

JUDGES (5)

The Problem Identified



Stephen Gunawan

The Closing Stories of the Book of Judges (Chp 17-21).

1. The Story of Micah and a Levite

We have come to the conclusions of the Book of Judges. But funnily enough, the story in Judges in ended with the stories of Micah and the Danites. These were not designated judges. So why end with these stories?

The answer is because the writer wants to portray for us the conditions of man in the days of Judges. The Book of Judges is set to tell us about the decline of spirituality; and we saw that the very last judge to be written in the Book was Samson, whose actions revealed a very questionable and uninspiring leader. So these last few chapters were supposed to give a snapshot of the conditions of the people. But be reminded that this was not a side-story that we can skip, or just skim through. If length by which the writer covered the story gave us hints as to the significance of this matter, then this story is given to us in five chapters; which is by far the longest of all.

To understand the stories, we need to understand what the Mosaic Law required; the ceremonial laws and the priestly roles. Without identifying these, we would not appreciate what Micah, the Levite, or the mother, did wrong. But it seemed like a funny twist. If we do not understand what went wrong, it might be because we do not know our Bible. That was the exact reason they did what was wrong also. They did not understand the Law and so felt they did nothing wrong. Our failure to understand the Book of Judges mirrored their failures in carrying out the Law.

Take note, throughout the discussion, the central theme which are repeatedly mentioned in Judges 17-21.

- *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 17:6 ESV)*
- *“In those days there was no king in Israel” (Jdg 18:1 ESV)*
- *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 17:6 ESV).*
- *“In those days there was no king in Israel” (Jdg 18:1 ESV).*

The story started very insignificantly, *“now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim said to his mother...” (1:1)*. A nobody spoke to his unnamed mother. That was it. But if the rest of the book gave us the conditions of the leaders of the tribes, this portion gives to us a picture of the general condition of the people. This was how the story went:

- **Micah’s mother.** At first sight, Micah’s mother seemed a strange woman. She discovered that her great wealth was stolen (1100 shekels of silver was no small amount, it would have paid for the Levite priest Micah would later hire for 110 years! – **17:10**); but when she cursed the thief and her son owned up (most probably not because of some act of conscience but out of fear of the curse), not only did she not discipline her child, or even utter a single rebuke; she even blessed him for it (**17:2**)! However, as we consider how mothers of all ages act, this is not so surprising. Mother always protect their children, and always see their own children as little angels (and other people’s children as the little devils?). She also seemed to be a religious person, and a charitable one also. When she

received back her money, she consecrated it to the *LORD* (17:3). But zeal without knowledge is no good (Prov 19:2), and a way that seems right may lead to death (Prov 14:2; 16:25). And when we interpret these principles with the theme of Judges 17-21, which was “*there was no king in Israel, everyone did as they seemed right*” (17:6, 21:25), we get a scary picture of people unknowingly sinning and walking to their own demise! And we get indeed this very picture. The mother’s generous act of consecrating a large sum of money ended up to be an act which advocated idolatry, as she crafted an idol (17:4). And that is laying aside the discrepancy that she consecrated all 1100 shekels but only used 200 shekels for the idol. She could have ① relented after realizing what huge amount she consecrated and justified that 200 shekels was more than enough ② intended to make more idols with the rest of the money. Whichever that was, there was one thing that struck me. Which was better for her to do at this point? Break her vows? Or make good her promise? Keeping her promise would have meant more idols being built. A wrong act done even in sincerity might be better left undone.

- **Micah.** Despite being in the Book of Judges, Micah was not a judge. In fact, he was not even a leader of his tribe, and may not have any position of leadership. Micah was introduced as a thief (17:1) and an idol-worshipper (17:5). He thought that everything could be bought with money. He first installed one of his sons as priest (17:5) whilst apparently knowing that only Levites were legitimate priests (17:13). Had the Law been practiced, Micah’s son who was made priest would have been put to death (Num 3:10). In a deluded fashion Micah thought that the combination of the Levite and the household idols would guarantee him blessing (17:13; 18:24), which sounded strange until we see present day practice of people who thought that having some idolatrous prosperity-promising preachers who offer them charms in the forms of anointing oil or water from Israel would similarly guarantee blessing. This act of taking the blessing of God as something we can turn on or off with a magic charm not only belittles His sovereignty, it is idolatrous and sinful!
- **The Levite.** The Levite was a money-oriented man who offered his services to the highest bidder. He went out of his assigned area (see Jos 21), agreed to work for Micah for the money (17:10) and later on for the Danites for more money (18:19-20). He even betrayed his former master who had been his source of income with this description: “*the priest was very pleased*” (18:20). No remorse, no guilt, no striking of the conscience; he just happily did it for more money. If he was a true priest, he should have known that there is no such a thing as an assigned priest for only one family (Micah) or even a tribe (Dan). The Levites were to be priests for the whole community of Israel (Num 3:7). But the fact that this Levite was on sale was probably due to the fact that the whole priestly system was no longer working, and Israel had stopped giving their tithes to the Levites, as required of them by the Law (Num 18:21). Priests were consecrated for the service in the Tent, and were for that reason not given the inheritance of land (Num 18:20). This Levite also later took on the role of a prophet (18:5-6) and even a false prophet who blessed the Danites’ illegitimate desire for a land that was not theirs to begin with. As a priest of Yahweh, he did not serve at the designated tent of meeting, where the Tabernacle is, but rather in Micah’s house which was filled with idols, and later even participated in stealing the idols (18:20) and its subsequent worship together with other self-made priests (18:30-31). At the end of chapter 18, the curtains were opened and the true identity of the Levite was finally revealed. He was Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses. Two things are of importance here. ① The Levites as a whole was consecrated to the service at the tent. However, only the direct descendants of Aaron were allowed to offer sacrifices, burn incense and teach the Law, whilst the non-Aaronic Levites were given for the keeping of the Temple (eg. Num 3:5-10; 18:1-7). So technically, the non-Aaronic Levites were not priestsⁱ. They were thus self-appointed priests

who deserved the death sentence. ② How far away are we talking about here? Jonathan was the son of Gershom, and Gershom was the son of Moses. In other words, the condition portrayed here was only 2 generations after Moses. How quickly do we forget the LORD; how prone are we to forget him!

- **The Danites.** The Danites were allotted land, which was detailed in **Jos 19:40-48**. And this Leshem or Laish they were aiming at was not part of what God had allotted to them, and was in fact further north of what was rightfully theirs. And the reason they took the city was because their own territory which was entrusted to them was lost to them (**Jos 19:47; Jdg 1:34**), and because the city was very prosperous and secure (**18:7**). Their desire had nothing to do with God's command, and His inheritance; it was fleshly desire though and through. They acted in false spirituality at every stage. Look again at the ambiguity of the language:

- *Inquiring of the LORD.* Is the first requirement for battles. And they did inquire (**18:5**). But such inquiry was supposed to be addressed to a prophet, not a priest. And such inquiry was despite the fact that they knew they were aiming for something that was not part of their allotted inheritance as described in **Jos 19:40-48**.
- *Spy out the land.* Was a common pre-war practice of the Ancient Near East and even commanded to test the faith of the people. Their response would determine if they indeed placed their faith in God, or in their fleshly abilities or weaknesses. They did send spy (**18:2**). But notice the sending happened before the inquiring; and this meant that they only want God to give a stamp of approval to their chosen decision. Though on the surface it looked like an act of obedience, it was in fact a denial to the sovereignty of God.
- *The confession of faith.* After the spying, unlike what happened during the time of Moses, this time they came back with a favorable report and made a great statement like this: "when you get there, you will find an unsuspecting people and a spacious land that God has put into your hands, a land that lacks nothing whatever" (**18:10**). It was a faith based on a false prophecy.
- *The victory.* The Danites were indeed victorious in battle (**18:27-29**), as if God was really handing the enemy over to them. But immediately after the victory they immediately set the place up for false worship and even idolatry (**18:30-31**). Did God reward them for their faith by giving Laish to them, or did He give them over to their desires and allow this to remain a snare? I think it was the latter.
- *The conclusion.* The conclusion seemed odd: "they continued to use the idol Micah had made; all the time the house of God was in Shiloh" (**18:31**). This was the conclusion of the disobedience. Despite the apparent spirituality of what they have done. Despite the fact that they had priests to serve, ephods, land, worship, but the house of God was south at Shiloh, as set up in **Jos 18:1**. That was where the priests had to serve God. That was where the Tabernacle was. That was where the worship should have been. This was merely a misdirected step, a zeal done without knowledge, priests without sacrifice, faith without Word, land without inheritance, worship without God. Just a short word then, is due, for the churches of this age. Do we have true zeal with true knowledge? Are we Christocentric and reliant on His sacrifice for our sins? Is our faith based on the unfailing Word of God? Are we looking for the imperishable inheritance instead of being at home in this world? Is our worship acceptable with God, or is merely an illusion? What the Danites did, despite its appearance of godliness, is void of power – completely worthless. But this form of godliness that is void of power is very much present in the present day (see **2 Tim 3:5**).

The story of Micah, Jonathan and the Danites explained to us part of the root reasons for the decline of spirituality and morality in Israel.

- *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 17:6 ESV). “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Jdg 18:1).* The very root cause was that Israel had no king, and with no administrators of the Law of God, the people did what was right in their own eyes. Notice that they did what was RIGHT. They did not purposely commit a wrong even after knowing it. They thought it was right, and it was indeed right in their eyes. Let’s define this a little more clearly – RIGHT in their OWN eyes. This was then self-righteousness pure and simple. A righteousness defined by the self and constructed by societal consensus; as opposed to the righteousness of God. It manifested in these symptoms:
 - **Idolatry.** Micah, Jonathan, the Danites. All of them worshipped the many idols and thought that by doing so they were doing their religious duties. And they made the graven images to serve their own desires and interests. They were right in their own eyes; self-righteous. They exchanged the glory of God with images (ref **Rom 1:23**).
 - **False Spirituality.** This was done by attempting to obey one commandment at the cost of another. Micah seemingly wanted to obey the commandments by installing a Levite as priest. The Danites did every step right when they tried to conquer Laish. However, Micah ignored the more important aspects of the commandment for levitical priesthood, place of worship and most importantly the object of worship. The Danites seemed to profess faith, but based that faith not on the Scriptures but on a false prophecy which they desired anyway.

2. The Story of a Levite and his Concubine

We have come perhaps to the most disturbing part of Judges. In this portion we will see homosexuality, gang rape, murder, mutilation, kidnapping – the grossest of crimes! But what was disturbing was who actually took center stage. The Levite represents a position of leadership, at least a spiritual leader whom the people should look up to. And here we are introduced to him not even with a name, not with what good he had done, but the fact that he took a concubine. But the description of this Levite looked strikingly similar to Jonathan son of Gershom of the previous chapter.

Levite from Jdg 17-18	Levite from Jdg 19-21
Young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah (17:7) Went to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim (17:8)	A Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim (19:1) Took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah (19:1)

The writer did not identify the Levite this time, never furnishing us with a name, so to say that they are the same person might be jumping too far. However, this at least showed the condition of morality in the regions of Bethlehem-Judah (which would be the birthplace of David the would-be king of Israel).

- **The Levite.** The story began portraying this Levite as someone who seemed to love his concubine very much, which was evident by the troubles he took to get her back.
- **The Benjamites.** The Levite refused to stop at Jebus (19:12) because he thought that he would receive no hospitality there, and might end up being dead. Little did he know that what would happen to him with an Israelite was no better. The Benjamites in Gibeah did not show the common courtesy (of the time) of inviting a traveler or a sojourner for lodging. The one who finally offered

was an Ephraemite living in Gibeah (**19:16**). When words got around that that were visitors to the town, what happened instead of hospitality were wicked men who wanted to rape the Levite (**19:22**). These were blatant homosexual acts, and the way this was described was eerily similar to what happened in Sodom (see **Gen 19**).

	Gen 19	Jdg 19
The Offer	Lot offered, “do not spend the night in the square” (v. 2)	The Ephraimite offered “don’t spend the night in the square” (v.20)
The Criminals	“All men from every part of the city of Sodom – both young and old– surrounded the house” (v. 4)	“Some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house” (v. 22)
The Vice	“Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out so that we can have sex with them” (v. 5)	“Bring out the men who came to your house so we can have sex with him” (v.22)
The Counter-Offer	“No, my friends, don’t do this. I have two virgin daughters. Do what you want with them” (v. 7-8)	“No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Here is my virgin daughter, and the guest’s concubine. Do what you want with them” (v. 24)

The style of writing, the words that were used, all seemed to be intentionally done to connect the two incidents. This was to show that the morality of the Benjamites had degraded to such an extent that they were doing similar things to what the Sodomites did. And God ended up destroying Sodom! That was the state of the Benjamites’ depravity. Of worthy mention was perhaps the fact that prior to God destroying Sodom, Abraham interceded for that city and argued with God that he should spare it if there were some righteous people there. So it might be the case that the depravity had gone so bad that in Sodom “*all men from every part of Sodom*” were accomplices, whilst in Gibeah it was “*some of the wicked men of the city.*” This could be part of the reason why the Benjamites were not completely eradicated. But clearly, they were walking in the very path of Sodom; heading in the very same direction and the very same destruction.

There is another point I would like to suggest. That in Gibeah, none of the Benjamites were willing to offer up lodging for the Levite probably because they were afraid they would be the ones being ambushed by the wicked men of the city. See, when an evil is so widespread and the law paralyzed, in most cases the conscience of the society would be similarly smeared that they would be afraid to do the right thing. In 2011 China, there was an incident which horrified the whole world when a toddler got hit by a lorry and was left for dead. Passer-bys went pass and ignored the toddler, and pretended not to notice. When the recording hit the news, the whole world stood aghast at how there was an absence of conscience in China. However, those who understood the context in China might be better able to understand the horror. A few weeks following that incident, I read another news in which a young man was asked to pay for an elderly man’s medical fees because he kindly brought an extremely sick old man to a hospital, and the hospital said they did not believe the young man would do such an unmerited favor had he not been related. See, by helping the toddler, they ran the risk of being implicated, perhaps even accused of being the culprit. It was the murder of a public conscience. We also see the same message in the parable of the good Samaritan (**Luk 10:25-37**). The audience of that day would be more familiar than we are with how dangerous the road between Jerusalem and Jericho was, and how they were in fact risking their very lives should they choose to help the victim. The story was in fact a sharp rebuke because it exactly described how they would act if they had found a bloodied man on that very road. But this story should also be directed

at us. In a fallen world, often times doing good is very costly. The question remained, however, if we would do it anyway.

Let's carry on. The Levite who went to great length to get his concubine back and showed the world how wonderful his love was for her had somehow mutated into this uncaring, cruel and wicked man. He let the Benjamites rape her outside the house all night long, probably cowering inside the house whilst hearing her screaming for help. Morning came, and he innocently asked her to hop along only to find her dead. And next he mutilated her and sent the pieces to the twelve tribes of Israel (**19:29**) supposedly demanding retribution. But this showed us how he really thought of his concubine. He did not love her as a person but rather as an object. When she was no longer of use to him, he did not even honor her with a proper burial, but used her corpse to get him retribution.

At least the tribes were as horrified at this as we are. They responded, *"Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something! So speak up!"* (**19:30**). The Levite then gave a witness that was misleading at best. His story was that the men at Gibeah tried to kill him and raped his concubine (**20:4-5**). We know this to be inaccurate. They came to rape the Levite, not to kill him, and it was he who allowed the men to take his concubine in his stead. But the Levite cleverly provoked all the tribes: after calling the act lewd and outrageous, he challenged them *"now, all you Israelites, speak up and tell me what you decided to do"* (**20:7**).

The tribes took the right steps in confronting the Benjamites:

- They approached the Benjamites to confirm the story (**20:12**), gave them an opportunity to make right (**20:13**).
- Their reasoning, to purge evil from Israel (**20:13**) displayed the correct understanding about the need to restrain evil by punishing the guilty.
- When punishment is inevitable in order to uphold justice, they did not do so joyfully, but rather extremely saddened that they had to resort to this (**20:23**). They reflected the will of God Himself, *"not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"* (**2 Pet 3:9**). Paul similarly displayed this sort of attitude even in his harshest discipline when he said *"hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the LORD"* (**1 Cor 5:5**).
- What they did, then, complied with the principles of **Mat 18:15-17** even when they did not have this word then. The principles were that ① the Church should implement Church discipline ② so that the Church can remain pure, not letting sin dwell in it ③ the purpose of discipline is for repentance ④ even the harshest discipline, which was to treat them as pagan (and therefore as someone who is not saved) was done for possible salvation. How do we treat pagans and tax collectors? We evangelize them.

The ironic fact, though was that in the rare event during the times of the judges that Israel was unified as one was when they were going against their own brother (**20:11**). However, the Benjamites stood behind the wicked men and refused to hand them over, fighting the Israelites instead (**20:13-16**). This clarified where their allegiance lied; and it was with wickedness. And this was why their decision to punish the Benjamites gained the approval of God, as their inquiry was answered by God Himself (**20:18, 23**).

The Benjamites might have gained their confidence because they were indeed formidable. Imagine the odds. They had 26,000 swordsmen plus the seven hundred elect troops (**20:15-16**) but the Israelites had 400,000 swordsmen, all of them fit for battle (**20:17**). Despite the impossible odds, the Benjamites initially defeated 22,000 Israelites (**20:21**), then 18,000 (**20:25**), proving their incredible prowess.

The LORD began delivering the Benjamites as He normally did the enemies (**20:35**), and first 25,100 died (**20:35**). However, this might be where they went too far. They did to the Benjamites as they were commanded to do to the Canaanites; putting all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything they found and then putting the towns on fire (**20:48**). Though the discipline to the attacking Benjamites was instructed by the LORD, the decimation of the town was not. The Benjamites had been thus put to divine discipline; but in excessive anger Israel went too far and created for themselves another problem. But by providence, 600 of them escaped.

Chapter 21 showed a weakness of the Israelites. It seemed like they had this bad habit of making unnecessary oaths. They had harshly though unnecessarily made a vow not to give their daughter to the remaining Benjamite women in marriage (**21:1**); and then again another vow to put to death anyone who did not assemble at Mizpah (**21:5**). These were not vows that the LORD required. And we see the consequence of their actions – they were about to witness the complete destruction of one of their own (**21:2-3**).

This was not to happen. And therefore, Israel went and thought of one solution (first). I see this solution to be merely a lame excuse. Notice that the action of finding out who did not assemble at Mizpah at **21:5** is surrounded in context by the need to find wives for the Benjamites. They began looking for a city they could decimate so that they could give its maiden to Benjamin. The end result was decided, they just had to find the means. Most probably, if this issue of finding wives for the Benjamites was not an issue to begin with, they would not even bother to investigate the attendance at Mizpah. And so they slaughtered an entire city in order to save a whole tribe; perhaps reasoning that it was for the greater good. From here, they got 400 maidens; not enough for the 600 survivors. They thought that they had achieved this whilst being innocent in the eyes of the law. They fulfilled their oaths, disciplined Jabesh Gilead, and saved the Benjamites from extinction.

They still needed at least 200 more maidens for the Benjamites. And so they went to a second solution, which exhibited the same characteristics as the first, but then taken to the next level. They orchestrated a mass kidnapping of the girls of Shiloh, done at a sacred day of a festival, and thought that they were not guilty of breaking their vow because the girls would be kidnapped instead of being given as wives. Again, they exhibited an insistence of keeping the vow, but at the cost of being guilty of orchestrating a mass crime. They did not think themselves guilty, because this standard of righteousness they lived by was one which was “in their own eyes.”

What do we make of this? The Israel of the time of Judges would have made very good lawyers. They tried to find loopholes in the Law, and to achieve their intentions and desires from those loopholes. Let’s just define it for what it was: they were trying to commit *legal sins*. And this is what we often do, is it not? We try to reason out the Word of God. Many people often ask, “is it wrong to go to a

nightclub? Is it sin to do drugs? How can polygamy be wrong when so many Old Testament leaders do it?" These are efforts of finding loopholes, of making what the Bible is silent about to be legalized. However, this is a sin of legalism pure and simple. And the warning of Christ to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law should apply.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and curmin. But you have neglected the more important aspects of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful in the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

(Mat 23:23-28)

The question at hand was on emphasis. Is spirituality inward, or outward? Do we consider the behavior, or the meditations of the heart? Christ's answer was this. Spirituality is **FIRSTLY** inward and **SUBSEQUENTLY** outward. Inward virtues of holiness, righteousness, justice and goodness becomes the basis of acts of charity, of justice and of goodness. First, clean the inside, then the outside will be clean.

And should it come as a surprise, then, that the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law came also in the form of such unnecessary oaths? See its preceding verse in **Mat 23:16-22**. They were also teaching and making silly oaths and forgetting the more important aspects of those vows. And Christ makes such comparison, "*which is greater: The gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred?*" (**v.17**). "*Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?*" (**v.19**). And finally the conclusion was this, "*anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it*" (**v.22**). Oaths are made in God's name, and we should not think that we can fulfill a vow by going against the very attributes of God. Fulfilling oaths through deceit, manipulation, murder, kidnapping was not righteous, it was self-righteousness; as the theme of the Book continually emphasize. The Israel's act of fulfilling their vows was still "doing what was right in their own eyes." The Law was given by God, and therefore was a reflection of God's attributes; and thus, "*the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good*" (**Rom 7:12**).

The story of the Levite, the Benjamites and the Israel explained to us the remaining root reasons for the decline of spirituality and morality in Israel:

- "*In those days there was no king in Israel*" (**Jdg 19:1**). "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes*" (**Jdg 21:25** ESV). Again, as it was in the first story, the phrase comes up twice, this time at the very beginning of the story and at the very end. As explained, they again do what was right in their own eyes. It was a self-determined and self-defined righteousness. But masked in righteousness nevertheless. It manifested in these symptoms:

- **Hideously immoral acts.** The homosexuality, gang rape, murder, mutilation, kidnapping that we saw in the story was committed by the Israelites! These were not stories of the pagan nations, these were Israel. They exchanged the natural for the unnatural (comp **Rom 1:26**) and therefore no longer thought that what they were doing was so cruel and disgusting.
- **Legalism.** But this was perhaps the scariest of all the symptoms. Many of the atrocities they committed were done in apparent obedience to the Scriptures! The unnecessary vows which implicated them; the murder of those at Jabesh Gilead; the kidnapping of the women at Shiloh. All of these atrocities were done whilst they put up a very righteous front of “*doing what was sworn in oath to the LORD.*” They thought they could trick God by turning a blind eye whilst those women were being kidnapped. They thought the keeping of an oath justified killing a whole city. These were more than bad hermeneutics, these were the hypocrisy we would later see in the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law who piled up standards and traditions which were, again, right in their own eyes in order to hide a more hideous sin. They had exchanged the truth of God for a lie (comp **Rom 1:25**)

And so, the result of this was the same conclusion we find in Romans 1. See how similar this is to the conditions in the times of the judges: “*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy*” (**Rom 1:29-31**).

The Need for a King

The central thesis of the Book of Judges was as repeatedly mentioned in chapters 17-21, that because there is no king in Israel, the people did as they deem right. Chapters 1-16 gave us the story of the judges, whom God had raised as leaders who delivered Israel out of oppressions. However, these judges only ruled over some tribes, and not the whole nation of Israel, and only seemed to restrain evil for a while before the people started to return to their idolatrous ways.

If we look at the book of judges in its isolation, we might be tempted to say that God had failed. The very people he brought out of slavery of Egypt had exhibited the very characteristics of a totally corrupt generation; much like Sodom and Gomorrah which God had destroyed, and like the Canaanites which God had commanded to destroy. However, we must look at the Book of Judges for what it is. You see, the Book is not a live recording of history – it is a flashback. The term “*In those days Israel had no king*” indicated that it was in fact written later in history when Israel already had a king. Samuel (if indeed it was him) looked backwards to the days when there was no king, and saw how it was part of God’s providence in emphasizing the need for a king. We are going to see that Israel identified the need, as in **1 Sam 8**, Israel would ask Samuel, the last judge of Israel, for a king. As to why God blamed them for this request, we are going to discuss this when we get to 1 Samuel.

As a closing lesson to the Book of Judges, I would like to bring your attention to the fact that despite the gross realism found within the book, this was part of the history through which God would realize His plan in the nation of Israel. There is, therefore, a progressive realization of the different aspects of establishing a

Kingdom, which would culminate in the times of David and Solomon, who would serve as a typology of the Kingdom of God which would be ultimately realized in Christ.

What was given	Vision & People 	Law 	Structure
Importance	The <i>Calling</i> was given, from which subsequent events are given purpose.	<i>Constitutional standards</i> established. Subsequent rulers would not orchestrate the laws but are themselves under the Law.	<i>Administrators of Law</i> given to ensure the implementation of the Law, and that <i>checks and balances</i> are established to avoid the abuse of power
Books of the Bible	Exodus	Exodus - Deuteronomy	1 Sam – 1 Kings 11

In the Book of Judges, the Mosaic Laws were already given and complete, and subsequent rulers are expected conformity. However, because of the lack of structure, its administration and execution was hindered. Thus, one of the functions of law, which was to restrain evil, could not be widely executed. And when the majority of the people disobey the law, we create an overall atmosphere of skepticism and lethargy. I live in Indonesia which is relatively more corrupt, despite its very noble values found in its confessions (the Pancasila) and constitution (called UUD45). I am a witness to how the otherwise excellent law becomes powerless in its implementation, because the system as a whole is corrupt. Taking a very simple example of traffic laws, when policemen are corrupt and catch traffic offenders only to take bribes and even the courts make paying a fine impossibly difficult (if we do not prepare an undertable oney of some sort), we get a very skeptical view of the law and people obeying only when there are law enforcers in sight. We feel that bribery is a necessary evil, and that those who insist on being clean are just naïve individuals who are not aware of the harshness of reality. That was what happened to the people in the Book of Judges. “In those days, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did as they saw right.”

What shall we say, then? If the Book of Judges showed us that having no executors of righteousness leads to evil, how much more would we need our Savior-King, Jesus Christ if we are to be able to do good. The failures in the Book of Judges proved that we need a king. The failures in the Old Testament, though, proved that we need Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria!

ⁱ Hence the terminology “the priests and the Levites” being distinguished. For some examples, see **1 Kings 8:4**; **1 Chr 28:13, 21**; **2 Chr 7:6**; the whole of **2 Chr 29**; even all the way to **John 1:19**.

ⁱⁱ With the grandson of Moses still alive, this might probably be early in the times of the Judges. The Book of Judges was not written in chronological fashion, but the purpose was to show how idolatry and immorality entered into Israel.