

Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology

Concluding Joshua (War & Pacifism vs. Just War) and Introduction to Judges

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Pacifism, Just War Theory, Joshua, Judges, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Warfare, Covenant, Biblical Ethics

Abstract

This lecture concludes the study of the book of Joshua and introduces the book of Judges, focusing on the theology and ethics of warfare in the Old Testament. Dr. Ted Hildebrandt contrasts pacifism with Just War Theory, examining biblical justifications for military action, divine warrior imagery, and practical rules of engagement. Transitioning to Judges, the lecture highlights Israel's spiritual decline, the cyclical pattern of rebellion and deliverance, and the transition toward human monarchy. Through the accounts of Ehud, Deborah, and Gideon, the lecture demonstrates how God uses individual uniqueness, human weakness, and divine intervention to accomplish His purposes and test each generation.

Outline

I. Introduction and Course Logistics

- A. Class announcements and Thanksgiving schedule adjustments
- B. Upcoming quizzes on 1 Kings, Ecclesiastes, and Roy Zuck article
- C. Opening prayer and lecture objectives

II. Pacifism vs. Just War Theory in Joshua

- A. Pacifism and Non-Resistance
 - 1. Distinction between non-resistance (medics, chaplains) and strict pacifism
 - 2. Scriptural foundation: Isaiah's vision of turning swords into plowshares and kingdom shalom
 - 3. Christ's model of non-retaliation and submission to the cross
 - 4. Evaluation of pacifism as salt/leaven in society versus the reality of world evil
- B. Just War Theory
 - 1. Justification of force to resist systemic evil (e.g., stopping Hitler)

2. Joshua's military conquest of Canaan as a God-commanded, valid war
3. Wisdom perspective from Ecclesiastes 3: 'A time for peace and a time for war'
4. Imagery of God as Warrior in Exodus 15 and Psalm 18
5. Dual comings of Christ: Lamb at first coming vs. conquering King in Revelation 19

C. Biblical Reasons and Rules of War

1. Land acquisition by divine command
2. Response to severe moral violations (e.g., civil conflict in Benjamin)
3. Response to national humiliation/insult (e.g., David and the Ammonites)
4. Self-defense against foreign oppression and taxation
5. Assisting allies against external oppressors

D. Modern Warfare Challenges

1. Preventative war dilemmas (e.g., pre-emptive strikes on nuclear threats)
2. Non-state actors, terrorism (Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban), and asymmetrical warfare
3. Technological escalation (biological/nuclear weapons) and future generational responsibilities

E. Conclusion of Joshua

1. Joshua 1:8 core principle: Meditation on the Law as the key to success and prosperity

III. Introduction to the Book of Judges

A. Nature and Context of the Period

1. Transition from centralized leadership (Moses/Joshua) to regional fragmentation
2. Central theme: 'Everyone did what was right in their own eyes'
3. Theocracy with God as King moving toward human monarchy

B. Roles and Reality of the Judges

1. Deuteronomic ideal (Deut 16-18): Distributing justice to widows and orphans without bribery
2. Historical reality in Judges: Regional military deliverers and tribal chieftains (Judges 2:16)
3. Overlapping chronologies and regional spheres of influence

C. Comparative Perspectives: Joshua vs. Judges

1. Joshua 21 perspective: Retrospective celebration of complete conquest and divine promise fulfillment
2. Judges 1 perspective: Regional reality of ongoing pockets of resistance (e.g., iron chariots on plains)
3. Theological synthesis: Conditionality of the Sinaitic covenant and divine testing of generations (Judges 2-3)

4. Idiom 'gathered to their fathers': Secondary burial practices and generational memory gap

D. The Cyclical Pattern of Judges

1. Apostasy (worship of Baals and Asherahs)
2. Divine retribution (oppression by foreign nations)
3. Repentance (crying out to Jehovah)
4. Deliverance (God raising a judge/deliverer)
5. Rest and peace during the judge's tenure

IV. Detailed Case Studies of Specific Judges

A. Ehud: Deliverance through Uniqueness (Judges 3)

1. Oppression under Eglon, fat king of Moab (obesity as status/wealth)
2. Ehud's left-handedness as an unexpected tactical advantage against weapon searches
3. Concealed 18-inch dagger and assassination of Eglon in the upper room
4. Dramatic escape through the latrine/sewage chute
5. Theological principle: God utilizing human uniqueness and perceived 'weirdness' for His glory

B. Deborah and Barak: Female Leadership and Warfare (Judges 4-5)

1. Deborah as prophetess, judge, and recognized leader in Israel
2. Theological analysis of female leadership in Scripture: refuting flawed arguments and examining Pauline texts (Gal 3:28, Eph 5:21)
3. Battle against Jabin II of Hazor and Sisera at the Plain of Megiddo (Armageddon)
4. Jael's assassination of Sisera with tent peg and hammer: victory through shrewdness

C. Gideon: God's Power in Human Weakness (Judges 6-7)

1. Threshing wheat in a winepress out of fear of Midianite raiders
2. Divine calling as 'mighty warrior' despite excuses and weak clan status
3. The fleece testing: seeking confirmation vs. testing God
4. Spiritual principles on discerning God's moral, providential, and directional will
5. Reduction of the army from 32,000 to 300 via water-drinking test
6. Night attack using torches, jars, and trumpets to display God's sole credit for victory