

“Samuel: The Last Judge” Part 1

A Walk Through the Old Testament

Various Scriptures in Judges

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Don Maurer: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes, Don?

Don: There is something that the Brave Men have been dying to know. What is your favorite kind of chocolate, milk or dark? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I’m not telling you. *(Laughter)* You know, Don? *(Laughter)*

Don: Yes?

Jeff *(moving over to the piano with his hand on Don’s shoulder, singing):* You know, Don. *(Laughter)* I’m not telling you. *(Laughter)* He’ll record that now. *(Laughter)*

Don: I am. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Milk, Don; milk.

Don: Okay. Thank you, thank you.

Jeff: Isn’t that the only kind of chocolate there is? *(Laughter)*

Don: No.

Don Nemit: Till you get to a certain age.

Jeff: Would you put that *(recorder)* down and lead us in prayer? *(Laughter))Music)*
Father in heaven, we thank You so much for this day, that You love us and gave this day to us as a gift from Your hand. Thank You for the evening from which we were able to get rest. We pray, Father, that You will make us ready for the day. Father, we pray that You’ll help us to look at this day, and each and every day, not only as a gift but as a way of serving You. And Father, we pray that You’ll place opportunities before us where we might do just that. Help us, Father, to serve You out of a confidence that we stand in Christ—not on our own merit, but only upon the basis of His merits. Thank You, Father, that You saved us from our sin and called us to Yourself, and prepared for us the good works in advance that we are to do. Help us to walk in them today.

Father, bless us as we open Your word this morning. We realize that Your word is a vital part of our Christian walk. Help us, Father, not only to study it but to understand it and to digest it. And Father, use Your Spirit who has inspired it to take it up in our lives and illuminate it and to bring it to bear upon us in ways that we need it. Bring conviction to our lives and comfort and everything in between. Father, help us to be shaped by Your word so that we might look more and more like Christ Jesus our Lord. Father, we pray for Your Holy Spirit to aid us in the whole process because we know that He lives within us. And we know that He is a promise and a guarantee of better things yet to come. So we praise You for Him. And we praise You overall for Your love extended to us when we were yet sinners undeserving. You loved us, and so we thank You for Your plan to redeem us from our sins.

Father, as we bow before You, we recognize that this world in which we live is affected by sin. And we pray, Father, that You will help us to have eyes to see that. So we pray for folks like Terry Gaab and his wife, who struggle from the effects of the Fall.

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Lord, this is what we all struggle with, the aging process and impending death and the struggles that come along the way in between. So we pray for Terry and his wife. And we pray for her to be well if that’s Your will. And we pray certainly for them to be able to handle this difficult time in grace.

Father, we also pray the same for Sig and Nancy. We ask on Nancy’s behalf that You would make her well. We’re so thankful that the doctors were able, at least for a time, to come to a solution to her nausea problem and the pain. But Lord, we know that they’re fallible men. And we know that they don’t have omniscience; they don’t have all the answers. And so it’s our desire to pray on their behalf, that they might indeed have answers to some of the besetting problems that plague her chemotherapy. Lord, it’s our desire, it’s our plea, that You will heal Nancy completely and fully so that she doesn’t need chemotherapy any longer. But we know that may not be Your will. So we pray that if it is not that You will give her the grace and the stamina and the strength to bear up under it. We pray that You’ll give the doctors wisdom to treat her carefully and well.

Father, we also pray for Matt. And Lord, as he looks for a job, we ask that You will match him up with a company that is suitable for him. And we pray that his gifts might be well complemented in the place where You place him. We certainly pray, Father, that You will give him encouragement there. But Father, in the meantime until You give him that job, we certainly pray that You’ll give him peace of mind. We pray that You’ll give him a sense of Your care. Yet if we are out of work we know that we oftentimes feel the crunch that comes upon us. And so we pray for Matt with the stress that he must be under, the anxiety he must be facing and battling. And we pray, Father, for these things as well. We pray, Father, that You would bless him. And we certainly pray that today he would receive job opportunities. We know that You are more than able to do that, so we pray for that.

We not only pray for his family, but we pray for our families. We certainly ask that You will bless and keep them. Lord, each one of us has difficulties in our families. We think of a variety of things all at once when we think about that prayer request. But oftentimes most of us think about our children, some think about their grandchildren. And we pray, Father, that they’ll be walking with the Lord, that the gospel would have come to them in such a way so as to awaken their affections and draw them to Yourself. Father, we pray that there would be the fruit of that in belief and repentance. And we pray, Father, for conversion for them.

Father, as we lift all of these things up to You, we know that You are more than able to do more than we ask. We expect that because You are such a generous and kind and loving Father. And so we commit these prayers to You in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Before we start, I want you men to know that I thought I would take it easy on Don this week. You know, you men sort of looked at me. I went home and told my wife, “You know, I think the men are thinking that I’m picking on Don.”

And she said, “Well, what are you doing?” So I explained to her and she said, “You are picking on Don.” (*Laughter*)

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I said, “Let me show you the emails.” And so I wrote to him and I said, “I’m going to show the men your emails.” And do you know what he said to me? “I won’t be able to see ‘em.” *(Laughter)* You know, I just don’t know how to deal with this. *(Laughter)* I want you men to pray for me. *(Laughter)*

All right. So we are looking today again through the Bible, looking at the Old Testament. And this is our basic purpose statement, basically what we are seeing. Let me put it on the white board. *(Laughter)* Oh, Kirk, where’s my white board?

Kirk Ellerbusch: It’s a white wall. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. I want you to think about this now. Keep working through this because I’m giving you a map. This is the way to think your way through the Old Testament.

So we started with *the covenant of works*, with Adam in the garden. And he was given a promise. And he would receive that promise of life if he kept the precept not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. But if he didn’t, then he would face the penalty of being driven out. And he ate and he was driven out. And that’s when *the covenant of grace* begins.

Now remember, the covenant of grace is one covenant with five exfoliations, five unfoldings to it. And the first unfolding is the covenant with Noah, the Noahic covenant. And that covenant is God promising to preserve the stage of redemption, to preserve the world, so that redemption could unfold on it. And so He promises that He’ll never flood the earth again. And He begins afresh with Noah and his eight.

And the problem is that as soon as they get out of the boat, sin manifests itself. Noah says, “Let’s plant a vineyard and celebrate.” *(Laughter)* And you know how that goes. He’s in the bag and bad things happen, right? But I digress.

Anyway, after that Abraham comes onto the scene. And Abraham basically becomes the first character called out onto the stage of redemption, if you will. And it is to Abraham that the promise is given. The promise of what? The promise of land. He is to be a nation to inhabit that land, that the nation inhabiting that land might be a blessing to other nations. This is how God is going to spread the promise in Genesis 3:15, that there is a Redeemer coming who will crush the head of the serpent and give life to the whole world.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15, ESV. “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*”

Jeff: So what happens? What happens is that the Genesis story unfolds. And the Genesis story is basically how Israel becomes a nation. God takes them down into Egypt. And by the time you get to Exodus 1 you find that they’ve grown into a nation in Egypt. And in Egypt they’re ready. They’re the nation that God promised them to be.

And so what does God do? He brings Moses in. And Moses moves them out of Egypt into the land. Now he doesn’t lead them into the land; Joshua leads them into the land. And Joshua conquers the land.

When we looked at Joshua 21 we noticed that not one of the good promises that God gave failed. God gave them all the land and rest on all sides. And so what we find is that God gives them the land.

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So now they’re a nation and He gives them the land. So what’s next? What is next is that this nation in this land is going to be a blessing to the other nations. And that’s where we are in the unfolding process.

Now we come to the book of Judges. And Judges is a disappointment to us in many ways. And yet what I want to do is that I want to explain to you why Judges is a disappointment. But I want to wait until we get to that point. So let’s move on and let me just hit the outline here.

So we’re going to look at the chronology. And some of these points are going to be very brief. We’re going to look at *a brief chronology*. We’re going to look at the question *why the Judges?* We’re going to look at the question *who were the Judges?* We’re going to look at the question of *the status of the church under age*.

When I talk about the church under age, I’m talking about the church prior to Pentecost. In my understanding this is the church in development. When Pentecost arrives that’s the church mature. And then the church in consummation follows that. It’s the status of the church under age.

And then *who is the last Judge?* We’ll look into the last Judge, which leads us into *the monarchy period*. Did you just give away the answer?

Bishop Rodgers: I did. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right.

Bill Stolze: We’re equally guilty. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay, *our chronological map*. I’m just going to give this to you. There are more dates on this than there are in your outline. But I want you to get the idea.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff writes “Braham” instead of “Abraham.”

Jeff: Jeff: So Braham. *(Laughter)* That’s a short version of Bro Ham. About 2000 B.C. is Abraham. And then 1446 is the date for the Exodus. And remember, the conquest happens forty years after that, so it’s 1406. And the Conquest takes a few years, so 1399 is the date for the Conquest.

Joshua to the Judges. That period goes from about 1399 to roughly 1360 or 1350. And then just to give you some idea of how long that period of Judges lasts, I say to you that Samuel is born in 1121 B.C. or thereabouts.

And then just to give you some perspective, David is born in 1041 or thereabouts. So that just gives you kind of a time line to think about some of these Old Testament major events, okay?

So *why the Judges?* Well I want you to understand that the Judges are all the things that I’m going to mention. But there’s something really key to the Judges. So if anyone ask, s the Judges a pretty good period of time? If you have any familiarity with the Scriptures you’re going to say no.

Transcriber’s Note: Someone sneezes.

Brave Man: Bless you.

Jeff: You’re not going to say, “Bless you.” *(Laughter)* You might say, “Bless you”; this is a bad time. All right, I’m a little punchy today. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: I noticed that.

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Jeff: Don’s got me keyed up! (*Laughter*) All right, so I didn’t do yoga this morning. (*Laughter*) Anyway, Judges is a really important time, because if you think in line with what we’ve been talking about, if you think about it in terms of the outlay of the covenants, you ask the question, why the law? That’s the question that Paul asks twice, once in Galatians and once in Romans. And in Galatians 3 he asks it like this. He says, “*Does the law nullify the promise?*” And what he’s asking is this. Does the law given to Moses nullify the promise given to Abraham?

And remember what he says. “No, it doesn’t.” You remember the illustration I gave when we walked through this one time. I said that if I give Caleb my car and promise to give him my car, if I say, “Look, Caleb, I’m going to give you my car in a week’s time from now,” and then a week’s time comes and I say, “Look, Caleb, if you do these three things I’ll give you my car,” what have I done? I’ve just introduced a law that has nullified the promise.

So Paul is asking, wait a minute. Does the law that was given through Moses nullify the promise given through Abraham? Because the promise given through Abraham was land, a nation, and a blessing to the other nations. But if the law comes along and nullifies that promise by saying that if you obey you’ll be a blessing to the other nations, well then, is that what happens? Does the law nullify the promise? And Paul says, “*Absolutely not!*”

And then the questions becomes, why the law? If the law doesn’t nullify the promise, why was the law given? And Paul’s answer in both Romans and Galatians is singular. He says that the law as given to tease out or to make sin manifest. In other words, the law as given to show Israel and the nations just how much they needed a Savior, just how unable they were to keep the law. And that’s why the law was given.

Look, if you want to show your child how sinful they are, if you’re trying to teach the lesson that you’re a sinful child, then what do you do? You say, “Look, honey, I’m going to put these cookies on the table. And here’s the law. The law is no cookies.” And all you have to do is set up a video camera while you’re not in the room. (*Laughter*) And what’s going to happen? He’s going to go to the cookies, ‘cause he’s a sinner.

You know, all you’ve got to do, even before he learns how to talk, you know the toddler, right? He goes up to the VCR. And you go, “No, no, no, don’t touch. Don’t touch.” And then he goes, (*making a face*), right? Why? Because he’s a sinner. That’s what we are. And sin will manifest itself especially when the law is added. When the law is added sin will manifest itself.

And so why the law? So that sin will manifest itself, and so the need for a Savior will be that much greater in our eyes.

Now think about this. So when they are given the land, what happens? They are immediately unfaithful. And that’s supposed to happen, because that’s the reason for the law.

You see, we look at their sin and we say, “Man, what is going on?” And here’s the answer to that question to what’s going on? Exactly what was supposed to go on, okay?

All right. So if we understand that, we’ll be able to look at the book of the Judges with eyes that see this from that vantage point.

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I want you to go to the book of Judges for just a second. So this is the seventh book in the Bible. So Joshua dies. And then what you find is that you find that they inquire of the Lord in verse 1. And then you find a rehearsal of all the victories that they continue to have in subduing the land, okay? So they defeated the Canaanites and all the people in the land.

Now that goes up through verse 26.

Transcriber’s Note: Judges 1:26-27, NKJV. *“And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day. However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.”*

And in verse 27 what you begin to notice is this. This is verse 28. *“When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely.”*

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: And all of a sudden you realize that oh, Israel is coming up with their own plan! Israel has now become a strong nation. And now instead of driving out the Canaanitish influence, they say, “Why are we driving them out? Why don’t we just turn them into our slaves?”

And all of a sudden, what happens? The Canaanites who were supposed to be punished by the Israelites, driven out from the land,—remember, when God says, “You’re going to go down into a land for four hundred years.” And we know that they’re going to go down into the land to become a nation. But God actually tells them that His wrath toward the Canaanites has not yet reached its completion. When it has, He’s going to draw them out of Egypt and use them as an instrument to punish the Canaanites. All of a sudden, now we find that God is not being heeded. And they are coming up with their own design about how to treat the Canaanites.

And then there is a rehearsal of that from 28 and 29 and 30, and all the way down.

Transcriber’s Note: Judges 1:28-30, NKJV. *“And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out. Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.”*

And then notice what happens. What begins to happen is that in verse 34 *“The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down.”* What’s beginning to happen is that the Israelite disobedience is already beginning to have its effect.

And then what happens? Chapter 2 is Israel’s disobedience. *“Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, ‘I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I swore to give your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. What is this you have*

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done? So now I say, ‘I will not drive them out before you. But they shall become thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’”

And So then the death of Joshua is recorded, and then notice what happens. In chapter 2, verses 11-15, what you find is that you find a rehearsal of Israel’s unfaithfulness.

Transcriber’s Note: Judges 2:11-15, NKJV. *“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.*

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

Now these chapters 1 and part of 2 become something of a bridge to help us understand the time of the Judges. They cease to inquire of the Lord and obey Him. They turn to their own ways. And God and the angel of the Lord comes to them and says, “Now this is what is going to happen to you.” So this is really a reflective summary of the disobedience of the Israelites and why it is that they’re going to experience the trouble they’re going to experience.

Now remember, the giving of the law so that sin will be manifest does not negate their responsibility. It actually points up their responsibility to keep the law in the face of the commandment. But they can’t, and they don’t.

So then what happens is that their unfaithfulness is redeemed. In other words, you say, “well, why are they staying in the land? Why not be driven out right away?” I mean, think about it. They actually stay in the land for several hundred years before they’re actually driven out.

You know, when you think about it, we’re going to find that Israel divides into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom is divided and driven into exile in 722. So about 300 years later they’re driven into exile. And then the southern kingdom is driven into exile in 586. So they get to stay in the land a little longer, and we’ll talk about why that is. But they are eventually driven out.

So why is it that God said, “If you don’t keep the law you’re going to be driven out?” I mean, why wasn’t this like Adam in the garden? Adam eats and boom, he’s driven out! And the answer is because God is gracious and slow to wrath. And He continues to teach the lesson. Why the law? It is that sin might be made manifest, and why it is that you need the grace that’s pictured in the sacrifices that you’re supposed to be offering day by day. Why? Because you need the Savior who is to come. Does this all make sense?

Brave Men: Mm-hmm.

Jeff: All right. So now *unfaithfulness is redeemed*. In Judges 2:11-23 what we see is, we see a pattern. But I want you to see that pattern in 11-23. I already mentioned it. But

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what I want to do is to read this. And then what I want to do is show you something. So now listening to 11 and following.

“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths.

“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. He gave them over to plunderers who plundered them. And He sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them, and they were in terrible distress.”

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: Now it mentions the Ashtoreths and it mentions the Baals. Let me say this to you. These were Canaanite gods that had their way of infiltrating Israel.

Baals were localized gods. If you were to go from one village to the next you would find a Baal, which basically meant *father*. And you would find a Baal. But the Baal in one village would be different from the Baal in the next village, because these were localized gods.

The Ashtoreth was a feminine god. And it was married to the god El. And so when you think about the Ashtoreth, you think about a feminine god. These gods were fertility gods. You went to these gods in hopes that these gods would respond to you in times of harvest.

So these were fertility gods. This obviously had its way of deteriorating into sexual immorality, and so on in the life of Israel, and we’ll see that. But the pattern that unfolds from what we just read is one that you’ll read and reread in the book of Judges. In fact, it’s a pattern. And if you get the pattern, you’ve got every story in the book of Judges.

So here’s the first story. Othniel is the very first story. And it says this. *“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.*

“But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD was upon him. And he judged Israel, and he went out to war. And the LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim.

“So the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.”

There’s a pattern in that. It repeats itself throughout the book of Judges. Let me show you the pattern. The pattern is this. There’s apostasy and there’s false worship. So there’s a turning away from God; there’s an abandoning of God. And then that abandonment of God leads to Israel being threatened.

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So they turn to the Baals, they turn to the Ashtoreths. They begin to worship them. Now I want you to understand this. This doesn't mean that they turn entirely away from God and begin to worship Ashtoreth. What this means is that there was a syncretism afoot in Israel.

And a syncretism is when you take a little bit of the Canaanite deities and their practices and their attributes, and you begin to incorporate that into the true religion. And so what begins to happen is that you may call God God. You may still call Him Yahweh. But all of a sudden you use something that is used in the worship of Baal.

For instance, you may use a golden calf or some kind of image. And you may use it and say, “This is Yahweh.” But really it's a Baal image, okay? Or you may begin to treat God as a baal. And this is the way it sometimes even happens today. People don't realize it, but oftentimes, when they treat God as if He were a magic charm, or the Bible as if it were a magic charm, what they are doing is that they're not acting Biblically. They're being syncretistic. They've brought in a little bit of whatever. And sometimes people don't even really know what it is that they bring in from the culture into their religion and their worship of God. For instance--, Yes?

Brave Man: Is what you're leading to similar to when people bury statues in front of their house before they try to sell it because they think it's the statue of some saint?

Jeff: Yes. That's superstition, absolutely. There are all kinds of superstition. If I just open my Bible up and say, “Well, today I'm going to follow the leading of the Lord here,” that's not the way we read and study and apply our Bible. That's the way you apply a trinket or the tarot card, or whatever it is, you know? That's not the way a Christian handles his Bible. And so there's a syncretism in that.

So when that begins to happen in Israel, Israel is threatened by another nation. And we're going to see that it's all of the nations that were not driven out because they stopped driving them out.

And then what begins to happen is that Israel cries out for help. Now it may be that they're in subjection many years. It may be that it takes them a while to cry out for help. But they eventually cry out for help. They cry out for help and then what happens? God raises up a deliverer or a judge.

And then after raising up the deliverer or the judge, there's peace in the land again. And after restoring peace in the land the judge dies, and then the cycle starts all over again. And every judge follows this same pattern. If you take this pattern and then just read through the stories of the Judges, you'll see the pattern unfold. Okay?

Kirk: Hey, Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Kirk: When Paul talks in Romans about men suppressing the truth in their unrighteousness and God giving them over, is this a practical example to us?

Jeff: You know, I'm really glad you asked that. That's a good question. And here's what my first response is, okay? My first response is that what we have to do is train ourselves to read the Scriptures as if this were what it is, a nonrepeatable event in redemptive history. The period of Judges is not going to repeat itself in our times. It was for the purpose of the unfolding covenants. This had a particular place in the unfolding of

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God’s covenant. So the time of Judges is a particular time in that era, so it’s never going to repeat itself in a particular way.

Okay. Remember what I said the last time. We can’t go and take the promises in the Old Testament about the Promised Land and then apply them to buying a house. Lord, I want this land. Give me this land. Here’s the promise You made.

That’s not the way the Bible works. That’s like using the Bible as a magic talisman. I’m just going to pick and choose the promises I want to apply and then get God to fulfill them. That’s not the way we understand this. The promise of land was to the Israelites. This time of Judges was particular to the Israelites in the giving of the law. Why? To make sin manifest, and so on.

Now having said that, there are lessons that come out of this. The law does manifest sin. It does.

Now the problem is that sometimes our unfaithfulness produces consequences in our lives. That first part is really true. And then we get to this idea of crying out for help. That’s really true. So you do see a certain cycle.

But the Deliverer that God has raised up is One. He’s Jesus Christ. God is not going to raise up for us some deliverer other than Christ. What he says to us is, you know, think about it like this.

There’s a sense in which our lives are like the land of Canaan, okay? In other words, the power of sin has been conquered in us in Jesus Christ. But the presence of sin remains. And what we must do, like romans 6 says, is put to death that which remains, to drive the sin from our members. And that’s going to be lifelong until we die, right?

But what begins to happen sometimes is that I get in a rough patch. And the sin that’s being driven out sometimes grows back up in places where I thought that land was good and I didn’t have to worry about it again.

I think I’ve told you guys this one time. Years ago I was struggling with anger. I had a problem with anger. And then God gave me this really wonderful conquering of it in a day. And for years I thought to myself that the Lord has really given me victory over anger. And then that day comes. I’m so angry! (*Laughter*) And come to think of it, I’ve been angry for weeks! (*Laughter*) And all of a sudden you realize that I always need to exercise vigilance against myself and the sin that pervades, right?

So there are some lessons. Does that help?

Kirk: Yes. I was also thinking from the standpoint of when you were talking about incorporating part of Baal into our worship.

Jeff: Yes.

Kirk: I mean, there are different degrees of apostasy probably taking place in Israel as well. That’s what made me think of Romans, where we suppress the truth. And I’m sure that some of the Jews from that time became very apostate and anti-God in their thinking. And I’m wondering if that would be an example of God giving those Jews over to their sin, because it’s not that they can’t be saved, but do you know what I’m saying?

Jeff: Yes. You’re saying that the church under age is really a nation at this point. And some of the nation are actually not believers.

Kirk: Right, yes.

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Jeff: And it’s not that they can’t be saved by turning and looking at the promises. But what some of them did, (and we see this in the Pharisees), was that they said, “The law as given for us to be saved. And in the keeping of the law we’ll be saved.”

You know, I’m so tempted to bring up what we were talking about. Let me do it really quick. Turn with me to Matthew 5 for a minute, because this really extends to what we were just talking about. Sometimes we read 5:17-20 and think that Jesus is actually demanding a higher, more faithful standard of righteousness and obedience than the Pharisees offered. And we say, “Oh, we can’t!”

But it says, *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”*

And we say, “Oh, man! That’s law. I’ve got to be super obedient, more obedient than the Pharisees,” right?

Well, I want you to think about what this says. It says, *“Do not think that I came to abolish.”* The word is *luo*. “Do not think that I came to loosen the Law or the Prophets. For I did not come to loosen them, but to fulfill them.” *“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota or a dot will pass away from the Law until all is accomplished,”* until all is fulfilled, right? “Therefore whoever loosens or relaxes one of these.” How did they loosen or relax the Law? Well, there’s an example of it given in 43 verse 5.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” That is nowhere in the Old Testament. That’s a loosening of the law’s requirements. Everybody is supposed to love their neighbors. But your enemies, you don’t have to love them.

Jesus says, “Wait a minute, whoa, whoa, whoa! To fulfill the law you have to love your enemy.”

Now the whole point of this is that Jesus is saying, “Do not become like the Scribes and the Pharisees, who believed that they could fulfill the law by loosening it. No one can fulfill the law as it’s written, save Me.” And that’s why you require an alien righteousness in order to be righteous in the sight of God. That’s why Beatitude 4 says that we must hunger and thirst for a righteousness that is outside of ourselves. Having mourned for the poverty of our sin, only Christ can fulfill that righteousness in us. And He has done so. And He has not fulfilled that righteousness of the law by loosening the law and making loopholes so that you can step through it. No, He fulfilled it keeping the whole law in its entirety. Does that make sense?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. So it goes back to the idea of the law. All right. So then the Canaanite gods; I’ve talk to you already about the Baals.

Who were the Judges? What I wanted to do is just to talk to you about some of the stories of the Judges. But I’m not going to have as much time as I hoped. So here is what

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I’m going to do. I’ll just mention some of them and talk to you a little bit about some of them.

Ehud. Ehud is a left-handed guy, remember? The Moabites were dominating the land. Eglon was a really big guy. He was a big guy. And remember that Ehud said, “I’ve got a message from God for you.”

And Eglon says, “Oh, come and tell me!” And he pulls out his sword with his left hand on his right thigh. And he shoves the sword into Eglon. And he shoves it in so far that the fat kind of encases it.

And this is the great thing. The great thing is that his men think that it’s hot out. He’s going into the inner chamber to kind of release himself. You know, take a dump.

Transcriber’s Note: Paul Deffenbaugh puts his head down.

Jeff: Sorry about that, Paul. (*Laughter*) Paul put his head down. He’s immediately ashamed of me for using that vernacular. “We’re not Lutherans here,” he says. (*Laughter*) Anyway, after a time where they’re embarrassed, they finally go and find him dead. God delivers them from the Moabites.

Deborah and Barak. Remember this story? This is a great story. Jael is a woman. And remember, the woman drives the spike through the head of Jabin the king of the Canaanites, because Deborah says to Barak, “Barak, you won’t go out and do this on your own? Well, the Lord is going to put the victory into the hands of a woman.”

And He does. Jael invites Jabin into her tent. He goes to sleep. And she drives the spike through his head.

Gideon and the Midianites. This is a great story. Gideon is just terrible in some ways, right? He’s scared all the time. He’s not like a big hero, you know. He’s really scared. And he’s lacking in confidence. You know, Gideon’s practice of the fleecing of God is not one to put into effect. Why? Because that shows that you don’t have confidence in the word of God that He has already given. You’ve always got to test God to see if the word that He’s given is good enough. And God is just gracious to Gideon and so actually confirms His word to Gideon. But that’s not a good practice for us to follow. It shows lack of confidence, and so on.

Anyway, this is kind of funny. Gideon refuses the kingship. They want to make him king. He refuses the kingship. He sets up an idol to himself. And he actually changes his name to Jerubbaal, which has some sort of leadership or kingly kind of ring to it. And then he tries to allow his son to be made king. You know, he’s trying to start this succession through himself. It’s just kind of an interesting way in which sin is a good study here. He’s definitely not a George Washington type who says, “No, after two terms I’m done, and I’m going to retire on my farm. And I’m not going to do this anymore.” Gideon’s like, “Oh, King Nate!” (*Laughter*)

A couple things about them. They are selected by God and not hereditary, which had a place in the Gideons. They’re also not juridical but military in terms of their nature, governors and generals and that sort of thing.

Jephthah is an interesting guy. Jephthah’s beginnings are not good. He’s born from immorality. But the thing about Jephthah is the vow. He’s so excited. Jephthah basically says on his way home, “The first things that comes out of my door I’m going to sacrifice

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to the Lord.” And his daughter comes hopping out the door. What a dummy! *(Laughter)* Right? You think to yourself, *what a dummy!* What does he think is going to come out of the door? Well, okay. Let’s cut him some slack. Animals came out of their door, okay? *(Laughter)*

You know what I mean? Let’s face it. Their homes were not like our homes. So you say, “We’ll cut him some slack. The dog might have run out.” No, it wasn’t like that. Farm animals had a way of going in and out of their homes. So it may have been an animal that may have come out of his home.

Also, the question you have to ask yourself is this. What does it mean that he offered his daughter? Does it mean that he offered her as a burnt offering? Well, it could, because this was the time of the Judges and everyone did what was right in their own eyes because there was no king in Israel. Do not think that he’s beyond that. No, he’s certainly beyond that! Do not think that. He’s not beyond that. He could have done that.

However, it could have been that he actually took his daughter to the tabernacle and offered her as a servant there for the rest of her life. She’s allowed to go out and mourn into the countryside, but she will not have children. It could be that she’s a temple virgin. That could be. So we don’t know; we’re not told. There are a couple of possibilities. It makes for an interesting story and some interesting questions arise.

Samson. A man’s man, right? I’ll tell you about Samson. My favorite judge, right? *(Laughter)* He’s great! The great thing about him is that at the end of his life he seems to come around. You hope that he’s not just looking for vengeance. I don’t think he is. You know, he says to the little servant, “Put my hands against the pillar that supports this whole structure, and then leave.” *(Laughter)* He prays to the Lord one last time and the Spirit comes upon him. That’s the key, isn’t it? He gets his strength because the Spirit of God comes upon him.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: He asks for the Spirit of God to come upon him and he destroys the Philistines. It’s a great story. If you’ve not read Samson, it’s a great story.

The state of the church under age. I want to make sure that I get to this. In chapters 17-18 you find corrupt worship. This is just crazy. So you find guys that are Levites who leave their home. And you find this guy Micah who says, “Hey, could I hire you?” He’s not a priest. He has already ordained his son as a priest. But then this Levite comes along and he says, “Ah, but this is really a priest!” And so he says, “Hey, would you serve as my own personal priest?” And he’s like, “Oh, that’s a great gig!”

But you see how everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes, right? There’s no longer a doing as God requires or as God commands. There’s a doing what’s right in my own eyes.

And you know, if I can be anachronistic, this is very much akin to the idea that I can do my own thing with God, and don’t need organized religion. Well, God is the One who organizes religion both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, albeit in different ways, but according to the same covenantal structure. But the idea that I can just go out and do my own thing is just as foreign to the Old Testament as it is to the New Testament. There’s no going out and doing our own thing. So anyway, enough said.

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But then there’s corrupt behavior. And the corrupt behavior is that the Levite has a concubine. The concubine is unfaithful. She goes back to her father’s house. He goes to get her. And when he goes to get her he’s traveling home. And he stops through Benjamin, the tribal area of Benjamin. And he stays with an old man. And the old man puts him up in his house. And people come to the door and say, “Give us that guy that came to your house because we want to do things with him sexually.”

And the man says, “Look, I’ve got daughters.” And he’s got a concubine. “And we’ll put those girls out. You can do with them whatever you want. But just don’t hurt him.” You have to ask yourself. What kind of men are these men? But anyway, I digress.

(Laughter)

And so the Levite takes his concubine and throws her out the door, and then they rape her all night. And she crawls to the door. And he opens the door in the morning and steps over her and says, “Get up.” And she doesn’t move. So he loads her onto his donkey and takes her home. She’s dead. And he cuts her into pieces and he sends her to all the parts of Israel.

And it’s a message to Israel. Now think about this. This guy is sending a message to Israel. “Look at what we’ve become!”

So their response is not necessarily to repent. But their response is, “Let’s go and exterminate the Benjamites.” So they go and nearly exterminate the Benjamites.

And then what? Then they repopulate them as a tribe, right? They take their women and repopulate, and so on. It’s just crazy. This is corrupt behavior.

And can I just simply say that the pattern of idolatry leading to sexual immorality is the pattern that Romans 1 talks about? It’s the pattern we see in the book of Judges. Idolatry leading to sexual immorality is not a road that takes you to good places. And that was true in the Old Testament; it’s true in the New Testament. It doesn’t change.

I wanted to touch on Ruth and Boaz because they are during the time of the Judges. Boaz is a man unlike his culture. Boaz is a guy who says this to Ruth when she comes to the field. He says, “I want you to come and stay with me in my field. I’ve told the young men not to touch you.”

Now that word *not to touch* can mean to harass. It can mean to sexually assault. It has a wide spectrum of meaning. But the point is that he knows that everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. And he says to her, “Stay with my young women. I’ve told the young men not to touch you.” He is a man unlike his culture.

You know how the story goes, right? Naomi is the one who describes herself as bitter. In chapter 2 and in chapter 3 Boaz and Ruth are described with the exact same word: they are *worthy* or *excellent*. It’s the same word that Proverbs 31:10 uses to talk about the excellent woman. They are excellent people, worthy people, godly people.

And so when Naomi says to Ruth, “Hey, go to the threshing floor at night. Boaz is going to be there. Wait till his heart is merry, and wait till he goes to bed. And then once he goes to sleep, then take the blanket that’s covering him and uncover his feet.”

Now I’m just telling you. We’re all men here. That could be a euphemism for “uncover his private parts.” “So uncover him up to his feet, or uncover him up to his

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private parts. Let him get cold. When he wakes up, say to him, ‘Tell me what you want to do.’”

Ruth is a godly woman. And even if Naomi intended for her to go to the private parts, she may have only uncovered the feet and sat back. And as soon as he wakes up, he says, “Who’s there?”

She says, “Ruth.” And then she says this. She basically says, “Shelter me under your wings and redeem me. Be my redeemer, my kinsman redeemer.”

Now the thing that is startling about that is the exact same thing he told her. When she came to Israel he said, “You’ve come to seek shelter under the wings of God.” What’s she is basically telling him is, “Tonight, you do the very thing that you said God was going to do, and that’s sheltering me under your wings.” It’s great! She short-circuits anything that might have happened. But they’re both worthy people. They’re both excellent people, godly people. And so you don’t expect anything bad to happen. But Naomi is the blockhead that sends her into that. *(Laughter)*

The reason I bring them up is because in the midst of the Judges, a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, with no king in Israel, there were people who were godly.

And how were they godly? They were following the law. How do we know they were following the law? Because Ruth says to Naomi, “Hey, we’re back in Israel. The only way for us as poor people to get any food for us is for me to go and glean.” Somebody knows the law.

Anyway with the Judges, everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. The last Judge is Samuel. I think I’ll put Samuel off till next time and we’ll work out from there, and we’ll call it a day right now.

Let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day. Bless our time together. And Father, we pray that we’ll not only learn history and the unfolding of Your plan of redemption, but we pray as well that we will learn how to be godly and different from our culture because we have a King in Israel. We pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*