

# A New Sodom

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 April 2024

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[ 0 : 0 0 ] As we come to the final narrative of the book of Judges, we need not only understand the story itself, but also its significance as the conclusion of the book. Remember, this is not just these randomly selected stories that are just kind of thrown together. This has been carefully curated in order to tell a message, send a message from God to the people of Israel, and therefore us as well. So there's a reason he concludes with this particular story. We need to understand that.

And it's only when we begin to grasp that, that we'll begin to grasp the book's place in the overall message of the Bible. Now, I have this quote for you on the screen if you want to follow along. This is from Jim Hamilton. He says this, in broadest terms, the Bible can be summarized in four words, creation, fall, redemption, restoration. This sequence functions as an umbrella story encompassing the whole canonical narrative or the whole story of the Bible. But it's also repeated countless times on both individual and corporate levels. Okay, so do you see what he's saying? He's saying, really, there's one big story to the Bible. It involves a sequence, creation, fall, redemption, restoration. But it's not just the big story. It's also repeated many times in these smaller, more detailed storylines. So we would say that the overarching story of the Bible is telling us how

God is bringing his people back to the garden. It starts with a garden. It ends with a garden. And in between is God's work of salvation, where he is bringing his people back to fellowship with him in the new heavens and the new earth. And the sequence of that redemptive action involves first God's creation of man for his glory, Genesis 1 and 2. Then man's fall from glory through sin, Genesis 3. Then Christ's redemption of sinners through his death and resurrection. That's in the gospels. And then the restoration of God's people in the new heaven and the new earth. That's Revelation 21. That's the big story. That's the biblical message at a macro level, right? That's the 30,000 foot view. But it's also seen on a micro level as the same sequence often shapes many of the biblical storylines. Now, why does God do this? This is so helpful. This is a God thing. Why does he give us his word like this? He reveals his saving plan to us by repeating that basic structure again and again and again so that when Christ comes, we know. Do you see? When we get to Christ, we begin to see, oh, this makes sense. This is the gospel because this is how God acts. This is how we've seen him act all through the Old Testament. And now we begin to piece it all together. God shows us his salvation by repeating this structure over and over. So helpful, isn't it? And then again, on a micro level, the book of

Judges fits so helpfully in this sequence. I want you to think about God's call of the nation of Israel, okay? Just from the big picture here. We have creation when God calls Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and he makes a covenant with him. He chooses him. Why does he choose Abraham? Because he chose Abraham. That's it. We don't know any other reason why. But he chooses him. He calls him out of Ur and then he makes a covenant with him. Creation. Then there's the fall. If you've read very much of Genesis, you know that Abraham and his descendants were a hot mess. They were an absolute mess. And their sin is symbolized ultimately in Egyptian bondage. They go to Egypt and they're in captivity there for 400 years.

Then there's redemption. Where do we see that? God in his mercy and in his grace raises up Moses, a savior.

[ 4 : 29 ] And the savior, the deliverer comes to God's chosen people and delivers them from bondage in Egypt. And then there's restoration. Where does it go next? Mount Sinai. What does God do there? God takes his chosen people and he comes to them and he makes a covenant with them like he made a covenant with Abraham. And he does that by giving them his law and then promising his presence. He will dwell among them in this covenant. And then this sequence with Israel, it anticipates Israel's new life, not in the wilderness, not in Egypt, in Canaan, the land of promise. A new kind of Eden, we could say. Where God will dwell with his people. Where they will enjoy blessing and security and fellowship with their creator. And then we get to Joshua's book and Joshua shows us how God perfectly kept his end of the covenant. And then we get to Judges. And he tells us how Israel did not keep their end of the covenant.

Instead of picturing a new Eden, Judges, especially this final story, shows that Israel has now devolved into a new Sodom instead. Of course, you know Sodom, a city in the Old Testament. Genesis 19, we read of it. It's a city that was so wicked that God devoted it and all of its inhabitants to total destruction. That's what Israel has now become. And the author of Judges makes the connection plain to us. He uses the exact language of Genesis 19 to actually tell this story in Judges 19.

And even worse, 100% of the people involved are supposed to be God's people. What is it? It's a new fall.

The sequence happens all over again. Which leads us to ask, how did it go so wrong? And is there actually any hope if this is the sequence that every time God shows mercy and grace that people just continually fall into sin? If that's the sequence, does it ever end? Is there a solution? These final chapters, they contain actually very little interpretation of the story. The author doesn't give us very much as far as what he thinks. He just basically tells the story. Except in the final verse, he gives us the theological lens through which we are to interpret the story and the book itself. Look at the very last verse of chapter 21.

In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The problem, how did it get so bad? The problem is that Israel did not have a righteous king.

[ 7 : 42 ] And because they did not have a righteous king, everyone was just doing whatever they wanted to do. They wanted to do whatever was right in their own eyes. They forgot God. They abandoned the covenant.

They abandoned the scriptures and simply did whatever they wanted. Which means that the only solution then to that problem is that God will graciously provide some kind of savior king to deliver his people, not just from an enemy on the outside, but to deliver his people from their own sinfulness and sinfulness and to then lead them in perfect righteousness. That's the theological lens through which we're to really to view the whole Bible, but especially this particular book. And the author makes that clear to us. Now, it's not very hard to see how this connects to our time now. It's not really actually very different. Everyone really just does whatever's right in their own eyes, don't they?

Isn't that kind of the mood of our culture? Hasn't that kind of crept into the church? So that many, even within the Christian community, seem to have forgotten God.

No, they don't have divine amnesia. It's not that. It's that they've just kind of ignored that he's there. They've ignored his scriptures. They have kind of abandoned the covenant. They're just doing whatever feels good to them.

And of course, our sin doesn't often look exactly like ancient Israel's. Of course, we could draw some parallels probably. But here's the thing. It's all rooted in the same fundamental issue of doing what's right in your own eyes rather than what's right in God's eyes.

[ 9 : 23 ] It all goes back to the fundamental issue of doing what you want rather than doing what is right. Live your truth. Love is love. It's my body. God just wants me to be happy. All of those are just modern ways of saying that we intend to do what's right in our own eyes instead of God's eyes.

God's eyes. That's the connection. The text here, it warns us of God's judgment against those who live for themselves. But then it also points us to a real hope of escaping his divine wrath through a savior king. And that's what I want to show you this morning as we work through this narrative, okay? We're just going to look at each chapter as a unit, okay? First chapter, chapter 19.

I want you to see it as Gibeah's depravity. Gibeah's depravity. Now, the story of Gibeah's great sin here that we just read, it's initiated and colored by the tale of a Levite whose concubine had left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. The text, the English translation, it's actually translated that she was unfaithful, but there's no explanation given as to the nature of her unfaithfulness. It's unlikely that it was adultery when we understand the context of what happens after the fact. It seems that the text wants to indicate that her unfaithfulness has to do with her abandonment, which may tell us a little bit about her husband or at least her master, however we would want to categorize him here. In either case, whether it was adultery or abandonment, she's been unfaithful according to the text. She's left him and she's gone back home to her dad's house in Bethlehem.

Whatever it is, the author wasn't really actually that concerned about describing the woman as much as he was showing us the character of the Levite. Now, our impression of him here at first is good, isn't it? It leans positive. We think she has wronged him and now he's going to chase after her.

How romantic. But as we begin to read the story and understand actually what's happening here, we realize very quickly that's not the case at all. When we consider the story as a whole, we're clearly meant to view him as a cold and callous, manipulative, vengeful, selfish man.

[ 11 : 59 ] In fact, I believe his concern for retrieving his concubine here really, it had less to do with pursuing his wife and more to do with his vengeance against her for leaving him. He doesn't care about her, only his ego. And that comes through in the story. As it unfolds, we see actually how little he did care for her. He offers her willingly to Gibeah's mob of rapists in order that he may save himself.

Isn't that the opposite of what Jesus does? When you go to the Gospel of John, I believe it is, Jesus and his disciples are in the garden of Gethsemane. Judas and the leaders of the Jews, they come with the soldiers to arrest Jesus. What does Jesus do? He stands in front of his disciples and what does he say? If this is about me, leave them alone. Isn't that the opposite of what this Levite does here? Here come these men, these vile men, these wicked men. Surely he's destined to die on this night. But instead of protecting his wife or his concubine, showing care and concern for her, he tosses her to the mob in order that he might save himself. Then he was so callous to her suffering after the fact that not only did he seem to get a good night's rest, knowing what was happening to her on the outside of the house, but he opens up the door and he finds her that he doesn't even take a time to check on her. Notice what he says. Get up. Time to go. And when she doesn't respond, finally, probably angrily, he goes to check and realizes she's actually dead. She's dead. She's been killed.

He utterly disrespects her body, dismembering her post-mortem. That's a physically violent act.

That's not an easy thing to do. Why does he do it? To incite war. That's his goal. Those actions weren't about justice for the concubine.

Those actions were about vengeance for him. And to make matters even more terrible, he was a Levite.

[ 14 : 37 ] He shouldn't have had a concubine to begin with. He's supposed to be a shepherd of Israel, and he's the one that's doing this. Everyone's just doing what's right in their own eyes.

Now, the point in highlighting this man's wicked character is to connect the nation's moral decline to its lack of spiritual leadership. Their immorality was unrestrained due in large part to the corruption of those who were supposed to lead them in love and obedience and worship of God.

This was always a problem with Israel. Isaiah talks about it later in his book. He says in Isaiah 56 11, but they are shepherds who have no understanding. They have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. The narrative isn't ultimately about the Levite. It's about the actions of Gibeah.

As he traveled back to Ephraim, the Levite assumed staying the night in Gibeah would be safer than in Jebus. As it turns out, it wasn't. And using the exact language of Genesis 19, the author tells the story of the devastating events. Let me just give you the comparison here. Here's what Genesis 19 4 says.

The men of the city of Sodom surrounded the house. That is where Lot was. Now look at verse 22 of Judges 19. The men of the city surrounded the house. Genesis 19 5, they called to Lot, where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them. Judges 19 verse 22, they said to the old man, the master of the house, bring out the man who came into your house that we may know him.

[ 16 : 27 ] Genesis 19 6 through 8, Lot went out to the men and said, I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you and do to them as you please. Judges 19 24, the master of the house went out to them and said, do not act so wickedly.

Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Violate them. Do with them what seems good to you. Whatever you want to do, whatever you want to do, do it to them. That's what everyone's doing, whatever they want. Genesis 19 verse 9, then they pressed hard against the man Lot and drew near to break down the door. Judges 19 25, but the men would not listen to him.

Unlike in Sodom though, there were no angels in the house to strike the men with blindness so that they couldn't get in to where Lot and his family was. They're not there in Gibeah.

Instead, the Levite tosses his wife to the men. They abuse her all night and she dies desperately seeking safety at the door of the house. Her hands are on the door. She's that close and she dies.

Things were so bad in Israel that one of their cities mirrored a people that God had devoted to total destruction.

[ 17 : 55 ] That's how bad things are now. Our depravity may not show itself in the extreme behavior as Gibeah, but you can be sure of this. The same thing driving the sin of the men in this story is the same exact thing that drives your sin.

A desire to do what you want to do rather than what God commands for us to do. It's the same thing.

That's the very definition of sin, isn't it? Going all the way back to the beginning with Adam and Eve, what is it that produces this sinful behavior in the garden? Their desire to do what they wanted rather than obeying God. You say, well, there's no way I'd be like these men of Gibeah. No, you are exactly like these men of Gibeah. Your sin may not be the exact same as their sin, but it's doing the same exact thing. When we sin, it's because we want to do what we want to do rather than what God demands that we do. And it always carries devastating consequences. Sin kills. It always brings death.

That's what James 1 tells us. Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Desire. Sounds a lot like doing what's right in your own eyes, doesn't it? Then desire, when it conceives, brings sin. Sin, when it's fully grown, brings what? Death. Sin always kills, and it's usually killing more than you. That's Gibeah's depravity. Secondly, I want you to see in chapter 20, Benjamin's ban.

Benjamin's ban. Benjamin's ban. Now, we read at the end of chapter 19 that there's outrage in Israel. But notice that the outrage is not yet about what happened to the concubine. They don't know that story yet. The outrage is over the dismemberment of her body that has now been mailed out to everybody in Israel. That's the shock of what they're experiencing in verse 30 of chapter 19, which is exactly why the Levite did it. He wanted to do something so shocking that it would incite war against Gibeah. And why does he want war against Gibeah? To satisfy his own vengeance. This isn't about justice. It's about him retaliating. He just couldn't let go the fact that somebody disrespected him.

[ 20 : 43 ] That's why he chased after her in Bethlehem. That's why he incites war against Gibeah. And his plan works. 400,000 Israelites prepare for war. They gather at Mizpah to hear the man's charges against Gibeah.

And being the manipulator that he was, he tells the story only from his angle. He says nothing about the fact of what he had done. He says nothing about him giving this concubine over to these men.

No, he doesn't incriminate himself. He only says enough so that they'll be angry with the men of Gibeah. Look at verse 8 of chapter 20. And all the people arose as one man saying, none of us will go to his tent. None of us will return to his house. But now this is what we will do to Gibeah. We will go up against it by lot. We will take 10 men of 100 throughout all the tribes of Israel and 100 of 1,000 and 1,000 of 10,000 to bring provisions for the people. And when they come, they may repay Gibeah of Benjamin for the outrage that they have committed in Israel. So all the men of Israel gathered against the city united as one man. This is methodical. This is planned out.

This 10% of the people, it's not 10% of the people that are fighting. It's 10% of the people that are collecting and carrying provisions for the 400,000 soldiers who will be doing the fighting.

This is a massive military campaign. Verse 12. The tribes of Israel sent men throughout all the tribe of Benjamin saying, what evil is this that has taken place among you? Now, therefore, give up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel.

[ 22 : 29 ] But the Benjaminites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel. Then the people of Benjamin, they came together out of the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the people of Israel. And the people of Benjamin mustered out of their cities. On that day, 26,000 men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who mustered 700 chosen men.

These are good fighters. Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed. Now, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? Do you remember Ehud, our second judge in the book, who was from Benjamin, who was a man left-handed? Do you remember what that meant? It didn't mean that he was dominant in his left-handed. It meant he was ambidextrous. He was a skilled fighter. And it shows, well, here's Benjamin.

They've got a whole bunch of men like Ehud. Everyone could sling a stone at a hare and not miss it. And the men of Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered 400,000 men who drew the sword. All these were men of war. Israel's united here for the first time since the beginning of the book.

This time, however, it isn't against the Canaanites. It's against their own people. That's how bad it is now. And to make matters worse, the leaders of Benjamin, they choose to defend Gibeah. They should have just turned over the wicked men who had done this. But they don't do it. Why?

They want to defend their sin. They want to defend those in their lives and in their family and their friendships who are committed to sin. They don't want to confront the sin in these people. They want to defend it. He who has an ear, let him hear.

[ 24 : 27 ] Gibeah's judgment now belongs to the entire tribe. And Israel seems to put the tribe of Benjamin under the Canaanite ban, which means total destruction.

Now, the text doesn't say that God told them to put Benjamin under the ban. It seems like it might actually be a rash decision on their part.

Another example of Benjamin doing what's right in their own eyes before consulting the Lord. But the text does tell us that God did sanction and to some extent instructed the judgment that was carried out. Three different occasions in chapter 20. They go to God and God answers them.

Verse 18. God told Judah to lead the people in battle. Benjamin gets the best of them. 22,000 Israelites die on day one. Look at the verse. Verse 18. The people of Israel arose, went up to Bethel to inquire of God.

We haven't seen that since the beginning of the book. Who shall go up for us to fight against the people of Benjamin? And the Lord answers them. He doesn't say he's going to deliver them. He answers their question.

[ 25 : 43 ] Who should go up? Judah should go up first, God says. Oh, we remember that now too, don't we? At the very beginning when they came in and they were acting righteously and they go to God and they say, Who should go up against the Canaanites first?

Judah, God says. Why? Leadership was supposed to originate in Judah. More connections we can make to Christ, right? That's the first time. But 22,000 Israelites die that day.

Then we go to day two in verse 23. God tells them to continue the fight, but then another 18,000 Israelites die. Look at verse 23. The people of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until the evening.

They inquired of the Lord. Shall we again draw near to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin? And the Lord said, go up against them. Go. Do it.

And yet 18,000 more die. Then there's the third time. This is 27 and 28. God not only tells them to fight, but now he promises victory. Verse 27.

[ 26 : 43 ] The people of Israel inquired of the Lord for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. Phineas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days, saying, Shall we go out once more to battle against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we stop?

And the Lord said, go up. Tomorrow I will give them into your hand. What's this all about? Israel may have been fighting.

The battle belongs to the Lord. Israel may have had overwhelming numerical advantage.

400,000 against 26,000. But that doesn't matter. Why? Victory only comes by the hand of God.

The course of this fight was just another lesson that God's people must wholly rely on him. Nothing else.

[ 27 : 49 ] Not on themselves. Not on their own desires. Not on man's wisdom. Not on man's strength. But on God alone. Look at verse 43 now.

Here's how God delivers the victory. Surrounding the Benjamites, they pursued them and trod them down from Noha, as far as opposite Gibeah on the east.

18,000 men of Benjamin fell, all of them men of valor. They turned and fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimen. 5,000 men of them were cut down in the highways.

And they pursued hard to get them. 2,000 men of them were struck down. So all who fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men who drew the sword, all of them men of valor.

But 600 men turned, fled toward the wilderness to the Rock of Rimen, and remained at the Rock of Rimen for months. And the men of Israel turned back against the people of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword.

[ 28 : 52 ] The city, the men, and beast, and all that they found. And all the towns that they found, they set on fire.

Israel kills all but 600 Benjaminite soldiers. Then they decided to turn against every other Benjaminite town, killing every man, woman, child, animal, and burning the towns to the ground.

They did to Benjamin what they were supposed to have done to the Canaanites. A sign of how Canaanized the people had become.

It's sad, isn't it? Now again, we aren't told that they were supposed to treat Benjamin with such severity. Only that they did. The author doesn't intend for us to make that judgment.

It's an open-ended question in this text. It's not answered for us. What he intends for us to see is how bad it is when everyone does what's right in their own eyes.

[ 30 : 02 ] That's what he wants us to see. You want to know what it looks like when a culture and a people and a family and a person decides just to do what they want to do? To follow their own heart and to live their truth.

This is what it looks like, the author says. But then he doesn't leave God out of it, does he? He at least wants us to know that God was not absent from the ordeal. Whether they were supposed to go that far or not, God was using Israel as his instrument of judgment.

What's this telling us? This is what it looks like when you do what you want to do. And this is how God responds. Judgment. Righteous indignation against sin and against sinners.

And you say, that's severe. If you think that's severe, you should read how he'll judge unbelieving sinners at Christ's return.

This foreshadows it. It will be far worse. Revelation 20. I saw a great white throne. Him who was seated on it.

[ 31 : 13 ] From his presence, earth and sky fled away. And no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small. That means old and young.

Standing before the throne, we will all stand before God in the end. Every one of us. And books were opened. And a book was opened, which is the book of life.

And the dead were judged by what was written in the books. According to what they had done. Now what's God judging? Did you do what was right in your eyes? Or did you love, obey, and worship him?

That's what's written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and hell gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged.

Each one of them according to what they had done. Then death and hell were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. The lake of fire.

[ 32 : 16 ] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. This is what it looks like when you live for yourself.

And this is what it results in. God's eternal judgment. So we see Gibeah's sin, their depravity. Then Benjamin's ban.

Finally, we see Israel's folly. Israel's folly. This is chapter 21. Now what's to be done with Benjamin's 600 men who survived?

That's what Israel's left to sort out in this final chapter. What are they going to do here? Complicating this situation as we read here at the beginning is that in the heat of the moment, when they had all gathered at Mizpah, before they went to war, they made this vow with one another, a solemn vow to God, before God, that none of them would ever give their daughters to surviving Benjamites, Benjamites for marriage.

They didn't think it was going to be that much of a problem then, because at that point, they were just trying to get the men of Gibeah who did this wicked thing. But then things get out of hand, don't they? They almost wipe out an entire tribe.

[ 33 : 34 ] And now they've got to figure out what they're going to do with these 600 men. And they've made this vow before God that none of them are going to give their daughters to them to marry. So the tribe's going to die out anyways. Verse 1 of chapter 21, Now the men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, none of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.

And the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God, and they lifted up their voices, and they wept bitterly, and they said, O Lord, the God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel? That today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel.

Why, they say. It's interesting, isn't it? They regretted what they did to Benjamin, but then they kind of suddenly try to blame God for it. God, why did you do this? Why'd you do it, God?

Why did this happen? Of course, the answer's clear, isn't it? Because everybody was just doing what was right in their own eyes. Nobody's listening to God. And this was the consequences.

It all happened because everyone was doing right in their own eyes, but they still had to decide what to do next. And really, there's only three options available to them. We need to think about it.

[ 34 : 46 ] What can they do now? Option number one, they could just execute the full Canaanite band. And to do that, they would have to kill the remaining survivors, the 600 soldiers at the Rock of Rimmon.

In that sense, they would have had to reflect on it, say, no, this was right, that they had to be put under the band. Therefore, to obey that, we must just completely take them out. We can't let the 600 men survive.

That's option number one. There's a sense, if you think about it, there's a sense in which to do less than this renders all of those other needless deaths as meaningless, right?

Why kill these supposedly innocent women and children, or at least bystanders, and spare 600 guilty men who were actually fighting against them?

Why do that? In view of the band, all was guilty anyway. So that's option number one. They could actually go and just finish the job. Option number two, they could acknowledge that the vow was foolish, that it was illegitimate, and they would do that by confessing their sin to God, following God's instructions for cleansing to free themselves of the vow.

[ 36 : 09 ] This reminds us of Jephthah, doesn't it? He makes this ridiculous vow. He carries it out, but he didn't have to. God made provisions in the law, but nobody's paying attention to the law.



That's the problem. That was option number two. They could just go and confess. They could go through the cleansing. They could admit to God, no, this was foolish, God. We shouldn't have made this vow. And then at that point, they could have demonstrated mercy and love to the Benjaminites by allowing them to marry their daughters.

Now, for them to take option two would mean that they were relying on God's mercy, but perhaps that was too scary for them. Maybe they didn't trust God enough to forgive them.

Option number three, they could devise a plan through which they could avoid violating the technicalities of the vow while still giving truly Israelite women to the men to marry.

Now, this would inevitably lead to other kinds of sins. There's no way to get around that, but at least they would be able to say, we didn't break our vow. That's option three. Now, the first two options are completely justifiable according to the scripture.

[ 37 : 25 ] If God intended for them to put Benjamin under the ban, it would have been right for them to finish the job, okay? We could justify that with the scriptures. Option number two, of course we can justify that with the scriptures, can't we?

It's true that God is always pleased to forgive those who confess their sins, who come and acknowledge His steadfast love and His mercy. That's the testimony of judges over and over and over and over.

God gives them mercy. He's saying, is there any mercy in this book? You know what the mercy is in this book? That they're still in Israel. That they still exist.

That's mercy. And if they just paid attention, if they just read their Bibles, if their Levites hadn't been so slimy, if they'd actually done what they were supposed to do, the people would have recognized, yeah, we're sinners, but He's a good God.

And if we will just come and confess, if we will cling to His mercy, He'll forgive us. He will make this right. But they don't do that. They go for option three. Totally unjustifiable, according to the Scriptures.

[ 38 : 35 ] Nothing in the Scriptures says that anything that they did was okay. What were they doing? What was right in their own eyes? So how did they solve the problem?

You can read about it later. Let me summarize it. They found a city called Jabesh Gilead. It was the only city who didn't send soldiers to the fight.

Now, admittedly, that was a problem. That was going to need to be dealt with. But they dealt with it with much too strong severity. They go to the city and they kill everyone. Everyone except the young virgins.

There were 400 of them. So they kidnap the 400 virgins and they take them to the 600 men at the Rock of Rimmon. And they say, here you go. Here's 400 women for you to marry. So they've justified that because they say, well, they didn't go to the war, so they all deserve to die.

We'll just take their daughters. But there's 200 left. What are they going to do now? Well, they concoct this plan for the men to kidnap the virgins of Shiloh.

[ 39 : 39 ] There was a feast to the Lord every year in Shiloh where the tabernacle was located at the time during the book of Judges. And when the people would worship the Lord, the young girls in the town, they would run out of the town.

They would dance before the Lord. It was a part of their worship ritual as a feast to the Lord. And they said, here's what we want you to do. They told the 200 men who were left who didn't have a wife. They said, we want you just to hide on the side of the road.

And when these young girls, when they come out of the city to worship God, just pick one and take her. And then when their dads and their brothers come and they try to pick a fight about it, we'll take care of it for you.

We'll deal with them. You just do this and we'll take care of it. That's how they solve the problem. That's how the story ends. Kidnapping. Lies.

Stealing. It's terrible. Why in the world would they do it this way? It was so unnecessary. Why would they do it like this?

[ 40 : 41 ] Well, he tells us in the very last verse, doesn't he? In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. This is what happens when everyone lives their own truth and follows their own heart.

And like Sinatra, if you like it that way, does it their way. Deadly sin, foolish living, foolish decision making, divine judgment.

And in this story, every person does what's right in his own eyes. The Levite, the Gibeahites, Benjamin's leaders, all of Israel, all of them.

everyone followed their own heart rather than God's. Israel's corruption was total. Sometimes we call this total depravity.

no one was exempt from it. Paul would say it this way, all of them sinned and fell short of the glory of God. Which brings into fresh perspective Israel's need for a king with God's heart, doesn't it?

[ 41 : 56 ] Which is precisely the point that the author is making in this book. This is what happens when Israel doesn't have a king. They need a king who will not follow their own heart.

They need a king that we might could say is a man after God's own heart. Right? Isn't that what he's preparing us for? The author, I think there's strong evidence to say this might be Samuel who's writing most of this book.

He's clearly a monarchist. But he knows that kingship itself isn't the answer. They need the right kind of king. Think of all the subtle connections that the author makes to the next phase of Israel's history in the Bible.

When they do finally get a king, their king, not God's king, remember. Their first one wasn't God's man. He was the man of the people. Who is it?

Saul. Do you know where Saul was from? Gibeah. Interesting, isn't it? When they finally get God's king, it's David.

[ 43 : 05 ] Where's David from? Bethlehem. Which tribe does Bethlehem belong to? Judah. Wow, that's interesting, isn't it?

The tribe that was supposed to be leading the nation from the very beginning. God's king comes from them. But the sad thing is, if you've read your Bible and you know what comes next, you know how this turns out.

They do get David. But then David proves that he's incapable of actually doing what Israel needed. He was a great king. He was God's king.

But he wasn't the king. He wasn't enough. He was a wicked sinner too. For their ultimate salvation, Israel needed a greater king.

They needed Jesus, the true and better David. That's what they needed. It's what we needed. Sam Ahmadi said this about the book of Judges.

[ 44 : 03 ] When we read the book of Judges, we're looking in a mirror. This is who we are without a king. This is the state of our hearts.

This is who we are individually. This is who we are corporately. What the human heart needs is a righteous king reigning over it.

Which brings us to the gospel connection in Judges. Here's the truth. We've all done what is right in our own eyes. We've all fallen short of loving and obeying God.

And what each one of us deserves is to be put under the ban. That's what we deserve. But there's one person who never did sin.

Jesus did only that which pleased the Father. And then Jesus, the sinless one, that great Savior King, took the ban in our place.

[ 45 : 09 ] His death was a payment for our sins, for the sins of His people. His resurrection proves that He has delivered His people from death.

He is the Savior King that Israel so desperately needed. He's the Savior King that we so desperately need. Galatians chapter 3, all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.

In other words, Paul's saying that we're going to be tempted that when we realize this is how bad things are, when we do things our own way, we'll be tempted to just try to do this moral about face where if we just clean up our lives and we follow a few laws and we do the things that God's Word says, then God will look on us and He'll say, okay, you're good enough now.

Paul says that's what we'll be tempted to do. But then he says in Galatians 3, all who rely on those works are under a curse for it's written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

Have you ever broken any part of the law? Yes, of course you have. All of us have. You're under the ban. You're under the curse, Paul says. But then what does he say?

[ 46 : 15 ] But Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? By becoming a curse for us. For it's written, cursed is everyone who's hanged on a tree.

So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. We read about that in Psalm 98. So that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Ah, there it is. He's the Savior King. But how can we receive his mercy and grace? Through faith. Faith alone.

Jesus is the truly righteous king. He rules over his people. He delivers them from the enemy. He writes God's law on their hearts.

He instructs their worship and obedience. He disciplines them in love. He is preparing to take them to his eternal kingdom in the new heavens and new earth.

[ 47 : 20 ] That's who he is. He's done what none of Israel's deliverers in the book of Judges and what none of their kings, including David, could ever do. In fact, their failures are there to point us to his sufficiency.

And he invites us to enter his kingdom through faith in that sufficiency. You'll never come up with a better plan.

And if you try, what waits for you is eternal judgment. Why would you do that? That's like taking option three in Judges 21.

Why would you even try that? He has done it for you. This life, this salvation, it's not about what you do. It's about what he's already done.

And Paul tells us in Romans 10, that the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.