

Judges 08-01-18a

This is Friday, the 18th of January, 2008. We continue our study in the book of Judges. We're in Chapter 1. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are grateful for this portion of your Word. We thank you for the opportunity to spend time studying it and thinking about it together. We ask your blessing on us as we study that the things that we learn will nurture us and build us up and draw us closer together as a group and also equip us individually and collectively for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Judges Chapter 1, continuing the story and actually backtracking a bit to the end of the book of Joshua.

We're going to see tonight that we're actually going to step back in this first chapter before the death of Joshua, an event that we've already seen in the previous book, and move forward past it. And as I mentioned last time, this is a very common feature of Hebrew storytelling, ancient Near Eastern storytelling, proto-Sinaitic storytelling, whatever you want to call it. People from this part of the world in old days would tell you something and back up and retell it, and back up, and they were not nearly as concerned with chronology.

Think about this. Have you ever gone back? Now, I don't want a show of hands. I don't want anybody to either brag or be embarrassed.

But have you gone back? This is a rhetorical question. Have you gone back and read a play by Shakespeare? Have you gone through and read Hamlet, or Othello, or Romeo and Juliet, or Two Gentlemen of Verona, any of the plays of Shakespeare? Think about that experience. When did Shakespeare live? How many hundred years ago? Four, five hundred years ago, right? It's around the time of the King James translation, 1611 King James, give or take.

We'll just call it 400 years ago. You've got Shakespeare circulating. Now, in the days in which he wrote, people spoke differently, and they told stories differently.

Dialogue was different. There have been attempts to modernize Shakespearean plays and set them in movie fashion in the present, or in World War I, or what have you, with very mixed results. Because you've got people walking around in polos, sweaters, and sneakers, saying, you know, whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows.

You know, it just looks very strange. It sounds very strange. All these prithe and, you know, quoth this and verily that.

It's just really strange. Because we have expectations in modern storytelling, modern presentation of dramatic entertainment, that are far different than they were in the days of Shakespeare. Well, that's just a few centuries' time difference.

We are going back in time 3,500 years. More than ten times, well, slightly less than ten times. I

don't do math for a living.

Eight or ten times further back than Shakespeare, or even your 19th century authors, guys that wrote in the 1800s. You go back and read some of those books, read some of the correspondence that was written, read the letters that were exchanged between husbands and wives in the Civil War, for example. Completely different kind of thinking.

Different vocabulary. Different level of thought. Deeper, more intricate, more complex, more connected.

So I say all of that to remind all of us that you cannot put modern expectations on 3,500-year-old storytelling. It is not going to be presented the way they are today. So it is not, or should not be, a surprise that the beginning of this book backtracks.

After it goes forward, it says, now after the death of Joshua it came to pass in the first verse, the children of Israel did thus and so. And yet, we are going to find that there is a reference to the death of Joshua in chapter 2 and verse 7. So right away we know that these events are not necessarily chronological. We also know that the storytelling in the last chapters of Joshua was not necessarily chronological.

The interest of the author, the interest of the storyteller, the interest of the scripture, both for the Hebrews to whom it was originally given and to us is not to establish a chronological timeline. It is to impress us with events and the doctrines and the principles that thereunto pertain. You didn't expect that, did you? That's not how we talk now.

So, there is one last administrative detail we want to iron out before we actually move into this chapter. And this is something I'm just going to reference relatively quickly. It has to do with chronology.

As I mentioned last time, there is debate and there is difference of opinion and there is scholarly disdain in our modern day for the biblical account that we are reading. Modern archaeologists, modern scholars do not believe that the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, that they left under Moses, that they wandered for 40 years, that they entered the land of Canaan and conquered it and burned certain cities and captured others under Joshua and that they then settled and appropriated that land for themselves. It is disbelieved on the basis of science.

And it's a useful paradigm, especially for some of you that are still pursuing your education, to take with caution the conclusions of science based on what everyone will agree is material evidence. Now, what do I mean by that? Scientists can go and unwind the strands of DNA and count the genes and compare the genes of a chimp to the genes of a human being and say, guess what? Percentage-wise, a human chromosome and a chimp chromosome match to 96.5% or so. Therefore, we descend from a common ancestor.

That's why our genes are so close. Is it valid to say that the chromosomes match to 95 or better

percent? That's a fact. Get the chromosome map, spread the thing out and do the comparison and you will see that better than 95% match of the chromosomes of a chimp and the chromosomes of a human.

No dispute. But the conclusion that is drawn from that evidence is they descend from a common point of origin in the biological world. We would say they descend from a common point of origin in the spiritual world, but science says there was a proto-simian-apian-human-something-or-other there and that proto-quadruped-semi-upright-knuckle-walking world, it eventually devolved down and you got your apes and you got your monkeys and you got your humans.

Well, this is a conclusion based on fact, but the conclusion itself is not a fact. We've talked about this before. I just want to give you that as an example because the same thing happens in the archaeological world.

Now, this is my second challenge to your imagination. First of all, had you imagined that you were reading Shakespeare and trying to translate it in the modern day. Now, imagine that the rapture took place in the next few minutes and your house gets buried in a layer of volcanic ash or something to be uncovered at some future point by some hypothetical archaeologists.

They're going to go in and they're going to find some stuff in your wastebasket, they're going to find some stuff in your closet, they're going to find some stuff all over your house and their task is to reconstruct who you are, what you do and when you got all of your stuff. Now, think about it. Just make a little mental trip through your house.

Make a mental trip through my house. Most of you have been there. Can you imagine somebody trying to reconstruct the chronology of my life based on what they find in my house? I've got stuff that belong to my grandmother.

I have things that belong to my great-great-great-grandfather. I have a letter from my great-great-great-uncle that he wrote in the Civil War. That's in my house.

Somebody would dig that up and they would try to place it. I've got pottery made by my college roommate. I've got pottery that belonged to my grandmother.

They're all going to be in the same archaeological stratum in my house. To cut a long story short, when archaeologists dig up the ancient world, they are not finding, unless you go to the lava under Vesuvius or something, typically they do not find intact sites. They find what is left over after destruction, what is left over after people moved out.

It has been picked over. Everything of value has been removed, if it could possibly be found. And what you have left is just the detritus and the trash and the crumbled, broken remains of things.

And they're trying to piece together. And so the result is, it's fragmentary. The fragments are

facts, just like the facts of DNA.

The layers and what is above and below a given stratum, that's a fact. But the interpretation of what is found in those layers and when they might be dated is speculation. Now, I've belabored this point because when you get to the archaeology of the ancient Near East, when you get to Holy Land archaeology, there is a wide spectrum of belief and of theory.

And nobody is right. Hear me carefully. Nobody is right.

There is nobody you can point to that has got ancient chronology right. No one. Nobody has nailed it.

Everyone has got significant problems. Now, some of you, I happen to know, including myself, are familiar or getting familiar or becoming familiar with revised chronology materials, whether it's from Velikovsky, whether it's from Donovan Curville, whether it's from David Roll or others. A lot of people have the sense that something is wrong with the standard view of ancient history.

And they're right. Something's wrong. But the solutions all have problems.

The solutions all have criticisms. So my encouragement is to you, do not be alarmed, do not come unglued or unraveled if someone says, we don't find any archaeological evidence for Israel wandering in the wilderness. We don't find any evidence for Israel taking over the land.

We don't find any evidence for Israel in Egypt. We don't find any evidence for Moses. We don't find any evidence for Joseph.

I can assure you that most of those people are looking in the wrong place at the wrong time for those materials. There is, conservatively speaking, in the later days, between the time of David and the carrying away into Babylon, an error of at least 150 and probably closer to 300 years in the chronology. As you move further back in time, that error telescopes.

I thought about giving you a detailed baptism in blood of revised chronology, but I'm not going to. If you're interested in it, I can point you to materials that you'll find very interesting. Let me just say this.

Between David and the captivity, 150 to 300 year error, depending on who you listen to. Prior to David, going back to the Exodus and earlier, that error telescopes and expands at the time of the Exodus. I personally believe the error is on the order of 600 years.

Most scholars think that the Exodus took place in the time of Ramses, because there's a mention in Genesis of the cities of Ramses and so on, and they therefore date the Exodus down in the 1200s. Well, there's a pretty good likelihood that Ramses is actually after the time of David. But if you go back, there is a good case to be made that conservative scholars will say, okay, it wasn't Ramses.

We'll take it back to the 18th dynasty and we'll place it in there. I personally, if I was going to roll the dice and guess, and it would be a guess because I'm not an Egyptologist. I think the Exodus took place in the 12th dynasty.

You can just make a note of it. When you delve into all the materials, you can decide for yourself. But the 11th and the 12th dynasties occupy what is known as the Middle Kingdom period.

This bears on judges, so just bear with me for a second. Egyptian history, three big pieces. You've got the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

For you, Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom. Time traveling in this direction. In between the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom, you have the First Intermediate Period, which is everything is kind of organized.

They're building pyramids. They're starting to get Egypt cranked up and going in the Old Kingdom. Then everything kind of comes unglued and unraveled, and they have a period of chaos and unrest, and nobody can figure out what's going on.

That's the First Intermediate Period. Then you have the Middle Kingdom, which is kind of the zenith, the apex. Everything great, grand, and glorious seems to happen at that time.

I think the Great Pyramid of Cheops and stuff is built during that time. Then it all devolves into chaos, and you have the Second Intermediate Period. Then you have the New Kingdom Period, the Late Period.

These are the pharaohs that were around in the time after the Hyksos. You've got the Hyksos kind of in that Second Intermediate Period and so on. That's just a big broad brush of Egyptian history.

To cut a big, long, complicated story extremely short, I think the scholars are probably right who believe that that is erroneous, and that the First Intermediate Period and the Second Intermediate Period should go like this, that there's basically Old Egypt, a big bunch of chaos, and New Egypt. Now, it's complex, but all of the Egyptian king lists, the kings and their reigns have been just stacked one after another like blocks, and so that makes this big, long string, and it puts the founding of Egypt back, biblically speaking, well before the Flood. If, however, you take the fact that many of those reigns were parallel, going on at the same time, and the Bible itself talks about Mizraim, remember that's the biblical name for Egypt, and it goes back to the sons of Noah and the distribution after Babel and so on.

There were five, and even Manetho, the great Manetho king list, on which a lot of Egyptian chronology is based, also talks about the fact that there are five kingdoms in Egypt. Well, those kingdoms often had separate pharaoh, separate kings, separate royal cartouches ruling at the same time, but ancient Near Eastern chronology has stacked them all one after the other, and has artificially telescoped the history of Egypt by centuries. If you put that intermediate period

together, and recognize that some of these guys were ruling at the same time, and this can be demonstrated by looking at burials, where a guy from the 24th dynasty got buried before a guy from the 21st dynasty, type of thing, you recognize that this is true.

To cut a long story short, when you fix the chronology that way, it turns out that Egypt is founded within about 150 years of the Tower of Babel. So is ancient Sumeria. A lot of weird, mysterious, missing layers in archaeological layers in long existing cities like Byblos.

Byblos is missing the entire Iron Age in its layers. The whole thing is just gone. 600 years of history are missing in what has been, by all historical accounts, a continuously occupied city.

And it just mysteriously has no Iron Age layer at all. And the reason for that is that they dig down to a certain point, certain point, certain point, and then they say, oh, look, here's stuff belonging to Ramses II. Well, we know Ramses is back in the 1200s instead of the 800s, so they just disappear 400 to 600 years of history and say, well, we're going digging down.

Well, they don't recognize that Ramses was so much later than he actually was. It's a long, convoluted thing, and nobody's got it right. Velikovsky had some great ideas, but he's got some big errors.

Donovan Kerrville had some great ideas, but he's got some erroneous errors. David Rohl has got some great ideas, but there are some irreconcilable problems with his theory as well. But taken together, all of them point to a serious problem in chronology.

So all I want you to remember, all I encourage you to remember, is don't become alarmed if you read a journal or pick up a biblical archaeology review and it says some guy is pontificating and saying there is no evidence. There's a lot of evidence. By the way, let me just give you one other thing.

The 11th and 12th dynasties span the Middle Kingdom in Egypt, in one part of Egypt. And what's interesting about that is in the beginning of the 12th dynasty, you have a situation and you have a vizier who is known in history, and he is called the Feeder of Thousands and the Chief of the Two Granaries, and he's got all these other titles that really closely match the biblical vizier that we're all familiar with who sustained the land through a great famine. He's well known.

He's got a name. He's documented. Toward the end of that dynasty, 215 years later, to be precise, there is a pharaoh who rules, who, although he is the son of his father and came to the throne, is not succeeded by a son, but is instead succeeded by his half-sister slash wife because his son's not around.

There is a 215 year, just for the records in that dynasty, ignoring all the rest of the kings in the other. This is in the Theban king list, and there is a lot of correspondence to the mysterious disappearance of this pharaoh. His tomb is not occupied.

His son is not to be found. His dynasty ends after his half-sister slash wife can't get things fixed up, and then you have the Hyksos coming in. There are equally valid understandings of history that comport precisely and very convincingly with the biblical account, but I'm telling you, you have to read copious amounts.

We don't have time to go into it for the purposes of our study in the Book of Judges. I just want you to be aware that these things exist. If you're interested in doing further reading, you can search on materials by and about Velikovsky, by and about Donovan Kerrville, by and about David Rohl, put in revised chronology, and take all of the things that you find with a little bit of a grain of salt.

You will find mixed in amongst that materials by Herbert W. Armstrong, and answers in Genesis, and there are some wild-eyed people who just make your hair stand on end. But in the midst of all of that bluster and fluff, there is some substantial agreement that there's something wrong with the standard chronology. Now, that's the last I'm going to say about that subject.

We're in the Book of Judges, and we're in a period which, when you understand what the chronology should be, is smack in the middle of the Middle Bronze Age. Why is this important? Because Middle Bronze, by all archaeological accounts, if you unhinge the years and just forget what year it is, this is the zenith, this is the best time for material culture. This is when art and pottery and manufacture and civilization and settlement is at its peak.

And when you fix the chronology and fix the problems in the Egyptian king lists and so on, you find that Middle Bronze is the time when Israel comes out of Egypt and goes into the land of Canaan. Middle Bronze, not Late Bronze, not Early Iron. It's Middle Bronze.

Now, there are some subdivisions within that, and you can argue where and when. But here's another little interesting tidbit. You may have heard or read that there are some turquoise mines down in the Sinai Peninsula, where they have found some Egyptian artifacts, an Egyptian temple to the goddess Hathor.

And this mine was mined continuously from early days in Egypt, beginning in the Old Kingdom, all the way down through the end of the New Kingdom. It was continuously mined. But what's particularly interesting is, during the Middle Kingdom period, during the 12th Dynasty specifically, in addition to all of the Egyptian inscriptions and artifacts and so on, the earliest examples of Proto-Hebrew, Proto-Sinaitic, Proto-Canaanite, whatever you want to call it, the earliest examples of writing that is not in hieroglyphs.

In fact, it is a weird mixture. It seems to be related to and drawing upon hieroglyphs, but it's also got some of the earliest examples of letters like Aleph and Beit and Hay and some of the early Old Hebrew alphabet. And it's a weird mixture, dated to the 12th Dynasty, with inscriptions by the very same pharaoh that is the pharaoh of the Exodus.

There's a cartouche and an inscription from his reign. And this is exactly the same time that these Semitic inscriptions show up at that place. And it is right on the road for Israel, who left Egypt and went around that way.

And you find that example of writing. This is significant because the Bible talks about Moses writing down the words of the law, Joshua writing the words in a book and making inscriptions and making monumental writings and so on, both in the wilderness, taking down the words of the book of the law, and the inscriptions that we've seen in the land. Well, they used to say this is an anachronism, it can't be possible, they didn't have writing back then, this is clearly a mistake.

No, it's not. Clear back in the 12th Dynasty, we have Semitic writing with Hebrew, old Hebrew letters mixed in with it. They're still trying to figure out what they say.

But, on a slab in one of these mines, they have found the two letters, Aleph and Lamed, from this time. What does Aleph-Lamed spell? El, which is the name of God. El Elohim, Elohim is the dual, the plural of majesty, El is the singular.

All of your names, like Yisrael, Israel, Prince of El, Prince of God, that name is in there. Of course, there's also the name of Baalot, it's one of the few words they've been able to decipher from this early Proto-Semitic, Proto-Canaanite writing. Of course, Baal is Lord, Baalot is the feminine form of that, and they're still trying to figure out the rest of it.

They've got some of the finest linguists in the world trying to crack exactly what these inscriptions say. But, it is contemporaneous, I believe, with the time of the Exodus, Semitic writing. It is not Egyptian, it isn't Sumerian, and it isn't anything else but Semitic.

It's its own unique thing. Well, this is a historical account, it is an accurate account. It can be trusted, it can be relied upon.

There's archaeology that fits, and don't let anyone dissuade you from that truth. Now, chapter 1 of Judges. After the death of Joshua, it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up.

Indeed, I have delivered the land into his hand. So Judah said to Simeon his brother, Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory. And Simeon went with him.

Now, you're going to teach a Bible class on this passage. This is your third trip of the imagination tonight. You're going to teach a Bible class on this passage.

If you had to stop right there, this is Scripture. All Scripture is God-breathed, profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. What do you draw from this? Just take a look at it for a second.

My fervent hope and confident expectation is that you can meditate on the Word of God, just like I can. You can see things in God's Word under the ministry of God's Spirit, just like I can. What do you see in this? After the death of Joshua, the children of Israel asked the Lord, Who shall be first to go up? The Lord said, Judah will go up.

Judah said to Simeon, Come up with me to my allotted territory. Simeon went up with him. Judah went up.

The Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand. They killed 10,000 men at Bezek. What do you notice with your eye for detail in there? Well, I will make a few suggestions.

First of all, after the death of Joshua, this particular episode, as far as it may go, is in fact chronologically going to be after chapter 2, verse 7-10, which gives us the death of Joshua. Because it says after the death of Joshua. It came to pass the children of Israel asked the Lord, Who are the children of Israel? How many tribes make up the children of Israel? It's all of them, right? Numerically speaking, 13 tribes.

So, at the death of Joshua, who's in charge? Who's in charge of Israel after the death of Joshua? Did Joshua have a protege? Did Othniel or somebody else step up and become the next in line after Moses and Joshua? Who's in charge? It's the elders of the individual tribes, isn't it? Each tribe has an elder. How do we know this? Look back at Joshua 24, verse 30. They bury Joshua within the border of his inheritance at Timnath-Sera, in the mountains of Ephraim, because he was from the tribe of Ephraim.

Remember, Ephraim is the chief tribe of the northern kingdom, the northern ten tribes. Judah is the chief of the southern region. That's why so often God talks to Ephraim and to Judah, and characterizes the northern kingdom in later history as Ephraim.

Then what does it say in verse 31? Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and... What? What does it say? All the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which he had done for Israel. So after Joshua dies, this first generation of elders, trained, given momentum, charged by Joshua to keep the faith, and keep to the straight and narrow, do so. The first generation of elders who outlived Joshua, Israel serves the Lord all of their days.

How long would their days likely be? Maybe 40 to 50 years after the death of Joshua? You figure some of these guys might have been in their 20s and 30s. Tough to imagine them as elders at the death of Joshua. But let's just be charitable and be generous and say that after Joshua, at least a full biblical generation, 40 years after, they would have served.

This episode in Judges chapter 1, verses 1 and following, is in that period. How do we know this? Because all of Israel is still united. And what's the first thing they do? They inquire of the Lord.

How many times in the rest of the book of Judges are we going to see anybody in Israel inquire

of the Lord as a group? We've got some individuals. Gideon's going to throw out his fleece. Samson's going to say, Lord avenge me for my two eyes, and one thing and another.

But in the rest of the book of Judges, how many times do we see all Israel gathering together and saying, let us inquire of the Lord? It's a rare thing. But it happens here because we're in that aftermath, that afterglow, after the death of Joshua. Now, they ask God a question.

What's the question? Who shall be first to go up for us, all of Israel, to fight against the Canaanites? And the Lord said, what? What's God's answer? How many tribes shall go up? Who shall be first? Judah. Judah shall go up. So we read in verse 3, So Judah girded up his loins, put on his sword, stuck on his helmet and went forth to do battle, and the Lord gave him a great victory.

What does it say? Judah said to Simeon his brother, hey, I know God didn't name you, but you come along with me, to help me. Now, I'm just asking here, does this bode well if God says Judah shall go up, and Judah says, hey, let me get some more guys? God didn't say, behold, Judah and Simeon shall go up, did he? He said, Judah shall go up. And Judah said, well, I ain't going up there by myself.

So already, we're in that aftermath phase. These elders have not died out yet, and they do the right thing, inquiring of the Lord. Now, observe, interpret, apply.

We have a challenge. We're getting ready to do a thing. We've got a problem to solve.

We've got a task to accomplish. We've got a direction to determine. We've got a policy to set.

We've got something that needs doing. And we know that we're Christians. Our lives should glorify God.

So what do we do? We get on our knees, and we say, Lord, help me figure this out. I want to think about it in the light of your word. I want to reflect biblical principles in my life, in my decisions, and in my actions.

So, Lord, lead me, guide me. You've made the promise. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Ask, and it shall be given, etc. Lord, here I am. I'm asking the question.

So, in His way, and through His word, through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, we get the answer. This looks like I'm on solid biblical ground to do this. Well, do we start adding, and refining, and bolstering, and getting some insurance, and getting some... Well, that's a good idea, and I think I'll also start padding, and shielding, and otherwise augmenting, and gilding this lily that God has given me.

We are not supposed to add where God has not added. Let me give you an example that doesn't pertain to anybody here, or us as a group. I know it doesn't, and you'll know it when I give you this illustration.

Suppose there is a church, and the church says, we must grow. And so, the pastor, or the elders, or whoever, get down on their knees and say, Lord, we need to grow. How should we grow? And the idea comes to this leadership, may well be from the Lord, you need to put in some facilities.

If you build it, they will come, let's say. Okay, let's say that this is from God. There are churches that are supposed to be there.

There are churches that are supposed to have a brick-and-mortar facade. I'm reasonably sure of this. And so, God says, you need to invest.

You need to put some money into your ministry. You need something. Okay.

The leadership of the church, the board, the men, the pastor, and his cohorts, they say, alright, that's what we're going to do. Then, to implement this plan, they say, well, I think we need to make people pledge. We need to get them to commit to a monthly amount that they will send.

To promise to send a certain amount each month, so that we can budget, so that we can plan. Because we can't just launch into this completely on faith. We have to have some expectation that the money will actually arrive and roll in.

But, of course, it's all by faith. Everyone will be trusting that God will give them the money that they have promised to the church. So, we'll call this faith promise.

And we'll send out cards. And you make your faith promise at the beginning of the year. I promise by faith that I will give \$600 this year, which is \$50 a month.

I will give \$50 a month. I know that my budget is really tight. I don't really make enough to give.

But I'm going to trust God to provide me an extra \$50 a month. And I'm promising this to the church. Now, my whole point in this scenario is to illustrate that you can be on the right track.

And you can have a mission from God. You can have a purpose and a thing to get done that is a part of God's plan. God reveals it.

You understand it. You say, okay, fine. And in the implementation phase, we go awry.

We start to add human wheels to God's chariot of fire. We want to bolt on a 400 cubic inch engine. We want to bolt on dual mufflers.

We want to bolt on an automatic transmission. We want to bolt on a chrome bumper. We want to put on some wheel covers.

We want to stick a nice ram onto the carburetor. We want to do these things. Dual overhead cam.

We're going to go in and modify and enhance what God has handed us. This is what Judah

does. They did the right thing.

They inquired of the Lord. And the Lord said, Judah, it's you. You're up.

Not surprising, since Judah is the leadership tribe. Kind of stands to reason. God might have said, funny you should ask.

I think I've already indicated that Judah is the leadership tribe. But, yes, you've inquired. Graciously answer your inquiry.

Judah shall go up. Judah says, okay, well, who will come with me? This is not operating in faith. Do you think if Joshua had still been alive, they would have recruited other tribes? No.

Now, if you do something wrong, does God revoke his promise? Does God remove all possible beneficial outcome? What happened when Moses struck the rock that he was supposed to speak to? Did water come out or not? Water came out anyway. Moses disobeyed. Moses got severely disciplined.

But water still came out of the rock. Now, can Moses or any other believer say, well, look, water came out. Obviously, I did it right.

Because, look, the result, the end, justifies the means. The means is still wrong, even though God graciously grants a beneficial and desired result. It tells us here, Judah said to Simeon his brother, come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory.

Simeon went with him. Judah went up. The Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand.

They killed 10,000 men at Bezek. They still won the victory, even though God didn't say anything about taking Simeon along. They won anyway.

God gave them into their hand. God does not wait for us to get everything exactly right, or nothing would ever happen. If God waited until we eliminated all sin, and eliminated all mistakes and errors, nothing would ever get done.

The point here is, we cannot argue from a victory, or from a blessing, or from a beneficial outcome, and say, see, I did that right, because God blessed it. Look at this outcome. Obviously I did it right.

Churches have used faith promise to pressure people in their congregation into giving large sums of money, and they have in fact built their buildings, and they have in fact accomplished their goals, and run their thermometers all the way up, and made it happen. That doesn't make it right. It does not mean that God honors or God blesses faith promise.

It just means that God is gracious, and grants mercy to thousands. But we do not, and this is

the main principle here, we do not argue from results, to doctrine, or to faith, or to practice. We always argue what is right and what is wrong, based on God's word.

We discern and we determine what is right and what is wrong, based on what the word of God says. God's word said, Judah, go up. And that's what should have happened.

Simeon should not have gone. It was not a part of God's plan. God gave them a victory anyway, but it wasn't His revealed will.

Now, they killed 10,000 men at Bezek. Once again, we run into our old friend Eliph, which is the word translated thousand, 10,000 men. This is 10, basically battalion size units.

In the same way that the ancient storytellers were not over-interested in precise chronology, they weren't over-interested in precise numbers. When they talk about 10 LFCs, or 10 large units, it does not mean precisely 10,000 men. If he was going to give a precise number, did they stop when they got the 10,000th guy? Okay, everybody stop.

We've got a nice round number, and it'll look good in the Bible, so everybody quit. Don't kill another guy. No, this is a round number.

They didn't have calculators. They didn't have cameras. They didn't have barcodes and so on.

Look, there was a big group over here. There was a big group over here, a big group over here. We wiped out 10 big groups, 10 Eliphs.

The exact count is unknown, but many of these numbers are, if you take them literally, they are impossible. To field some of the armies that are described in literal, if you take them literally in the Bible, you would have to have a population in Canaan that the land has never supported, has never seen. It just doesn't work, and this tells us that we have to understand these words the way the original author and the way the original hearers understood them, and an Eliph is a big group of people of indeterminate size.

Size is determined by context. Okay, well, this is a good place for us to stop. We've actually made it several verses into the chapter, and we will continue a great deal further when we come back from the break.