

Title: CSI  
Text: Judges 2:1-5  
Theme: God's view and verdict  
Series: Judges #2  
Prop Stmt: God's analysis and conclusions are clear and without challenge, but it still is no guarantee that it will be accepted.

Forensics or forensic science is taking the laws of science and applying them to the investigation of a crime. But there is more to the investigation of a crime scene than physics, DNA, tissue samples and chemistry. A crime scene involves lives. It involves relationships. It involves hatred, murder, families, addictions, despair, and revenge. In conducting an investigation one wants to know what and why. For those who give their lives to this type of work, it takes its toll. Tragedy weighs us down.

This text helps to set the stage for this book and the book of Judges is like a crime scene investigation. We see the carnage. We feel the loss. But, we need to do more than shake our heads in bewilderment at the inexplicable choices made as they are laid out before us. We need to do more than realize what went wrong. Knowing what went wrong and even why is not enough. We actually need the will and resolve to change because otherwise we will repeat the same failures. This book is history. This pattern is in place. Their flesh and blood is the same as your flesh and blood. Their unrelenting bent toward idolatry, self-righteousness, self-will, rebellion, self-destruction deceit and excuses is the same unrelenting bent that leans so forcefully upon your will. This story is 3,000 years old and 2,000 years old and 1,000 years old, and it is 1 day old and it is being told in our lives today and will be told in our lives tomorrow. This is what happens over and over and it will happen to you and your family and this church unless you do and we do something different. So, listen to this text with solemnity. Listen to this text with humility. Listen to this text with alarm. Listen to this text for your soul, and not because someone else needs to hear it. Grieve with me over these accounts, but learn. Learn from this. Learn so deeply that you change course. Learn so deeply that you no longer see sin as something attractive and enticing but as evil and toxic. Learn deeply so that your eyes are opened to the delusion of thinking that you can handle a little bit of sin, or that the sin you are playing with and excusing isn't that bad. These people thought the same thing. The book of Judges is wisdom if you will accept it. It is condemnation if you won't. You can accept it. By God's grace, you must. Today.

Read Text:

I had planned to preach the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter in its entirety, but I could not get past the first five verses. There is a lot here and we need to stop and explore it. We are not defined by emotions, but neither should we be dismissive of them. Emotions can be like buoys in the water, or markers on the land indicating that there is something under the surface that you need to be aware of. When you get so angry that you are dangerous, you need more than management techniques for blowing off steam. You need to go deeper. The volcano erupting on the surface is telling you that there is a cauldron of lava underneath that is welling up from a heart that is demanding something that it cannot get. The emotion of

anger is telling you that something is deeper. So, we learn to read not just for information but for emotion. What do you feel when you hear the angel of the Lord speaking in this text? Now, before you answer that, let's examine the scene. Look at the opening phrase. Do you feel what the angel of the Lord is feeling? Let me explain. Gilgal was the name of the place where Israel gathered when she finally at long last crossed the Jordan River and was in the Promised Land. She was finally there. The manna stopped because she was not wandering in the wilderness anymore. She had arrived in her home. And they called it Gilgal because Gilgal means to roll. The reproach of Egypt was rolled away. No longer were they the slaves who escaped from Egypt wondering around; they were the nation of Israel who had come to their land, had come to take what God had given to them and there (Gilgal) they recommitted themselves to God by renewing the covenant. By renewing the covenant and by having every male circumcised, they personally and collectively made a powerful statement to God, to one another and to their world and that is this: We belong to Yahweh. We are not like the nations around us. We belong to one another because we belong to God. We are marked by God. We are known by God. We are in this land because of God. And the Passover that got them out of the land of Egypt was now celebrated in the Promised Land because God's goal was more than getting them out of Egypt but getting them in their land. And here they were, standing on the beachhead. Looking back over 40 years of struggle on the very threshold of all of these promises being fulfilled. Now, they were about to get their own lands, their own homes, their own beds, their own fields, their own cities, and their own nation. Gilgal was so full of promise. The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal. The angel of the Lord went back to Gilgal as if to be reminded of that wonderful, promising, exciting, unbounded potential packing moment of hope. And from there the angel of the Lord went to Bochim. Gilgal took place at the beginning of Joshua, and Bochim was the event that took place at the beginning of Judges. Bochim means weepers. We don't know where Bochim but it was the name given to the gathering of the nation described in these first five verses. From Gilgal to Bochim describes the shockingly short trip from unbounded joy to grief. But that opening sentence tells us that the angel of the Lord is speaking with emotion.

*"I brought you up from Egypt."* Exodus 2 concludes with these words that describe the people of Israel living in Egypt. *"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew."* Unbeknownst to the people of Israel, God was on the move calling Moses, moving Moses, drawing Moses, and then they heard for themselves what God was doing. *"I brought you up from Egypt."* I did this. I rescued you because you could not rescue yourself. I rescued you because out of all of the nations of the world I set my affections upon you. I loved you. I chose you. You did not chose me, I chose you. I placed my name, my mark, my affection and my plans on you. I made a covenant with you. I entered into a relationship that I formalized so that you would know that you could trust me. This was not a contractual agreement of two equal parties. Oh no, this was a covenant between a Sovereign and subjects, between the powerful and the needy, between a magnanimously gracious King and impoverished and vulnerable people. I will care for you. I will give you a land. I will love you. I will provide for you. I will protect you and I will not break my promise to you. In exchange, you agree that you will not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land because they are bound by idols and

gods who are not really gods. They are given over completely to these gods. To enter into a covenant with these people is to place the trust that you are to have in me in them and they cannot love you and protect you and provide for you and be faithful to you. Do not do that. They are a people who are so depraved and given over to sin by their idol worship, that they have exhausted my mercy. There is only justice for them. They refuse to give up on their idols, so break down their altars. Destroy their shrines. Burn their idols. Besides, if their idols cannot save them, why would you ever worship them?

Now, I am filling in between some of the statements here, but all of it is in keeping with what the angel of the Lord said. Notice the end of verse 2. “*What is this you have done?*” What a devastating question. What is this they have done? Can you explain this to me? Can you tell me why after all that I have done for you, you would betray me? Can you tell me why after I warned you over and over and over you disobeyed my voice?

Israel has no answer. All she can do is weep, but while weeping can be evidence of repentance, it can also be remorse over the consequences of sin instead of actually being sorry for the sin itself. At this point in the story we do not yet know if these are tears of repentance or tears of consequences. But there is so much weeping that they call the place Bochim. And the weeping and grief drove them to offer up sacrifices in hopes of appeasing the God they had betrayed. When we see emotion, we are moved by it. We tend to believe it. We want to believe it. We want to believe that the weeping in the moment is powerful enough to drive obedience for the long haul, but it isn’t. Emotion has no staying power when confronted with the grip of evil. But, at the end of verse 5, we can still hope that Israel will change course. But there is more to this text.

The emotion of the text is easier to see, because it is on the surface. But what fuels that emotion is tension. The tension is like the lava under the surface that causes the eruptions of emotion on the surface and therefore it is the tension that we need to examine as we investigate this crime scene in order to determine what happened. – 2.1-5

### **I. Israel is torn between two loves.**

The people of Israel are no different than us. They want to be liked. They want to fit in. They want to be respected. But the world does not like the people of God. They never have and they never will. Oh sure, you will find some isolated examples of how the world is impressed with or respects certain Christians, but like us? No. It was no different for Israel. But, she wanted to be liked. I say that because of how quickly Israel began to intermarry with the Canaanites and how she ended up pleading for a king so that she could be like the other nations around her. This desire to be liked tore her up. How could she obey God and at the same time gain the approval of the nations around her who followed other gods and wanted Israel to do the same? She couldn’t.

### **A. Tribes divided**

The story of Judges is the story of division. Division is the result of rebellion against God. Tribes end up going to war against each other. The nation ends up in a brutal civil

war that almost completely wiped out one entire tribe. But that it was sin does. When we treat the enemy of our hearts as our friend we will go to war with ourselves. The nation that was forged together in her suffering in Egypt, that was delivered together, that crossed the Red Sea together, that endured the wilderness together, that entered the land together that experienced all of those victories together, is now being torn apart because her heart is not loyal to God. Sin separates. It separates us from God and it separates us from one another. What happens on a tribal level goes deeper.

### **B. Families divided**

This issue of wanting to be liked and wanting to fit in is something that most of us if not all of us struggle with. Adults tend to be a bit more sophisticated about it more than kids, but this issue the Bible calls “the fear of man” is something we are all familiar with. And I am convinced that this was a huge factor in the thinking of Israel. I say that for two reasons: 1) In the beginning of chapter 3 we read where Israel, right from the beginning started to intermarry with the Canaanites and serve their gods. We can understand how that works, because there is nothing like a wedding or to bring out all of the families religious and spiritual beliefs – right? And when you are trying to marry people from two different cultures or ethnicities, there’s some learning and some giving that takes place. But when two people from opposing religious beliefs get married, then you have an obvious problem because both of them do not really believe what they claim to believe or otherwise they would not be marrying someone outside of their faith. How do you create a wedding ceremony in a situation like that? Either you do not bring religion into it, or you pretend. But there were no atheists in these days. Everyone had a god. In order to mix marriages you have to play the appeasement game, and when you play that game everyone loses. So, why would you even try? Because in the moment, the desire to fit in, overrules God’s commands. What do you do at the Passover, when your family is supposed to celebrate this together but your son or granddaughter has married a Canaanite who does not believe what you believe? How do you obey God’s commands to take the land when the land belongs to your son-in-law’s family? The Canaanites knew what they were doing. If they could intermarry, then Israel would lose her uniqueness and would no longer be a threat. But now, families are divided because they do not believe and live and worship the same way.

### **C. Hearts divided**

This is the tension that Israel feels. This is the war that rages on the turf of her heart. And this is why the book of Judges has so much conflict, fighting and bloodshed over territory. The territory, the land that is fought over is a reflection of the war that is raging under the surface. Which god will be lord? Will the land belong to Baal or will it belong to God? That all depends on whether or not the people belong to God or give themselves to Baal? What is going to happen? Loving God means being exclusively devoted to him. God is not like any other god. God will not share his glory with another. He will not pretend that anything or anyone else is worth your worship or trust. He demands exclusive rights over your life and that is a glorious thing, because this God will go to the mat for you. This God will send his Son to die for you. This God will love you all the

way to the end. The gods of this world, like Baal, will make promises that they cannot keep. They will promise you your best life now. They will promise you comforts, prosperity and pleasure, but in exchange will take and take and take from you. (More on that next week) So, right here at the beginning of chapter 2 this tension is already bubbling to the surface. What will Israel do? Will she love God? Will she love, treasure and obey the God who loves and treasures her or will she love and try to follow the gods of this world who will destroy her?

Israel was vulnerable to serving the god of “wanting to fit in.” The god of “wanting to fit in” was called Baal. You can see how tempting it was for Israel. She had been a nation of slaves for such a long time that she was known for that. She had no glorious history of building cities, commerce, armies, education centers, museums and temples of her own. She lived under the foot of Egypt. She was the doormat for others to wipe their feet on. And now she had moved up in the world and was anxious to prove that she belonged. She should have a seat at the table like the other nations. She was the real deal. She was anxious to be recognized as legitimate and if you want the other nations to like you, then you have to fit in. You have to stop talking about how your God is the only true God. And so, Israel considered her love to be liked and love for comfort (more on that next week) to be more important than her love for God, yet it was God who truly loved her.

#### **D. Result: remorse but no repentance**

So, look at those first two verses again. God is the one who established his covenant with Israel. This covenant is not an agreement between two equals. This is the covenant of an emperor with a vassal state. The Emperor has all of the power, the position, the authority and influence to set the terms of the relationship. This is who God is. He does not ask Israel nor does he ask us what the terms ought to be. This covenant is not a brokered peace agreement. God sets the terms and he reminds Israel of the covenant. I rescued you. I brought you out of Egypt. I gave you this land. I am your God who has done all of this for you. What is this you have done to me? And here, the tension is in full view. The people are embarrassed, ashamed and fearful, because God who went before them is now going to allow them to try to stand on their own. If you want to worship the gods of this world – go on and see how that works. And what we see is remorse. They cry and cry and cry, they sacrifice, but in the end, they do not change. Repentance is not words of remorse; it is a heart change that results in actually going in a different direction. But, Israel is not the only one torn.

#### **II. God is torn between two loves.**

God is the most glorious, beautiful, perfect, righteous, holy, loving, powerful, gracious, faithful, wise, good being ever and forever. His glory is all that He is and all that he is, is so true and so right and so perfect and so good that it should be displayed and spread abroad. If you were in love with your own glory and you attempted to spread that abroad, you would be preaching an inferior message. But, to spread the glory of God, is to spread the greatest message. Therefore, it is right and good for God to love his own glory and to spread it abroad. It is worth everything. As a means of making his glory known, God

chose the nation of Israel as his people. He put his name on them. He established a covenant with them in order to show the world what God is like. Israel was supposed to be a reflection of God. Israel was supposed to be a nation of mirrors who reflect the light and glory of God and image that to their world. God's glory is so amazing it should fill the entire world. Israel had a mission to spread that abroad to the world. But Israel failed. She miserably failed. And God is pre-eminently committed to the pursuit of his glory and he will not compromise that. He is too good to compromise that.

#### **A. God loves his glorious justice.**

God's justice is perfect. God's justice is part of his infinite glory. Justice demands that sin be dealt with. Justice demands that sin be responded to. Therefore, how does God respond to the offensiveness of Israel's sin without destroying her as a nation? We know that God has to punish sin, but how can he do it justly? If he does to Israel what Israel was supposed to do to the Canaanites for their sin, there would be no Israel. We feel this tension. At the same time...

#### **B. God loves his glorious faithfulness.**

God established a covenant with Israel. He said I will not break my covenant with you. God's faithfulness, God's covenantal love is part of his glory. God is so faithful with his love that he publicly and formally establishes a relationship in order to show his people that he can and must be trusted. Here's the problem. How does God keep his covenant without violating his justice? At this point in the story, that tension is not resolved. It just hangs in the air. As the years go by, the tension only increases and the wrath of God, which is God's righteous response to the offensiveness of sin only increases and we know that something has to give. At this point, we just don't know what.

This is not just a problem for Israel 3,000 years ago. This is a problem. We have a justice system that tries to address this, but can only do so much. This week, a judge sentenced Larry Nassar, to 175 years for his abuse and assaulting of so many girls. Larry will never serve 175 years. The weight of his crimes screams for justice. The weight of justice is 175 years according to our laws, but Larry cannot bear that weight because he will not live that long. But, it's the best our justice system can do.

But God's system of justice is not caught in this, "well it's the best I can do under the circumstances" dilemma. God is not trapped, although at this point in the story it looks like he is. How many sacrifices will Israel have to offer in order to pay for their sins? In other words, how can finite people offer a sacrifice to appease the infinite justice of God? The answer is – they can't! And neither can you. The only way for God's justice to be satisfied is for an infinite sacrifice to be made to appease God's infinite wrath, whereby God's righteous demands are satisfied so that God's faithfulness to his covenant can be fulfilled. And that is why God sent Christ to die on the cross. Thousands of years of pent up justice were poured out on Christ, so that God's covenant of love would be fulfilled. There is no other God like that. Trust Him.

In this book you are going to come face to face with your Baals, your idols. Your idol for pleasure, security, for comfort, to be liked, to fit in, to be respected, to be important, to be successful, to be right, to be in control, to be loved, to look young, to be healthy all call you to come and worship at their altars and give your life to them and these gods will take your life. They will take everything from you and suck everything out of you until after smoking you like a cigarette they will flick you into the gutter and go on to smoke someone else. What is this that you have done? There is a better way.

What idols of the heart seem to have the tightest grip on you?

- What causes the most amount of fear, or anger

“God help me see the idols of my heart. Help me to hate them so that I might love you purely.”