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Judges Overview



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview of the book of Judges, Steve Gregg highlights the unique nature of this Old Testament book, which features a series of heroes who rose to power in times of crisis. Without a centralized government or king, Israel was governed by charismatic leaders whom God raised up to deliver the people. Gregg also draws parallels between the period of the judges and the early church, arguing that institutionalized leadership can be detrimental to the spiritual health of a community. Ultimately, the book of Judges teaches that faithful leadership and obedience to God's law are crucial for the well-being of society.

Transcript

The book of Judges, a really interesting book to be sure. It's got a lot of heroes in it. A lot of the books of the Bible only have a few heroes.

I mean, the books of Samuel, you've got Samuel himself, you've got Saul in the early days, and then David, and that's about it. Jonathan too, I guess. In a long, you know, lots of chapters, probably over 50-something, 60 chapters.

But Joshua only has like one major hero, and that's Joshua himself. Judges has a lot of heroes. In fact, the word judges refers to heroes.

Now you might not think of a judge as someone who's heroic. You think of a judge as someone who sits, you know, at a bench with a robe and is severe and punishes people for doing things wrong. That's what judging is often thought to be.

But the Hebrew word, shofetim, which is the word for judges, refers in this case not to so much a judge at the bench, although the judges did that too. The judges usually rose up as a result of a crisis in the nation, and they were military heroes. They were champions, people like Samson, Gideon, and so forth.

It rose up at a time when the nation was under siege or was under oppression by a foreign invader, and they would marshal a militia of Israel together and heroically drive out the oppressors. That's usually how a judge's career began. Deborah might be an

exception because we read that she was not only a judge, she was also a prophetess, and she was judging Israel.

It would seem she was doing so before she was involved in delivering the people militarily. But for the most part, these judges come out of nowhere, and in many cases, it specifically says the spirit of God comes upon them and raises them up to rescue the people from a period of years of oppression. And then for the rest of that judge's life, that person does act as a magistrate.

We have to understand that in the period of the judges, one thing that we keep reading about four or five times in the book is there was no king in Israel in those days. Now, in the later history of Israel, Samuel and Kings and Chronicles, we find there are kings, first Saul, then David, then the line of David. There were also kings of the northern kingdom after the time of Rehoboam, and there were quite a few kings in Israel eventually.

But this was a period of time before there were kings. Now, this was not just a lull between the time of Joshua and the time of King Saul. This was a period of over three centuries.

And when it ended with the appointment of Saul as king, it didn't please God to end it. God was angry at Israel because they sought a king. And when the Bible says repeatedly in the book of Judges, there was no king in Israel, it's not saying something that was bad.

It is saying the way God set things up. Interestingly, Moses, of course, was the founder of the nation of Israel, and he led them for 40 years after the Exodus. And when he died, or just before he died, he appointed Joshua under God's direction to be his successor.

He laid hands on him, a part of the authority that Moses had was put on Joshua, the scripture says. And Joshua was the undisputed leader and successor after Moses. When Joshua led the people into the conquest of the land, in his later years, he didn't do very much that we know about.

When he was old, he gave a few speeches that are found at the end of the book of Joshua. But when he died, he left no successor. He didn't say, OK, now I'm gone, this is the guy you're going to listen to from now on.

This is the guy who's going to lead you. There was no successor. And there wasn't, it wasn't necessary for there to be one, because what was established in Israel was a unique nation that had a king that never needed a successor.

And that was God. God had said to them in Exodus 19, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you'll be a peculiar treasure unto me above all nations and a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. God was saying that Israel would be his kingdom and he'll be their king.

They'll be his nation. Now, they would be a holy nation. The word holy means set apart, certainly different than other nations.

And they are holy in this respect, particularly that they follow God as their king. They don't need a king, an earthly king. All other nations need a supreme authority.

Israel had one already, and he never needs a successor because he never dies. The ruling of the nation of Israel under God's kingship was committed to certain individuals. The high priest had a lot to do with making sure that people knew what the law said.

Every seven years, he had to get up and read the law to the whole gathered assembly. But see, it was God's law that ruled the nation. And Israel in those days, being not a regular kingdom, was more like a league of tribes, a tribal league.

The Greeks had some of these in their later history. This kind of a tribal league in Greek is called an amphictyony. Now, you don't need to know that.

You don't have to learn to spell it or anything like that. It's in the notes here. An amphictyony was actually a league of tribes that are loosely associated with each other, but they're independent from each other.

And God had, under Joshua, distributed the land of Canaan to the various tribes, and they would have these tribes have the same land in perpetuity. And they cooperated sometimes. They had a common religion.

They went to the tabernacle to worship, and they worshiped the same God. But mostly, they weren't much like a nation at all. They were just like a bunch of free people who did freely what they needed to do in obedience to God.

But obedience to God simply meant you don't break his laws. You don't murder. You don't commit adultery.

You don't worship idols. You don't steal. You don't dishonor your parents.

It's easy kind of to avoid those things, it seems to me. They did have to do some religious things, but those were on a calendar. Every few months, they had to go to the tabernacle and do the things that were required to be done on an annual basis.

But this took up a very small percentage of their year. And in general, they were just a free people who did what they wanted to within the boundaries of God's law, and that's how God wanted it. God liked freedom.

God liked to give people freedom as long as they're following his laws. And they didn't have a centralized government in Israel during those 325 years approximately. This is the whole period from the death of Joshua to Samuel's time.

So from death of Joshua to Samuel, and Samuel is the one who established the monarchy. He appointed Saul as the first king, and he appointed David as the second king. So this is between the conquest and the monarchy, the conquest under Joshua's leadership and the monarchy under whatever kings came along later on.

This 325 years, Israel was not much like other nations because they didn't have a king. They had no centralized government. They had no taxation with the exception of the tithe, which was largely to support the Levites in the tabernacle service.

They didn't have a standing army. They didn't have the trappings of government at all, really. And this is because God apparently doesn't like big government.

God actually likes, apparently, minimal government because that's what he gave them. He wants people to be free to follow him. Now, a lot of times we read, for example, in chapter 17, 6, and chapter 18, 1, chapter 19, 1, chapter 21, 25, there was no king in Israel.

And a couple of those times it says there was no king in Israel in those days and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Now this is something that is generally seen as a bad thing by most preachers. I've never heard a preacher suggest that that was a good thing.

People do what's right in their own eyes. In fact, many times the book of Judges, I think, is misrepresented as a picture of how bad things are when people do what's right in their own eyes. Well, first of all, God didn't want there to be a king in Israel.

He was the king. And if there's no king, then what do you do but what's right in your own eyes? The point is you're supposed to do what's right in your own eyes. And if your eyes have been informed by the law of God, then what you're doing is according to the law.

If you don't do what the law says, then it's up to the king to bring discipline, and God did. Because there were times when the nation did go after other gods, quite a few times they did. And God would bring discipline upon them as a good king would have to keep law and order and punish criminals.

So those who rejected him in Israel, if they worshipped idols and so forth, which they often did, then God saw that as treasonous, and he brought in foreign powers to conquer them and oppress them for periods of time, varying lengths of time, some of them a very long time, 20 years or more, some of them only three years or something like that, or eight years sometimes, or 18. But the point is Israel was oppressed for a certain period of time until they finally got the idea that they should turn back to God. And when they did turn back to God, they cried out to God, and he raised up a judge.

Now the judge was not a king, and he wasn't really setting up anything like a centralized government. He was just sort of a military hero. And he'd blow a trumpet and rally the

troops and take them out to make war against the enemies, and they'd drive out the oppressors, and then he'd be a minimalist ruler in the sense that he'd just be a judge.

He didn't make laws like a king does. He just enforced the laws of God. And so that would be what judges did until they died.

But when they died, again, there was no successor. That's the difference between having a king, as they later had in the monarchy, and having judges as they had during this 325 years. The difference is a king begins a dynasty.

When you have a dynasty, that means that when the king dies, his son takes over. When his son dies, the grandson takes over. When the next king dies, his son takes over, and so forth.

You've got this succession that's not based on anything except heredity. It's a hereditary dynasty. Now that can be good if every generation of rulers is a wonderful godly man, but there never is any case of that in the Bible or elsewhere in history.

David was a good man for the most part. He did have his sins, but he ruled well, and he was loyal to God. His son Solomon started out being that way but went bad.

His son Rehoboam was worse still. And many of the kings that followed in David's dynasty were the worst imaginable. Now here's the problem.

When you've got a king who rules by heredity, there's no reference to his character. There's no reference to his qualifications other than he had the right dad. His dad was the king.

Now he's the king. And so you've got what we call an institutional succession. Now in the period of the judges, God would raise up a judge.

He'd put his spirit on them. They would, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they would deliver the people. They'd serve the people for their generation.

They'd die, and no one was appointed to replace them until someone was needed again. Then the Holy Spirit would come on someone else. In other words, Israel was ruled by, or not ruled but led, by a series of charismatic leaders.

Now you might hear the word charismatic to think of the charismatic movement or something like that in the church. The word charismatic comes from the word gift of grace. In fact, it's a secular word too.

I mean Hitler is described as a charismatic leader. Certainly not a charismatic in the biblical sense of gifted by God. But if somebody can harangue crowds, if he's got a lot of personality, if people kind of get excited when he's near, Obama was considered to be a very charismatic leader.

I never cared for his speeches that much. Even his delivery didn't impress me. But lots of people thought he was charismatic.

They got excited when he spoke. A charismatic personality means someone whose gift is the literal meaning of it. But in the secular world it has a particular meaning.

But in the Bible, charismatic means the Holy Spirit has gifted somebody. And even in the New Testament where we have lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one of the gifts is a gift of leadership. In Romans chapter 12, Paul lists seven gifts of the Spirit.

One of them is a gift of leading. Well, this was a gift that God gave to some people in the book of Judges. They were charismatic in the sense that the Spirit came upon them and gifted them to lead and deliver the people.

But you see, this again is the difference between God being the king and having a human king. God as king has all that is necessary to keep order in his kingdom. If the people depart from him, he can send in oppressors to spank them.

If the people turn to him, he can by his Spirit raise up a charismatic leader to deliver them. God's managing the country. But when you have a king instead, well, he manages the country.

He might be a good king or a bad king, but he's the king. You see, Israel was guaranteed to have a good king, God, as long as they remained his kingdom. What happened later on was in 1 Samuel chapter 8. In the beginning of that chapter, the leaders of Israel came to Samuel, who was kind of the de facto spiritual leader of the country as a priest.

He was a priest, he was a prophet, and he was also a judge. But he was the last of the judges. Because the people of Israel came to him and said, We don't want this system anymore.

Give us a king to reign over us like all the nations. And Samuel was upset because he knew that wasn't what God wanted. God didn't want Israel to be like all the nations.

He wanted it to be a unique nation, a holy nation, a special nation. His holy people, his special people. But they wanted to be like all the other nations, and God was upset with them.

But he said to Samuel, Give them a king. Go ahead, give it to them. But warn them, it's going to be bad.

And so he did. He gave them Saul. And after that, for the most part, most of their history after that was bad.

Now what I'm saying is, when the book of Judges says, In those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. I'm suggesting that people

doing what was right in their own eyes is exactly what God intended for them to do. He didn't intend for there to be a king.

And without a king, what are you going to have? People are going to have to just follow their conscience. But since God gave them excellent laws, and for the most part, law is not very difficult to keep, unless you're a criminal type. I mean, it's easy not to bow down and worship statues, isn't it? I've never done it.

It's easy not to commit adultery. I mean, sometimes there's a little struggle and temptation there for people, but even non-Christians sometimes live without committing adultery or murder or stealing. I mean, it's not like you have to do those things.

Keeping the laws of God were not that difficult. And the law of God informed the conscience of Israel so that they could do what is right freely, according to their own conscience, rather than by an oppressor who is a ruler. Now, you see, doing what's right in your own eyes is better sometimes than doing what's right in the king's eyes.

You know, when King Ahab married Jezebel, they outlawed the worship of Yahweh. The prophets of Yahweh had to hide in a cave and be fed with bread and water by a secret supporter. People like Elijah had to run for his life because it was outlawed to worship Yahweh.

Well, that's the risk you take when you have human government. You see, better it is for people to be able to do what's right in their own eyes. That way you find out who really is good and who's not.

God can take care of those who are not. But if you've got people who've got a heart for God, there's no danger in having a society where people do what's right in their own eyes. There is a danger in having a king because then you have to do what's right in the king's eyes.

And many times the kings are corrupt, even if they don't start out that way. Solomon didn't start out corrupt, but he got corrupt. Power corrupts.

You don't want to invest absolute power in a man, if you can help it. And that's what God didn't want to do. So the period of the judges really reflects the period of time where God's people were governed directly by God through charismatic agents, spirit-filled prophets, spirit-filled judges who came along.

But there was no succession of prophets or judges because they were just ad hoc leaders. They were just raised up for the purpose of delivering the people and getting them back on track. And then when the judge died, they didn't need a judge anymore until they needed one.

Now, I want to say that my own study of church history has led me to believe that there's

a parallel here, that God intended for the church to be led not by a succession of bishops, but by ad hoc spiritual men and women. That is to say, God didn't give the church earthly kings. You know, I said, what about the apostles? They certainly had authority.

They had spiritual authority, but they didn't have political authority. Jesus had told them in the book of Matthew, Jesus had told the apostles that rulers of the Gentiles exercise authority over them, but it shall not be done like that among you. Whoever would be chief among you must be the servant or the slave of all.

So even Paul, who arguably had more authority over the Gentile churches than any living man in the first century, the apostle to the Gentiles, he said to the Corinthians, and this, by the way, was a troublesome church, but he said to them in 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 24, he said, not that we have dominion over your faith, we're fellow workers for your joy, for by faith you stand. He said, I'm an apostle to the Gentiles. You're my converts.

I'm even your father in the faith, he told them in 1 Corinthians 4. I'm your dad in the faith, as it were, but I don't have dominion over you. You stand by your own faith. I'm here to help.

I'm a helper toward your joyful Christian life. I'm not here to govern you or to rule you. And, of course, Peter, who was also an apostle, when he wrote to the elders of the church, and by the way, the leaders of the local churches in the first century were called elders, and Peter wrote a letter to the elders, part of a chapter to the elders of the church, 1 Peter 5, in verse 1, he says, The elders who are among you I exhort, I, whom a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed, shepherd, or pastor, the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly, not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

So the leaders in the church were not supposed to be lords. They were not supposed to be authorities. They were supposed to be examples.

They were supposed to shepherd the flock by the way a shepherd shepherds sheep. How does a shepherd shepherd sheep? Well, he feeds them, for one thing, and the elders were supposed to teach people and feed them that way, and a shepherd also goes ahead of the sheep so they know where to go. He sets an example and they follow it.

This is how God set up the church. It's how he set up Israel, too. The leaders in the early church were spirit-filled people.

They were charismatic leaders. You read about these gifts in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, and you see them in the book of Acts, gifted people that were raised up, but we have no evidence in Scripture that there was a succession, an institutionalization

of the church, such as came about in the later generations after the apostles. This is where, frankly, the Roman Catholic Church finds its claim to authority, as they say, well, Peter was the head of the church in his day.

Before he died, he appointed a successor in Rome to be the new bishop of Rome, and then that man appointed another successor, and every generation has had a successor of Peter as the bishop of Rome, and that person is what we call the pope, and therefore the pope and the bishops today are apostles today because of apostolic succession. They're talking about an institutional leadership succession. Well, this man died.

Let's put another man in his place. What if he's not a good man? Doesn't matter. We need someone there because it's an institution.

Same thing with the dynasty in Israel. Once they have a king, the guy dies, they need to put someone on the throne. Got a good man? Nope.

We'll just use what we got. A bad man? We'll have to do. That's what happened to the church in the Middle Ages.

There were bad men that got into the leadership of the church because there was a position there for bad men to aspire after and to obtain. In the early church, I don't believe that was so. I believe there were elders in the churches, but I think when they died, I don't think they were necessarily seen as necessary to replace unless you had someone else qualified.

Leadership in the early church was spiritual leadership, not political leadership, not institutional. And that's how God set up Israel as an example too. Israel was God's kingdom.

God reigned them directly. The church is supposed to be God's kingdom. Jesus is the Lord.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, 3, the head of every man is Christ. Not a pastor, not a bishop, not a pope. Christ.

Well, Christ never needs a successor. He lives forevermore. So everyone answers to Christ.

In the book of Judges, everyone in Israel answered to God directly. If they didn't do very well in obeying God, God could take care of that. And he did many times in the book of Judges.

But when people suggest that it's a bad thing, that the book of Judges was a bad thing, and that somehow the monarchy was a better thing, they're not paying very close attention. For one thing, although you do read of some bad behavior in the book of

Judges, especially in the last several chapters, there's some very bad behavior there. You also know that there were good people then too.

Ruth, the whole book of Ruth, takes place during the time of the Judges. It's a separate book, but it belongs in the period of the Judges. In fact, the book of Ruth begins, in other words, in the years when the Judges reign.

So it belongs to the period of the Judges. And what do you find there? You find pious Jewish people in Bethlehem. Boaz, he greets his workers with, Yahweh bless you.

And they say, Yahweh bless you. They're honoring God. He's trying to honor God's law by, he wants to marry Ruth, but the law of God actually says there's another man a little closer in succession who probably has the right too, so he's going to honor that.

And you see Jewish people in the book of Ruth, a whole community that are really praising God and trying to live for God. That's during the period of the Judges too. In other words, when you let people do what's right in their own eyes, some of them are going to do good things, and some are going to do bad things.

But better to have a society where people who will do good things are free to do it, than to have a society that has a king that won't let anyone do good things, that outlaws pure religion and worship of Yahweh, like some of the kings of Israel did. I mean, let's face it, a lot of the prophets later on were killed by the kings of Judah or Israel. Isaiah is thought to have been killed by Manasseh, the worst king Judah ever had, son of Hezekiah, supposedly.

I mean, by Jewish tradition, Isaiah was put into a log and sawn in two at the command of Manasseh. That's not freedom of religion, when the prophet gets killed for telling the truth. That's a bad king.

Better to have a bad king or no king. I'd rather have no king. I mean, sometimes you need a judge, sometimes you need police.

Once in a while you need a militia, but you don't need a bad king. Now, of course, we don't have those choices here because we're not God's, America is not God's chosen nation. There is no nation on earth today that is God's chosen nation.

So this is a system that's no longer available to us, except in the church. The church is God's nation. Peter said to the church, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

We are, 1 Peter 2, verse 9 says and 10. So the church now is the only nation ruled by God, but even sometimes it isn't because it's got its institutional leaders too, its dynasties, it's got its hereditary leadership. And if it's not hereditary father to son, a lot of times it's just hereditary according to the bylaws of the corporation.

Okay, here's how our pastor lives or dies. Our bylaws say we elect a guy to replace him in such and such a way. Well, then that's institutional.

That's like automatically filling an office because someone died. You see, in an institutional religious system or any institutional system like a corporation or for that matter a government like ours, president dies, you've got a vacancy. The office outlives the officer.

The office is there longer than the man and you have to put another man in it because it's a vacancy when the man exits. In Israel during the time of the judges, the office arose with the officer and died with him. The judge came out of nowhere.

He did what he did for his generation. He died and there was no office to fill. There's nothing there.

There's no vacancy until God raises up another. I believe that's how the church was to be set up too. I think it was in the first century and I think it took a very short time for carnality to institutionalize what was once spiritual.

It took 325 years for Israel. It took shorter time than that for the church. Although interestingly, it was about 325 years after Christ that Constantine became the emperor who was a Christian and then of course the church became very institutionalized, though it had already begun before that time.

If someone wants to say the period of the judges was worse than the period of the monarchy, they're not paying attention. The period of the judges was 325 years. In the chart I've given you, which shows the cycle of the judgeships, it says who the oppressor was, how long he oppressed, who God raised up to drive him out, and how many years of peace Israel had after the oppressor was driven out.

And there's several references to the Holy Spirit. Not every judge is there mention of the Holy Spirit, but enough of them to suggest this was the norm, that the Holy Spirit came upon these judges. On Othniel and on Barak and Deborah and on Gideon and on Jephthah and on Samson.

All of these judges. There were actually 12 male judges and one woman judge. In the book.

But at least five or six of them were told the Holy Spirit came upon them. And I think we're supposed to imply or infer that that was true of the other ones where it's not mentioned as well. This was a time where God ruled his people and rescued his people through spiritual means, not political.

And if you look at how many years of oppression there were, they're a lot shorter than the years of peace under the judges. Now, while the judges were alive, Israel obeyed

God. It was when the judge died that they left God again, and they're sure they were oppressed.

But look, the first oppression was eight years. The years of peace after Othniel were 40 years. Moab oppressed them for 18 years, but under Ehud, they had peace for 80 years.

Jabin, the Canaanite, oppressed them for 20 years, but Barak and Deborah and Jael delivered Israel, and they had peace for 40 years. You can see that in every case, the period of peace was very much longer than the period of oppression, except for the case of Samson and the Philistine oppression, which lasted into the time of David's kingship, even. Samson died while the Philistines were still in power.

Saul died while the Philistines were still oppressing Israel, and then David conquered the Philistines. So that was a long time of oppression. But, I mean, like the 18 years that the Philistines and Ammon oppressed Israel were followed by Jephthah's deliverance, that lasted for 50 years.

What I'm saying is they had a lot more years of behaving well, a lot more years of peace during the period of the judges, than they had of misbehaving or being oppressed. Now, take the period of the monarchy from the time of Saul on, and especially after the kingdom divided. The ten tribes to the north during the monarchy never had a good king.

Not one. They were all evil kings that enforced pagan worship. They didn't have a good year, ever.

The southern kingdom had a few good kings, about five or six, but they had about 14 who were just as evil as the ones up north. In other words, during the time of the monarchy, there was hardly a year, hardly a decade, where in the 12 tribes of Israel, there was good leadership and faithfulness to Yahweh. In the period of the judges, they were faithful to Yahweh a lot more than they were unfaithful.

So if someone says, well, there was no king in Israel that ever did what was right in their own eyes, and that's a bad thing, you know why most pastors say that? Because they want to be the king in their church, and they don't want everyone to do what's right in their own eyes. Now, I know that's cynical. That may be cynical, but I'm cynical.

I've been in institutional church both in leadership and in followership, membership, for more than 60 years. And I've been in leadership for more than one church. I mean, there are exceptions to what I'm saying.

Let's face it, the modern church is institutionalized. It has institutionalized leadership. They are not there to serve the people in many cases.

They are there to rule a corporation and to promote the vision of the leader. That's why they're always taking special offerings to promote a vision that the pastor has that

everyone's supposed to get on board with. In other words, they see the church there to serve the vision of the leader.

They don't see the leader there to serve the needs of the people. Now, that might be unkind to me, but I don't mean to be unkind. I'm sure that the leader who has a vision thinks, my vision, once implemented, will serve the needs of the people better.

At least I'm sure that's how he justifies it to himself. But the way the church really works is you get on board with the pastor's vision, or you go find another church. And if you don't, they'll make sure you do.

Because you're not allowed to not serve the pastor's vision in a modern church. You're a troublemaker. You've got to go somewhere else.

It never occurs to these pastors that they're supposed to get down and wash the feet of the people and say, what can I do to serve you? That's what Jesus did. That's what Jesus told the apostles to do. But in institutional religious systems, the leaders are political leaders.

And they rule over the people like the Gentiles rulers rule over the people, which is what Jesus said should never be done among you. That's inevitable, though, when you have institutional authority. It was not a good thing.

Israel was much better off, more spiritually obedient to God, during the period of the judges than during the time of the monarchy. They had a few good kings, and churches sometimes have a good pastor. I'm not saying there are no good pastors.

I'm kind of broad brushing a little bit, but I'm doing so with the admission that this is not true of every single pastor, but probably everyone you've ever known. Not really everyone. I've known a few that are not like that, but I've certainly known a lot that are.

And that's partly because the church is institutional now. And I don't think God ever wanted that. I think God wanted, as Paul said, that the head of every man is Christ.

That every man is not the pastor. Every Christian is supposed to be obeying Jesus, walking in the Spirit, just like the people of Israel were supposed to be doing under the judges, and did much of the time. And when they didn't, God took that in hand.

When people in the church begin to disobey it, there's such a thing as church discipline that Jesus ordered. So, I mean, this can be done. It's the congregation that does it, according to Paul.

It's the whole congregation that exercises the discipline, not a group of political leaders in the church. Yeah, I know you've never heard a lot of this stuff before because, like I said, every pastor I've ever heard talk about judges, they say, everyone did what was in

their own eyes, no king, that's a bad thing. And I think it's a bad thing from your point of view because you're the king of this church, aren't you? And people doing what's right in their own eyes is a threat to you, isn't it? Now, everyone can see for themselves if the pastor of the church they go to is an exception.

And if you say it is so, I'll believe you because I have known exceptions. But the church as a whole, being institutionalized, has not been made more pure than the early church, which was led by Spirit-filled people that God raised up. And the discipline of the church that Jesus ordained.

So I see in the book of Judges a type in Israel of the church as God set it up. In the book of Samuel, where they become a monarchy, that's a type of the church when carnal people institutionalized it. And they said, let's have a king.

Now, by the way, the idea of having a king was suggested from time to time in the book of Judges, at least once we read about in chapter 8. And this is after Gideon, the judge, had delivered the people of Israel from the Midianites. And they were so thankful to Gideon that they wanted to make him king and set up a dynasty. So there'd be hereditary leadership, starting with Gideon and his son and his son's son.

And you see this in chapter 8, in verse 22, it says, The men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson also, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian. Now, when they say, you rule over us, you and your son and your grandson, what they're saying is, when you're dead, your son can rule. And then when he's dead, your grandson can.

In other words, we want a king here. We want a monarchy. We'll have a Gideon monarchy, a Gideon dynasty.

And Gideon knew that was a bad idea. Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you.

In other words, he's saying that is not what God set up things to be here. We're not supposed to have a guy ruling over us. God is ruling over us.

And so this is what we, I think, learn about God's plan. It was a theocracy. A theocracy is a nation ruled by God.

Theo means God, theos in the Greek. Theocracy is ruled by God. And Israel is the only nation in history that was ruled by God as a real theocracy.

Now, there have been Christian nations in Europe in the Middle Ages, Catholic nations, and then later Protestant nations and so forth. And the kings themselves answered to the pope and so forth. And so one could say, well, those are kind of like a theocracy.

The problem is that in many cases the religious leaders that ruled over the kings were as bad as the kings themselves would be without them, and sometimes worse. When you put religious authority into a political box, then it's corrupted. You know, Christopher Hitchens in his book *God is Not Great*, he's dead now so he now knows how great God is, but in his book *God is Not Great* it had the subtitle *How Religion Poisons Everything*.

And I think, as I read it, I thought, he's right about one thing. He's not right that God's not great, but he's right that religion poisons everything. And God never intended for Christianity to become a religion.

Religions have priestcraft. Religions have special holy days and special holy places and special holy people holier than the masses. These are what religions are.

And, of course, because there is political authority to be had, the people who most want it are the ones who will campaign for it. And usually the people who most want to have authority over other people are the worst people. The best people very seldom want to rule over anybody.

Occasionally you find a good man who thinks he can do more good by being in a position of authority, but so often it's the people who have dark intentions that really want to be in charge. And you find it with all the kings of Israel were evil men. Certainly there were some good men they could have had, but they didn't have any of them.

Because when there's an office of power, the most corrupt people are the ones who covet that office. They can't always get in there. But too often they do.

So if the church would function as a family like Israel was, rather than like a political entity or a corporation, if its leaders were simply whoever God happened to lead up to teach and to lead and to be a good shepherd, and then when that person died, they don't need one until God raises up another one. That's how Israel ran and that's how God wanted it. That's how God planned it.

That's how God wanted it to be. It was a theocracy. And of course the persons that were providing leadership were the priests, the prophets, and the judges.

The judges were the special leaders that were raised up for special purposes of deliverance. The others, like the priests, that was an institution. But that was just to keep the sacrifices going in the temple.

It didn't run the country. Okay, so I want to talk about the structure of the book because I'm assuming you're going to be reading the book subsequent to this talk. The book has more than one introduction.

It has a preliminary introduction in chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 5. So the first chapter and the first five verses of chapter 2 are a preliminary introduction. And the

second introduction begins at chapter 2, verse 6 and goes through chapter 3, verse 6. And there's some overlap in these. They're introducing the book from different angles and with different emphases.

But the book is introduced that way in these two introductions before the actual story moves forward much, before you actually begin to see the judges. And the judges that you do find, you begin to see the first one in chapter 3, verse 7. And there's a series of judges all the way through chapter 16. Now, chapter 16 is not the end of the book, but it is the end of the discussion of judges.

Now, this section of judges has a certain repetitiousness about it. There's a cycle of things that are always said to happen. First of all, the people serve the Lord.

That's how it starts. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua. But when Joshua died, they went astray.

And when a judge came along and he judged people for 40 years or however long he did it, when he died, they served the Lord during the time of the judge, but when he died, they went astray. So we have, first the people start out in each cycle serving the Lord. But with the death of their leader, a new generation, who's ignorant of Yahweh, did evil in the sight of the Lord.

For example, chapter 2, verses 10 through 11, which is the first reference to that. In fact, chapter 2, I think, even before the story of the judges begins, kind of is intended to summarize the whole pattern. If you look at chapter 2, you see kind of a cycle there given to us.

Chapter 2, verse 7. So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen the great works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel. Now Joshua, the son of Nun, the son of the Lord, died when he was 110 years old, and they buried him within the border of his inheritance, etc. Verse 10.

When all the generation had been gathered to their fathers, that is when they'd all died, another generation arose after him who did not know Yahweh. Well, how could a generation rise up that didn't know Yahweh if the previous generation knew Yahweh? Obviously, although the people obeyed God in terms of keeping laws, they were not very zealous at passing on their knowledge of God to the next generation. So when that generation died, a new generation came up that doesn't know Yahweh, nor the work that he'd done for Israel.

Now this might only mean that they didn't know from experience, like the earlier generation did, the deliverances they'd seen crossing the Jordan River and things like that and the fall of Jericho and those kinds of things. They didn't know God in that capacity. They hadn't seen that.

But then the third thing that happens is that God would send oppressors because they go astray. And in chapter 2, verse 14, we read that, and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, so he delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them. Now this is not reporting any particular case.

This is summarizing the whole book of Judges. God, every time they went astray, he turned them over to plunderers, different ones in each case, but this is simply a summary of what God typically did, who despoiled them. And he sold them into the hands of their enemies all around so they could no longer stand before their enemies.

And then in verse 18 of chapter 2, the next thing in the cycle is when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and harassed them. So after they were oppressed, they groaned.

God heard them and raised up judges to deliver them. And then of course we read that the judges would not only deliver them but would lead them in the sense that magistrates would, they would arbitrate between people who had cases they'd bring to court against each other and the judges would use the law of God to answer how these disputes should be settled, just like a judge does in a court today. Now this cycle went on.

The people served the Lord during the time of the judge. The judge died. A generation came up that didn't serve the Lord.

God had to oppress them because of their idolatry. They eventually groaned under that oppression. He raised up a judge and the judge delivered them and led them in peace for another 40 or 80 years or something like that.

And then he died and then the cycle would begin again. You see this cycle in its completeness at least six times. There are 12 named judges who are men and one of them, Barak, was alongside a female judge named Deborah.

So there are 13 named judges. But not all of them are mentioned in terms of a cycle like this. Now I said the period of time was about 325 years.

This is not the time given to us in the book but from other calculations that can be done from chronological data and scripture we know that it would, at least it would appear, that Joshua died around 1425 BC and that Saul came to power about 1100 BC and the time between 1425 and 1100 is 325 years and that's the interval that the book of Judges fits into. Now if you actually total up the total number of years of oppression under these different oppressors and the total number of years of peace under various judges you get a real different number. It's like 454 years.

That's like half again longer than the 325 years. So how come this can be? How can you total up these years and get a much larger number than what was really the total number? You do it by recognizing that some of these oppressions happened in the northern part of the country. Other oppressions happened to other tribes in another part of the country and they overlapped in time.

So while one oppressor was oppressing maybe the northern part of Israel and some of the tribes up there, another oppressor overlapping in time with them was oppressing another part of Israel and so some of these judges apparently were contemporary with each other and that may be why we read of only six cycles but 12 judges because some of them were at the same time as each other in different parts of the country. Remember, of course, it would be really hard for a man in one spot without any electronic media, without fast transportation to really be accessible or useful to a whole country like that, without a military or governmental machinery. And so God would have sometimes judges in different parts of the country at the same time and that would explain why the total number of oppressions and judgeships is actually a larger number than the period of time itself because you have to overlap some of them.

So we have in chapter 3 verses 7-11 the judgeship of Othniel in chapter 3 verses 12-31, Ehud and Shamgar. Shamgar we don't know very much about. All we know is he delivered Israel by killing 600 men with an ox goat.

Sounds a little bit like Samson killing a thousand with the jawbone of an ass. Well this guy was sort of a poor man's Samson apparently but we don't know of anything else he did except killing 600 Philistines is a good thing when they're the oppressor and it may have helped contribute to the deliverance of the people. But he may have been contemporary with one of the other judges and killed these 600 Philistines in some part of the country where the others were not operating.

We don't know much. There's only the one statement about what he did. Deborah and Barak are the subject of chapters 4 and 5. Deborah is interesting because of course she's the only woman who was a judge and it said she was a prophetess and she also judged Israel.

Now when Israel was oppressed in the days of Barak and Deborah it would appear that Barak, we don't know who Barak was up until that point Jabin the Canaanite oppressed Israel for 20 years and Deborah came to Barak a guy and she as a prophetess said has not the Lord commanded you to lead Israel to deliver them and Barak said well I'll go if you go. Like put your money where your mouth is. Anyone can say God's telling me to go out and risk my life but if you'll go too I'll go too.

If you really mean it then you go too. And she said I'll go but then the victory will not go to you. The victory will go to a woman.

You might think she means that victory will go to Deborah but as it turns out there's another woman who ended up winning that victory because God did fight on behalf of Israel and Sisera the enemy general his chariot got disabled and he ran off on foot and he entered the nearby tent and a woman named Jael feigned friendship with him and she gave him some he wanted some water but she gave him some milk calculated to make him go to sleep and when he fell asleep she drove a tent peg through his head and that was the end of him so that in the song of deliverance which is found in chapter 5 of Judges Jael is praised as the one who delivered although Deborah is also praised in that so I mean the victory and the credit for it went to a woman in that case but it would appear that Deborah's role in that was due to the fact that Barret was not willing to do it alone her prophecy initially was not hey God's telling you and me to go fight these people but God's telling you to go and he says well I'll go if you go so she got involved because of his wimpiness because of his being unwilling to take those risks alone and I frankly even though the Bible says that you know the leadership of the church is supposed to be men Paul said he didn't put women in authority over the churches and the elders should be husbands and wives and so forth sometimes men wimp out and then a woman may be raised up to shame them you know a lot of missionaries are women and there have been some great women leaders but in so far as women have ever led the church I think it's only because of the failure of men to do so and God can shame men by causing womenfolk now you might say well why should it be shameful for men for women that sounds very chauvinistic yeah I know it does in our current culture but in almost all cultures throughout history before our most enlightened of all cultures as we think all cultures previously thought women should be protected women should be you know taking care of the children that the men should be out fighting the wars not the women and that the men should be the heroes who defend the women and the children so for a woman to take the lead is was a rebuke to a man in fact in Isaiah Israel is being scolded by saying children are your oppressors and women rule over you that's supposed to be a real rebuke to them how shameful that women are ruling over you now we live in a time where women rule you know lots of companies and even countries so it doesn't sound to us shameful we've been reconditioned but I believe that the reason that Deborah went and did what she did is because the man was cowardly or at least too cowardly to do it by himself and God can use women they can be used as mightily as men at times but I think God usually has something else for women to do and men and women are not the same thing I realize that's another very controversial thing to say in this most enlightened of all cultures but in all the cultures that I think were more enlightened than ours they knew men and women are not the same thing and God made them for different things there are many ways they can overlap in their duties and they can even step in for each other and do what each other do because men and women often have the ability to do so but as far as what God made them to do he has I believe in the Bible stated different roles for the men and the women and it's ideal to follow those when it's sub-ideal when the men don't do their job then I don't think it's such a bad thing that women step up and do it someone's got to do it and I think God is

sometimes the one who causes them to step up and do it you have the story of Gideon in chapters 6 through 8 and his son Abimelech in chapter 9 Abimelech was made himself king Gideon wouldn't let them make him king though they wanted to but when Gideon died Abimelech killed all his brothers and had himself proclaimed king and he was no presser he was not king over the whole country but his king over Shechem and some cities around and he tried to press his power broader he got himself killed by a woman and again that was considerably shameful he was hit in the head with a stone that a woman threw at him and he said to one of his soldiers kill me don't let it be said I was killed by a woman that's macho so we got Abimelech in chapter 9 a couple of judges we know very little about Tola and Jair are mentioned in chapter 10 verses 1 through 5 and then chapter 10 verse 6 through chapter 12 verse 7 is the story of Jephthah he was the son of a prostitute that his father had gone to and the legitimate born brothers of his father drove him away from the family because he was they didn't like him because he was illegitimate as the term is usually used and so he lived out in the wilderness became an outlaw and a kind of tough guy leader of a bunch of an outlaw band and then when Israel came under oppression the people of Israel didn't have anyone as tough as Jephthah to call on so they went out to him and said would you please come we'll pay you come and lead Israel to victory against our enemies he agreed to do it and he's the one who famously said to God if you'll deliver the Ammonites into my hand then when I return home the first thing that meets me out of my house shall be the Lord's and I'll offer it as a burnt offering and that turned out to be his daughter that story is very troublesome but I will say this there are two views that are held by Christians and Jews about this one is that he really did sacrifice his daughter now if he did so that doesn't mean it was a good thing to do it was a bad thing to do you're not supposed to offer human sacrifice God never approved of human sacrifice if he did that then he was doing something that wasn't very right but see a lot of people did things that weren't very right in the period of the judges Samson did quite a few things that weren't very right and the last chapters of Judges tell of some guys who did something that weren't right so Jephthah could have in fact offered his daughter as a sacrifice but that wouldn't have been right it's just remember the story is being told without giving commentary on whether it was good or bad this is just what happened and some really bad things did happen during the period of the judges just like some good things did but the other theory is that he didn't sacrifice his daughter and he didn't even promise to that the oath he took where he said whatever meets me coming out of my house when I return victorious will be the Lord's and I will offer it as a burnt offering would be actually intended to mean this that whatever meets me will be the Lord's and if it's something that's a clean animal I'll offer it as a burnt offering too you see your child could become the Lord's Samuel did Samuel's mother committed him to the Lord and he was raised in the tabernacle and served God there I mean you could dedicate a child to the Lord and they'd go and serve God in the tabernacle many people think that Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed but that she was dedicated to the Lord she became the Lord's as he promised and the part about and I will offer it as a burnt offering would only apply in

such an instance as it was perhaps a lamb or a cow or something else that met him and could be sacrificed otherwise he'd know better that he's not promising to sacrifice a person or a dog or a donkey or something like that none of those could be sacrificed to the Lord and I personally think that's what happened partly because when the daughter heard it she said well let me go out with my friends for a while to bemoan my virginity not bemoan my death but that she would have no marriage she'd have no children and for Jephthah this was a terrible thing too because she was his only child and therefore if she went and served in the tabernacle and was dedicated to the service of the tabernacle and was not available for marriage then his family line would end there too with her death there would be no children no grandchildren and so both she and he saw that as a terrible thing whether or not she died it was a terrible crisis for Jephthah and her and so she wanted to bemoan her virginity and at the end of the story it says that the daughters of Israel to this day still mourn the virginity of this girl so it doesn't sound like they're mourning her death they're mourning the fact that she had to remain perpetually a virgin and therefore have no children which is much more of a crisis in biblical culture than it would be in ours some people would even have trouble with it in our culture who want children but in biblical culture it'd be horrible alright so we've got Jephthah in chapter 12 verses 8-15 there's real brief references to Ibzan and Abdon some more judges and then there's a long treatment of Samson chapters 13-16 the last of the judges covered is Samson and he was a Nazirite the angel of the Lord appeared to his parents before he was born and said you're going to have a son and he's going to be a Nazirite now Nazirite according to Numbers 6 is where you find the Nazirite vow would drink no alcohol I shouldn't say alcohol would drink no product of the grapevine couldn't even eat raisins or grapes or anything like that had nothing to do with the alcohol so much it had to do with the grapevine they couldn't eat anything as a product of the grapevine they could not come near a dead body because that would make them unclean and they were separated unto the Lord and they could not cut any of their hair during the time of their vow now a Nazirite vow could be taken for a short time and Paul took it once we read of it in Acts 18-19 that Paul had a Nazirite vow but you would end the vow by shaving your head if it was a short term vow a few people in the Bible were said to be Nazirites for life from birth until they died Samson was one of them Samuel was another one Elijah was probably one John the Baptist was one these are men who were Nazirites before God called them Nazirites before they were born and they never cut their hair they never drank wine or ate products from the grapevine and they never were allowed to come near a dead body this is unusual for a person to be Nazirite for his whole life but Samson was called to be by God and of course we know that he was he made a lot of mistakes if you read his story he was kind of it's hard to see him as really much used to the nation at all except that he killed a bunch of Philistines sort of like Shamgar who killed 600 Philistines Samson killed even more than that he killed a thousand on one occasion and three thousand on the occasion of his own death so he did help Israel against the Philistines but he didn't fully deliver them the Philistines were still entrenched as oppressors of Israel when Saul was raised up as king and when

Saul died he died at the hands of the Philistines they killed him and so when David became king it was his task that he inherited to wipe out the Philistines or drive them out and he did he subdued them but Samson did his little bit probably he would have done more better if he had been godlier but he was kind of a woman's man and he did seem to drink he did come near dead bodies he even killed people he even touched the dead body of a lion and ate honey out of its body a lion is an unclean animal to the Jews you can't eat honey from the carcass of a lion bees had made a hive in the lion's carcass and he went to prostitutes and he married a Philistine but then he went to another woman other than Delilah who was a prostitute apparently so this man was not a very godly man but as long as he had his hair he had his vow he had his separation to God he didn't live up to it very well but when he finally submitted to having his hair cut that was the last straw that was his renunciation of his relationship his special relationship with God and he lost his strength by the way we always picture Samson as a very big muscular guy and he might have been I understand there's a new movie just out about Samson I haven't seen it yet but it's just out I think in theaters I haven't seen the actor who plays him but I'd be very surprised if he wasn't a fairly hefty muscular guy because people think of Samson like Hercules or something like that you know and you need someone who's won the Mr. Universe contest or something to play him but really the Bible doesn't indicate that Samson was a big guy or muscular he did supernatural feats when the spirit of God came upon him when the spirit of God came upon him he killed a lion with his bare hands when the spirit of God came upon him he tore a gate off its hinges and carried it off into the hillside Samson's works his strength was supernatural which God did through the Holy Spirit he might not have been muscular at all he could have been but it wouldn't require it if we're talking about supernatural strength the demons gave a man supernatural strength so he could break chains if the demons can do that certainly the Holy Spirit can do that even more and the fact that the Philistines couldn't figure out how he was doing these things that's why they were paying to figure out why he's able to do this well if he was a super hunk of a muscular guy it would seem like they just figured well he's a strong man that's why he can do these things but it may have been that to look at him he didn't look impressive didn't look like the kind of guy who could kill lions with his bare hands but God did it through him in any case the cutting of his hair was the renunciation of his vow and the spirit of God left him the sad thing is that when he woke up from his sleep after his hair was cut and he decided that he would kill the Philistines that were there to arrest him it says he did not know that the Lord had departed from him what a tragic thing it is when a man has been used by God for years God's departed from him and he doesn't know it and he thinks he can still go on and there are perhaps instances of that in ministry and the history of the church as well well let me just say after Samson's story there's these two appendices in Judges we're going to wind this down Micah and the Danites is mentioned in chapters 17 and 18 and then the Levite and his concubine in chapters 19 through 21 now both of these stories are very discouraging the second one is quite gross they are mentioned out of chronological order it's clear that the story of Micah and the Danites happened early in the period of

the Judges it's being told as sort of an appendix at the end because in telling the story of the Judges the writer wanted to follow these cycles through and these stories didn't fit really as an interruption of those cycles for the literary purpose of the book but these stories are nonetheless little snippets of some of the life in the period of the Judges that happened during that time we know that the story that's found in chapters 17 and 18 happened early in the period of the Judges although it's recorded at the end as an appendix because it talks about when the Danites first became idolatrous which was early on it tells of when they first conquered their territory which was around the time of Joshua and then the other story of a Levite and his concubine almost sounds like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah this guy's concubine runs away from him he persuades her to come home they're traveling through a town at night they think they'll just sleep out in the street but someone says no you don't dare do that someone takes them inside and the men of the city come out and want to rape the guy but his host says no give him your concubine so they put the concubine out and she gets gang raped to death in the morning she's dead and then the owner comes out he doesn't seem to be very moved, very unemotional it seems like and he cuts her body into 12 pieces and sends the pieces to the 12 tribes of Israel and says anyone who does not come to avenge me of this abuse it'll be done to you this way that's what Saul did later on too when Saul was trying to call Israel to battle he cut up an ox and sent the pieces of it to the different tribes of Israel with the announcement this is what will be done to your oxen if you don't come so it's kind of a middle eastern old fashioned way of saying you better show up or it's going to be ugly and it was ugly they came and they made war against this city it happened to be the Benjamite city of the tribe of Benjamin and first the tribes of Israel asked the tribe of Benjamin to turn over the people who had done this crime to be punished and the Benjamites all stood with the men of this city and said no we're going to fight you over this so there's a war between the Benjamites and the rest of Israel at first the Benjamites seemed to win but eventually they didn't and the Benjamites were reduced to a really tiny number like 400 men left and the book of Judges closes with not being enough women for the Benjamites especially since during the battle someone had made an oath cursed as anyone who gives his daughter to the Benjamites so now the Benjamites need female counterparts and they end up kidnapping them from other tribes and so that's how the book ends and we're told at the end in those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes so it's because of the connection of that statement with some of these stories at the end especially that people say oh that's a summary of a bad situation well it can be when people do what's right in their own eyes that can be bad if their eyes are ill informed of what's right but the people of God who have the word of God as Israel did should have been informed about what's right and if they had been faithful to what they knew was right they would have done differently now it's interesting they did what was right in their own eyes and yet it was something wrong it'd be worse if it says everyone did what was wrong in their own eyes because that would be a bad society if everyone knew what was right and did what they knew to be wrong but in these cases it sounds like they thought this was right it's like they were not

in touch with the word of God they had lost awareness of the law of God and the standards that God had given them through Moses and therefore what they did even the wrong things they did were things that were right in their eyes they thought it was okay and this should be a warning also to us for the church too because frankly the church we do in a sense what's right in our own eyes and we should you shouldn't do what's wrong in your own eyes you should do what's right in your own eyes you should do what you feel the Holy Spirit is leading you to do but if you're not informed by the word of God then the things that you think are right may be wrong it says in Proverbs there's a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof are the ways of death how do you guard yourself against that mistake wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed according to your word it says in Psalm 119 thy word is a lamp unto my feet a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path the word of God is that which tells us what's right and as we meditate on the word of God day and night then what is right in our eyes will be agreeable with what's right in the word of God we are transformed by the renewing of our minds as we meditate and saturate our minds with the scripture with the word of God if Israel had done that as they should they would have had more good years as it turned out they had pretty good years when the judges were around to teach them what the law said when the judges were gone they forgot what the law said and they did what was right in their own eyes unfortunately what was right in their own eyes was what was wrong in God's eyes and when that was true it certainly was a bad situation fortunately for them it was good most of the time punctuated by some bad seasons sort of like church history sort of like any nations history sort of like the time we're living in now in our own history there's ups and downs but one thing that you see in the book of judges is God's faithful to discipline his people and to rule his people and to guide his people even through harsh circumstances when they deserve it and to deliver them by the power of the holy spirit in leaders that he raises up when that's the right thing to do the church of course doesn't get oppressed I mean it does by political oppression of course the church is persecuted in many countries and that's a political oppression but the church is more in danger of spiritual oppression and spiritual deception and coming into bondage to error Jesus said if you continue in my words you'll be my disciples indeed and you'll know the truth and the truth will make you free free from what free from not knowing the truth free from the errors that you make when you don't continue in his words and you're not his disciples and so God's word frees us from the bondage and oppression of falsehood and the devil is the father of lies if we're subject to falsehood then we're under the devil's oppression but God hopefully raises up by putting his spirit upon people teachers and prophets and so forth and pastors and good men who will again teach the word of God who will again deliver the people from the oppression of deception that the devil brings the church's warfare is spiritual Israel's was political because they were a political nation the church is a spiritual nation and our warfare is spiritual the oppression we are in danger of is spiritual oppression and the freedom from which God's spirit filled leaders are to deliver us is spiritual freedom of the truth if you know the truth the truth will make you free so this is how I would summarize the book of

Judges there's some information in your notes that I didn't cover as is always the case and you can keep those notes and if you wish use them as you're studying it later on