

Theme: The fundamental problem for all humans is our rejection of the reign of God, preferring to do what is right in our own eyes, which leads to chaos and curse rather than God's blessing.

I. The Game of Thrones

- A. Very popular book series and TV show
- B. I am not endorsing them!!!! Read and watch at own risk!
- C. Stories of intrigue, power grabs, ruthlessness, sex & violence
- D. And I am talking about the biblical books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles!
- E. Multi-part series to go through these books
- F. First installment will cover period of Judges just prior to the beginnings of kingship under Saul
- G. What is happening? How is God involved? What should we learn from all of this? How does it point to Jesus?

II. When the Judges Reign

- A. We begin in a time before the kings
In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. Judges 21:25
 - 1. This is the last verse in the book of Judges
 - 2. It is letting us know that this was the time before the kings
 - 3. A key theme at the end of Judges - 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25
 - 4. Critical to understand there was no king
- B. The period of the rule of the judges

Then the Lord raised up **judges**, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Judges 2:16

- 1. There were leaders - the judges
- 2. These individuals led Israel for a few centuries
- 3. The book of Judges describes the period of their 'reign'

C. Who were the judges?

- 1. They were not primarily 'judges' who interpreted law
- 2. They were 'deliverers' - rescued people from enemies

Then the Lord raised up **judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders**. Judges 2:16

- a. The judges saved them from raiders all about
- b. Led them in battle against their enemies
- 3. They were 'saviors' - delivering the people
But when they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a **deliverer**, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who **saved** them. 10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's **judge** and **went to war**. The Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. Judges 3:9–10
 - a. v10 - judged/led them and went to war - deliver from enemies
 - b. v9 - deliverer/savior who saved them (also in 3:15)
 - c. "Deliverer/savior" is used of yahweh many times
"But I am the Lord your God, [who brought you] out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, **no Savior except me**. Hosea 13:4

4. God is the only Savior - but He has delegated leaders who He uses to save and deliver
5. Before kings, judges were these deliverer/saviors

III. When Anarchy Reigns

A. Judges - the story of these deliverer/saviors

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. Judges 2:16, 18

1. Judges 2:10-19 is a summary of the whole book
2. Israel was continually oppressed by raiders
3. God raised up judges to deliver them from raiders
4. God did this because of His compassion - in spite of Israel's disobedience

B. The theme: the utter failure of the judges

1. The downward spiral of the people

Whenever **the Lord raised up a judge** for them, **he was with the judge** and saved them out of the hands of their enemies **as long as the judge lived...** ¹⁹**But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers,** following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

Judges 2:18-19

- a. God raised up judges and was with them

- b. They successfully drove out enemies
- c. But their influence did not last - when they died it stopped
- d. Downward spiral - worse with each generation

2. The downward spiral of the judges

- a. The judges get progressively worse as the book goes on
- b. More and more info given - almost all bad
- c. Period of deliverance shrinks as book moves on
- d. Samson - sleeps with enemy, prostitutes, utter stupidity, blinded, suicide
- e. Judges themselves increasingly corrupt, ineffective

3. The downward spiral of the nation

- a. Beginning - enemies are external
- b. End - internal sin, civil war

4. The disturbing epilogue - Judges 17-21

- a. A few stories to demonstrate the final situation
- b. Idolatry, theft, rape (like Sodom), cruelty, cut up body
- c. Civil war, rash vows, kidnapping - all disgusting
- d. This is the depth of depravity - in Israel itself!

C. The root cause - anarchy in the hearts of the people

1. Some would say problem is delegated leaders
2. But God had set up these leaders - always delegated authority in God's universe

3. The solution - a king instead of judges
In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. Judges 21:25

- a. Remember this is repeated 4 times at end of book!
- b. The people actually did worse when there were no judges
But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. Judges 2:19
- c. The solution is not no human leader - they need a king
- d. Judges had failed - a king would be better

4. The root cause is our own desire for anarchy - no rule

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (literally - what was right in his own eyes) Judges 21:25

- a. This shows the real problem - anarchy
- b. The people had not just ignored their leaders - they had ignored the rule of God
- c. They did what was right in their own eyes - end evil in the eyes of Yahweh
Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. Judges 2:11, 19
 1. Evil in the eyes of the LORD - 7 times in Judges
 2. Right in their own eyes = evil in the eyes of Yahweh

- d. The real problem is not our leaders - it is us!
- e. Solution is not anarchy - it is denying self, taking up cross - and following the King!

D. Conclusion - our desire for self rule/anarchy leads to chaos and curse - not blessing

1. This is what happened in the Garden - self rule leads to curse and death
2. It is what happened in Judges - chaos and curse
3. It is what will happen for us today if we reject God's gracious rule to go our own way
4. I would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.... and wherever we rule is hell

IV. Applying the Word

A. The bad news - anarchy reigns in our heart

1. Do we see our own desire for autonomy?
2. Do we find ourselves rejecting God's delegated leaders?
3. Do we see ourselves worshipping our idols rather than Yahweh?
4. We all play the game of thrones - we all want to rule
5. This is the root issue for each of us
6. Where are my desires in conflict with God's will?
7. What am I desiring more than God's will and rule?

B. The good news - God reigns in grace!

1. Amazingly these faltering judges are in Hebrews 11
2. Despite their sin - they are welcomed through Christ
3. Despite their wandering hearts - God's heart is steadfast to them
4. Despite their failures - Christ has won the victory
5. Do I know that God's grace is greater than my sin?
6. When there is sin - turn in confession
7. Do not continue on a wayward path - it only leads to chaos

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
Judges 21:25

C. The Table of the King

1. Come to the Table and confess your anarchy
2. Come to the Table and confess you have tried to win the game of thrones
3. Come to the Table and receive forgiveness
4. Come to the Table and embrace God's rule
5. Come to the Table - and be received by the King!

When Anarchy Reigned

Judges 21:25
February 23, 2014
Communion
1 Timothy 6:15-16

[May your hearts be drawn to embrace the rule of] God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15-16