I. Slide1 Announce:
   A. Slide2 Christmas Eve Services: 3,7,9pm
   B. Next two Wed Nights:
      1. 12/23 (day before xmas eve) is in the gym. Tables, communion. Acoustic set.
      2. 12/30 (day before New Years eve). Will be? I’m thinking a prayer night to usher in the new year.

II. Slide3 Intro: Anarchy [an=w/o - arkhos=chief/ruler; w/o a ruler]
   A. Imagine a football game with no rules. Sounds like fun but in in anarchy. Imagine a busy intersection w/no stop lights. It can function, but with a lot of frustration and people ultimately doing what they please.
      1. Here we have a nation w/no rules. Not wanting to follow God. No leadership over them. And every man doing what is right in his own eyes.
   B. We have this last story in Judges, bringing us to a culmination of the horrible conditions that prevailed in Israel, right before the rise of the monarchy. Chaos, lawlessness, & anarchy prevailed.
   C. Slide4 Map of cities to know: Ephraim Benjamin, Judah. Jebus(Jebes) Jer Jabesh Gilead Bethlehem

III. Slide5 GIBEANITES GONE WILD (Ch.19)
   A. (1) A concubine was a friend with benefits in that day. A sexual partner, but who did not possess the legal and cultural status of a wife.
      1. Lev.21:14,15 says who he can/can’t marry. A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot - these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife. Didn’t say anything about concubine! Levitical Loophole he thought?
   B. Slide6 (15) Hospitality a prime virtue in their culture...normally. But here a serious breach of Near Eastern etiquette.
   C. (23,24) In the name of hospitality - this man was willing to protect this male visitor...and forsake the defense of the weak & helpless.
1. He knew his neighbors were wrong by wanting to have sex with this man [see wickedly, outrage, vile] But decides heterosexual rape is better than homosexual rape? 

D. (25) Gang raped her all night.

E. (27) I guess he got a good nights sleep.

F. Slide 7,8 (28,29) He was surprised she was dead, or almost?
   1. So he takes her home & dismembers her body (like a bad episode of Criminal Minds) & sends the pieces to each of the 12 tribes.
   2. It was symbolic act. If Israel failed to help him take revenge they would suffer the same fate as his concubine.
      a) I wonder if this is where Saul gets the idea to unite Israel later, where he did this w/ one of his dads yoke of oxen?

3. Well, He got the desired outcome...see vs.30.

G. Slide 9,10 With the rape of the Levite’s concubine, the moral depravity of Israel reached a new low.

H. Judges 19 is the updated equivalent of Genesis 19. Sodom & Gomorrah & lot.
   1. Not only do the two share much of the same vocabulary, the # of Hebrew words in Gen 19:4–8 and Judg 19:22–24 are identical.

I. How far Israel had fallen! Adultery, lack of common hospitality, sodomy, rape, and murder had become a way of life!
   1. When people become their own law, social order and basic morality do not exist. Humankind, left to its own devices, falls into unimaginable sin.

IV. Slide 11 CIVIL WAR (Ch.20)

A. Israel’s first Civil War.

B. (2) Their intent...to take official action against the men of Gibeah.
   1. One of the few encouraging things in the whole story...that the country comes together united in heart & mind (as one man), to deliver Justice.

C. (5) The Levite condemned the men, but exonerated himself. He said nothing of his own complicity in the tragedy.
D. Slide12 (8) As one man - really? an unexpected phrase here, given the disunity amongst the tribes.

1. It's ironic, that in the last episode of the book, they all finally come together, but to fight against one of their own tribes, not a foreign oppressor.

E. (14-17) The Benjamites refused to turn the men who had committed the gang rape over to the Israelite force for punishment.

1. By their refusal, the entire tribe became implicated in the crime.
2. Worse, they decided to fight against Israel in order to protect the criminals.
   a) Where do you draw loyalty’s lines? Loyalty to family, friends, business associates, etc? I believe loyalty leaves off, where w/our loyalty to God & His commandments begins.

F. Slide13 (16) 700 left-handed skilled fighting men - Benjamin evidently gained a reputation for having skilled left-handed warriors. [Ehud/an earlier Judge 3:15,21 was left-handed. As a special contingent from David’s soldiers later 1 Chron.12]

1. Biblical notes like this sure give the Bible a real-life flavor.

G. Slide14a The Sling - was a common weapon in ancient warfare.

1. This obviously increased the range of hitting your enemy.
2. Ancient Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs show slingers and archers standing together as long-range attackers. Shepherd’s Notes, Joshua/Judges pg.96

H. Slide14b (18,23) Twice Israel attacked, and twice they would beaten by the smaller yet superior Benjamite force.

1. Ask: How would you account for the fact that the 11 tribes were twice defeated by the Benjamites, even though they had asked counsel of the Lord?
   a) The 3rd time it was added...they would win. vs.28
   b) Also note: 1st time they asked God. 2nd time wept till night, then asked. 3rd time wept, sat before God, fasted till dinner, offered burnt sacrifices, & peace offerings, then asked Him.

I. Slide15 (27) Ark of the covenant - interesting note. The Ark is mentioned once in judges.

1. The absence of the ark in the narratives of judges reflects the moral decline of Israel during that period. [compare to 30 x’s in Joshua]
J. (29-48) Despite how far Israel had fallen away from their faith, Yahweh still orchestrated their battle & brought justice. Dr. David Jeremiah

K. (36-48) The account of the battle at Gibeah ends with a detailed retelling of certain elements of the fight.

L. The entire tribe of the Benjamites paid dearly for supporting the criminal actions of a few.

M. (43) Gibeah will be the home town of Saul (1st king) so maybe why all weren’t wiped out.

V. Slide16 CATCH ME A WIFE (Ch.21)

A. The tribe of Benjamin was decimated by the Civil War.
   1. Israel had won, but the victory was hollow.
   2. What was worse, before the battle had begun Israel had taken a vow that anyone who gave his daughter as wife to a Benjamite, would be killed. (1,5)

B. Slide17 (3) The war had begun with a dismembered concubine; with Benjamin defeated, Israel itself has become dismembered.

C. (3,4) Note: God doesn’t answer here, but the Israelites decided to take action anyway.
   1. What an ill-conceived plan to preserve the tribe, apparently w/o divine counsel.
      a) When God’s people make a habit of failing to consult Him, they end up confused about right & wrong, wisdom & foolishness.
   2. Jabesh-Gilead was a city of Manasseh in Transjordan.
   3. The men would be killed for not joining in the battle against Benjamin.
   4. So Israel could fulfill its vow under the guise of punishing a noncooperative city
      a) Clearly, this vow was as rash as that of Jephthah (next 1 to walk thru my door I’ll sacrifice to you Lord) and the consequences just as shocking.

D. (13-15) A little problem...the need for wives was not fully met, so a 2nd solution was proposed.
   1. Slide18 The Benjamites were allowed to kidnap young women who were celebrating at a yearly feast in Shiloh.
   2. We can’t “give” them to you but you can take them.

E. (24,25) The last 2 verses of Judges summarize the unstable condition of Israel in the years before the rise of the monarchy.
1. Vs.24 presents *a quiet picture* & is even how Joshua ends 24:28.

2. But then vs.25 gives the final word. Each Israelite *was* living on his own land...but he was *also* doing whatever seemed right to him.
   a) They were living as if there was *no nation, no tribe, no clan, or no family...just a mass of individuals* each pulling in whatever direction they wished.

F. So the book ends in despair. People acting w/o God. People finding their own solutions. But these solutions are sometimes *worse* than the *initial problem*.

G. Slide19a The book of *Joshua* started off with Israel as *one* people, *united* in vision & spirit. The book of *Judges* ended with Israel *fractured* into many pieces. Slide19b

H. How do we tie this in to Christmas season?
   1. What they needed was a leader. A king. But not just a king...but *The King of Kings*. Who came to earth as a little baby *for all* who admit their need for Him.

I. When *people* disobey, their *society* will decay.

J. When *darkness* abides, *leadership* must *arise*.