

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 20

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This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology course lecture number 20 concluding the book of Joshua and pacifism vs. the just war theories, and then on to Judges, with an introduction to the book of Judges and the judges Ehud, Deborah, Barak and Gideon.

Week preview

Class let's get started. Let's open with a word of prayer. We've got some things before we get started let me just announce what's going on with this week. We've got a quiz this Thursday over largely I Kings. We did chapters 1 through 11 for the exam so basically chapters 12 to 22 or whatever is left there. Finish that up and then Ecclesiastes chapters 1 to 3 and 12 and then there's an article by Roy Zuck. So we'll do that on Thursday. Then Tuesday I got to actually work with the assignments. Some things because of Thanksgiving, has been jacked around. So we'll have a quiz on Thursday like we normally do. Then Tuesday we'll have an adjusted one for Tuesday. If you're going home early because you're flying out of here or because you've got something going on, Tuesday, you've got to take the quiz when you get back. People keep saying, well, can I take it on Monday? The answer is no. It's not made up yet. I make it up just before I get to class. So take it when you get back from Thanksgiving vacation.

Question: So is the quiz on Thursday is going to be on Kings 1 through 22 or 11?

Chapters 12-22. Look on the website. The website, has got it right. So follow the website. All right, let's open with a word of prayer and then we'll finish Joshua today and get through Judges we're going to try to move rather quickly today, so let's begin.

Father thank you for this day. We thank you for your kindnesses to us and allowing us to study your Word in this kind of context where people are trying to integrate your Word and your presence into every discipline. We thank you for this class where we can focus on your Word that you've spoken to Joshua. You've led the Judges. Father you've led us also in the way that we have gone in life. And we pray that you might be with us now in this hour as we explore your Word. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

Pacifism

We need to finish up Joshua and we were right in the middle of war when the class broke for the exam the last class period. So I want to kind of finish up our discussion of war. We had talked about non-resistance people who won't go into battle per se but they'll go in as medics and chaplains trying to do something positive in a war context. Pacifism, a lot of these pacifism people don't want anything to do with war, not even in a positive way of helping as a medic. Largely they'll cite passages like this where the kingdom is described in terms of beating the swords into plowshares. Taking the weapons of war and using them for farming purposes and shifting the purposes of those things. This is the kingdom that God brings, not war but peace and harmony, and with the land, the plowing and turning of the soil and that kind of thing.

The kingdom of God is described in Isaiah as the lion lying down with the lamb, or the wolf lying down with lamb. And *shalom*, the pacifists will really focus on this notion of *shalom*. Peace and harmony, and the kingdom coming, when someday the lion will lay down with the lamb. This is what the kingdom is about, and we should be about kingdom business. But now, we should be thinking about peace and harmony, rather than the dissonance and conflict that we have in the world. So they'll use these passages, prophetic passages, to say that we're part of the kingdom of God and therefore there should be no war in that regard.

These folks also, many of them will not defend themselves. Jesus gave us a model of dying for one's faith. Therefore if a soldier comes up, you die for your faith and you don't fight back and you're totally non-resistance and you go to jail, you suffer the consequences of your pacifism. Other people may do violence on you but you do not retaliate in any way. So it's a pacifistic stance largely trying to follow Christ. Christ allowed the Romans to crucify him, and he died on a Roman cross. He could've blown them away, he could have defended himself, just blinked his eyes and blown them to smithereens but he chose not to do that, not to defend himself in a violent way. So I, to be honest with you, love the fact that in our country we have pacifists. So you say well, "I'm not a pacifist myself." But I love the fact that there's a presence of pacifists here and I think it's kind of like salt or like leaven. A little bit of salt; do you need a little bit of salt on your meat to make it taste good? So I think these people are like leaven and salt in a society. They remind us that peace is the way of Christ and things and that we need to think seriously about that.

The problem I have is if everybody is a pacifist, does somebody need to protect these people? No, I'm serious. I mean if everyone were a pacifist, what would have happened with

Hitler? We'd all be speaking German probably. So, I just, think you got to be real careful with trying to map this out on everyone because there's evil in the world and sometimes evil can be resisted by pacifist means and other times somebody's got to do something.

Question: If everyone's pacifist, wouldn't that include Hitler?

If everyone's pacifist, that would include Hitler. There'd be no more problems. The problem is there is evil in the world. You've got people like Hitler. You guys want to go Stalin? Or Mao? I mean Mao killed 60 million people in China. Is there evil in the world? And when you've got evil in the world, sometimes you've got people in power and they do bad things and need to be stopped. By the way do we have policemen? Do policemen use force to stop bad stuff happening? What would happen if you didn't have any policemen? I don't want to even think about it.

Just War Theory

I like this just war theory. These are people who say it's Okay to go to war for a just cause. So then you got to ask what is a good cause? I think most people would acknowledge, when Hitler was dominating and going through Germany and killing 6 million Jews, that this guy needed to be stopped by force or by whatever means necessary. Hitler had to be stopped. So most people would acknowledge that that was a good cause. Then you go to war. What constitutes a good cause then? A country stops selling us a oil. Do we have the right to bomb them because they won't sell us oil anymore? No. We say that would be an unjust cause that would simply be a materialist cause. That's totally unacceptable. In America, of course, that would be a problem. Does Joshua point out that some wars are right? Did Joshua go to war? When Joshua crossed the Jordan River to take the Promised Land, did he take the Promised Land by war?

I always get a kick out of people saying war is not the answer. I look and I say, how do you know that? How do you know that? Is war the answer sometimes? Does war provide us the answer sometimes? And the answer is: yes. Joshua goes to Jericho and took the land and at God's command. War was part of the solution. So you can't make these great generalizations: war is not the answer. You just can't make that statement because you don't know that. So you need to think about some of these things, Joshua went to war.

I like Ecclesiastes. You guys are going to be reading Ecclesiastes 3. It says there's a time for what? There's a time and a season for everything. Is there a time for peace? There's a time

for peace and there's a time for what war. There's a time for love and there's a time for, guess what? Hate. And it mentions that and you say well it's never all right to hate. No, actually the New Testament tells us to hate evil.

Now again in our culture we just love everybody. But the Bible says hate that which is evil. And so I like this passage in Ecclesiastes because there's wisdom there. "There's a time for peace and a time for war." If you get those two times mixed up you could be in trouble. So that's an interesting passage. God himself portrays himself as a warrior. When he led them across the Red Sea, God portrayed himself as a warrior leading Israel and that's explicitly stated in the Exodus chapter 15. So God uses warrior imagery and portrays himself that way.

In Psalm 18, also big Psalm, God is warrior. So there's a whole theme that God is a warrior. Now by the way do we do all our themes God is King do we emphasize God is King? God is King is emphasized. The sovereignty of God is emphasized. What I kind of laugh at is it's kind of ironic that nobody mentions the fact that God is often portrayed as a warrior leading his people to victory--military victory. Yet that theme of God is a warrior has been played down because again we love everybody, peace, harmony and all this kind of rhetoric. What he's saying is no there's bad stuff going on in the world and God gets involved sometimes.

What is Jesus' perspective. Now you say, "Well, Jesus turned the other cheek. Jesus said peace and harmony." But what is the portrayal of Jesus in the book of Revelation? In the book of Revelation chapter 19 verse 15 and following, Jesus comes back the second time and when Jesus comes back the second time in the book of Revelation is this the meek and mild Jesus? No, a sword comes out of his mouth. Now I've heard one person actually in our chapel here say and this was totally absurd to me, he said, "The sword is truth and justice. The sword coming out of Jesus mouth is the truth and justice."

Can you make the Bible say whatever you want it to say? Is that legitimate? Do you just sit idly by when someone twists a Bible like that?

First of all is the imagery of a sword. Are we talking truth and justice? The sword it says in the context there the sword came out of his mouth to slay the people. This is the battle of Armageddon and the sword was slaying people. So to say its truth and justice is this guy making this stuff up. What I'm saying is that it doesn't fit the context of the sword. Jesus was slaying the people in the battle of Armageddon. So when he comes the second time it's not going to be meek and mild Jesus getting slain on a cross. When he comes back the second time he comes as King

to rule and establishes his rule by destroying his enemies. Now whether you like that or not that's what's being described. What I'm saying is be careful. Did you see how when Jesus first came did they want a king to rule? When Jesus came initially they wanted a king to rule to throw off the Roman yoke? They wanted that and Jesus came peacefully. My guess is when Jesus comes the second time we're going to want this lovey-dovey teddy-bear Lamb-of-God pacifistic, Jesus but he is coming to reign and he's coming in power. So be careful you don't get your two comings of Christ mixed up.

Rules of War

How does one fight a good war? Can someone be involved in a good cause but execute it in a bad way? Can someone have a good war, the cause is right, but they do it in a wrong way? See you've got to ask how is a good war fought? By the way is this why you have things like the Geneva Convention? When you capture somebody you can't just torture them and kill them. You've got to respect their rights they do have certain rights. By the way other countries abide by that but what's the problem now are we fighting other countries or a lot of times are we fighting these Al Qaeda/Islamic State type groups that are cells. Do they go by the Geneva Convention? No. Do they lop off people's heads? Are the Taliban in Afghanistan? America's over there building schools so their children can go to school? What does the Taliban do? The Taliban says if you're a woman or a young girl and go to that school we will chop off your nose. Have you seen the pictures of the Afghani girls with their nose chopped off? Do they actually do that? You say there should be laws against that. Tell them that. The Bible gives various reasons for going to war. So I've listed some of the reasons why Israel went to war. Here are some of the reasons that are listed from Scripture.

Reasons for War

One is they went to take the land. God told them to go cross the Jordan River to take the Promised Land. They were to do that in a military way to burn down the cities. So land acquisition that was a reason for going to war for Israel. Divine command, God commanded them to go to war and God told them to go in and wipe out the Canaanites that the iniquity of the Amorites had raised for 400 years. God said now its time for a judgment on this culture. If somebody comes today and says, "God told me to go to war." Question: Would you say the person's wacked out? God doesn't speak like that he speaks through his word now. You've got to be real careful about "God told me to go to battle" against somebody.

Moral violation: What was a moral violation when they went to war? Does anybody remember that woman that was chopped up and her 12 parts sent out? That was a moral violation. The people were just morally stunned this woman was chopped up and so they went to war against the tribe of Benjamin. They almost wiped out the tribe of Benjamin because of this moral violation. The raping of this woman and killing her and then this guy cutting her up into pieces and things like that and sending her out. That was a moral violation.

Insult, David goes to war for an insult over here with the Ammonites and this is a kind of interesting thing. The king of the Ammonites dies, so David says to the son, "your father was a good man, and I want to send you some tribute here and I want to be nice to you as I was with your father. I want to make an alliance with you as I did with your father." Well, the young kid over here says, "My father's dead. You aren't sending those guys over here because you want to support me, you're sending them because they're spies. They're spying out the land." So what he does is he says okay. So David sends all his big elders over there. His elders come in with the royal robes and the young king over here says, "Ok, take those guys shave off half of their beards." You see what he's trying to do is humiliate them with their beard, "shave off half of their beard and cut off their robes at their buttocks." So basically these guys are streaking back home with robes that only cover just part of their body so that's thoroughly an insult. David then gets insulted and then he sends out Joab to go to war against the Ammonites and that's when the story of David and Bathsheba happens as a result of that insult, that moral insult.

Defense is a big one. Israel's attacked a lot by oppressive regimes coming in from the Moabites, Ammonites, and the Philistines are always beating up on the Jews. So in order to defend themselves they go to war in defense. The Israelites were commanded to pay taxes to the Moabites and the Moabite king comes in and says you've got to pay tribute to me. Israel says, "we don't want to pay tribute."

By the way is this kind of like America, no taxation without representation. We need to revolt and the American revolution from the oppression of the king whether it was legitimate or illegitimate. I mean big question but this notion of being oppressed by another people through taxation or various things.

Then lastly, Israel goes to war to help others and sometimes Israel goes to battle to help another group fend off oppressors. So Israel sometimes helps others. So these were all reasons for going to war.

Now each one of these has its pros and cons. In each one of them you need a lot of discernment to know when to apply it but those are some of the reasons why war was done.

Preventative War

Now here's one that's new for America and this one is called Preventative War. I'm not sure how I feel about this; part of it really bothers me. In other words you strike first to avoid them striking you. What I am talking about now, let's be more explicit than I probably should be. Iran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon. Israel says, "If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, are they going to use it on us." Had they already said they're going to try to wipe Israel off the map, I mean those are explicit statements from their leaders. "We're going to try to destroy Israel." Therefore, is Israel going to go over and destroy them before they get to do the nuclear weapon or does Israel sit there and say, "Well, we'll just wait until they do the nuclear thing and then we'll respond"? What's the problem with that? They do the nuclear thing and is it possible there won't be anybody to respond to because everybody will be dead, or there will be a lot of people dead and so they won't be able to respond. So do you do the first strike type thing? This is a very tricky question. It's preventative war and I'm not sure what I think about that and things.

The future problems that you guys are going to face are: in the old days you had countries going to war with other countries right? What's the problem now? Is it country going against country? No. It is small groups going against small groups. You've got Al-Qaeda groups, you've got Hamas groups, and you've got Hezbollah groups. These groups come even in America with cells in America that are ready to be called to do all sort of dastardly deeds. So future problems, what do you do if you've got a nuclear weapon in cities? All of a sudden they claim that they've got a nuclear bomb in New York City, what are you going to do? What if they've got nuclear bomb in New York City, Washington, and Philadelphia? What are going to do? Boston? They pick those four cities. What are you going to do? They blow up one and then they say, "We got three other ones. On your knees America!" What are you going to do?

So these are major questions, some major problems now because the weapons have gotten so much more powerful and there is no national identity with some of these groups now. You got just wacked out people, individuals who do not wear military garb. They're not representing a country, and they're just promoting their own wacky ideology. They feel like they can go around killing people. So there are ideological groups of individuals of those countries and how do you fight a war against them? How do you fight a war against individuals who are

not associated with a country? You guys are going to have to figure this out. It is your generation that is going to have to figure this out. This is like it has never been before. These are new things and the stakes are getting higher.

I'll just put it flat out. My guess is that in your lifetime you're going to see things that will pale what I have seen in my lifetime. It is going to make it look like it is nothing. It is going to come in your lifetime because of the capability of doing all these things now and all you need is one crazy person doing some bad stuff now. The bad stuff before, if a guy has a gun, is that one thing? When you start working with nuclear weapons and you're working with biological, when you start working with all this other stuff it can devastate entire populations. Are people crazy enough to do that? Well, when you see two planes flying into a building, are people crazy enough to do that? Do they believe in their killing? This is pretty sad, but as someone in my son's class says, "It doesn't make a difference, it doesn't bother me, just make sure I can watch TV and I'm ok." He actually had someone in his class say that and this kid was probably 19-20 years old. Is that a problem? Wake up time. Be careful, your generation has got some major decisions to face here.

Joshua 1:8

Now here is how the book of Joshua opens and we want to end on this note. This is a positive note then coming back. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Prosperity and success predicated on meditating on the Word of God, the Law of God, and implementing it in your life. So the book of Joshua begins that way, kind of linking itself with the Law and saying meditate on the Word of God. That is an important thing and a good thing is we're done in Joshua.

The Judges: a description of their roles

Now, we're going to jump over here to Judges and we start Judges. We're going to pick up kind of a new theme. Moses was kind of the big guy in the Old Testament. Joshua, his understudy, then follows Moses. When you say Joshua rises to Moses' level, they were compared in a lot of ways, but Joshua is kind of down a little bit.

Now the period of judges is going to be a time of fragmentation and chaos in Israel. We've got all these little judges doing their thing. The major theme in the book of Judges is going to be "everyone did which was right in their own eyes." The book of Judges is going to be

a transition book. The book of Judges is a transition; there was no king in Israel. So the book of Judges moves from a 200-year period or thereabouts, saying there is going to be a movement to a king. Now who is actually king during the period of Judges? God is king. God is king during the period of Judges. These judges all administer under God and go to victory and in various ways God raises up these judges. But God is largely the king and Israel is going to move then to a human king as Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 17.

Now meet the Judge. Moses set up the institutions in the book of Deuteronomy in chapters 16 through 18. He set up the institutions of Israel and one of the institutions was this judgeship. The judge was to do two things: 1. He was to distribute justice. He must distribute justice in the land. Who particularly needs justice?--the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. Do they need justice? So the judge was to take the fatherless and the widow and to give justice to make things fair so that even the widow and the orphan could get justice. 2. And the judge was not to take a bribe. Money and justice were to be separated. Judge was not to take bribes. So Moses sets up this thing.

When you read the book of Judges, however, were any of the Judges sitting around doing court cases? No. So what Moses describes kind of misses what the book of Judges does. Most of the judges are out doing what? Actually, the judges are more what?--military deliverers. So in the book of Judges, Samson does not sit around doing court cases, he is out beating on Philistines. So the military deliverers are leading Israel to war. Judges chapter 2:16 describes this, let me just read this, "Then the Lord raised up judges..." and what did the judges do? "...who saved them out of the hands of these raiders." So the role of the judge was a deliverer. He was a deliverer, a kind of "savior," to save Israel from the hands of these oppressors. So they really take on this role of a military deliverer and here is another way to look at it as almost a tribal or regional chieftain. It is important to realize that. When you read the book of Judges, you cannot just go from one judge to the next judge. They're not necessarily in chronological order and they overlap. They're in regional areas, they're regional chieftains. So, therefore, Samson may be going off at the same time as Jephthah, Jephthah is over here in Jordan, Samson is over here and so they judge in different regions.

The judges may overlap each other because they're all in different regions from each other. They're petty chieftains or tribal chieftains, and they rule for 40 years, for 80 years or rule

for 20 years and times like that. They'll rule as a petty chieftain.

Conflict between Joshua and Judges

Now each generation participates in this. There is an interesting conflict between, and I want to bring this up, Joshua and the book of judges. At the end of the book of Joshua, Joshua 21, if you look at verse 43 there, it's interesting how Joshua was reflecting back it says in Joshua 21.43- 45 "So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers." Is this statement true? "The Lord gave Israel all the land he swore to give to their forefathers and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies' withstood them. The Lord handed their enemy's over to them. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house to Israel failed everyone was fulfilled." Is that true?

Joshua says we took all the land. Question: Were the Philistines still in the land after Joshua? Samson fights Philistines. What about the city of Jebus, the city of Jerusalem? Did the Jebusites own the city of Jerusalem after Joshua? Yes, they took it, but the Jebusites got it right back apparently. Later who would actually take the city of Jerusalem? David takes it. This is after hundreds of years David takes the city of Jerusalem. The Jebusites had it. So can Joshua say he took all the land like that?

Well, actually, if you go over to the book of Judges, Judges presents another vision. Judges chapter 1.19, turn over three or four pages to Judges 1.19. "The Lord was with the men of Judah they took possession of the hill country but they were unable to drive the people from the plains because they had iron chariots." Now what's the problem with iron chariots? When it said iron chariots what goes off in your head? You see Ben Hur and the gladiators with these iron chariots chomping down on people in these big huge iron chariots. Do you realize in Israel they burn their chariots. Question: what were the chariots made out of if you are going to burn the chariots? They are made out of wood. So when it says iron chariots don't think Ben Hur, with the huge chariots. Think instead wood chariots with iron reinforcement in certain places. So they would have an iron shield in the front and reinforced with iron in certain places but it wasn't a massive iron, chariot that you would see in a Ben Hur movie. So they are wood chariots reinforced with iron. By the way, would chariots work well on the plains? Do chariots work well on mountains? No, your going to hit rocks and you're going to blow a tire. In the mountains, you hit rocks you're going to fall over in your chariots. So they work well in the plains. Israel

couldn't defeat the chariots. So Joshua says they took it all, Judges says wait, we didn't take the plains because they had iron chariots. So do you see the conflict there?

So you say well which one's right? Here it continues let me finish this out with Joshua. How can Joshua say we took all the land, all the promises were fulfilled? You have to read things in their context. Joshua at the end of his life is reflecting, did Joshua do everything that the Lord commanded him to do? Did God bless Joshua beyond his imagination? Yes, and Joshua was reflecting on that the end of his life. By the way when an old guy reflects at the end of his life he looks back and sees all the good things that the Lord has done for him. Now does that mean when he says "all" does that mean every little detail? No, he is just saying basically the Lord gave us all the success. We were successful in taking the land and he is making these global statements but is he reflecting back on a whole life. This is an old person reflecting on their life, they look back and they see it a certain way. Is it okay for an old person to do that? To reflect on life and see it in a whole cloth rather than all the little details? Yes, it's okay to do that. So what I'm saying is that Joshua is saying, "I finished my life. I finished what God called me to do. We took all the land God gave us. All his promises, everything was fulfilled." Joshua was just reveling in God's goodness to him.

What happens after Joshua, do things change? Yes, because there's still these little pockets of resistance in the land and then the book of Judges has to face those pockets of resistance. It's just a different way of looking at things. What I'm saying. Be careful about taking a Scripture passage and universalizing and absolutizing it. You don't want to absolutize or universalize a lot of the statements in Joshua. He's making comments and in a grandiose kind of way. It's okay to do that.

Now the conditionality of the covenant Judges chapter 2, verses 20, says this: "Therefore the Lord was very angry at Israel, because Israel had violated the covenant." The Sinaitic Covenant that God made with him at Sinai, the covenant with the blessings and curses and all the Ten Commandments and all the commandments God had given, "Israel has violated what I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me." God says, "Therefore, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. I will use them to test Israel." So in other words, there are still some groups inside of Israel, God says, "I will no longer drive them out. Because they have violated my covenant, I will use them to test Israel to see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their forefathers did." So now the

inhabitants of the land that were left, God uses them to test Israel, to see whether they would follow him or not.

So now what happens is you also get the transition between generations. Does each generation have to know God? Can you have slippage in the knowledge of God between generations? Does your generation know God the same way my generation did? Does my generation know God the same way my parents generation did? Does each generation have to come to their own way of knowing God? Is there slippage between the generations? I see it between my parent's generation and my generation and I think I see it in your generation as well.

Gathered to their fathers

Judges chapter 2 verse 10 says this: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers." What does this "gather to your fathers" mean? Let me just describe this. In their culture when they bury a person they basically put them on a bench. The bench is about this long, they are in a cave. They are in a cave usually the hole is about this big so you have to bend down so they slide the person on a bench and he is wrapped up in all sorts of linen and spices like a pizza. They put them in there and then he's in there. What happens after a period of time is a person melts down and decomposes and the bones are left. After a certain period of time just the bones are left then what they do is--I'm sorry for being so morbid, but this is about the phrase "gathered to their fathers." They then gather up the bones of the person and underneath the bench there is a hole underneath the bench and what they do is they take the person's bones and they put the person's bones in the hole underneath. That's when they're "gathered to their fathers." They are in the hole where those who went before you were put and they were put down there. Now "you're gathered to your fathers" I'm not making stuff up this is the truth. So then they slide the next person in and then they wait and they gather them to their fathers. Does that make sense? They don't do it like we do. We put somebody in the ground like that and do it that way.

Actually, their bones get mixed up when they gather them to their father's. It's just the bones are all mixed up. I've seen some of these things they're all mixed up. They have multiple kokim tombs and they have 8 or 10 different nooks that go in like that. So there's room. I mean and if there's not room they will chip another out, but so there's more than one bench. So they can handle multiple people. Sorry let's get off that.

But the other thing God says then so they're gathered to their fathers. Let me go back to

this chapter 2 verse 10, “after that whole generation had been gathered to their father’s, another generation grew up who neither knew the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.” In other words, they didn’t remember the crossing of the Red Sea. They didn’t see that. They don’t remember the taking of the land, they didn’t see that. So as this new generation grows up they’ve never seen what God had done for the people and God points this out. Down to chapter 3 verse 1 says, “These are the nations the Lord left to test all the Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan. He did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not previously had battle experience.” So part of the reason he leaves them in the land is every generation needs to learn how to defend themselves in war. So he says partially the reason for leaving them in there is so they also learn how to go into battle to defend themselves. So he leaves them in the land for that purpose.

Judges Cycle

One of the main themes of the book of Judges is the need for a king. The book of Judges is a period of chaos and it points out then this need for a king to rule over Israel. So Judges is pointing out this need. With the Judges there’s chaos and there’s need for harmony in the whole picture. The major theme is: “everybody did that which is right in their own eyes” and so it is chaos. Everybody is doing their own thing. Kind of sounds familiar doesn’t it. “Everybody does that which is right in their own eyes.” This is the Judges cycle.

This is the literary cycle and we are going to actually walk through this cycle. In the book of Judges there will be this literary cycle. It will start out like this: people will serve the Baals and the Asherahs. The Asherah was the female, the Baal was the male and it’s amidst all sorts of really corrupt practices. We actually know a lot of Baal worship. We know it’s very corrupt worship. The gods do battle and they kill one another, they chop them in half and they take part and make with half the sea and with half the land. So there is a lot of really cruel and crude stuff with these gods, as well as really immoral practices. The people actually go after Baals; God delivers them, Jehovah delivers them, but they go after Baals. God gets upset when they do that and so God sells them into the hands of the Ammonites, and he sells them into the hands of the other foes.

Then what happens? When they get sold into the hands of the Moabites and Ammonites and other peoples, then cry out to God in repentance. They cry out to Jehovah and they repent. The people repent; they cry out to the Lord. Now what happens after they repent this is when

God relents and God rises up a judge. God raises up a judge, and this is when the judge gets involved after the people repent and then the judge is raised up. Then what happens, the judge is victorious and the judge is given rest for x number of years, twenty, forty years, or eighty years there's rest. There's peace, there's harmony while God blesses that judge. They defeated their enemies, and now they have a time of peace.

Ehud

Now this is the Judges cycle. After having read Judges, do you remember this kind of cycle going on in Judges? Now we're going to do Ehud for the mini-cycle. Ehud is a very special guy. Ehud is going to be our first judge we look at and this will be a mini-cycle. We'll be able to see the whole cycle in just less than a chapter here. In chapter 3 verse 12 it says. "Once again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and because they did this evil the Lord gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel."

So Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, what was the retribution? The retribution was God sold them into the hands of Eglon king of Moab. Now what do we know about this Eglon, king of Moab? We know one thing about him, he is what? Yes, the Bible describes in great detail this guy is overweight, fat. Now in America when you think overweight, obese, you think negative. In that culture those people value fat. Actually who were the people who were overweight and obese like this were the kings. The kings were the big guys because they had all the food coming their way. Actually, fat is used as a word for strength. So it's very different in the Old Testament when you read about fat, fat means success and prosperity. That's what it means: success and prosperity. So it's very different than how we think about this.

This guy, it goes into detail, he's from Moab. Then what happens? Ehud comes on the scene as the judge. God lifts him up but what's the deal with Ehud? Let me just read through this. "Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord and he gave them a deliver, Ehud a left-handed man." He was a Benjaminite man and they sent him to pay tribute. What do we know about Ehud? We know that he is left-handed; Ehud has a difference. We suppose most people are right-handed. He's a lefty. When you come up to somebody and you check them for their weapons, are there certain places people carry weapons? Until this day if you are checking people for weapons where would you check? Now most people are right-handed, so if they're right-handed, where do they wear their sword? You don't wear your sword on your right leg because if you try to pull it up this way, you're going to stab yourself. You put it on your left leg, and you draw it across,

right? So you put it on your left leg and you draw it across like this. So when Ehud comes in, where do they check him? They look at his left leg, there's no sword there; they know the guy is clean. Question: does he have a foot and a half dagger on his right side?

Let me just read because I think it's almost meant to be humorous. "Now, Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a foot and a half long." And by the way is that important "about a foot and a half long"? It becomes important later on. All these little details tie in. "Which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing, and he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent them on their way, the men who had carried it. And at the idols near Gilgal he himself turned back and said." So he goes back down to where they're crossing of the Jordan River and then he turns back and he goes back to Eglon and he says, "Eglon, I've got a secret message for you, O king" and the king said, 'quiet' and all his attendants left." Now why would the king leave himself just with this one Israelite guy. You'd say he wanted to protect himself, the question was is the king a big guy? He's a big guy. He is not afraid against this scrawny little Israelite guy. He's not afraid of him. He's a big guy. So he tells all his attendants to go. Ehud says, "I've got the secret message." He says, "I have a message from God for you." And as the King rose from his seat, Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the King's belly and even the handle shank went in after the blade which came out his back. Ehud did not pull the sword out, the fat closed in over it." This is too much information. Do you see how all the details come together, unfortunately?

"Then Ehud went out to the porch and he shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. And after he had gone, the servants found the doors of the upper room locked and they said, 'He must be relieving himself.'" Now, when the king's on the pot, do you disturb the king? No. So Ehud locks the doors and the servants come up and say, "Well the doors are locked, the king must be on the pot. You don't disturb the king when he is on the pot." And now what's Ehud's going to do?

Ehud's Escape

In the NLT, does anybody have the NLT? NLT makes an interesting translation here. Has anybody ever seen *Shawshank Redemption*? In *Shawshank*, how does the guy get out of prison? Do you remember? He goes through the wall, but then do you

remember? Do you remember that long scene when he goes through that what is it? The pipe and it is that sewage pipe. It turns out that Ehud escaped through, as the NLT correctly translates it most likely, “through the latrine.” So basically, you’ve got a hole. He goes down through the sewage thing and gets out through the latrine.

Now whenever this story comes up it always reminds me of I have four kids and they were raised in a kind of suburban kind of neighborhood in Indiana. We went on a vacation up to northern Minnesota, and I am talking really really far up; right next to the border of Canada, in northern Minnesota. Now my kids had never seen these things. They were called “outhouses.” My children had never, well my two girls had never seen one. And so we’re out. It’s night. We pull up to the camp. We set up camp, and it’s dark. Now my daughter has to go and my wife’s got to go too. So they had a double holer out away from the camp ground. So, now do you know girls about six, seventh grade? Have you ever seen them when they get to the really klutzy stage? They drop stuff, and they are klutzy. She was going through this klutzy stage. So she takes the flashlight out. My wife, you know, knows what to deal is. So they go out there. My wife bops around the other side because my wife knows as she grew up in northern Minnesota and so she knows what to do. So she bops around the other side. She goes in here.

My daughter goes in, and it is, “is this place safe?” First of all, you know, what’s the deal? There is no light switch here. It’s pitch black down here. So what she does is she takes her flashlight and she shines it down in the hole. “Now is somebody down there? What’s down there? I want to find out. I don’t know what’s down there?....” She is curious. And she just looks down there, one second. But she is also very klutzy, and she, and this is the honest truth; she drops the flashlight down the hole. The flashlight then does its loop, and sticks shining up. My wife is on the other side, and this flashlight light shines up. And it is, “holy cow.” So my wife goes flying out of there and my wife was, “holy cow.” So my daughter comes out, “oh no.” So then they come back to the camp. Now I am the father and they come back and it’s “Rebekah, that’s our flashlight. That’s the only flashlight we have. Rebekah we need to go back out there.” You said, “you wouldn’t do that.” I sure did. Anyway. So we marched her back out there. “You got

to go down and get that flashlight back. It is the only one we've got." She was "Dad, are you going to make me do that?" She was going off and I said "I was just joking with you." Anyway, it was pretty funny. So go back to Ehud.

Ehud goes down the chute. He goes down the chute through this stuff and out. And that's how he escapes. That is what it says in the NLT. The NLT uses the word and "he escaped through the latrine." That's probably the right translation. The other translations cover it over and just say he escaped. They don't tell you that it was probably a *Shawshank Redemption* type escape. But that's Ehud.

God uses Ehud's uniqueness

By the way, I missed the point. One of the little points that I wanted to raise is this. Ehud was left handed. He had something that was different. Something that was weird from the normal population. Question: "did God use his weirdness for his glory; the fact that he was left handed?"

Now I just want to suggest that when I was younger, I always wanted to fit in with other people. Half my life I realized I'm just plain weird. I just didn't fit in. I didn't fit in anywhere. I was always the weird one. I mean I could do all this stuff. Play sports everybody wanted me on their teams. But I always knew, I just didn't fit in really. I was weird. So I ended up trying to cover up my weirdness for most of my life. I spent time and energy trying to make people think I was normal. Then I realized, I in my mid-twenties, "Give up man, you're just weird. Just acknowledge it and be out with it." But I look at some of you and I say, "you're in the same ball park." What I am saying is so then we can be weird together. But what I am saying; what I am trying to say is this. The thing that you think is your weirdness is your biggest asset.

Yes, actually, when I left Grace College. I taught there for 22 years. I'd wondered why I never got fired there. And one of my friends who knew me real well, said, "Ted." I said, "how come I never got fired here? I mean all my friends got fired, and I didn't get fired." And the guy says, "Ted, you were so far out there. Nobody knew where you were. So they just let you go because it was just..."

So what I am saying is. I really mean this strongly: the thing that you think is the really weird thing about you, I'll bet you anything God will use. God uses the weirdness and the very thing that brings the one sense shame, and you try and cover it up, God uses that thing the most. You think it is the most devastating wrong thing but God will turn that into a benefit. "You meant it to me for evil. God meant it for good" kind of thing. God takes a person's individuality like that. So it is unique, and God uses that.

God used Ehud. I mean there were all these Israelite guys. Who did God use? He used the left hander, and used that particular uniqueness for his glory. What I am saying is be careful. Don't try to cover up and destroy your own weirdness. Allow yourself to be weird. Allow yourself to, and how should I say it, enjoy that. It's that very point that's different that often times God uses.

Map

Now here's just a map trying to lay out the territory. The Moabites were up from there, and they come down here to Jericho and they had taken Jericho. Is this really close to Israel? Here is Jerusalem, yes. So the Moabites had been really aggressive. Ehud's going to drive them back. Actually these guys are from up there, and that's where the Moabite king was up making an alliance there. Ehud comes down to Gilgal down in this area crossing the Jordan River, and then he turns around. He goes back up, and that's when he gets the king. So that's the area, the territory, where it takes place. So we're just getting a sense of the geography of it

Question: On the previous slide, we don't have the repentance as part of the cycle.

Yes, the people cry out to the Lord. I forget where it's mentioned exactly here. Yes, there it is verse 15; the repentance there. "And again the Israelites cried out to the Lord. He gave them a deliverer." So that would be their repentance and then God's relenting giving them a deliverer. Good point! Keep me honest.

Deborah and Barak

Now, what's the deal with Deborah? Deborah's in Judges chapter four and five. About this woman, it says this: Judges chapter four, verse four, and this has to do with women in leadership. Deborah is a leader; here's what it says: "Deborah, a prophetess,

the wife of Lapidoth, was leading Israel at the time.” So she’s a prophetess; She’s married, to Lapidoth. She was leading Israel at the time, and “she held court under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim.” Israel came to her to get court cases decided. So she is married, a leader, she tells men what to do, and she’s approved by God. Who made her a prophetess? Does a person make themselves a prophet? No, God makes you a prophet. What does a prophet do? A prophet says, “thus saith the Lord.” The prophet speaks for God. What does a prophetess do? A prophetess speaks for God and that is exactly what Deborah did. She was also a judge. She actually had her own palm tree and the people would come to her and she would make judicial decisions. She was a judge in Israel, she was leading Israel, and she was a prophetess.

How does that fit, then, with some of the other statements in Scripture? How do you explain all that with this woman in leadership? Then you’ve got some statements from Paul in the New Testament that say, in 1 Corinthians 14.33, that the women should be what in the church? They should be silent in the church. Or you’ve got over in Timothy, “I suffer not a woman to teach a man.” Paul’s making these statements saying “women no, no, they shouldn’t be in leadership positions.”

These passages bring up once upon a time I was at a small Bible college down in Bristol, Tennessee area, and on the weekends I would be like a circuit rider preacher. In other words, I’d preach at five different churches. So I’d go to one church one week, the next week, and then I’d go around the circuit. One of the churches, I would say the average educational span, most of the guys probably had never graduated from high school. Most of the men in the church had never graduated from high school.

There was a woman in the church, and she had a master’s in English Lit. The church decided they wanted to study the book of Ecclesiastes. Is Ecclesiastes simple, or complex? Ecclesiastes, you’re going to be reading it, for this Thursday, Ecclesiastes is a complicated book to understand exactly what’s going on there. Actually, I just this year I’ve come to a kind of a new understanding of Ecclesiastes. By the way, somebody make me say this say “hey Hildebrandt what do you think about Ecclesiastes?” because I got a

new take on that I think, that I actually developed this semester.

But, these guys never finished high school, this woman had a master's in English Lit. Could she teach the book of Ecclesiastes? Probably better than anyone else in the church! So I came in and I said "Hey! I am seminary trained in things like that, but I don't understand the book of Ecclesiastes. I'll be the first one to admit that." So I thought "I'm going to listen to what this lady does. She's a English Lit. person, she'll give me a literary way of understanding Ecclesiastes. It may help me."

So I sat in her class. Do you realize some of the men in her church wouldn't come into her class because she was a woman? And they used these statements, "I suffer not a woman teach a man." So then they used this statement and things to support their position.

Now question: Do you see the conflict there with some of that approach? And so how do you work with that, I put "answers" in quotation marks--I'm not saying these are "answers" but it may help.

Once upon a time I was in a doctoral dissertation, the guy was presenting a doctoral dissertation and I was one of the readers that had to kind of approve this guy's dissertation. He made the argument and this is the argument he made. "God uses women, when there are no good men and that God used Deborah because there were no good men." So I think this is the answer to the book of Judges.

Nobody's going to argue with me, but everybody's ok. So I'll have to argue myself. That's one of the dumbest things I've ever heard. Ok? I'm sorry. Does this alienate both men and women? Let's say there's no good men, so God uses a woman. So it actually ends up alienating both sides. Were there good men in the time of Deborah? Yes, there were. Did God use her because there were no good men? I don't think so. I'll show you other cases where there definitely were good men and God still uses a woman. This is a pathetic argument.

Is this God using someone? If God uses someone, who are you to say that this woman is second rate? Is God using her to lead Israel? So who are you to contradict God? God pretty much makes choices. So when you start saying, "God shouldn't be

using a woman like that,” you say, “well, yes, he’s God he does what he wants.” So, this argument I think, is alienating to both sides. It’s demeaning. This, approach is demeaning both to men and to women. I can’t accept it and so I gave the guy a bunch of grief on his dissertation.

Then he also came up with this second argument: Deborah is the exception. The exception proves the rule. Now, “unfortunately.” I was a math major when I was in college. Not unfortunately, I loved mathematics. When I got into teaching college they didn’t have any logic teachers. So I ended up teaching logic for a number of years. In logic when you make an “all” statement how do you contradict an “all” statement? If somebody says “all women are like this; that all people are like this, all people from Massachusetts are like this,” how do you refute an “all” statement? How many counter-examples do you have to have? One. When you make an “all” statement are you really vulnerable? Because you have to prove that all of them are that way. All they’ve got to do is find one counter-example and your argument’s done.

By the way, when you write papers, should you stay away from “all” statements? Do you understand? “All” statements put the burden of proof on whom? On you. You’re very vulnerable when you use an “all” statement. Now if I said, “some Massachusetts people are like that.” Question: how do you refute a “some” statement? Is it almost impossible to refute a “some” statement? They have to show all, and then the burden of proof is on them to show all and often you can’t do it. So what I’m saying is when you write, be very careful of using “all” statements.

If all women are to be like this, if all women are not allowed to be in leadership, all women are to be silent, all women are not allowed to be teachers, if you’ve got one exception, the exception doesn’t prove the rule, the exception shows you that the rule doesn’t work. You can’t say all women should be like this or all men should be like that. That kind of thinking just doesn’t work. So this argument here, Deborah is an exception, she sure is, but the exception shows that the rule doesn’t work. Women can be in leadership and it’s not a problem.

Now some people use progressive revelation, they say, “Paul is the one that we should accept over everything else.” But do you see what that does? It privileges Paul’s writings. Should we be privileging Paul’s writings over other parts of the canon? Is the Old Testament part given by God as were Paul’s writings. I went to a place where they said, “Here’s Romans, and this is Galatians, and we look at the whole Bible through the lenses of Romans and Galatians.” What’s the problem with that? They’re all bent out of shape because they love the book of Romans and Galatians. Shouldn’t you interpret the Bible through the lens of Genesis and through the book of Exodus? And shouldn’t you come at it this way through the Old Testament to the New rather than turning around and interpreting it all like that? So what I’m saying is be careful about privileging one part of Scripture over another. If this is God’s word the whole thing is God’s word, you start privileging sections. I find that to be offensive actually.

Then what about Paul himself. Check this out. Paul himself says, and these are important verses I think in this gender conflict thing, Paul, in Galatians 3:28. This is a famous verse. People have argued over this for years now, Paul says “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” what’s that mean? You’ve got the Jewish people and the Greek people. In the Old Testament there were Jews and Greeks and the separation between those were circumcised and uncircumcised. “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek” no difference Jew or Greek. “Slave or free” we’re not just slaves and free anymore, we’re brothers and sisters in Christ. There’s not slave nor free. “Male or female you are all one in Christ.” So there are all those boundaries that were between the Jews and Gentiles, between the slaves and free between the male and female, those boundaries are gone. We’re all one in Christ and Paul says that in Galatians 3:28.

The other one I like, and let me just do this out of my head is Ephesians 5:22. It says, “Women, wives submit yourselves to your husbands.” And all God’s men have used this to say, “wives submit yourselves to your husband.” But what’s the preceding verse say? Ephesians 5:21 says “submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.” This means then should I submit myself to my wife? Yes, “submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.”

Jesus Christ is a great example. Is Jesus Christ the big leader? Jesus Christ is the big leader of the Christian church. How does Jesus express his leadership? Does he come and say, “hi, I’m the big leader, all you guys bow down.” What does Jesus do? He says take off their sandals, and then what does Jesus do? He washes his disciples’ feet. He who is the king of the universe becomes the servant of all. Does that leave us a model for leadership? It’s not, I am the big leader. No, it’s I washed their feet.

I remember a story about Andrew Jackson who was president I think in around 1830, Andrew Jackson. Why was he such a great leader? I don’t agree with everything the guy did but he was a great leader. He was in a battle of context. He was leading his troops off to war, some of his guys got hurt. Andrew Jackson got off his horse, he’s the big general, he rides the horse. He gets off his horse, puts his wounded men on his horse while he walks. Question: Would those men have died for him because he did things like that? Yes, they knew that he would sacrifice himself on their behalf and so they would sacrifice themselves on his behalf. He walked while they rode and they said, “wow, now that’s a leader.” That’s what Jesus did.

Three Cardinal sins: money, sex, and power

It leads me into what I’m going to teach you about sin today. There’s three big ones: money, sex, and power. Now money, you guys are Gordon college students so you don’t have to worry about that, that’s not going to be a problem. Sorry, but to be honest with you the biggest thing that scares me and actually should scare you is fifteen, T. Fifteen T and you guys should be scared out of your minds. Fifteen trillion in debt. You don’t even know what that means, I don’t even know. It is a lot of money. Money, don’t worry about it you won’t have to worry about the money thing.

Sex is dirty. If you’re a Christian you do sex you get caught, you’re busted. It doesn’t work real well. So sex is dirty, let’s face it. The one you need to worry about and actually if you’re going to do sin don’t worry about money you’ll never have it. Sex it’s dirty and you’ll get caught. If you’re going to do sin, do power. Power is the clean one. No, seriously they don’t catch you and actually you do power right, everybody thinks you’re the big honking leader and you’re the man. So if you’re going to do it do power,

it's the clean one. Question: was I being sarcastic? Yes, I should have walked over there but I'm afraid he won't move the camera. So what I'm saying is money, sex, and power which is the most tricky the most insidious, power. That's what I'm trying to say power is the most insidious because it comes on a person. Power does what? Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Be careful about power, it's really subtle and it gets into a person and it sucks the marrow out of their being before they can even know it. So what I'm saying is, be careful. It's the clean one that looks good. But you've got to be careful with power.

Let's get back to Deborah. Now what's going on with Deborah? It seems to me competence and gifts, not gender, are the issue. Competence and gifts are the issue. Huldah is going to be a prophet for us in the Old Testament. She is a prophetess. Now you say, God only used prophetesses when there were no good men. No. Huldah was a prophetess when a guy named, I think his name was Jeremiah's running around. He was a fairly good man. Jeremiah writes the biggest book in the Old Testament actually. It's bigger than Psalms, not as many chapters but it's longer. So Huldah is prophetess when Jeremiah's around. There were good men around but God still used her as a prophetess.

If you go into the New Testament somebody said, "Well, all these Old Testament prophetesses and such, the Old Testament's all messed up. What happens when you go to the New Testament? You have Phillip's prophesying daughters. He's got like five or seven, I forget which, five or seven of these prophesying daughters. They're Phillip's prophesying daughters. That's in the book of Acts that's after Pentecost, after the Spirit's come, during the church age. So what you've got is women in leadership in both testaments.

So what do you do with Paul statements and things? Well, when I think I see conflict in Scripture between statements like that we've got to say culture is probably involved in it. Is Paul addressing a particular problem at Corinth that makes him say that? There are there particular problems that are being addressed that is what he is talking about. Now, I'll actually pursue that in your New Testament class as you go over

Corinthians and Timothy we'll point out some of those solutions, but I think it's largely solved because of cultural issues that were problems back in those days.

Now, where does Deborah do her thing with Barak. Barak is the general. They go out and they're going to fight with iron chariots. Jabin, king of Hazor comes down with his iron chariots. Question: Is this going to be a great place for chariots? It's flat, do chariots work here? Yes. Do chariots work here on the mountains? No. They work here on the plains. Do you see this plain looks like an arrowhead here. This plain kind of looks like an arrow head coming down. This plain right here is called the Megiddo plain, or as you guys know it--Armageddon. This is Armageddon. This is the Armageddon Valley. It's the largest valley in all of Israel. It's a great place for a war. By the way, Megiddo is right here that's why they call it Armageddon. Megiddo is the name of the place. There is a tel where they did the battle, this is the tel and this is where they did the battle.

Women and War

By the way, in the story of the battle, whose going to take out the chief general? Is it going to be a man or a woman? A woman is going to take out the general and God says, "Barak, because you are such a wimp, a woman is going to take out this man." So what happens? Sisera gets off his chariot, he comes trucking into this lady's house, and says, "Hey, Jael, we've got an alliance with you guys." So, he says, "man, I'm really thirsty, give me something to drink." She says, "Oh, I don't have anything, I just have this nice warm milk." So he takes the warm milk and then what happens to him? He is dead tired, fighting war is really hard. He takes the warm milk and he goes to sleep. What is she good at – the woman? What skill does she have? Can she fight Sisera hand to hand? You know, I can do this battle, no. What does she do? Is she good with pegs and hammers because she puts tents up and takes tents down? Does she know how to use a hammer and a peg? So she gets out her hammer and bang, bang Maxwell's silver hammer comes down on his head. Boom, the peg goes down his head and she pegs the guy and takes him out while he is sleeping.

Question: How does the woman fight in battle – does she out fox him? Is she shrewd? Yes, she is shrewd and she out foxes him. She gets him when he is weak like

that and she takes him out. She wins the days. Jael is the great victor and God wins the victory here with Deborah and Barak. So they are successful. They defeated Jabin king of Hazor.

Jabin I and II

By the way, does anybody remember the book of Joshua? You probably don't, but in the book of Joshua, it also mentioned that Joshua defeated Jabin, king of Hazor. Some people say the Bible has got errors in it. It's got Deborah defeating Jabin but Joshua had already killed Jabin. It is most likely that Jabin was a family name like Jabin I, Jabin II like you had in Egypt. Has anybody ever studied the Ptolemies in Egypt? Let's do a little Egyptian history. Egyptian history Ptolemy I, Ptolemy II, Ptolemy III, Ptolemy IV, you have 24 Ptolemies in a row. So now you know all the history of Egypt. I'm just being facetious, but Jabin was probably the same thing, it was probably a dynastic name. Jabin was king and he died.

Gideon versus Midian

Now Gideon and Midian, what happens here in chapter 6 of Judges. Gideon is going to be--do you remember that article you guys read? The book of Judges kind of moves up with Gideon and Gideon is kind of like the peak of the book of Judges. After Gideon, the book is like going to go down, there's going to be lots more sinful things happening. So it kinds of rises up this guy Gideon.

Gideon in the Winepress

He is threshing wheat in a wine press. We need to know some information about what is wheat in a wine press. First of all, how do you harvest wheat? Normally the wheat is in stalks, of about a knee high or a little bit higher. You take a sickle and you go with your hands, you grab a bunch of stalks and you chop with the sickle. You chop stalks, chop stalks and then all the stalks are laid down. Then you take these stalks and you put them on a threshing floor. A threshing floor, that pillar to this pillar where I am is about twice as big as most of them are. They're about half of this size. They're often up on the top of mountains. They shave off the top of mountains and make a flat area up there. Then they take all the stalks and put the stalks on there with the wheat. The wheat

is in the chaff, and you know about the chaff is a husk around the wheat. The wheat is a kernel.

The question is can we as human beings eat the chaff? Eating the chaff is like eating grass. Can human beings eat grass? Our digestive system doesn't do cellulose like that. So you can't eat the chaff. Do we eat the wheat though? We eat the wheat (unless we're gluten free). So you've got to separate the wheat from the chaff.

So they get up on this flat area, the animals walk on it. Now as the animals walk on it, the hard wheat gets shucked and the shuck comes off and then what do you do? You throw it up in the air and all the chaff which is light gets blown off by the wind. Why do you want your threshing floor up on the top of a mountain? There is wind up there. So the wind blows the chaff away. But when it does that, by the way, can you see the chaff, it's almost like clouds. I've seen this in Israel where they do the chaff thing and it looks like clouds. You can see it from ten miles away.

So what do the Midianites do? The Midianites are smart, do the Midianites let the Jews plant their crops? Yes, they do. Do they let them harvest their crops? Yes, they do. When do the Midianites step in? When they are doing the threshing, the Midianites say, "Okay, now we've got pure grain," and the Midianites go up and say, "Give me all that grain, it's mine."

So what is Gideon doing? Gideon is in a wine press. A wine press, the ones I've seen are about this big and round, they are holes in the ground where wine gets pressed. Gideon is down in this wine press hole threshing and trying to get the chaff off the grain. So he is throwing it up and down, up and down, but now it only has gravity to work because there is no wind in the wine press. Does he feel like a mighty warrior or is he hiding from Midianites? He is hiding from the Midianites and this angel then comes up to him and Gideon was threshing wheat in the wine press to keep it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." Does Gideon feel like a mighty warrior, or does he feel like a chicken down there, hiding, trying not to get caught by the Midianites.

"But sir," Gideon replied, "If the Lord is with us why is all this happening to us?"

Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about?” Gideon goes off. God then calls Gideon and says, “Gideon, you are my man, you are going to lead Israel.” So God calls Gideon. The Lord told him, “Go in the strength that you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” “Lord,” he says, “How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest of Israel,” and he starts making excuses (cf. Moses).

Gideon and the Fleece

Has anyone ever heard of the fleece story in the later part of chapter 6? Gideon sets out the fleece. People use this fleece for determining God’s will. You put out the fleece and you pray to God, "God if this happens, then I know you mean to do this." They call that putting out the fleece. Was this passage of Gideon putting out the fleece, for Gideon to determine God’s will? Did Gideon already know what God’s will was? Yes, God had told Gideon what he wanted him to do. He knew what God’s will was. Putting out the fleece was a test. Was he testing God? Yes. In other words, be careful while using the fleece to determine God’s will. This passage says he already knew God’s will. This was only to test God.

Now how did he test God? He said “God, make the fleece wet and the ground dry.” In the summer, the dew that comes in from the Mediterranean Sea which is warm and the ground gets cold at night. So basically, the Mediterranean moisture comes in and hits the cold land. When it does, it precipitates in dew. But when dew goes on the fleece, what happens? The fleece is like a sponge. Does the sponge naturally stay wetter while the ground dries up? The ground dries up, the water goes right into the ground. So Gideon says, make the fleece wet and the ground dry. That is what normally happens. Yes, so Gideon's not to bright, he says, “Oh, hey, that’s definitely what normally will happen. Oh God, I get one more try. This time, I want you to make the ground wet and the fleece dry.” That is really tricky. Now, that one’s tricky because, the dew comes down, the dew covers everything. To make the fleece which normally holds the water dry and the ground wet, that’s a real miracle. It’s all a miracle when you are dealing with God, but it’s just pretty incredible.

Determining God’s will and the fleece

So this passage comes up then about finding the will of God. I just want to talk a little bit about finding God's will. Kids come into College, what are you majoring in? What do you want to do with your life? My daughter graduated from Gordon College and she had no clue on graduation what she wanted to do with her life. It's terrible. So what happened? Seriously, she was about two years after graduation, she was rummaging around, she was a Biblical Studies major, she did not know what she wanted to do. After about two years, she said, "you know, I think I want to be a nurse practitioner." So then she went back, took all this chemistry and courses and now she is a nurse practitioner. But what I'm saying is it took her years after college to figure this out.

So determining God's will these are just some abstract guidelines that I would use myself. First of all, you ask if it is moral. Question: should I go out and steal, should I go out and lie, should I go out and cheat, should I go out and kill somebody. The answer is: No. Those are immoral, they're wrong. So in other words, is it moral, is it in God's will. He stated lying is wrong, cheating is wrong. So the moral will, so I know I don't have to ask myself about that.

The question I ask myself quite frequently is what is the good? I am an old man, I am looking at the end of life. I am saying what is the mostest, goodest I can doest the quickest. In other words, what is the most good I can do? Every day I get up with this question: what is the most good I can do for this day? So you ask what is the good, what is the good that I can do?

Now, pursue your passions, each of us have different interests in things and you need to pursue things that you are interested in, that you're passionate about. You hope that can coalesce with what are you gifted in? What are you gifted in? What is your weirdness, what is your gift, your creativity, what really gets you going? What are your gifts? Follow those things.

Then you ask also, what do I feel God's calling me to do and there comes a sense of God's calling in your life.

But sometimes you can't figure these things out very well. Let me just give you an example. When I was in college and went through for electrical engineering and

mathematics. That was my undergraduate degree. After I finished in January, I went to seminary. When I went to seminary, what did I study? Abstract algebra, complex variables in seminary? No, I studied Greek and Hebrew. When I got to seminary, I found out I loved studying Scripture. After I graduated from seminary, I went on to graduate school after that. I thought regretfully, “God, I wasted three years out of my life. Three and a half years out of my life, I was killing myself going to school taking twenty hours of engineering courses, working twenty and thirty, forty hours a week. I killed myself going through college.” I said, “God, I wasted my all that work that I put in there. I totally wasted it. And now I am doing Bible, what does Bible have to do with electrical engineering”?

All of a sudden about ten years, fifteen years later, somewhere in the late 80’s and I picked up a thing called a PC. And I said, “Holy cow, this is ten times easier than it used to be and look at all we can do on this PC”. Then what happened? So then I started doing all this with the computer. Question: am I able to do Biblical studies and computer together. By the way, do you guys benefit from that? Because what happens, you got all these course materials, you've got audio, you've got text and how much you pay 10 bucks for this material. If you buy a textbook in here, everybody in here saved about 50 to 75 bucks because you do it online now. Can we really do cool stuff online? Yes. But what I’m saying is there was about a ten to fifteen year period in my life where I said, “I can’t figure out what God was doing.” In other words, I wasted a huge part of my life and I couldn’t figure that out. What I’m saying is, you may think that you can’t figure out what God’s done in your life, but if you give it time over time, ten, fifteen, twenty years later all of a sudden the light bulb will go on and you’ll say, “Aw stink, that’s what was going on and I never understood the connection.”

What I see happening is that God takes the things that you think are the biggest problems and he turns them. Do you remember Joseph’s statement? “You meant it to me for evil, but God meant it for good.” So you see this redemptive work of God where God takes the things that are the most mucked up things in our lives and he turns them. The biggest problem we end up having turns out to be the thing God uses in spectacular ways

for his goodness and for his greatness. We know then that it's God doing it, it's not us doing it. God has redemptively touched us in a way that's made us special.

So, just some things to think about with this open and closed door? God opens doors, other doors are closed. One of the biggest things I think for people is failure. Is failure one of your best friends? Failure is really, really important to know how to handle failure. Failure can be one of the biggest blessings in your life.

I always remember the story of Michael Jordan. Does anyone remember who Michael Jordan is? This guy played basketball in the 90's. I never watched professional sports, but I watched Michael Jordan. I honestly I played in college, Houghton college. It was just like I never saw anybody that could do what he did every game. How could he do that stuff? It's impossible. Michael Jordan got cut from his high school basketball team. What I am saying is how do you deal with failure? Failure is really important. Open and closed doors, how do you handle the open and closed doors?

Finally, let me pull a thing from Henry Nouwen. He talks about prayer. He says when you pray, you have to pray with open hands. If you pray like this [clutched fist]. You shouldn't pray like this. You're talking to God. You pray with open hands and God puts things in your hands. It's his grace. It's his grace. So, a lot of life is praying with open hands. You can't demand. Things that you think are going to work out beautifully and things like that. You hold things for with an open hand. God places, as Niles Logue used to say, "God puts bouquets of grace in your hands." You can't clutch them, he puts them as gifts in your hands. So that's to do with Gideon and the will of God.

Gideon and Midian Battle

Now, our next big one is Gideon and Midian. Let me just finish out Gideon and we'll call it a day. Gideon gets the battle and Gideon goes out to fight. What happens? God's going to give him the victory. Let me just narrate the story here chapter 7 the Gideon and Midian battle. What happens here? Gideon goes out and gets 32,000 guys. Do you want a large army or small army to be victorious? You want the largest army possible. God looks at it and says, "Gideon you've got too many guys." He says, "Too many warriors, if you win the battle, you are going to think it's because you won the

battle. I want you to know that I am the one who is winning the battle. So anyone who is fearful let them go home.” Are people fearful in war context? Is a war context threatening?

I could tell you a story about Hadley, one of my son’s best friend. Hadley was fearless, knew no fear. He had been to Iraq and knew no fear. My son was one of his closest friends. He goes to Afghanistan. He was shot through the neck. It missed his major artery by a millimeter and he would have been dead. Hadley took a month or two off, I forget, whatever. They’ve patched him up. He came back. When he came back to battle, did he know fear now? Yes. After having been shot through his neck, all of a sudden it was when you go out there again this is it you and you get shot through the neck again. This is not good. So what I am saying is fear and battle.

What is going to happen? 22,000 leave. He’s left with I don’t know 10,000 or something like that. Now, God takes him down to drink. It’s a hot climate. All the guys that dumped their head in the water and lap just out of the water, let them go home. How do most people when they’re really thirsty drink? You dive into the spring and get in head first? He said the ones that bring it up and lap to their mouth, those are the ones that I want. How many were there? 300. All the rest, thousands go home. Gideon has 300. Sounds like the “300” Spartans or something.

Now some people say Gideon is wanting a few good men. Is that what God was trying to do, get a few good men? The answer is: No. That’s exactly the opposite of the point of this story. Was God trying to get a few good men to show that a few good men can win the victory? No, he was trying to show them who was going to win the victory? He was going to win the victory. It’s not these few good men.

So what they do was they basically go around and they surround the Midianites and they’ve got this lamp full of olive oil with a wick on it ready to burn. They’ve got trumpets and three hundred guys surround them. The Midianites, by the way, are a complex of what they call mercenaries. So there’s mercenaries mixed in with these guys. Gideon surrounds them. They break the lamps kind of like a Molotov cocktail. They break the Molotov cocktail. Everything goes up in fire. They blow the trumpets and the

Midianites and mercenaries figure they're surrounded and they start fighting each other. Then, the army breaks down and the guys kill each other. Gideon wins the battle with 300 guys. Who won the battle that day? The Lord won the battle and the victory was his.

We'll call it quits there. I think that clock is slow and we'll finish it up next time. So, see you on Thursday. We've got a quiz on Thursday.

This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology course lecture number 20, concluding the book of Joshua and Pacifism versus the Just War theories. And then on to Judges with an introduction to the book of Judges and the judges Ehud, Deborah and Barak, and Gideon.

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