

In Those/These Days . . . • Judges 17:6

Read 2 Tim 3:1-5 Judges 17

1. The last 5 chs of Judges are an appendix to the book where the writer tells a couple wild stories.
 - a. We looked at the 1st *last* Wed
 - b. And will cover the 2nd ***even more crazy*** tale *this* Wed.
2. They describe what life was like during the time of the Judges.
3. The writer knows the stories are *out there*, and explains how they *could be* by saying . . .
17:6 • In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.
 - a. Turn to 18:1. Half thru thru the 1st story, to remind us of WHY things were so messed up, he says . . .
18:1 • In those days *there was* no king in Israel.
 - b. Now 19:1. As he's about to launch into the 2nd, ***even more*** sordid tale -
19:1 • And it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel . . .
 - c. Finally, last v. When finished & we're all sick to our stomachs, the postscript -
21:25 • In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.
4. The author doesn't intend that as an interesting, but unconnected factoid.
5. It's the **REASON** all the atrocious things he's just recounted happened.
6. Because no one was in charge, everyone was. // They each made it up as they went along.
How?
 1. It's part of most tours of Israel to visit *Yad Vashem*; the Holocaust museum in Jrz.
 - a. The State of Israel urges tour companies to make a visit to the museum *a necessity*.
 - b. The only way to opt out is if you've already been.
 - c. The exhibit is extremely well done with massive documentation charting the history of European anti-Semitism and the rise of the National Socialists in Germany = the Nazis.
 - d. The goal of Yad Vashem is that the world ***never forget*** the death of 6 million Jews during WWII.
 - e. The overwhelming thought most have as they make their way through the last half of the exhibit and are confronted with the unspeakable evil of the Nazis' Final Solution is "***How could this happen?***"
 - 1) Surely the Nazis were ***monsters; in-human beasts***.
 - 2) They were *evil* the likes of which the world has never & will never see again.
 2. Turns out, that's historically ignorant.
 - a. History's ***filled*** with atrocities.
 - b. The Mongols massacred millions.
 - c. Stalin starved 5 million to death.
 - d. Pol Pot killed 1.5 million in Cambodia.
 - e. More recently ISIS raped and killed thousands.
 3. Confronted with the last chs of Judges we ask, "How could these things have happened?"
 - a. Because they're unthinkable to us.
 - b. We chalk them up to the assumption we're *more evolved*; surely we're more *civilized*.
 - c. The arrogance of "***This*** time / ***My*** time" says, "Those people back then weren't sophisticated, like me!"
 - d. ***They*** were just a bunch of pre-scientific barbarians, illiterate savages.
 - e. Living in 21st C America with science & technology to guide us, we've evolved to the place we're not subject to the superstitions of these ancient unfortunates.
 - f. We're civilized, refined, lettered, sophisticated.
 - g. Certainly we've ***advanced*** beyond the barbarities we read about here.
 5. The Holocaust, mass cemeteries of the Soviet Union & Killing Fields of Cambodia disabuse us of our supposed superiority to those we encounter in these chs.
 6. While these stories took place 3000 yrs ago, the Nazi Final Solution was just 70; 1 generation!
 - a. Some of its survivors still live; the death camp numbers tattooed on their arms can still be seen.
 - b. These stories are a shocking revelation of what happens ***when people forsake God***.
 - c. That's the author's point, and why he repeats the phrase -
In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

1. The people of Israel recognized no authority.
 - a. Israel was supposed to be a *theocracy*, where Yahweh was their King.
 - b. But they'd dethroned Him and set up idols in His place.
 - c. Those idols weren't real, of course; just projections of their desires.
 - d. A way to paste a veneer of respectability over their sin.
2. An idol is just an excuse; a way to scratch the urge to worship while bending god to our will.
3. Yahweh, the Holy One, with His Commands, stood in the way of what they wanted.
 - a. So they yanked Him off His throne, and put an idol there.
 - b. That idol was just a religious version of their lust for power & pleasure.
4. Right & wrong were determined by whatever satisfied these dual desires.

In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

1. What about **THESE days in the USA**?
2. For 250 yrs we've prided ourselves as a nation with no king.
 - a. We're a *democratic republic*, with a govt **of, by & for** the people.
 - b. That system worked when "those people" lived as the Founders knew they must **FOR** it to work.
 - c. The Founders lived when people had a profound awareness of God.
 - d. They reasoned America didn't need a **human** king because it had a divine one; **God**.
 - e. There was no need for a lot of govt because people governed themselves.
 - f. That's what the **self-govt** they talked so much about meant.
 - 1) Self-govt referred, not to American's setting up their own system independent of Britain.
 - 2) It meant the control individuals exercised **over themselves** as they honored & obeyed God.
 - 3) One of the Founders expressed it this way; either we are ruled by the Bible or the bayonet.
3. But as time passed, the **skepticism** of the Enlightenment grew.
 - a. Reason was **dislodged** from Faith, then **supplanted** it.
 - b. Secularism took over in college & university.
 - c. The Biblical WV of the Founders was replaced by a secular WV hostile to God.
 - d. One that has neither place nor regard for Him.
4. We now live in a society the Founders never envisioned.
5. A govt of, by, & for people who live for nothing beyond power & pleasure **is doomed**.

The Lesson

1. Judges teaches us, the more things change; the more they stay the same.
2. For here we are, full circle back to the time of Judges.
3. There's no king and everyone does what's right in their own eyes.
 - a. There's no agreed-on authority.
 - 1) Worse; The very **idea** of Authority is resisted.
 - 2) You see it in the bumper sticker "Question Authority"
 - b. Because there's no absolute truth, there's no objective right & wrong; just preference.
 - c. People make up their morality as they go along. If it feels good, do it.
4. It's gotten to the point where if someone **WANTS** something, that's all that's needed to **approve** it.
 - a. **Attraction** is all that's needed for **validation**.
 - b. Things that 50 yrs ago were regarded by nearly everyone as **abominations**,
 - c. *Now* have organizations promoting & pressing, not just for legalization but for **normalization**.
5. Same-sex marriage is now legal, while same-sex **attraction** is regarded by most as **normal**.
6. The acceptance of homosexuality has encouraged groups to form in support of open marriage & polygamy; even for sexual relationships between adults and children.
7. We're appalled when we learn the ancients sacrificed their children to their idols.
8. Yet we've sacrificed 60 million since 1973.
9. We just endured a huge national debate because the right to **keep** killing children was thought to be threatened by the seating of a new judge.
10. I could go on, but you get the point. The names & places change, but the problem remains.
11. Because we've removed God from the center, the center cannot hold.
12. When there's no agreed on standard of right and wrong, people are left to figure it out on their own.
13. They'll do whatever their desire demands with no sense of responsibility to anyone but themselves.

14. Because, after all, there's no one to answer to.

Our King

1. That's the bad news. Now for the Good.
2. While the world has no king, ***we do***.
3. And the society that makes it up as it goes along isn't ours.
4. We live IN it, but are not OF it.
5. Jesus is our King and we are citizens of His Kingdom.
6. We are the Church of Jesus Christ.
 - a. There's a reason The Spirit picked that word for us = Church.
 - b. In Grk, Ekklesia – Those called OUT.
 - c. Being IN Christ means being called OUT of the world and it's ways.
 - d. When you were born again by faith in the Person and Work of Jesus, you died to what you were and began a new life in something new. // That's why 2 Cor 5:17 says ...
If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
7. 1 Pet 2:9 says ...
You *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God's] own special people.
8. Who we are in Christ *trumps* all other distinctions, identities, marks.
 - a. The Gospel IS our ***ideology***.
 - b. Our Heavenly Citizenship supersedes the Earthly.
 - c. Our Party's symbol is the Cross, not a donkey or elephant.
 - d. Our platform is Grace & Truth; not Left or Right.
9. Our WV has God at its center. And from that center comes everything else.
10. While the world in which we live dissolves into moral chaos, Let's be a people who bend our knee at the throne of Jesus.