

Judges 08-01-18b

Let's pick up our study now in Judges chapter 1. Judah recruits Simeon, his brother, and says, Come up with me that we may fight against the Canaanites. You'll remember if you look back in Joshua chapter 19 that the second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon, according to their families, and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. So, there is some logic, there is a reason.

They didn't say, hey, Gad or Manasseh or one of the tribes that was more distant. The lot came out for Simeon. And you could also argue, well, aren't they the leadership tribe? Can't they decide how they should go up when they ask of the Lord? When the Lord says, Judah, go up, can they not improvise or expand on that theme? And all of these are certainly valid rationalizations, which I'm sure the children of Judah themselves probably thought of at the time.

The fact remains that when they inquired of the Lord, the Lord said, Judah shall go up. God didn't say Judah and Simeon. He didn't say Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

He didn't add. He said Judah. So, it says, Judah shall go up.

I have delivered the land into his hand. But they added Simeon. There are reasons.

But as you continue, Simeon went with him. Judah went up. And the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand.

They killed ten Eliphs at Bezek. Now, where is Bezek? This is, of course, part of the allotment within the territory of Judah. And if you look this up, you find that it's in the same place that is called Scythopolis, or modern Hiriye Bzika.

It's 14 miles from Nablus. It is the 17th milestone from Neapolis towards Scythopolis. The name means gravel.

At least, that's conjecture. Bezek means gravel. So, Adoni Bezek, the king.

Adon means Lord. So, Adoni Bezek is the king of gravel. The gravel king.

Sounds like a business you might call to have your driveway done. They found Adoni Bezek in Bezek. Obviously, this is a title like Pharaoh or Melchizedek or Abimelech.

Adoni Bezek is just going to be the mayor or the king or the lord of this particular city state. They found Adoni Bezek. They defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

So, Adoni Bezek fled and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Now, these are the people of God. The mighty victorious conquerors under Joshua.

They catch this guy and they cut off his thumbs and they cut off his toes. You don't typically see

this scene pictured in biblical epics. Here's the great mighty Judahite army getting this hapless guy.

Probably a little pudgy king. And they chop off his thumbs and they chop off his big toes. Seems kind of gruesome.

Why would they do this? Did God tell them to cut off the thumbs and the big toes? Well, yes. How do I know this? Remember the thing that we studied when we did Exodus called Lex Talionis? Which is the law of retribution and basically says an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life. When the army of Judah and Simeon found Adoni Bezek, and they pursued him and they caught him, they found that in his little kingdom area, in his palace, he had 70 kings that he had defeated in his relatively and apparently long reign in Bezek.

Now, when it says kings, we think of kings in terms of pharaohs and kings, great monarchs of large territories. But remember, in Canaan, we're talking about city states. These are going to be villages.

You can think of these guys more like mayors. The mayor of a town or a township. Maybe a county commissioner, if you will, who is located in the county seat.

How many counties are there in the state of Texas? Anybody know? Well, there's dozens and dozens and dozens. Texas is a huge state. I don't know how many there are, but there's well over 100 counties.

And each of those counties has a county seat. And there's a county government. There's a county constable.

There's a county courthouse. County records are kept, and so on. So these guys, you might think of them as county commissioners, although this area is relatively small that's assigned to Judah.

And these are really more like little town mayors. And the surrounding area for maybe a mile or two outside the town might be presided over by this guy. Seventy kings, 70 individuals had been defeated by this man.

And when he conquered them and seized them, he had cut off their thumbs and their big toes. Well, the law of Moses says, as you have done to others, so it shall be done to you, basically. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a thumb for a thumb, a toe for a toe, and a life for a life.

So he himself confessed that he had cut off these thumbs and so on. So they did the same to him. Now, the actual Hebrew here says that they cut off the thumb from his hand and his foot.

They don't have a word for big toe. So it's the thumb of the hand and the thumb of the foot, basically. What is the thumb of your foot? It's your big toe.

So, as I have done, so God has repaid me, he says. And this is indeterminate. You have God with

a capital G, and it's a singular word in the translation.

But he says, as I have done to them, so Elohim has repaid me. The verb is in the singular, but the Hebrews here may have interpreted his words in the light of the one God. He may have said, the gods have repaid me.

I seriously doubt that Adonai Bezek was a believer in the God of Israel, but he might have been. He might have been like the other Canaanites who saw what the God of Israel had done, and God gave them the victory over him. Your God has repaid me.

Maybe that's what he said. But it says that Elohim has repaid to me, and this is a masculine singular verb, and it is silam, is the word here. S-I-L-A-M.

He has repaid to me. Now, why do I bring this up? Because it says, after they cut off his thumbs and his toes, where did they take him? To Yerushalam, which is the same word. There's a play on words here.

It's shalam, S-H-A-L-A-M, is the last part of Jerusalem. And basically, Yerushalam is the prefix that means city of. This is the city of peace, the city of Salem, city of Shalem, is where he was taken.

But he says, shalam-ly, God has repaid to me. And so there's kind of a word play between the word for repay and the destination to which he is taken. Because shalam, S-H-A-L-E-M, is a verb that means to be complete, to be sound, as it were, or to be requited, to be safe, to be secure, to be free from fault.

And so it's essentially the same root as the city. And God repaid to him what he had done to these kings, and then he is taken to the city of repayment, or the city of Shalem. God has shalamed to me what I dished out to these others, and then he's taken to the city of Shalem.

It's real obvious in Hebrew. It's hard to bring out into English. It says they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

Now, how can they bring him to Jerusalem when they don't own the city of Jerusalem? Jerusalem is not the capital city. It's not their city. They haven't even taken it yet.

This comes later. Now, verse 8, the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it. They struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

So once again, we've backed up in time, because they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there. Well, you get the idea he spent some time there, learning to operate without thumbs and without toes. But we've backed up because the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem and took it.

They struck it with the edge of the sword. They set the city on fire. Is there a destruction layer in Jerusalem that can be traced to this time? There ought to be a burn layer and a destruction

layer.

Well, it's impossible to know. You cannot do good archaeology in Jerusalem and dig down to this time, because the city's been continuously occupied, and you'd have to destroy a bunch of existing buildings. You'd have to tear down existing walls.

You can't even get back to the time of David and Solomon in many parts of Jerusalem, because there's mosques and people's homes. Unless a particular area is cleared for a new building project, which occasionally happens, then they get a treasure trove of artifacts, and they get a brief glimpse into the earlier layers in Jerusalem. But Jerusalem is the hardest city to do archaeology in, because it's a living city.

It'd be like asking, well, I wonder what's under the Colosseum in Rome. Well, you're not going to find out, because nobody's going to let you tear down the Colosseum or any part of it. You can't find out what's under the Temple Mount, because they're not going to let you tear down the Dome of the Rock and the big plaza.

You're not going to find out what's behind the second temple wall. There's a seam there, and there's different walls. They're never going to let anybody excavate.

But I feel certain that if one could, one could go down to this layer and find a burn layer where the inhabitants of Jembus or Salem were conquered. And afterward, the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains in the south and in the lowland. What's the Hebrew word for south? Negiv.

And I want to point something out here just in passing. Again, stepping back and looking at the large picture of what's going on, this is a model. Judah is the tribe that is kind of given as a model.

We get a detail, a close-up of their intrusion into their assigned land. And this would be duplicated many times over for the other tribes. Let's think about this for a minute.

God turns Israel loose in the land after the northern and southern campaigns by tribe. They have allotments and assignments by tribe. What does this tell us? They are to continue to function as units, tribal units.

Their land allotment is by units, not by clans, not by families. So what is their unit of organization? The nearest analogy I can think of is this is the United States of Canaan. This is the United States of Abram land.

This is the United States of Palestine, although that's a misnomer because Palestine comes from Palishtim, which is named after the Philistines. It's not the Philistines' land and it's not the Canaanites' land. It's Abraham's land.

So this is the United States of Abraham land. And God assigned it to them by tribes. These are

like your individual states.

Now, what I find interesting is that this particular area, when you think about the tribal land assignments, if you look at a map of how those allotments were made, there are natural barriers at all of the borders. Let's think about it for a minute. If you put the 12 tribes into some area, not some area or Sumeria, but some space area, some land, some territory, there are going to be other inhabitants.

There are going to be people who have been pushed aside, elbowed out of the way, people with whom they share a border. But this particular postage stamp there has natural borders. What's the border in the south? It's the desert, right? You get down, they've been assigned some arid land, and nobody really wants to live south of their southern border.

It's desert. You don't have competition down there. It's a natural border.

What is their eastern border? The eastern border is the Jordan and the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. That's a natural border. They don't have to worry too much about somebody arguing over, well, my fence is on your land, your fence is on my land.

You've got a big natural border there. As you curve around the northern border, you've got the northern heights, you've got the hills and the mountains up in northern Galilee, and there's kind of a no-man's land there, above which you've got Tyre and Sidon, and you've got that whole region. But nobody's really arguing about the hilly, mountainous, scrub-forested regions of northern Galilee.

Then on the west, you've got the Mediterranean Sea. So when God assigned them those territorial regions, he gave them a land that has natural boundaries. Who opted out of the natural boundaries? Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

What do they have for natural defenses on their edges? What is going to impede close personal contact with the surrounding nations and their idolatry and their culture and so on? Is there a river surrounding that land of Bashan and Gilead? No. It just fades into these other nations and these other lands. So Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh on that side of the Jordan are going to be the first to be assimilated, the first to be polluted by contact and defiled by contact, because they're outside the natural borders that God assigned.

God permitted it. God didn't argue with them when they requested that land, but it wasn't his ideal. He said, this is your land, crossing the Jordan.

That's when they got circumcised. That's when they no longer ate the manna. It wasn't when they were walking up and down in Gilead and Bashan.

It's when they crossed the Jordan that God stopped the manna, because now they're in the land of Abram. They're in the land of promise. Well, if you think about this, there is a nation of Israel in the Old Testament that reflects the individual believer in the New Testament, right? So we

observe this and we say, God obviously wanted them to maintain a kind of cohesion.

There are separate tribes, but the tribes are distinct and coherent entities. It's not every man for himself. It's not the land rush in Oklahoma in the first part of the last century.

Okay, just get in your wagon and go as far as you want, plant your flag, that's your land. That's not how it goes. Well, so what does that mean for us? How would we observe, interpret, and apply? We have commands that say, it's not every man for himself, don't we? What does the New Testament say to church age believers? We still have a unit of organization called the local church, right? And given the interesting nature of modern technology, you can be local without being physically local, but there is still an assembly, there is still a fellowship, there are still believers with whom we closely identify, and that's our tribal unit, if you will.

We are not lone rangers. I probably told you before that I had an interest in the Boy Scouts when I was a young guy, but there weren't any scout troops where I was. So I wrote to the Boy Scouts of America and said, hey, what do you do if you want to be a Boy Scout and there aren't any Boy Scouts around? And they wrote back and they said, well, they have this thing called the Lone Wolf Scout program where you can basically work on your badges and you do stuff by correspondence and you travel every so often and get with... but you're basically a... I don't know if they still have that or not, but you're kind of an orphan scout out there with no scout master and it's kind of like home scouting.

And I thought, well, forget that, and I didn't pursue it any further. But we're not really supposed to be doing the home scouting deal, the lone wolf believer mode. We are designed to function as units just as the people of God were assigned to be units.

What is the repeated condemnation that we're going to find in the book of Judges? Every man did what was right in his own eyes. Everybody decided to be an individual. It was the me generation, the Pepsi generation.

Well, I'll do what makes sense to me. And they lost that sense of cohesion. You can see in the earliest days of the book of Judges here, they're operating as tribes and they're inquiring of the Lord and the tribal elders are doing their thing.

But that's what they're going to lose. That's when they're going to disintegrate. They're going to begin to act like the Canaanites who do not have a confederation and a relationship and a household to which they belong.

They're little mayors. They're little county commissioners. And Adonai Bezaḥ can go pick them off one by one and accumulate 70 of them with no toes and no thumbs.

That's exactly what happens to believers who forsake the assembling of themselves together. They get picked off like stragglers. That's what the hyenas and the lions in Africa do is they look for the ones who get off by themselves.

And they're weak and they're not designed or able to function alone. And there is a clear, distinct, and important biblical principle that says that we as believers are to cultivate fellowship. We are to look for it.

Now there are times when God will put us by ourselves. You figure a prophet isn't any good unless he's got an audience to prophesy to, right? And so if God calls a man to be a prophet, well, he's going to put him somewhere where he's got people he can prophesy to. And yet, you have Elijah by the brook Jareth.

You've got Jeremiah down in the cistern. You've got times Jonah down in the belly of the fish. There are times when he's going to be alone, but that's going to be brief and temporary.

Ultimately, believers are designed to function in units, in elephs, in small, cohesive groups which are part of a larger entity. The individual tribes and the clans within those tribes are part of the nation of Israel which is still a complete nation. Israel is still all under God.

God is the overall suzerain, the overall king. But the individual tribes are autonomous and they make their decisions and they can decide. Judah can decide how and when he's going to attack without consulting Dan or Naphtali.

But there is a dynamic and there is a principle involved in being united as a group. We don't want to overlook that, but we're going to see that this is what begins to disintegrate as we move through the book. So the children of Judah, the whole tribe, acts as a tribe and they take Jerusalem.

They strike it with the edge of the sword. They set it on fire. Then they went down to fight in the south and in the lowland.

Then they went against the Canaanites who dwelled in Hebron. The name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath Arba and they killed Sheshai, Ahimon, and Talmai. Now, I want you to notice that beginning in verse 8, it says, Now the children of Judah fought.

This is the Hebrew conjunction, Now. It's just a little shepherd's crook. A little vertical stroke.

And it is the most flexible and universal conjunction there is. It can mean, But, Now, And, Then, For, Except. It can be translated almost any way.

When it is translated, Now, it makes it sound like things are sequential. And this is often not the case. They brought Adoni Bezek to Jerusalem and there he died.

Now the children of Israel fought against Jerusalem. That's not what it says. This conjunction just simply means, Now, I'm going to tell you another story here.

And it may or may not be chronological. It may or may not be sequential. And in fact, this is not.

Because they can't put Adoni Bezek in Jerusalem until they take it. Then it says, And afterward,

the children of Judah went down. In verse 9. Here, we have a specific word that tells us sequence.

Achar. A-C-H-A-R. That means, Behind, or afterward, or following.

So now we've got a clear notation of sequence. Then, in verse 10, it says, They went and fought. And, there is no Achar.

After that, they went down. It just says, They also fought the Canaanites, who dwelt in the mountains, and who dwelt in Hebron. Now, the name of Hebron was Kiriath Arba.

They killed Sheshai, Achim, and Talmai. Now, we know that this actually happened previously. This happened before Joshua died.

We saw the account of this battle back in the book of Joshua. But this is an account of all of the battles of Judah. And the guy says, Oh yeah.

It's almost like, Oh yeah, I forgot. They also had fought battles in Hebron. These are not necessarily in sequence, unless it tells us they're in sequence.

The name of Debir was formerly Kiriath Sefer. We already saw that back in the book of Joshua. Now, verse 12.

Caleb said, Whoever attacks Kiriath Sefer and takes it. We already had this story in the book of Joshua. We covered it extensively there.

And I'm going to go through it pretty quickly now. Whoever takes it, I will give my daughter Achsah to him as wife. Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it.

So he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. Achsah and Othniel are cousins. And back in this day, it was okay for cousins to get married.

But Othniel is the son of Caleb's younger brother, Kenaz. And so this is the daughter of one brother marrying the son of another brother. That's what you call marrying your cousin.

It was okay in those days. Remember, just not too many generations before this, guys were marrying their sisters or their half-sisters. It's perfectly fine.

Now, again, why does he set this criteria? Whoever takes the city, I will give my daughter. This is not a raffle. I think Caleb already has a pretty good idea, knowing his clan and knowing his family and knowing his tribe.

He knows that there's only maybe two or three guys who could actually pull this off. And I think he already knows that Othniel is the guy that can and will do this. And he is not just carelessly palming his daughter off on the first guy who can take a city.

This is a demonstration of Othniel's qualification. So when she came, she urged him to ask her

father for a field. She dismounted from her donkey.

Caleb said, What do you wish? She said, Give me a blessing, since you have given me land in the south. Give me also springs of water. We have covered all of this in our Joshua study.

The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the city of Palms with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the south near Arad, and they went and dwelt among the people. Now, what is the city of Palms in verse 16 here? There are some who say this is Jericho. There are others who say that this is a location which was referred to back in Deuteronomy 34.3. In other words, that is the verse that they cite to support that, because it says in Deuteronomy 34.3, in the Negev, or the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of Palm trees.

And Jericho is called the city of Palms. Well, we know that Jericho has been destroyed, so this basically gives the route, the descendants of the Kenite, the sons of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the vicinity of Jericho with the sons of Judah to the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad, and they went and lived with the people. Arad was mentioned back in Numbers chapter 21, and this basically tells us that these unattached Kenites, or Midianites, are lodging with the children of Judah.

What tribe is Moses from? The tribe of Levi. The Levites are basically scattered amongst the other tribes. This is Moses' in-laws, so these are Levitical in-laws, and they're just a generation or two down.

Moses is within the last hundred years. So these have sojourned with the Israelites. They stayed back around Jericho during the northern and southern campaigns, and now they're going to come on in and settle.

Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they struck the Kenites, living in Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Hormah means destruction.

It's kind of like Korban, that which is dedicated or that which is destroyed. Now the Lord was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots. This again brings us into the archaeological realm, because iron isn't supposed to be around until the early Iron Age.

Iron is supposed to come to this region with the Philistines. Well, archaeology has got it wrong. The Bible says that here in Middle Bronze, or at the latest, early Late Bronze, there were iron chariots.

They could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots. These are the early Philistines, the early bringers of that whole culture from the northeastern Mediterranean area. So they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had promised him, and drove out from there the three sons of Anak.

But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. So the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. Now remember, this is not just the city.

This is the county. This is the area that includes Jebus, or Salem. Judah came up and attacked the city proper, but remember, part of what belongs to that city is in the northern region that belonged to Benjamin.

Judah and Benjamin, their border runs right through that town. So they got the city and part of the territory. The other tribe gets the other territory.

Likewise, the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the Lord was with them. The house of Joseph spied out Bethel. That's two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh.

The spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said, Please show us the entrance to the city. We will treat you kindly. They showed him the entrance.

They struck the city with the edge of the sword. They let the man and all his family go free. The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city and named it Luz, which is its name to this day.

Now Luz was formerly the name of Bethel. This is not the same town, because Bethel is not in the land of the Hittites. But here's the problem.

You get these little anecdotes of how the tribes initially started out. Remember, they're functioning as tribes, and they're under that tribal leadership which was charged by Joshua, and which faithfully served the Lord all the days of Joshua. And they're succeeding, at least at first blush.

But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-Shean and its villages, or Ta-Anak and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibliyam and its villages, or Megiddo. The Canaanites persisted in living in the land. Notice these are the tribes of Joseph.

They had one big victory, but they didn't take what they were supposed to take. Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites, who were living in Gizir. The Canaanites live in Gizir among them.

Zebulun did not drive out Kitron, or Nahalol. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko, or Sidon, or Ahlab, or Akzib, or Helbo, or Afik, or Rehob. The Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land.

They did not drive them out. So, you have that first... Here's the summary of all of this. You could bog down.

We could look at these details in agonizing length. But here's the thrust of it. Here's the whole point.

Judah did it right initially, almost. They inquired of the Lord. God said, Go up.

They went up. God gave them the victory. That was the model.

Everything after that deteriorates. It's like making a copy of a copy of a copy. The further we get into this chapter, the worse it gets.

They don't conquer everybody. They don't fully drive them out. It doesn't say that God gave them the victory.

They're going through the motions. They're sort of doing it, but it's half-baked. It's half-done.

It's unfinished. You don't see anything about inquiring of the Lord. You don't see anything about God's glory.

Nothing like the conquests under Joshua. It's a pale imitation. I would suggest to you that today, when you look around in the Christian world and you see claims of victory, claims of great accomplishment, claims of great ministry, that in many cases, we have much the same thing going on.

Why? Because it is done in the same way. It is not really done in a spirit of inquiry, asking, What is really God's will here? Does God really want me to build this giant thing? Does God really want me to win the world by the year 2000? Does God really want me to do this, that, and the other? There is a human idea of what constitutes success, and that is the measure. Secondly, as we look around today, the mission has changed.

These tribes are going to quickly disintegrate and lose their identity. They become individuals. It gets down to individual towns and individual cities.

They don't take a territory. God assigned them a territory surrounded by a border. But notice here, you have Ahlav, and Ahzib, and Helba, and Afik, and these other individual towns weren't taken.

They moved into unoccupied areas, and they left the strongholds. That's what's easy. Well, there's a town here and a town here.

I'll just move into the vacant space between, and I'm not going to really try to wipe these guys out. Can't do it. Don't want to do it.

Unable to do it, whatever it may be. Compromise and an alternate plan. God did not say move into the land and settle amongst the Canaanites, did he? What do we do as believers now, today? Our soul is the land to be conquered.

That's where our inheritance is won. That's where we win victories and battles by faith. Are we settling? Are we deciding that the battle is over? Have we quit fighting? Have we decided that, well, I'm just not going to get all the Canaanites out of this land, so I'm just going to dwell in

their midst? Yeah, I've got to be setting sin here, and I've got a bad pattern of behavior there.

Especially as we get older, and believe me, you know how old I am now, it's easier and easier to say, you know, I think it just isn't going to get much better. I think it's going to have to kind of settle. And I think in the light of a scripture like this, it's a dangerous attitude.

We are never too old to fight the battle. Look at Caleb, oldest man in Israel. And his is the last great story of victory in the account.

He goes up and slays these giants. And he's the oldest guy in Israel. Younger, stronger, more numerous people can't get the job done.

Why? Did the promise of God fail? Why is this such a tacky, shabby, sort of boring account of what happened in the land? That's what happens in our soul. It gets tacky, and it gets incomplete, and it gets boring. When we look at the landscape of our soul, we are supposed to be on the attack.

We are supposed to be claiming the promises of God by faith and eradicating the sin in our souls and the evil in our souls. And I say this talking to you as a guy who has not driven out the Canaanites. I haven't gotten them out of my soul, and you haven't gotten them out of your soul.

We are all in this phase. We are not baby believers. We are not running around for 40 years, dropping in the wilderness.

You're a student of the Word of God. Many of you have been a student of the Word of God for many years, and you have persisted, and you have endured, and you have crossed the Jordan and gone into the land. We are poised.

We are in a position to take possession. How much are we going to take? How fully are we going to obey? How completely are we going to overcome? That is the question for you and me. We're not back in the doldrums.

We're not ignorant of the Scriptures. We're not misconstruing why we're here. You know why we're here.

You know what God's purpose is for your life, right? Is there any doubt in your mind why we're breathing air, why we're in this life, what Jesus Christ is going to judge at His judgment seat when He comes back? We all know this, don't we? We know this. The only question that remains is how fully and completely are we going to fight this battle and win this victory? And if we start settling, if we start getting disinterested and saying, well, you know, I'm in a pretty good spot. This is a decent land.

I don't really need to conquer that nearby village. I don't have to drive out that particular Canaanite. He's willing to get along.

He's promised not to attack me if I leave him alone. Can't we just all get along? Visualize world

peace. If we get that attitude of complacency and apathy and indifference in our soul, our life is going to be the story reflected in the book of Judges.

And you know already that this is not a happy book, and it's not a happy account. But that's exactly what it's going to be like. We are going to succeed, and we are going to be blessed, and we are going to live a fulfilled and satisfied life when we pick up our sword and say, who's left in my allotment that needs driving out? What's left in my soul that still needs conquering? Where have I missed a village? Where have I missed a town? Where have I missed a portion of my inheritance that God charged me to take, that God promised me the victory over by faith? All of us, I think, have areas that we can look around in our soul and say, you know what, there's an enemy I haven't licked.

Maybe it's worry. Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's hyper-criticism.

Maybe it's impatience. Maybe it is arrogance. Maybe it is a personal agenda.

Maybe it's some personal ambition that keeps elbowing aside the plan and purpose of God. Whatever it may be, we've got to find it and we've got to stick a sword in it while we can. The days are short.

Maybe Sunday, if I have enough time, I'll share with you the most recent construction of the time remaining to us that I've run across. There are some people who think it's all going to end in the year 2012. There are others who think it's going to be 2028.

But I don't see anybody stretching it past 2028. I've seen five or six new calculations based on the prophecies of Daniel, one thing or another. I don't really go in for date setting, but I think it's obvious to all of us that the time is fast approaching.

And certainly the end of our life is fast approaching. Whatever we're going to do, we've got to hurry up and do it because we're going to be face-to-face with the Lord very soon. So I think all of us would hope that we would finish strong.

And when last seen, we were still swinging the sword, right? Well, I leave you with that great vision and hope, and hopefully we'll see you Sunday morning. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your word and the truth that it conveys to us so graphically.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find ways to minister it to us so that it is effective and it empowers us and enables us with all the power that you have given it to transform us and to equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.