibeah so the nation
could be cleansed of this great wickedness

“No deal!”

Benjamin sided with perversion vs justice

Benjamin defended wickedness over righteousness

Benjamin chose war over peace

v15-17 numbered...left-handed:

So Benjamin rallies to Gibeah to war against their brethren
26,000 (from other villages) + 700 (from Gibeah)

The 26,700 included 700 who were left-handed marksmen/sharpshooters
I wonder if David was left-handed...

The irony is not lost on me:

The left-handed marksmen could not miss their mark...yet the men of
Gibeah and the entire tribe has missed the mark (sinned)
They were aiming at the wrong mark...and hitting it

Sincerely wrong (contrary to Word of God) is...still wrong!

v18 go up first:

When God's Word and ways are rejected, society quickly disintegrates
3 civil wars in times of the Judges, highlighting the disintegration of a society

The 11 tribes gather at Shiloh to ask the Lord regarding who is to lead
"Judah first."

Q: First for what?

v19-21 fight against:

With

- God on their side (really?)
- a much larger army (nearly 15:1 advantage)

the "allies" march, brimming with overconfidence

But the "cornered" Benjamites carry the day, killing 22,000 "allied" soldiers
Mean junk yard dogs and wolverines, those Benjamites!

v22-25 second day:

Well, the allies get themselves together and go back at it on the 2nd day...
and the ornery Benjamites kill another 18,000 soldiers

22,000 + 18,000 = 40,000

Judgment began with...the "good guys" vs the "bad guys"
1 Peter 4:17

Truth is, both sides need a severe lesson!

v26-28 wept...fasted...offered:

Humbled and broken, the allies gather in Shiloh...fasting and praying...
and offering sacrifices

- burnt offerings
- peace offerings

Before: proud, boastful, self-confident, saw no need for fasting or sacrifices
But the judgment and forgiveness of sin demands a sacrifice!

Now: hearts are in a right place – humbled and broken

Note: officiating is Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron
A man very zealous for the jealous God

- Num 25 whoredom with Moab, man and Moabite woman
- Num 31 led the avenging of the Lord against Midianites
- Joshua 22 led investigation of false altar by 2½ tribes

And because their hearts are in the right place now, the Lord says something He
did not say in v23 –

“Tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand.
Victory is Mine/yours tomorrow.”

v29-34 as at other times:

On the 3rd Day, the allies have a revised battle plan, different tactics
ala Joshua at Ai – feigned retreat, less defensible ground, and then
an ambush

Now who is overconfident?
Now who is blind to the calamity upon them?
The Benjamites

Overconfidence in Self...hurts!

v35 the LORD smote Benjamin:

Who judged the sin of Benjamin?
The LORD, the Righteous Judge

Note: 400,000 without the LORD were no match for 26,700

This time, Benjamin is wiped out
26,700 - 25,100 = 1600 survivors

v36-46 saw that they were smitten:

When the trap is sprung, the Benjamites knew their eyes and hearts lied to them
and calamity was upon them

- 18,000 + 5,000 + 2,000 = 25,000 fell
- Gibeah is destroyed

Note: hometown of Israel's 1st king, Saul (1 Sam 10:26)

v47 six hundred men turned:

600 of the remnant of 1600 fled to Rimmon
Don't know where the other 1000 went

v48 set on fire all the cities:

But the allies do not stop!
They attack and burn all the cities in Benjamin in their path

The near-annihilation of a tribe of Israel...

- by the other tribes of Israel
- by the hand of God

But now Israel has another problem...Ch 21

When God's Word and ways are rejected, society quickly disintegrates.
Sin brings destruction and the purging of sin is a bloody mess!

What is the only solution?

1. An acceptable sin sacrifice...only God can
2. Repentance...return to God's Word and ways...only man can

Hosea 14:9 the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them:
but the transgressors shall fall therein

John 3:16

2 Peter 3:9 by John 6:29

Man needs order, unity, peace, safety...all impossible without a right relationship with God

Good News: God wants man to have order, unity, peace, safety

His terms: Jesus Christ and Him crucified

The purging of our sin was a bloody mess!

The sacrifice for sin on the Cross...reaches deeper than the depths of man's depravity

The loving, merciful, gracious, longsuffering God
gives repentance for the acknowledging of the truth
to those who are opposing themselves
that they may recover themselves from the snare of the devil (2 Tim 2:25-26)

Jesus was broken to make whole the broken
He is our hope...our only hope, our glorious hope, our peace and safety!

Ps 49-50

- Why should I fear in the days of evil? (49:5)
- God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (49:15)
Hosea 13:14 O grave, I will be thy destruction
(Nothing to worry about, no fears...Ps 46:1, 10)
- God will come, He will not remain silent, He will judge the evil (50:3, 6)
- We must come to God with a sacrifice...offer Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving
(50:5, 14)
- Call upon God in the day of trouble; He will deliver us and we will glorify Him
(50:15)
- Those who need to fear and worry are those who throw away the Word of God
(50:17)
- Those who praise the Lord and lives according to the Word of God will see the
salvation of God (50:23)

We must humble ourselves before God (Jer 17:9, we are no one to judge anyone)
We must be zealous as Phinehas for Truth, Righteousness, Holiness
We must “side”/stand with Jesus in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation

Do not ever leave here troubled or condemned...unless Jesus is not your Lord
In which case...turn to the LORD and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us*
graciously (Hosea 14:2)

Judges Chapter 21

Last time...civil war and the near annihilation of a tribe of Israel...Benjamin...
due to their practice and defense of perversion and wickedness

This time...what to do about that “near annihilation” problem

v1 the men of Israel had sworn:

An important backdrop for this chapter

After Ch 20:1-7, the “allies” (11 tribes) made a vow – a curse

“No one will give in marriage their daughter to the tribe of Benjamin,
under penalty of death (Ch 21:5).

We will cut them off to cleanse Israel.

We will not intermingle with perversion and wickedness.

They who killed a wife deserve no wife.”

Then they went off to war.

Is this vow/curse holy (Spirit-led) or foolish (of the flesh)?

Keep in mind the “state of the union”...Ch 17:6 and Ch 21:25

v2-3 wept sore:

Now, after Ch 20:48, the allies are bitterly brokenhearted about their brother
Benjamin

The allies lost 40,000 men...of their 400,000

10% loss

Benjamin lost 25,100...of their 26,700 and 1000 are MIA, leaving only 600

97.66% loss

Gen 4:9?

Yes!

v4-6 altar...offerings:

btw...with the death threat to the non-assemblers as part of their great vow/curse of v1, no wonder 400,000 men showed up for this “holy war”!

Clearly, the LORD used the allies to judge Benjamin (Ch 20:28b, 35a)

As clearly, the LORD judged the allies...first (Ch 20:21, 25)

The LORD was calling both sides of the civil war to repentance...Ch 17:6

So I believe the vow of the allies in v1 is not Spirit-led but is carnal...foolish

I believe the allies were governed by their emotions (self-righteous anger)

vs “governed by God”

Prov 14:17 *He that is soon angry deals foolishly*

Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Prov 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city.*

James 1:20...now, they regret their angry vow/curse and are grieved by the resulting destruction of Benjamin

In their grief, they draw near to God, seeking a solution to this “near death” problem...or do they?

v7 How shall we do:

“How will the remaining 600 men of Benjamin ‘be fruitful and multiply’?

Their women are destroyed (Ch 20:48, Ch 21:16).

We vowed to give none of our daughter in marriage to them...under penalty of death.

Without wives for the 600, the tribe of Benjamin will disappear; this cannot be. How do we solve this problem?”

God ordained marriage as one man and one woman for very good reasons!

Any corruption/perversion of that definition will lead to destruction

Ask

- Benjamin
- Israel
- Greece
- Rome

But USA refuses to ask, refuses to learn from history, has forgotten God...and will reap what it sows unless there is repentance

v8-9 came not up...Jabesh Gilead:

Roll call is taken to this assembly to mourn Benjamin and to seek the Lord.
Lo and behold, it was learned that Jabesh Gilead (Manasseh East) blew off the
Lord and this assembly of His people

Why did they forsake the assembling together?

- Openly defiant?
- Too busy?
- Double-minded?
- A divided heart or a deceived heart?
 - Left their first love?
 - Spiritually dead?
 - Lukewarm?

For these same reasons, Christians today forsake the assembling together

v10-12 Go and smite:

What do the allies do about this “no show” by Jabesh Gilead?
They call for blood and jump headlong into a 4th civil war
Are they governed by God or governed by their emotions?
Bear in mind v25

Seems to me they are making things worse...

“You have not come to mourn the near annihilation of Benjamin...
so we will nearly annihilate you!”

The entire town was wiped out except 400 virgins

“We can use them in solving our ‘Benjamin problem’ so spare them.”

Does bad behavior ever fix other bad behavior, our own or that of others?

Does another sin make right a previous sin?

Does one uncontrolled emotion heal another uncontrolled emotion?

Does “tit for tat” ever fix anything?

Why is man’s bad behavior put on display in the Word of God?

To reveal our hearts...Jer 17:9

To contrast God’s heart...gracious, merciful, longsuffering, slow to anger,
kind, compassionate, loving

By being confronted with our “warts”, we more clearly see His purity and
holiness

v13-15 call peaceably...Benjamin came again:

Having captured 400 virgins from Jabesh Gilead, the allies make a peace offering to Benjamin...the 600 of Ch 20:47

Problem solved?

No

Why not?

Still short 200 virgins

Still hindered by their foolish vow of v1

Well, can those 200 men not just pair off and marry each other?
(homosexual marriages)

No, that arrangement cannot be 'fruitful and multiply', cannot be blessed!

Man's solutions to the problem of the heart will always come up short...

because every man falls short of the glory of God

Only God can solve man's heart problem

So the allies now let God fix the problem, right?

Wrong

The "wise guys" of Israel...still facing an unsolved "Benjamin problem"...
come up with a "creative solution"

v16-22 the elders...ye did not give:

"There is a yearly feast of the Lord in Shiloh.

You 200 single men of Benjamin go there and hide in the vineyards.

When the virgins of Shiloh come out to dance, make like a pirate and kidnap one!

(in violation of Ex 21:16...kidnapping a capital offense)

When their fathers come to complain to us, we will cover for you by saying to them:

Let it go for our sakes.

We have this "Benjamin problem" and we are all bound by our oath.

After all, you did not break your vow.

You did not "give" your daughter to Benjamin...

Benjamin "took" your daughter.

So no harm no foul and problem solved!"

OMG!

The wart-covered "wise guys" of Israel are not governed by God but are governed by the flesh that is always on the lookout for loopholes to circumnavigate the precise Word of God!

As a father, do you know what words come to my mind?

I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. If you are looking for ransom, I can tell you I don't have money. But what I do have are a very particular set of skills; skills I have acquired over a very long career. Skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that'll be the end of it. I will not look for you, I will not pursue you. But if you don't, I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you.

Bryan Mills to Marko the kidnapper in *Taken*

v23-24 did so...departed:

Well that settles that, huh?
We're all good, right?

Nope.
The Problem is unresolved.

v25 no king...own eyes:

This is THE Problem!
No Moral Authority
No Final Authority
No Justice
Man's lusts and emotions are unrestrained.

A tragic...and utterly avoidable...picture of

- compromise with sin
- hypocrisy
- worldliness

Missing in Israel: holiness...holy dread, holy following...in secret and in public
They forgot God...

- the very Foundation of life
- the Fountain of Living Waters

The applications are

- Personal
- National
- The Church

Personal

Unbeliever: There is a very simple reason why your life is a mess.

Even an upright, moral, “happy” life without Jesus is a mess in God’s eyes...
for it is self-centered, driven by self-interest...imperfect

The Problem is spiritual...sin

Jesus Christ is not King of your life

Good News!

Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death so the Father in heaven could
graciously forgive your sins

(if you are not perfect, you are a sinner)

and make you a new creature, perfect in God’s eyes!

Jesus suffered in your place, He bore the righteous judgment of God for you

He suffered, died, and rose again...that you might rise again too!

You need to repent and submit...to be twice-born, born again...

not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God
because there is a sin unto eternal death – unbelief in Jesus Christ

His sacrifice on the Cross is sufficient to pay for your offenses/imperfections and
to remove all your warts!

The “Ultimate Wart Remover” is a gift of God...all you need to is accept it by
faith in Jesus.

Will you accept God’s grace?

Backslider and Carnal Christian: There is a reason why your life is like a wild
rollercoaster, why your life is always stormy

You are governed by your flesh (lusts, emotions) and not by the Word of God
Worldliness...the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches...

is choking out the seed in your heart

The Problem is spiritual...a “power vacuum” in your life

Jesus Christ is not Lord of...ALL

You have forsaken the Fountain of Living waters and hewed out cisterns, broken
cisterns, that can hold no water

You need to repent, return, and surrender unconditionally

You need the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the power of God from on high to

- not be double-minded
- be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only so as to not deceive yourself
- be “fruitful (fruit of the Spirit) and multiply (make disciples)”
- continue in Jesus’ Word
- finish your race well
- be ready with oil in your lamp when the Bridegroom comes

National

There has been a catastrophic failure in Israel – the nation has forgotten God

Given, 1 Cor 10:6, 11 we need to learn from Israel!

Yet we have not learned

There has been a catastrophic failure in USA – the nation has forgotten God

Results include:

- Pastors being charged with “hate crimes” for uncompromisingly preaching the Word of God
- Might makes right...”consensus” defines truth
- Moral confusion, “tolerance”/promotion/exaltation of immorality
- Destruction of the family
- 55+ million babies have been murdered
- The “Higher Law” upon which our Constitution has been removed... replaced by humanism, the very essence of v25
- Loss of freedoms ala freedom of speech (Chick-Fil-A), right to bear arms (?)

Recommended Reading: *When a Nation Forgets God, 7 Lessons We Must Learn From Nazi Germany*

Church

Luke 14:34-35 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; *but* men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The nation is not holy...what about the Church here in America?

- Openly defiant?
- Too busy?
- Double-minded?
- A divided heart or a deceived heart?
 - Left their first love?
 - Spiritually dead?
 - Lukewarm?

We talk of the nation forgetting God...but what about the Church in this nation?!

The Church has lost the fear of God!

Unless there is a revival in the Church, what hope does this nation have?

1 Peter 4:17

Recommended Reading: *A Christian Manifesto*

We as followers of Jesus Christ have been given a course to run – how will we finish?

- Like Paul...start well, finish well?
- Like Amaziah and Uzziah (2 Chron 25-26)...start well, finish badly?

Yesterday morning...”Turn on the Olympics”

Men’s Bicycle Road Race...250 km (approx 155 mi)...on a narrow road

With about 7 miles to the finish

- leader took turn too fast and crashed
- those following right behind crashed into him

Didn’t they know the course?

Let their guard down?

Did fatigue dull their minds?

Several miles later, the next leader had a near-flat tire (equipment failure)

- expended much energy just to keep up
- tired out, dropped way back

Race suddenly and unexpectedly was between two who had not led before then but had persevered over a very long and difficult and narrow course

- 39 yr old veteran
- 25 yr old up-and-comer

Nearing the Finish Line, 25 yr old leading...then looked back over his shoulder

Off his other shoulder, the 39 yr old burst forth with his sprint

By time 25 yr old looked around, it was too late...and the 39 yr old won the race

25 yr old

- Not focused on the Finish Line...distracted by “behind” him
- Looking over his shoulder

39 yr old

- Eyes on the Finish Line, pressed for the prize
- Wisely started his sprint when presented with the opportunity to win

We run the race...to win

Most important part of the race is the finish

Are we utilizing the best fail-safe equipment... Word, Spirit?

Do we have the winning strategy?

Are we properly trained?

Do we know the course? (will NOT be easy)

Are we prepared for unexpected developments that would prevent the finishing of lesser skilled racers?

Will we persevere and stay the course when the race gets really difficult?

We are running the race...the Finish Line is on the horizon!
What do we need to finish and win?

In these days we need discernment...to be wise as serpents to “see” the serpents
camouflaged in our surroundings...both inside and outside the Church

Charles Spurgeon: "Discernment is not simply a matter of telling the difference
between what is right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right
and almost right."

In these days we need courage...are we truly willing to follow Jesus, to suffer for Him?

Deitrich Bonhoffer (pastor in Nazi Germany jailed for opposition to Hitler):
“When God calls a man, He bids him come and die.”
(certainly to Self, perhaps literally)

Peter Marshall (US Senate Chaplain in late 40s and early 50s):
“It is better to fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than to succeed
in a cause that will ultimately fail.”

Better to serve Jesus than to serve Self
Better to die sharing the Gospel than to live denying Jesus.

The Church needs men and women who are willing to stand for Truth...
lovingly, joyfully, courageously, uncompromisingly,
with humility and grace...
having counted the cost and willing to pay it

We will fail if we have a “consumer” attitude when it comes to Jesus Christ
[God Tube]

In these days we need strength...to finish the race!

The summer Olympics now taking place in London have reminded me of a
marathon run in Mexico City at the 1968 Olympic games.

Hours behind the runner in front of him, the last marathoner finally entered
Olympic stadium. By that time, the drama of the day's event was almost over and
most of the spectators had gone home. But the story of Tanzanian marathoner
John Stephen Akwari was still being played out. Limping into the arena, Akwari
grimaced with every step, his knee bleeding and bandaged from an earlier fall.
His ragged appearance immediately caught the attention of the remaining crowd,
who cheered him on to the finish line. Why did he stay in the race? What made
him endure his injuries to the end? When asked these questions later, he replied,
"My country did not send me 7,000 miles away to start the race. They sent me
7,000 miles to finish it!"

I think it is fair to say that Jesus Who did finish His race (John 19:30) expects us to finish ours.

With discernment, courage, and strength, we must

- not compromise with the Humanist giant in the land.
- follow our Captain Who will finish (Phil 1:6) and enter the battle
 - willing to go to prison rather than be silent.
 - willing to lay down our lives for Jesus who laid down His life for us.

To the casual observer, CCA is homeless and wandering, if you will, from day to day
But is Matt 8:20 “off limits” for the Bride?

But I pray this is God’s view of CCA:

- poor yet rich in Jesus
- well fed flock
- faithful to His name
- faithful to the Word of God – adults and children
- growing in grace...for each other
- loving...each other as He loves us
- strong finishers

Rom 1:16-17

Christianity stands or falls at the Cross of Jesus Christ
Victory awaits all who come at the foot of the Cross.
CCA will stand at the Cross...we will not forget!

The picture might look very bleak in

- Israel...here in Judges as well as in our day
- USA
- The Church
- your walk

Yet...God is still at work!

He is on the verge of doing something mighty and glorious!
Next week: Book of Ruth

Because God is still at work, it is always too soon to quit!

God’s measure of success: faithfulness...to the very end, come what may

Rom 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep:
for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

1:40

Unbeliever	New Birth
Backslider/carnal Christian	Baptism of Holy Spirit
Believer	Resolve

An aging king woke up one day to the realization that should he drop dead, there would be no male in the royal family to take his place. He was the last male in the royal family in a culture where only a male could succeed to the throne - and he was aging. He decided that if he could not give birth to a male, he would adopt a son who then could take his place but he insisted that such an adopted son must be extraordinary in every sense of the word. So he launched a competition in his kingdom, open to all boys, no matter what their background. Ten boys made it to the very top.

There was little to separate these boys in terms of intelligence and physical attributes and capabilities. The king said to them, 'I have one last test and whoever comes top will become my adopted son and heir to my throne.'

Then he said, 'This kingdom depends solely on agriculture. So the king must know how to cultivate plants. So here is a seed of corn for each of you. Take it home and plant and nurture it for three weeks. At the end of three weeks, we shall see who has done the best job of cultivating the seed. That person will be my heir-apparent.' The boys took their seeds and hurried home. They each got a flower pot and planted the seed as soon as they got home. There was much excitement in the kingdom as the people waited with bated breath to see who was destined to be their next king.

In one home, the boy and his parents were almost heartbroken when after days of intense care, the seed failed to sprout. He did not know what had gone wrong with his. He had selected the soil carefully, he had applied the right quantity and type of fertilizer, he had been very dutiful in watering it at the right intervals, he had even prayed over it day and night and yet his seed had turned out to be unproductive.

Some of his friends advised him to go and buy a seed from the market and plant that. 'After all,' they said, 'how can anyone tell one seed of corn from another?' But his parents who had always taught him the value of integrity reminded him that if the king wanted them to plant any corn, he would have asked them to go for their own seed. 'If you take anything different from what the king gave you that would be dishonesty.'

'Maybe we are not destined for the throne. If so, let it be, but don't be found to have deceived the king,' they told him. The d-day came and the boys returned to the palace each of them proudly exhibiting a very fine corn seedling. It was obvious that the other nine boys had had great success with their seeds. The king began making his way down the line of eager boys and asked each of them, 'Is this what came out of the seed I gave you?'

And each boy responded, 'Yes, your majesty.' And the king would nod and move down the line.

The king finally got to the last boy in the line-up. The boy was shaking with fear. He knew that the king was going to have him thrown into prison for wasting his seed. 'What did you do with the seed I gave you?' the king asked. 'I planted it and cared for it diligently, your majesty, but alas it failed to sprout.' the boy said tearfully as the crowd booed him.

But the king raised his hands and signaled for silence. Then he said, 'My people behold your next king.' The people were confused. 'Why that one?' many asked. 'How can he be the right choice?' The king took his place on his throne with the boy by his side and said, 'I gave these boys boiled seeds. This test was not for cultivating corn. It was the test of character; a test of integrity. It was the ultimate test.'

If a king must have one quality, it must be that he should be above dishonesty. Only this boy passed the test. A boiled seed cannot sprout.' Never!!