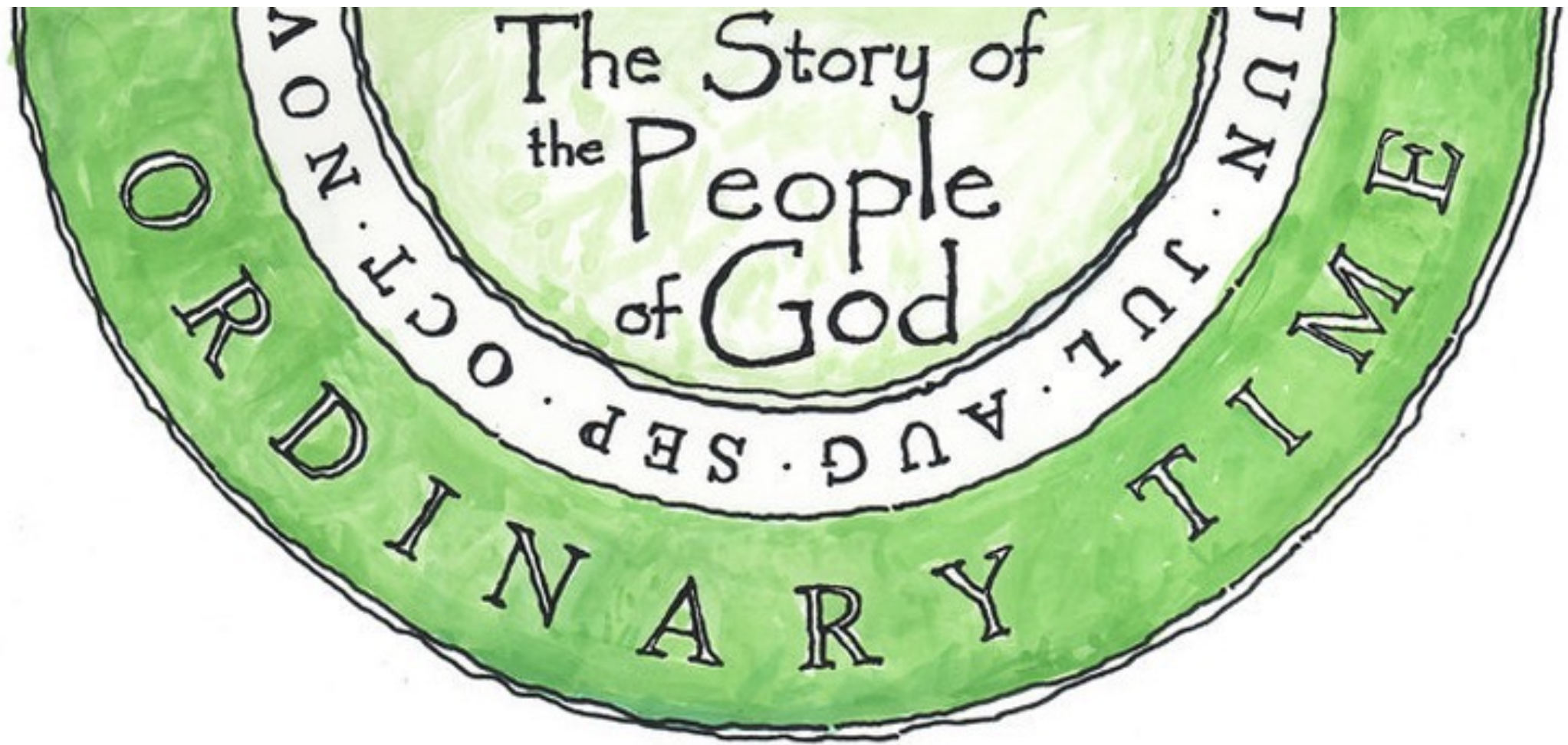


Faithful God,
throughout the ages
you have made known your love and power
in unexpected ways and places.
Help us to daily perceive the joy and wonder
of your abiding presence, and give us grace
to offer our lives in gratitude for for your love.
Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page. It features a dark background with a colorful Venn diagram in the center, consisting of three overlapping circles in red, green, and blue. To the left of the Venn diagram, there are stylized white outlines of hands reaching out. To the right, there is a white outline of a fishnet or mesh pattern.



JUDGES

Part 6: Ch.17-21



STORYTIME

Judges 17-18: Religious Mayhem



So, after (Micah) returned the (1,100 shekels of) silver to his mother, she took two hundred (of it) and gave them to a silversmith, who used them to make (an) idol. And it was put in Micah's house. Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some household gods and installed one of his sons as his priest. In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES

17:4-6

*Then Micah said to (the young Levite),
“Live with me and be my father and priest,
and I’ll give you ten shekels of silver a year
and your clothes and your food.” So, the
Levite agreed to live with him, and the
young man became like one of his sons
to him. Then Micah installed the Levite,
and (he) became his priest and lived in
his house. And Micah said, “Now I know
that the Lord will be good to me...”*

HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES
17:10-13

No one in this story, beginning with Micah and his mother, has noble motives...and no one appears to be a serious monotheist. The whole bizarre story appears to be an authentic reflection of the early moment in Israelite history when the exclusive worship of YHWH was not generally established.



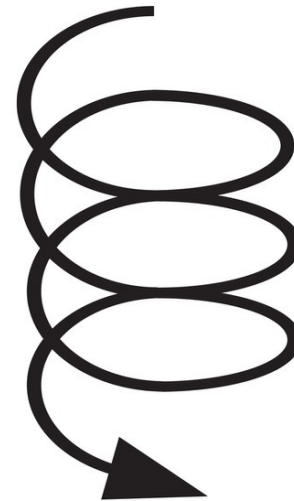
In those days, Israel had no king... When five (Danites) went into Micah's house and took the idol, the ephod and the household gods, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" They (said), "Be quiet! Don't say a word. Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" The priest was very pleased...

HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES

18:1,
19-20

...the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. They continued to use the idol Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.



HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES

18:30-31

STORYTIME

Judges 19-21: Civil Mayhem



Judges 19 contains the most brutal story in all of the scriptures. While ostensibly advocating for an Israelite monarchy, but simultaneously demonizing the Gibeonites of Benjamin (Saul's city and tribe), it is also the account of a gruesome rape-murder-dismemberment of a woman, facilitated in part by her own husband.



The woman is a wife of secondary status, meaning she and any children would not be entitled to support from her husband, making her financially vulnerable. It is possible he entered into a secondary union with her because she was not a Levite woman, reserving the prerogative of primary marriage for a tribeswoman.



She is often mistranslated as a “concubine” (which came to mean someone more like a sexual slave), an inappropriate translation because a secondary or low-status wife had full societal recognition and legal status, as would her children.



In those days, Israel had no king.

*Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a **secondary wife** from Bethlehem in Judah. But she was unfaithful to him. She left him and went back to her parents' home...After she had been there four months, her husband went to her to persuade her to return.*

HOLY
BIBLE

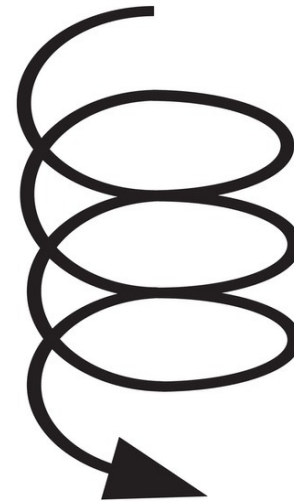
JUDGES
19:1, 2-3

When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, "Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night." His master replied, "No. We won't go into any city whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah."

HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES
19:11-12

He added, "Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places." So, they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them in for the night.



HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES
19:13-15

HOLY BIBLE

1 SAM 11:6-7

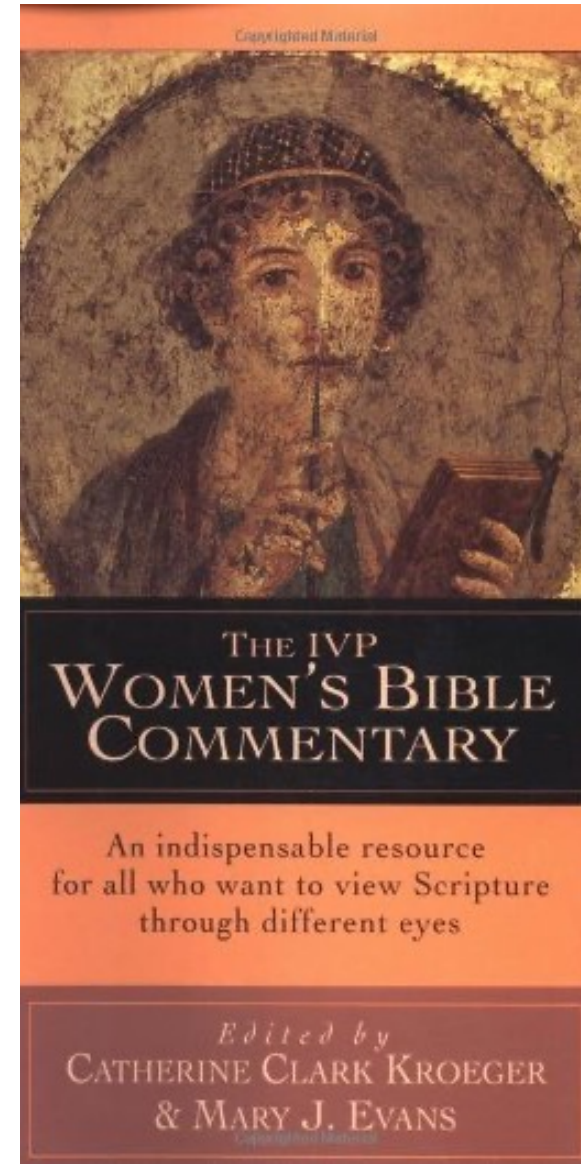
When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out together as one.

(This woman) is a victim whose only attempt to assert her independence (her flight from her husband) was thwarted by her father, her husband, and the failure of the citizens of Gibeah to carry out their proper role as hosts. The Levite chooses to sacrifice her to save himself.

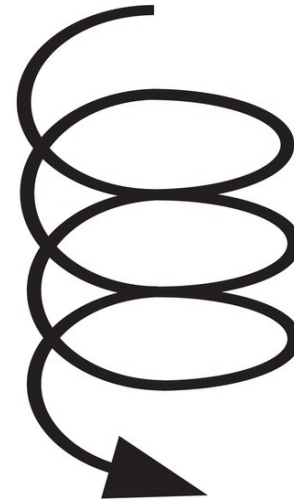


CRAIG
KEENER

As a musical coda echoes, repeats and brings to resolution the themes of the piece, so Judges 17-21 echoes past events within and beyond the text: Sodom and Gomorrah, the severed thumbs and toes of the Canaanite king, Jephthah's vow, Samson's wanton destruction... Then comes the resolution of the theme:



*In those days Israel had no king;
everyone did as they saw fit.*



HOLY
BIBLE

JUDGES

21:25

REFLECTION TIME

How Do We Apply Any of This?



ON WRAPPING UP JUDGES...

- When religion is for sale, it never, ever ends well for anyone involved



ON WRAPPING UP JUDGES...

- When religion is for sale, it never, ever ends well for anyone involved
- Domestic abuse is a living nightmare and can be both active and passive, emotional, verbal, and physical



ON WRAPPING UP JUDGES...

- When religion is for sale, it never, ever ends well for anyone involved
- Domestic abuse is a living nightmare and can be both active and passive, emotional, verbal, and physical
- Rash decisions/actions are generally unwise and lead to compounding consequences down the line



ON WRAPPING UP JUDGES...

- The Bible includes the good, the bad, and the ugly about Israel's history; reckoning with the ugliness of national history requires intentional introspection and a good deal of moral courage; the United States should learn from this biblical example...



Q/A TIME

Any Questions After All This?



God of life, we praise you for your abiding presence
from generation to generation, blessing your people,
strengthening us to lives of service;
grant that, as we serve you now on earth,
we may one day rejoice with all of creation
in your kingdom of light and peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

A decorative banner at the bottom of the slide. It features a dark background with a Venn diagram of three overlapping circles in red, green, and blue. To the left of the circles, there are stylized white outlines of hands reaching out. To the right, there is a white outline of a fishnet or woven mesh.