

Judges 08-02-22a

This is Friday, the 22nd of February, 2008. We're in the book of Judges, chapter 4. We'll pause to give ourselves the opportunity to exercise our priesthood and make sure that we are prepared to investigate the truth of God's word under the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Shall we pray? Father, it is a wonderful comfort and encouragement to recognize that our lives are not lived in our own strength, by our own wits or our own wisdom, that it is not our might, but it is your spirit that leads us and guides us and elevates us to a supernatural plane where our lives have eternal meaning and eternal consequence.

We can partake of things that are beyond this universe and beyond the grasp of the carnal mind. We thank you for your word and the preservation of it, the easy and ready access that we have to it, especially in this day and age. We are so blessed with so many helps and resources and opportunities, and we know that this creates a responsibility as well as a potential for us to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior.

We pray that our study this evening will contribute to that goal. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Judges, chapter 4. We see Jabin resurrected from the dead, as it were. You will perhaps recall that back in Joshua chapter 11, we had another story involving Yabin, the king of Hazor. He created a federation when Joshua began to stomp all over the Canaanites and the Amorites and the other ites that were in the land.

He was the instigator. He was the diplomat that called together the Canaanite coalition involving himself, Jobob, that's J-O-E-B-O-B. Jobob, the king of Madon and the king of Shimron, the king of Aksoth, and all the kings that were of the north and the hill country.

These are the small little townlets, little village hamlets, with basically small little militias. Some of them could only contribute maybe a few dozen men. He got all of these guys even down in the Arabah, south of Kinnereth.

What is Kinnereth? It's the Sea of Galilee. And the lowland and the heights of Dor in the west, I'm reading by the way from Joshua chapter 11, to the Canaanite on the east and the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpah, they came out all at the instigation of Jabin. All their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore with very many horses and chariots.

Hazor is, there must have been a chariot factory in Hazor because you just can't get away from the chariots. All these kings having agreed to meet, they came in a camp together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. What happened at that time when Jabin put together this multinational force of evil? The Lord came and spoke to Joshua and he said, do not be afraid because of them for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel.

You shall hamstring their horses, you will annihilate their chariots, etc. God spoke and God said,

I am going to crush and defeat this coalition. Well, now in chapter 4, we find that once again, and you may recall by the way that Hazor suffered a pretty ignominious fate back there in Joshua chapter 11.

Let me see if I can find the verse for you here. After the rout of the coalition armies, Joshua turned back and took Hazor in verse 10 and struck its king with the sword. Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms.

It was the capital city of the whole northern empire there. They struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing and he burned Hazor with fire.

This has led people to assume that when you get to Judges chapter 4, that there is some sort of a garbled retelling of the conquest of Joshua chapter 11 in this chapter. Because if Hazor got burned with fire and everybody was slain and none were left breathing, where did this guy come from? So the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died. This is sort of a chronological time marker here.

We, as I said last week, we know that at least two generations have passed now from the time of the elders under Joshua. Because you've got the 80 years and so on. But the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.

The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor. And the commander of his army is Sisera who lives in Harosheth Hagoyim. The sons of Israel cried out to the Lord.

He had 900 iron chariots. He oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years. This oppression begins after Ehud dies.

So how much time has passed since the days of Joshua's conquest? We're talking about close to a century, right? Now, is it possible over the course of 10 decades, especially if you do not hold the land you have taken, for someone to go back and say, oh, look at the rubble. You remember when the British burned Washington, D.C.? Well, what happened after we kicked the British out of there? It went in and rebuilt. What are they doing down in New Orleans after the destruction down there? What are they doing at the site of the Twin Towers in New York City? It doesn't take that long.

If you don't hold the ground, they're going to come back. And it's got symbolic value. It resonates.

It can be a source of unifying motivation for people to say, hey, we're rebuilding Hazor. Remember the glory of Hazor? Remember what a crown jewel it was in the northern region here of this land? Well, the Israelites, those nefarious Johnny-come-latelys who have come in here and handed us such a series of defeats? Well, there's another Jabin, and he's back in Hazor. Isn't it great? We've cranked up the chariot factory again.

Some of the old-timers learned from their grandfathers how to make chariots. They started up... By the way, these were not like Charlton Heston type of chariots. These are not the Ben-Hur, wonderful, glorious... When it talks about 900 chariots, I still have a strong suspicion.

I'm researching this, and I'll let you know if I get any additional insight. I believe that in the same case with LF, the word hundred needs more review. This may be another word for unit.

In the same way that centurions in the Roman army commanded a century, it doesn't necessarily mean that there was a hundred of something there. It transcended its numerical value. In other words, it came to mean a military unit or a group of a certain expected size that is no longer related to the name.

There is a pharaoh down in Egypt who, in the 15th century BC, by the standard chronology, had gone to Megiddo and had fought a battle there. He claimed to have captured 923, 924 chariots there. So this area is known for its chariots.

I think they manufactured them. I think they exported them. I think they maintained them.

I think they were very simple. I think it was basically just kind of a little one-man buggy. You see pictures of them in the things.

They're not these great, big, honking—is that an academic word? They're not highly manufactured, 150-pound pieces of iron. They're essentially a wooden cart hauled behind a single horse holding a single guy, two at most, and they are rimmed with iron. At the places where a sword would hack, at the places where they would be vulnerable, they're reinforced with iron.

When it says iron chariots, it doesn't mean the whole thing is made out of iron. If you think about an iron chariot and trying to get around in some of this terrain, that's not going to happen. They're reinforced with iron at the critical points.

At any rate, it's not inconceivable that there could actually be 923, but my instinct tells me that it was probably perhaps nine chariot units, nine hundreds. In other words, nine little chariot battalions or something. At any rate, this Canaanite force has raised back up from the ashes, to be in the vacuum left by the failure of Israel to fill and occupy and maintain possession of the land.

Why is that so difficult? Where is this area? Well, this area, Hazor and Hiroshima and so on, this is up north. This is in the land of Ephraim. Now, what do we know about Ephraim? Who's on the wrong side of the Jordan over there? Half the tribe of Ephraim is over there.

So what does that mean for the land of Ephraim, that they're supposed to fill and occupy and exterminate all of the previous inhabitants? Well, they're not there. They came over and fought some critical strategic campaigns and that was great, but they didn't stay to occupy, they went home. This is part of the problem.

You can't just take, you have to occupy, you have to hold. Israel knows all about this from the 67 to 73 wars. It took a lot of territory, but with international pressure, and one thing and another, including pressure from the United States, they've had a real hard time.

And in fact, they have not been able to maintain possession of everything they took in those battles. So the sons of Israel cried to the Lord because they were oppressed for 20 years. So if you go and do a survey of the archaeology at Hazor, you find that it was indeed destroyed in the time of Joshua, especially if you correct the chronology, and it stayed, they don't find any occupation layers until down around the time of David.

There's a long time where it's not particularly occupied. What this tells me is Hazor is still a burned heap of rubble. Jabin has set up a city there and he is sitting enthroned there, but this has to be temporary stuff.

He's built out of wood. He's in tents. They're occupying the site for its symbolic value.

They haven't actually built anything. And this is why it says he reigned in Hazor, but this is not where the army headquarters is. The army headquarters is with Sisera.

So this is some of the background. This city wouldn't actually be rebuilt until after David's day, down at the time of Solomon. Sisera is the main antagonist here, although he is Jabin's arm.

He is Jabin's material force against the Israelites. He is the enforcer. He's the guy that's got the might and the weight, but he's being directed by Jabin up there.

The base of operation up there in Hirosheth, it says he lived up there in Hirosheth Hagoyim, but the participle Yoseb here is from Yassab, which means to sit, literally. He sat in Hirosheth Hagoyim. And this means that's where his base was.

That's where his army sat. That's where his headquarters sat. Not so much lived as operated from.

We're going to see Deborah sitting under the palm tree. She didn't live under the palm tree. That's where she operated from.

That's where she met with the elders of Israel when they came. So you have this area, and there's some trouble figuring out what Deborah's role is. When you get to verse four, Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at the time.

You remember two or three weeks ago, we talked about this word for judging from Shafat. And what it signifies is not so much a legal holding of court as analyzing situations, formulating a plan, and helping to implement that plan. And that is in fact the same interpretation that we have here.

Deborah, of course, her name resonates with this area because Rachel's nurse, Deborah, is buried under a tree here. And she sort of comes back and harks back to the early days of Jacob

in this area just by her name and by her location. Her name, the name Deborah, I think is the best they can figure out.

It has the idea of a honeybee, like Aunt Bee. Her name is Bee in Hebrew. But she is called a prophetess, a Nevi'ah.

And you think about this for a moment because it says that she is judging Israel. And she's not adjudicating court cases here. And one of the ways that we know this is because it says the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment in verse 5. And if I said something different than this last week, I will correct it because I've continued to work and I think I have a better understanding.

I wasn't real happy with my level of perception on this. And so I went back and did a little more digging. And I discovered something real interesting here in verse 5. The sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.

The term sons of Israel is never used in the book of Judges for individual Israelites. Every time you find it used, it is used for the entire nation. And evidently, it is the entire nation that comes to her.

Specifically, the thing that she is judging is this problem of the oppression of Jabin. And the implementation of it through Sisera. The B'nai Yisrael, the sons of Israel, is used here just like it is in verse 3. It says the sons of Israel cried to the Lord.

He oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years. This is the nation. This is with emphasis on the northern portion of the nation.

You figure the closer they get to Hazor, the worse this is going to be. And Hirosheth Hagoyim. But the entire collection of tribes is oppressed.

And so when it says the sons of Israel come to her for judgment, that is the same as the ones who are being oppressed. So we have the context to tell us what sons of Israel means here. So we should not view Deborah as sitting there saying, Ahab, you need to pay Bosheth over here five shekels for wounding his goat.

She is not doing that kind of thing. She is a prophetess. And when this crisis reaches ahead, the elders of the tribes get together and they say, we need to go seek counsel.

We need to figure out what to do. This has gone on for two decades now. And it is just unbearable.

Something has to be done. So the sons of Israel, as representatives of the collective nation, have come to Deborah for an answer. She was judging Israel at that time.

She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country Ephraim. And the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. And so they are coming to her when instances of this oppression occur.

That is what she is giving them advice about. Did you know that Sisera has moved in and taken over another town? Did you know that he has imposed a tax and he is sending the money back to Yabin? What should we do? And they are coming to her for advice and counsel on this specific issue which affects the entire nation. That is the view.

Now, why do we care? Why is that important? She is, it tells us specifically in verse 5, She is at the palm tree of Deborah, her namesake, the nurse to Rebekah, Jacob's mother. This might have been the nanny for Jacob when he was a little boy, right? The nursemaid for Jacob. The nursemaid for, your name will no longer be Jacob, but it will be Yitzra'el.

Who is Deborah? The babysitter, the nursemaid for Jacob. Now, here is Deborah and the men of Israel are coming to the palm tree of Deborah so that Deborah can nursemaid them, if you will. I mean, this is really pretty symbolically damaging to the leadership of Israel.

Not only this, but if you think about this, between Ramah and Bethel, if you look at the map I gave you last time, or look at the Bible in the back of your map, you will see, how close is this? Where is the Ark of the Covenant at this time? Shiloh. How far is Shiloh? Why aren't the elders of Israel going to Shiloh? Why aren't they inquiring of God? Why aren't they going to the priests? You know, this is just a generation before Eli and his sons. The Ark is sitting at Shiloh.

Deborah is a prophetess, a Nevi'ah, and it puts her, you know, who has been identified as a prophet previous to this? Well, Moses for one, Miriam for another. I don't know if you remember that back in the Exodus account, Miriam was identified as a prophetess. And one of the things you find is that there are several women who are identified as prophetesses, but when they are, they are always linked to a man somewhere in their periphery.

This is pretty much without exception. Even when you get to Anna in the New Testament, or if you want to talk about Miriam, it describes Miriam as the sister of Aaron. It gives Deborah as the wife of Lapidoth, and so on.

So it is always sort of significant that when a woman is pointed out as being a prophetess, that she's linked to some male in her near periphery, a husband or a wife, brother, etc. But why are they coming to her? Where is the Urim and the Thummim? Who's got the Urim and the Thummim around his neck? It's the high priest in Israel, right? Where's the high priest? He's co-located with the Ark of the Covenant. Who is the high priest at this time? Well, he is so unmemorable, he doesn't even get a mention.

Somebody is wearing the ephod. Somebody has got the headdress. Someone has got holy to the Lord on his forehead.

Somebody has got the Urim and the Thummim, and evidently has already gone the way that Eli and his sons are going to go in the future. And so the priesthood is completely ineffective and inconsequential and a non-issue here. So the only place they can get any counsel is going to Deborah.

If you think about the downward spiral, we've talked about the Gilgal procession downward. You start with Othniel, who is associated with Caleb, and you move through Ehud and Shamgar, and now we're down to Deborah, and it is only going to get worse. It has been pointed out that really these judges in this book are not so much heroes as antiheroes.

Think about Ehud. We covered that in great detail, and he solves a problem there by burying his double-edged sword inside Eglon. But let me ask you this.

Last time there was a Jabin, God spoke. God fought for Israel. There used to be miracles.

There used to be great deliverances, and now we're reduced to espionage. It's tough to really... You don't see flags flying with celebration of Ehud. He's basically kind of a sneaky left-handed guy, right? I mean, it isn't so much heroic as sneaky.

It solves the problem, but this is not emblazoned across the roster of the faithful. Over in Hebrews 11, it does say, and time fails to tell of Ehud. He doesn't make the list, does he? Interestingly, Deborah does not make the list in Hebrews 11, and elsewhere when this story is celebrated.

So this whole thing is unsettling. It's troubling. She sits under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the sons of Israel came to her for judgment.

She sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kadesh Naphtali, and said, Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, Go and march to Mount Tabor and take with you 10,000 Elephs, 10 Elephs of men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops, and I will give him into your hand. That's the initial word from the Lord.

Whose hand is Jabin going to be given into? Who does God say is going to have the hand on Jabin or Sisera? I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army. I will give him into your hand. Who does the Lord address these words to? Barak, the original promise.

This puts you in mind of the promises that were made to King Saul. I will make of you a dynasty. Your throne will endure, etc.

Those were the original promises to Saul, but he lost them. I will draw out to you. I will give him into your hand.

Barak's reply disqualifies him from receiving that promise. Barak says, If you, nursemaid Deborah, will go with me, then I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go.

She said, I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey you are about to take. The Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.

Since you require a woman to go with you, then a woman is going to get the privilege of taking

this guy into her hand. And that's a loss. That's a downgrade of the original word of the Lord.

Now, nevertheless, Barak is going to be the hero of the peace here. And he is essentially the deliverer that God raises up for Israel, although it's a real sad case of being a deliverer. He's got to have two different women to help him.

He's got to have a woman to help him at the beginning. He's got to have a woman to help him at the end. His achievement in winning this victory is bracketed by Deborah on one side and J.L. on the other.

Woman at the beginning, woman at the end. Which, symbolically speaking, not that there's anything the matter with women, but think of the symbolic value here. He was supposed to win this.

He was supposed to take Sisera into his hand. And this is man's work. Fighting battles, killing generals, defeating armies.

This is man's work. It's an assignment. Don't think of it in terms of quality or, well, could Israel have fielded an army of women? I have no doubt that they could.

If you see any of the women in the Israel army today, that is a fearsome fighting force. It isn't a matter of quality. It isn't a matter of value.

It isn't a matter of ability. It is a matter of assignment. There are assigned functions.

And in the same way that I would not expect a guy whose primary MOS is supply to be on the front lines taking out mortar platoons and taking out artillery and taking out forward reconnaissance, I would expect this guy to be doing his job of supply. And it's a sad thing if the O3s and the infantry and the artillerymen and the mortarmen and all the other guys that are up there in front that are supposed to be slaughtering the enemy are so ineffectual that the supply corps has got to march through and over them and go take care of the enemy. This is an embarrassment.

So don't think in terms of, oh, wow, isn't that politically incorrect? Think in terms of assignment. It should not be the assignment of women in Israel to have to kill the enemy and call generals of armies to get them to go and fight and do. But the only way God can even speak to Israel is through a woman.

And the only way he can kill their opposing general is through a woman. And this is an embarrassment. It's a shame.

So Barak does manage to follow instructions. And he's going to get credit in Scripture for at least having the gumption to hear and act on the word of the Lord. As weak-kneed and wobbly as he is.

And he's got Deborah sort of holding him up and guiding him down there. But he does manage

to do it. And as milk-toast as he is, he's the leader in Israel.

He's got more spunk than anybody else does. So Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kadesh. And 10,000 men went with him.

10 LFs of men, 10 units. Deborah also went up with him. Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites.

You remember the Kenites? The family, the Midianites that Moses' in-laws were a part of had kind of gone sour. Heber the Kenite is a good guy. He says, I'm throwing in with Israel.

The Midianites have lost what little bit of orientation toward God they had in Moses' day three or four generations ago. So he separated himself. And he's living in Israel amongst the Israelites.

Although he's a Kenite. And this is the great thing. You know, people say, oh, how horrible was the God of Israel that he went in there and just slaughtered? And isn't he a terrible, vindictive, implacable God? How could you possibly? He's just, you know, he's no different than the Islamic terrorists of today.

I mean, it's just completely insane the things that people say about the Old Testament out of just brute, stark-staring ignorance. This is a Kenite. The Kenites are ultimately going to be wiped out.

The Midianites are going to be wiped out by Israel. But this is a Kenite. And when he comes to Israel, and he lives in Israel, and brings his family to Israel, he gets the same standing.

And his family is going to have the honor, his wife is going to have the honor of achieving the final period at the end of the sentence of this battle. And God reserves mercy for thousands. He is compassionate to anyone who will call on him, anyone who will even look in his direction.

So don't let people get away with this idea that, you know, the God of the Old Testament is this bloody hacking and slashing God. It's just, it's nonsense. Barak called them.

They went up. Heber the Kenite, from the people of the in-laws of Moses, had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Saanaim, which is near Kadesh. Now, this is important.

Barak is up at Kadesh. And he is living up there near Kadesh. So, they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

And I want you to notice the shift in the emphasis on the story here, because Deborah's work is done. Deborah fades from view. A lot of people say, well, you know, if you look at the cycles, there's this cycle of Israel does evil on the side of the Lord, oppression comes, they call out to the Lord, and the Lord raises up a deliverer.

And they say, this is what he did with Othniel. This is what he did with Ehud. Now, this is what

he's doing with Deborah.

No, it's not. She is not the deliverer. She's never called a deliverer.

The yashah verb for deliverer is never used of Deborah anywhere at any time. And if you think about this, as Samson, the Holy Spirit comes on him, others at various times, Gideon, God is interacting, and they are actually the agent of God's deliverance. There's no mention of that made.

She does deliver the word of the Lord, but there's no reference to the Spirit coming upon her. If she is the deliverer, then why is Barak there? Who needs Barak? Why doesn't she lead the army? And go forward. Why does she say the Lord will sell Cicero into the hands of a woman instead of into my hands? Why isn't she the woman who pounds the peg through the guy's head? It says that she went up with Barak to Kadesh, but there's no further mention of her being involved in the battle or leading troops or going forth or standing on a hill with her arms raised or any of that.

She announces in verse 14, this day, the Lord has given Cicero into your hands, meaning Barak's hands, rather than my hands. In the actual battle description that we saw last time in verses 15 through 17, the Lord routed Cicero and his chariots and his army with the edge of the sword before Barak, not before Deborah. Cicero alighted and fled.

Barak pursued the chariots as far as Haroth Ha-Goyim, and the army of Cicero fell by the edge of the sword. And later on, a part that we have not gotten to yet, but I'll direct your attention to it right now. If you look at verse 7 of that song, Judges 5-7, the peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel, or the village life ceased, as they have it in the New King James.

It ceased in Israel until I, Deborah, arose. Arose as a deliverer in Israel? Arose as a judge in Israel? Arose as a savior in Israel? No. What is she? A mother in Israel.

Just pause that thing, Joseph, so it'll stay running. So all of these things militate against, and it's clear that the narrator does not intend for us to view Deborah as the deliverer and the savior and God's agent here. Her involvement is basically, as I said, a rebuke and a shame to the men who are not functioning as priests in Shiloh, who are not functioning as elders in Israel, who are in the wrong place at the wrong time, crying out in the wrong way, and have to have their hand held by women to get this victory accomplished.

And it is another step down in the downward spiral for Israel. Well, so as we get into this, the judging, the having of the solution handed to them, they keep coming to Deborah saying, what are we going to do about Jabin? What are we going to do about Sisera? And she says, all right, go down here and do this. And if she will hold their hand, they will go and do that.

But all of their deliverance is to and through Deborah's communication. And so this is really, think about this. It's been a hundred years now.

80 years after Ehud and Shamgar, and another 20 years of oppression, right? And this little spot deliverance was not miraculous. Ehud sneaked in and stabbed the king and got away, and they came back. And that was sort of a skirmish that got this power center out of Jericho and protected that middle vulnerability that would divide the land.

And then nothing happens, no further oppression, and nothing miraculous. The sun didn't stand still. Walls didn't fall.

Hail didn't come down from heaven. This is the most minor, smallest possible deliverance to keep the nation together. Now they're oppressed by yet another guy.

It was in the south. It was in the middle. Now it's in the north.

And it's a word from God. Go here and you'll prevail. And he ends up delivering the general into the hand of a woman.

And then what? Well, there's going to be another period where God sort of takes a hands-off approach. The miraculous and the tangible presence of God in Israel seems very far away. And it is as though God does just enough.

When they cry out desperately enough to restore a situation where they should take charge of their own country, they should work out their own salvation, their own deliverance with fear and trembling. They don't need miracles. They have the promise of God.

They don't need walls falling and hail crushing and supernatural fire from heaven to prevail. God has given them everything they need if they will just use it. But they won't.

The priests do not avail themselves of God's guidance. They are evidently sacrificed as all but ceased in Shiloh. There's no mention even of an altar there.

The ark is there. Where's the altar? Down in the days of Eli and his sons, that's just a convenient way to steal meat from the Israelites. You know, we'll run the sacrificial system and look how good the menu is now.

Get our three-pronged hook and pull out the good meat. So if there is a lesson to be learned from the setup and the introduction and the details of this story before you get to the pounding of the tent peg, anybody who looked at Israel with an objective eye, in the same way that we should be looking at ourselves with an objective eye, could realize and could foresee that there is going to be a lack of divine intervention and a lack of divine blessing because that is a reciprocation of a lack of interest in the things of God on the part of the Israelites who are expected to know better. In the same way that the church age has moved past the age of miracles and healings and tongues and flames of fire coming from heaven and so on, we've got the canon of scripture.

We are supposed to know what to do. We are supposed to be able to look and judge. Am I in

the faith? Am I doing what I'm supposed to do? Am I in a position for God to bless my efforts, my fulfilling of the mission? Here's the mission.

I've got everything I need. That's where Israel is. They represent the mature believer taking possession of the land and suddenly slipping away and old victories are nullified.

First victory in the land was at Jericho and here comes Eglon. Great victory up in the north. Joshua burned Hazor with fire and now here's another guy with the same title, Jabin, setting up shop in Hazor.

We will find that as we neglect our daily spiritual responsibilities for meditation, for dedication, for sanctification, keeping short accounts, claiming Psalm 51, claiming 1 John 1.9, as we let that stuff slide, we are going to find ourselves slipping back into old difficulties that we thought were licked, that we thought were passed. That was in the past. Why is this coming back up? But you look at the history of Israel and the land and this is the pattern.

And notice, God does not send Jonah tramping through the land saying, yet 40 days and Israel will be destroyed. He doesn't send Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, calling Israel to repentance. He shouldn't have to.

Fresh in their memory are the days of Joshua. Fresh in their memory is the writing of the law on the rocks. Fresh in their memory are the memorials and the victories.

It's within the living memory of the elders of Israel. And so God doesn't call them. God doesn't send a John the Baptist or an Elijah or some other great vociferous prophet to call them back to God because they're supposed to know.

And their difficulties in becoming oppressed and falling back under the spell of things that they were once victorious over is the clue. That is the message. That is the warning.

And they are expected to heed it because they represent the mature believer who doesn't need a mallet on the head or shouldn't. But this continued cycle of oppression and each time God seems to do less. Each time the deliverer is less and less admirable, less and less honorable, less and less an embodiment of the things that represent God.

And it's going to be a tragedy when we get to Gideon and Samson that this is the kind of deliverer that God has to work in and through to get anything done. They're pathetic. You don't see people naming their child Samson.

Why? Well, he's an ingrate. He's a terrible guy. Well, this is the warning music we hear playing behind this victory.

This is not anywhere on a par with the victories of Joshua, is it? Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back we'll see the resolution and the denouement of this episode.