

Joshua 07-10-05a

This is Friday the 5th of October 2007. We are in the book of Joshua. We're starting a new chapter, chapter 19, tonight.

Let's take a moment as we approach our study together to go to the Lord in prayer, remind ourselves mainly of why we're here and the importance of the Holy Spirit and the opportunity that we have to raise our sights above the mundane and above the ordinary and above the things of this world that if we were unbelievers we could not help but be occupied with. We are believers. The Lord Jesus Christ has delivered us out of that darkness into light and it's a wonderful privilege and it's a wonderful opportunity that we have together this evening.

Shall we pray? Father, thank you for sustaining us and providing for us and blessing us for another week. We thank you for the challenges that you have brought our way and the tests that we have faced and the provision that you have made and the comfort you have provided and the encouragement and guidance that we have received from your spirit. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, the record of his coming, the reasoning behind it, the unfolding of your plan that we find throughout the scriptures, and the certain hope of his return that gives us great confident expectation and motivates us during these days of variety of challenges and opportunities.

We thank you for your word and this portion that is set before us this evening and we ask your blessing on it as we study it together. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Joshua chapter 18 told us about the division of the land after Joshua has gone into the land. There are tribes that have not yet been given their inheritance. You have those that have already taken land in territory on the east side of the Jordan.

It is now time for these others. Ephraim and Manasseh have been dealt with. In 18 we saw the seven tribes that have not yet received their inheritance.

Joshua did a recon, brought back a survey map, sort of like a Lewis and Clark expedition where they went out and tried to map out the various portions. They were familiar with some, not so familiar with others based on their campaigns. So then they came back and began with the first lot that was cast after Judah and Ephraim and Manasseh.

Already having seen Reuben and Gad and the other part of Manasseh on the other side. Then Benjamin in the last half of chapter 18 was the first lot. Last tribe, first lot in this remaining set of seven tribes.

Now in chapter 19 we're going to see the second lot as you look at it. The second lot came out for Simeon for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. Their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.

Seems like every time we get to a new tribe there's something just a little bit different. I would expect and I think you would expect that Joshua and the armies would march across, conquer the Canaanites. They would divide up the land and each would go their own way and yet it's been a very unorthodox, very peculiar means by which the land is divided.

You have a couple of tribes that sort of ask for an inheritance before it's really even been divided. They settled for something less than what is actually the promised land. We saw that already.

You have some that have previous entitlements. The daughters of Zelophehad have a previous entitlement. Caleb has a previous entitlement.

And so then finally you have the lots being cast and you have the allocation that we've studied in these recent weeks. Now as we go into this fresh chapter I want to offer a thought about this content, about this section of the book of Joshua. We went great guns going across the Jordan into the land, walls falling, hail, death, slaughter, sun standing still, big adventure story.

Then we got into this division of the land and the narrative has taken a completely different tone and a different approach. It almost reads like a legal document. You buy a house and they do the title search and they send you all this paperwork and you're trying to sign it all and you go through and you get the entire history going back to when the house was first built and here's the first owner and here's the second owner and here's the plaque and here's the legal description and here's the name of the neighborhood that it's in, the development and the subdivision.

Les Babin is going to remember half a word. Yeah, subdivision. And it's very dry, very dry.

This could easily be very dry and so you say well obviously the Word of God is not very dry. Man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. All of these things were written for our instruction so as I have pointed out in preceding weeks, we want to think and figure out what it is that God has put in this passage.

So I say well you know I've got all kinds of Hebrew background and vocabulary and resources and lexicons and we can go through these city names and there was definitely a lesson I think when we look through the border of Judah for example and we could continue to do that all the way through but I think for thousands of years this scripture has stood available for believers who didn't have a Hebrew lexicon who would look at this list of towns and just say well there's a bunch of hard-to-pronounce words and is it really the case that if you don't have a lexicon you can't get any benefit out of this scripture and I think that certainly cannot be true. So makes me believe, makes me theorize at least that the lesson, the application, the meaning for you and me in this

section is not in some obscure derivation or interpretation of these words. Well if it isn't in there although nothing wrong with that and we as we've seen you can get a lot out of that if you choose but what about the monk over there in you know 13th century France or something who's just studying through and he doesn't have a lot of original language maybe he's working through a Greek translation in the Septuagint or maybe he's working in a French derivation and or Latin most likely he's probably a little Catholic monk and he's got a Latin Vulgate thing before him and so he's he's well removed from the Hebrew in any case so what's he going to get out of this and what would he share if he was a teaching monk what would he share with his fellow monks or with his fellow Catholics who might come down there to the monastery to learn something so we have to go back to answer that question I feel like giving you like three or four minutes to ponder and say well how what is the answer here if it just says and here are the towns that here's how many there were etc and I've asked myself this question I think well what are the fundamental principles of biblical interpretation that you and I thought we have all come to know and appreciate and understand these principles when you come to a scripture that doesn't immediately strike you with its message or with its import what do you do how do we ascertain what scripture is saying how do we come to a confident understanding of its meaning well scripture interprets scripture right if if this particular passage doesn't yield its mysteries up immediately it must need to be informed by other passages of scripture in the Bible for a couple thousand years now has been transmitted in its entirety and for fourteen hundred years before that the Old Testament scriptures as they developed were a unit the Pentateuch was a unit the historical books quickly followed the books of poetry the books of prophecy and so on these things have accompanied each other and it's it's a set and in the same way that when you get into one of these novels that's kind of a series you one book may not necessarily inform you of everything that's going on you say well where did this why do these two characters know each other well you had to had to read the other book first and in the same way this passage in particular isn't going to be very easy to understand if you just look at it in isolation so what do we know that would help us figure out what's going on in this in this passage let's just take a look at a few of these verses we read the first couple of verses in chapter 19 second lot came out for Simeon the tribe of the children of Simeon families their inheritances within the inheritance of the children of Judah they had their inheritance Beersheba Molodai Hazar Shu all by law as an etc all the way down 13 cities in their villages then it gives four cities in their villages all the villages around these cities as far as this at the other first 90 inheritance the children of Simeon was included in the share for the children of Judah for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of that people interesting little detail that their portion seems to have sort of been reallocated from Judah we've already seen that there were some discrepancies with some of the other tribes in terms of who ultimately claimed what town Jebus or what would become Jerusalem kind of went back and forth between Judah and Benjamin we had some other towns in the list that we've talked about before so

having said all that where could we look if this was our piece of manna for the week this is our scripture here you're in a prison camp in this one scrap of a page of the Bible floats down out of the sky and this is what you have to live on spiritually for the next week while you be in trouble because I've already said you need the rest of the Bible to help understand where would we go where would we look what information here what leads to have what clues are there well we have two tribes named only is the tribe of Simeon and they are mentioned with reference and their territories mentioned with reference to the tribe of Judah so it might help if we knew a little bit more about those tribes I don't have to parse any Hebrew verbs or derive the meaning of any Hebrew nouns or place names to go back to Genesis and see the origins of the tribe of Simeon and to learn a little bit about its history so if we go back and do that here's what we discover the birth order of Jacob's sons of course begins with Reuben and who's the second-born Simeon Reuben I'm not sure I can get all the way down the list but I know the first few very well Reuben Simeon Levi Judah and your first six sons are all sons of Leah then you have Conti mine sons and then at the end you have the two sons of Rachel Joseph and Benjamin so there is the status as the second-born son that is occupied by Simeon his name is explained in the scripture that talks about his birth over in Genesis chapter 29 verse 33 when Leah conceives a second time and bore a son she said because the Lord has heard that I am unloved remember Leah was not the favorite wife Jacob worked seven more years married to Leah the whole time to get another wife he didn't say well now that I've got you I find that I'm perfectly happy and I don't I don't need Rachel after all instead for seven years she sat there watching her husband knock himself out to get another wife the one that he was enamored with to begin with and she was kind of the the poor substitute and you remember this in the story in Genesis and so she says I am unloved but look I'm generating sons and when she conceived and bore the second son she said because the Lord has heard that I am unloved he has therefore given me this son also so she called his name Simeon and this comes from the Hebrew verb although we don't have to know this but Shammah is the root of Simeon it's it's also the root of Shmuel by the way which means to hear has the idea of somebody calling and somebody hearing and she called out and God she felt like God heard her prayer there are people who try to associate it with a an Arabic word Sima S-I-M-A which which was used for the offspring of the hyena or the female wolf it's kind of like talking about we call them pups if they come from dogs or kittens if they come from cats well the Arabs called the offspring of a hyena or the offspring of a wolf Sima and so they would say well he's he's like a wolf pup or a hyena pup or something but that's not what his mother said of course his other brothers in addition to Reuben are going to be Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun those are the those are all the sons of Leah so we know this already he's the second born son we also know that he is one of two sons that committed a grievous evil remember what it was why was he rejected by his father because when the Dinah incident took place nearby individuals over in Shechem took up with Dinah defiled Dinah they were upset they by means of a ruse went in and slaughtered these guys and Jacob was horrified by that and so he in his dying blessing

he said Simeon and Levi are brethren weapons of violence are their swords oh my soul come not thou into their counsel unto their assembly my glory be thou not united for in their anger they slew a man in their self-will they hocked an ox cursed be their anger for it was fierce cursed be their wrath for it was cruel I this is Genesis 49 5-7 by the way Jacob said in his predictive blessings for his sons I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel now we have a little bit of help with what's going on in Joshua no way Jacob said many many many many many years before the offspring of Simeon and Levi are going to be scattered in Israel now this is what's fascinating and this is a point that seems to be made over and over again in these middle chapters of Joshua and the point is this we determine how God treats us by our decisions we determine our fate our fate is not determined for us it is all about our choices our volition our self-established goals and values and priorities think about this who gets no territory whatsoever in the promised land which tribe Levi Levi gets no land territory assigned no borders no boundaries they're going to be given some places to live but they have no ownership of land in Israel Levi and Simeon committed the very same act and came under the very same curse from their father Simeon and Levi are brethren Jacob said and he curses them together he predicts about them together they will be scattered in Israel however the sons of Levi learned from their mistake what tribe is Aaron from Aaron the priest tribe of Levi what tribe is Moses from Moses is Aaron's brother tribe of Levi right a Levite is the one who delivers Israel out of bondage and leads them to the shores of the promised land a Levite is appointed to be the high priest and his descendants will be the servants of the Lord in the tabernacle and later the temple same curse for Simeon same opportunity for Simeon however Simeon is a different kind of man if you look at the records in Chronicles for example you know where they go to each tribe and they say here were the sons of Judah here were the clans the major clans under each tribe what you find out is that Simeon got married and had some sons and then something happened to his wife or didn't happen to his wife but he married a Canaanite woman and had at least one son with her he married a Canaanite well that's kind of what Esau did you remember Esau broke his father's heart he married one or more women who were outside the the people of God so the curse is turned to blessing in one case and not in the other isn't it because Levi is truly scattered in Israel but they're scattered as a blessing they're scattered as the priests and the ministers of God the teachers of the oracles of God yes they are scattered in accordance with Jacob's word but that scattering is a is a good thing they have a it winds up being a privilege there are going to be men who want to be the Levites remember the core of Dathan and Abiram rebellion why can't we be just like the sons of Levi in fact some of them were sons of Levi they weren't sons of Aaron and they wanted the priestly prerogative they wanted the priestly privileges cursing is turned to blessing for those who go God's way who choose to live in faith who choose to live in obedience there are certain built-in consequences for bad decisions this curse got pronounced on Simeon and Levi because they made a series of bad choices but Levi and his descendants turned from their error and they wind up being the most blessed tribe in Israel I think it's more of a blessing to be a priest than it is to be a king

which would you rather do sit up in a palace and administrate a bunch of ungrateful people or be in the precincts of God's presence you know what David said one day in your courts is worth a thousand anywhere else words to that effect so I just want to point out that as we look at what happens to Simeon here it just keeps going from bad to worse Simeon doesn't actually get a territory assigned either just like Levi but for a completely different reason and in a completely different way same curse is working itself out but in Levi that curse turns to blessing in Simeon look at what happens Judah is so over-blessed with territory they've got land to spare they say we can't even take all the cities and the stuff that we've got we can't even deal with that stuff down south so part of the southern territory of Judah is reallocated and all of these cities that you see listed here we don't have to know what the names mean but if you go back to the list of cities for Judah they're all listed there these are all cities originally given to Judah and reassigned this is like well this is a these are hand-me-down cities Judah is well I've got about their spare so you can have these I'm your younger brother but I'll help you out you know here take these I've got plenty and so Simeon it's it's kind of humiliating in a way if you look at their numbers in the book of Numbers and then you look at them later on in Chronicles they are a diminishing tribe there their numbers are shrinking they have 55,000 some-odd warriors in numbers I want to say chapter 33 by the time you get over to the the next time that people are numbered they only have like 22,000 they've been cut by half they're a shrinking tribe and here's what's going to happen you see this list of cities the inheritance of the children of Simeon was included in the share of the children of Judah for the share of the children of Judah was too much for them for Judah so Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of that people they are scattered within Israel in other words now let me ask you just a general Bible knowledge question let's see how good your general Bible knowledge is in the time of the monarchy in the time of Solomon and right after Solomon what's the what's the geography of Israel what happens when the when the kingdom splits how many tribes are up north in the northern kingdom in the northern kingdom 10 tribes right wait a minute Simeon was given territory in southern Judah why aren't there three tribes down south at least what happened to Simeon's inheritance that they got as a hand-me-down from Judah well if you look carefully at some of the events in Judges and on into Kings and Chronicles you find that the tribes other than Judah and Benjamin in the south that had apportionments down there eventually gave up and migrated north and there are references to warriors of Simeon and warriors of some of these other tribes coming down from the north because that's where they have moved they this isn't even going to last they are truly scattered in Israel they start out down in south Judah but by the time of David 400 years later anybody left as Simeon is up north pretty much so what does this tell you and how about the Levites on the other hand how are the Levites doing by the time of David thriving remember David has to set up 24 courses for all the priests that's just the sons of Aaron that doesn't even count the you know the sons of Korah and all the ones who do the singing and the the service of the tabernacle and what will soon be the temple the Levites are flourishing and thriving they've been scattered throughout Israel and didn't

even ever have territory to call their own Simeon has given some here and they eventually lose it and they just wind up going off and trying to live with some of their brothers up north ten tribes up north that's not how it started what happened bad decision after bad decision after bad decision there is no reason even if you start at a deficit even if you start out under discipline even if you start out with your father pronouncing a curse God can turn cursing to blessing look at Levi Levi started out exactly the same way as Simeon Simeon down down down down Levi up up up up have you ever heard of anybody in the modern world whose last name is Cohen like Sammy Cohen and that in the entertainment world that sort of thing the phone book of any major city go to New York there's pages and pages of Cohen's C-O-H-E-N you know what that name is that is unchanged in three and a half thousand years Cohen is Kohane K-O-H-E-N that is the Hebrew word for priest these guys are the sons of Levi and you can still identify them today they those men have still got the name and you can trace their ancestry those those Cohen family men those guys go right back to Aaron and they're still identifiable today Israel ever or not if and ever but when they finally regather in the true sense when God regathers them and the tribes are once again identifiable that's going to be the easiest tribe to identify because they have that's how blessed the Levites are Simeon by way of contrast the father of that tribe began marrying a Canaanite woman and it's just been downhill ever since by the time you even at the end of the life of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 remember the song of Moses the blessing that he pronounces on the tribes Deuteronomy chapter 33 and he he mentions the various tribes he starts out and he says the Lord came down from Sinai dawned on the people from Seir and Paran and 10,000 of his saints fiery law came down and so on he says let Reuben live and not die nor let his men be few this he said of Judah hear Lord the voice of Judah and bring him to his people let his hands be sufficient for him may you be a help against his enemies and he pronounces a blessing on Levi and he goes down through all the tribes guess who's not mentioned by Moses in those blessings on the tribes in Deuteronomy 33 give you one guess Simeon Moses doesn't even mention Simeon he's not even dead yet Simeon is already sunk to the point that they're not worth a mention by the leader of the nation in his final words its choices its decisions and it is indicated to us symbolically through Simeon's initial bad judgment in the incident and then toward the end of his life when he marries his Canaanite woman and has a son with her it just it just keeps going down and down there's very little history at all related to the Simeonites but here's a little bit of history related to the tribe of Simeon do you remember that in numbers there was an episode where the Midianites came over and started seducing all of Israel away and then Phineas came through the camp and there was a guy who had gotten a Midianite woman and brought her right into the middle of the camp and was having his way with her just flaunting disrespect and disregard for the things of God and Phineas went through and ran them both through with one javelin you remember that well the gal's name was Cosby the man's name was Zimri and Zimri was from the tribe of Simeon that's Numbers chapter 2 and verse 12 that talks about them camping next to Reuben and then in chapter 10 verse 19 you have a another reference to them but it's

Numbers chapter 25 where you have the episode of Baal Peor which God was very unhappy there was death and destruction on that occasion and Zimri is the poster boy for that bad episode and Zimri was a Simeonite so as I said in Numbers chapter 1 there's over 59,000 Simeonites at the second census at the end of the book in Numbers 26 they've dwindled down to 22,000 and some change shrinking tribe cursed and not blessed and it's because of this kind of choice lack of dedication lack of the Caleb attitude or the Joshua attitude and they had plenty of opportunities when when Israel assembled at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal to hear the blessings and the curses which side would you guess Simeon would be on not a blessing or a curse you might be surprised Simeon in Deuteronomy 27 was the first tribe to be named to stand at the Mount of Blessing all day long God says I have held out my hands to disobedient and stiff-necked people God said look Simeon it's not too late turn yourselves around here look at the blessings that are available if you will just heed in here in the city list here that I already gave in chapter 19 if you go back to Joshua 15 21 through 32 that's where you find that those very same cities that have been given to Judah there were still over 7,000 Simeonite warriors that came to David in Hebron this is recorded in First Chronicles 12:25 remember David initially started ruling from Hebron which was in the Judah territory before he ruled over all Israel and Simeon sent 7,100 actually warriors and you would think well okay this tribe is hopeless this tribe is on the downhill slide and that's why they lose their territory they dwindle in numbers they disappear out of Moses blessing and they have a scanty history their few notable members are reprobates and then they just kind of disappear but what if you had been born into the tribe of Simeon and said wait a minute I don't share this view I want to be faithful to God I want to be blessed by God I want to have that hard charging Caleb type of attitude am I just doomed because I'm in the tribe of Simeon not at all take a look at the episode that is found in First Chronicles 12 I'm sorry First Chronicles 4:39 there are 500 Simeonite warriors led by a set of brothers and they go and attack take a look at first 24 First Chronicles 4 the sons of Simeon, Nemuel, Jameen, Jereb, Zerah, and Shaul, Shalem his son, Mibsam his son, Mishmah his son, the sons of Mishmah and so on, Shimea had 16 sons tells where they dwelt in verse 28 and following their villages were and it gives a whole list of those and in verse 38 it says these mentioned by name were leaders in their families and their father's house increased greatly so they went to the entrance of Gedor which at this point the Septuagint reads Gerar remember Abimelech the king of Gerar Isaac Abraham both had dealings with the king of Gerar well that may in fact be the town it's real easy to confuse D and R in the Aramaic script it's the difference of a tittle remember one jot or one tittle will not pass away well if you make an upside-down L that's an R if you make an upside-down L with a little tiny corner on it that's a D as they're commonly confused and so this could well be Gerar instead of Gedar or Gedor they went to the entrance of this town as far as the east side of the valley to seek pastures for their flocks they found rich good pasture the land was broad quiet and peaceful Hamites had formerly lived there these recorded by name notice they are honored because they're recorded by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah

attacked their tents and the Maunites who were found there and utterly destroyed them as it is to this day so they dwelt in their place because there was pasture for their flocks there some of them five hundred men of the sons of Simeon went to Mount Seir having as their captains Palatia Nehariah Rephiah and Uzziel the sons of Ishi and they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped and they have dwelt there to this day belatedly they accomplished some of the victory and some of the possession of the land that they had initially been charged to do by God almost a thousand years earlier this by the time you get down to the days of Hezekiah that well not a thousand years but maybe 700 years earlier instead of 1400 BC by the time you get to Hezekiah you're talking about 721 BC when the northern kingdom goes out and Hezekiah's kingdom is almost overrun but at the last moment God spares them so it's you're not doomed you're not fated you are not restricted by any pre-existing condition your heredity is not an issue your environment is not an issue your past mistakes and any consequences from those are not an issue there's a great hymn that talks about grace greater than all our sins God is anxious he is pleading he is scouring the earth looking for people for whom he can turn cursing to blessing our condemnation in a lost and fallen race dead in Adam and Adam all die but God turns that curse into a blessing because when we are saved and when we go into the eternal future as those who have been rescued from darkness and brought into light this is a manifestation and a tribute to the grace of the character and the compassion of God that would never exist except for that initial curse God turns cursing to blessing for those who choose it the Levites chose it many of them the ones who didn't you got Korah, Dathan, some of those guys were Levites and the earth swallowed them up bad choices making a Levite or being a Levite doesn't make you automatically blessed you can be a Levite and the earth will swallow you whole, swallow you alive and your family you can be a Jebusite or you can be a Canaanite and come to God bring your moldy bread your old sandals and wangle your way in be Rahab the harlot be Naaman the Syrian and you can be blessed you can be a Simeonite in a decadent and shrinking and failed tribe and you can lay hold of the promises of God identify the enemies of God go forth and attack them and take their territory and dwell there unto this day that's what the sons of Ishi did.

You know what Ishi means in Hebrew? My man. Ishi. Remember that in Genesis? Ishi means my.

Ishi, my man. These are the sons of my man. God says this is what I'm looking for doesn't matter what tribe you're in if you will take your sword in your hand and go slay the Amalekites dwell there to this day God says there is nothing stopping you and nothing stopping me from receiving the blessing of God but our own choices and to the extent that we do choose and we do operate in faith and obedience if God before us who can be against us is there anything too hard for the Lord these are scriptures no mistake we've made no past discipline no past judgment no sorry episode that had lasting consequences God can turn every single one of those things to his advantage to benefit

to blessing all we have to do is recognize the opportunity and say that's what I want that's what I want my life to partake of that's what I want my life to be centered around the plan and purpose of God it is not the will of God that any should perish but look at how many are perishing and why is that it's not God's will and there's only one other will involved and that's the people who are perishing it is their own choice it's their own decision it's the same with us we determine where we will fall in God's plan are we on the blessing side of the cursing side are we on the inheritance and reward side or are we in the darkness which is outside it's entirely our choice and you can see it illustrated so clearly with this little tribe of simeon this short section in Joshua is so poignant when you think about opportunity lost second-born son could have easily been and had everything that Ruben gave up bad choices pattern bad choices and no repentance no change of mind let's pause here take a break when we come back we'll see what else is in store for us in Joshua chapter 19